

**“WE WERE HAVING CONVERSATIONS THAT WEREN’T  
COMFORTABLE FOR ANYBODY, BUT WE WERE FEISTY:”  
RE-CONCEIVING STUDENT ACTIVISM AGAINST REPRODUCTIVE OPPRESSION IN  
CALGARY AND LETHBRIDGE DURING THE 1960S AND 1970S**

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Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Lethbridge, 2013**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines student activism against reproductive oppression in Calgary and Lethbridge during the 1960s and 1970s. The purpose is to highlight the strong and multi-faceted character of student activists' fight against reproductive oppression, including issues of sexuality and marriage, birth control, (hetero)sexual liberation, reproductive rights, women's health, and daycare. Using reproductive justice as an analytic lens, relevant articles published in student newspapers from the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Mount Royal Junior College, and Lethbridge Junior College are used as sources in addition to eight in-depth, semi-structured oral history interviews conducted with five narrators. My research revises conventional perspectives on student activism in Canada during these decades to determine student activism as intergenerational and multi-faceted. Additionally, my thesis challenges the representations and perceptions of Alberta as religiously, politically, and socially conservative emphasizing the significance of student activism that existed and thrived in the province during this era.

## Acknowledgments

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**Introduction**  
**Reproductive Rights and Oppression in Alberta:**  
**A Unique and Complicated History**

Activism around birth control, abortion, and reproductive rights is best known and, indeed, often assumed as beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the women's liberation movement. However, the North American history of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression has a much longer and more complicated history involving a variety of motivations and activisms. For example, in the 1960s Canadian student activists highlighted concerns about youth and women's sexuality alongside existing advocacy for reproductive rights.<sup>1</sup> Student activists brought the demands for sexual freedom outside of marriage to the forefront of their reproductive rights activism by advocating for the decriminalization of birth control and abortion. Student activists also advocated for accessible birth control for youth so young people could be sexually free from unwanted pregnancy and marriage.

In the 1960s White, middle class women across Canada advocated for married women's access to birth control and abortion. Family limitation, they implied, allowed for greater autonomy within marriage. Operating in the shadow of the threat of persecution, medical professionals supported family limitation primarily within marriage with many prescribing birth control, sexual health information, and abortion referrals.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, neo-Malthusian advocates—many of them medical professionals, clergy, and politicians—were

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<sup>1</sup> Christabelle Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975," *CBMH/BCHM*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2006), 89-118; Doug Owram, "Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-1973," in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 268.

<sup>2</sup> Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State* (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart Limited, 1986), 15-30.

advocates of population control and wanted birth control decriminalized. Their aspiration subscribed to early twentieth century social urban reform, or rather social control, as well as transnational control of racialized populations. The urban working-class, immigrants, Indigenous persons, as well as the populations in India and Puerto Rico, as well as other countries in the Global South, were perceived as ignorant or incapable of self-control when it came to sex and limiting fertility. Thus, neo-Malthusians felt it was their responsibility to limit the fertility of such populations before they grew so large that they would overtake the White, middle and upper classes across the globe.<sup>3</sup>

The neo-Malthusian concern of population explosion and the eugenicists' concern over the breed of humankind illustrate what Angus McLaren explains as eugenicists perceived as their right to control fertility and the populations, or to "police pregnancies."<sup>4</sup> He states that all reproductive issue activist groups "share[d] the assumption that they had the right to police pregnancies and impose on women their particular model of the family."<sup>5</sup> In other words, reproductive issue activism emerged from political beliefs, such as neo-Malthusianism and eugenics, that supported limiting the population of specific non-White, less affluent demographics. Therefore, activism around birth control and abortion, across the twentieth century, was always more deeply motivated by more than women's personal right to control their fertility, and it may be said, therefore, that reproductive activism was

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<sup>3</sup> Johanna Schoen, "Taking Foam Powder and Jellies to the Natives: Family Planning Goes Abroad," in *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 197-240; Karen Stote, "The Coercive Sterilization of Aboriginal Women in Canada," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* vol. 36 no. 3 (2012), 117-150.

<sup>4</sup> Angus McLaren, "Policing Pregnancies: Sexuality and the Family, 1900-1940," *The Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* vol. 6 no.3 (1992)," 17.

<sup>5</sup> McLaren, "Policing Pregnancies," 17.



historically rooted in who is, and who is *not*, monitored to participate in sexual activity outside of White heteronormative unions.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the concerns of limiting fertility across the twentieth century significantly revolved around race and Whiteness, in particular. The idea of Whiteness as “respectable” and “superior” permeates across the twentieth century reproductive issue activism, expressed through the voices of eugenicists, neo-Malthusianists, and the decriminalization of birth control. Scholar Dorothy Roberts examines the links of race and reproduction in her book *Killing the Black Body*. She states, “White, childbearing is generally thought to be a beneficial activity: it brings personal joy and allows the nation to flourish. Black reproduction, on the other hand, is treated as a form of degeneracy.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, as Roberts explains, reproduction is discussed in terms of how it may increase the “superior” White race while attempting to decrease the populations of “inferior” races.

The promotion of “superior” or “respectable” Whiteness is also seen through the fears of “race suicide” in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century eugenicists and neo-Malthusianists. Historian Dianne Dodd explains that “race suicide,” or the argument that if White Anglophone women used birth control to limit their fertility then the Francophone race would eventually take over Canada, was used to advocate against the decriminalization of birth control in the late 1930s birth control movements.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, she outlines the racialization of working class Canadians, who were cast as inferior and less

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<sup>6</sup> Margrit Eichler, “Grasping the Ungraspable: Socio-Legal Definitions of the Family in the Context of Sexuality,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* vol. 6 no. 3 (1992), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* vol. 16 no. 32 (November, 1983), 411.

respectable citizens whose fertility should be limited so not to taint the White race.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, Whiteness, classified as “superior” and “respectable,” not only had to be protected through the control of Black and Indigenous reproduction, but of the inferior White (working class and Francophone Canadians) reproduction as well.

The “superiority” and “respectability” of Whiteness is also present in the calls to decriminalize birth control in Canada during the late 1960s as well as the reproductive rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The neo-Malthusianists of the early twentieth centuries were worried about “race suicide” if birth control was decriminalized. However, by the 1960s neo-Malthusianists called for the decriminalization of birth control in order to protect “superior” and “respectable” Whiteness by providing birth control to “over-populated” foreign countries and Canadian indigenous populations. For example, historian Christabelle Sethna outlines the racism of neo-Malthusian motivations behind particular politicians support for the decriminalization of birth control in 1968 and 1969. She explains, “disparate interests—from family planners to politicians, physicians and social justice organizations—used the threat of a global population explosion as one of the main justifications for the 1969 revisions to Canada’s birth control legislation.”<sup>10</sup>

Following suit, it is possible, too, that the reproductive rights movement, seen as led by White women made the decriminalization of birth control more palatable to the general public? Roberts has outlined the ways in which the call for individual reproductive rights primarily serves the interest of White women: “The dominant notion of reproductive liberty is flawed in several ways. It is limited by the liberal ideals of individual autonomy and freedom from government interference; it is primarily concerned with the interests of white,

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<sup>9</sup> Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial,” 411.

<sup>10</sup> Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*,” 99.

middle-class women; and it is focused on the right to abortion.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, while the decriminalization of birth control increased legal access to abortion the racial and class barriers of accessing birth control and abortion services, such as lack of transportation or the inability to take time off work, remained.

In Calgary and Lethbridge Alberta, student activists also fought against reproductive oppression in the midst of the global and national movements for reproductive rights, population control, and eugenics activism. From 1960 to 1969 students in Alberta advocated for the decriminalization of birth control so that they could become sexually free from unwanted, pre-marital pregnancy. In 1969 birth control, homosexuality, and abortion (removed from Canada’s Criminal Code yet regulated by Therapeutic Abortion Committees) were decriminalized in Canada. Thereafter, students activism against reproductive oppression re-focused on accessible birth control and abortion (apart from Therapeutic Abortion Committees), greater sexual liberation, and gaining campus daycare services, to name a few. Thus, the activism occurring in Calgary and Lethbridge was part of larger national social reform movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Compared to the larger urban-centres of Toronto and Vancouver (two cities featured prominently in the history of feminist reproductive rights activism) Calgary’s and Lethbridge’s urban populations were smaller. Calgary’s population was 249,641 people in 1961 and 469,917 in 1976, and Lethbridge’s population of 35,454 people in 1961 and 46,752 in 1976.<sup>12</sup> The smaller local populations often presented a problem in mobilizing specific activist groups causing student activists to ally across causes on and off campus to guarantee

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<sup>11</sup> Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> “Table 6: Population by census subdivisions, 1901-1961,” (*1961 Census of Canada Volume I: Population*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1963), 6.77-6.83; “Table 3: Population for census divisions and subdivisions, 1971 and 1976,” (*1976 Census of Canada Volume I: Population, Geographic Distributions*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1977), 3.40–3.43.

greater visibility. Increased visibility was significant to the student activists' consciousness-raising efforts, which was discernibly more successful with greater numbers of activists. In this thesis I examine student activism between 1960 and 1979 to track the activity leading up to decriminalization of birth control, homosexuality, and abortion (under the regulation of Therapeutic Abortion Committees) as well as the evolution of activism shifted towards the full decriminalization of abortion (free of Therapeutic Abortion Committees), consciousness-raising, education, and accessible reproductive and sexual health services following decriminalization into the 1970s.

My purpose in writing this thesis is twofold: First, to address a gap in the national narratives of the history of student and reproductive rights activism by illuminating the unique character of regional student activism throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Second, to highlight the multi-faceted and intersectional activism against reproductive oppression as represented in Southern Alberta campus newspapers and the memories of the five narrators I interviewed.

I propose a shift in the historiographical and methodological approach to the Canadian and Albertan histories of reproductive rights and oppression in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as well as redress of the historiography of regional student activism in the 1960s and 1970s. I challenge the previous periodization of feminist and student activism, allowing for greater overlap and inclusivity across various causes, movements, and issues. Moreover, I call upon the individual experiences of activists captured in oral history interviews to shift the narratives about activism in 1960s and 1970s Calgary and Lethbridge. The memories of the oral history narrators affirm my argument that activists in Southern Alberta are diverse; that coalitions were essential to mobilization and success in smaller regional centres of

Lethbridge and Calgary. Therefore, I expose thriving activist communities built on cooperation and coalitions in a region otherwise defined by overwhelming conservatism.<sup>13</sup>

Because the central purpose of this thesis is to challenge previous historiographies on this topic, the sources including the oral history interviews here are used to illustrate and support my proposed shifts in the conceptualization of the histories of student activism, activism in Alberta, and reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta. Thus, this thesis weaves the history of student activism against reproductive oppression within my calls for historiographical shifts, rather than providing an in depth history of the oral history narrators' experiences as activists, or activism and activist events as outlined in the student newspapers. The historiographical focus of this thesis represents a starting point from which I, and other historians, are able to delve deeper in to the histories of activism against reproductive oppression in Southern Alberta.

### **The History of Access to, and Activism for, Birth Control and Abortion in Canada**

During the 1960s married women seeking family limitation, neo-Malthusians, eugenicists, and students seeking sexual freedom all adopted what Margrit Eichler terms the contraceptive mentality, wherein increased easy access to pharmaceutical solutions separated sex from procreation.<sup>14</sup> As Arlene Tigar McLaren and Angus McLaren have shown, many medical professionals risked persecution to provide contraception to women from the 1930s to the 1960s.<sup>15</sup> The majority of women, or couples, who received this help, were married and

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<sup>13</sup> Doreen Barrie, *The Other Alberta: Decoding a Political Enigma*, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2006); Lois Harder, *State of Struggle: Feminism and Politics in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Margrit Eichler, "Grasping the Ungraspable: Socio-Legal Definitions of the Family in the Context of Sexuality," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* vol. 6 no. 3 (1992), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics Contraception and Abortion in Canada 1880-1980*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 41-42.

already had children.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in the twentieth century, family limitation was one aspect of the contraceptive mentality. Nonetheless, many of the medical professionals who provided contraception and advocated for decriminalization were also influenced by neo-Malthusian and eugenic<sup>17</sup> fears of “race suicide” nurtured by anxiety about the decline of society whereby the working class and immigrants would over-populate the nation unless access to birth control was improved.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, eugenics and neo-Malthusian practices contributed to the support for the sterilization of Indigenous women and girls, which was frequently coerced or done without consent.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the contraceptive mentality as interpreted by eugenicists and neo-Malthusians was explicit in the call for state control over who could, and could not, or who should, and should not, procreate.

In the 1960s and 1970s student activists in Canada used radical methods, such as civil disobedience, to fight for legal access to birth control and abortion, and as such, their sexual freedom. Canadian college and university students in the 1960s advocated for contraception, accessible to all, married or unmarried, as necessary for sexual freedom.<sup>20</sup> For example, Christabelle Sethna discusses the student activist initiated McGill *Birth Control Handbook* (hereafter the *Handbook*) and student activism for the decriminalization of birth control in Canada. Sethna highlights that McGill student activists involved with the creation, publication, and distribution of the *Handbook* (1968-1974) were aware of the significant repercussions of their civil disobedience. However, she argues that the dedication to legal

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<sup>16</sup> McLaren and Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 42.

<sup>17</sup> I will discuss the terms “neo-Malthusian” and “eugenics” at greater length in chapter one.

<sup>18</sup> McLaren, “Policing Pregnancies;” Angus McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920,” *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 3 (1978); and Diane Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement: Two Approaches to the Dissemination of Contraceptive Technology,” *Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science Technology and Medicine* vol. 9 no. 1 (1985).

<sup>19</sup> Stote, “The Coercive Sterilization of Aboriginal Women in Canada,” 117-150.

<sup>20</sup> Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*,” 89-119.

and accessible birth control and sexual liberation from unwanted pregnancy overcame the fear of persecution.<sup>21</sup> The contraceptive mentality in this context did not revolve around family limitation but around one's ability to prevent unwanted pregnancies and, as a result, to avoid unwanted marriage.<sup>22</sup> Student activists also invented distinct organizational strategies in their fight against reproductive oppression. For example, in 1968 members of the McGill Students' Union drafted, edited, published, and subsequently widely distributed the *Handbook* at a time when the distribution of birth control and abortion information was illegal in Canada.<sup>23</sup> Medical professionals transgressed the law more discretely as they, unlike student activists, were protected by the privacy of a medical exam room in consultation with individual patients. Student activists openly risked persecution through public protest, civil disobedience and the distribution of, then illegal, contraceptive information. Therefore, as Sethna has shown, the first edition of the *Handbook* in 1968 represents a watershed of student activist civil disobedience in Canada one year before the decriminalization of birth control and the partial decriminalization of abortion.<sup>24</sup> I will expand on the significance of the *Handbook* and other instances of student activist civil disobedience specific to Calgary and Lethbridge in chapter four.

After considerable lobbying by student activists, women, and eventually by medical practitioners, and in the face of rising publicized instances of civil disobedience, in 1969 Canada's Liberal government decriminalized birth control, homosexuality, and partially decriminalized abortion in the Omnibus Bill C-150. Thereafter the McGill *Birth Control*

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<sup>21</sup> Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*," 81-119.

<sup>22</sup> Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*," 81-119.

<sup>23</sup> McLaren and Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 1-30.

<sup>24</sup> Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*," 81-119.

*Handbook* was legal.<sup>25</sup> In this thesis using the oral histories of five individuals who were active in a range of concerns around the issues of reproductive rights and sexual liberation I highlight how student activism is constituted as a force in Southern Alberta before and after the 1969 Omnibus Bill C-150, which strove for equal access and opportunity for all to engage in sexual activity outside heterosexual unions or marriage. Once the legal rights to birth control and sexuality had been won, activism from 1969 onwards into the early 1970s called for full decriminalization of abortion, better access to birth control and sexual health services and education, sexual liberation, and for more accessible and respectful women's health services, and campus daycare services.

The cross-Canada Abortion Caravan of 1970 is often used by scholars to exemplify the beginnings of post-Bill C-150 student and feminist reproductive rights activism. A multi-generational endeavour, the Abortion Caravan was organized by the Vancouver Women's Caucus (VWC), a student activist initiative at Simon Fraser University.<sup>26</sup> The Abortion Caravan, therefore, exemplifies a coalition of student and feminist activists in the post-

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<sup>25</sup> Doug O'wram, "Youth Radicalism in the Sixties," in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); O'wram, "The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973," in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); O'wram, "Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-1973;" Roberta Lexier, "To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart: The Sixties Student Movements at English-Canadian Universities," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* edited by Campbell, Lara, Dominique Clement, and Gregory S. Kealey, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 82; Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Elaine H. Chalus, "From Friedan to feminism: gender and change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970," in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, eds. Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Christabelle Sethna and Steve Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP," *The Canadian Historical Review* vol. 90 no.3 (September, 2009), 463-495; Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*, (Toronto: Penguin Press, 2005), 35-46; Frances Jane Wasserlein, "'An arrow aimed at the heart': The Vancouver Women's Caucus and the abortion campaign, 1969-1971," (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1990).



decriminalization era. It is significant that a student activist initiative, the VWC, devised and instigated the Abortion Caravan because the Caravan is commonly identified as the “first national action of the women’s movement in Canada.”<sup>27</sup> This highlights that student activism did not end with the so-called “beginning” of feminist and reproductive rights activism in the early 1970s.

Student, feminist, and reproductive rights activism were not limited to large cities such as Vancouver. The reproductive rights activism of students and feminists in Lethbridge and Calgary over the 1960s and 1970s also contributed to the larger national and international movements that changed the lives of all Canadians. Conventional structures of the family were challenged, and the restrictions on, and fears of, sexuality and sexual expression in general, and for women and youth in particular, were eroded. The combined efforts of feminists and student activists across two decades in all regions of Canada resulted in the revolutionary transformation of sexuality and the family.

One of my main goals in this thesis is to contextualize the organized and informal campaigns of student activists fighting reproductive oppression in urban southwestern Alberta in the 1960s and 1970s. I situate this local account within the larger history of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression, as established by scholars such as Angus McLaren, Sethna, and Dianne Dodd – among others. Currently, the literature on reproductive rights activism in Alberta is limited to a very small body of literature, most notably by feminist scholars such as Erika Dyck and Beth Palmer. Therefore, this thesis contributes to this small, yet growing, body of scholarship and knowledge that discuss reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta specifically. Examining the history of student activists fighting reproductive oppression in Lethbridge and Calgary during the 1960s and

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<sup>27</sup> Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses*, 35.

1970s, this thesis adds to existing literature on the history of women and student-led reproductive rights activism in Canada.<sup>28</sup>

### **Canadian Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Oppression: A Literature Review**

The existing literature on reproductive rights and oppression activism is widespread topically and chronologically. My research adds to this literature by focusing on accounts of students' activism recorded in oral histories and in student newspapers in Western Canada during this time period. By including Calgary- and Lethbridge-based student activism my research fills a gap in the historical narrative. To date, the narrative about Alberta's reproductive politics or activism has focused primarily on reproductive oppression and specifically on the eugenics activism of early 20th century feminists such as Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby.<sup>29</sup> Following Dyck, my thesis complicates the history of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta by providing an entangled understanding of reproductive rights, eugenics, population control, and feminism. My survey of the existing historical literature on reproductive rights and oppression in Canada reviews my purpose, motivation, and framework.

#### *Alberta's Absence*

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<sup>28</sup> Erika Dyck, *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Angus McLaren, "Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920," *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 3 (1978); Shannon Lea Stettner, "Women and Abortion in English Canada: Public Debates and Political Participation, 1959--70." York University (Canada), 2011; Beth Palmer, "Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages': Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 92 (December 2011); Erika Dyck, "Sterilization and Birth Control in the Shadow of Eugenics: Married, Middle-Class Women in Alberta, 1930-1960s," *CBMH/BCHM* vol. 31 no. 1 (2014); Claudia Malacrida, *A Special Hell: Institutional Life in Alberta's Eugenic Years*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); McLaren and Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and The State*; Diane Dodd, "The Canadian Birth Control Movement: Two Approaches to the Dissemination of Contraceptive Technology," *Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science Technology and Medicine* Vol. 9 No. 1 (1985); Dodd, "The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial."

<sup>29</sup> Dyck, *Facing Eugenics*, 9, 88.

Activism in the 1960s and 1970s in Calgary and Lethbridge, whether mobilized by student activists, or feminists, feminist students, or all three, is underreported or discussed superficially, if at all, in literature on reproductive rights in Canada. The national narratives concerned with reproductive rights activism focus on the specific urban settings such as Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. Significant monographs such as Nancy Adamson's, Linda Brinskin's, and Margaret McPahil's *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*, and Judy Rebick's *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* neglect activism in Alberta despite their claim of a national scope.

Similarly, McLaren's *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* makes no mention of Alberta in his limited discussion of the Canadian birth control movements. McLaren emphasizes the transnationality of the rhetoric of prominent birth controllers in the twentieth with his examples of Margaret Sanger (United States) and Marie Stopes (Britain).<sup>30</sup> McLaren's article "Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920," however, focuses more specifically on the Canadian struggle to decriminalize birth control and abortion. He argues that "the importance of the evidence that we have garnered is that it reveals, despite the assumption of women's passivity in relation to their fertility, the extraordinary risks they would run to control it."<sup>31</sup> While McLaren highlights not only agency of women, but also the hunger and need for safe reproductive control he regionally focuses on central Canada in his analysis and discussion. Here, too, McLaren's examination of prominent legal cases such as the trial of Dorothea Palmer and the Parents Information Bureau in Ottawa, Ontario from 1936-1937 emphasizes the various, including eugenic, motivations for birth control and reproductive control.

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<sup>30</sup> Angus McLaren, *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1990).

<sup>31</sup> McLaren, "Birth Control and Abortion in Canada," 339-340.

In her various groundbreaking works in co-authorship with Steve Hewitt, Nancy Janovicek, Palmer, and Katrina Ackerman, Sethna expands the historical narratives of abortion activism focusing primarily on Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. For example, her article “Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP”, coauthored with Hewitt, exposes the RCMP's (unsuccessful) infiltration of the Vancouver Women's Caucus and the Abortion Caravan in 1970 to show how the “the gender, race, class, and sexual orientation of the caravaners played into the Mounties' fixed understanding of feminine and unfeminine attire and behaviour, even when those same women were suspected of leftist subversion, thereby giving the caravaners the upper hand.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, Sethna and Hewitt argue that the RCMP officers' pre-conceived notions of women as passive and unthreatening blinded them to the Abortion Caravan's radical plans. In particular Sethna and Hewitt focus on the RCMP's failure to recognize the Abortion Caravan activists' plan to disrupt Parliament because the officers were too distracted by finding Communism in the organization:

While they [RCMP] looked for Communists and bombs, the women's movement was shattering traditional ideas about work, customs, education, sexuality, and the family. ... The caravaners not only got the publicity they were seeking for the abortion issue. They also inadvertently managed to skirt Canada's national police force all the way to the prime minister's residence and to the House of Commons.<sup>33</sup>

Sethna and Hewitt review the unsuccessful attempts of the RCMP to curb radical behaviour in the Vancouver Women's Caucus and the Abortion Caravan, while also highlighting the significant impact these feminist endeavours within the larger national women's liberation movement.

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<sup>32</sup> Christabelle Sethna, and Steve Hewitt, “Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP,” *The Canadian Historical Review* vol. 90 no.3 (September, 2009), 495.

<sup>33</sup> Sethna and Hewitt, “Clandestine Operations,” 495.

Sethna's "Choice Interrupted: Travel and Inequality of Access to Abortion Services since the 1960s" co-authored with Janovicek, Ackerman, and Palmer outlines the history of international and domestic abortion travel, as well as how pro-life and pro-choice activists interact in New Brunswick and British Columbia. They use these histories as a "global reminder that abortion delivered in a safe, legal, and timely fashion is critical to women's reproductive health. Today, worldwide, legal *and* extra-legal barriers continue to compromise access to abortion services."<sup>34</sup> While significant in filling a gap in the historical literature these two co-authored essays focuses mainly on activism in British Columbia, Central Canada, and New Brunswick.

Shannon Stettner paints a fuller characterization of the activists and regions of the national movements.<sup>35</sup> Stettner mentions Alberta infrequently in her 2011 dissertation "Women and Abortion in English Canada: Public Debates and Political Participation, 1959-70," but does productively stray from the trend to emphasize urban activisms of Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. Stettner successfully uses women's political participation and activism with her sources of letter writing to newspaper editorials, *Chatelaine* magazine, and the Commission of the Status of Women. Stettner's emphasis on national media as well as letters to the federal Commission, including letters from Alberta women, unlike others, her scholarship does not overlook Alberta in her analysis.

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<sup>34</sup> Christabelle Sethna, Beth Palmer, Katrina Ackerman, and Nancy Janovicek, "Choice Interrupted: Travel and Inequality of Access to Abortion Services since the 1960s," *Labour/Le Travail*, 71 (Spring 2013), 29.

<sup>35</sup> Shannon Lea Stettner, "Women and Abortion in English Canada: Public Debates and Political Participation, 1959--70." York University (Canada), 2011. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1095710071?accountid=12063>. Also see: Shannon Stettner, "'He is still unwanted': Women's Assertions of Authority over Abortion in Letters to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada," *CBMH/BCHM* Vol. 29 No. 1 (2012); Shannon Stettner, "'We Are Forced to Declare War: Linkages between the 1970 Abortion Caravan and Women's Anti-Vietnam War Activism,'" *Histoire Sociale/Social History* Vol. 46 No. 92 (November 2013).

Why does much of the historical literature primarily focus on the large urban centres of Vancouver, Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal? Where are activists and activism from other cities and provinces in this narrative? Why is Alberta discussed so infrequently, if at all? These are a few of the questions I ponder as I move forward. As Stettner has shown through her use of the Alberta women's letters to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, activism existed in Alberta. So, why is this regional activism not more widely discussed? Does the perception of Alberta as overwhelmingly politically, religiously, and socially conservative have anything to do with this underrepresentation? I explore this question in greater depth in chapter three.

#### *Alberta and Reproductive Rights*

While much of the literature on reproductive rights activism focuses on Vancouver and Central Canada, a small body of literature features feminist and reproductive rights activism in Alberta. Scholars Lois Harder, Palmer, and Dyck respectively discuss Albertan feminist and reproductive rights activism. These authors focus on Alberta and by doing so expand the national narratives of the women's and reproductive rights movements. Harder documents feminism in Alberta from the 1970s to the 1990s, to highlight the activists and the struggles they have faced in the province: "it is the more recent struggles of feminism's second and third waves and the insights these struggles provide into the inter-relationships among economy, state, and society that are the central concern of this book."<sup>36</sup> She describes her project as an, "analysis of feminist struggles in Alberta" for the purpose of disrupting "prevailing views of the consistency of the province's conservatism."<sup>37</sup> Thus, Harder similarly calls for a reevaluation of how and why Alberta is left out of the historical narratives

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<sup>36</sup> Lois Harder, *State of Struggle: Feminism and Politics in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003), ix.

<sup>37</sup> Harder, *State of Struggle*, 1.

of Canadian feminism, breaking away from the myth or commonly held assumption that the province is uniformly conservative. While Harder inserts feminism in Alberta in the national narratives, her discussion on reproductive rights is limited to government financial cuts to reproductive and sexual health services in the 1990s.

Palmer and Dyck both explore reproductive rights in Alberta more deeply in their articles (respectively), “Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages?: Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s” and “Sterilization and Birth Control in the Shadow of Eugenics: Married, Middle-Class Women in Alberta, 1930-1960s.” Palmer hopes her “analysis of the CBCA’s [Calgary Birth Control Association’s] underground actions focusing on immediate needs complicates our understanding of the abortion rights movement in Canada that to date has focused on the strategic attempts in the 1970s and the 1980s to garner attention on the limitations of the abortion law.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Dyck encourages

...us to rethink the connections among contraception and eugenics, and perhaps to look for roots in the 1920s and 1930s rather than to see that period as a distinctly different blend of feminism, contraception, and population control.<sup>39</sup>

As Dyck above indicates, an intergenerational approach to Alberta’s (and Canada’s) history of feminism, eugenics, population control and reproductive rights activism, challenges the prior periodizations. This thesis converses with the work of Palmer and Dyck by investigating student reproductive rights activism in Alberta during the 1960s and 1970s in order to fruitfully expand the historical narratives of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression in Canada. I hope that by including Alberta based student activism in the historical narrative, I can expose a passionate and strong activist presence on campuses in

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<sup>38</sup> Palmer, “Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages?,” 638.

<sup>39</sup> Dyck, “Sterilization and Birth Control in the Shadow of Eugenics,” 183.

Southern Alberta, challenging the assumption that reproductive rights activism did not occur in the province.

*Eugenicist Roots of Alberta*

While a comprehensive understanding of the history of reproductive rights activism within Alberta is currently missing from much of the literature, the provincial history of eugenics and, specifically, the Sexual Sterilization Act (1928-1972) does exist. McLaren's and Tigar-McLaren's *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics Contraception and Abortion in Canada 1880-1980*, mentions Alberta briefly in relation to Eugenics and the Sexual Sterilization Act (SSA): "The decade that saw the passage in Nazi Germany of race laws also witnessed in British Columbia and Alberta the passage of bills permitting the forcible sterilization of the mentality ill and retarded."<sup>40</sup> Douglas Wahlsten's article "Leilani Muir versus the Philosopher King: Eugenics on Trial in Alberta," Claudia Malacrida's recent work *A Special Hell: Institutional Life in Alberta's Eugenic Years*, and Dyck's monograph *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice* exemplify more regionally attuned literature on Alberta's history of eugenics.<sup>41</sup> This particular body of literature is significant as it recognizes Alberta's reproductive oppressive past by actively naming the SSA as the most

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<sup>40</sup> McLaren and Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 83-84.

<sup>41</sup> Also see: Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990); Richard Cairney, "Democracy Was Never Intended for Degenerates: Alberta's Flirtation with Eugenics Comes Back to Haunt It," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 155, no. 6 (1996): 1-4; Timothy Caufield and G. Robertson, "Eugenic Policies in Alberta: From the Systematic to the Systemic?" *Alberta Law Review* 35, no. 1 (1996): 59-79; Terry Chapman, "Early Eugenics Movement in Western Canada," 9-17; Jana Grekul, "The Social Construction of the Feebleminded Threat: Implementation of the Sexual Sterilization Act in Alberta, 1929-1972" (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2002); Gail van Heeswijk, "An Act Respecting Sexual Sterilization?: Reasons for Enacting and Repealing the Act" (MA diss., University of British Columbia, 1994).



active eugenic legislation in Canada. Under the SSA, the Alberta's Provincial Eugenics Board recommended 4725 people for sterilization, 2822 of who were sterilized.<sup>42</sup>

Wahlsten, for example, reviews the salient features of the “legal case and the practices of eugenics in Alberta,”<sup>43</sup> focusing in particular on the historical context and legal case of *Leilani Muir v. Province of Alberta* (1995). He argues, “Biology was an important propaganda device wielded by bombastic politicians and their minions to dehumanize troubled children.”<sup>44</sup> He outlines the historical context of eugenics in Alberta and explains that the “science” behind it was used strategically to influence political legislation in the establishment and continuation of the SSA. Malacrida takes a more analytical approach through her examination of the “philosophical, intellectual, and professional influences that contributed to the idea of “feeble-mindedness” as a biologically-determined category and the acceptability of institutional life and sterilization as meaningful social responses to the problem of mental deficiency.”<sup>45</sup> Further, she re-connects themes of race, class, sex, and education through interviews conveying the perspectives of survivors of Alberta's eugenic institutional life in the twentieth century, and argues that eugenic ideology, or “newgenics,” is alive and well today.<sup>46</sup>

Dyck similarly argues that the end of the SSA was not the end of eugenics in Alberta, or in Canada. She pairs her suggestion that “eugenics as it comingled with notions of virtue that were tied to First-Wave feminist ideals of citizenship” with an assertion of “the bittersweet victory of pro-choice feminists who successfully lobbied for safe access to

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<sup>42</sup> Dyck, *Facing Eugenics*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Douglas Wahlsten, “Leilani Muir versus the Philosopher King: Eugenics on Trial in Alberta,” *Genetica* vol.99 (1997), 185.

<sup>44</sup> Wahlsten, “Leilani Muir and the Philosopher King,” 196.

<sup>45</sup> Malacrida, *A Special Hell*, 29.

<sup>46</sup> Malacrida, *A Special Hell*, 30.

medical abortions but continued to be chastised to contributing to the modern version of race degeneration.”<sup>47</sup> By so doing, Dyck allows for a more intersectional consideration of feminism, eugenics, population control, reproductive oppression, and reproductive rights in twentieth century Canada, and, more specifically, in Alberta. Moreover, in her article “Sterilization and Birth Control in the Shadow of Eugenics” Dyck also considers how women themselves utilized SSA in Alberta by seeking voluntary sterilization during a time when contraceptive methods were still illegal in Canada.<sup>48</sup> Dyck’s works thus revises pre-existing narrative of Alberta’s history of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression because she argues that the oppressive SSA created opportunities to expand some but not all women’s sexual and reproductive liberation during a time when birth control was illegal and largely inaccessible.

Much contemporary literature on Alberta's eugenic history and more specifically the Sex Sterilization Act by scholars such as McLaren, Wahlsten, Dyck, and Malacrida focuses on the early twentieth century history of eugenics. However, Malacrida and Dyck argue that eugenics continued even after the repeal of the SSA and still exists, in more implicit ways, today. My thesis, while acknowledging the earlier focus, does not specifically address eugenics but instead uses the early history of eugenics and Malacrida and Dyck’s assertions of prevailing eugenic attitudes to inform my analysis. I acknowledge that neo-Malthusianism, eugenics, and population control advocacy occurred simultaneously with the fight against reproductive oppression. Indeed, the decriminalization of birth control in Omnibus Bill C-150 was both supported and opposed based on neo-Malthusian and eugenically based fears.

### *Complicating the Narrative*

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<sup>47</sup> Erika Dyck, *Facing Eugenics*, 26.

<sup>48</sup> Dyck, “Sterilization and Birth Control in the Shadow of Eugenics,” 167-168.

Authors prior to Dyck expanded the historical narrative of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression in Canada. McLaren and Dodd recognized the multi-faceted political motivations behind Canada's birth control movements of the twentieth century. In his book, co-authored with Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State* as well as his article "Policing Pregnancies: Sexuality and the Family, 1900-1940", McLaren illuminates how political, medical, and women's advocacy for birth control was motivated and "inextricably entangled in a web of social, sexual, and cultural relationships."<sup>49</sup> Additionally, he argued that the recognition of the multiple political, social, and cultural motivations behind birth control advocacy was "far more than the simple question of family size" and that all types of activists (politicians, physicians, clergy, and women) involved in birth control advocacy felt that they had the right to "police pregnancies"<sup>50</sup> and family structures. Similarly, in "The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937" and "The Canadian Birth Control Movement: Two Approaches to the Dissemination of Contraceptive Technology", Dodd highlights the "mixed motives of birth controllers."<sup>51</sup> She identifies "mixed motives" to describe the combination of eugenics, neo-Malthusian, and women's rights beliefs that informed the 1930s birth control movements in Canada. Moreover, she argues that the call by women's rights activists to control their own fertility was evident in the advocacy campaigns for birth control and that this more complex argument was ultimately "overshadowed by the economic and social arguments of the movement's political

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<sup>49</sup> McLaren and Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> McLaren, "Policing Pregnancies," 17.

<sup>51</sup> Diane Dodd, "The Canadian Birth Control Movement: Two Approaches to the Dissemination of Contraceptive Technology," *Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science Technology and Medicine* Vol. 9 No. 1 (1985), 56.

leaders.”<sup>52</sup> The economic and social arguments, “mixed motives,” and the web of social, sexual, and cultural relationships that McLaren and Dodd signal the co-existence of eugenic and population control arguments that subsumed much of the “authoritative” birth control advocacy during the 1930s and beyond. Both authors highlight how women’s rights arguments were entwined with eugenic- and fear-based arguments of “race suicide” and were further compounded by the social panic expressed and articulated by neo-Malthusians who were preoccupied with what they believed was the excessive fertility of the working class or racialized others. Thus, McLaren and Dodd were the first scholars using a Canadian context to refute the standard narrative of birth control activism as an inherently feminist or exclusively relevant to individual women’s rights.

Other scholars, such as Susanne Klausen, Johanna Schoen, and Karen Stote, further enhance the conventional narrative (and chronologies) around the history of reproductive rights and oppression with their transnational research on eugenics and population control during the era conventionally labeled as the “Second Wave” of feminism. “Second Wave” feminism is a historiographical categorization that these authors associate with Western feminist activism around reproductive freedom and choice rather than with the more oppressive support of eugenics. Klausen exposes the use of racist and eugenic population control by the Apartheid State in South Africa of the 1970s in, ““Reclaiming the White Daughter’s Purity:” Afrikaner Nationalism, Racialized Sexuality, and the 1975 Abortion and Sterilization Act in Apartheid South Africa.”<sup>53</sup> Her research illustrates that eugenics and

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<sup>52</sup> Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* vol. 16 no. 32 (November, 1983), 411.

<sup>53</sup> Susanne Klausen, ““Reclaiming the White Daughter’s Purity’: Afrikaner Nationalism, Racialized Sexuality and the 1975 Abortion and Sterilization Act in Apartheid South Africa,” in special issue on Reproduction, Sex and Power in the *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 22 no. 3 (September 2010).

population control over Black South Africans was thriving in the 1970s, despite the myth that eugenics existed in the first half of the twentieth century and was replaced by calls for sexual and reproductive freedom in the second half. Similarly, Schoen surveys the American promotion of population control in her chapter “Taking Foam Powder and Jellies to the Natives: Family Planning Goes Abroad.” While Klausen highlights South African attempts to control populations within their own country, Schoen illuminates how American governments, medical professionals and researchers, and missionaries attempt to control those citizens considered “other” in nations such as India and Puerto Rico during the 1960s and 1970s. She reveals that this attention to Indian and Puerto Rican populations, in particular, was not gained through women’s call for choice but rather what was considered “the moral duty of a poor country on the verge of a population explosion.”<sup>54</sup> Schoen’s article illustrates that birth control as population control in “developing” countries was encouraged, implemented, and supported by North American activists because of concerns over socio-economic, eugenic, and global population rather than a concern over a woman’s right to choose motherhood.

Notably, however, the North American eugenics and population control activism during the 1960s and 1970s was not exclusive to advocating for controlling the fertility of foreign populations, such as the birth control testing and programs in India and Puerto Rico. Karen Stote highlights evidence of coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Northern Canada from the 1930s to the 1970s, to imply that support for eugenics and population control co-existed with the reproductive rights narratives voiced by “Second Wave” North American feminism. Furthermore, Stote argues that the coercive sterilization of Indigenous

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<sup>54</sup> Johanna Schoen, “Taking Foam Powder and Jellies to the Natives: Family Planning Goes Abroad,” 197-240, in *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005: 218.

women in Canada's North goes beyond reproductive oppression. She argues that these instances of coerced sterilization must be "understood, not as an isolated instance of abuse, but as one of many policies employed to undermine Aboriginal women, to separate Aboriginal peoples from their lands and resources, and to reduce the numbers of those whom the federal government has obligations."<sup>55</sup> In other words, Stote highlights that the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women was part of the broader settler colonialism in Canada and deliberate on the part of the Canadian government's agenda of assimilation from the 1930s to 1970s.

The aforementioned literature complicates the narrative of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression provincially, nationally, and internationally. Dyck, McLaren, and Dodd all illuminate the various political motivations backing advocacy campaigns for access to birth control while Klausen, Schoen, and Stote indicate that a eugenic consciousness in Canada beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stretched well into the 1960s and 1970s on a domestic and international level. These insights inform my discussion of student activism in Lethbridge and Calgary and the transecting histories of reproductive rights, eugenics, and population control in Alberta across the twentieth century.

### **Reproductive Rights and Oppression in Student Newspapers and Oral Histories**

This thesis uses evidence retrieved in Calgary and Lethbridge student newspapers from the 1960s and 1970s as well as oral history interviews created with individuals who were politically active as students in the region during these decades. I examine content from four student newspapers: two student newspapers are from Calgary – the University of Calgary's *The Gauntlet* and Mount Royal Junior College's *The Reflector* – and two student

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<sup>55</sup> Karen Stote, "The Coercive Sterilization of Aboriginal Women in Canada," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* vol. 36 no. 3 (2012), 118.

newspapers from Lethbridge – the University of Lethbridge’s *The Meliorist* and the Lethbridge Junior College’s *The Endeavour*. These newspapers provide insight to what issues, causes, events, and movements were significant on all four campuses across the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, as contemporary historian of student newsprint activism James Pitsula claims, student newspapers provide the opportunity to use sources created by, created for, and distributed to students: “It is fitting that an era that held such high regard for personal authenticity is here interpreted through documents the students themselves produced – articles, editorials, letters to the editors, columns, cartoons, and photos.”<sup>56</sup> Pitsula argues that the student newspaper is an excellent source of activist history because it is produced by and for student activists as an alternative source of information from mainstream and establishment news sources.

While, I agree with Pitsula that the student newspaper is a significant source in the study of *student activism* it is important to note that not all students self identified as activists or felt that the activism expressed in student newspapers represented them. For instance, Larry Hannant describes animosity between *The Gauntlet* and the U of C Student Council. He states, “So the newspaper tended to be the focus of Leftist activism and, on the campus, the student council, interestingly enough, tended to be the focus of budding conservative student politicians whose goal was to go to law school.”<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, in 1967 *The Meliorist* reported on the U of L Student Council’s decision against the “revolutionary calling for the dissemination of information concerning birth control.”<sup>58</sup> Similarly, in 1972 *The Endeavour* reported their disappointment in the LJC Student Council’s decision against sending

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<sup>56</sup> James M. Pitsula, *A New World Dawning: The Sixties at Regina Campus*, (Regina: University of Regina, 2008), 1, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>58</sup> “Council Vetoes Birth Control,” *The Meliorist*, November 23, 1967.

financial support to the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre.<sup>59</sup> The greater conservatism of Student Council as compared to their counterparts at the student newspaper is only one example of how the activism in student newspapers and student activists do not represent the entire student body at U of C, U of L, MRJC, or LJC. Therefore, it is important to note that my use of the terms “student activist” and “student activism” are used in reference to students who identified with, and participated in, activism on campus and off. I do not use “student activists” to refer to all students or the student body at any of the campuses discussed here.

Moreover, while the perspectives of the student newspapers in Calgary and Lethbridge are significant, no collection is without limits.<sup>60</sup> Given missing dates and issues, I necessarily gleaned what I could from the sources. These papers, and the institutions associated with them, were founded in the 1960s and therefore offer student activist concerns mostly from 1967 onward. Thus, *The Gauntlet* alone provides a context for the early to mid-1960s, as it is the sole paper of the four that provides coverage of reproductive issues and sexuality between 1960 and 1965.

Additionally, it is important to consider how the sources used in this thesis may be limited in terms of the analytic categories of race and class. Students’ race or class identity was not tabulated at the time and thus is not available for these decades. Moreover, in terms of statistics on indigenous students’ attendance of post-secondary schools, in particular, there is very little if any information available. Some of the oral history narrators, who I

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<sup>59</sup> “LCC's Students Council refuses clinic's request,” *The Endeavour*, November 9, 1972.

<sup>60</sup> For instance, in the case of *The Reflector*, I only had access to microfilm copies of the paper and, thus, was unable to gain precise dates for some of the articles used. A limit with all of the newspapers was preservation as well as timelines. Some issues of all four papers were missing and, in the case of *The Reflector*, the available issues of the paper were missing entire years – mostly the early years.



discuss below, do refer specifically to race and class distinctions to some extent. However, the questions I asked in the interviews did not explicitly query identity markers such as class and race and, therefore, the responses of my interview participants did not specifically reflect either on their own class or racial status or any “differences” among students or organizational campaigns as categories to theorize or recall the political activism of their younger years. As Elaine Chalus has illustrated in her article “From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970” gender and women’s increasing enrollment in post-secondary institutions during the 1960s have been well researched.<sup>61</sup> Class and race in addition to gender are all categories of analysis that may be usefully enlisted in future research on student activism in Canada.

Despite the limits, student newspapers offer unique perspectives. For instance, the student newspaper staff is, and remains, dynamic. Each September new editors took over the paper with new staff working with them. The frequency of staff and writer rotation within each newspaper (especially in the case of *The Gauntlet* which recruited featured writers as well as regular writing staff) highlights the need to emphasize the variability of perspectives from semester-to-semester, year-to-year. The frequent turn around within each of the papers means the foci varied with the appointment of each new editorial staff. For instance, some years the papers would mainly focus on issues within the university such as budget cuts, other years they would focus on international issues such as Apartheid in South Africa. Thus with each paper, based on changes in staff editorial and writers, a considerable diversity of coverage and perspectives become evident. The variety of perspectives within these student newspapers benefits this analysis as they may better represent the diversity of

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<sup>61</sup> Elaine H. Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970” In *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, edited by Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 140.

student journalists and student newsprint activists in Calgary and Lethbridge. Issues of institutional, local, national, and international importance were covered frequently and focused on student activists' desire for social change over the two decades.

Overall, student newspapers are an exemplary source for the topic of activism because on many campuses and, indeed, communities the student newspaper was a significant expression of student activism. As Pitsula affirms, "Student newspapers are a rich source of information about the sixties because, unlike general circulation newspapers, which serve a broad and diverse audience, they cater to the segment of the population that is most in tune with social and cultural change."<sup>62</sup> He argues that student newspapers actually provide an important perspective into social activism because student papers' target the radical youth of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, many of the narrators I interviewed similarly affirmed that the student newspapers that they worked with provided alternative information. Larry Hannant, for example, remembers *The Gauntlet* being a place where "a lot of the Left gravitated towards ... so the newspaper tended to be the focus of Leftist activism and on the campus." In fact, he explains that writers from the *Calgary Herald* came to *The Gauntlet* to print a story that the city paper's editors deemed too controversial. Thus, the writers, and editorial staff, at the *Calgary Herald* recognized *The Gauntlet* as the activist paper with greater freedom to spread "controversial" news.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Luba Lisun remembers *The Meliorist* being the "major source of information. Alternative information that you weren't reading in the [local] newspaper or on the news."<sup>64</sup> Thus, while limited in many ways as described above, the student newspapers are an ideal reflection of student activism and determine the climate for activism more generally.

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<sup>62</sup> Pitsula, *A New World Dawning*, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Larry Hannant, interview with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>64</sup> Luba Lisun, interview with Karissa Patton, December 1, 2015, transcript.

In addition to using student newspapers to understand the topical issues of concern during the 1960s and '70s, oral history interviews allowed insight into the personal experiences of student activists. I recruited narrators whose names I found in *The Gauntlet*, *The Meliorist*, *The Endeavour*, and *The Reflector*. After locating these narrators I would contact them by telephone, followed by an email with my letter of introduction, consent form, and interview questions. Some people who I contacted were not interested in participation or did not feel that they were the “right fit” for the research. With the narrators who agreed to be interviewed, I conducted eight semi-structured, in-depth interviews<sup>65</sup> between the five narrators and the questions designed and posed investigated seven main themes which reflect the concerns, and potentially the oversights, of this thesis: Activism and Activity; Intergenerational Relationships; General Questions about Birth Control, Abortion, and Reproductive Rights; Population Control; Southern Alberta; Your Opinion on Reproductive Oppression Now; and Activism Stories. Using these themes, a variety of perspectives and memories from the narrators about their experiences of fighting against reproductive oppression in Calgary and Lethbridge were expressed. I interviewed four women and one man who identified as student activists fighting reproductive oppression in Calgary or Lethbridge, Alberta between 1967 and 1978: Judy Burgess, Rita Moir, Luba Lisun, Mary Bochenko, and Larry Hannant. The personal experiences of the narrators, shared in the oral history interviews, are utilized in this thesis to support my contention of expanding and shifting the history about student and feminist activism in Southern Alberta and Canada, as well as the history of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>65</sup> The transcripts for these interviews will be held at the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge Alberta after this thesis is submitted. All of these interviews were conducted with the approval of the University of Lethbridge Human Research Ethics Board.

In response to my questions about their years as students, all of the narrators identified as activists during, as well as after, their time as post-secondary students. Because of the time-restraints for an MA thesis as well as the recruitment methods I used to find narrators, the group of narrators appears quite homogenous. All of the narrators in the thesis sample are White and heterosexual, therefore the experiences of students and activists of colour as well as gay and lesbian students and activists are not represented in the interviews. While the narrators' class was not explicitly asked about, class status was implied by some of the narrators, such as Rita Moir and Mary Bochenko who remember having to work before they could attend the U of L and LJC (respectively) because they had to save enough money to pay for tuition. Additionally, while some narrators remember exact dates of their times as students, others can only recall rough dates and times rather than exact dates. The biographies below introduce the narrators who inform this thesis.

Judy Burgess was born and raised in Calgary but came to Lethbridge as a young nursing student, attending the Galt School of Nursing (c. 1969-1972). She was a nursing student when she established the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre (hereafter LBCIC) in 1972, spear-heading a significant initiative to fight reproductive oppression in Lethbridge. Rita Moir was drawn to Lethbridge from Brandon Manitoba to attend the “radical” University of Lethbridge. Becoming the editor of *The Meliorist*, she was a student activist involved with a variety of causes, and especially with the LBCIC and the Lethbridge Women’s Liberation Group (hereafter LWLG) (c. 1970-1976). Luba Lisun emigrated with her family to Coaldale from England when she was young. When she was ten Lisun and her family moved to Lethbridge where she attended Catholic school. She began her fight against reproductive oppression in Lethbridge during her high school years. She also was a student activist and writer for *The Meliorist* at the University of Lethbridge in the

early 1970s (c. 1971-1975) and was also involved in the LBCIC and the LWLG. Mary Bochenko was born and raised in Picture Butte where her parents, who had emigrated from Ukraine, owned a sugar beet farm. She attended Lethbridge Junior College in the early 1970s (c. 1972-1975) and fought reproductive and women's oppression from her writing position at *The Endeavour* and as a student in the Law Enforcement program. Larry Hannant was born and raised in Calgary where he also attended the University of Calgary. Characterizing himself as a New Left activist Hannant wrote for *The Gauntlet* from the late 1960s to the early 1970s (c. 1968-1974). He was involved with the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist Leninists) and fought reproductive oppression through his own fight against "moral" and social regulations of sex, bodies, and parenthood. These oral history interviews offer personal insights that were useful to my analysis of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression in urban South-western Alberta.

My use of oral histories in this thesis is purposeful as I hope to gain insight into the activists' individual experiences not from a biographical perspective but rather to set their reflections within my larger challenge of how the regional, provincial, and national histories have been told or blind to specific concerns of reproductive justice. Oral historian Linda Shopes states, "Placing extant interviews in the intellectual and social context of their generation allows the researcher to read them more astutely, to understand how the context unavoidably shaped the inquiry."<sup>66</sup> In other words, the understanding and interpretation of oral histories is aided by the inclusion of topical context derived from those who were present at the time of the event. This approach is necessary to consider the intergenerational character of students who were mobilized to be activists against reproductive oppression

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<sup>66</sup> Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 263.

across the 1960s and 1970s. The oral history interviews are complemented by my qualitative, and thematically driven, systematic analysis of student newspapers previously mentioned produced on the four campuses in Calgary and Lethbridge.

While I do not delve into the particulars of oral history theories regarding the fallibility of memory within this thesis, I feel that it is important to acknowledge the value of subjective memory for this research. I use these interviews to gain significant insight into the experiences of students who were politically active. Student activists like my narrators who fought against reproductive oppression in Lethbridge and Calgary, I suggest, helped create the foundation for accessible regional sexual and reproductive health services, as well as reduce social barriers around sexuality, contraception, and abortion. More recording of varied individual accounts of how these changes occurred will substantially revise the historical record by including the specific experience of activists in Southern Alberta. My thesis begins that accounting process. The experiences and memories of the narrators included in this thesis are significant to building this history as their memories recall that they were, indeed, active and activist in Southern Alberta while also highlighting the specific regional circumstances of lack of access or public debates around reproductive justice they faced. Paired with the plentiful, and contextualizing, content from student newspapers, the oral histories I utilized provide a detailed and lively account of students who actively fought reproductive oppression in urban South-western Alberta. Thus, the use of oral histories with these individuals harmonized with relevant articles in the newspapers challenges the gaps left in the existing literature that implies that a range of activism in Alberta did not exist among students.

## **Chapter Outlines:**

The chapters individually expand the historical narrative and understanding of student activism against reproductive oppression in Calgary and Lethbridge during the 1960s and 1970s. In chapter one, I discuss how the use of reproductive justice as an analytic lens expands my discussion beyond reproductive rights activism, the latter conventionally defined in Canada by the decriminalization of birth control or abortion, to include other various activisms. I also define the terminology used throughout this thesis; as well as describe the significance of using “reproductive justice” as a lens to deepen the historical understanding of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta across the twentieth century and to better understand the range of student activism of the 1960s and 1970s, more specifically. Chapter two shifts perspectives on, and understandings of, student activism in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s. I move away from a New Left perspective, which focuses on “the generation gap”, and male dominated student activisms of the 1960s towards a feminist perspective of intergenerational activisms. In doing so, a different version of history where student activism is intergenerational, multi-faceted, and continuous over the 1960s and the 1970s is evident. My third chapter, challenges the representations and perceptions of Alberta as overwhelmingly conservative, and serves to highlight the significant student activism that existed and thrived in the province during the 1960s and 1970s. Chapter four highlights the multi-faceted activisms around sexuality and marriage, birth control, sexual liberation, reproductive rights, women’s health, and daycare.

## **Chapter One: Fighting Reproductive Oppression: Reproductive Justice as an Analytic Lens**

In recognizing the unique history of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression in Alberta during the twentieth century, I am faced with several conceptual challenges around how to describe and define the history and manifestations of student activism against reproductive oppression. To unpack this history I use the concept of reproductive justice as an analytic lens. This chapter outlines how a reproductive justice lens expands discussion beyond reproductive rights activism, a term that is conventionally defined by the decriminalization of birth control or abortion. My conceptualization of reproductive justice includes other various activisms, such as advocacy for sexual liberation and university daycare centres. In this chapter I review the terminology used throughout this thesis; as well as describe the significance of using a reproductive justice lens to better understand the history of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta in the twentieth century and within student activism of the 1960s and 1970s, more specifically.

The definition of terms is needed in order to avoid blanket and essentializing terms. For example, although many of the reproductive rights activists from the 1960s and 1970s self identified as feminist, others did not. McLaren and Dodd established that “birth control as a woman’s right” was only one of many arguments espoused by or adopted by the birth control advocates in the Canadian birth control movement in the late 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Dodd and McLaren recognized that the women’s rights argument was often dismissed or left

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<sup>1</sup> Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* vol. 16 no. 32 (November, 1983), 411-428; Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement: Two Approaches to the Dissemination of Contraceptive Technology,” *Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science Technology and Medicine* vol. 9 no. 1 (1985), 53-66; Angus McLaren, “Policing Pregnancies: Sexuality and the Family, 1900-1940,” *The Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* vol. 6 no. 3 (1992), 117-123.



aside in favour of eugenics and neo-Malthusian arguments in the 1930s Canadian birth control movement. Therefore, I also consider the various interests and motivations behind the advocacy for reproductive rights (or oppression) and the intersectional nature of the histories of reproductive issue activism.

### **“Women’s Rights,” “Women’s Liberation,” & “Feminism”**

Nancy Adamson’s “Feminists, Libbers, Leftists, and Radicals: The Emergence of the Women’s Liberation Movement,” recognizes the differences between the terms, “women’s rights,” “women’s liberation,” and “feminism.” In her article, Adamson describes the three movements that “started” in the 1960s and 1970s to argue that distinction between these three groups, “women’s rights,” “women’s liberation,” and “feminism” are significant.<sup>2</sup> “Women’s rights” activists, as detailed by Adamson, believed that women’s liberty and equality might be achieved through legal and social systems. Alternatively, Adamson describes “women’s liberation” activists as those women who began their activism within the New Left movements but strayed from the New Left when they became disenchanted with women’s roles within the movement. “Women’s liberationists,” like the New Left movements from where they fled, engaged with Marxist theory and believed that women’s oppression could only be stopped through “radical and fundamental change in the structure of society.”<sup>3</sup> The third group of activists who contributed to the ‘60s and ‘70s women’s liberation movement, as detailed by Adamson were “feminists.” According to Adamson, “feminists” focused on conceptions of biological difference rather than structural

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<sup>2</sup> Nancy Adamson, “Feminists, Libbers, Lefties, and Radicals: The Emergence of the Women’s Liberation Movement,” in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 255-256.

<sup>3</sup> Adamson, “Feminists, Libbers, and Lefties,” 255.

environments (as their “women’s liberationist counterparts were) as the root of sexism.<sup>4</sup>

Adamson goes on to state, however, that the term “feminist” was a term applied to different but connected or collective movements of the 1960s and 1970s—meaning that all three groups were enveloped under the umbrella term “feminist”.<sup>5</sup>

My thesis also employs “feminist” or “feminism” as umbrella terms to signify “women’s rights,” “women’s liberation,” and “feminist-based” activisms. I consistently use “feminist” or “feminism” in order to remain true to how most of the interview narrators employ the term—unlike Adamson who distinguished between the three terms, the narrators employ these terms interchangeably with “women’s liberation” and “women’s rights” and use “feminist” to describe themselves using “feminism” to describe the movement they were, and remain, involved with.

Additionally, I use the terms “feminist” and “feminism” to acknowledge the long history of feminist activism as well as the connections between all types of Canadian feminist activisms across the twentieth century. By using the terms “feminist” and “feminism” I am able to complicate, and indeed reject, the strict boundaries assumed to exist between “first” and “Second” Wave feminism in Alberta and Canada—particularly in relation to feminist activisms around reproductive issues. Moreover, as I will discuss in chapter two, in using the terms “feminist” and “feminism” that have been consistent across the twentieth century I am able to recognize and highlight the intergenerational characteristics of feminist activism in Southern Albertan. In doing so, the duration of feminist activism is seen as continuous rather than bounded by generations or Waves.

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<sup>4</sup> Adamson, “Feminists, Libbers, and Lefties,” 255-6.

<sup>5</sup> Adamson, “Feminists, Libbers, and Lefties,” 277.

## Recognizing Intergenerational Activisms By Rejecting the Waves

The history of feminist-led reproductive rights activism in Alberta has generally been understood as two parallel narratives, or “Waves.” The “First Wave” encompassed feminist participation in eugenic and neo-Malthusian ideas of population control that targeted working class, poor, and people of other marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, gay and lesbian persons, and Indigenous persons; whereas the “Second Wave” signaled control over reproduction, and the advocacy for individual women’s right to fertility limitation and to abortion services, all of the latter separated sex from procreative duties for women (assuming heterosexuality).<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, if one understands the political environment in Alberta throughout the twentieth century as advancing rather than contesting oppressive reproductive politics then one’s historical view is limited. Indeed, early twentieth century Alberta’s ruling party, the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), supported socially progressive policies including democratic access to reproductive health services and education; and yet many feminist activists *within* the party simultaneously supported what today we might call “reproductive oppression.” Thus, some feminists in the twentieth century can be described as politically progressive but “morally” conservative. For example, Nellie McClung, the United Farm Women of Alberta, and other “maternal feminists,” while part of this progressive UFA movement, advocated for what we conceive in the contemporary era as oppressive reproductive politics. Most memorably, prominent feminists of this era advocated for

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<sup>6</sup> I elaborate on the assumption of heterosexuality within the contraceptive mentality and reproductive rights activism in Chapter four. See Shulamith Firestone, “The Dialectic of Sex,” in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* ed. Linda Nicholson (New York & London: Routledge, 1997); and Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” in *The Lesbian and gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Alberta's SSA (1928-1972).<sup>7</sup> After the 1930s with the rise of the Social Credit Party, Alberta's political environment moved further to the right. It was well into the so-called "Second Wave" of feminism and the 1960s and '70s reproductive rights movement before the Social Credit party's thirty-six year majority government in Alberta ended in 1975. Moreover, the SSA remained actively in use in Alberta until its repeal in 1972.<sup>8</sup> The history of how the SSA made voluntary sterilization in Canada available before the decriminalization of birth control, and the fact that the SSA was not repealed until well into the feminist reproductive rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s complicates the history of Alberta's reproductive issue activism in the twentieth century by illustrating that reproductive oppressive politics continued into the 1960s and early 1970s, and were not confined to the early twentieth century. Moreover, these two examples show that reproductive rights and reproductive oppression are not always mutually exclusive or decisively bounded within consecutive Waves of feminism. Therefore, the history of reproductive issue activism in Alberta during the twentieth century must be discussed beyond the exclusive frame of "reproductive rights" activism.

While it may appear more efficient to cleave Alberta's complex history of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression into these two Waves, in reality history is not cut and dry. For instance, Alberta's Famous Five, who were supportive of eugenics and reproductive oppression, also paved the way for women's decriminalized access to

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas Wahlsten, "Leilani Muir versus the Philosopher King: Eugenics on Trial in Alberta," *Genetica* vol. 99 (1997), 187; Erika Dyck, *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice*, Toronto: University of Toronto, 2013, 7-11.

<sup>8</sup> Wahlsten, "Leilani Muir versus the Philosopher King."

contraception.<sup>9</sup> As Dyck discusses, voluntary sterilization was made available under Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act (SSA), active from 1928-1972. She encourages "us to rethink the periodization of feminist politics regarding reproductive rights, and to consider deeper roots within the late depression era, Second World War, and postwar periods as leading to a redefinition of feminism and its relationship with contraception in the 1960s."<sup>10</sup> Dyck's revision of the history of the SSA illustrates the problem of using binaries or bounded periodization to define reproductive issue activisms and activists.

If feminist activism in Alberta around reproductive rights and oppression is not limited by binaries, bounded Waves, or categorizations, our understanding of the history becomes more complex. Nancy A. Hewitt argues that the use of the oceanic wave metaphor for the duration of specific periods of feminist activism is limiting. She proposes we discuss feminist activisms and movements beyond the prescribed activities and time frames of each so-called "Wave." She states,

It was not, however, especially deep as we willingly lumped all of our predecessors, the entire sweep of US women's rights activism from the 1840s to 1920, into a single wave. Moreover, despite the fact that many of us took Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger, Sojourner Truth, and other anarchist, socialist, or African American women as role models, we often accepted – and circulated – a tale of First Wave feminism by the seemingly more moderate Seneca-Falls-to-suffrage narrative.<sup>11</sup>

She goes on,

Thus, most US feminists of the 1960s and 1970s embraced an image of the First Wave as one, long, powerful surge, pounding the beachhead of patriarchal politics and slowly wearing away at its most egregious barrier to equality. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, however, with more than three decades of feminist scholarship at our disposal, this definition of the First Wave seems seriously

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<sup>9</sup> Historian Erika Dyck highlights this contradiction in "Sterilization and Birth Control in the Shadow of Eugenics: Married, Middle-Class Women in Alberta, 1930-1960s," *CBMH/BCHM* vol. 31 no. 1 (2014)

<sup>10</sup> Dyck, "Sterilization and Birth Control in the Shadow of Eugenics," 167-168.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy A. Hewitt, "Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor," *Feminist Studies* vol. 38 no.3 (Fall 2012), 659.

flawed. Yet it is impossible to add more waves before 1960 now that the Second is lodged so securely in American imaginations and publications.<sup>12</sup>

Hewitt's rejection of the oceanic wave metaphor to describe shifting views of feminism across the twentieth century and the prescribed "First" and "Second Waves" is useful. Furthermore, the history of feminist reproductive rights activism "in-between" the Waves, such as the 1930s birth control movements, as described by McLaren and Dodd, contests conventional periodization. Therefore, my rejection of the conceptualization of feminist reproductive rights activism as "Waves" expands the designated definitions and durations of feminism, as well as recognizes "grey" areas within Alberta's history of reproductive rights and oppression. Such "grey" areas can be exemplified through the Sexual Sterilization Act and some feminists who supported it creating opportunities for voluntary sterilizations prior to the decriminalization of contraception. Moreover, the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women that continued into the 1970s, well into the so called "Second Wave" of feminism, illuminates reproductive oppression remained during a era that has been confined to reproductive rights.

### **"Neo-Malthusianism" & "Eugenics"**

"Neo-Malthusianism" and "eugenics" ideologically informed reproductive issue activism in the twentieth century were applied to socially control marginal populations, including the working classes, disabled, "deviant," immigrant, Indigenous, and "foreign" populations. Even though "Neo-Malthusian" and "eugenics" advocates, in Canada as elsewhere, may be categorized as part of reproductive issue activism, their objective was to control the reproduction of racialized populations and, therefore, do not fit within the

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<sup>12</sup> Hewitt, "Feminist Frequencies," 659.

definition of “reproductive rights.”<sup>13</sup> For example, many early 20th century Alberta feminists, such as Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby, advocated for eugenics as a way to improve society and the many social problems they encountered.<sup>14</sup> In this case, feminist activism around reproductive issues falls outside the standard definition of “reproductive rights” and implies reproductive oppression instead. “Neo-Malthusianism” and “eugenics” ideologically informed much of the oppressive reproductive issue advocacy throughout the twentieth century in Canada.

“Neo-Malthusianists,” in Canada as elsewhere, prescribed to the notion that the rate at which a population increases should be controlled so that the population does not exceed the resources available in a particular society.<sup>15</sup> In practice this perspective led to the upper and middle classes’ attempt to control persons whom they deemed a threat to the “superiority” and “respectability” to the White race—most consistently the working class, immigrant, and Indigenous families. These upper and middle class views were motivated by fear that the working class, who were believed to be biologically inferior, to the White middle and upper classes, population would take over in numbers and, therefore, eventually degrading the White race. Understanding the politics behind “neo-Malthusianism” is significant in understanding reproductive issue advocacy across the twentieth century because “neo-Malthusian” arguments were used in the early twentieth century birth control movements as well as in the 1950s and ‘60s to advocate for birth control and foreign “population control.”

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<sup>14</sup> Wahlsten, “Leilani Muir versus the Philosopher King,” 187.

<sup>15</sup> Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics Contraception and Abortion in Canada 1880-1980*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 71-91.

Similarly, “eugenics” focused on the control of the population in order to improve the “breed” of human kind. “Eugenics” went hand-in-hand with “neo-Malthusian” fears of “improper” and “uncivilized” populations breaking down society. For example, Dodd outlines the fear of “race suicide” by mainly Anglophone, White men, and some women, during the 1930s. In this context “race suicide” was a belief held by the Ontario Clergy (testifying in trial of Dorothea Palmer and the Parents Information Bureau in Ottawa, Ontario from 1936-1937) that the largely protestant English-Canadians’ use of birth control would result in becoming outnumbered by Catholic French-Canadians.<sup>16</sup> In the 1960s, similar arguments of “race suicide” were used in protest against the decriminalization of birth control and abortion. In 1965 *The Gauntlet* quoted M. Gauthier from Roberval Quebec: “In ten yeas from now, with this system [of decriminalized birth control and abortion], there would be no people left and the Black and Chinese people would come and replace us in Canada.”<sup>17</sup> The blatant racism evident in Gauthier’s statement reflects the fear of White men losing their power to the growing immigrant populations. Thus, in the twentieth century the history of eugenics is often grounded in racist attitudes as well as ideology of race difference and superiority.

“Eugenics” was additionally used as a tool of colonial genocide of Indigenous persons in Canada through coerced sterilizations throughout the 1930-1970s. For instance, Stote calls for a holistic understanding of the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada “not as an isolated instance of abuse, but as one of many policies employed to separate Indigenous peoples from their lands and resources while reducing the numbers of

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<sup>16</sup> Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 16/32 (November, 1983): 411.

<sup>17</sup> Montreal CUP, “Latest Bill May Resolve Contraceptive Controversy,” *The Gauntlet*, January 29, 1965.



those to whom the federal government has obligations.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, she argues that the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women aided in the population control of Indigenous people, which would benefit the colonial motivations of the government by reducing the First Nation population and, therefore, reducing the government’s economic and political responsibility to Indigenous peoples across Canada.

While “neo-Malthusian” or “eugenics” advocacy is not directly applicable in this thesis, understanding the terms, ideologies, and their significance within the history of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta during the twentieth century is important. These ideologies influenced and informed the establishment of the SSA in Alberta, and similar sterilization legislation in British Columbia, as well as the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Northern Canada. Thus, my understanding of oppressive reproductive politics such as “neo-Malthusianism” and “eugenics” is essential in understanding oppressive social and legal practices in Alberta and Canada throughout the twentieth century.

### **“Population Control”**

Social and political support for “population control” was similarly a part of “neo-Malthusian” and “eugenic” rhetoric that sought to control racialized populations as Stote, Wahlsten, Dodd, McLaren, and Doug Owram have effectively shown.<sup>19</sup> However, the

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<sup>18</sup> Karen Stote, “The Coercive Sterilization of Aboriginal Women in Canada,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* vol. 36 no. 3 (2012), 141.

<sup>19</sup> Stote, “The Coercive Sterilization of Aboriginal Women in Canada,” 117-150; Wahlsten, “Leilani Muir versus the Philosopher King,” 185-198; Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937,” 411-428; Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement: Two Approaches to the Dissemination of Contraceptive Technology,” 53-66; Angus McLaren, “Policing Pregnancies,” 117-23; Doug Owram, “Youth Radicalism in the Sixties,” in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 216-218; Doug Owram, “The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973,” in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 280-306; Doug Owram, “Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-

meaning of “population control” changes according to the context in which the term is used. As positioned by the “neo-Malthusians” reproductive control of “foreign” or “Third World” populations by White men is necessary to prevent such populations from growing so rapidly that their population would theoretically surpass available global resources, allowing them to be easily swayed by Communism. Christabelle Sethna describes the early movement: “Internationally, population control experts trained their sights on the so-called Third World. Influenced by the Cold War between the Soviet Bloc and the Western nations, they argued that overpopulated nations could be won over by Communism.”<sup>20</sup>

The meaning of “population control” is also deeply entwined with the push for the decriminalization of birth control and partial decriminalization of abortion in Canada that occurred in 1969. Some politicians, doctors, and birth control advocates continued to advance “population control” rhetoric, in terms of controlling foreign populations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, as historian Christabelle Sethna points out, “disparate interests—from family planners to politicians, physicians and social justice organizations—used the threat of a global population explosion as one of the main justifications for the 1969 revisions to Canada’s birth control legislation.”<sup>21</sup> That being said, the meanings of, and advocacy for population control splintered during the 1970s and some activists began to advocate population control as a global environmental issue. For example, some activists began to reject the “neo-Malthusian” arguments for “population control” and redirected their focus to issues of class, the environment, and women’s health as reasons for population

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1973,” in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 248-279.

<sup>20</sup> Christabelle Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975,” *CBMH/BCHM*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2006), 99-101.

<sup>21</sup> Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*,” 99.

control. Larry Hannant, for instance, explains that by the mid-1970s the New Left began to challenge the “neo-Malthusian” ideology behind population control: “And then I believe it was in the mid-1970s we started to see some Marxist criticism of that the numbers aren’t the issue, it’s more who takes what in the population, the disproportions, the inequality of distribution that is the issue.”<sup>22</sup> Hannant recalls a shift in the way overpopulation was understood, in true Marxist fashion, away from the number of people in a population towards the way wealth is unevenly distributed.

Luba Lisun and Rita Moir remember discussing “population control” as an environmental and women’s health issue. For instance, Lisun recalls “Well it [population control] was something people talked about: Our population and what were we going to do. It was another way to protect us all in the long run in terms of the environment, and your right not to have children, it was certainly something that was talked about.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, Lisun explains that while “population control” was still discussed in the early and mid-1970s the “neo-Malthusian” ideology behind the concept had been replaced with environmental considerations behind North American consumption. Moir explains further,

I’m sure we talked about zero population growth but not, that I recall, as aimed at some other group of people but at just the world population and our own responsibility for how many kids we may or may not have – as a world issue. But I don’t ever remember us having anything to do with zero population group as in those people should have zero population. I think we were more aware at that time – and I could be mixing up decades here – but the fact that the dangerous birth control pills that we were using or IUD’s or whatever were probably being hoisted upon other populations of women in third world countries was discussed.<sup>24</sup>

Moir’s accounts of her involvement in, and concerns about, “population control” focused on the global environmental responsibility and women’s health in the “Third World.” She

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<sup>22</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>23</sup> Luba Lisun, interviewed with Karissa Patton, December 1, 2014, transcript.

<sup>24</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

explains that activist discussions of “population control” that she participated in revolved around personal responsibility to limit one’s fertility to decrease one’s environmental footprint, as well as the significant harm occurring in the Global South to women who were subjected to “population control” efforts, conducted by governmental and medical eugenicist and neo-Malthusianist energies, for example the distribution of unsafe contraceptive options to poorer women in the Global South.

Recognizing the disparate interests of “population control” advocacy is significant to this thesis for two reasons. First, these disparate interests proves that the “eugenics” and “neo-Malthusian” motivations were not limited to the early twentieth century but, in fact persisted into the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. This landscape challenges the notion that only reproductive politics during the “First Wave” of feminism were eugenically based. Secondly, these disparate interests highlight the multi-faceted nature of the “population control” activisms across the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Thus, environmentalism and the women’s health movement were entangled with racism, “eugenics,” and “neo-Malthusianism” rendering “population control” activism as dynamic rather than static.

### **“Reproductive Oppression”**

Many forms of “population control” activisms, “neo-Malthusianism,” and “eugenics,” taken together, enable and enlarge the idea of reproductive issues to be more clearly understood as “reproductive oppression.” “Reproductive oppression” as described by scholar Loretta Ross is the control of people’s bodies through legal, social, or economical means, such as limited or lack of legal rights to have, or not have, children, barriers to reproductive and sex education, and to reproductive and sexual health services.<sup>25</sup> This definition demonstrates that political, economic, and social barriers to sexual and

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<sup>25</sup> Ross, “Understanding Reproductive Justice,” 14.

reproductive health services and education contributed to what “reproductive oppression” means, as well as questions of choice and access.

The application of the term “reproductive oppression” is important to my historicization of Calgary and Lethbridge student activists of the 1960s and 1970s who fought against “neo-Malthusian,” “eugenics,” and “population control.” My use of the phrase “student activism against reproductive oppression” in my title and throughout my thesis acknowledges that the activism of students in Alberta in the 1960s and 1970s cannot be historically understood as solely being about “reproductive rights” or “feminist” activism. Moreover, using the phrase “activism against reproductive oppression” to describe the activism of those Alberta student activists in the 60s and 70s allows me to holistically address activism around sexual liberation, sexuality, birth control, abortion, sex education, campus daycare, and women’s health, as all of these activism push against various forms of “reproductive oppression.” Activism for all of these causes were necessary in fighting reproductive oppression and achieving the social changes they sought for the world. The inclusion of a range of activism is significant in my goal to consider the complicated and intersectional history of Alberta’s history of reproductive rights and reproductive oppression.

### **“Reproductive Rights”**

The term “reproductive rights” is primarily defined as the legal,<sup>26</sup> and often the ethical, rights of individual persons to control their fertility. Scholar Asha Moodley defines the term “reproductive rights” as being concerned with “women’s ability to control what happens to their bodies and their persons through legal and ethical principles which protect

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<sup>26</sup> Loretta Ross, “Understanding Reproductive Justice: Transforming the Pro-Choice Movement,” *Off our Backs* vol. 36 no. 4 (2004), 14.

and enhance their ability to make and implement decisions about their reproduction.”<sup>27</sup>

Following Moodley’s definition, the term “reproductive rights” fails to adequately encompass the many types of movements, activisms, and motivations within reproductive issue advocacy in Alberta across the twentieth century. If the term “reproductive rights” is limited to describing advocacy for legal rights, such as the decriminalization of birth control and abortion, then it cannot be used to describe the various other student activisms involving reproductive issues, such as sex education, sexual liberation, daycare, and women’s health. However, I use the term “reproductive rights” more inclusively to describe advocacy for the decriminalization of birth control and abortion, as well as any other activism involving legal rights around reproduction. In doing so, I am able to include a broader, but still limited, scope of activisms such as women’s right to sexual and reproductive health as covered by health care professionals and systems. By using the term “reproductive rights” this way I must also recognize that, following this definition, much of the reproductive issue activism in Canada and Alberta during the twentieth century does not fall within the category of “reproductive rights” activism.

### **“Reproductive Justice”**

Ross defines “Reproductive justice” as “the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, social and economic well-being of women and girls, based on the full achievement and protection of women’s humans rights.”<sup>28</sup> As both a concept and a movement “reproductive justice” moves beyond the idea of legal and ethical rights of women to limit their fertility, and seeks to make visible the extent of the social barriers women experience around race, class, gender and reproduction. As Scholar Dorothy Roberts says reproductive

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<sup>27</sup> Asha Moodley, “Defining Reproductive Rights,” *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* no. 27 Reproductive Rights Special Issue (1995), 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ross, “Understanding Reproductive Justice,” 14.

justice goes beyond the call of pro-choice and seeks to understand how race and class shapes “the degree of “choice” that women really have.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, she calls to shift our understanding of reproductive liberty as “a matter of social justice, not individual choice.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the key to reproductive justice does not stop at the legal access to birth control and abortion, but requires complete racial and class liberation

It is important to note that the term “reproductive justice” is a relatively new term and was not one used by activists in the 1960s and 1970s to describe their activism. Reproductive justice, as a movement, concept, and analytic category, emerged in the 1990s as a result of the global feminist critiques around the marginalization of “women of colour, poor women, women with disabilities and women from other marginalized communities,”<sup>31</sup> such as Indigenous, lesbian, and immigrant communities, in the 1960s and 1970s reproductive rights movements and beyond. Thus, I use the terms “reproductive rights” and “activism against reproductive oppression” to analyze and describe student activism of the 1960s and 1970s discussed in my thesis rather than “reproductive justice activism,” as the latter did not yet have popular currency.

I do, however, use “reproductive justice” as a lens of analysis in order to deepen my understanding the history of feminist reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta. As Loretta Ross explains, reproductive justice as a lens of inquiry and analysis,

offers a new perspective on reproductive issue advocacy, pointing out that for indigenous women and women of color it is important to fight equally for (1) the right to have a child; (2) the right not to have a child; and (3) the

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<sup>29</sup> Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, (New York: Random House, 1997), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Andrea Smith, “Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice,” *NWSA Journal* vol. 17 no. 1 (Spring, 2005), 199.

right to parent the children we have, as well as to control our birthing options, such as midwifery.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, a reproductive justice lens moves analysis beyond the issues of individual choice and access to recognize that “the ability of any woman to determine her own reproductive destiny is linked directly to the conditions in her community.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, reproductive justice represents more than legal access to birth control and abortion; rather it encompasses community-based concerns such as how access to reproductive and sexual health services, as well as social constructs of parenthood, are affected by race and class. By employing a reproductive justice lens, I am better able to recognize any exclusions, marginalizations, or harm within the rhetoric used by students’ activism against reproductive oppression during the 1960s and 1970s.

My rationale for shifting the focus away from single-issue reproductive activism, such as the decriminalization of abortion is purposeful. My thesis highlights student activists who may have defined themselves as reproductive rights activists but in actuality more broadly fought reproductive oppression. Additionally, Ross argues that there are three aspects to activism against reproductive oppression:

There are three main frameworks for fighting reproductive oppression: **(1) Reproductive Health**, which deals with service delivery, **(2) Reproductive Rights**, which addresses legal issues, and **(3) Reproductive Justice**, which focuses on movement building. Although these frameworks are distinct in their approaches, they work together to provide a comprehensive solution.<sup>34</sup>

Ross’s scholarship shapes my analytic lens so I can expand my mode of inquiry beyond reproductive rights, as exclusively limited by legal accessibility for women.

### **Activism as Multi-Faceted**

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<sup>32</sup> Ross, “Understanding Reproductive Justice,” 14.

<sup>33</sup> Ross, “Understanding Reproductive Justice,” 14.

<sup>34</sup> Ross, “Understanding Reproductive Justice,” 14.



By utilizing Ross' and Roberts' concept of reproductive justice as an analytic lens and by focusing on students' fight against reproductive oppression rather than exclusively reproductive rights, the approach to Alberta's history of reproductive issue activism shifts. Moving forward, I use this analytic lens to better understand the multi-faceted student activism against reproductive oppression. In doing so, I explore student advocacy for sexual liberation, decriminalization of, and access to, birth control and abortion, sex education, daycare services on post-secondary campuses, and women's health, in addition to reproductive rights.

## Chapter Two Shifting Perspectives: Expanding the Historical Understanding of Student Activism in Canada

There is a small body of literature on the history of student activism in Canada; the majority and most significant of the literature is reviewed here. The definition of youth and student activism varies across the literature. For example, Roberta Lexier defines the “student movement” as: “Students mobilized in large numbers in order to exert considerable influence over the discussions taking place on their campuses and spearheaded efforts to transform their institutions.” She analyzes “how and why a student movement gained momentum and influence at English-Canadian universities in the 1960s.”<sup>1</sup> Doug Owram, on the other hand, claims that “youthful radicalism” is a defining characteristic of the 1960s. He argues that the youth “movement” of the 1960s “redefined politics and the way in which generation and ideology interacted.”<sup>2</sup> While Lexier focuses on the student activism around institutional change and Owram focuses on the political activism of youth more broadly. Pitsula defines student and youth activism as an amalgamation of issues, causes, and movements. He discusses various movements and their impact on students including the civil rights movement, Aboriginal rights, women’s liberation, the peace movement, and even Quebec’s Quiet Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The geographical scope of this literature is varied as well. While some scholars who research student activism discuss the entire country (mostly English-Canada) in their work,

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<sup>1</sup> Roberta Lexier, “To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart: The Sixties Student Movements at English-Canadian Universities,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, edited by Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 81.

<sup>2</sup> Doug Owram, “Youth Radicalism in the Sixties,” in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 218.

<sup>3</sup> James M. Pitsula, *A New World Dawning: The Sixties at Regina Campus* (Regina: University of Regina, 2008), 198-239.

such as Doug Owram's *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, Bryan Palmer's *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, and Roberta Lexier's "To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart: The Sixties Student Movements at English-Canadian Universities," other works such as James Pitsula's *New World Dawning: The Sixties at Regina Campus*, Elaine Chalus' "From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970," and Ian Milligan's *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada* restrain their discussion of student activism to specific cities, universities, or issue driven movements.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, much of the preexisting literature is university-specific and founded on, what I interpret as, New Left activism. Most only mention birth control briefly and as one small aspect buried beneath much larger issues of national, provincial, local, and university Politics.<sup>5</sup> Christabelle Sethna's article "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975," alone addresses student reproductive rights activism. Unlike Owram and others cited above, Sethna acknowledges the significance of student presence within community- and campus- based reproductive rights movements during, and

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<sup>4</sup> Owram, "Youth Radicalism in the Sixties," 216-218; Doug Owram, "The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973," in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 280-306; Doug Owram, "Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-1973," in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 248-279; Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Lexier, "To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart;" Pitsula, *New World Dawning*; Elaine H. Chalus, "From Friedan to Feminism: Gender and Change at the University of Alberta, 1960-1970," in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, edited by Catherine A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993); Ian Milligan, *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> In this chapter I make the distinction between "Politics/Political" and "politics/political." I use the capitalized "Politics/Political" to describe the formal legislative and ideological party Politics where members of particular Political parties and ideologies participate. And I use the "politics/political" to describe the informal personal actions and grassroots activism of individual activists and advocacy groups in support of social change within one's daily life.

following, the apparent decline of the student movements. This thesis builds on Sethna's scholarship by focusing on student activism against reproductive oppression in less documented regions and cities including Lethbridge and Calgary across the 1960s and the 1970s.

The histories of student activism during the 1960s and 1970s in Canada is often discussed through a particular narrative that claims that the student movement and student activism in Canada ended in the early 1970s as the activists graduated post-secondary and became adults, and as the movement dispersed into various identity-based interests such as gay rights activism, environmentalism, and feminism.<sup>6</sup> However, does this supposed decline in the Canadian student movement signal the end of student activism? I argue that, in the case of fighting reproductive oppression, student activism continued and flourished into the 1970s even after the decline in the student movement.

Further, the existing literature on the student and youth activism highlights feminist activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s, to represent feminist activism as separate, or a distinct break, from student activism. By discussing student activism generationally and culminatively the literature presents a narrative in which student activism outside of the "long sixties" New Left "student movement" goes unrecognized. I argue that this approach obscures important continuities as well as the intergenerational work of feminist and reproductive rights activists.

While all of the literature I discuss within this chapter significantly expands the small body of literature on Canadian student activism, I exclusively focus on four aspects of the

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<sup>6</sup> Owram, "Youth Radicalism in the Sixties," 216-218; Owram, "The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973," 280-306; Owram, "Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-1973," 248-279; Palmer, *Canada's 1960s*; Lexier, "To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart;" James M. Pitsula, *New World Dawning: The Sixties at Regina Campus* (Regina: University of Regina, 2008); Chalus, "From Friedan to Feminism;" Milligan, *Rebel Youth*.

literature. First, I examine how the literature describes student activism generationally (or, as I conceptualize it, in generational Waves—similar to the way feminism has been divided into Waves). Second, I explore the ways in which the literature dates the end of the student movement in the late 1960s or the early 1970s. Third, I examine the way feminist activism is discussed, and I address the misconception that feminist activism emerged from, and therefore serves to mark the end of, the student movement in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Lastly, I examine how a New Left conceptualization of “the generation gap” has influenced the histories of student activism in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s. I argue that this New Left perspective diverges from feminist recollections from the oral histories created for this research. I argue that a feminist perspective counters with an intergenerational version of activist history. It is important to note, however, that this shift in perspective and understanding is not a rejection of the New Left or of the significant scholarly research discussed in this chapter. Ultimately, I argue that the perspectives present in some of the literature allow for gendered based assumptions about who was, or was not, an activist during these decades, what is personal and what is political, and what was considered an issue within, or outside of, the university. These gendered assumptions limit the discussion of student activism to the long sixties and allow for mostly male-dominated narratives of Political activism, leaving the “personal” or “cultural” activism of women’s liberation, indigenous rights, civil rights, and sexual liberation (to name a few) as adjuncts to the “real” focus of the movement.

### **Generational Waves of Student Activism**

The literature on student activism in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s consistently frames student activism as generational. This generational depiction of activism is problematic and is equivalent to the use of the ocean wave metaphor used to categorize

feminist movements. Like the feminist Waves metaphor, the use of generations in the literature of student and youth activism is limiting. The categorization of activism into generations, or Waves as conceptualized, confines activism into specific boxes of who was a part of such activism, what time period the activism occurred, and the issues that activism addressed. In limiting activism and movements in this way, one's view of the activists, causes, and movements during a specific time or across time is obstructed. Thus, many activists involved in issues and movements outside of the generational limit are left out of that narrative of such time periods and activism. The work of Pitsula, Chalus, and Owrham all rely on an understanding of student activism similar to the oceanic wave metaphor used to describe feminism—the conceive of student activism in generational Waves that begin and end, one overtaking another sequentially.

Thus, I find the discussion of generations of student activism limiting in that much of the literature categorizes and assigns a generational “end” of student activism(s), leaving no room for activism that do not fit within the prescribed generations. For example, Pitsula discusses “the long sixties” at the University of Regina as one generation of activists distinct from the decade/generation of activists that came before them. He claims that youth of the 1950s were “either charmingly wholesome or annoyingly naïve,”<sup>7</sup> while the youth of the 1960s students movement, on the other hand, were known for “rebellious youth, “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll,” hippies, flower children.”<sup>8</sup> While Pitsula recognizes a convergence of social change and issues during the 1960s, his focus on the 1960s and a generation of activism defined by specific characteristics or actions does not allow for any other types of activism during the 1960s, nor any of the categorized 1960s activism to occur outside of the

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<sup>7</sup> Pitsula, *A New World Dawning*, 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Pitsula, *A New World Dawning*, 2.

decade (while also casting a monochromatic view of the concerns and characteristics of students in the 1950s).

While Pitsula discusses the student activism of the 1960s as generation as distinct, Elaine Chalus breaks student activism at the University of Alberta (U of A) in the 1960s into three divisions or generations of the 1960s: the early (1960-1963), mid- (1964-1968), and late (1969-1970). Her description of the early era is similar to Pitsula's separation of the 1950s and 1960s. She explains that despite the increase in women in the workplace and in universities, a rise in the marriage age, and a decrease in the birth rate during these years, the U of A student activists whether male or female in the early 1960s reflected a more traditional stance of society. She states, "The women who entered university in 1960 grew up in the 1950s and had absorbed a set of gender beliefs that were at odds with trends shown by these statistics."<sup>9</sup> In other words, even though these women (and men) were coming of age during a time of societal change their upbringing had rooted them in the 1950s beliefs of neo-Victorian separate spheres ideology.

In her description of the mid- and late 1960s, the categorizations of student activism into generations are more specific than Pitsula's but still limited. She goes on to describe the mid-1960s era as focused on pre-marital sex and free love,<sup>10</sup> whereas the late 1960s is a "transitional period" as feminist activism increased on campus.<sup>11</sup> She describes the three generations and recognizes that each generation builds upon the previous thus, acknowledging gendered changes in activism over time. However, her discussion still specifically uses generations to categorize stages, limiting particular types of activism to very distinct periods of time.

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<sup>9</sup> Chalus, "From Friedan to Feminism," 124.

<sup>10</sup> Chalus, "From Friedan to Feminism," 133.

<sup>11</sup> Chalus, "From Friedan to Feminism," 138-142.

Like Chalus, Doug Owram, in his monograph *Born At The Right Time*, discusses three generations of student activism of the 1960s highlighting the beginning (1960), climax (1965-1968), and the decline (1969-1973) of the “long sixties.” The decline occurred once student activists graduated post-secondary and reached adulthood in the early 1970s. Owram is significantly focused on the concept of generation as one purpose of his study of the 1960s is to investigate the interaction of ideology and generation.<sup>12</sup> Owram’s focus on multiple Waves or generations is evident in the way he divides his chapters on the 1960s. For instance, he focuses three chapters on youth or student activism and confines such activism to specific periods as shown in chapter titles: “Youth Radicalism in the Sixties,” “Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-1973,” and “The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973.” Like Chalus and Pitsula, Owram divides the 1960s into Waves or generations and by doing so limits how the activism achieved by each generation may be discussed. Moreover, his chapter “The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973” illuminates his assertion that the clear end of the “long sixties” was also the end of an era of student and youth radicalism. His choice in chapter titles illuminates a significant link not only between Owram’s work and that of Chalus and Pitsula but also the work of Bryan Palmer, Robert Lexier, and Ian Milligan, all of whom discuss the end of the “long sixties” as the end of student activism therefore, to the exclusion of women’s liberation activism.

### **The End of Student Activism?**

Because this literature on Canadian student activism discusses the student movement and the “long sixties” in term of generations, with limited duration and categorizations, the rise and decline of the so-called student movement is also highlighted. Owram follows this

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<sup>12</sup> Owram, “Youth Radicalism in the Sixties,” in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 218.



trend by claiming that by the mid-1970s “the culture of youthful rebellion and the adult mainstream drew together.”<sup>13</sup> He suggests the decline of the student movement in Canada gave way in the 1970s and was replaced or transposed by other kinds of activism. The emergent 1970s activisms, he argues, shifted away from one’s identity as student towards activism around one’s gendered and sexual identity including “the women’s movement, environmentalism, and gay rights.”<sup>14</sup> These activisms, according to Owram, gain momentum at the end of the 1960s to flourish in the 1970s, signifying the end of the student movement. Bryan Palmer and Chalus also highlight this same periodized move way from the mid-sixties student movement towards the women’s movement by the late 1960s.<sup>15</sup> Historian Roberta Lexier also tracks a declension model fixed across a specific duration of decades when she describes the student movement’s “rise to prominence and its sudden decline” in Canada.<sup>16</sup> She argues that the decline in the student movement occurred quickly over the late sixties “when many activists prioritized particular ideological perspectives and focused on issues external to the university.”<sup>17</sup>

However, were the issues of the women’s movement, environmentalists, and gay rights activists really external to post-secondary institutions as Lexier and Owram imply? My thesis illustrates that student activism against reproductive oppression, while relevant beyond the Southern Alberta campuses, were significantly linked to the politics of student life at the universities and colleges discussed in this research. For example, activism for campus daycare, as a significant step towards equal opportunity for parents to attend post-secondary

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<sup>13</sup> Owram, “The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973,” in *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 305.

<sup>14</sup> Owram, “The End of the Sixties, 1968-1973,” 306.

<sup>15</sup> Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism,” 132; Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s*, 278.

<sup>16</sup> Lexier, “To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart,” 82.

<sup>17</sup> Lexier, “To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart,” 83.

schools, exemplifies activism in the 1970s after the so-called “decline” or “end” of the student movement and is deeply relevant to campus life. Additionally, student activism around birth control education and access is evident on all four campuses I discuss. Birth control activism occurred throughout the mid- to late 1960s and proceeded across the 1970s. These two examples illuminate that the activism of the 1970s were not significant only outside the university and college campuses. Perhaps it is the shift away from prioritizing one’s identity as “student” rather than a shift away from the post-secondary campus that has influenced the historical narratives on student activism in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s?

Thus, as Owram and Lexier implied, does a decline in the student movement towards more identity-focused activism mean that student activism vanished completely? My previous research on the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre<sup>18</sup> (which was established in 1972 and closed in 1978) was an innovative of student activists who were the centre’s largest and, in many ways, strongest realm of support and activism. Therefore, my research highlights the continuity of student activism in alliance with persons beyond the university rather than decline across the 1960s and 1970s.

Furthermore, the supposed move away from activism for institutional change at post-secondary campuses towards more identity-based politics, as evident in the Owram, Palmer, Lexier, Pitsula, and Chalus, allowed student activism to shift beyond the middle-upper class racially exclusive world of post-secondary education. Because the student population of many universities and colleges in the 1960s was predominantly White, middle

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<sup>18</sup> Karissa Patton, “Community, Contraception, and Controversy: A History of the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre in the 1970s,” (Undergraduate Honours Thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2013).

and upper class, activism on campus might be seen as the result of class and racial privilege.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the end of the student movement and the subsequent focus on feminism, environmentalism, and gay and lesbian liberation recognizes that there are injustices in the world beyond institutional hierarchy and *in loco parentis*. Thus, issues of race, class, and gender might be discussed more deeply within and beyond the post-secondary institutions students attended.

My research adds to this existing literature on student activism in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s by contesting this durational, generational, and, what I interpret as a New Left perspective in order to embrace the overlaps in feminist and student activisms and their alliances within the community. Thus, an alternative narrative arises from my stress on inter-generational, identity-based activism that resulted from community/university alliances during the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Feminism Emerging from the New Left**

While all of the scholars discussed mention feminism, at least briefly, Sethna, Chalus, and Lexier in particular discuss feminism as part of the student movement in greater detail, including a discussion of collaboration between feminist and student activists during the 1960s. For example, Sethna discusses the McGill *Birth Control Handbook*'s "significance to both Anglophone and Francophone student and feminist politics as well as to women seeking information about birth control."<sup>20</sup> Chalus focuses on gendered based student newsprint activism at the U of A during the 1960s, specifically examining "conflicting

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<sup>19</sup> Chalus, "From Friedan to Feminism," 124.

<sup>20</sup> Christabelle Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975," *CBMH/BCHM*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2006), 89.

perceptions of gender which permeated the 1960s.”<sup>21</sup> Her work significantly illuminates the presence of gender-based activism in campuses before the supposed decline of the student movement. And similarly, Roberta Lexier discusses feminist activism within the student movement in Canada during the 1960s through her discussion of student activists’ demand for gender equality.<sup>22</sup> While Sethna and Chalus describe feminist activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s as an extension of student activism, Lexier highlights the end of the student movement replaced by feminist activism by the early 1970s.<sup>23</sup> Sethna, Chalus, and Lexier all address the presence of feminist student activism more specifically than do Palmer, Owram, and Milligan. All six mark the end of student movement by the increasing presence of the women’s liberation movement in the early 1970s.

Additionally, much of the literature describes feminism as emerging from the New Left movements. For instance, Chalus asserts that “the first spark of feminism” occurred in the mid-1960s, despite her recognition of discussion that occurred around gender issues at the U of A across the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> Bryan Palmer, Doug Owram, and Ian Milligan recognize the women’s movements of the 1960s and 1970s but discuss it as the Second Wave of feminism that branched off of the early New Left movements. Bryan Palmer claims that by 1967 the New Left broke into “three complicatedly related, albeit often eventually divided, radical trajectories” of Marxism, Left Nationalism, and Feminism, signaling the end of the New Left youth movement.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Owram describes the “emergence” of feminism in the late

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<sup>21</sup> Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism,” 123.

<sup>22</sup> Lexier, “To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart,” 82.

<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that Roberta Lexier earned her PhD under the supervision of Doug Owram and therefore her discussion of the student movement is most likely uniquely shaped both by her own feminism as well as Owram’s view of the “long sixties” and the student movement.

<sup>24</sup> Chalus, “From Friedan to Feminism,” 133.

<sup>25</sup> Palmer, *A New World Dawning*, 278.

1960s as, “the idealism of the baby boom was being turned upon itself.”<sup>26</sup> Owram recognizes the continual youth- and student-based feminist activism: “Still, by 1969, there do seem to have been ongoing, active, youth-based feminist movements in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.”<sup>27</sup> Although Owram briefly acknowledges feminist student activism in the late 1960s he, like Palmer, equates the end of the “long sixties” with the end of student activism and the subsequent “emergence” of the women’s movement.

While Lexier, Palmer, and Owram focus on feminism as emerging from and ending the student activism of the long sixties, Milligan does not include feminist activism in his discussion of the student activism of the 1960s. In his monograph *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers, and New Leftists in English Canada* Milligan briefly discusses feminism and feminist activism as part of the youth labour movement but he does not acknowledge feminist activism or the fight against reproductive oppression as part of student activism during this time. He states,

The rapidly growing universities also saw youth unrest, as students challenged *in loco parentis*, fighting for greater control over their daily lives and involvement in the institution’s ruling structures. Some formed New Leftist organizations, seeking fundamental social change and fighting for participatory democracy, civil rights, university issues, and peace. Although there were certainly distinctions between young workers, students, and New Leftists, they were all active expressions of a broad anti-authoritarian youth culture.<sup>28</sup>

While Milligan’s focuses on the labour movement, this quote illustrates a focus on male student activists and New Left student activism exclusive of feminism and fights against reproductive oppression. His description of student activism during the 1960s does not include women’s rights, the fight to decriminalize birth control, or the sexual revolution, all topics that Owram, Palmer, Pitsula, Sethna, Chalus, and Lexier have recognized as significant

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<sup>26</sup> Owram, “The End of the Sixties,” 278.

<sup>27</sup> Owram, “The End of the Sixties,” 278.

<sup>28</sup> Milligan, *Rebel Youth*, 172.

within the youth and student movements of the 1960s (albeit, some more significantly than others). Furthermore, much of Milligan's discussion of feminist and reproductive rights activism (mainly the Abortion Caravan) can be found in his chapter "Leaving Campus."<sup>29</sup> Thus, he separates feminist and student activism in alignment with the narrative that the women's movement was an outcome of rather than a part of the New Left.

Nancy Adamson develops the history of women in the New Left. While she, like Milligan, Palmer, and Owram, recognizes the feminist flight from the New Left in the mid-late 1960s she also indicates that feminists were but one part of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. She states,

What set these groups apart from earlier organization, and marked the beginning of a new kind of women's organizing, were the decisions to organize autonomously as women and to define the group's issues as the concerns of women as defined by women. These traits were to be the hallmarks of feminist organizing. Collectively called the women's liberation movement, these groups of women were regarded both by themselves and by the media as new phenomena. In fact, they were part of a long history of Canadian women struggling together to change the conditions of their lives.<sup>30</sup>

Adamson significantly points out that, in fact, feminism did not suddenly emerge out of women's disillusionment and flee from the New Left but has existed since suffrage and beyond, thus, also contesting the generation and Wave metaphor.<sup>31</sup> She argues that women in the New Left started Women's Liberation movements and joined other feminist activists in the fight against the patriarchy. However, the women moving away from the New Left were by no means the first or only activists to fight patriarchy and reproductive oppression.

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<sup>29</sup> Milligan, *Rebel Youth*, 116-117.

<sup>30</sup> Nancy Adamson, "Feminists, Libbers, Lefties, and Radicals: The Emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement," in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 252.

<sup>31</sup> Adamson, 253, 256.

The difference between the New Left and feminist perspectives is evident in the oral history interviews. In fact, the differences in perspective are rooted in the historical contexts of the movements themselves. For example, Larry Hannant, who self-identifies as a New Left activist, remembers the perceived end of student activism by 1975. He recalls,

I left the U of C in the Spring of '74 and it was probably less Politically involved and more cultural at that time, alternative music and things like that. And then I started again in University of Waterloo in '75. And interestingly enough by that time, in '75/76, the Student Press Movement they looked at the *Chevron* and campus activism and the University of Waterloo – which was at a very high level at that time – as anomalous, in that by '75/76 many student journalists at least were of the view that that level of student activism was gone. I remember people asking me, “why is Waterloo so active? So Radical?”<sup>32</sup>

His memories outline his own, and broadly defines a, New Left perspective of student activism coming to an end, or already generally over by 1976. However, he also recalls student activism as increasingly cultural and less politically charged, which suggests that the definition of Political/political<sup>33</sup> is another significant difference in the conceptualization of student activism. Larry Hannant’s distinction between Political and cultural activism highlights a significant difference between the feminist philosophy of “the personal is political”.

Like Larry Hannant, Bryan Palmer, Doug Owram, and James Pitsula were youth during the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, they have had specific experiences during the 1960s that shape their own memories and research of that era. That said, I cannot discuss the actual experiences of Palmer, Owram, or Pitsula here but merely recognize that their 1960s and

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<sup>32</sup> Larry Hannant, interview by Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>33</sup> The distinction between “Politics/Political” and “politics/political” is significant. The capitalized “Politics/Political” is used to describe the formal legislative and ideological party Politics in which members of particular Political parties and ideologies participate. The lower case “politics/political” is used to describe the informal personal actions and grassroots activism of individual activists and advocacy groups in support of social change within one’s daily life.

1970s experiences shape their standpoints as historians. However, I purposefully highlight the similarities in Larry Hannant's description and recollections of the New Left activism he was involved with and the way activism is discussed in the work of Pitsula, Owrarn, and Palmer. Christabelle Sethna and Roberta Lexier grew up after the 1970s and all identify as feminists. Therefore, their discussion of the 1960s student activism is shaped through their own feminist standpoints. Recognizing the diverse backgrounds of these scholars highlights the significant standpoints that inform each authors' work. Of course, by living through the activism of the 1960s and 1970s Palmer's, Owrarn's, and Pitsula's perspectives will be shaped by their own experiences of the era. Moreover, Sethna's, Lexier's, and Chalus' own feminism will draw out more feminist history within their work.

It is important to note that I am not rejecting the perspectives of the historians discussed, nor am I suggesting that Hannant's recollections are skewed or false. My goal in this discussion is to point to a dominant New Left perspective, as I have interpreted it, prevailing in the literature; and, in pointing out this perspective I emphasize a different perspective that allows a different comprehension of student activism. History writing is subjective and I shift the focus from a New Left standpoint to a feminist standpoint. The presence of feminism during the 1960s student activism has expanded the historical narrative. My goal is to expose various feminist and reproductive issue activisms in Calgary and Lethbridge across both the 1960s ad 1970s to illustrate that student activism was not limited to the 1960s New Left movements.

### **“The Generation Gap”?**

The oral histories undertaken during this research also illuminate differences between New Left and feminist understandings of the “generation gap.” The memories of Rita Moir and Larry Hannant respectively reveal the important differences between a



feminist and a New Left perception of intergenerational relations. Moir remembers the intergenerational character of feminists with whom she organized,

I think one of your questions had been, you know, age range, and that was what always was so powerful for us, it wasn't all women who were 22 years old who wanted to change the world. There were older women who had been through much more of life than we had and many more battles and around reproductive rights and everything else as well, so it seemed far more the experience of lives of women that they shared with us and gave us courage too, and vice versa. We gave them courage.<sup>34</sup>

Her recollections of mentorship, support, and courage across generations of women vary from those of Hannant's. He recalls a significant generation gap that caused young activists to feel as though they were on their own, especially in Calgary:

So there were precious few people of Left wing activists, the New Left. A precious few people of a generation that we could look to. Now interestingly enough there was the voice of women activists that was there. So we were aware of older women activists but they were more concerned with issues such as peace and things of that kind. So for older people, activists, we didn't have very many sorts of role models, and this started to reinforce this idea of a generation gap.<sup>35</sup>

Interestingly, he remembers older women activists, supporting Moir's remembrance of an intergenerational feminist movement. However, he was not as fortunate as Moir in his participation in the New Left movements, especially in Calgary, where he did not experience the same extent of intergenerational support.

The juxtaposition of intergenerational and generational activism in Moir's and Hannant's recollections (respectively) is significant in understanding why the literature takes a New Left perspective and conceives of the rise and fall of generations of activists rather than student activism as continuous over time. Because Moir and the other student feminists were part of intergenerational groups with mentors to guide them, a feminist perspective offers greater discussion of intergenerational co-operation and activism. A New Left

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<sup>34</sup> Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

<sup>35</sup> Larry Hannant, interview by Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

perspective, on the other hand, more actively constructs the impression of a “generation gap” because, as Hannant’s memories illustrate, fewer mentors (especially in Southern Alberta) created a more isolated youth and student New Left movement. Thus, the historical literature writing from, what I interpret as, a New Left perspective subscribes to the narrative of a generation gap.

### **Conclusion**

By shifting from this New Left perspective of a generational gap rather than intergenerational cooperation, and by examining student activism from a feminist perspective significant goals may be achieved: First, student activism against reproductive oppression is represented as continuous, but not uniform, over the 1960s and 1970s. Second, feminist activism existed across the 1960s and 1970s rather than arose with women’s liberation beginning with the decline of the student activism. Last, student activism was community based and intergenerational rather than occurring in generations (or Waves) or shadowed by a “generation gap.” Student activism against reproductive oppression may be seen as an amalgamation of multi-faceted causes and movements developing across both decades.

**Chapter Three**  
**“The Other Alberta:”**  
**Activist Resistance to Alberta’s Conservatism**

As I have argued, the histories of student, reproductive rights, and women’s liberation activism in Canada overwhelmingly focuses on Central-Canadian student movements in the 1960s and women’s movements of the 1970s. The story of student activism in Alberta against reproductive oppression across the 1960s and 1970s has yet to be told. I have often wondered if this gap exists because of Alberta’s reputation of seemingly all-encompassing political, economical, and social conservatism. This chapter challenges the representations and perceptions of Alberta as overwhelmingly conservative, and highlights the student activism that thrived in the province during the 1960s and 1970s.

To begin, I examine media representations of Alberta’s conservatism and how this representation of the province affected student activism within the province. The oral history narrators’ recollections of conservatism and reproductive oppression present in their cities, province, and campuses were integral to developing their activist consciousness. Lastly, student newspapers are shown to significantly transform these individual instances of personal activist awakenings into collective action. Moreover, student newspapers became a hub of student activism during the 1960s and 1970s to provide alternative and activist information. Four student newspapers are utilized: *The Gauntlet* from 1960 to 1979 (University of Calgary, U of C), *The Reflector* from 1967 to 1979 (Mount Royal Junior College, MRJC), *The Endeavour* from 1965 to 1979 (Lethbridge Junior College, LJC) and *The Meliorist* from 1967 to 1979<sup>1</sup> (University of Lethbridge, U of L) as well as the recollections of five oral

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<sup>1</sup> The dates I have included here reflect the available editions of the student newspapers in the respective campus archives.

history narrators, to better understand student activism against reproductive oppression in Calgary and Lethbridge during the 1960s and 1970s.

The second and third sections of this chapter rely heavily on the recollections of the oral history narrators. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the memories shared in this chapter and thesis are, as Lynn Abrams describes, “as much about the present as the past.” In other words, the nature of oral history and, specifically, the memories of the narrators are subjective.<sup>2</sup> Oral history is about gathering memories and experiences not about gathering data one can quantify into a particular meaning.<sup>3</sup> This is significant in broadening histories in that oral histories are a means to include marginalized historical figures and their experiences. Abrams has argued that memories and subjectivity is important in adding to the histories we study as they offer significant insight into the relationship between “the self and society, between past and present and between individual experience and generalized account.”<sup>4</sup> While I do not delve into the particulars of oral history theory of memory within this chapter I feel that it is important to acknowledge the value of subjective memory for this chapter in particular where the oral histories are predominantly utilized.

### **“The Other Alberta:” Media Representations of Alberta as Politically, Economically, Religiously, and Socially Conservative in the 1960s and 1970s**

Alberta, and Southern Alberta in particular, are understood to be politically, economically, religiously, and socially conservative. This perception of Alberta is not unfounded—the economic, political, and social support in cutting social and reproductive

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<sup>2</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2010), 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> Abrams, 78.

<sup>4</sup> Abrams, 81.

health services, paired with the economic and political reliance on non-renewable resources, such as oil, feeds into the stereotype that the province is overwhelmingly conservative.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the links between religious and social conservatism to the political trajectory within the province demonstrate the significant barriers to reproductive liberation that activists sought to overcome. Many scholars have examined the significant affect religion has on the social, economical, and political conservatism in Alberta. For instance, Clark Banak investigates “the relationship between these religion-based streams of political thought and Alberta’s broader political trajectory in general and its consistent rejection of left-leaning political parties in particular.”<sup>6</sup> He argues that deeper understandings of the religious influence on Alberta’s political leaders from the twentieth century, Henry Wise Wood, William Aberhart, and Ernest Manning, can illuminate the how the right-wing monopoly of Alberta’s legislature sustained itself across the twentieth century. In other words he contends that, “religion’s influence on the province goes much deeper than the occasional instance of socially conservative, pro-family policies that have appeared in contemporary Alberta.”<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, scholars Gloria Filax and Gillian Anderson have studied the relationship between religion and social and political conservatism in Alberta. Although both authors discuss a more contemporary era in Alberta’s history, 1980s to 2000s, their work helps understand how social and political conservatism is linked to the idealized heterosexual nuclear family. Filax’s article “Issues and Agenda: Producing Homophobia in Alberta, Canada in the 1990s” examines the struggles for lesbian and gay rights as it links to Canadian

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<sup>5</sup> Lois Harder, *State of Struggle: Feminism and Politics in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Clark Banak, “Evangelical Christianity and Political Thought in Alberta,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* vol. 48 no. 2 (Spring, 2014), 70.

<sup>7</sup> Banak, “Evangelical Christianity and Political Thought in Alberta,” 72.

Federalism. Moreover, she analyzes how these struggles illustrate the Political discourses of “what constitutes a proper, normal Alberta identity and who rightfully belongs within the Alberta community/mosaic.”<sup>8</sup> She argues that social and political conservatism revolved around the protection and maintenance of the heterosexual nuclear family. She states, “issues such as feminism, environmentalism, Aboriginal rights, and homosexuality are interrelated because, according to the *AR* [*Alberta Report*], they are threats to their concept of the family and society.”<sup>9</sup> Anderson and Langford, similarly discusses the Pro-family movement as a countermovement that vilified feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. They state that the Pro-family movement originated in its “initial phase as an anti-feminist countermovement.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, they describes the national Pro-family organizations, such as Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, Kids First Parent Association, Canadian Family Action Coalition, and the National Foundation for Family Research and Education, as organizationally based in Alberta, many specifically in Calgary.<sup>11</sup> In determining the link between religious, social, and political conservatisms in Alberta they distinguishes between the religious ties of an organization and the use of religious doctrine. Importantly, she argues, “we ascertain that although Christian groups were dominant in 1998, promotion of the heterosexual nuclear family, not doctrinal issues, was fundamental to the movement.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, Anderson and Langford point out that although the Pro-family organizations that opposed feminism and lesbian and gay rights were more focused on preserving the heterosexual nuclear family, than prescribing religious doctrine. Thus,

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<sup>8</sup> Gloria Filax, “Issues and Agenda: Producing Homophobia in Alberta, Canada in the 1990s,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 17 no. 1 (March 2004), 88.

<sup>9</sup> Filax, “Issues and Agenda,” 89.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Anderson and Tom Langford, “Pro-family Organization in Calgary, 1998: Beliefs, Interconnections and Allies,” *CRSA/RCSA* vol. 38 no.1 (2001), 54.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson and Langford, “Pro-family Organization in Calgary, 1998,” 40.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson and Langford, “Pro-family Organization in Calgary, 1998,” 38.

much of the reproductive oppression that activists fought was based in this social and political Pro-family ideology in the province.

However, social and political conservatism brought on by Pro-family religious organizations do not represent all Albertans' religious, social, or political leanings. The history of Albertans who do not agree and, indeed, protest such conservatism, illustrates that the province is not impenetrably conservative. For instance, oral history narrator Rita Moir remembers a variety of perspectives in Southern Alberta: "We were realizing we were in a very conservative milieu but knowing that, there are people who have lived in southern Alberta all their lives, not all of them marched lock-step in a right wing conservative agenda."<sup>13</sup> She recalls the existence of the Southern Albertan conservatism but emphasizes that it was not all encompassing. Similarly, political scientists Lois Harder and Doreen Barrie have challenged the representation of Alberta as completely conservative. Harder's *State of Struggle: Feminism and Politics in Alberta* discusses the contemporary and historical perceptions of Alberta as overwhelmingly conservative:

In the course of my research, a common response to learning that I was writing about feminist organizing in Alberta was, "Well, that should be a short book." The less glib have assumed that I must be writing about the "Famous Five," those remarkable Alberta women who did so much to advance women's voting rights and representation in Parliament and in provincial legislatures during the early part of the twentieth century. Of course, the foundation laid for women's political participation by Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Muir Edwards is certainly present in these pages. Without their work and that of lesser known women, the struggles recounted here would not have been possible. But it is the more recent struggles of feminism's second and third waves and the insights these struggles provide into the inter-relationships among economy, state, and society that are the central concern of this book.<sup>14</sup>

She seeks to disrupt the prevailing narrative of the province's impenetrable conservatism through her discussion of feminism and feminist activism in Alberta from the

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<sup>13</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

<sup>14</sup> Harder, *State of Struggle*, ix.

1970s to the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> Barrie's *The Other Alberta: Decoding a Political Enigma* examines how Alberta's identity of "redneck cowboys" has been "constructed and public opinion sculpted."<sup>16</sup> My thesis highlights those Albertans who do not subscribe to and, in fact, fight against Alberta's conservatism, the Albertans who political scientist Doreen Barrie describes as "The Other Alberta."<sup>17</sup>

The Prairies, Alberta, and Southern Alberta more specifically, have been cast as impenetrably conservative in media representations issued by national press such as *The Globe and Mail*. While much of the coverage of Alberta in *The Globe and Mail* between 1960 and 1979 focuses on economic issues, such as the provincial and federal negotiations around the province's oil resources, and political and social issues, such as Alberta's rejection of the federal move towards bilingualism and one article on the repeal of the Sexual Sterilization Act,<sup>18</sup> a few articles explicitly describe the overall perceptions of Alberta. In 1969, for example, columnist George Bain wrote about the Alberta government's resistance to bilingualism, "Reading the Alberta brief for the upcoming conference, anyone may find the idea creeping over him that Canada has its own Deep South. In our case, it's sort of a Deep

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<sup>15</sup> Harder, *State of Struggle*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Doreen Barrie, *The Other Alberta: Decoding a Political Enigma*, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2006), xiv.

<sup>17</sup> Barrie, *The Other Alberta*.

<sup>18</sup> *The Globe and Mail* published one article on March 3, 1972 covering the new Progressive Conservative government's repeal of the Sexual Sterilization Act in Alberta. However, it was not recognized as a progressive act or celebrated but mentioned casually in a cheeky article on Premier Lougheed's new program list for the province. The article explains in one sentence that the government has repealed the Sexual Sterilization Act and describes the legislation as allowing the government "to sterilize mentally retarded persons." The remainder of the article is spent describing how the plans of Premier Lougheed and his new Progressive Conservative Party are no different than what everyone would have expected from the Alberta government when the Social Credit was in power. "Lougheed's Program Lists few Surprises; Will Drop Sterilization," *the Globe and Mail*, March 3, 1972.



West, and in it Alberta is our approximate Mississippi.”<sup>19</sup> Bain’s perceptions of conservatism in Alberta are evident in his comparison to the Deep South of the United States (US) and, more specifically the state of Mississippi. Utilizing a “hill-billy” or “cowboy” writing style, he continues “Just as the folks in the land of cotton (where dear old hatreds ain’t soon forgotten), the folks in the land of the oil-rig and moo-cow country don’t put a whole lot of stock in legislatin’ things. No, sir. Keep government out of it and we-all will git along just fine – making imperceptible progress, perhaps, but just fine.”<sup>20</sup> Bain’s use of “hill-billy” or “cowboy” colloquial speech and reference to the *laissez faire* attitude in Alberta further reinforces Albertans as conservative, parochial, uneducated, and backward. His article is an extreme example of how Alberta was represented as deeply conservative by the press. Admittedly, not all articles representing this perception of the province do so as forcefully as Bain.

Similar media representations of Alberta are evident in the 1977 four-page spread in *The Globe and Mail*, “Will the Real Alberta Please Stand Up?” by Member of Parliament Douglas Roche. Roche, a Progressive Conservative MP for Edmonton Strathcona at the time, recognized the conservatism of Alberta but tries to paint a picture of “the other Alberta” as well.<sup>21</sup> He wrote,

What fun journalists visiting Alberta have. First a flip through the statistics: the lowest personal income tax rate in Canada, a low gasoline tax, no sales tax, no succession duty, no gift tax. Then they lunch with fast-talking oil executives at the Petroleum Club, hunt down the shops that sell gold-plated bathroom fixtures, and prod taxi drivers into quotable discourses on how Albertans are fed up with Ottawa

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<sup>19</sup> George Bain, “Canada’s Deep West,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 7, 1969.

<sup>20</sup> George Bain, “Canada’s Deep West,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 7, 1969.

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that part of his purpose in writing this article is to gain favour for Alberta and promote their resources, such as oil, ranching, and farming. While Roche’s account as a Progressive Conservative MP from Alberta skews his perceptiveness of his home province, his article demonstrates that a very small part of the Albertan population is actually being represented in the media.

shoving French down their throats. New riches, new power. And a hard edge on everything. That's Alberta today, folks. No wonder it is the most unpopular province in Canada. Just what are the right images for this mixture of 50 ethnic groups in the Rockies and plains and oil fields of the big sky country?<sup>22</sup>

Roche argues that the images of Alberta described in the media represent one small and elite group of the people of Alberta. Roche backs up his criticism of the media representation of Alberta with several quotations from newspaper articles across the country, including:

Outside Red Deer, after lunch in his house, cozy, neat and quite small, a rancher tours me around the countryside. We meet a guy selling tickets to Conservative MP Jack Horner's \$100-a-plate roast. The rancher decides to buy a pair. He pulls out a creased leather wallet and passes over a pair of hundred dollar bills. (They are olive-green, in case you didn't know.) – Richard Gwyn, *Edmonton Journal*, 1977.

To enjoy is to equip a house with, say, seven, or even nine bathrooms, a perhaps Freudian obsession in a society so recently removed from the frontier. Master bathrooms boast his and her tubs, guest rooms rate their own \$3600 tubs, so the domestic help also have their own brushed gold faucets. – Suzanne Zwarun, *Maclean's*, 1977.

The key to understanding Alberta is androgen, the male sex hormone, and the aura it projects, the insecurities it hides, the locker-room mentality it bolsters, explains the new rich kid on the block – the province of cowboys and nouveau rich swagger. – Allan Fotheringham, *MacLean's*, 1976.

They treat women as they would a horse. – Allan Fotheringham, *MacLean's*, 1976.

Money, land, oil, cattle, short hair and short views. Jack Ludwig, *Maclean's*, 1975.<sup>23</sup>

These quotations illuminate several perceptions of Albertans, insinuating that the province and its people, predominantly men, are overwhelmingly rich and frivolous—hidden beneath what sometimes seems to be envy and awe at the wealth in the province. Furthermore, the accounts of the blue denim, masculinity, misogyny, haircuts, and the bad food portray Albertans as uncultured and unfashionable farmers, ranchers, and oil executives who are

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<sup>22</sup> Douglas Roche, "Will the Real Alberta Please Stand Up?," *The Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1977.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas Roche, "Will the Real Alberta Please Stand Up?," *The Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1977.

unenlightened in terms of gender equality. The comment about the “short hair and short views” is especially telling during a decade when the fashion symbol of social change was the “hippies” long hair, suggesting that Albertans were not part of the larger national and international push for social reform.<sup>24</sup> Roche’s use of these quotations highlights his desire to expose the press’ shallow representation of Alberta as overwhelmingly conservative. Moreover, he hopes to represent Alberta and its citizens in a less superficial light, and emphasizes “the Other Alberta” in the remainder of the article.<sup>25</sup>

Like MP Roche, many activists fought for the recognition of “The Other Alberta” and their place within it. Rita Moir, a feminist activist in Lethbridge during the 1970s, explains that she and others represented an activist, left wing, feminist presence within Alberta in spite of these media representations. She remembers “western alienation” as a large factor in her student activism and the student newspaper movement. She remembers that representing Lethbridge and Southern Alberta within the larger student newspaper community as a form of activism:

I think there was always a power struggle between the Western newspapers and the West and the University of Toronto, the bigger power centres, just as there is in any other issue, there was some western alienation. I remember one year we called it the Western Express, a whole bunch of us got on a train and we went, all of us from Lethbridge went up to Edmonton and joined friends there. We got on the train together and we crossed the country with more and more students getting on the train on our way to Toronto and sort of formulating our politics and policies as we went, partying of course.<sup>26</sup>

Moir’s memories of power-struggles between the prairie campuses and campuses in larger centres in Central Canada (around which activists were recognized as legitimate or an authority in national student activist organizations) illustrates the significant impact Alberta’s

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<sup>24</sup>Valerie Steele, “Anti-Fashion: The 1970s,” *Fashion Theory* vol. 1 no.3 (1997), 280.

<sup>25</sup> Douglas Roche, “Will the Real Alberta Please Stand Up?,” *The Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1977.

<sup>26</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

(and often the other prairie provinces’) conservative reputation had on Albertan activists. Her recollections indicate that the exclusion of Albertan student activists from profiles of larger national movements was one consequence of the province’s completely conservative reputation. The actions of the “Western Express,” however, proves that student activists in Alberta were determined not to succumb to these external perceptions; the Albertan student activists equated the activism in other provinces and refuted the provincial reputation as conservative. Moir’s participation in the “Western Express” illustrates her attempt to counter the stereotypes of Alberta and Southern Alberta, as well as demanding her own activism be recognized as legitimate.

Clement Blakeslee’s 1966 article “Alberta – The Not So Quiet Revolution,” in *The Gauntlet*, also reinforces the presence of student and youth activism in Southern Alberta. He emphasizes the determination of these activists to breakdown the real and perceived conservatism in the province. He refers to the youth and student movement as the “not so quiet revolution,” and introduces the implications of religious conservatism when she states, “Of course I’m referring to the revolution fomented by the youthful population. The rigid fundamentalist mentality of the Bible belt will collapse under the weight of the twentieth century. The rural spirit of Alberta’s boondocks represents an unfortunate left-over which is slowing down the revolution – but only slowing it down.”<sup>27</sup> His words enlarge our understanding of the passion and resolve of Southern Albertan student activists. He identifies the religious and social conservatism in the region as a hurdle in the call for social change. But, he is quick to remind her readers that student activism in Southern Alberta is still strong and determined even in the face real or perceived conservatism.

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<sup>27</sup> Clement Blakeslee, “Alberta – The Not So Quiet Revolution,” *The Gauntlet*, October 26, 1966.

While the Southern Alberta region, and more specifically the cities of Calgary and Lethbridge were perceived as overwhelmingly conservative, both cities, as Moir's memories and Blakslsee's article have shown, have a documented history of activism. The media representations of Alberta as completely conservative, which were affirmed by media reports from other provinces and regions, marginalized feminist and student activism in Southern Alberta during the 1960s and 1970s. As Moir remembered, part of the student activism during the 1970s was the fight against invisibility.

The conservatism that did exist in Alberta and Southern Alberta—the same conservatism represented in the media that rendered the term “Albertan Activism” an oxymoron—was a driving force in stimulating activism in Southern Alberta. In other words, the conservatism of the province strengthened the resolve of activists to fight against reproductive oppression. Thus, the political, economic, and social contexts in Alberta and Southern Alberta solidified a regional specificity where fewer numbers and greater opposition led to strong and determined groups of activists. The activism described in this thesis was strengthened by the conservative and oppressive circumstances on campuses, locally, and regionally.

### **Resistance to Conservatism**

The legal and social circumstances, both before and after the 1969 federal decriminalization of birth control and the partial decriminalization of abortion, made it difficult for youth to access birth control and abortion nationally and provincially. Until 1969, women needing access to birth control and abortion relied on finding a sympathetic doctor who would risk persecution to prescribe birth control or perform abortions. However, even after the 1969 decriminalization, accessing birth control and abortion remained difficult. Barriers such as social attitudes around birth control and abortion

remained, particularly for young, unmarried person. Pre-marital sexuality and accessible birth control were issues youth and student activists understood as deeply entwined. The fear of being exposed as sexuality active outside of marriage deterred some students and youth from seeking birth control.<sup>28</sup> Social surveillance presented significant barriers to birth control, abortion, and sex. Student and youth activists rejected this surveillance, awakening the activism against reproductive oppression.

Youth and student activists in Calgary and Lethbridge sought to break down the legal and social barriers that prevented access to birth control, abortion, and that prevented sexual freedom. Their desire for birth control and sexual freedom across the 1960s and 1970s grew into active opposition to political, economic, and social conservatism in their cities and province. Indeed, for many of the narrators who inform this thesis, their activism began as a reaction to such conservatism locally, provincially, and on campus. Oral history narrators' personal experiences informed and ignited their activism against reproductive oppression. The first two sections of this discussion review the experiences of reproductive oppression and activism before and after Bill C-150 in 1969. I explore the legal (pre-Bill C-150) and extra-legal (Post-Bill C-150) barriers students and youth experienced during these times. The third section describes the fall out of such reproductive oppression as incidents of unwanted pregnancy grew across the 1960s and 1970s, illustrating that criminalization was not the only barrier to accessible birth control, abortion, or sexual freedom.

Although the legal barrier to birth control was significant for student and youth's access to birth control in the 1960s, social barriers and surveillance posed a great obstacle and often prevented access to birth control as well. Larry Hannant discussed the barriers he

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<sup>28</sup> Karissa Patton, "Community, Contraception, and Controversy: A History of the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre in the 1970s," (Undergraduate Honours Thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2013), 36-40.

faced in accessing birth control in the 1960s, prior to decriminalization, in the mid- to late 1960s in Calgary. He remembers that pharmaceutical birth control was hard for young women to get and that the most available form of birth control was condoms. However, he remembers that condoms stored behind the counter at that time and, therefore, hard to access for unmarried youth:

And at that time, '68/69, perhaps the main form of birth control people would have had access to would have been condoms. And at the time you had to go to a drug store and those things were behind the counter. So you had to go through the humiliation of asking the druggist for condoms. So condoms were in short supply. It was much easier to get alcohol at age eighteen when the drinking age was twenty-one than it was to get a condom.<sup>29</sup>

He explains that the humiliation created by the social surveillance of youth who had to ask permission to access condoms (and, therefore, essentially ask permission to have sex outside of marriage). This condition often deterred youth from accessing condoms for fear of exposing themselves as sexually active outside of marriage to their communities and families:

It was just one of those things where you weren't supposed to be sexually active, your parents expected you not be, and, I mean, some parents were more tolerant about under-aged drinking and occasional use of marijuana and things like that. But for some of them the sexual taboo was still quite strong so you put it off.<sup>30</sup>

Hannant felt as though his memories of the greater acceptability of underage alcohol and drug use than of pre-marital sex demonstrate the great social barrier to youth's sexual freedom. Hannant's memories illuminate that the expectation of youth to abstain, rooted in Christian ideal of chastity, was reinforced within and outside of the family through parental and medical surveillance of youth's access of birth control.

Moreover, Hannant's experience with familial, medical, and public surveillance of his use of birth control and, therefore, his sexual activity inspired his activism. In particular, he

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<sup>29</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>30</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

describes the necessary evil of deception in order to be sexually-active during the late 1960s and early 1970s: “You don’t want to deceive your parents but the expectation is that you are chaste and therefore you are not engaged in anything, so... You know the inevitable, you’ve got to go around them, you’ve got to deceive them.”<sup>31</sup> His recollections of dealing with family expectations of chastity illuminate his, and others’, desire for sexual freedom that overcame their feeling of loyalty or honesty to their parents and families.

Prior to 1969, the criminalization of birth control and abortion reinforced the social barriers to youth’s sexuality, but after the 1969 decriminalization of birth control and partial decriminalization of abortion, the access to birth control prescriptions was eased across Canada. Rita Moir, Luba Lisun, Mary Bochenko, and Judy Burgess all recall knowing which physicians in Lethbridge were supportive of youth’s access to birth control and sexual freedom. Burgess states, “I had a doctor in the community, and I could satisfy my birth control needs and sexual information needs by going to my physician.”<sup>32</sup> With the decriminalization of birth control doctors became more open and public in their support of women’s rights and accessible birth control. Like Burgess, Moir, Lisun, and Bochenko were able to access birth control easily because they knew which physicians were supportive of, and those not supportive of, birth control and abortion.

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<sup>31</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>32</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 9, 2014, transcript. While Luba Lisun, Rita Moir, Mary Bochenko, and Judy Burgess all knew which doctors were sympathetic and supportive in providing birth control prescriptions and information, it is important to note that this information was easily accessible to these women in particular and not necessarily accessible to all women. These four women were all a part of similar social groups through their education and activism groups and, therefore, could easily share the information on which doctors to go to get birth control. One of the goals in establishing the LBCIC and the Calgary Birth Control Association was to make the list of doctors who were supportive and who would prescribe birth control and abortion referrals available.



However, while the access to birth control legally increased with the support of certain doctors, social and familial expectations and surveillance remained. For example, while Bochenko recalls no problems with doctors in accessing birth control she does remember concealing her use of the Pill from her mother: “my mom didn’t know – that was the biggest barrier.”<sup>33</sup> The social and family expectations around marriage and reproduction inspired Mary Bochenko’s and Luba Lisun’s women’s liberation consciousness and activisms, including their commitment to women’s sexual liberation. Because abstention from sex until marriage was expected, many young women were encouraged to marry young so that they could begin to have children without breaching the “moral” regulations expressed by families and communities. Mary Bochenko remembers her mother wanting her to get married after high school rather than attend university. She recalls, “But my mom was always on my case: Okay, now you’re finished school, now you get married, you have a family... You do all of those things and I was like: I don’t think so. There was this whole world out there that I knew nothing about, right.”<sup>34</sup> Luba Lisun also remembers her family encouraging her to get married. She describes her feelings of resistance, “you just felt like: I’m a girl and I work hard and I should have the same rights and, I shouldn’t be expected to get married. I don’t want to get married. Generally in society and in the world around us, that grew, that attracted me. Just don’t tell me what to do, I’m going to choose.”<sup>35</sup> Bochenko and Lisun express not only their families’ expectations around marriage, reproduction, and sexuality but also their individual instances of resistance to such expectations. Young activists like Bochenko and Lisun refuted family and community, expectations around

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Bochenko, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 27, 2015, transcript.

<sup>34</sup> Mary Bochenko, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 27, 2015, transcript.

<sup>35</sup> Luba Lisun, interviewed with Karissa Patton, December 1, 2014, transcript.

“morality,” marriage, reproduction, and sexuality through their resistance to marry early in order to pursue their own goals outside of marriage and starting a family.

Judy Burgess did not have to push against restrictive “moral” regulations and expectations from her family but from her school. It was her experience with the social barriers and reproductive oppression at the Galt School of Nursing (GSN)<sup>36</sup> in Lethbridge that inspired her to become an activist. Her activism was ignited by the GSN’s strategy of *in loco parentis*—in place of the parent. In her article, “To Struggle Together or to Fracture Apart” historian Roberta Lexier discusses how *in loco parentis* instigated student activists’ protest in the 1960s. Lexier defines *in loco parentis* as a relationship between society, university administration, and students where “administrators regulated both the academic and personal conduct of their students. Rules were therefore put in place covering sexual relations, alcohol consumption, swearing, and smoking.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, Burgess remembers her time at the GSN as one of fighting against the controlling administration and authorities. For example, she faced “very tight curfews and rules and regulations about what we could do and what we couldn’t do.”<sup>38</sup> As she explains her first act of activism began with protesting the school’s curfews. The regulation of students’ time and behaviour through strict curfews and schedules was an attempt by the school to control students’ social and sexual lives inspiring Burgess’ initial resistance to, and activism against, reproductive oppression.

Limited access to education on reproduction, reproductive and sexual health, and birth control and abortion at the GSN also inspired Burgess’ activism. She depicts the lack

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<sup>36</sup> Unlike the other campuses discussed here the GSN was a very small school (of less than thirty students of less in each year) dedicated to nurse training and had no student paper.

<sup>37</sup> Roberta Lexier, “To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart: The Sixties Student Movements at English-Canadian Universities,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* edited by Campbell, Lara, Dominique Clement, and Gregory S. Kealey, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 83.

<sup>38</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 1, 2014, transcript.

of education on these subjects in her nursing classes as “knowledge control.”<sup>39</sup> She explained that reproductive and sexual health were not discussed in classes except perhaps one unit in one class on the reproductive systems. She believed that the lack of information was an attempt to keep reproductive and sexual health information out of the classes and, therefore, out of the community: “And so that’s the knowledge control. That’s the other piece of nursing. You were doing knowledge control and just what they wanted us to know.”<sup>40</sup> She realized that if nursing students were not informed about these topics, then they would not have the tools or information to answer questions or advise people on abortion, birth control, or reproductive and sexual health options. Her experience with “knowledge control” within her nurse training also awakened her passion to change access around sex and birth control education, and inspired her to establish the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre in 1972. Therefore, Burgess’ direct experience with conservatism and reproductive oppression amplified her passion and strengthened her resolve to act.

The narrators remember unwanted pregnancy as one of the many consequences of reproductive oppression during the 1960s and 1970s. Their memories of unwanted pregnancy before and after decriminalization in 1969 illuminate the significance of legal as well as extra-legal reproductive oppressions, to prove that the fight against reproductive oppression did not stop at legal access to birth control. Larry Hannant and Luba Lisun described their memories of unwanted pregnancies during the 1960s and 1970s, reinforcing the social conservatism around pre-marital sexuality and pregnancy.

Larry Hannant’s own experience of “inadvertently fathering a child” in 1969/1970 and his memories of how this event affected his partner of the time reveals the reproductive

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<sup>39</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 1, 2014, transcript.

<sup>40</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 1, 2014, transcript.

oppression that existed. He describes how hard it was on his girlfriend when her parents sent her away to have their baby in secret: “Well, interestingly enough, my girlfriend went to Edmonton for a home for unwed mothers basically. You know, a home for young pregnant women whose families did not want to have the embarrassment of their daughter so evidently pregnant in their midst.”<sup>41</sup> Hannant’s recollections of the shame imposed on his girlfriend and her dispatch to a home for unwed mothers characterizes the environment around teen pregnancy that persisted into the late 1960s and early 1970s. His memories illustrate the magnitude of restrictions placed on youth relative to demands for sex and birth control education and services and highlight one clandestine response to extra-marital pregnancy. His witness of the emotional distress of his girlfriend at the time inspired Hannant to support activism around birth control, abortion, and sexual liberation. Lisun also experienced the consequences of the social and familial barriers and “moral” expectations reflecting on peers’ teenage unwanted pregnancies:

Yeah, the other side of being raised in a Catholic world was that girls got pregnant. And so I would say people I knew got pregnant as teenagers and either went away and had the child or they kept the child. Others got married right after school. I mean we still lived close enough to that period of time that that’s what you did. And it wasn’t until the mid- to late ‘60s that that started to change – thinking about how to deal with that, or how things should change.<sup>42</sup>

Lisun remembers teen pregnancies among her peers and s as a significant part of her young adult life in high school. These experiences inspired her to get involved in reproductive rights activism to advocate for better access to birth control and support for contraceptive mentality during her time at the U of L in the early 1970s.

The narrators’ witness of reproductive oppression amplified their resolve and encouraged their activism in Lethbridge and Calgary. Larry Hannant’s experience of poor

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<sup>41</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>42</sup> Luba Lisun, interviewed with Karissa Patton, December 1, 2014, transcript.

access to birth control and “inadvertently fathering a child” lead to his support of birth control, abortion, and sexual liberation activism. Luba Lisun’s response to family and friend’s unwanted pregnancies and her and Mary Bochenko’s resistance to family and social expectations of marriage, reproduction, and sexuality encouraged them to organize activist groups such as the Lethbridge Women’s Liberation Group (LWLG), the LBCIC, and to encourage the progressive views in campus papers, *The Meliorist*, and *The Endeavour*. Judy Burgess’ protest the GSN’s strict and controlling curfew for students allowed her and other GSN students to regain control of their sexual and social agency. These examples individually highlight resistance to the political and social conservatisms that produced reproductive oppression in Southern Alberta. In other words, their experience of reproductive oppression enticed student activists’ passion and activism, illustrating that the apparent conservatism of Alberta was known for did not prevent activism, but, indeed, encouraged the activism of many students.

### **Newsprint Activism: The Student Newspaper as a Hub of Student Activism**

Student newspapers at the U of C, U of L, MRJC, and LJC became a common place for student activists who sought to fight reproductive oppression and the provincial, regional, local, and campus conservatisms. The student press provided a space where personal activist struggles became collective. Four of the five oral history narrators who inform this thesis worked on student newspapers (the GSN did not have a student newspaper so Judy Burgess was never a part of one) but all five discuss the importance of the student press as a significant hub of activism on campus serving as the alternative source of information in Calgary and Lethbridge (compared to the mainstream newspapers).

In the 1960s and 1970s, all of the post-secondary schools and their corresponding student papers were still quite young. The U of C had separated from the University of

Alberta (U of A) in 1966 after only nineteen years of operation. The U of C student newspaper, a major advocate for separation from the U of A throughout the early and mid 1960s, only began publishing in 1960. The U of C offered the largest range of programs out of the four campuses discussed in this thesis, including Bachelor Degrees in Arts, Science, Fine Arts, Engineering, Commerce, and eventually Nursing. U of C also offered Graduate programs whereas the other post-secondary schools discussed here did not. The U of C's newspaper *The Gauntlet* was established in 1960 and was run independently through the Students' Union. MRJC originated as a bible college in Calgary in 1910, and was once also under the U of A as a Junior College Associate from 1931 to 1966 when MRJC became a public junior college autonomous from the U of A. The MRJC's student newspaper *The Reflector*, established in 1960, was run through the school's journalism program as well as the Student's Union so there was a greater degree of censorship and bureaucracy involved in its publication than its counterparts at the U of C, LJC, and U of L. LJC was established in 1957 and opened as the first public college in Canada. In 1967 its campus and facilities hosted the newly established University of Lethbridge until university separated from the college in 1971/1972. The LJC's student newspaper *The Endeavour* began in 1965. The U of L and its student paper *The Meliorist* are the youngest of the institutions and student press discussed, were both established in 1967.<sup>43</sup>

The student newspapers in Calgary and Lethbridge generated the perfect atmosphere to bring various movements and causes together as well as to provide a space for activists to

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<sup>43</sup> "Historical Highlights," *The University of Calgary*, accessed April 9, 2015. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/about-historical-highlights.html>; "Historical Highlights," *Mount Royal University*, accessed April 9, 2015. <http://www.mtroyal.ca/AboutMountRoyal/FastFacts/History/>; "The University of Lethbridge Timeline," *The University of Lethbridge Archives*, accessed April 9, 2015. <http://www.uleth.ca/lib/archives/timeline/>.

find, and share, their voice within Alberta and across Canada. Rita Moir explains that as the editor of *The Meliorist* in the early 1970s she was “hitchhiking and travelling all over Alberta, Saskatchewan and, we even hitchhiked to Thunder Bay. We were working on women’s papers and labour, student papers, and community-based left wing papers all over.”<sup>44</sup> She described *The Meliorist* as a “very active paper because we were finding our voices as young feminists and activists, and that was our place, one of our places to express that and to try and change society.”<sup>45</sup> Her recollections of *The Meliorist* emphasized the multi-faceted nature of the newspaper, which allowed student activists to learn, research, talk, and write about, as well as fight for social change they strove for in the world. Therefore, the student newspaper was a perfect incubator for student activists to grow individually and to organize collectively with like-minded students who were resisting the conservatisms, patriarchy, and reproductive oppression of Alberta.

Mary Bochenko, Luba Lisun, Larry Hannant, and Rita Moir emphasize their respective student newspapers as a hub of activism on their campuses. For example, Bochenko remembers *The Endeavour* as a place to express herself among peers who were creative and “open-minded.”<sup>46</sup> And Lisun claimed, “there was a legitimate structure to express some of this stuff [women’s and sexual liberation] in terms of *The Meliorist*.”<sup>47</sup> Bochenko and Lisun suggest *The Endeavour* and *The Meliorist* was a space where they could meet with like-minded activists and discuss issues that they were passionate about. Lisun even recognized *The Meliorist* as enabling legitimizing her work as an activist.

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<sup>44</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 9, 2014, transcript.

<sup>45</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 9, 2014, transcript.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Bochenko, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 27, 2015, transcript.

<sup>47</sup> Luba Lisun, interviewed with Karissa Patton, December 1, 2015, transcript.

Hannant recalls that the U of C's *The Gauntlet* represented the New Left and activist presence on campus in the 1960s. Because of *The Gauntlet's* New Left focus in the late 1960s, Hannant believed it was a significant hub of student activism on campus,

the newspaper tended to be the focus of Leftist activism and on the campus the Student Council, interestingly enough, tended to be the focus of budding conservative student politicians whose goal was to go to law school and join the Conservative Party or the Social Credit Party and make their way into the political process.<sup>48</sup>

Hannant also remembers *The Gauntlet* as the main source of activism against conservatism on campus. He explains that the conservatism expressed by Engineering students in particular were quite organized in their resistance to the New Left and women's liberation:

The engineers were particularly organized and they had an active student society. In the late fall of '70 and into '71 we would hold campus meetings on various issues and the engineers, at these meetings they would arrive in force and try to intimidate and push much more right wing view than we were advancing. But *The Gauntlet* reported on this [the Engineering student opposition and disruptions], and that's perhaps one of the reasons why *The Gauntlet* particularly was taking up issues like the Engineers. I mean they, in general, had stuff like the Engineering Queen Contests and stuff like that that seemed to us to be so backward.<sup>49</sup>

Hannant's recollections of the Engineering students expose the politically charged atmosphere of activism and opposition on the U of C campus where *The Gauntlet* was a hub of student activism of many kinds during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Like Hannant's recollection of *The Gauntlet*, Rita Moir's memories illuminate *The Meliorist* as a activist hub on the U of L campus. She explains. "There were a lot of student activists and the newspaper was a student activist newspaper. And so we actively supported places like the Birth Control and Information Centre. That was part of our role as student

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<sup>48</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>49</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.



journalists, to promote progressive causes.”<sup>50</sup> She describes the student newsprint activism, autonomously active as well as integral to various other movements:

Well at the time there was of course a strong university press and college press network, the Canadian University Press, and well it was a movement. There were all sorts of them. There was a labour movement, there was a women’s movement, there was so much going on. It was a time of student uprising. But at the same time we were working at the women’s centre and the birth control information centre and bringing those voices, women’s voices, to whatever venue we could.<sup>51</sup>

Moir demonstrates that the student newsprint activism brought several movements together, to create a larger, broad discourse of social change. Moreover, she emphasizes that she, and other student journalists, saw the support of local causes such as the Birth Control and Information Centre and the Women’s Centre in Lethbridge as part of their political responsibilities as student activists and journalists.

Rita Moir, Luba Lisun, and Larry Hannant also illustrate the importance of the student newspapers as an alternative source of information in Calgary and Lethbridge. Rita Moir, for example, explains the limits of local and national newspapers as “very mainstream and pretty conservative” so *The Meliorist’s* newsprint activism “was our way of launching a counter offensive to that kind of stayed and corporate voice.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Luba Lisun reflects on *The Meliorist’s* impact, “Well and obviously it was *The Meliorist*, and I hadn’t noticed it at the time, but looking back at them now, they were a major source of information.

Alternative information that you weren’t reading in the newspaper or hearing on the news.”<sup>53</sup>

Moir and Lisun’s depicted *The Meliorist* as an alternative source of information and believed that student newsprint activism was fundamental to resisting political and social conservatism in Alberta. By providing alternative information about several causes student

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<sup>50</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2015, transcript.

<sup>51</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 9, 2014, transcript.

<sup>52</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 9, 2014, transcript.

<sup>53</sup> Luba Lisun, interviewed with Karissa Patton, December 1, 2015, transcript.

journalists expanded public discourse on topics such as birth control, abortion, sex education, reproductive rights, and sexual freedom.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps the best example of the student newspaper as an alternative and activist source of information is evident in Hannant's memory of *The Gauntlet's* collaboration with some *Calgary Herald* writers in 1968. He remembers,

There was a big plan on the part of developers to work with the City of Calgary to put in exclusive high-rise housing on the southern border of Prince's Island near the Bow River. And the city's plan was to turn that area over to developers, run freeways separating downtown from this new development. So cut it off essentially and make it into an enclave that better off people would have access to Prince's Island... And so some journalistic activists at the *Calgary Herald*, where several of us had worked, had done some investigation into this and they had wanted to publish this article exposing what being planned and the *Herald* sort of nixed the series actually and said, "we won't publish this." So the *Herald* reporters brought it to us at *The Gauntlet* and we published a special edition of that, which in order to make a sort of a civic – broader than just the campus – we published a bunch of extra copies and six of us at *The Gauntlet* went downtown to the mall and distributed copies of this at the mall.<sup>55</sup>

Hannant's memories of outside journalists publishing a story in *The Gauntlet* that exposed the City of Calgary's class-based oppression emphasizes the student newspapers' significant role in providing alternative information. Moreover, this instance of student newsprint activism demonstrates that student activists, using journalism, allied themselves with local causes, movements, and institutions to create stronger, collaborative efforts in their fight against political and social conservatism and reproductive oppression provincially, regionally, and locally.

## Conclusion

Despite popular representation of Alberta as overwhelmingly conservative, activism existed and flourished in Alberta in the 1960s and 1970s. The conservatism from which

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<sup>54</sup> See Appendix: Student Newspaper Coverage of Reproductive Rights, Abortion, Birth Control, Sex, Sexuality, Youth, and Others in *The Gauntlet*, *The Endeavour*, *The Meliorist*, and *The Reflector*, 1960-1979.

<sup>55</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

these perceptions stemmed was, in large part, the fuel for student activism. Students' experiences with reproductive oppression brought on by social, familial, religious, and political conservatism, encouraged student activism in Southern Alberta. Moreover, student newspapers became significant vehicles for organization as student journalists and activists like Hannant, Moir, Lisun, and Bochenko mobilized the fight against reproductive oppression in Calgary and Lethbridge. The personal resistance to, and the collective newsprint activism against, reproductive oppression demonstrates that the representation of Alberta as completely conservative overlooks a significant evidence of activism in the province. Moreover, the implication that the provincial political, economic, and social conservatism prevented activism is false, as student's experiences with conservatism and reproductive oppression may be seen to have strengthened the resolve of many activists rather than deterring them from their cause.

**Chapter Four**  
**“Nothing just stopped at one issue, we were looking at everything:”**  
**Student Activism as Multi-Faceted, 1965-1979**

In this chapter, I seek to complicate the history of student activism against reproductive oppression by examining how these various activisms interacted with each other. Historian James Pitsula also describes student activism of the 1960s as interwoven. In *A New World Dawning* Pitsula examines the long sixties of student and newsprint activism at the University of Saskatchewan Regina Campus. He describes the movements of the sixties at the Regina Campus as an overlapping fusion of political and cultural activisms:

The movements of the sixties were not just about politics; they were also concerned with values and lifestyles. The sexual revolution, drugs, music, and the counterculture formed the context in which anti-war and liberation struggles were carried on. Critics of the sixties often failed to make distinction between politics and culture; they conflated zonked-out hippies and Marxist revolutionaries. This was an oversimplification. It is possible to separate the strands of the sixties, while acknowledging how tightly they were interwoven.<sup>1</sup>

Pitsula explains how the student activism of the 1960s was much more complex than it is remembered. The activisms occurring at the Regina Campus, much like the student activism against reproductive oppression in Calgary and Lethbridge during the 1960s and 1970s, were not disparate. Rather these movements built upon one another.

In their respective research on the Canadian birth control movement in the 1930s, historians Angus McLaren and Dianne Dodd point to multiple motivations behind birth control advocacy that informed activist strategies. For instance in “Policing Pregnancies: Sexuality and the Family, 1900-1940” McLaren shows “that the participants in the fertility control debate in the first four decades of this century believed that they were fighting over

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Pitsula, *New World Dawning: The Sixties at Regina Campus* (Regina: University of Regina, 2008), 198.

far more than a simple question of family size – at stake were competing social values.”<sup>2</sup> The assumption held by many early twentieth century birth control advocates and supporters that they could control the reproduction of others, as according to McLaren. Similarly, Dodd recognizes the political significance of birth control:

Birth control affects population control, and consequently economic growth, differentials in fertility and consequently class and ethnic relations, religious and political ideology and relationships between the sexes. It almost goes without saying that contraceptive technology can affect the nature and the status of women’s work in the home and that consequently is can affect women’s role in society.<sup>3</sup>

She stresses the overarching impact birth control had on society and recognizes that the activism around birth control and abortion was more deeply political than the arguments for women’s individual right to control their fertility.

Following the example of Pitsula, McLaren, and Dodd this chapter highlights the ways in which activism around sexuality and marriage, birth control, sexual liberation, reproductive rights, women’s health, and daycare intersect. By this, I refer to the ways in which these activism inform one another and were integral to the larger student activism for sexual and women’s liberation during the 1960s and 1970s. My intention is to expand historical understanding of the activism of the 1960s and 1970s in Southern Alberta (and in Canada) and to conceive the activism of that era as inclusive of but more than feminist reproductive rights activism. My approach embraces the multiple motivations of student activism against reproductive oppression.

Oral histories from “the experts” who were activists for these causes and movements during the 1960s and 1970s emphasized the multi-faceted nature of activism. Judy Burgess,

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<sup>2</sup> Angus McLaren, “Policing Pregnancies: Sexuality and the Family, 1900-1940,” *The Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* VI/III (1992): 17.

<sup>3</sup> Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement: Two Approaches to the Dissemination of Contraceptive Technology,” *Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science Technology and Medicine* vol. 9 no. 1 (1985), 63.

Mary Bochenko, Luba Lisun, and Rita Moir all implied that activism of the time meant that you were an activist in all ways. In other words, one was not limited by a single cause or movement but committed to a range of movements and causes. For example, Moir explains,

I mean nothing just stopped at one issue we were looking at everything. We were looking at childcare, rates of pay, and all of those issues together. They're all linked of course. ... but none of it was just one thing, the Birth Control Information Centre wasn't just about birth control, it was about reproductive health, women's choices, all of that. ... It's about looking at all aspects of the patriarchy. ... There wasn't any issue concerning women that we weren't examining, and questioning and challenging."<sup>4</sup>

Moir's reflection illustrates that as a student activist she understood patriarchy and reproductive oppression as an overarching and complex social problem in Southern Alberta and beyond, and that these issues had to be addressed and dealt through diverse and holistic approach to activism. In other words, Moir shows that students recognized the tiered character of their activist endeavours. Their actions were a small part of larger social movement but nevertheless moved towards solving the much pervasive problems of patriarchy and reproductive oppression.

Both male and female student activists took up activism against reproductive oppression in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, in "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook: From Student Peer Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975*" historian Christabelle Sethna explains that a male student activist, Allan Feingold, was part of the driving force behind the McGill *Birth Control Handbook*.<sup>5</sup> As Sethna explains, Feingold was the editor-in-chief of the *Birth Control Handbook* and worked very passionately for the decriminalization of contraception. Sethna describes Feingold's pride in

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<sup>4</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

<sup>5</sup> Christabelle Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975*," *CBMH/BCHM*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2006), 94.

the *Handbook's* 1968 debut, "A proud Feingold was quoted as saying: "To print such a book indicates that we believe that students are responsible adults with the right to make decisions that affect their lives.""<sup>6</sup> Like Feingold at McGill, other male student activists at Calgary and Lethbridge campuses advocated for many seemingly women centred causes including sexual liberation, sexuality, birth control, and daycare. Therefore, men actively fought against reproductive oppression.

However, women student activists involved in the reproductive rights movements during these decades often expressed the need for women to be the face of reproductive rights activism, stressing the importance of women in leadership. Rita Moir remembers that men supported and, in some cases were activists for, the cause but their participation was often complicated because often men wanted to lead the protests and make speeches refusing to allow women to run the protests and represent the public face of the movement.<sup>7</sup> Thus, while some male student activists were also reproductive activists, some male student activists often did not identify as reproductive rights activists themselves but participated as supporters in the cause. My discussion moves from an exclusive focus on student or feminist involvement with reproductive rights activism to widen the range of other types of student activism and activists and, therefore, illuminate the breadth and depth of student activism in Calgary and Lethbridge during the 1960s and 1970s.

With smaller populations compared to larger cities such as Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa, Lethbridge and Calgary had a concentrated cohort of activists. In Southern Alberta in particular, the overlapping character of issues was significant because the population of activists were unable to maintain specific or single issue driven organizational groups.

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<sup>6</sup> Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*," 7.

<sup>7</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

Cooperation and reciprocity between activists in Southern Alberta, and in the smaller city of Lethbridge especially, was an absolute necessity. Furthermore, the presence of cooperation and reciprocity among activists in Lethbridge and Calgary highlights an important regional specificity of the activism in Southern Alberta during these decades. For example, Larry Hannant states “there was a small group of people who I would consider to be on the Left in a general sense” when he discusses activism in Calgary and at the U of C. Similarly, Rita Moir argues that it was the smaller rural population in Lethbridge and Southern Alberta<sup>8</sup> that strengthened their community:

Lethbridge was pretty rural compared to Montreal or big cities. We were far more likely to form coalitions because we didn't have a critical mass of people that you could have groups that were all 22 year olds or you know all 30 year olds or all 70 year olds. You brought together people who wanted to talk about the same thing and grapple the same issues. ... But there weren't like 17 different women's groups, there was, you know, like one. ... We noticed in Saskatoon when we were doing the women's press, there was also a difference at that time between you know the gay rights movement, there were women who were separatists. And in Lethbridge that just couldn't have worked there wouldn't have been enough people. And so we came under criticism for being too involved with men in our organizations. You know not in the Lethbridge Women's Liberation Group but in working with men, well we just didn't have enough women to have any kind of separatist women only group.<sup>9</sup>

Moir's description of coalitions across age groups, genders, sexualities, and causes in Lethbridge during the 1970s reinforces the necessity of building cooperation in smaller cities. She highlights the multi-faceted nature of activism in Lethbridge, and Southern Alberta more generally. Building alliances, or coalitions, was therefore a distinguishing strategy for

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<sup>8</sup> Calgary and Lethbridge was small populations, compared to the larger centres of Toronto and Montreal, but was growing rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s. Calgary grew from 249,641 people in 1961 to 469,917 in 1976, and Lethbridge grew from 35,454 people in 1961 to 46,752 in 1976. “Table 6: Population by census subdivisions, 1901-1961,” (*1961 Census of Canada Volume I: Population*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1963), 6.77-6.83; “Table 3: Population for census divisions and subdivisions, 1971 and 1976,” (*1976 Census of Canada Volume I: Population, Geographic Distributions*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1977), 3.40–3.43.

<sup>9</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.



the success of activism in the city and region. Student activists sought common ground across issues in order to build powerful, and alternative coalitions in their communities. One example of the need for strong coalitions may be found in the 1974 civic controversy over the LBCIC receiving municipal funding. It was the strong alliance of student activists, feminist activists, and medical, educational, and municipal professionals that won over the City of Lethbridge and resulted in the LBCIC's continued funding. In this case, an alliance struck between the student and feminist activists provided strength and passion that ultimately harnessed moral support from a wider population in Lethbridge. Students and feminists allied with the local professionals (perceived as professional and "adult" authorities) to grant the LBCIC credibility within the municipality and eventually the organization won over many citizens. As Moir explains, "So that was part of it, it was all these young people with these ideas and then making coalitions with older people going "this is what we can do together, we can make stuff happen.""<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, without this intergenerational coalition on and off campus the support for the municipal funding of LBCIC would not have been as strong.

Furthermore, the example of the coalitions that Moir discusses and their occurrence in support for the LBCIC build evidence that Calgary and Lethbridge student activists were part of larger national and international movements. Student activists were part of the larger women's liberation and reproductive rights movements of the 1970s. Moreover, the coalitions created in Lethbridge and Calgary were inclusive of those involved with a range of concerns expressed by the New Left Movement, by feminists, Gay Liberationists, and other types of institutional organizing at post-secondary campuses and as such this range demonstrates the extent of the broad social change student activists desired. Rita Moir

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<sup>10</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

describes fighting structural systems of power as an integral to the national and international movements: “There’s so much but we were part of a national and international movement of people making change and some pretty fun years and then at some point it got stalled and people were starting to leave and it wasn’t the same critical mass of people to fight for the change that we were making.”<sup>11</sup> Her memories of participating in larger national concerns illustrates that student activists sought broader social change and they found common ground with other beyond the university in their fight against reproductive oppression, patriarchy, and, to an extent, capitalism.

This chapter first examines the conceptualization of the contraceptive mentality (pre-Bill C150); the civil disobedience utilized in the fight for the decriminalization of birth control; and the erosion of taboos around premarital (hetero)sexuality. Second, I review the student focus on peer- and self-education in lieu of social and public birth control, abortion, sex education and health services as part of activism such as sexuality, reproductive rights, and women’s health, post-Bill C150. Last, I explore how the contraceptive mentality influenced the broadening call for social change influenced student activism for campus daycare centres from 1969 to 1979.

### **“Free birth control handbooks are available to all students:” Civil Disobedience, Birth Control, and Premarital (Hetero)Sexuality, 1965-1969**

Student activism in Lethbridge and Calgary was grounded by the belief and commitment to what Margret Eichler defines as the contraceptive mentality; that is, a ideological shift in how society perceived sex during the 1950s and 1960s. Eichler argues that the creation of the birth control pill and other contraceptive technologies introduced during the 1960s created a mentality where “sex is increasingly seen as recreational rather than

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<sup>11</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

procreational. Having a child is a conscious decision which is ... taken within the context of a sexual relationship, *not* as a natural outcome of marital sex.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, with accessible and women-controlled forms of birth control, it was possible to separate sex from procreation allowing for more (hetero)sexual freedom, especially for women. As I argue in this chapter, the conceptual and physical separation of sex and procreation allowed student activists to question social norms around pre-marital (hetero)sexual liberation, reproductive rights, and asserts to education on contraception, abortion, sex, reproductive and sexual health, and parenthood. Student activists began to carve out a new, potentially more sexually liberated, lifestyle for themselves across the 1960s and 1970s when they could sexually experiment outside of marriage and (ideally) without the worry of unwanted pregnancy; they could discuss reproductive and sexual health issues and demand ethical services on sexual health matters without taboo; and, they could have children while pursuing school or professional careers. Of course, to achieve these social changes student activists necessarily advocated for the decriminalization of birth control and abortion as well as wider access to reproductive and sex education.

The early activism of the 1960s discussed here focuses on sexual liberation from unwanted pregnancy and therefore rested on the assumption of heterosexuality. Thus, I use the term “(hetero)sexual freedom” and “(hetero)sexual liberation” in place of the 1960s common vocabulary of “sexual freedom” and “sexual liberation” throughout this chapter to recognize that the activism of the 1960s and 1970s and discussed was primarily focused on sexual freedom for heterosexual persons (as also assumed in the student newspapers). After the decriminalization of birth control, homosexuality, and partial decriminalization of

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<sup>12</sup> Margrit Eichler, “Grasping the Ungraspable: Socio-Legal Definitions of the Family in the Context of Sexuality,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 6/3 (1992), 8.

abortion in 1969 students' fights against reproductive oppression sought change beyond legal barriers to include social barriers to reproductive and sexual freedom. With the decriminalization of homosexuality lesbian and gay persons no longer faced persecution for their sexuality and increasingly advocacy campaigns advocated for lesbian and gay rights grew on campus and off. For example, the first "homosexual rally," or what was termed "Gay Day," occurred on August 28, 1971 where a group of activists marched on Parliament Hill.<sup>13</sup> The activists who mobilized and participated in this march brought attention to the gaps left after decriminalization. One man stated, "Even today Canadian homosexuals are having their careers ruined, being kicked out of their churches, having their children taken away from them, and being assaulted in the streets of our own cities. What have we done to deserve this? Love, that's all we have done."<sup>14</sup> The activists' words demonstrate that decriminalization left many gaps in lesbian and gay rights in Canada. Thus, lesbian and gay rights became more publically visible and had an increasing presence in activism for sexual liberation following the passing of Bill C-150 in 1969.

The emergence of heteronormative notion of contraceptive mentality of the 1960s and 1970s was, however, also an integral part of breaking down what lesbian feminist poet and writer Adrienne Rich calls "compulsory heterosexuality." In her highly influential 1982 article entitled "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", Rich provides "a feminist critique of compulsory heterosexual orientation for women."<sup>15</sup> Rich argues that

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<sup>13</sup> CBC Digital Archives, *The first gay march*, CBC television, August 28, 1971. Accessed October 2, 2015. <http://www.cbc.ca/player/Digital+Archives/Politics/ID/1409054845/>.

<sup>14</sup> CBC Digital Archives, *The first gay march*, CBC television, August 28, 1971. Accessed October 2, 2015. <http://www.cbc.ca/player/Digital+Archives/Politics/ID/1409054845/>.

<sup>15</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *The Lesbian and gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 229; Shulamith Firestone, "The Dialectic of Sex," in *The Second*

compulsory heterosexuality is a dominant system “through which lesbian experience is perceived on a scale ranging from deviant to abhorrent or simply rendered invisible.”<sup>16</sup> By separating sex and procreation the contraceptive mentality widened the meaning of sexuality beyond its reproductive purposes, to include premarital sexuality and, potentially, same sex relations free of medical or criminal stigmatization. Thus, the compulsory heterosexuality of the early call to decriminalize birth control to limit fertility also created space to discuss sex beyond procreation indicative of various sexualities and sexual expressions.

While only three of the narrators I interviewed with for this research mentioned the lesbian and gay rights activism of the 1970s they did note some important links between the fight against reproductive oppression and lesbian and gay rights in North America.<sup>17</sup> Mary Bochenko discusses lesbian and gay rights in her interview but she does not remember a significant Lesbian Gay Rights movement or group at the LJC in Lethbridge during the early to mid 1970s. Rather she remembers greater visibility of lesbian and gay rights activism occurring in the 1980s.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, Rita Moir’s recollections of coalitions as discussed earlier illustrates that straight and lesbian women (and often straight and gay men as well) may have created alliances across causes in order to intensify their mobilization and support networks in Lethbridge and Southern Alberta. Therefore, according to the activists I interviewed while perhaps less visible in some circles, lesbian and gay rights and women’s liberation were significantly entwined in Southern Alberta.

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*Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* ed. Linda Nicholson (New York & London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” 229.

<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it is important to note that all of the oral history narrators are straight persons and therefore cannot provide an adequate account of the experiences of lesbian women’s relationship with, and participation in, reproductive rights and activism against reproductive oppression.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Bochenko, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 27, 2015, transcript.

Rita Moir's suggestion that lesbian and gay rights activism was present in Lethbridge is also supported by the news coverage in the student newspapers, especially in *The Gauntlet* and *The Meliorist*. Both papers and MRJC's *The Reflector* ran ads for, and reviews of, *The Body Politic*, a key publication of the "militant" Toronto-based gay liberation movement that was "devoted to strengthening the growth of gay consciousness in this country."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, by the early 1970s the student newspapers incorporated various lesbian and gay rights issues in the news,<sup>20</sup> the best example of which is the coverage by *The Meliorist*, *The Endeavour*, and *The Gauntlet* of the CBC's refusal to air an advertisement for the Gay Alliance for Equality in Halifax in 1976. All of the newspapers covered the responding protests by lesbian and gay communities and their allies across the country.<sup>21</sup> The coverage of this story and the support and attention given to the lesbian and gay activist protests show how the student newspapers did not avoid the lesbian and gay rights movement in Calgary and Lethbridge during the 1970s.

While the contraceptive mentality and the decriminalization of birth control and homosexuality in 1969 allowed lesbian and gay activism to become more public and visible a

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<sup>19</sup> Joan Shields, "You're Somebody Once You Leave that Closet," *The Meliorist*, October 6, 1976; Ty Renolds, "'Honest' sex manual not a novel approach," originally printed in *The Gauntlet*, re-printed in *The Reflector*, December 4, 1978.

<sup>20</sup> Santa Barbara LNS, "Gay and Other 'Sex Offenders' Castrated and Tortured in California 'Hospitals'," *The Meliorist*, January 21, 1971; Toronto CUP, "Gays OK at Toronto City Hall," *The Meliorist*, November 29, 1973; Toronto CUP, "Toronto Gay Course No Longer in Trouble," *The Gauntlet*, November 8, 1974; Antigonish CUP, "Gay Rights Upheld," *The Gauntlet*, October 7, 1977; Toronto CUP, "Bryant's Visit Enrages Gays," *The Gauntlet*, February 7, 1978; Steve Maroney, "Gays Plan Anti-Bryant Demonstration," *The Gauntlet*, March 31, 1978; Toronto CUP, "TO Mayor Backs Gays," *The Gauntlet*, January 17, 1979.

<sup>21</sup> Ottawa CUP, "Gays, CBC Tangle," *The Endeavour*, December 7, 1977; Toronto CUP, "Gays Protest," *The Endeavour*, February 18, 1978; Montreal CUP, "CBC Snubs Gays," *The Endeavour*, November 3, 1978; Johnathan Lytton, "Gays Fight CBC; CUP Joins In," *The Gauntlet*, February 21, 1977; Ottawa CUP, "Gays Picket Against CBC Radio Stations," *The Gauntlet*, March 2, 1977; Ottawa CUP, "Gays Picket CBC," *The Gauntlet*, March 2, 1977; Ottawa CUP, "CBC refuses Gay Advertising Bid," *The Gauntlet*, November 4, 1978.

dark underbelly of reproductive oppression of lesbian and gay people remained. Evidence of the sterilization of lesbian and gay people and the sustained classification of homosexuality as sexually deviant represent two major barriers to lesbian and gay people's reproductive and sexual freedom in Southern Alberta during these decades. This reproductive oppression is most evident in one oral history interview conducted in this research and one article from *The Meliorist* in particular. In one of my interviews with Judy Burgess she shared her memories of her psychiatric practicum at Ponoka's Provincial Hospital for the Insane in 1970. She remembers being assigned a final project at the end of the practicum on sexual "deviancy"

And we had to present a psychiatric condition and we had to work in groups of three or four. ... And so the four of us put information together on sexual deviancy, and of course in those days, sexual deviancy was pretty run of the mill compared to sexuality now, because we were talking about homosexuality and what we would see now as normal, healthy sexuality. It was perceived then in the books and the literature, researching and presenting on it, it was considered deviancy."<sup>22</sup>

Reflecting on her presentation on sexual deviancy, inclusive of homosexuality, in 1970 Burgess' demonstrates a significant gap in the history of reproductive oppression, in light of a particular article in *The Meliorist* in January 1971 from the Santa Barbara Liberation News Service titled, "Gay and Other "Sex Offenders" Castrated and Tortured in California "Hospitals.""<sup>23</sup> Burgess' memories of her textbooks and curriculum classifying homosexuality as "deviancy" in the fall of 1970 if paired with *The Meliorist's* report on the castration of gay men in California a few months later in early 1971 illuminates that reproductive oppression of lesbian and gay people was actively pursued in 1970s North America. Unfortunately, apart from this convergence, the reproductive oppression, including

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<sup>22</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, December 18, 2014, transcript.

<sup>23</sup> Santa Barbara LNS, "Gay and Other "Sex Offenders" Castrated and Tortured in California "Hospitals";" *The Meliorist*, January 21, 1971.

sterilization, of gay men was not reported in the student newspapers I reviewed from the 1970s. Therefore, while I cite only two sources, these linkages illustrate an important connection that needs to be explored in future research. This small but significant glimpse of the dark underbelly of reproductive oppression that remained in 1970s North America, as recounted by Burgess' memories and *The Meliorist* article, also highlights the complex and multi-faceted nature of the fight against reproductive oppression in the 1970s.

Embracing the contraceptive mentality, student desire to engage in sexual activity for pleasure without concern for unwanted pregnancy motivated their activism against reproductive oppression in the mid- to late 1960s. It was generally understood that sexual freedom—the separation of sex, marriage, and procreation—might only be achieved through legal and accessible birth control. Thus, students' activism for (hetero)sexual freedom entwined with the activism for decriminalized and accessible birth control. While the birth control pill had been created in 1952 (through the discovery that the hormone progesterone could prevent ovulation) with select doctors prescribing the “Pill” since 1960 under the pretense that it would be prescribed for the regulation of “menstrual disorders, the distribution of birth control methods or information remained illegal in Canada throughout the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> Specifically, student activists called for a repeal of Section 179 (legislated in 1892) of Canada's Criminal Code that stated,

Everyone is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to two years imprisonment who knowingly, without lawful excuse of justification, offers to sell, advertises, publishes an advertisement of or has for sale or disposal of any medicine, drug or article intended or represented as a means of preventing conception.<sup>25</sup>

Student activists considered the recently created birth control pill as an opportunity to repeal

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<sup>24</sup> “Time Line: The Pill,” *American Experience: The Pill*, PBS. Accessed May 30, 2015. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/timeline/timeline2.html>.

<sup>25</sup> *Canadian Criminal Code*, 1892, Section 179.



Section 179 and realize the separation of sex and procreation. Thus, student activists called for the decriminalization of birth control, including pharmaceutical birth control pills as part of a larger campaign to end the “moral” regulations of pre-marital chastity—or, as Larry Hannant put it, the end of “stultifying sexual attitudes,”<sup>26</sup> that would grant (hetero)sexual liberation. Hannant speaks of his activism against reproductive oppression from the mid-1960s to early 1970s as informed by this idea of sexual freedom with sex separated from procreation:

I think there was an environment, especially coming out of the United States that suggests that sexual liberation is part of the change that we were looking for, part of the improvement in society, and what we regarded as a pretty stultifying sexual attitude. ... But it’s being encouraged by our desire to have a sexual life without the consequences of unwanted pregnancy.<sup>27</sup>

Hannant explains that birth control and (hetero)sexual liberation were entwined, and describes lingering, and antiquated, attitudes around sex and sexuality. What’s more, he remembers, the uncoupling of sex and procreation was part of the larger social change student activists demanded during the 1960s and 1970s.

The desire to separate sex from procreation was so significant that student activists were willing to engage in civil disobedience to provide birth control information to others. The McGill *Birth Control Handbook* serves to exemplify student activists’ civil disobedience as Sethna describes: “In September 1968, in contravention of the Criminal Code, the Birth Control Committee published the *Birth Control Handbook*. When asked if the Students’ Council would face any legal repercussions, Foster thumbed his nose at the question: “We figure if we get a lawsuit it will be a lot of fun.””<sup>28</sup> Student activists at the U of L, U of C, MRJC, and LJC similarly risked persecution and expulsion by distributing, and in some cases

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<sup>26</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>27</sup> Larry Hannant, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 23, 2015, transcript.

<sup>28</sup> Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*,” 94.

publishing, birth control information. Student activists' civil disobedience is evident in the student newspapers of the time. Student newspapers from the Calgary and Lethbridge campuses, for example, covered the distribution and publication of birth control information at other post-secondary institutions across Canada, such as the distribution of birth control pills at the University of Toronto (U of T) in 1967 and followed the story of the decision to publish the *Birth Control Handbook* at McGill University from 1968 to 1974.<sup>29</sup> For instance, *The Reflector* reported, "The student council of the University of Toronto voted Wednesday to provide birth control information to co-eds. According to the Criminal Code of Canada such an education program would be illegal, and SAC president Tom Faulkner said if the SAC were prosecuted "I realize that the president might go to jail.""<sup>30</sup> The brief report of U of T's student actions illustrates that civil disobedience, while considered necessary by many student activists, was not taken lightly. The student activists who distributed birth control information knew that they were breaking the law and aware of potential consequences including criminal persecution.

Clearly, student activists across Canada were impatient for decriminalization. At the U of L in 1967, the Student Council attempted to follow the footsteps of their U of T counterparts and voted on a resolution that the Student Council would provide birth control to students.<sup>31</sup> While the resolution was defeated by the Student Council in a close 4-3 vote, *The Meliorist* coverage suggests this was not a popular decision on campus:

The resolution was defeated 4 to 3. The resolution was introduced by Kevin Anstey and seconded by Stasha Sikora, both of whom spoke in favour of the resolution.

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<sup>29</sup> Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*;" Toronto CUP, "Pill Info Given at U of T," *The Reflector*, October 4, 1967; Montreal CUP, "Council Fires McGill Editor," September 24, 1969.

<sup>30</sup> Toronto (CUP), "Pill info Given at U. of T.," *The Reflector*, October 4, 1967.

<sup>31</sup> "Council Vetoes Birth Control," *The Meliorist*, November 23, 1967; "Come In, Control," *The Meliorist*, November 23, 1967.

Also speaking in favour of the resolution was Business Manager Hugh Johnson. Those taking the opposite view were Brian Shaw, who maintained that “sex is private,” (no one ever maintained that it was not), Lament Neilson, same reason, and Lynn Stuckley, for reasons that this reporter is failing to comprehend. Arnold Harris, the other member present and voting, failed to give any reason for his obvious vote. ... Student Health Services Committee of the U of L has still to decide on the matter and we hope they have more sense than the Student’s Council on the matter.<sup>32</sup>

The author covering the Student Council’s decision did not try to hide their anger and shock in their description of the resolution’s defeat, making it clear that they found the decision senseless. Furthermore, the author’s hope in that birth control might eventually be distributed through Student Health Services at the U of L highlights the passion some shared on this issue. Furthermore, the three Student Council members’ and the author’s call for accessible birth control for students represents a larger collective lobby for (hetero)sexual liberation from the fear of unwanted pregnancy and from confining social attitudes. The larger dedication to the decriminalization of birth control and (hetero)sexual liberation is clear in further coverage in *The Meliorist*:

The distribution of information does not mean that the university is saying that it believes in and agrees with young people having sexual relationships. It does say that the university is mature enough to admit that there are going to be sexual activities among the students and that the one major problem – pregnancy – is trying to be prevented. ... If the students know how to prevent pregnancy, there would be fewer drop-outs, unwed mother, (sic) unwanted children, and probably more important, unwanted marriages. ... what people in authority are afraid of is sex orgies. However, can we trust the younger generation a little more than that? It is my opinion that young people have a higher regard for sex than they are given credit for.<sup>33</sup>

The author’s response to the reactionary notion that by providing birth control to students the university would encourage pre-marital sex illuminates a broader call for social change in marriage and the family. Thus, the author’s concern extended beyond birth control and (hetero)sexual liberation to criticizing patriarchy and notions of “morality.” Moreover, this

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<sup>32</sup> “Council Vetoes Birth Control,” *The Meliorist*, November 23, 1967.

<sup>33</sup> “Come In, Control,” *The Meliorist*, November 23, 1967.

response highlights student activists' rejection of, and frustration with, the *in loco parentis* attitude where the university paternalistically infantilized students as in need of supervision. The call for the distribution of birth control on campus in 1967 reached far wider than the bedrooms of students' to include changes of the society in which they lived.

By 1969, on the eve of federal decriminalization of birth control, student activists in Calgary and Lethbridge continued to be civilly disobedient by distributing birth control information. The availability of the McGill *Birth Control Handbook* was announced in *The Gauntlet* throughout 1969.<sup>34</sup> *The Gauntlet* published ads stated, "Free birth control handbooks are available to all students. Anyone may pick one up at the students union office, the frosh information centre, the student health centre, or the student affairs office. This year's pamphlet is again published by the students society of McGill University."<sup>35</sup> *The Meliorist* took civil disobedience one step further by counseling students on methods of contraception. Titled, "Birth Control: Not Why but How," the article advised students on how to use the pill, intrauterine devices (IUD), and condoms.<sup>36</sup> Soon after, by May 14<sup>th</sup> 1969 Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau declared that "the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation"<sup>37</sup> and announced that birth control, homosexuality, and abortion (under the regulations of Therapeutic Abortion Committees) had been decriminalized. Student activists in Lethbridge and Calgary, in unity with student activists across Canada, celebrated as they were one step closer in to the contraceptive mentality becoming a reality and one step closer to (hetero)sexual freedom from unwanted pregnancy.

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<sup>34</sup> "Handbooks Available Again," *The Gauntlet*, September 10, 1969.

<sup>35</sup> "Handbooks Available Again," *The Gauntlet*, September 10, 1969.

<sup>36</sup> "Birth Control: Not Why but How," *The Meliorist*, February 21, 1969.

<sup>37</sup> Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar-McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986): 9.

## Peer-Education as Activism: Breaking down the Social Aspects of Reproductive Oppression, 1970-1979

The creation of the birth control pill in 1952 and the 1969 Omnibus Bill C-150 technologically and legally (respectively) enabled the separation of sex from procreation. However, social restrictions to accessible contraception, abortion, and sexual health services and education continued to present a problem for students. For example, in 1971 the University of Calgary General Faculties Council (GFC) “halted further distribution of the student activist “Birth Control Handbook,””<sup>38</sup> according to *The Gauntlet*. The coverage on this issue in *The Gauntlet* in the following weeks reveals that the rationale behind the GFC’s decision to censor the *Birth Control Handbook* was that the information in the *Handbook* was ““Maoist”, “immoral” and “clearly unnecessary.””<sup>39</sup> *The Gauntlet*’s coverage on this issue also reveals student activists’ attitudes towards this type of oppressive censorship. U of C student, Doreen Travis, in a letter to the editor wrote,

The G.F.C.’s decision to halt distribution of the “Birth Control Handbook” reflects a reluctance to face the reality of social problems. ... Until society incorporates sex education in the school curriculum, establishes many more family planning clinics and revamps attitudes towards these social problems birth control information such as that in the “Birth Control Handbook” should be made available to everyone.<sup>40</sup>

The letter illustrates student activist understanding that the *Handbook* clearly filled a gap in the social rejection of birth control, abortion, sex, and sexuality education (even after the decriminalization in 1969) based in the “moral” regulation of student and youth’s sexuality. The student activists at the U of C successfully reversed the campus ban of the *Handbook* a mere two weeks after the GFC’s original decision. It is unclear how such a decision was reversed but it is clear that they celebrated their accomplishments in a tongue-in-cheek

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<sup>38</sup> Tony Dimnik, “GFC Aborts Handbook,” *The Gauntlet*, February 18, 1971.

<sup>39</sup> Doreen Travis, “Letters to the Editor,” *The Gauntlet*, February 26, 1971.

<sup>40</sup> Doreen Travis, “Letters to the Editor,” *The Gauntlet*, February 26, 1971.

advertisement that read: “Now In: The Book that Rocked the G.F.C.! ... The Birth Control Handbook: Free at the Student Council offices.”<sup>41</sup> The U of C’s GFC banning of the *Handbook* exemplifies one of many social barriers that remained despite decriminalization in 1969. Moreover, the response of the U of C students reveal that student advocacy against reproductive oppression also remained following Bill C-150 in 1969. Indeed, student activists continued to fight reproductive oppression with gusto through their support and advancement birth control, abortion, sexual and reproductive health services and education.

This section examines how the contraceptive mentality and student activists’ promotion of peer- and self-education as well as educational services available to youth on campus and locally illuminates how reproductive rights, sexual liberation, and women’s health in Calgary and Lethbridge overlapped post the 1969 Bill C150. Student activists developed self- and peer-education programs as part of their larger goal of consciousness-raising using this method as an accessible way to learn about sex, sexuality, contraception, abortion, and reproductive and sexual health following decriminalization. Judy Burgess remembers her own self- and peer-education during the early 1970s in Lethbridge. She says, “I think a lot of it was our own education project. (Laughs) It was just peers learning about things...”<sup>42</sup> Burgess’ words, “our own education,” reveals that peer- and self-education was the means by which student and youth activists reclaimed control over their own sexual and reproductive lives from those who tried to censor or control, such as the U of C GFC’s attempt to censor the McGill *Handbook*. Student activist participation in this peer-education movement at the U of C, U of L, MRJC, and LJC was significant. Student newspapers were devoted to promoting avenues of peer- and self-education by publishing informative articles

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<sup>41</sup> Birth Control Handbook Ad, *The Meliorist*, March 5, 1971.

<sup>42</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 2, 2014, transcript.

on sex, sexuality, contraception, abortion, as well as sexual and reproductive health in the student press.

Student newspapers in Calgary and Lethbridge supported peer- and self-education by advertising for, and providing information on the availability of, handbooks, pamphlets, and resources to students on campus. For example, in the 1970s *The Meliorist* published informational Julius Schmid prophylactic advertisements, including an ad for the condom company's "How Not To" booklet,<sup>43</sup> as well as ads that provided information on several contraceptive methods other than condoms.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, during the 1970s, *The Gauntlet* advertised various educational materials available at the U of C's Student and Health Services on campus. For example, in 1974 they published an ad that read, "The Students' Union has received V.D. & Birth Control Handbooks Available at MacEwan Hall Information Desk."<sup>45</sup> Advertisements used to promote or distribute educational materials on birth control and sex illustrates the student newspapers' dedication to peer education during these decades.

However, student activist sponsored promotion of educational materials went beyond advertisements. Student newspapers in Calgary and Lethbridge alerted students to where they could get contraceptive and human sexuality information on campus. For example, in 1970 *The Meliorist* reported on "Prophylactic dispensers have been installed in the washrooms of the Students' Facilities Building."<sup>46</sup> Similarly, in 1972 and 1978 *The Gauntlet* informed students that the Student Health Centre would provide the "Morning After" pill<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Julius Schmid "How-Not-To" booklet Ad, *The Meliorist*, September 29, 1972.

<sup>44</sup> Julius Schmid Ad, *The Meliorist*, January 20, 1978; Julius Schmid Ad, *The Meliorist*, June, 1979.

<sup>45</sup> V.D. & Birth Control Handbooks Ad, *The Gauntlet*, February 19, 1974.

<sup>46</sup> "Birth Control for Students," *The Meliorist*, February 12, 1970.

<sup>47</sup> Anita Fadum, "'Morning-after' Pill Available," *The Gauntlet*, November 1, 1972.

and general contraceptive advice,<sup>48</sup> respectively. Moreover, *The Gauntlet* publicized events and information for “Human Sexuality Week” at the U of C in 1974, 1975, and 1977 alerting students to watch for educational opportunities during the week.<sup>49</sup> Following suit, *The Endeavour* covered the opening of “an office for counseling students in family planning” in 1977 offering students accessible advising “about sexuality and family planning.”<sup>50</sup> In addition to publishing advertisements for various educational resources and opportunities on their campuses, student activists in Lethbridge and Calgary reported on relevant upcoming speakers, conferences, presentations, and seminars on birth control and human sexuality sponsored by other organizations in the respective cities. Seminars and courses on general Human Sexuality,<sup>51</sup> as well as specific local workshops and seminars on communication, “intimacy, sexuality, and sex,”<sup>52</sup> female sexuality,<sup>53</sup> “Transsexualism and Sex Changes,”<sup>54</sup> “Sexuality and the Single Person,”<sup>55</sup> and courses as specific as “Weekend for Men: Coping with Social Changes, and Sexual Attitudes”<sup>56</sup> were all covered by *The Meliorist* and *The Gauntlet* across the decades of the 1970s.

The multiple advertisements for, and information published on, birth control, abortion, and sexual and reproductive health services and education illustrates two

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<sup>48</sup> “Student Health Services,” *The Gauntlet*, April 4, 1978.

<sup>49</sup> Art Blomme, “Human Sexuality Week at U of C,” *The Gauntlet*, November 1, 1974; “Human Sexuality Week,” *The Gauntlet*, October 31, 1975; “The Total Women” Ad, *The Gauntlet*, September 23, 1977.

<sup>50</sup> “Family Planning Office Opens,” *The Endeavour*, October 6, 1977.

<sup>51</sup> Ad Seminar on human Sexuality, *The Meliorist*, February 5, 1971; Noel Jantzie, “Human Sexuality course endangered,” *The Gauntlet*, April 9, 1975.

<sup>52</sup> Terri Cody, “Intimacy, Sexuality and Sex – Topics for Interaction Course,” *The Gauntlet*, September 29, 1971; Eugene Plawiuk, “Student Services promotes sex and discussion,” *The Meliorist*, September 29, 1978.

<sup>53</sup> “Female Sexuality Conference,” *The Gauntlet*, January 24, 1975.

<sup>54</sup> Shamir Bhatia, “Everything you always wanted to know,” *The Gauntlet*, November 7, 1975.

<sup>55</sup> “Sex and Singles Workshop Planned,” *The Gauntlet*, June 21, 1979.

<sup>56</sup> “Liberation on sexuality,” *The Gauntlet*, September 27, 1977.



significant details. First, the student newspapers' dedication to peer- and self-education on birth control, abortion, and sexual and reproductive health demonstrates the severe lack of resources available to unmarried youth during these decades. And, second, the student papers' coverage highlights the significant role that student activists and student newspapers played in the dissemination of information – on birth control, sex, and abortion, but also on services and physicians supportive of these health services.

The student newspapers also promoted off-campus city organizations that provided education on, and services for, sex, sexuality, birth control, and abortion. The Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre (LBCIC) and the Calgary Birth Control Association (CBCA) were frequently mentioned and promoted in the Lethbridge and Calgary student newspapers. *The Gauntlet* and *The Meliorist* surveyed the services available at these organizations as well as covered various reasons and ways to support them.<sup>57</sup> Campus student activist support of the LBCIC and CBCA was considered part of the Student Council's collective commitment to greater sexual and reproductive liberation during the 1970s.<sup>58</sup> In fact, the LJC Student Council came under great scrutiny by *The Endeavour* after the Council turned down the LBCIC's request for financial support:

To assist in rent payments and maintenance cost [of the LBCIC], both the University of Lethbridge students' council and our LCC students' council were approached with requests of \$200. The University recognized the need for such a clinic, and immediately granted the expenditure, and offered their services again if necessary. Our own students' council, however, apparently felt that such a clinic was not worthwhile or that the students wouldn't benefit from it. After putting the request off for a week, firstly turned it down, and went back to finding a more suitable way to spend our money. Perhaps basketballs? It would be a little bit earlier to take I think, since we are being ripped off anyway if even a LITTLE of our money went to at least one worthwhile endeavour. But no, this issue, like that of our ridiculously

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<sup>57</sup> Calgary Birth Control Association Ad, *The Gauntlet*, September 8, 1972; "Birth Control talk Wednesday," *The Gauntlet*, September 19, 1972.

<sup>58</sup> Steve Maroney, "SU supports birth control," *The Gauntlet*, January 27, 1978.

high student fees, will go largely unnoticed and certainly unchanged, while our council members ponder the “important” issues of cabarets and hockey games. I hope no one says anything to any of them, it would be a shame to ruin their record of no notable accomplishments whatever.<sup>59</sup>

This passionate evaluation of the LJC’s failure to provide financial support for the LBCIC further highlights student activists’ commitment to filling educational and service gaps existing in Calgary and Lethbridge. What’s more, this editorial response to the LJC’s Student Council decision suggests that student activist support went beyond commitment and, in fact, this author believed the Student Council was obligated to support endeavours like the LBCIC in order to promote larger social change. Support of the LBCIC and CBCA like the earlier campus wide calls for support and distribution of the McGill *Birth Control Handbook* demonstrates that student activists recognized that the off campus services and organizations filled a gap in sex, birth control, abortion, and sexuality education available to regional citizenry. Mary Bochenko’s letter to the editor in *The Endeavour* in 1973 reflects this understanding of the LBCIC as a much needed public service for student activists and others: “I honestly feel the support of this centre is a reflection of our community’s practical understanding of modern life problems and that this attempt at combating misinformation or lack of information in the area of sex education can only be to their good credit.”<sup>60</sup> Bochenko’s words demonstrate that many felt there was a gap in birth control, abortion, sex, and sexual and reproductive health services. Moreover, her letter suggests that students, like her, realized the significance of public health service organizations like the LBCIC and CBCA.

In addition to publishing and promoting on- and off-campus educational and health

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<sup>59</sup> LCC Student, “LCC’s Students’ Council Refuses Clinic’s Request,” *The Endeavour*, November 9, 1972.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Bochenko, “Birth Control Centre Serves a Purpose,” *The Endeavour*, February 16, 1973.

service organizations, students also wrote and published on the topics of birth control, abortion, sex, sexuality, and women's health during the 1970s. Student press coverage on these topics included listing various available types of contraceptives and their "clinical failure rate,"<sup>61</sup> exploring sexual needs,<sup>62</sup> and women's reproductive health concerns.<sup>63</sup> The student activists' efforts in researching, writing, and publishing on these topics illustrates their dedication to fighting the reproductive oppression that prevented public access to birth control, abortion, sex, and sexual and reproductive health education and services. Furthermore, their efforts at peer education during the 1970s are significant. Student papers were used to educate the author's peers and should be recognized as an expression of resistance to reproductive oppression.

The memories of the narrators combined with a broad range of advocacy published in the student newspapers also shows that student activists, and the organizations they supported, understood their activism as multi-faceted across issues, including birth control, abortion, sex, sexuality, and women's health. Judy Burgess describes her activist work in the early 1970s as wide ranging yet mutually informing:

It was all activist projects. So, there was one called, "Red Eye," that was on drug use. We were called "Sex Services," ... and I just cringe at the idea that we were called "Sex Services." (Laughs) It sounds like some kind of prostitution program, not program but service. There was a Woman's collective. But they were all a really great

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<sup>61</sup> "Birth Control," *The Gauntlet*, January 29, 1973.

<sup>62</sup> "Exploring your needs," *The Meliorist*, September 30, 1977.

<sup>63</sup> Anita Fadum, "Day After' Pills Issued Despite Cancer Threat," *The Gauntlet*, November 22, 1972; Maryhellen Vicars, "Women and Their Bodies: Part Two," *The Meliorist*, December 1, 1972; A. Miron, "Gynecology off our backs...", *The Meliorist*, March 8, 1974; New York (LNS), "IUD manufacturer Sued," *The Gauntlet*, June 3, 1976; New York (CUP), "Pill Users Die Early Says British Study," *The Meliorist*, November 18, 1977; "Women Move Away From the Pill," *The Meliorist*, February 25, 1977; Denver (CUP), "Users of the Pill Beware," *The Gauntlet*, March 14, 1978; Maureen McEvoy, "The Pill: Convenient but Not Safe," *The Gauntlet*, December 1, 1978; "Your Body: Her Health is in your Hands," *The Meliorist*, March 10, 1978; New York (LNS-CUP), "Pill Cancer," *The Reflector*, January 26, 1979.

group of young people that were involved in the changing ways.<sup>64</sup>

Burgess' consideration is significant in two ways. First, her reflection on, and amusement in, the name "Sex Services" illuminates the greenness of these programs and services through misuse of language. The terms used in the early 1970s to describe or advertise sexual and reproductive health services and education reflects that student activists were at the vanguard of developing and mobilizing the movement against reproductive oppression. Second, her memories of the various activist projects she was involved with and how they converged to achieve broader social change highlights the way that activists perceived their activism as entwined rather than distinct. Additionally, Judy's recollections reveal that these actions required collaboration.

Courses or workshops advertised and discussed in the student newspapers also reflect this emergent understanding of sex, sexuality, birth control, and abortion as relevant and linked to student activists' fight for sexual and reproductive liberation. For example, the LBCIC and CBCA offered various seminars and courses on human sexuality and sex education, even though their names suggest that they dealt with birth control alone. In 1973 *The Meliorist* wrote that the LBCIC would be offering a six week "sex education group" to meet every Thursday.<sup>65</sup> That same year *The Gauntlet* reported that CBCA would be offering a similar eight-week course on human sexuality, entitled "Living with Sex."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, in describing the LBCIC, and recognizing its similar programming as organized in Calgary by the CBCA, *The Meliorist* article shows how both offered information on a variety of topics "including counseling about such sexual problems as sterilization, abortion, birth control

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<sup>64</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 2, 2014, transcript.

<sup>65</sup> "Sex Education Group," *The Meliorist*, March 8, 1973.

<sup>66</sup> "Sex Course," *The Gauntlet*, March 21, 1973.

methods, gynecological malfunctions and venereal disease.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, much like the linkage between (hetero)sexual liberation and the decriminalization of birth control in the 1960s, student activists of the 1970s did not isolate their attentions solely on one issue; rather they sought broader social change and were active in multiple causes and movements. Student activists knew that these birth control centres and services went beyond providing services to prevent pregnancy and to providing answers to all the questions men and women might have about their reproductive and sexual lives.

The recognition of the converging concerns of reproductive and sexual health is evident across the student news coverage of the 1970s. For example, as early as 1971 *The Gauntlet* covered the University of Calgary Open House where a presentation on human sexuality, “Fetotal [sic] Development, Abortion, and Birth Control”<sup>68</sup> was given by the nursing students. Editorial staff of *The Gauntlet* continued to recognize and discuss sexual health and reproduction from a multi-faceted perspective throughout the decade and, in 1979, a new U of C course that explored “sexuality, the reproductive system, family planning and sources of specialized help available in the community” was reported.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, *The Meliorist’s* publication of a prophylactics ad in 1979 highlights a new spin on the student activists’ still strong dedication to the contraceptive mentality. The ad states, ““What kind of women buys prophylactics? Today’s kind of woman. Because there’s no longer any old fashioned prudery or stigma attached to women buying what was once an exclusive male purchase.”<sup>70</sup> Newspaper coverage of educational services and opportunities highlights the student activists’ understanding of birth control, abortion, sex, and sexuality as entwined

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<sup>67</sup> Jocy Roy, “Take The Worry Out of Being Near,” *The Endeavour*, October 9, 1973.

<sup>68</sup> “Human Sexuality,” *The Gauntlet*, February 3, 1971.

<sup>69</sup> “Course Exploring Reproduction to Begin,” *The Gauntlet*, September 21, 1979.

<sup>70</sup> Julius Schmid Ad, *The Meliorist*, March 2, 1979.

through the multi-faceted educational services and opportunities.

In other words, student activists saw these issues as falling under the larger category of reproductive oppression. Like the student activism of the 1960s that entangled decriminalization of birth control and (hetero)sexual freedom, student activist between 1969 and 1979 found that their various causes overlapped. For instance (hetero)sexual freedom continued to be limited by poor access to birth control prescriptions, education, and information. The lack of access to birth control paired with the only partial decriminalization of abortion and the establishment of Therapeutic Abortion Committees in 1969 continued to stunt women's liberation generally, sexually, and reproductively. Student activists at the U of C, U of L, MRJC, and LJC recognized these intersections as part of a system of oppression and sought change in multiple issues because they understood that total liberation could only be achieved through an multi-faceted understanding and approach to the various activisms discussed in this chapter.

### **Fighting for Equal Opportunities: Student Daycare Activism 1969-1979**

Student activists' approach to activisms and the manner in which they collectively expressed a desire for broader social change are also evident in their efforts to establish campus daycare centres at the U of L, U of C, MRJC, and LJC. Student activists across campuses in Calgary and Lethbridge advocated for the establishment, funding, and preservation of a daycare through out the 1970s. Advocacy for campus daycare began in 1970 with the call issued by the *Royal Commission on the Status of Women* (RCSW) for national day care programs.<sup>71</sup> None of the campuses had daycare services before the 1970s, and student activists initiated much of the discussion on, and advocacy for, campus daycare in

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<sup>71</sup> See Alison Norman and Lisa Pasolli, "Still Insufficient: Child Care in Canada," at ActiveHistory.ca, October 7, 2013. Accessed June 30, 2015. [activehistory.ca/2013/10/still-insufficient-child-care-in-canada/](http://activehistory.ca/2013/10/still-insufficient-child-care-in-canada/).

1970. By 1971, in step with national and RCSW calls for daycare, advocacy for campus daycare was abundant in the Calgary and Lethbridge student newspapers with several articles on campus daycare in each newspaper every year.<sup>72</sup> While some campuses gained daycare services early on, MRJC's daycare opened in 1970,<sup>73</sup> followed by the U of L's daycare in 1972,<sup>74</sup> and LJC's in 1974<sup>75</sup> – the U of C waited until 1976<sup>76</sup> to get their own campus daycare after years of activism and failed attempts. However, the establishment of campus daycare did not safeguard childcare for students in the 1970s. All four schools faced many complications with their daycare services. Daycares were shut down at least once on each campus during the 1970s due to unsupportive administration or a lack of funding. At the U of C the daycare services were on shaky ground by 1979, and the fate of MRJC's daycare services is unknown past 1973, when *The Reflector* stopped covering the cause. However, daycare services were still intact at U of L and LJC by the end of the 1970s when the local

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<sup>72</sup> “Daycare Centre Opening,” *The Reflector*, January 1970; Bonnie Kulak, “Who Says I’m Tired: Daycare Centre Opened,” *The Reflector*, February 1970; Tami Gaudry, “Letters to the Editor: Daycare Centre Needed Next Year,” *The Endeavour*, April 2, 1973; “Day Care Centre Possible as LCC,” *The Endeavour*, September 10, 1973; “Day care organized,” *The Endeavour*, February 4, 1974; “Day Care Centre operating at LCC,” *The Endeavour*, February 25, 1974; “All day child program popular on campus,” *The Endeavour*, September 23, 1974; Lorraine Pawlivsky, “Daycare issue surprises U of L and LCC meeting members,” *The Endeavour*, September 28, 1978; “Day care return recommended,” *The Endeavour*, February 8, 1979; “Daycare considered,” *The Endeavour*, April 5, 1979; “Daycare essential service – MacNeil,” *The Endeavour*, September 27, 1979; “Lethbridge First to Begin New Daycare Subsidy Program,” *The Endeavour*, September 27, 1979; “Day Care Soon Underway,” *The Meliorist*, November 10, 1972; “Child Care On Campus,” *The Meliorist*, November 24, 1972; “Working Out the Kinks – U of L Child Care Co-op,” *The Meliorist*, October 18, 1973; “Student Initiated Course on Day Care,” *The Meliorist*, November 1, 1973; “Day Care is ‘Lookin’ Good,’” *The Meliorist*, September 17, 1975; Kris Klaasen, “Daycare in Final Stages,” *The Gauntlet*, October 1, 1974; Lynne Estabrooks, “Daycare required necessity,” *The Gauntlet*, November 19, 1974; Elleen Eckhart, “Day Care Needed,” *The Gauntlet*, November 2, 1976.

<sup>73</sup> Lorna Bernard, “Child Care Centre: bring Your Brat,” *The Reflector*, c. November/December 1969; Bonnie Kulak, “Who says I’m Tired: Daycare Centre Opened,” *The Reflector*, c. January 1970.

<sup>74</sup> “Child Care on Campus,” *The Meliorist*, November 24, 1972.

<sup>75</sup> “Day Care Centre Operating at LCC,” *The Endeavour*, February 25, 1974.

<sup>76</sup> Beth Taylor, “Day Care Comes to U of C,” *The Gauntlet*, January 13, 1976.

and campus authorities took on funding and responsibility for the campus daycares. Despite these ups and downs student activists continuously advocated for campus daycare across the 1970s.

Student advocacy for daycare was linked to student activists' dedication to the overlapping concerns of contraceptive mentality, women's liberation, and the corresponding fight against reproductive oppression because the activism for campus daycare was motivated by the belief in women's value beyond motherhood. Thus student activists hoped campus daycares would provide opportunities for women with children to attend or work at post-secondary institutions.

Clearly based on the extent of articles in all the student press, the link between birth control activism and parenthood informed daycare advocacy on Calgary and Lethbridge campuses. For example, one article in *The Endeavour* states, "It is about time that future parents have the facts about birth control presented to them so they can decide what method of birth control is the safest and which one they want to use."<sup>77</sup> *The Endeavour's* suggestion that birth control activism went beyond preventing pregnancy to show a concern that unwanted pregnancy, more specifically, should be prevented. This distinction between wanted and unwanted pregnancies, and the prevention of pregnancy itself, is significant in understanding birth control and daycare activism as a fight inclusive to the activism against reproductive oppression because the student activists created a space for parenthood within their platform. Furthermore, student activism for daycare as integral to activism against reproductive oppression was shown through the birth control and abortion advocacy slogan that "all children should be wanted"<sup>78</sup> and that the desire for children should not prevent any

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<sup>77</sup> "Birth control info coming..." *The Endeavour*, October 20, 1972.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Ann, "Abortion information available in Calgary," *The Gauntlet*, November 12, 1970.



person, and women especially, from attending post-secondary education.<sup>79</sup> The arguments for daycare on campus revolved primarily around providing equal opportunity to all students with children to attend post-secondary as is evident in student papers in Calgary and Lethbridge throughout the 1970s. As early as 1969 *The Reflector* explained that the administration's hope was "that child care facilities on campus might encourage mothers to continue or begin school." The article quoted a MRJC administrator who stated, "We're specifically interested in people who aren't going to school and should be ... It ties in with the whole idea of women's liberation and women's rights."<sup>80</sup> Similarly, in 1970 *The Gauntlet* argued that "mothers are being prevented from furthering their education under favorable conditions"<sup>81</sup> because no daycare yet existed on the U of C campus. Coverage about the need for daycare in *The Meliorist* and *The Endeavour* during the 1970s made similar arguments and students on both campuses became powerful advocates not only for campus daycare but also for daycare services at the local and provincial levels. In 1975 *The Meliorist* wrote:

Day Care has finally come to roost in the arms of the administration. This is due to the City's shortsighted action in not granting the Day Care Centre the \$1660 requested for continuing operation. ... The City Council's refusal (after several presentations and much stormy debate) left the Centre financially insecure and floundering. The administration in its infinite wisdom, recognized the essential service, which this struggling organization provided and came to its aid. That's one for them!<sup>82</sup>

*Meliorist* writer, Lee Ens, determined that student activists recognized that true liberation for women, and all parents, could be achieved through the establishment of civic social services

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<sup>79</sup> "Lack of Day Care "Student Apathy"," *The Gauntlet*, October 14, 1973; "Preschool training available for tots," *The Reflector*, c. 1972-1973; Beth Taylor, "Day Care comes to U of C," *The Gauntlet*, January 13, 1976; "Mother Combines School and Children," *The Endeavour*, February 10, 1977; "Day care future possibility decided this week," *The Endeavour*, March 30, 1978.

<sup>80</sup> Lorna Bernurd, "Bring Your Brat," *The Reflector*, c. November-December 1969.

<sup>81</sup> "Day-care Centre Attempts Continue," *The Gauntlet*, September 9, 1970.

<sup>82</sup> Lee Ens, C.E.O., "Daycare Changes Hands," *The Meliorist*, September 6, 1975.

such as daycare. What's more, Ens highlights student activists' beliefs that these social services should be provided by the state or municipality. Following suit, *The Endeavour* held Alberta's provincial government to account in a similar fashion in 1979:

LCC may be the place to be for most of us but when you're committed to raising a child while trying to get an education, it is definitely not the place to be. The editorial policy of *The Endeavour* has always been to support the idea of a day care centre and we still feel the same. A provincial government task force created to study the costs of post-secondary education recommended that every post-secondary institution in the province have a day care service. Surely, with Alberta's reputation of being Canada's most affluent province, we could support the needs of the ambitious parent by providing a service such as day care. If *The Endeavour* could establish such a service on its own it would. However, since this is impossible, we urge you, the student, to show your support by filling out the questionnaire posted in the halls by student services.<sup>83</sup>

*The Endeavour's* passionate expression in support of daycare services displayed in this article questions the provincial government's unsupportive attitude towards daycare centres on Alberta post-secondary campuses. The reference to the province's affluence calls into question why the province failed to support such an endeavour. Furthermore, the article suggests that daycare is a significant service that should be provided by the state as a means to decrease class and gender inequality. Thus, the coverage of, and advocacy for campus daycare was incorporated as essential to the broader slate of social change student activists desired.

## **Conclusion**

The desire for broader social change, expressed by student activists on the campus press in Southern Alberta, was not informed by a single issue. From the distribution of birth control information prior to decriminalization, to the peer- and self- education on birth control, abortion, and sex post Bill C-150, to advocacy for daycare on campuses of the 1970s, student activism against reproductive oppression on campuses in Calgary and

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<sup>83</sup> "Daycare support urged; information sought," *The Endeavour*, March 29, 1979.

Lethbridge was multi-faceted. Student activists in Lethbridge and Calgary fought reproductive oppression through a variety of activisms, including the fight for (hetero)sexual liberation, sex education, sexuality, and daycare. Thus, student activism was not bounded to a woman's individual reproductive rights but sought broader social change and fought systems of patriarchy, "moral" regulation, and reproductive oppression.

## **Conclusion** **Blind-spots**

In this thesis, the history of student activism against reproductive oppression is interwoven within my call for a historiographical shift in approach. Thus, this thesis does not provide comprehensive history based on the oral history narrators' experiences as activists, or offer a documentary account of any specific results emerging from their activism or activist events specific to campuses in Southern Alberta, the latter may have been more evident if I had conducted a comprehensive reading of student newspapers. Rather, this thesis seeks to shift the historiographical and methodological approach to the histories of reproductive rights and oppression and student activism in Canada and Alberta during the 1960s and 1970s. Southern Alberta was chosen to showcase how strong, multi-faceted student activism against reproductive oppression had been present within a region that has received little or no historical attention across these particular decades. Calgary and Lethbridge student newspapers, *The Gauntlet*, *The Meliorist*, *The Endeavour*, and *The Reflector*, were used to show that activism did, indeed, exist and thrive in Lethbridge and Calgary, as were oral history interviews I conducted with five narrators active in Calgary and Lethbridge student activism during this time period. I purposefully utilized the personal experiences captured in the oral history interviews to reveal the diverse alliances struck among a small but active community of activists in Southern Alberta. The narrators depict the absolute necessity of building activist coalitions in Lethbridge and Calgary, which I argue was essential to their mobilization and success of activist campaigns against reproductive oppression.

Therefore, these sources reveal the strong activist communities built on reciprocity despite the region's representation as overwhelmingly conservative in the media.<sup>1</sup>

The historiographical focus of this thesis represents a starting point from which to develop and deepen the histories of student activism in Alberta and Canada, reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta, and activism against reproductive oppression in Southern Alberta, in particular. Throughout this thesis I have suggested alternative lenses and perspectives might fruitfully be employed to generate a more complex impression of the history of student activism across Canada in general and more specifically in Calgary and Lethbridge. My ambition has been to broaden the narrative and understanding of student, feminist, and reproductive issue activism in Alberta and Canada. For example, I suggest that use of the concept of reproductive justice as a lens allows for a better understanding of the history of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta across the twentieth century, and as part of the vocabulary of student activists in the 1960s and 1970s.

My use of reproductive justice as an analytic lens expands my discussion beyond reproductive rights activism to include other various activisms, for instance, the advocacy for sexual liberation or for university daycare centres. Moreover, I called for a shift away from the predominant, generationally driven, New Left perspective in the literature on student activism in Canada during the 1960s that tells a story of student activism that ended in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the “rise” of the women’s movement. Using a feminist perspective to interpret and discuss activist history I argue that student activism against reproductive oppression existed in the 1960s and continued to flourish into the 1970s even after the decline of the so called “student movement,” as defined by the New Left focused

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<sup>1</sup> Doreen Barrie, *The Other Alberta: Decoding a Political Enigma*, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2006); Lois Harder, *State of Struggle: Feminism and Politics in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003).

scholarly literature. Additionally, I contest the media representation of Alberta as overwhelmingly conservative during the 1960s and 1970s as well as student activist reactions to representations and instances of conservatism. The perception of Alberta's conservatism fueled activist passion. Thus, my analysis highlights the "Other Alberta"<sup>2</sup> within the province. Lastly, in attempt to move beyond the limits of reproductive rights focused narratives, I examine the multi-faceted nature of student activism against reproductive oppression wherein issues of sexuality and marriage, birth control, sexual liberation, reproductive rights, women's health, and daycare overlap. My efforts urge a change in the historical narratives about student activism against reproductive oppression in Calgary and Lethbridge during the 1960s and 1970s and represent the beginning of such an endeavour.

Narratives about activism in Alberta in the current historical literature and in this thesis remain incomplete. To conclude I would like to suggest some themes that need to be addressed in future research. As a relatively under-researched topic there is much work yet to be done in writing the history of activism against reproductive oppression in Alberta, specifically. Further investigation of student activism in the province during the 1960s and 1970s might potentially reveal, for example, students' roles in the support, or repeal, of the Sexual Sterilization Act (SSA) or their interactions with various concepts of population control. In terms of activism against reproductive oppression in Alberta more generally, the roles and experiences of persons from rural communities, Indigenous persons, and immigrants also demand future research.

The broader or national history of activism against reproductive oppression in Alberta is also in need of deeper exploration that might include those missing constituents

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<sup>2</sup> Doreen Barrie, *The Other Alberta: Decoding a Political Enigma*, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2006).

mentioned above. For example, the voices, experiences, and roles of persons from rural communities in the activism against reproductive oppression in Alberta have yet to be included in any preexisting histories. Rural communities in Alberta have often been associated with religious conservatism, especially in Southern Alberta, which is commonly referred to as the “Bible Belt.” Notably, in my previous research on sex education on the Prairies in the 1950s and 1960s I learned that many rural youth had a better grasp of sex and reproduction than their urban counterparts. For example, one narrator explained that her spouse had a better understanding of sex and reproduction because he had grown up on a farm and learned about breeding animals.<sup>3</sup> The availability of sex education, access to birth control, abortion, sexual and reproductive health services in rural communities still need to be investigated in the histories of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta during the 1960s and 1970s.

Similarly, the investigation of Indigenous persons’ experiences of, and activism against, reproductive oppression need to be included in the historical narratives. Until the publications of Karen Stote, the reproductive concerns of Indigenous women, particularly in the Canadian context, has been neglected in national scholarship. Moreover, Indigenous women’s advocacy for the right to have children and parent the children they had, in addition to legal rights to prevent pregnancy, have not been considered within accounts of regional and national reproductive rights activism.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Indigenous persons were also fighting the oppressive burden of racism and colonialism that was pervasive in attempting to control their social, sexual, and reproductive lives.

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<sup>3</sup> “Francis,” interviewed with Karissa Patton, March 24, 2012, transcript.

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Smith, “Without Bureaucracy, Beyond Inclusion: Re-centering Feminism,” in *Left Turn: Notes from the Global Intifada*. <http://www.leftturn.org/?q=node/396> (2006), 1; Andrea Smith, “Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice,” *NWSA Journal* vol. 17 no. 1 (Spring, 2005), 199.

Some experiences of reproductive oppression, such as the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women without consent as well as the coerced sterilization without consent of lesbian and gay persons, were overlooked by the arguments and claims made by student activists on Calgary and Lethbridge post-secondary campuses of the 1960s and 1970s as evident in sparse reports in campus papers. The absence of the acknowledgment of any Indigenous or gay and lesbian activism on these issues on these campuses specifically illuminates the need to expand the understandings of student activists. The activism of Indigenous persons specifically are significant topics that deserve deeper analysis—such an analysis, in doing it justice, was beyond the historiographical scope of this thesis. The activism against reproductive oppression in Indigenous communities, as seen in the *Kainai News* and the *Akwesasne Notes* reports on coerced sterilization of Indigenous women, needs to be included in the history of activism against reproductive oppression in Alberta and Canada. Including Indigenous activism against reproductive oppression in the historical narratives will allow scholars to delve deeper into race, class, and gender relations. More significantly still, the inclusion of Indigenous women's and communities experiences provide a different frame to understand activism against reproductive oppression because of the racial- and gender-bias against Indigenous women in the sterilizations performed under the SSA as well as the government sanctioned coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada's North from the 1970s to 1990s. Moreover, the specific national, regional, and local contexts around Indigenous persons' involvement in the advocacy for reproductive justice may be illuminating in understanding gender and race relations within the topic of student activism around fighting reproductive oppression.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Indigenous newspapers such as the *Kainai News* and *Akwesasne Notes* reported on the issues of the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women as well as Indigenous activism against



The SSA was not repealed until 1972, well into the era of student activism against reproductive oppression discussed in this thesis. Some of the activists I interviewed, Judy Burgess, Rita Moir, Mary Bochenko, and Luba Lisun, remembered the SSA, its repeal, and the public discussions about coerced sterilization. Burgess, for instance had a school practicum at the Provincial Hospital for the Insane in Ponoka in 1970. She states, “our psychiatry rotation was in Ponoka. And that in itself was an unbelievably shocking experience.”<sup>6</sup> Rita Moir explained that some women involved with the Lethbridge Women’s Liberation Group had been “sterilized against their choice.”<sup>7</sup> Bochenko and Lisun recall discussions of ethics and reproductive choice around the SSA. Lisun describes her dismay of the SSA and says, “that it really was discriminatory, it was a really unnecessary thing to do, a punishment almost.”<sup>8</sup> Bochenko, on the other hand brings up questions she, other students, and activists pondered at the time. She describes the SSA and sterilization as a complicated subject:

there was some talk about people who had mental health issues, should they be sterilized if they physical handicaps. ... So, is it fair? Well that’s one question. Would it help the population as a whole? That’s a whole other story. And, would it be useful to the individual? ... It wasn’t just about that, it was about ethics, and it was about morals, and of course religion got into it.<sup>9</sup>

Bochenko’s memories of the ethical, moral, and religious considerations of the SSA illustrate that some activists’ during this era and in this region were calling for the end of the eugenically motivated SSA. Further exploration of the views, discussions, and considerations described by these narrators and others would expand the regional narrative of student

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reproductive oppression. These sources are not included in this thesis because they do not fit into the prevue of student activism. However, they would be exemplary sources for any future research I have suggested above.

<sup>6</sup> Judy Burgess, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 9, 2014, transcript.

<sup>7</sup> Rita Moir, interviewed with Karissa Patton, October 7, 2014, transcript.

<sup>8</sup> Luba Lisun, interviewed with Karissa Patton, December 1, 2014, transcript.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Bochenko, interviewed with Karissa Patton, January 27, 2015, transcript.

activism against reproductive oppression in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as expand the larger history of reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta across the twentieth century.

A study of student involvement and interaction with various population control activisms is similarly needed to properly expand the range of views on this topic which is evident in student newspapers and in other printed media such as the McGill Birth Control Handbook. As discussed in Chapter One, diverse views on population control activisms that co-existed across the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s: The advocacy for or against population control may have originated with “neo-Malthusian” concerns of “foreign” or “Third World” populations growing so rapidly and threatening the “superiority” of the “respectable” White populations,<sup>10</sup> yet concerns of population control evolved into environmental issue by the 1970s. Moreover, as Christabelle Sethna suggests, public and political support for population control coincided with the passing of Bill C-150 in 1969, decriminalizing birth control in Canada.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is important to recognize and investigate student activist support in favour of all types of population control advocacy throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Deeper discussions of student activisms around the repeal of the SSA and their support for population control as well as the reviews of activism in rural communities, among lesbian and gay persons, and Indigenous persons would widen our national understanding of the variable narratives about reproductive oppression in Alberta during the 1960s and 1970s. I hope to investigate some of these topics in my future research and build upon the existing literature on the history of student activism, feminist activism, and reproductive rights and oppression in Alberta. Continued research on the complex character

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<sup>10</sup> Christabelle Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-Empowerment Text, 1968-1975,” *CBMH/BCHM*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2006), 99-101.

<sup>11</sup> Sethna, “The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook*,” 99.

of activism against reproductive oppression in Alberta across the twentieth century and in the 1960s and 1970s more specifically will fill some of the major gaps within the historical literature as well as highlight unique regional contexts.

The specific regional study of the history of activism against reproductive oppression in Alberta challenges and changes the national narratives of reproductive rights and oppression in Canada. By examining and including the neglected regional histories one can expand the understanding of what student activism and feminist activism were in the twentieth century. The regional history of student activism against reproductive oppression allowed me to challenge the narratives that feminist and student activism were mutually exclusive categories confined to their own separate decades. Moreover, my study of Calgary and Lethbridge activism has expanded the national history of reproductive rights activism beyond the “high-profile” activism of the 1970s that occurred in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. By challenging these national narratives, I have made space for future research to discuss activism in Canada beyond “high-profile” event-based activism, to discuss the experiences of activists and highlight the “every day” activism that occurred in Alberta.

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## Appendices

Student Newspaper Coverage of Reproductive Rights, Abortion, Birth Control, Sex, Sexuality, Youth, and Others in *The Gauntlet*, *The Endeavour*, *The Meliorist*, and *The Reflector*, 1960-1979

| Coverage of Reproductive Rights, Abortion, Birth Control, Sex, Sexuality, Youth, and Others in <i>The Gauntlet</i> , 1960-1964 <sup>1</sup> |                     |          |               |     |           |       |                    |       |
|---|---------------------|----------|---------------|-----|-----------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Year/topic  | Reproductive Rights | Abortion | Birth Control | Sex | Sexuality | Youth | Other <sup>2</sup> | Total |
| 1960  | 0                   | 0        | 0             | 0   | 0         | 0     | 1                  | 1     |
| 1961  |                     |          |               | 5   | 1         | 1     | 21                 | 27    |
| 1962  |                     |          |               | 1   |           |       | 2                  | 3     |
| 1963  |                     |          |               | 1   |           |       | 6                  | 7     |
| 1964  |                     |          |               | 3   |           |       | 3                  | 6     |

| Coverage of Reproductive Rights, Abortion, Birth Control, Sex, Sexuality, Youth, and Others in <i>The Gauntlet</i> and <i>The Endeavour</i> , 1965-1966 <sup>3</sup> |                     |          |               |         |           |         |         |         |
|--|---------------------|----------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Year/Topic   | Reproductive Rights | Abortion | Birth Control | Sex     | Sexuality | Youth   | Other   | Total   |
| <i>The Gauntlet</i>  |                     |          |               |         |           |         |         |         |
| 1965   | 1                   | 1        | 5             | 6       | 0         | 1       | 0       | 13      |
| 1966   | 0                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 1       | 1       | 2       |
| <i>The Endeavour</i>   |                     |          |               |         |           |         |         |         |
| 1965   | No Data             | No Data  | No Data       | No Data | No Data   | No Data | No Data | No Data |
| 1966   | 0                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 1       | 1       |

<sup>1</sup> *The Gauntlet* was the only paper, of the four discussed in this research, that existed from 1960-1964.

<sup>2</sup> The topics categorized as other in the original research include feminism, women's liberation, women's rights, daycare, aboriginal students, population control, eugenics, student activism, women. This applies to all charts in this appendix.

<sup>3</sup> *The Gauntlet* and *The Endeavour* were the only two papers, of the four discussed in this research, that existed from 1965-1966. However, there was no available record of the 1965 editions of *The Endeavour*.

| Coverage of Reproductive Rights, Abortion, Birth Control, Sex, Sexuality, Youth, and Others in <i>The Gauntlet</i> , <i>The Endeavour</i> , <i>The Meliorist</i> , and <i>The Reflector</i> , 1967-1979 |                     |          |               |         |           |         |         |         |
|---|---------------------|----------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Year/Topic  | Reproductive Rights | Abortion | Birth Control | Sex     | Sexuality | Youth   | Other   | Total   |
| <i>The Gauntlet</i>   |                     |          |               |         |           |         |         |         |
| 1967  | 0                   | 0        | 1             | 1       | 0         | 0       | 3       | 5       |
| 1968  | 0                   | 0        | 0             | 2       | 0         | 0       | 5       | 7       |
| 1969  | 1                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 1         | 0       | 5       | 7       |
| 1970  | 0                   | 2        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 5       | 7       |
| 1971  | 0                   | 2        | 0             | 6.5     | 2.5       | 0       | 18      | 29      |
| 1972  | 1                   | 1.5      | 4             | 2       | 4.5       | 3       | 24      | 40      |
| 1973  | 0                   | 7        | 0             | 5       | 5         | 0       | 33      | 50      |
| 1974  | 1                   | 8        | 3             | 8.5     | 6.5       | 0       | 55      | 82      |
| 1975  | 0                   | 6.5      | 5.5           | 5       | 9         | 0       | 75      | 101     |
| 1976  | 0                   | 0        | 2             | 4       | 0         | 2       | 30      | 38      |
| 1977  | 1                   | 3        | 2             | 2       | 11        | 1       | 59      | 79      |
| 1978  | 0                   | 2        | 8             | 4       | 7         | 1       | 50      | 72      |
| 1979  | 0                   | 3        | 7             | 5       | 6.5       | 0       | 46.5    | 68      |
| <i>The Endeavour</i>  |                     |          |               |         |           |         |         |         |
| 1967  | No Data             | No Data  | No Data       | No Data | No Data   | No Data | No Data | No Data |
| 1968  | 0                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 7       | 7       |
| 1969  | 0                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 1         | 1       | 6       | 8       |
| 1970  | 0                   | 1        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 10      | 11      |
| 1971  | 0                   | 0.5      | 0.5           | 0       | 0         | 2       | 2       | 5       |
| 1972  | 1                   | 0        | 1             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 4       | 6       |
| 1973  | 3                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 2       | 13      | 18      |
| 1974  | 2                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 2       | 24      | 28      |
| 1975  | 1                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 1       | 20      | 22      |
| 1976  | 1                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 16      | 17      |
| 1977  | 4                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 2       | 7       | 13      |
| 1978  | 0                   | 0        | 1             | 0       | 0         | 1       | 31      | 33      |
| 1979  | 0                   | 0        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 14      | 14      |
| <i>The Meliorist</i>  |                     |          |               |         |           |         |         |         |
| 1967  | 0                   | 0        | 3             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 0       | 3       |
| 1968  | 0                   | 1        | 0             | 0       | 0         | 0       | 8       | 9       |
| 1969  | 0                   | 0        | 1             | 2       | 0         | 0       | 5       | 8       |
| 1970  | 0                   | 2        | 2             | 0       | 2         | 0       | 3       | 9       |
| 1971  | 0                   | 4        | 8             | 1       | 5         | 0       | 3       | 21      |
| 1972  | 0                   | 0.5      | 3.5           | 2       | 0         | 0       | 17      | 23      |
| 1973  | 0.5                 | 8        | 6             | 1       | 3.5       | 0       | 11      | 30      |
| 1974  | 2                   | 0        | 10            | 0       | 0         | 0       | 35      | 47      |
| 1975  | 0                   | 1        | 5             | 1       | 0         | 1       | 18      | 26      |
| 1976  | 0                   | 1        | 0             | 1       | 2         | 2       | 14      | 20      |
| 1977  | 0                   | 1        | 7             | 0       | 1         | 0       | 14      | 23      |
| 1978  | 1                   | 1        | 8             | 4       | 2         | 0       | 12      | 28      |

|                      |   |   |   |     |     |   |    |    |
|----------------------|---|---|---|-----|-----|---|----|----|
| 1979                 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1   | 0   | 0 | 8  | 12 |
| <i>The Reflector</i> |   |   |   |     |     |   |    |    |
| 1967                 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0   | 0   | 0 | 11 | 13 |
| 1968                 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0   | 0   | 0 | 5  | 6  |
| c.<br>1968/1969      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1   | 1   | 0 | 5  | 8  |
| 1969                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 0 | 8  | 10 |
| c.1970-71            | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0   | 0 | 1  | 1  |
| 1970                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0   | 1 | 1  | 2  |
| c. 1972/73           | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0   | 0 | 2  | 2  |
| 1974                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0   | 0 | 1  | 1  |
| 1976                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0   | 0 | 1  | 1  |
| 1977                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1   | 2   | 0 | 4  | 7  |
| 1978                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2   | 3   | 0 | 7  | 12 |
| 1979                 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0   | 3   | 0 | 3  | 7  |

## Oral History Method of Recruitment & Consent

### Letter of Invitation for Oral History Participants

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am Master of Arts (M.A.) student at the University of Lethbridge. My thesis explores a history of youth and students' reproductive rights activism in Southern Alberta during the 1960s and 1970s. My M.A. supervisor is Dr. Carol Williams, Associate Professor in the Department of History and Women and Gender Studies. Dr. Heidi McDonald (History), Dr. Kristine Alexander (History), and Dr. Suzanne Lennon (Women & Gender Studies) make up my M.A. committee.

I would like to interview you about your memories of your activities related to reproductive rights activism in Southern Alberta. Specifically I am interested in your involvement **in/with** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Organization, Postsecondary school, activist group)** **in** \_\_\_\_\_ **(City/Cities)**. I am particularly interested in your views on this history or other issues you think are relevant to this time and history. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange a meeting at your convenience.

Attached to this letter is the list of questions I intend to ask you when we meet. I estimate that the interview will take one to two hours. I will digitally record our conversation so that no information you provide is lost. I may incorporate, or paraphrase, parts of your impressions of this history into my thesis. I am glad to provide you with of a copy of the chapter(s) drafts where your recollections are used. And, if you're interested, I am glad to provide you with a copy of the thesis once completed. Also attached to this letter is a consent form for your review. The consent form explains all your rights as a participant and I am glad to clarify any of this with you when we meet.

Please contact me at (403)715-2173 or [karissa.patton@uleth.ca](mailto:karissa.patton@uleth.ca) if you agree to be interviewed or have any further questions or concerns. You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Carol Williams at (403)380-1818 or [carol.williams@uleth.ca](mailto:carol.williams@uleth.ca) . The University Of Lethbridge Office Of Research Ethics may be reached at (403)329-2747 or [research.services@uleth.ca](mailto:research.services@uleth.ca) if you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this Master's thesis.

I look forward to interviewing you at your convenience,

Sincerely,

Karissa Patton

*Address*

*Phone number*

*Email*

## Oral History Consent Form



## Oral History Interview & Transcript Release Form

### Project:

**Title: STUDENTS' REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA DURING THE 1960s AND 1970s**  
**By Karissa Patton**

### Purpose:

**This oral history project is part of the Master's Thesis that interviewer Karissa Patton is currently completing at the University of Lethbridge. This thesis examines the history of the youth and students' involvement in the reproductive rights activism of Southern Alberta (Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat) between 1960 and 1979. Using various primary sources, including oral histories, the research will explore various youth and students' activisms that disrupt the perception and historical memory of Southern Alberta as merely religiously, politically, and socially conservative. This research will focus on activists who were students at postsecondary institutions in Southern Alberta.**

### The Interview:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Interviewee) consent for the digital file and transcript of my interview on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) to be stored digitally on a password protected computer and fully transcribed. I understand the purpose of this oral history project and I realize that the information I share with the interviewer is to be used for the purposes of the interviewer's Master's thesis research.

A single interview will be held at the place of your choosing and will last between 1 and 2 hours. Karissa Patton will digitally record the interview. There are no anticipated risks to participating in this project. There is no payment offered for participating in this project.

I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time or may choose not to respond to certain questions without penalty. This Master's thesis conducted by M.A. student Karissa Patton is being supervised by Dr. Carol Williams (Department of History and Women and Gender Studies). If I have any questions or concerns about the research or the conduct of the researcher I am welcome to contact Dr. Williams at (403)380-1818 or by email at [carol.williams@uleth.ca](mailto:carol.williams@uleth.ca), or by mail at Dr. Carol Williams, Associate Professor and Chair of Women and Gender Studies, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, AB, T1K3M4. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research



may be addressed to the Office of Research Ethics, University of Lethbridge (Phone: [403-329-2747](tel:403-329-2747) or Email: [research.services@uleth.ca](mailto:research.services@uleth.ca)).

### **Conditions of Participation:**

Please review the following conditions and options with the interviewer. Feel free to ask questions if they appear unclear.

I will receive sections of Patton's M.A. thesis in which my interview is cited for **my approval and suggested revisions** before the completion of the M.A. thesis. It is important to note that you will be asked to provide feedback to Patton by a specific date to avoid missing significant deadlines in Patton's thesis completion.

In terms of **identification and reproduction of my interview**, I agree to the following conditions:

\_\_\_\_\_ My identity may be revealed in the Master's thesis, any presentations that may result from this thesis, or any further work on this topic by Karissa Patton. A copy of the thesis will be housed in the University of Lethbridge Special Collections in the University Archives. Another copy will be held by Karissa Patton and her thesis supervisor Dr. Carol Williams (Department of History and Women and Gender Studies) and members of Patton's committee, if requested.

\_\_\_\_\_ Should I prefer anonymity, Karissa Patton will agree to utilize a pseudonym throughout the Master's thesis, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, and my identity will not be revealed.

I understand that I will be able to see all sections of the thesis in which I am quoted or referenced to highlight sections where my identity could be determined, as well as make suggestions on how to increase my anonymity. I also understand that the communities of student and women's rights activists in Southern Alberta in the 1960s and 1970s was limited and therefore, even if I choose to use a pseudonym some of the stories or other defining characteristics I share in this interview creates the possibility of identification.

In terms of **storage, transcription, and preservation of this interview**, I agree to the following conditions:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that the digital recording of my interview will be transcribed and utilized by the researcher in her M.A. thesis, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, and stored at the Galt Museum and Archives under the Centre for Oral History and Tradition after the project is completed. In other words my interview and transcript will be stored and **available to future researchers through the Galt Museum and Archives following the completion of Patton's M.A. thesis**. Patton will send me the final version of the transcript to me for approval before submitting my transcript and interview to the archives.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that the digital recording of my interview will be transcribed and

utilized by the researcher in her M.A. thesis, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, and stored at the Galt Museum and Archives under the Centre for Oral History and Tradition after the project is completed. However, I request a hold be put on my interview and transcript where the information **cannot be accessed by future researchers until fifty years after the interview date.** Patton will send me the final version of the transcript to me for approval before submitting my transcript and interview to the archives.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that the digital recording of my interview will be transcribed and utilized by the researcher in her M.A. thesis, and other scholarly and public publications and presentations, but **not deposited into an archive.** In other words, only Karissa Patton and her supervisor, Carol Williams, will have access to my interview and transcript.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like **my interview and transcript to be destroyed** following the completion of Karissa Patton's Master's thesis.

I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

| <u>Interviewer's Contact information</u>  | <u>Interviewee's Contact information</u>                                      |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Karissa Patton</b><br/> <a href="mailto:karissa.patton@uleth.ca">karissa.patton@uleth.ca</a><br/>           (403)715-2173</p> | <p>Name: _____<br/>           Email: _____<br/>           Phone(s): _____</p> |

## **Oral History Interview Questions**

Can you give me a short biography? Where and when you were born?

### **TOPIC 1: Activism & Activity**

Describe the type of reproductive rights activism you were involved with during the 1960s and/or the 1970s.

What do you remember about the reproductive rights organizations/groups/services you were a part of? What was your role in this/these organizations/groups/services?

Please tell me about the purpose or mandate of the reproductive rights organization/group/services you were involved with.

What services did this/these organizations/groups/services and it's/they're volunteers or workers provide?

Was there an age limit or a specific age range that this/these organizations/groups/services served?

In your opinion what impact did this/these organizations/groups/services or any other reproductive health services have on the school and municipal communities?

In your view what was the significance of the reproductive rights organizations/groups/services you were a part of or any other reproductive health services?

#### **1A: Clientele and Community outreach**

Can you describe who you remember being involved in the reproductive rights organizations/groups/ services that you were a part of? Why did they seek this organization/group/service?

Did the reproductive rights organizations/groups/services you were involved in offer any educational outreach beyond serving individual clientele? Can you describe what you remember?

#### **1B: Funding**

Can you describe how you or the organization(s) you were a part of funded your/their reproductive rights activism?

Do you remember ever having trouble getting or maintaining funding?

#### **1C: Community response and relationships**

Tell me what you recall about the community response to the types of reproductive rights activism you were involved with? Or reproductive rights activism in general?

Could you describe a situation (if any) where an institutional power (municipal, university/college administration, medical or community services) supported or censured the activism you were involved in, or any type of reproductive rights activism?

Do you recall any media reports on the reproductive rights activism at any time in this period? Can you describe it?

## **TOPIC 2: Intergenerational Relationships**

Were the reproductive rights organizations/groups/services you were involved with multi-generational? Or were they made up of mostly students and/or youth?

If yes, how would you describe the intergenerational relationships?

Generally speaking (inside and outside your activist communities), how would you describe intergenerational relationships during the 1960s and 1970s?

### **2A: Activism and family/friends/relationships**

How did your involvement with reproductive rights activism affect you? Can you describe any changes you personally experienced?

Did your awareness of women's reproductive rights and sexuality affect you and your family/friends/relationships? If so, how?

Did you ever feel outcast or ostracized because of your involvement in reproductive rights advocacy? If so, can you give examples?

Did you ever feel personally concerned, or socially stigmatized, about being associated with reproductive rights organizations? If so, how so? Can you explain?

## **TOPIC 3: General questions about birth control, abortion, and reproductive rights**

Do you think the issues of birth control and women's reproductive rights are private issues or public issues? Could you expand?

Many people link feminism, or women's rights and reproductive rights. How would you define feminism? Would you define yourself as a feminist then and now?

## **TOPIC 4: Population Control**

What do you remember about population control groups or theories?

Where you involved in any population control groups?

Was the reproductive rights organizations/groups/services you were involved with allied with any population control groups?

Do you remember the 1972 Alberta Governments repeal of the Sexual Sterilization Act? If yes, what do remember?

Was this a prominent topic of discussion in your circles of reproductive rights advocacy? If yes, please explain.

**TOPIC 5: Southern Alberta**

Can you describe the atmosphere or understanding of birth control at that time in Southern Alberta?

**TOPIC 6: Your opinions on reproductive oppression now**

Would you consider birth control still heated issue today? How so?

Has the climate around women's reproductive rights changed? How so?

Have your opinions changed since the 1970s? If so, how so?

**TOPIC 7: Your Stories**

Would you share one of your favourite stories from your activism in the 1960s or 1970s?

Is there anything you would like to add?