

COMMUNITY, CONTRACEPTION, AND CONTROVERSY:
A HISTORY OF THE LETHBRIDGE BIRTH CONTROL AND INFORMATION CENTRE
IN THE 1970S



Figure 1: LBCIC Logo, from the *Meliorist*.

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Figure 2: The Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre, 1974. 542 7th Street South, Lethbridge, Alberta. Photo courtesy of the Galt Museum and Archives, 19901067001.

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ABSTRACT

This honours thesis examines the history of the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre (LBCIC) and the representation and acceptance of it within the community of Lethbridge as well as the Centre's influence on the local community. The LBCIC represents the wider fight for women's reproductive rights, acceptance of all sexualities, and women's equality in the 1970s. This Southern Albertan organization is particularly significant because there is still a regional resistance to accessible contraception and women's reproductive rights. The purpose of this honours thesis is to fill the historical gap and to educate scholars and citizens of Southern Alberta on this significant history of regional women's activism. This research illustrates how the community of Lethbridge was divided in terms of social views, mores and acceptance of the services and education provided by LBCIC. The story of the struggle to establish the LBCIC in Southern Alberta enlarges the history of birth control activism in Canada. Moreover, I hope to inspire continued awareness of the importance of women's reproductive rights through this research. The first chapter, using material from interviews recognizes the organized activism of these five women, and how they raised consciousness about women's reproductive rights in Lethbridge, and Canadian, society during the 1970s. The first chapter also determines that their advocacy widens the national historical narrative on birth control and women's reproductive rights activism by including Southern Albertan, rural, and small town activist experiences. The second chapter investigates letters to Lethbridge City Council during the 1974 LBCIC funding controversy, analyzing public declarations of parental authority to argue against the supporters of the LBCIC. Chapter three discusses the eroding boundaries public/private divide posed by birth control debate.

INTRODUCTION
CANADIAN REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ACTIVISM & THE LBCIC

You know, part of what I learned about social movements is that change happens through social movements. So I think about the student movement in the '60s, and in the '70s it was the feminist movement, and then we started to move into the gay rights movement and the environmental movement and more recently the communications movement... This is where we bring the dialogue out to the public and you get a whole mobilization of people and that's where culture changes. And it's huge. We still need a sexual health culture change.

~ Judy Burgess, 2012

Historians, such as Angus McLaren, have traced women's use of birth control and abortifacients back to ancient times. Women passed on knowledge about herbs, plants, minerals, and procedures that could prevent pregnancy or cause miscarriage.¹ Generation to generation birth control practices were taught and used. However, by the nineteenth century the normative discourses around birth control and abortion shifted; no longer was it acceptable to prevent pregnancy or induce miscarriage. This shift was reinforced and politicized in 1892 when the Canadian government criminalized the use, sale or advertisement of, and education about, birth control. In the same piece of legislation abortion was criminalized as well. The criminalization of birth control and abortion led many desperate women to seek "back street" abortions, which killed thousands due to inadequate care or infection. Moreover, the desperation of these women

¹ Before the late nineteenth century inducing miscarriage was deemed acceptable as long as it proceeded 'quickening' or the stage at which the mother can feel the fetus moving.

often provided opportunity for men, either doctors or other “abortionists,” to sexually and financially exploit the women who sought to abort a fetus.²

In the 1930s Canadians began to advocate against the criminalization of birth control. The strongest arguments during the 1930s birth control movement came from Malthusian and eugenic ideology. For fear of a powerful working class and the idea that the world’s resources could not support high populations, many called for population control of the lower classes or the developing countries of the world. The opposition to birth control similarly argued that contraceptives would cause “race suicide” as the lower classes and immigrants would soon over populate the nation if the middle and upper classes used birth control. The fear of “race suicide” was especially prevalent among English Canadians, as they feared the prominently Catholic Quebecois would take over.³

Despite the public outcry and fears of “race suicide,” married and middle class Canadians were finding ways to limit their family size and sought birth control and abortions to do so. Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren statistically show that abortion was mainly used in the 1930s by married women. Between 1930 and 1939, fifty-seven percent of abortions were performed on married women, twenty-five percent on single women, and eighteen percent on widowed, separated or divorced women. Similarly, the statistics on the age of women who sought abortions showed that seventeen percent of the women were under twenty years of age, fifty-two percent of women were twenty to twenty-nine years of age, twenty-eight percent of women were thirty to thirty-nine, and four percent of women were forty or older.⁴ These

² Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, introduction to *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986).

³ Angus McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920,” *Canadian Historical Review* 3 (1987). And Angus McLaren, *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford: B. Blackwell Press, 1990).

⁴ McLaren and Tigar McLaren, 41-42.

statistics illustrate the want and need for family limitation as the demographic seeking abortions were married women between age twenty and twenty-nine.

Despite continuous demand for family planning methods, abortion and birth control remained illegal until 1967 when an amendment to the criminal code on birth control and abortion was introduced after a Canada wide popular movement by women activists. In 1967 Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau introduced this amendment, but the omnibus bill was not passed. Not until 1969 when Prime Minister Trudeau introduced the amendment a second time did it pass. After the decriminalization of birth control, institutions within the federal government began to change. For example, in 1970 the National Department of Health and Welfare created the new division of Family Planning and access to abortion was embedded in the Health Services Act.⁵ The establishment of government run family planning illustrates the official recognition of birth control as a accessible component of public health services. This is significant because it justifies government funding and supports the principle of public access to birth control through a large, authoritative social institution.

The Canadian women's movement was essential to the decriminalization of birth control in 1969 and the complete decriminalization of abortion in 1988. Women from all over the country began to stand up for their reproductive rights and advocate for the decriminalization of birth control and abortion. Although access to birth control was decriminalized in 1969, abortion was only partially decriminalized. The amendment required any women seeking abortions to present her case to a Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC) made up of doctors who would decide if it was in her best interest to have an abortion.⁶ Women's liberation groups all over the country began advocating for the complete decriminalization of abortion, while also opening and

⁵ McLaren and Tigar McLaren, 134-138.

⁶ Ibid.

running birth control information centres and widening access to birth control. Groups such as the Vancouver Women's Caucus and the provincial and national Committees on the Status of Women advocated for better accessibility and acceptance of birth control and abortion throughout the 1970s.⁷ In 1988 abortion was completely decriminalized and women gained complete control over the decision.

Although birth control was decriminalized, access to resources and services for Canadian women was still limited in certain regions due to socially conservative cultural and community norms. For example, the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre (1973-1978) endeavoured to increase access to, information on, and community acceptability of birth control and abortion. The Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre (LBCIC) brought birth control and sexuality information and education to the citizens of Lethbridge through individual counselling, information access (pamphlets, books, videos), and outreach education. The LBCIC also provided sexual abuse counselling and prenatal care for single mothers. The University of Lethbridge founded in 1967 supplied a large progressive community of faculty, staff, and students who supported and advocated for the LBCIC. However, like many birth control centres at the time, the LBCIC faced obstacles and controversies. The LBCIC was located at the heart of Southern Alberta, which was described as "one of the most conservative places in all of Canada."⁸ The great religious conservatism⁹ in Lethbridge and surrounding areas meant the LBCIC faced significant public opposition. The LBCIC was, however, significant in providing increased access to, and education on, birth control and sexuality in Southern Alberta, affording an opportunity for women to access reproductive rights in an area where it would have been next to impossible before.

⁷ Judy Rebick, *One Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Penguin Canada, 2005).

⁸ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

⁹ See Appendix.

Although the activity of the LBCIC is influential to birth control, abortion, and sexuality activism in the Southern Albertan region it has, much like all reproductive rights activism in Alberta, been neglected in the historical literature and memory of the Canadian women's movement. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to include the LBCIC and the women involved in its organization and maintenance in Canadian history and memory. Using a feminist framework, I have focused mainly on primary source analysis as there was an excellent amount of letters and news articles on the LBCIC, and because of the absence of secondary sources on the topic of the LBCIC or women's reproductive activism in Alberta. I conducted oral history interviews with five women involved with the LBCIC to gain information about the origins and structures of the organization and all those involved. The first chapter, using material from interviews recognizes the organized activism of these five women, and discusses how they raised consciousness about women's reproductive rights in Lethbridge, and Canadian, society during the 1970s. The first chapter also determines that their advocacy widens the national historical narrative on birth control and women's reproductive rights activism by including Southern Albertan, rural, and small town activist experiences. The second chapter investigates letters to Lethbridge City Council during the 1974 LBCIC funding controversy, analyzing public declarations of parental authority to argue against the support for the LBCIC. Chapter three discusses the eroding boundaries public/private divide posed by birth control debate.

CHAPTER ONE
***COMMUNITY, CONTRACEPTION, AND CONTROVERSY:
 ORAL HISTORIES OF THE LBCIC***



Figure 3: Lethbridge Women's Liberation Group Campout, June 1, 1973. Photo courtesy of Rita Moir.

Back (left to right): Bev Johnson, Dee Bell, Luba Lisun, Karen [Last Name Unknown];
 Middle row (left to right): Marg Koep, Frances (Isobel) Isaakson, Rita Moir;
 Front (left to right): Judy Burgess, Bev [Last Name Unknown], Addie Miron.

This chapter specifically focuses on women's reproductive activism in Southern Alberta situating its relevance within the larger Canadian historical narrative on birth control as discussed by historians such as McLaren and Tigar-McLaren, Comacchio, Roach Pierson, and Sethna. The Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre (LBCIC) has been absent from the national historical narrative as has Southern Albertan women's activism in the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter contributes to the small amount of research on regional activism in the 1960s and 1970s thereby providing an opportunity for activists involved, or associated with the LBCIC to share their stories. This study of the LBCIC and the women involved will increase the visibility

of women's reproductive rights activism in Southern Alberta in the historical literature, and enhance the existing literature on the Canadian women's movement.

The emergence of women's history and oral history in the 1960s and 1970s as a valuable primary source and method generated major shifts in the discipline of history and ultimately arose from the emergence of historical interest on controversial and marginalized topics and regions. Women, formerly marginalized, were brought into the historical narrative as many scholars rewrote the history of women's unique experiences. Many women's and feminist historians continue to fill the gaps in the historical literature. However, the historical research on the Canadian women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s largely focuses on central Canada and Vancouver, leaving out activism in the Maritime and Prairie Provinces, as well as the territories. For example, McLaren and Tigar-McLaren's *Bedroom and the State* focuses on central Canada and Vancouver in some cases completely leaving Alberta out of statistics.¹⁰ Moreover, they have referred to national and other provincial statistics on birth control and abortion and therefore, had access to the Albertan statistics but fail to include them. Rebick's chronicle of the Canadian women's movement, *Ten Thousand Roses*,¹¹ also concerns activism in Central Canada and Vancouver. She mentions events such as, the abortion caravan reception in Calgary, but does not deepen the analysis of activism within the province. To date, only Beth Palmer has written on Alberta's reproductive rights activism in "'Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages': Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s."¹² Her article investigates the Calgary Birth Control

¹⁰ Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State* (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart Limited, 1986), 18.

¹¹ Judy Rebick, "The Women are Coming: The Abortion Caravan," in *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005).

¹² Beth Palmer, "'Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages': Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s" *Canadian Historical Review* 92 (December, 2011).

Association's (CBCA) role in organizing abortions across the border for Calgarian women during the 1970s.

Oral histories are essential to capturing the regional accounts of women's experiences. As a methodology, oral history records the women's experiences and stories in their own words and through individual perspectives. As women's historian Ruth Roach Pierson states many feminist historians have been drawn to "oral history as the methodology" because the method promises "to bring the researcher closest to the 'reality' of women's lives."¹³ Roach Pierson argues that oral history best captures women's experiences because the individual describes her own experiences in her own voice. Kristina Minster encourages oral history practices to allow historians to "hear what women deem essential to their lives."¹⁴ Similarly, Valerie J. Janesick argues that oral histories help scholars "preserve more than a bureaucratic account of a person's life."¹⁵ Minster and Janesick argue that oral history affords information about women's experiences in ways other sources cannot; oral history provides the opportunity for the narrator to record what she feels is significant and needs to be shared.

Has activism in Alberta been overlooked and passed over by scholars because of the Province's seemingly conservative reputation? Known as the most conservative province in Canada, Alberta is commonly overlooked as significant to the history of women's activism, the two exceptions being the Persons Case in 1929 and prairie women granted the right to own property in 1922 (for married women). I believe, however, that if the current and historical

¹³ Ruth Roach Pierson, "Experience, Difference, Dominance, and Voice in the Writing of Canadian Women's History," in *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, eds. Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, and Jane Rendall, 79-107: (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 91.

¹⁴ Kristina Minster, "A Feminist Frame for the Oral History Interview," in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, 27-41 (New York: Routledge Publishing, 1991) 30-31.

¹⁵ Valerie J. Janesick, *Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher: Choreographing the Story* (New York & London: Guilford Press, 2010): 15.

narrative of Albertan women’s rights activism is overlooked and ignored, Southern Albertan women activists are erroneously not celebrated with the rest of our nation’s women’s rights activists. Therefore, the inclusion of specific stories of Southern Albertan birth control activism, as embodied by the LBCIC, is overdue. Smaller cities and regions, such as Lethbridge, and Southern Alberta may be passed over in women’s reproductive rights history for two additional reasons. First, while Lethbridge is urban it is surrounded and influenced by many small rural religiously conservative communities such as Cardston, a predominantly Mormon town south of Lethbridge. Secondly, this religious conservatism and rural influence emphasizes events and activism in larger urban centres such as Calgary and Edmonton. Therefore, Southern Alberta is virtually invisible in the national investigation of reproductive rights history. Therefore, the study of reproductive rights activism in Lethbridge as demonstrated by the LBCIC is significant. The experiences of women involved in the formation of the second wave of Canada’s women’s movement and their concerns in this region deserve dedicated attention.

By sharing the stories of five women who were involved with the organization of, or impacted by, the LBCIC my research recognizes the organized activism of these five women, and how they influenced change in Lethbridge, and Canadian, society during the 1970s. This chapter also recognizes that their advocacy enhances the national historical narrative on birth control and women’s reproductive rights activism by including Southern Albertan, rural, and small town activist experiences.

The five women I interviewed for this research include Judy Burgess, Rita Moir, Lynne Van Luven, Terri Forbis, and Barbara Lacey, all of whom were involved with the LBCIC or some aspect of reproductive rights activism in Lethbridge, Alberta during the 1970s. Judy Burgess was a young Nursing student when she established the LBCIC in 1972. She ran the

centre until 1975 and later became a board member. Rita Moir, a student activist and the editor of the *Meliorist*, volunteered and advocated for the LBCIC and many other women's liberation causes in Lethbridge during the 1970s. Lynne Van Luven worked at the *Lethbridge Herald* as the family editor and was active in the Lethbridge women's liberation group during the 1970s. Terri Forbis started and ran the Family Planning Centre (est. 1979) after the LBCIC lost its funding and closed. Dr. Barbara Lacey supported the LBCIC and referred patients to them during the 1970s. She was also an advocate for sexual education to become part of the public school curriculum.

Three themes provide focus for this chapter: community, contraception, and controversy. All five participants discussed these topics. "Community" implies the women's interaction with the city's main players and organizations involved in the founding and funding of the LBCIC and how these forces cumulatively contributed to the centre's success. "Contraception" highlights the opinions of the five women interviewed on the policies and attitudes around birth control in 1970s Lethbridge. The "contraception" section also reviews the significance and influence of the LBCIC on the transformation of the Lethbridge community's attitudes toward birth control, and discusses the evolution of birth control and reproductive rights in the city during and after the establishment of the LBCIC. "Controversy" describes public anxiety, religious resistance, and popular push back regarding the municipal funding of, and the public access to services provided by the LBCIC. The controversy over municipal funding of the LBCIC is further developed in the third section of this chapter and in chapter two.

Community

The LBCIC as an entity consisted of a few main constituents, professional associations, and loosely defined student and feminist groups that supported the organization and advanced the cause of open access to reproductive health services including: birth control and abortion referrals, birth control, abortion, and sexuality information, as well as reproductive rights and sexuality education. The women I interviewed who were involved in the LBCIC and the birth control movement during the 1970s all discuss the support they received from their feminist colleagues in the women's liberation (liberation) group; student activists; and the progressive professionals (including doctors, nurses, teachers, school principals, and city employees). The interviewees also discuss the combined strength of the women's liberation and student communities. Judy Burgess and Rita Moir described the Lethbridge women's liberation group as a multi-generational, feminist, "large talking group"¹⁶ that met periodically to discuss women's issues and activism in Lethbridge. Van Luven remembers, "the thing is though, and in any community you make your own sub-community so we women who were active in the birth control movement and in the women's centre then, we had our own community and we hung out together."¹⁷ Rita Moir explains that the "Women's liberation group in Lethbridge... And I don't know if you've heard of that group but that was really, really a powerful group of women of all ages from you know I was twenty, I guess when I moved to Lethbridge, and there were women in that group from their twenties to their seventies or eighties."¹⁸

Student activists additionally made up a large part of the LBCIC's support system during the 1970s. Student activists mostly associated with the university, but also from Lethbridge

¹⁶ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

¹⁷ Lynne VanLuven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript.

¹⁸ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

Community College, and the Galt School of Nursing supported the LBCIC. Rita Moir recalls the student support for women's issues and the LBCIC,

“You know, it was part of a whole effervescence and revolutionary times of those years. So there were a lot of student activists, the newspaper [the *Meliorist*] was a student activist newspaper, as all the [student] papers were across the country, and so we supported and actively supported places like the Birth Control and Information Centre.”¹⁹

Feminists and students collectively made up the largest realm of support for the LBCIC. Lynne Van Luven describes her experience of becoming an activist in Lethbridge. She states, “I got involved with the Women's Centre and all of the other kind of activist stuff when I moved there probably around 1973. And so that was the time I met Rita Moir, and that was the time that we worked on both the Women's Centre and the birth control project.”²⁰ Van Luven's experience is similar to many other young women who became involved in the women's liberation collective in Lethbridge with volunteer work at Women's Place, the local women's centre. Her activism at Women's Place was entwined with activism in the LBCIC, the larger national birth control movement, and other women's causes in Lethbridge.

Moir, like Burgess and Van Luven, remembers the strength of combining feminist and student communities,

and, you know, one of your questions was did I ever feel ostracized, or any of that, and I would say no because we had such a broad base within our women's movement in Lethbridge, like I said, you know, women from their – women who had lived through much tougher years than we had were older women who were part of our organization and they had stood up for women's rights in much harder years and were much earlier feminists than we were and they were with us and we were all together and we were learning from each other and supporting each other.²¹

¹⁹ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

²⁰ Lynne VanLuven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript.

²¹ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

Burgess, Van Luven, and Moir all agree that the strength of their community, united by the cause of reproductive rights and the birth control movement, exceeded that of the public push back and any controversy that came along while the LBCIC was open.

Some progressive professionals (select doctors, nurses, teachers, school principals, and city employees) and established organizations also supported the LBCIC for its dedication to women’s health. Doctors in Lethbridge, including interview subject Dr. Barbara Lacey, recognized the need for a birth control center in Lethbridge and supported the movement through referrals for birth control and abortions.

The coalition of student and feminist communities in Lethbridge established support for women’s issues and causes like the LBCIC. The two groups agreed on many political debates and similarly committed to common causes. Rita Moir highlights the revolutionary nature of the 1970s and how student and feminist activism converged. She recalls the cooperation of the women’s liberation group with the student community, “we had that [feminist] base in the community as well as within the university community and so-so we had quite – and we were young and spirited.”²² Moir believes that youth found unity and community in women’s issues and human rights activism during a time of widespread change. Historian Doug Owram explains that many student groups across Canada advocated for birth control and participated in the larger national civil disobedience associated with the student and women’s movements.

As early as [sic] 1965 an unofficial student group at the university of British Columbia defied the law, the administration, and their own student government by offering information on birth control. The next year students at McGill were holding sessions on the issue. Other campuses followed within the academic year. In the face of such grassroots demand, student governments soon took up the cause [reproductive rights].²³

²² Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

²³ 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.

Owram emphasizes the connection between student activists and women's liberation activists to which Burgess, Moir, and Van Luven refer. Owram and Christabelle Sethna both acknowledge the value of these coalitions and provide examples of student and women's liberation alliance from the formation of Vancouver Women's Caucus (1968-1971) and the development of the McGill Birth Control Handbook (1968).²⁴ Both acknowledge that neither students nor women's liberation groups could mobilize decriminalization independently; a vocal coalition of student and feminist was needed to achieve their goals of legal access to contraception for all.

Further, as Judy Burgess explained, these coalitions organized not only for access to reproductive health services but in search of support, fun, and friendship: "it was kind of fun as a young person to be involved with ... a lot of student activity..."²⁵ Burgess' statement discusses the genuine political commitment and raised consciousness of young feminists and students found in supporting women's issues and discusses a substantial population of student and feminist activists.

While the cohort of young activists was large and strong in terms of unity and support, their youth and perceived radical attitudes caused many to dismiss their access to contraception. For example, Ray Keitges, in a letter to City Council in 1974, stated, "As a realist I believe that if society demands that birth control (conception) information should be given to unmarried teenagers, then a clinic operated by medical doctors (and never by hippie type unqualified persons) is the only proper answer."²⁶ Similarly, one parent wrote to City Council stating, "I do not want

²⁴ Owram, "Sexual Revolutions," 265-266. And Christabelle Sethna, "The Evolution of the *Birth Control Handbook: From Student Peer-Education Manual to Feminist Self-empowerment Text, 1968-1975*, in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* edited by Mona Gleason, Tamara Myers, and Adele Perry (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁵ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

²⁶ Ray Keitges, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

my children taught by a bunch of hippys [sic] or second class people that run this center.”²⁷

Keitges categorizes young student and feminist activists as “hippy types” who supported the LBCIC in order to discredit their authority. The second writers use of “second class people” reinforces the perceived need for more credible or “first class people” to distribute birth control. The coalition of women’s liberation and student activists also caused some Lethbridge citizens to blame the recently established University of Lethbridge (est. 1967) and those associated with students and activists for the new “radicalism” in the City. For example, Louis J. Krammer and M. Krammer isolates the university as source of discontent in their letter to City Council.

Now we learn that the University people are the strongest advocates of the centre [LBCIC]. As parents we were thrilled when we got our own University here at home. However, in the few short years the U of L has been in operation, there are so many processes to hasten the deterioration of the morals of the students. Consequently we are forced to send our children at far greater expense to another university. It would seem as that if we wanted to attract students from this area to the U of L that an attempt must be made to “clean up the Campus”²⁸

The Krammers’ letter illustrates how they perceived “radicalism” of students and others linked with the U of L.

The politics of the combined group of vocal young feminists and students earned greater credibility once local medical and educational professionals was mobilized in favour of the cause. Moir argues that the authority of the medical and professional supporters was what gave the movement, the young radicals, and the centre credibility, therefore, leading to the opening and the municipal funding of the LBCIC. As Moir explains, when student and feminist enthusiasm and numbers merged with reputable Lethbridge professionals’ the overall argument for the LBCIC was not only heard but also perceived as more trustworthy. Moreover, she explains that the medical community was recruited by young radicals to join the cause.

²⁷ Name Indiscernible, letter to Lethbridge City Council, c. March-April, 1974.

²⁸ Louis J. Krammer and M. Krammer, letter to Lethbridge City council, April 1, 1974.

...there was enough of us both in the university community and the Lethbridge community itself to um, you know, rally support for this centre. And when there was opposition we were able to reach out – I say we but, you know, it was more people like Judy Burgess and people like that were able to reach out to the medical community, which finally stood up in support of the centre and was able to change City Council's mind about it because I think City Council had to see that there were people with, you know, big time credentials who were supporting the centre.²⁹

Both Judy Burgess and Terri Forbis explain that professionals recognized the public need for sexual health services. Burgess explained the influential professionals involved with the LBCIC were essential to its success,

And at the front end when we were trying to open up and we certainly couldn't have done it as a group of young people, that would have been impossible. It was really the champions who were influential people in the community. . . . And they really stepped up, right. They were stepping out of their peer group and saying, you know, they committed to sharing birth control and sexuality information [with] young people and that they believed in women's rights, so. It was cool.³⁰

Many professionals joined the birth control movement and supported the LBCIC because they recognized the need for better women's health and sought to improve it. Burgess states, "I got to know a couple of the gynecologists who were very interested in supporting women's health... because they were seeing the fallout of it: unwanted pregnancies and what not."³¹ Terri Forbis, who ran Lethbridge's sexual health services at the Family Planning Centre in 1979 once the LBCIC closed in 1978, found solidarity with "other professionals who were seeing the same kids or the same families with issues. That were seeing the same bad decisions being made and the lack of information and how that was affecting young people and not just young people, older women too. I had clients that were forty-four years old that had so little information about their

²⁹ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

³⁰ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

³¹ Ibid.

bodies and about reproduction and what was happening.”³² As Burgess observed, support from young activists alone was deemed too radical to gain wider city support. She, like Moir, reinforces that it was the support and advocacy of local professionals, doctors and nurses specifically, that really won the City’s approval to fund, and, therefore, initially safeguarded the LBCIC.

One of the first doctors to publicly recognize the need to improve women’s access to reproductive health was Dr. Lloyd Johnston. Dr. Johnston not only supported the LBCIC but helped Burgess found the center. Like Burgess and Moir, Johnston also recognized that medical professional support was essential for political credibility with the municipality. Furthermore, he assumed the role as public spokesperson for the LBCIC on behalf of medical professionals and city employees. Johnston also recruited other doctors including Dr. Robert Hall. Burgess and Johnston understood that influential and reputable figures, like Hall, were key to the success and required to widen public support for the LBCIC. Therefore, Burgess and Johnston began choosing their colleagues strategically to enhance the centre’s integrity. Their strategies included recruiting city employees to join the LBCIC’s Board of Directors. As Burgess recalls,

[T]he board of directors had to be very strategic people because we were working against all odds. ... so we needed to have a board of directors that was very influential. And I don’t recall them all ... But I do remember there – Lloyd Johnston was on the board, Robert Hall was on the board. The city manager was on the board: Tom Nutting I think was his name. ... And there was a principal of one of the high schools that was on the board – he was very influential too.³³

Inviting influential professionals to join the LBCIC board illustrates that credibility was considered essential to the success of the centre. Moreover, according to the times most of the

³² Terri Forbis, interview by Karissa Patton, January 24, 2013, transcript.

³³ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

professionals in Lethbridge were men, and therefore, masculine authority was significant to the LBCIC.

Burgess claimed her youth and appearance undermined her authority as head of the LBCIC. As a consequence she and the board members agreed to hire Claranne (Tinky) Bush, a young academic professional with a PhD in Physiology to increase the centre's credibility. Burgess recalls, "Well we got the money for an additional staff person and I looked like I was about fifteen of course and they needed somebody that had a more reputable look ... she had a *PhD* in Physiology so she had that knowledge. ... So it was just fine."³⁴ Burgess understood the need for a combination of feminist commitment *and* professional credentials to guarantee success. As she says, "we did well together ... I had the feminist enthusiasm and she [Tinky] had the grounded knowledge and, you know, the academic reputation."³⁵

The combined assets of the young activists and the medical professionals created a strong collective. Nonetheless, medical and teaching professionals involved with the LBCIC did not always self-identify as feminist. Nor were feminists involved in the centre always perceived by local professionals and city employees as professional or knowledgeable. While not self-declared feminists, those working professionals and doctors who supported the centre held unique views within Lethbridge. As Burgess recalls, "both Dr. Johnston and Hall were pro-choice. And they were kind of standing out there on a limb by themselves."³⁶ Johnston and Hall's support for women's reproductive rights within Lethbridge's medical community illustrates the essential bond between the young activists and the professional supporters. Both constituents and doctors representing women's health and feminists advocating for women's reproductive rights had to be jointly represented with in the LBCIC to succeed.

³⁴ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Once reputable doctors and other professional figures from city schools, clinics, and government threw their support behind the reproductive rights mandate of the LBCIC, respectability followed and other individuals and organizations joined the campaign. Van Luven remembers one organization that supported the birth control movement, “there was a very progressive, something called a community council there. Community Social Services. ... and those people were supportive. So it wasn’t that we didn’t have any support within the community, we did amongst many of the social agencies.”³⁷

While gaining the authority and credentials of professionals’ support of the birth control movements granted the LBCIC credibility with the municipality, it was the strength of the feminist and student coalition that initially recruited Lethbridge residents and harnessed moral support from a wider population. The subsequent controversy over the municipal funding of the LBCIC played out in the public arena and in City Council, also consolidated moral support for the campaign. Burgess, Moir, and Van Luven all explained that the strength of their communities ultimately overwhelmed any protest or push-back from more conservative citizens as expressed in letters to the city council and local media. As Burgess recalls “there was always a group of people to support you. And I really felt supported...”³⁸ This controversy is discussed to a greater extent in chapter two and chapter three.

Contraception

The LBCIC fed an appetite for access to information on contraception and sexuality. The women interviewed all discussed the significance of the LBCIC in the progressive evolution of the regional attitudes towards, and access to, women’s reproductive rights. Moir described the

³⁷ Lynne VanLuven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript.

³⁸ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

LBCIC as a “tremendous service being offered to women of all ages.”³⁹ She emphasized the importance of the LBCIC and reproductive rights activism in the 1970s: “for us as young women and women dealing with issues of birth control, and rape, and unwanted pregnancy we were – you know, it sounds melodramatic, but we were fighting for our lives, our futures.”⁴⁰ As Moir explains the LBCIC was significant because it transferred the issues of women’s reproductive rights from the private sphere into the public sphere to reinforce women’s and men’s right to information and education about their bodies and sexuality. Forbis, like Moir recalls expression of public need, and desire, for sexual health information:

People need information. People were hungry for information, there was no internet. There was very little even print material in the library available for people to – the Kinsey studies for people were like a huge big deal, right. Or Woody Allen movies were he actually started introducing sex into movies and providing people with information about sexual functioning and relationships, and it was just so not talked about anywhere that people were really hungry for it, really hungry for it. But they still had to get it served, like under the table and, you know. That’s why the Birth Control and Information Centre was so controversial – this was really putting on the table, things that we now joke about in coffee rooms and talk openly about.⁴¹

Forbis affirms that the service the LBCIC provided to Lethbridge citizens who wanted information was essential. People wanted and needed information on birth control but also, as Forbis recognized, the LBCIC was the first organization to offer this information in the region. As such the LBCIC was seen as radical.

Forbis suggests that organizations like the LBCIC significantly changed the discourse around contraception, sexual health, and reproductive rights.

And the other thing that is really different and unique is at that time there were so few of us that had any skill set in how to talk about sexuality that we were really sought after by different professional groups and agencies that didn’t have that skill set and wanted – it’s not the same. Now everybody talks about sexuality. It’s integrated into your therapy sessions it’s integrated into your education sessions. So there’s way more people who are

³⁹ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

⁴⁰ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

⁴¹ Terri Forbis, interview by Karissa Patton, January 24, 2013, transcript.

capable of that skill set, it's not unique anymore. It used to be kind of a specialty, a skill set.⁴²

Forbis notes that in the 1970s there was a public need for improved sex education and, therefore, those who taught, promoted, or worked in sexual and reproductive health necessarily became specialists. Historians John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman affirm the radical transformation in talking about sex caused by reproductive rights activists in the 1970s, “[n]o longer merely something you did in bed, sex served to define a mode of living, both private and public, that encompassed a wide range of activities and relationships.”⁴³

Sex education in public schools also contributed to this transformation in how sex was perceived or discussed. Barbara Lacey, a doctor who advocated for improved sexual education in public schools, describes the evolution of the human sexuality curriculum during the 1970s:

there was a move in the – trying to think when it was – it must have been the early/mid-seventies, to increase the health curriculum or introduce a new curriculum into the school system, which would deal with things like interpersonal relationships and, you know, just general natural maturation things and sexuality, and – oh there were whole-exercise and nutrition and – I think it ended up being called C.A.L.M. [Career And Life Management] ... So, I got involved with that group through the parent councils. And then – and sort of got into the debate about teaching sexuality in schools.⁴⁴

As Lacey discussed, the evolution of sexual education, like the evolution of increasingly positive public reception for reproductive rights, was ignited by women's activism in Lethbridge and beyond. But the fight to establish the LBCIC changed the regional expectations of how sex education was delivered.

The LBCIC contributed to the increasingly positive public conversation about information and education on reproductive rights, but has the dialogue around contraception, sexuality, and sexual health really improved or broadened since the 1970s? All five women

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ John D'Emilio, and Estelle B. Freedman, “Sexual Revolutions,” in *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989), 323.

⁴⁴ Barbara Lacey, interview by Karissa Patton, February 11, 2013, transcript.

indicated the superficial or moderate improvement of the discourse around sexuality and contraception since the 1970s and, therefore, recognize the return to more conservative conversations about, and ads for, contraception and sexuality in the media today. However, all believe that there still remains a need for improvement in education or informed awareness on contraception, sexuality, and sexual health in contemporary homes, in schools, and public spaces. Judy Burgess explains, “certainly the climate around relationships is still undercover. ... Um, yeah. And the fact that we’re still not talking to young people. ... You know, we’re giving them HPV shots at nine years old but we’re not talking to them about sexual health, it is mind boggling.”⁴⁵ Burgess, in accord with others interviewed, recognizes that popular and media driven discussion around contraception and sexuality has only moderately expanded. All felt that despite the activism of the ‘70s the topics of contraception, reproductive rights, and sexuality remain controversial. In other words, many of them felt that the activism around reproductive rights declined after the 1970s, leaving room for the opposition to women’s rights to fight back. Moir expresses the decline in activism, “[I]n the women’s movement, you never finish. You never finish.”⁴⁶

Controversy

All five women discussed the subsequent public protest and the controversies that occurred when the LBCIC opened and brought the full-fledged birth control movement to the citizens of Lethbridge. The women recollect the public anxiety around the LBCIC in the city that began shortly after the centre came into existence. Moir recalls, the public apprehension about

⁴⁵ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

⁴⁶ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

“promoting promiscuity” and “teen sexuality or irresponsible sexuality.”⁴⁷ For example, some citizens referred to the LBCIC and the literature they distributed as immoral, others, like letter writer Rosemary R. Edmunds went as far to say, “The literature made available with regard to this project is obscene. We should all be enraged at such pornographic material being available to adults, let alone children.”⁴⁸ Forbis remembers concerns such as “about sex education and, ‘what are you saying to our kids? And what about values? What values are you going to be imparting? You’re-you know, you’re going to be telling our kids it’s ok to have sex. And if you talk about birth control they’re going to want to go out and do it. And we want you to be abstinence only. And well, and then what about the abortion issue? Are you going to be talking about abortion?’”⁴⁹ Moir and Forbis both recollect the social anxiety and fears expressed around contraceptive and sexuality education and information that eventually led to heightened public protest in Lethbridge.

The women interviewed attribute the public protest and controversy against the LBCIC and the birth control movement to the city’s and region’s overall religious and political conservatism. As Moir states, “we’re talking about Southern Alberta, which is one of the most conservative places in all of Canada.”⁵⁰ She suggests that the Lethbridge struggle for the LBCIC and reproductive rights occurred in one of the most religiously conservative regions in the country. Forbis, similarly, recalls the public manifestation of conservatism and patriarchy in Lethbridge and how such conditions made the LBCIC vulnerable to attack:

They [LBCIC] were really – at that time they were extremely controversial and therefore, they were vulnerable, they were vulnerable to the political winds and the people who had a lot of control, a lot of older, middle-aged men who had control over what services were

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Rosemary R. Edmunds, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

⁴⁹ Terri Forbis, interview by Karissa Patton, January 24, 2013, transcript.

⁵⁰ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

being delivered. And that's just who was there at the time. I mean, I had just as much flack from women though, you know, like it wasn't limited to men.⁵¹

The strongest component of the public protest, all five agreed, came from a vocal component of conservative religious communities in Lethbridge and surrounding rural areas. All five women identified the Catholic and Mormon communities as most resistant to the LBCIC and the birth control movement and these two communities fueled the letter campaigns protesting the LBCIC in 1974 (as discussed in chapters two and three). Burgess recalls, "we were working in a community that was largely Catholic and Mormon. So the religious politics were significant for us."⁵² Religious groups attempted to close the LBCIC through vocal and written opposition. Van Luven also addressed the impact of religious conservatism: "Well and that's always an issue in a community where there is such a strong presence of a conservative Church. I mean, it's really hard to break through that."⁵³ Barbara Lacey similarly recalls how Catholic and Mormon communities affected not only access to birth control via the LBCIC but the impeded advances in corresponding sex education movement she was actively involved in: "And the argument was that we weren't supposed to talk about contraception until people were married. It was the just say no movement, you know, which is still very strong."⁵⁴

However, the most controversial element resistant to the LBCIC and the birth control movement became the so called "Community Services Advisory Committee" (CSAC). In 1974 the CSAC introduced the recommendation to pull municipal funding for the LBCIC one year after the LBCIC was established. Burgess remembers resistance emerging from "a group of women, you know, largely with religious affiliations that would have been involved with that. And they – that may have-it may have been all the push back from them and then there was a

⁵¹ Terri Forbis, interview by Karissa Patton, January 24, 2013, transcript.

⁵² Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

⁵³ Lynne VanLuven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript.

⁵⁴ Barbara Lacey, interview by Karissa Patton, February 11, 2013, transcript. Also see Appendix.

committee of the city – the Community Committee may have been the city committee that recommended that the funding not be renewed.”⁵⁵ Burgess links, what Moir described as, “religious fanaticism” of the Lethbridge counter campaign to the CSAC who initiated the funding controversy of 1974. Van Luven recalls the public municipal meeting where Lethbridge citizen’s voiced their opinions on the municipal funding of the LBCIC:

I just remember the tone at the meeting was really hostile and demeaning and that there were people speaking up in support but they were in the minority. That’s all I remember, I’m sorry. I just remember feeling that the hostility was so strong and yet – and it was coming mainly from men and I kept thinking, but how is this in anyway hurting them. You know what I mean. And that was kind of perplexing to me. Perplexing that they could be so angry and so vitriolic when in fact, it had nothing to do with their bodies and that was always at that time particularly, you know, women’s bodies were seen as a public, rather than a private commodity. You know, I could just never understand that. I still can’t understand it.⁵⁶

Van Luven describes the paternalistic tone of the meeting and its influence on the funding controversy more generally. She argues that the majority of men at the meeting, and the nature of these men’s arguments, reinforced the conservative and religious attitudes that dominated the municipality. However, Van Luven suggested that the attitudes expressed at the meeting and the general controversy strengthened her resolve along with the resolve of the other feminist and student activists in Lethbridge to advocate for women’s reproductive rights.

Despite the protest and resistance staged by the campaigns of the CSAC against the LBCIC the communities of feminists and students remained strong favouring access to reproductive health services and education. In fact, Moir, Van Luven, and Burgess all remember overcoming controversies, like the 1974 recommendation to pull municipal funding, with the unyielding affirmation of their cohorts of feminists and students. I quote Moir once more to emphasize the strength of community she felt, “you know, one of your questions was did I ever

⁵⁵ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

⁵⁶ Lynne VanLuven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript.

feel ostracized, or any of that, and would say no because we had such a broad base within our women's movement in Lethbridge."⁵⁷ Moir is confident that the coalition of student and feminist activists was stronger than any social anxiety, public push back, or controversy that emerged during the 1970s. She believes that the strength of the Lethbridge women's liberation group and the university and college student activists significantly outweighed the efforts to stop the birth control movement by the CSAC or any other organization or individual.

Each woman I interviewed described the rising social anxiety and the organized push back and protest against the services provided by the LBCIC. However, the conversations about the controversy around the LBCIC were overshadowed by their affirmations of the strong communities and the importance of the LBCIC, the services it provided, and the larger international fight for reproductive health and education it represented. I have, therefore, deliberately put the section on controversy at the end of this chapter because, in my mind, it represents the women's narratives where community and contraception came first.

⁵⁷ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2013, transcript.

CHAPTER TWO
“AS A PARENT”:
PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHORITY ON THE ISSUE OF BIRTH CONTROL

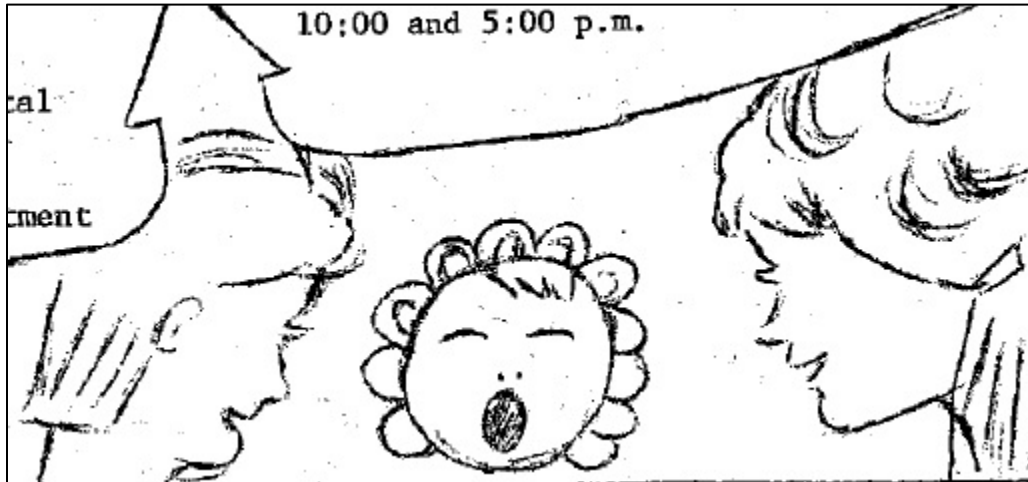


Figure 4: Graphic from Lethbridge Women’s Centre Newsletter, *UP*, September 10, 1974. Newsletter courtesy of Rita Moir.

In March 1974 the “Community Services Advisory Committee” (CSAC) recommended that Lethbridge City Council end all municipal funding for the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre (LBCIC). The CSAC, made up of volunteers, argued that the LBCIC was immoral and corrupting Lethbridge youth, and were aware that once municipal funding was pulled from the LBCIC any corresponding provincial and federal monies would also be withdrawn and as a consequence the LBCIC would close. Using the *Meliorist* as a source, Rita Moir recalls the gravity of this situation, “the city gave twenty per cent and the province gave eighty. Something like that... I saw in one of the [Meliorist] articles. ... “if the city approves funding, it provides twenty per cent of the funds for one year. The grant comes from ...

preventive social services, the province providing eighty per cent if the city approves the project.”... So, you know, if the city didn’t approve, then the province wasn’t going to.”⁵⁸ Letters and petitions supporting the LBCIC were sent to Mayor Anderson and City Council by Lethbridge citizens urging them to continue funding the LBCIC. City Council was also flooded with letters that called for municipal funding to be pulled and for the permanent closure of the LBCIC. Many of those opposing the LBCIC wrote in using their authority “as a parent” in an attempt to qualify their opinions and arguments. Moreover, the assertion of their authority as parents and their want for control arose from their attempts to preserve traditional and religious morals and ideals.

Table 1: Parents and parent supporters in letters to City Council, 1974

	Letters of support	%	Letters of opposition	%
Total Number of letters	35	N/A	138	N/A
Letters that make arguments that support their position*	35	100	78	56.52
Authors that identify as parents	3	8.57	21	15.22 (26.92)*
Authors who mention parents as main educators	0	0	17	12.32 (21.79)*
Total of writers who identify as parents, and writers who mention parents should be primary educators	3	8.57	38	27.54 (48.71)*

*The percentage in parentheses was calculated with the total number of letters that made arguments, while the numbers without parentheses were calculated using the overall total number of letters.

⁵⁸ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

There is very strong evidence that many letters of protest were the products of organized letter campaigns, possibly from religious or community groups. For example, there are groups of letters organized together in the archival fond at the Galt Museum and Archives of uniform paper identical in colour and size with what looks like three different coloured pens, and, most importantly, all uniformly dated on either April 1st, 2nd, or 3rd of 1974. The writers who participated in these later campaigns often wrote short, one to two sentences, statements of opposition without supporting their position with arguments. Many of these opposers simply write: “I am opposed to the birth control centre” or “I am against city funds going to the birth control centre.”⁵⁹ These campaign letters were significant in gathering more letters of opposition, but those who did not form any type of argument only added numbers to their cause. Without adding any argument to their letters these opposers increased their numbers but weakened the overall argument. Of the one hundred and thirty-eight letters of opposition, seventy-eight made some type of argument against the LBCIC. The remaining sixty letters simply stated opposition to the LBCIC.

The separation of letters with and without arguments is significant as it affects the influence of opposers’ use of parental authority. Removing letters *stating* (rather than arguing) their opposition strengthen the arguments for parental rights, responsibility and authority in terms of sex and birth control education (see table 1). For example, when looking at the total number of letters of opposition, letters where parenthood is identified makes up fifteen percent. However, after removing the letters without arguments parenthood is identified in twenty-six percent of the opposition’s arguments (see table 1).

⁵⁹ See letters to Lethbridge City Council, March and April, 1974.

One hundred and thirty-eight letters of opposition were sent to City Council in 1974. However, LBCIC supporters fought back with gusto gathering 893 signatures between three petitions and thirty-five letters of support. The letter writers came from various youths, students, and professional doctors, nurses, and educators, as well as organizations such as the *Meliorist* staff and staff from the Lethbridge YWCA.

The letters use of parental status is worthy of deep exploration. Twenty-one opposing letter writers indicate their roles as parents as a way to wield or demonstrate authority on the issue of birth control and the sexual education of youth. Why did these writers believe their parental status needed to be identified and, in some cases, highlighted to strengthen their arguments? Moreover, did supporters use their parental authority differently than opposers, and if so, why? This chapter will analyze why so many advocated for parental driven sexual education, how parental authority was used, and the moral and values arguments behind the perceived parental authority. Furthermore, this chapter will focus mostly on the parents who wrote in opposition to the LBCIC as more opposing writers self-identified as parents than those writers who supported the LBCIC.

Of the thirty-five letters of support, only three authors identified as parents. On the other hand, of the 138 letters of opposition, twenty-one authors identified as parents. Another seventeen argue that parents should be the main educators of sexual education and birth control (see table 1). No supporters argued that parents should be the main educators on sexual education or birth control (see table 1). In fact, many of the supporters argued that parents and clergy should not teach their children about either subject because the education provided by these groups was inadequate or judgemental in a manner. Luba Lisun's letter explains this argument: "City Council cannot deny that the idea such matters [birth control and sexuality] are best

discussed in the home or church has not and can not [sic] meet the demands placed on society by a growing rate of venereal disease, the increase of unwanted pregnancies, and the larger numbers of young men and women engaging in sexual relationships.”⁶⁰ Similarly, Professor R. G. Koep argues that the LBCIC provides the much needed sexual education that is ignored or inadequately provided by others, “Unfortunately, many parents refuse to teach their children about human sexuality. At present our schools do not have this vital area covered. Our local health unit turns its back on the topic. . . . Sex education is absolutely essential to a healthy society; be it done by parents, teachers, doctors or nurses.”⁶¹ Lisun and Koep argue that parents and clergy are not neutral nor sufficiently informed on the topic of human sexuality and birth control and, therefore, the education should not be left in their hands. Moreover, Koep recognizes that the existing education on such topics from parents, clergy, and the health unit was inadequate to meet the needs of society.

The letters also reveal a gender and generational division between those who identified as parents. As the table below demonstrates, of those who opposed the LBCIC and identified as parents: eleven were written by mothers, six signed by both parents, three written by fathers, and one parent whose sex is unknown. Moreover, three of the eleven mothers writing to City Council also identified as grandmothers, where as no men in any of the letters identified as grandfathers (see table 2). This data suggests that popular parenting beliefs held that it was not merely the parents’ role to educate children on sexual education and birth control, but the *mother’s* role specifically. Because sexual education and birth control were considered private matters between *married* couples the imperative to instruct children fell within the domain of the domestic sphere. Despite an active feminist movement during the 1960s and 1970s, women were still largely

⁶⁰ Luba Lisun, letter to Lethbridge City Council, March 13, 1974.

⁶¹ R. G. Koep, letter to Lethbridge City Council, March 20, 1974.

defined by their domestic role of wife and mother and, therefore, any labour, including emotional or intimate labour, revolving around children was understood as primarily the mother's responsibility. Similar to the maternal feminism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, during these decades some women, and popular culture, believed motherhood gave them authority overseeing domestic chores: cooking, cleaning, tending to and educating children. Only three letter writers identified as fathers (not including the six who jointly signed as husband and wife). In fact, of the fourteen letters written by male opposers two of them identified their occupation of doctor and religious leader, and nine used their designations as taxpayers to demonstrate authority rather than identifying as fathers. In sum, the variations between women's use of their parental status and the men's use of their occupational and taxpayer designations illustrates a strict adherence to separate spheres ideology that confined women to the domestic and men to the public sphere. Men used their occupation and taxpayer status to give them authority because they recognized their roles, breadwinner and political participant/taxpayer, wielded force within the public domain.

	Letters of support	%	Letters of opposition	%
Children identified as female	1	33.33	2	9.52
Children's sex not identified	2	66.67	17	80.95
Fathers	1	33.33	3	14.29
Mothers	2	66.67	11	52.38
Both Parents	0	0	6	28.57
Mom & Grandmas	0	0	3 (out of the 11 women)	27.27
Unknown sex of author	0	0	1	4.76

The letter writers also discuss the sex of their children differently, illustrating a second gender division that reinforced the double standard that women should be sexually pure and men

sexual aggressors. As illustrated in table two, although very few identified the sex of their children, the only time the child's sex was used is in the case of female children. The identification of female children is related to the majority of mothers writing in "as a parent" as it was mothers' responsibility to educate girls about sex, as parents were also responsible for teaching gender norms to children of the same sex. The identification of daughters and not sons seems to imply greater paternalism over daughters, that a parent with daughters justified a stronger claim to parental authority. And further, having a daughter strengthened their right to assert their opinions because birth control was understood as a concern exclusive to women and girls. Moreover, many of the objections to the LBCIC focused on sexual morality. Therefore, the identification of daughters suggests that the protection of the purity and innocence of young women drew greater significance than the protection of the sexual purity of young men. The identification of daughters and the call to protect young women's morality in particular arises from the association of purity and innocence with the feminine. Masculinity and maleness, on the other hand, was associated with traits of aggression and power. The protection of female purity and innocence were asserted to maintain parental control over women's bodies and their fertility. These assertions reinforced the prevalent double standard of the male sexual aggressor and the non-sexual female as the moral protector of her own virginity. Understood in this way, the gender use of parental authority claimed in the letters was a tool to strengthen gender specific arguments for closure or support.

Parental Success, Blame, and Control

The perceived threats of venereal disease in the 1940s, sexual delinquency in the 1950s and 1960s, and the sexual revolution that was in full swing in the 1970s across North America

caused parents to fear for their children's sexual morality. Therefore, when the LBCIC opened in 1973 those threats suddenly felt much closer to home by opening and publicizing the dialogue around birth control and sexuality. Cynthia Comacchio has stated, "Next to love, the most profound emotion infusing the parent-child relationship is fear. At the very heart of childbearing is an eternal nexus of hope and dread. Until the unforeseeable moment when parents can control all factors working against the child's welfare, parental anxiety is likely to remain an [sic] historical constant."⁶² Comacchio argues that parental fear and anxiety around children's well-being will remain prevalent because there is no parenting method that can achieve complete control over children. Moreover, Mary Louise Adams argues that the fears around youth rebellion during the 1960s and 1970s paired with the threat of social change made adults fight for control over their youth:

Notions of adolescence as a time of rapid and profound change echoed widespread fears about change in society at large. . . . Some adults saw teenagers being under the control of their blossoming sex drives. These adults wanted to set limits on public discussion of sexuality because they feared it would set teens off on an orgy of experimentation.⁶³

The LBCIC challenged ideal, traditional, and religious⁶⁴ "family" values of Lethbridge citizens and intensified the era's social anxiety over the sexual immorality of youth. Preserving the sexual morality of youth or, more accurately, the sexual purity of young women, was significant to preserving the patriarchal, traditional and religious values that advocated separate spheres to uphold men's power in society.

⁶² Cynthia Comacchio, Introduction to *Nations are Built of Babies*, by Cynthia Comacchio (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 3.

⁶³ Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 164-165.

⁶⁴ Religious conservatism is identified as a feature of the city's predominant values in the letters to City Council from Gary Bowie (representing Christian Denominations) and Robert K. McIntosh (Director of L.D.S. Institute of Religion), as well as the interviews of Judy Burgess, Rita Moir, Lynne Van Luven, Terri Forbis, and Barbara Lacey. Also See Appendix, "Research on the Religious Conservatism in Lethbridge, 1974" and "Table i: Religious Denominations in Lethbridge, 1974".

The establishment of a birth control centre in Lethbridge, a city significantly influenced by religious conservatism, threatened the stability of the ideal family, the ideal child, and the ideal parent. Comacchio argues that “the way that a society defines the ideal child and the best method for its upbringing tells a great deal about the society’s self-image.”⁶⁵ Therefore, the arguments about youth’s morality and parental right and responsibility to educate their children on human sexuality and birth control suggests that religious, conservative, and traditional communities associated the ideal nuclear family with moral and sexually pure children. Sexual morality was important to the ideal family as it proved the family’s religious and traditional values, such as premarital abstinence. Moreover, the ideal family and its values were significantly built on the scrutiny of women’s behaviours. The stigma around teen pregnancy and the economic burden of an unwed teen daughter and her baby was thought to be one of the worst things to happen to the ideal family. Young women were also blamed for pregnancy as they were expected to resist temptation and protect their virginity from young men’s advances.

Why did the ideal family, ideal parent, and ideal youth figure so significantly in the letters written by Lethbridge citizens who asserted their authority “as a parent” to the City Council in 1974? Upholding this ideal as a parent must have partially stemmed from the fear of being labeled an “unsuccessful” or “bad” parent or being blamed for their child’s “immoral” behaviour. The fear of blame and labels such as “unfit” or “unsuccessful” were used as a tool to encourage conformity in the religious and traditional communities. These letters tell us that “successful” parents taught their children religious and traditional morality through parental example and education when needed; what these parents identified as moral, however, is not stated in the letters. It is evident in the letters that religious conservatism prevalent in Lethbridge

⁶⁵ Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 15.

significantly reinforced “family values” and sexual “morality”.⁶⁶ Although none of the writers specifically outlined what was “moral” in their letters to City Council, they did define the “ideal” and the “immoral.” Discourse around “morality” at the time left no room for interpretation, according to Canadian opposers of the birth control movement. Adams stated,

A central feature of the moral panic over indecency was that nowhere in these discussions [of youth’s sexuality] were the definitions of immorality and indecency at issue, nor was the need of Canadian to be protected from them questioned. Immorality and indecency were assumed to be known and harmful categories; all that need to be asked – by the concerned senators, editorial writers, or parents – was how it could be dealt with.⁶⁷

To the LBCIC opposers, for instance, the “ideal” family consisted of one mother, one father, and two to three children, all of whom upheld traditional and religious values. The mother stayed at home fulfilling her maternal duties in the domestic sphere and the father was the breadwinner who contributed to society. Similarly, the “ideal” parents taught their children about intimate relationships, family values, and reproduction through example and some parental guidance as required.⁶⁸ Following suit, “ideal” youth were obedient, moral, and so innocent they would not have even known about the “perversion” of the birth control movement, and if they did, they would have been appalled. “As a teenager” Debbie Nelson, for example, wrote in opposition to the LBCIC, “I would like to share with you a few thoughts of mine about this Birth Control and Information Centre. The information given out is corrupted. I thought the purpose of a centre like this would be to help council [sic] kids to not get involved in premarital sex, not help to have fun getting involved in it and then, if you’re in trouble come running back to them.”⁶⁹ Nelson’s letter, along with the other opposers letters frames the “ideal” sexual behaviour in 1974

⁶⁶ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript; Lynne Van Luven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript; Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript; Terri Forbis, interview by Karissa Patton, January 24, 2013, transcript; Barbara Lacey, interview by Karissa Patton, February 11, 2013, transcript.

⁶⁷ Adams, *The Trouble with Normal*, 158.

⁶⁸ See the letters of opposition to City Council, March and April, 1974.

⁶⁹ Debbie Nelson, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

Lethbridge and helped to define what was “moral” and “immoral” to the opposers of the LBCIC. “Moral” citizens upheld traditional and religious values, such as sexual purity (mostly for girls), and premarital abstinence, and you were a strong “upright” citizen that took on the role of wife and mother if you were female and the role of providers and taxpayers in the public sphere if you were male. “Immorality” was defined by radicalism, “hippy types,” or “libbers”⁷⁰ who promoted sex before marriage, promiscuity, homosexuality (which was referred to as “perversion”), had children out of wedlock, and supported early access to abortions⁷¹.

“Unsuccessful” parenting or mothering was blamed for youth’s sexual “immorality.” Parents, youth, and families who did not conform to the “moral” standards of their relatives, friends, and neighbours often faced blame for the misbehaviours. Rebecca Kukla states, “[a]s a culture we have a tendency to measure motherhood in terms of a set of signal moments that have become the focus of special social attention and anxiety...”⁷² Motherhood, she suggests, is judged on specific “successes” and “failures” based on society’s anxieties. In other words, societies are quick to judge mothers for one “failure” and will forever mark them as “bad” or “unsuccessful” mothers based around an unattainable set of parameters. Similarly, John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman claim, “[a] woman was defined by the man she married and the children she nurtured.”⁷³ The definition of a woman based around maternal care for children and husband reinforces the mother’s responsibility for raising her children and, therefore, is responsible for the child’s successes and failures. Comacchio correspondingly reveals the power

⁷⁰ Used as a derogatory term for women’s liberation activists.

⁷¹ The arguments against abortion in Gary Bowie’s and Robert K. McIntosh’s letters to City Council also illustrate the strong religious aspect in the opposition to the LBCIC and the religious conservatism in Lethbridge, 1974.

⁷² Rebecca Kukla, “Measuring Mothering,” *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 67.

⁷³ John D’Emilio, and Estelle B. Freedman, “Sexual Revolutions,” in *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989), 308.

of the “ideal” occurs through a society’s reaction to challenges to the “ideal.”⁷⁴ The LBCIC represented such a challenge. By reinforcing mothers’ roles as “the public representatives of [the family’s] status and cultural identity,”⁷⁵ the letter writers attempt to reinforce social “norms” expected of women. Furthermore, as Comacchio claims, “such expectations, however, were often targeted for blame”⁷⁶ and then those who failed to meet expectation were categorized as “bad mothers.” Therefore, the liberal shift in sexuality, and sexual “morality,” of youth during the 1960s and ‘70s threatened the authoritative hierarchy of the ideal family. In this instance, less than “ideal” mothers were blamed for the sexual immorality and impurity of their children. Reinforcing the ideal family was a significant part of the public discourse around the LBCIC because the family ideal encouraged women to stay in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers, and compelled them to produce proper female citizens to follow in their footsteps as mothers and wives. Mothers were also expected to produce strong, “upright” male citizens to govern the public sphere as taxpaying doctors, city councilmen, and businessmen.

Fear of parenting failure led to the increasingly perceived “need” and arguments for parental control over youth’s sexuality. For instance, Yvonne K. Wolff wrote the council, “There are other means to receive information on birth control which are more controlled and more wisely managed [than the means utilized by the LBCIC].” Wolff’s demand that more controlled ways be employed to distribute information suggests she wishes to control, or censor, access to information. The desire to control the information and education on birth control might also be symptomatic of a desire to usurp open door liberal access afforded by the LBCIC. If the opposers of the LBCIC could decrease access to birth control information, then it would be easier to instill

⁷⁴ Cynthia Comacchio, “The History of Us’: Social Science, History, and the Relations of the Family in Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail* vol. 46 (Fall 2000), 205.

⁷⁵ Comacchio, “The History of Us’”, 205.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

the traditional and religious morals deemed so significant to a moral society. Another opposer and a mother, Mrs. Leo L. Davidson, affirmed her control over her children's sexual education: "I am responsible for my children, I am their guardian, I will give them sex education however however [sic] limited it might be compared to the raw literature handed out at the Birth Control Centre, But I resent [sic] as a parent having those at the Centre tell my children parents do not need to be involved or included in their experiences or problems."⁷⁷ Davidson exemplifies how parents argued for the control over the sexual education of their children and used their roles as parents to authorize and safeguard parental rights.

Parental Responsibility and Authority

Parents described sexuality and birth control education as their right, responsibility, and duty and expected control over their teenage children's sexuality. But why? The best answer I can surmise from these letters is that parents wanted control over youth and youth's sexuality to preserve the traditional and religious "morals" and "ideals" they so desperately clung to in face of the frequent and all-encompassing change wrought by the 1970s women's movement.

Authority is defined as "the power or right to force obedience."⁷⁸ Parents claimed rightful authority to oppose the services provided by the LBCIC. It is my estimate that these expressions arose from historically contingent fear of losing control over, or obedience of, their children. Because of perceived rights and authority of parents to youth's obedience, many of this generation of citizens who identified as parents claimed that sexual education remained within the domain of the family rather than the realm of a publically funded health services like the LBCIC. These parents voiced their parental status, along with parental responsibility, to affirm

⁷⁷ Mrs. Leo L. Davidson, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

⁷⁸ George A. MacLean and Duncan R. Wood, *Politics: An Introduction* (Don Mills, Oxford University Press, 2010), 32.

authority in their arguments against the reproductive health mandate of the LBCIC. Authority claims rose from the reasoning that 1) if you had children of your own, especially girls, you are more qualified to speak to matters of their well-being, and more specifically sexual behaviours, and 2) if you have children of your own you are directly affected by your children's "morality" and social behaviour. In the first instance, citizens who identified as parents described sexual education as the exclusive duty or responsibility of biological caregivers rather than public medical professionals. For instance, Doris Dohms and her husband illustrate the religious boundaries of such arguments when they claimed sex education was a responsibility bestowed to parents by god when stating, "We have examined this literature and find it utterly revolting, morally debasing and an outright insult to us as parents in our duty towards our children. ... There is no one more qualified than parents to carry out this God given duty to answer a child's question properly, and only when a child's mind probes for answers."⁷⁹ Other parents, such as Rita Miller and Loraine Park, also claimed exclusive parental responsibility to educate their children about reproductive and sexual health. Miller wrote, "As a parent it is my responsibility to teach my children correct principles and proper guidelines. It is not the responsibility of any other organization or person to take that responsibility away from me."⁸⁰ Similarly, Park argued her rights as a parent were being displaced by the presence of the LBCIC: "I say that it is my privilege + responsibility to teach my children about sex. My private rights are being taken away."⁸¹ Park's claims around parental rights categorizes children as possessions, ignoring the children's individual rights to enhance the right of parents. Mr. and Mrs. Krammer also explained that they felt as though their rights as parents were being violated and that parents alone were responsible for teaching their children about sexuality and birth control. They

⁷⁹ Mr. [Indiscernible] and Mrs. Doris Dohms, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

⁸⁰ Mrs. Rita Miller, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

⁸¹ Loraine Park, letter to Lethbridge City Council, c. 1974.

declared, “We are strongly opposed to any organization that has the power to arrange for the medical needs of any young person, contraceptive measures, child birth, abortion or what ever—all without any parental knowledge. This is an infringement on our rights as parents [sic] to have it supported by public funds is unthinkable.”⁸² Moreover, the Krammers suggest that youth’s decisions around birth control and human sexuality should be made with parental consent. Their claims reinforce parental authority on the matter of sexual education, as well as parental right to control their children’s contraceptive and sexual knowledge. Parents writing to the City Council used the argument of their responsibility and right to teach their children about sex and birth control to emphasize their authority on the matter. Many wrote “as a parent,” suggesting that the title of parent alone made them premier authority to weigh in on the validity of the LBCIC’s services. The Dohms exercised their parental authority when they stated, “We moved to this fair city July/73 and became homeowners and taxpayers the following month. Besides this, and of greater importance, we are parents – with a happy home and six children. (four still at home with us)”⁸³ By stating that their role of parent was of “greater importance” than their role as homeowner and taxpayer suggests that they perceive their children’s and community’s “morality,” and controlling it, a priority. Loss of parental control when it came to children’s sexuality and birth control knowledge was significant because organizations like the LBCIC, that allowed unsupervised access to information and service related to sexual behaviour, seemed to encourage youth to question religious and traditional authority of the prior generation. Moreover, these values were reinforced and idealized so considerably that if teenagers acted against these values the parents would be blamed by extended family, neighbours, friends, and other social

⁸² Lois [F] Krammer and M. Krammer, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 1, 1974.

⁸³ Mr. [Indiscernible] and Mrs. Doris Dohms, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

groups for not controlling their children or not being moral and upright examples for their children.

The issue of morality and the perceived parental authority is also illustrated through the differences of how many children the writers have. The Dohms' statement about the numbers of children in the family supported the belief that their large family size granted them even greater authority. Accordingly, Mrs. J. McCreary wrote, "I am a senior citizen, a mother and a grandmother. I have also worked for the Homemaker's dept. and have done many years of baby sitting [sic]. I know by experience that such teachings are definately [sic] harmful to children."⁸⁴ McCreary uses her compounded experience as a mother, grandmother, and experienced homemaker and babysitter to give her authority. Her experience raising numerous children made her an expert commenting on the issue of educating youth on human sexuality and birth control. She claimed that the LBCIC and similar institutions were harmful to children suggesting that the LBCIC caused moral degeneration in youth and particularly young women. Many parents likewise described the LBCIC as promoting promiscuity and the literature they distributed as "pornographic".⁸⁵ Following these claims, the perceived harm of the LBCIC was not so much physical as emotional, spiritual, and moral.

Parents as Educators of Family Values and Morality

The most wide spread arguments against the LBCIC were the claims of the moral implications of removing sexual education and birth control education from the home into the public domain. Many argued once the parental dictates of morality was removed from sexual education youth and society would disintegrate. Many claimed that only parents could provide

⁸⁴ Mrs. J. McCreary, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

⁸⁵ See letters of opposition to Lethbridge City Council, March and April, 1973.

the love and affection that went along with the teaching of sexuality. By claiming that all families were moral, parents attempted to validate their arguments and their authority.

In a detailed letter, Gary Bowie argues that sex education is the parents' right. His claims epitomize the widespread argument of many other parents who wrote to City Council in 1974.

As a father of four and a tax payer in this community I would like to express my concern about the continued funding of the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre. Personally I feel the responsibility of providing information about sex is up to the family. Along with the factual information is the value part of sex education which can only be properly presented by the family.

Historically the family unit has, to my knowledge been the basic unit in our North American culture. It has been the responsibility of the family to take care of the needs of family members. As society became more complex there has been a need for additional social units developed to help the family. An example of this is the development of the public school system when the family expected chemistry and other subjects to be taught by an expert. Basically the school is set up to help the home educate family members.

One function of the family has been to educate family members in the sexual process. However, we see around us that there are some families that would like to give up this responsibility. There are a number of families that still believe that this is a family function. There are many ways we in our society can help families who do not want to take responsibility on. I would suggest that there are a number of better solutions to the problem of sex education and helping with unwanted pregnancies than a birth control and information centre.⁸⁶

Bowie's letter outlines three prevalent arguments made to define what ideal family values in sexual education implied. First, Bowie argues that the values associated with sexual education can only be taught and provided by the family. Parents like C. J. Peterson also felt strongly that morality should be a large part of sexual education, especially when teaching teenagers and unmarried youth: "I feel that birth control information may be the purogative [sic] of a married couple but cannot agree that birth control be taught to teenagers who ought to be taught morality rather than safety in sex."⁸⁷ Other parents, such as Grant O Johnson, agree with Peterson and

⁸⁶ Gary Bowie, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 1, 1974.

⁸⁷ C. J. Peterson, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

Bowie claiming that only they, as parents, can undertake the moral and value aspect of sexual education. In summing up those values that represent proper morality, Johnson states, “This place [the LBCIC] and its attending implications adds one one [sic] factor prevalent in our society that makes good parental teaching difficult. We are trying in our family to teach by precept and example that children are desirable, marriage vows to be honoured, chastity and moral character desirable. Permissiveness, disrespect, lack of self control cannot possibly build good strong upright citizens.”⁸⁸ His focus on “strong upright citizens” suggests that the LBCIC and similar organizations would challenge and break traditional and religious values and the ideology of separate spheres. If the separate spheres disintegrated then women’s domestic roles as mother and wife might disappear or, worse yet, collide with men’s public roles as politicians, doctors, businessmen.

Elizabeth and Thomas Snee also believe the family to be the moral centre of educating youth on sex and birth control. They argue that her family’s education is threatened by the LBCIC because the argument and services they provide contradict the morals and values that she intends to instill in her children: “I do plan to teach my children correct principles + do not want schools and others teaching complete opposite ways. Many young people suffer mental problems because of improper principles. I have seen things happen to young girls that go to these birth control centres + they end up suffering in the long run.”⁸⁹

The Snees also reinforce Bowie’s second argument that the family unit cares for family members and knows what is best for them, including sex education. The refrain that the family knows best implies that the LBCIC provide contrary and corruptive education that potentially would harm not only individual family members, but also the family unit (and the community

⁸⁸ Grant O Johnson, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 7, 1974.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Ann Snee and Thomas Snee, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

and society by extension) by discouraging children's obedience to parental authority. The Snees suggest that visiting the LBCIC was harmful. Similarly, Mr. and Mrs. Dohms argue that the LBCIC will destroy the family, "[w]e protest most vigorously any allotment of taxpayers monies toward the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre, or any other organization that seeks to demoralize and destroy the family unit and the home."⁹⁰

Bowie's third argument around family sexual education suggests that only the family *or* other institutions, such as the church (but not school, as the Snees state), that hold the equal moral authority as the family should be trusted with the task of sex and birth control education. For example, Bowie and many other parents would argue that besides parents only doctors and religious groups were morally equipped to adequately teach children about human sexuality. However, according to these writers, the doctors and religious groups should only support and train the family in the matter of sexual education, not completely replace parental responsibilities. Teresa McLeod suggested to City Council,

[w]hen birth control and abortion are publicly proclaimed the family unit is undoubtedly hurt, but if the child is to be informed aside of the family, at least let us have the protection of mature and trained councillors. I suggest the Health Unit and the Church be employed in this type of counseling and that a program be instituted to help the parent fulfil his [sic] duty in this respect there drawing the child, the parent, and the church together. We must stop stimulating our children and abusing the sacrament of marriage and I feel council has a moral obligation to be well informed before allotting public funds to so delicate a program as sex education.⁹¹

McLeod's argued to include physicians and clergy in improvements to sex education but only to adequately assist, not displace the family to educate better. Bowie and other parents recognized that some families did not educate their children on sex education and called for the increased participation of parents through more strident regulation and control of youth. Referring to

⁹⁰ Mr. [Indiscernible] and Mrs. Doris Dohms, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

⁹¹ Teresa McLeod, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

irresponsible parents, Mrs. W. Griffin wrote, “I believe it is time, the parents took a stand and shouldered a bit of responsibility of teaching this over populated centre – Lethbridge – that don’t have anything better to do but live in filth and crime and expect their elders to build this and that every time they cry and holler + imagine they need a centre.”⁹² Griffin also reinforces the idea of moral degeneration due to disturbance in the nuclear middle class family and the parental failure to assume appropriate responsibility of sex education.

The arguments around family values and the central role of the family in sex education reinforce the arguments on behalf of parental authority and justify opposition to public funding of the LBCIC. By claiming the family was morally strong and value driven and charged with the prevention of the moral decay of youth, the writers who opposed the LBCIC also claimed the family would protect the future of their society. The parents who argued these claims understood change as negative. Historian Angus McLaren reinforces this interpretation,

Those who bemoaned the ‘decline of the family’ forgot that children in previous centuries had been sent out early in life into domestic service or apprenticeships and married late in life. In the post-war world, they stayed in school and lived at home until their late teens and married in their early twenties. Fears of a ‘generation gap’ and ‘juvenile delinquency’ became staple topics for magazine writers, but a longer experience of dependency could only be expected to result in the emergence of new and occasionally disturbing forms of youth culture. Generations once succeeded each other; now they overlapped. The pursuit of ‘love’ was one way in which young people could achieve emotional independence from their parents. Increased premarital sexual activity, plotted by Kinsey and others and permitted in part by a rise in contraceptive use, usually led on to marriage. It could hardly be called an ‘emancipation’.⁹³

McLaren claims the fear of societal degeneration was actually the expression of fear of change and an attempt to protect the white, middle class, patriarchal separate spheres ideology. The perception that freedom of youth was increasing in the era’s evolution of the family led to

⁹² Mrs. W. Griffin, letter to Lethbridge City Council, March 30, 1974.

⁹³ Angus McLaren, “The Triumph of Family Planning” in *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford: B. Blackwell Press, 1990), 243.

increases in access to education and success. From social evolutions of family life emerged the “creation” of youth as a new life stage and from that the emergence of a new youth identity and culture. The new individual youth identity captured the gap between child and adult, allowing teens to form their own slang, pastimes, and culture. The youth culture of the 1970s Lethbridge was characterized by much protest and a rejection of tradition and conformity, including increased sexual freedom such as premarital sex and use of contraception. Owram has described the 1970s sexual revolution as causing complete alterations of how virginity, sex, marriage, and reproduction were perceived:

The sexual revolution was real and had very specific affects upon the social moral code. In a decade premarital virginity was demoted from the centre of mainstream morality to the margins of conservative religious and ethnic groups. This snapped the fundamental link between sex, marriage, and procreation and brought other radical changes in its wake. If premarital sexual activity was neither a sin nor aimed at procreation, than neither abortion or single motherhood could be judged in traditional terms.⁹⁴

However, as McLaren explains, the era’s increase in pre-marital sex and use of contraception usually led to marriage rather than preventing marriage as many, such as letter writers opposing the LBCIC, feared. However, as is evident Lethbridge citizens wholeheartedly feared social changes proposed by the LBCIC and claimed authority over the issue of sexual and birth control education as parents.

Supporters and Opposers: The Public/Private Debate and the LBCIC

Those who opposed the LBCIC identified the family, specifically parents, as the best and most authoritative educators of sexuality and birth control. Those who did not identify as parents also argued that sex education should be taught by parents in the home. Further, those opposers of continued funding of the LBCIC reinforced the separate spheres ideology and traditional and

⁹⁴ Owram, “Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes,” 262-263.

religious values. Moreover, those opposed who did not identify as parents encouraged the discussion of birth control and sexuality as a private matter belonging in the home or church where children could learn proper morals and values. For example, Edna McLeod, while not identifying as a parent herself, argued that only parents could handle sexual education with the delicacy “required”: “Teaching of sex and all related material is the responsibility of individual parents who can teach such matters with love and understanding.”⁹⁵ Mrs. Boychuck more dramatically stated, “[w]e must, as the adult society, band together in strong Parental COMMUNICATION (most of you are parents) to produce a healthy environment for our youth.”⁹⁶

While opposers who reinforced parental authority in the matter of sex education, three supporters also identified as parents in their letters to City Council. The supporters similarly employed parental authority to strengthen their arguments but they more briefly focused on parental roles. Unlike opposers, these three writers did not claim to have the right or the authority to be their children’s sole educator on sexuality and birth control. For example, John Robertson merely signed his name followed by: “homeowner, taxpayer, father.”⁹⁷ The other two supporters who identified as parents described the LBCIC as a positive addition to the Lethbridge community. Rosina Staddon described the LBCIC as a comfort: “[a]s a foster mother working with children of all age groups, it is a comfort to me that this service is available should I ever need it.”⁹⁸ Similarly, Winnifred Mills recognized the LBCIC as a needed service, “as a citizen taxpayer, a parent of four teenagers (three girls), as an educator at the post secondary level and as a registered nurse I am convinced that such a centre is necessary now in the City of

⁹⁵ Edna McLeod, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

⁹⁶ Mrs. Oral N. Boychuck, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 1, 1974.

⁹⁷ John Robertson, letter to Lethbridge City Council, March 15, 1974.

⁹⁸ Rosina L. Staddon, letter to City Council, March 13, 1974.

Lethbridge.”⁹⁹ Robertson, Staddon, and Mills all briefly mention their role as parent and focused their arguments on the need for the service provided by the LBCIC. Robertson describes the LBCIC as progressive, Staddon commends the LBCIC staff, and Mills discusses the public service the LBCIC provides. The focus of each of these letters suggests that their identification as parents was not the sole foundation of their arguments.

Why were supporters generally and comparatively less inclined to employ parental authority as the justification for their arguments? Why are Robertson, Staddon, and Mills the only supporters to identify as parents? Were they the sole parents who wrote to City Council in support of the LBCIC? Most of the LBCIC supporters apparently believed that birth control and sexuality was a public health matter and their parental status was, therefore, less significant than their arguments for the right to public access to birth control. This explains why so few supporters identified as parents and why those who did focused more heavily on their arguments than their parental status. The protestors and supporters of the LBCIC were divided not only in their opinion of public or democratic access to birth control but on the much deeper private/public debate about family life that founded many social and class conflicts about sexual freedom and contraception during the 1970s.

⁹⁹ Winnifred C. Mills, letter to Lethbridge City Council, March 18, 1974.

CHAPTER THREE
“PRIVACY OF THE HOME” OR “ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY SERVICE”?:
THE LBCIC AND THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DIVIDE

It [the LBCIC] attempts to provide an educational service covering a matter which is private and, to some, extremely sacred and has no chance of doing more than touching the surface of the problem. ... It tries to usurp a function of the home which can be more properly and efficiently given by parents.

~ Briant Stringam, Letter to Lethbridge City Council, ND.

“We also feel that sex education of any or all kinds should be taught in the home or the Church, but not in Schools or public houses or offices.”

~ Gladys and Woodrow Glungam, Letter to Lethbridge City Council, ND.

In an age when people want to know more about their bodies, social relationships, and disease prevention, , [sic] the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre is providing an essential service to the people of Lethbridge.

~Pauline Hoskin, Letter to Lethbridge City Council, 1974

During the 1970s the community of Lethbridge was divided by their contrasting opinions on birth control access and education as a public service. Their support or opposition to the LBCIC became a public argument. Where this division began, however, was the much deeper issue of the public/private divide. The second wave of feminism challenged the public/private divide by arguing the “personal is political”. Organizations like the LBCIC brought issues of women’s reproductive rights and sexuality into the public and demanded its politicization. This chapter is a literature review on the topic of the public/private divide, debate, and shift as it relates to birth control activism during the second wave of feminism. This literature review will

support my argument that the criminalization of birth control and abortion in 1892 politicized reproduction and sexuality bringing both matters to the public sphere even after an attempt to privatize such matter by the Canadian government in 1969. Additionally, I also analyze the public/private divide through its use and understanding regarding the LBCIC in 1970s Lethbridge, Alberta.

The shift in the public/private divide that occurred during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged the uncoupling of sex from procreation with arguments to afford women with the opportunity of greater sexual freedom. Many scholars credit women's liberation (lib.) activism for the shift in the public/private divide around reproductive rights. For example, in "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction" Landes credits second wave feminists with the shift in the public/private divide in terms of birth control, reproductive rights, and many other issues.¹⁰⁰ She refers to the achievement of second wave feminist activists including, but not limited to, the criminalization of spousal and child abuse and the decriminalization of contraception. In "Sexual Revolutions" D'Emilio and Freedman discuss the 1970s women's lib. groups' push to make women's experiences with abuse, restrictions on their thoughts and bodies, and domestic limitations public through an "ideological attack on sex-role constructs."¹⁰¹ The shift in the public/private divide raised awareness about, and criminalized, domestic violence and rape. Also proposed was the decriminalization of birth control, abortion, and homosexuality. The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s politicized spousal abuse and child abuse, contraception and reproductive rights bringing the discussion of these concerns as women's issues into the public and political spheres. The problematization and politicization

¹⁰⁰ Joan B. Landes, "Further Thoughts on the Public/Private Distinction," *Journal of Women's History* 15/2 (Summer 2003), 30.

¹⁰¹ John D'Emilio, and Estelle B. Freedman, "Sexual Revolutions," in *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989), 321.

of formerly “private” issues challenged the public/private divide and the separate spheres ideology that produced it because with separate spheres the actions of the man of the house was protected as authority over what occurred in the domestic sphere. After the changes brought on by feminist activism the home was understood as the business of the law and the state. The erosion of boundaries between the public/private attempted to expose brutal physical and sexual abuse of women and children and forced society to acknowledge women’s rights to safety and sexual pleasure.

The Vancouver Women’s Caucus’ (VWC) abortion caravan is one Canadian example of activism contributing to the erosion of the public/private divide. The VWC’s abortion caravan travelled city to city educating and distributing information about abortion. The caravaners put on public forums and guerilla theater to raise awareness and advocate for safe access to abortion. The abortion caravan brought the birth control and abortion debates into the public by driving across Canada in 1970, gathering a collective of women, and eventually conducting a series of protests in Ottawa. Rebick discusses the significant groups and events in the Canadian women’s movement from, including the abortion caravan, the 1960s to the 1990s. Her chapter on the abortion caravan describes an increase of public discourse around reproduction.¹⁰² For example, one of Rebick’s interview subjects remembers media coverage on the abortion caravan everywhere they went.¹⁰³

Canadian women’s lib. groups in the 1960s and 1970s also called for the privatizing of some topics. For example, the birth control movement and the larger women’s movement encouraged discussion of birth control and sexual health between partners encouraging a privatization of the decisions each couple made. In *The Bedroom and the State* Angus McLaren

¹⁰² Judy Rebick, “The Women are Coming: The Abortion Caravan,” in *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005), 35-46.

¹⁰³ Rebick, “The Women are Coming,” 39.

and Arlene Tigar McLaren describes Canada's history of birth control activism, arguing that issues around birth control have not been, are not now, and will never be static.¹⁰⁴ They discuss the private issues around birth control such as disagreement between partners on whether birth control should be used or not.¹⁰⁵ They also discuss the public issues such as the criminalization of birth control and abortion in Canada and the USA in the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, as well as the regulation of women's fertility by religion and law.

The shift in the public/private divide brought about by second wave feminism has caused some issues, such as homosexuality, to become increasingly privatized while other issues gain greater public attention. Through the decriminalization of homosexuality in Canada in 1969 one's sexuality and sexual activities became private matters that could not be persecuted as public offences. In "Grasping the Ungraspable: Socio-Legal Definitions of the Family in the Context of Sexuality" Eichler also credits the 1960s and 1970s women's lib. activists for shifts in what is private and what is public.¹⁰⁶ She explains that issues such as contraception methods today can be easily discussed in the media, with friends, or around the dinner table, while forty-five years ago contraceptives were illegal and inappropriate as a public conversation.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Eichler suggests that the change in how society talks about and perceives sex has occurred because of the legalization of contraceptives, as well as the increased accessibility to, and education on, birth control. She outlines these changes started by the reproductive rights

¹⁰⁴ Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State* (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart Limited, 1986), 39.

¹⁰⁵ McLaren and Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, (1986).

¹⁰⁶ 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).

¹⁰⁷ Eichler, "Grasping the Ungraspable," 9.

activism during the second wave of feminism, including the recognition of sex as recreational instead of procreational.¹⁰⁸ This shift is also called the “contraceptive mentality.”

The new emergence of sex as recreational rather than exclusively procreational brought women’s reproductive health into the public sphere through discussion of pregnancy and venereal disease prevention. In “Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-1973” Owram argues that the negative reaction to the “contraceptive mentality” arose from a fear of moral and gender denigration.¹⁰⁹ The association of sex with pleasure rather than reproduction that came with women’s access to reliable birth control methods like the birth control pill assisted the shift in the public/private debates. The birth control pill raised awareness about women’s reproductive rights and brought the discussion of birth control and sexual freedom for women into the public and political sphere. Moreover, more open discussion on birth control between sexual partners became acceptable. As D’Emilio and Freedman state, sex redefined as “[n]o longer merely something you did in bed, sex served to define a mode of living, both private and public, that encompassed a wide range of activities and relationships.”¹¹⁰

Organizations like the LBCIC contributed to the redefinition of sex “as a mode of living” by advocating for women’s sexual freedom through the birth control movement. The mere existence of the LBCIC contributed to the greater public visibility of birth control, sexuality, and reproductive rights in Lethbridge and Southern Alberta. Furthermore, the public dispute over municipal funding of the LBCIC politicized birth control, sexuality, and reproductive rights, inserting the topics deeper into the public sphere. The LBCIC also introduced the topics of birth control and sexuality into the public through their sponsorship of seminars and outreach

¹⁰⁸ Eichler, “Grasping the Ungraspable,” 8.

¹⁰⁹ 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), 265-266.

¹¹⁰ D’Emilio and Freedman, “Sexual Revolutions,” 323.

education. For example, the local women's lib. newsletter, *Up*, listed two presentations by Lynne Van Luven in the August, 1974 edition: "Women and Gynecology" and "Women and Mental Health."¹¹¹ The LBCIC provided public sources and a safe place to ask questions and acquire information about birth control and sexuality. Different from a doctor's office where one would go to discretely ask about "putting herself right"¹¹² or family limitation, the LBCIC was an open and safe yet publically accessible environment where information was shared without caution. Moreover, each of the forums took that information into the public arenas to widen accessibility. The LBCIC provided judgement free services referring women to doctors supportive of the LBCIC's cause. Before the existence of the LBCIC women would approach their doctors cautiously for fear their doctor would not support or understand their want of family limitation or



Figure 5: Judy Burgess (left) at the LBCIC's first Sexuality Seminar held at the University of Lethbridge, 1973. Photo by H. Neufeld. From the *Meliorist*, March 29, 1973.

¹¹¹ *Up* newsletter from Lethbridge Women's Centre, vol. 1 no. 6 August 12, 1974.

¹¹² A term frequently used in advertisements for abortions and abortifacients.

abortion. Women in Lethbridge were especially curious about birth control and family limitation because of the religious conservatism prevalent in the city.¹¹³

Birth Control and the Public/Private Divide: Literature Review

Scholars who have written about birth control and abortion or the social changes and activism of the 1960s and 1970s provide examples of the public nature of birth control in Canada and the United States. For example, activists in the USA and Canada were public in their message and arguments for better access to birth control. The purpose was to bring women's issues, such as domestic abuse, inequality, and birth control, into the public arena and draw attention to women's victimization. In "Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP" Sethna and Hewitt expose the RCMP investigations of the VWC and describe the obsession with finding communists to the extent that the informants were blinded to organized protests and demonstrations occurring. The RCMP's distractions with communism enabled the caravaners "to skirt Canada's national police force all the way to the Prime Minister's residence and to the House of Commons."¹¹⁴ Sethna and Hewitt discuss the public campaign of the VWC through the examination of the RCMP informants, illustrating the public advocacy campaign of the VWC and the wider women's lib. movement in general.

Similarly in "Radicalization of Reform" Reagan illustrates the public nature of the birth control and abortion debates in North American activism through her overall investigation of the 1970s movement to legalize abortion in the United States. She argues that feminist "speak-outs"

¹¹³ See all five interviews and appendix.

¹¹⁴ Christabelle Sethna, and Steve Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 2009): 495.

helped export the discussion of abortion experiences from private conversations into public view.¹¹⁵ She also describes a group of activist lawyers who refused to “make privacy their primary argument”¹¹⁶ because they wanted the topic of abortion to be politicized. By encouraging changes in access to of abortion and birth control, activists were also encouraging the public and political defence of women’s reproductive rights.

The public discourse around birth control and abortion, and who participates in that discourse, also illustrates the increasingly public nature of knowledge of women’s reproductive rights. Multiple parties were involved in any decisions over a woman’s body in the 1970s particularly a woman’s decision to seek an abortion. Women’s activists lobbied for legal access to abortion as a personal decision between a woman and her doctor rather than by Therapeutic Abortion Committees (TACs) or abortion clinic workers. While TACs were the first step in decriminalizing abortion, the TACs mediated women’s access to abortion by reviewing her “case” and “need” for abortion and then approving or denying her abortion. In ““Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages’: Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s” Palmer describes the transnational abortion services provided by the Calgary Birth Control Association (CBCA) during the 1970s. She discusses the multitude of individuals who were involved or tried to become involved with the abortion-seeking clients of the CBCA. As Palmer describes, women who used the CBCA’s services gained access to American and out-of province doctors all offered their services to the transient “abortion tourists” of the CBCA.¹¹⁷

The discussion around birth control and reproductive rights incorporates many voices and views. Most are male “authorities” before the 1960s and 1970s when laws were changed. During

¹¹⁵ Leslie J. Regan, “Radicalization of Reform,” in *When Abortion was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 229-230.

¹¹⁶ Regan, “Radicalization of Reform,” 237.

¹¹⁷ Beth Palmer, ““Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages’: Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s” *Canadian Historical Review* 92 (December, 2011): 651-656, 663.

the 1930s for example, Canadian birth control movement debates were fueled by several public concerns and various public figures, such as doctors, clergymen, police officers, eugenicists, and economists weighed into the debates. The arguments made by these public and authoritative figures were concerned with eugenics, family values, the French-Canadian and English-Canadian populations, and assertions for the need of population control for the foreign and the working class. In “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937” Dodd investigates the public nature of the trial of Dorothea Palmer and the Parents Information Bureau in Ottawa, Ontario from 1936-1937. Palmer, a social worker, was put on trial in 1936 after being arrested for the distribution of birth control and birth control information door to door in a Hamilton neighbourhood on behalf of the Parents Information Bureau. Palmer’s defence tried to prove her innocence by arguing that birth control was a public need, calling on “expert” testimony from male eugenicists. Dodd describes the many opinions and “expert testimony” of doctors, clergymen, police officers, and economists used during Palmer’s trial and therefore, illustrates variety and abundance of male contributors and “authoritative” arguments supporting, or protesting, birth control at that time. Dodd argues that the prosecution’s use of economic and social arguments in favour of birth control for the working poor not only overshadowed the arguments for women’s choice but also illustrates the civic agenda origins of birth control in Canada. Dodd shows how public figures used public issue of population control to advocate or protest birth control, making the trial and the birth control debate public.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Dianne Dodd, “The Canadian Birth Control Movement on Trial, 1936-1937,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 16/32 (November, 1983): 411.

Many early birth control supporters, especially male and Malthusian¹¹⁹ supporters, argued in favour of birth control by expressing the urgency for population control. While arguments for women’s right to birth control and reproductive choice existed during the earlier birth control movements, women’s access to family limitation was not the primary motive of the authoritative male activists. In “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920” McLaren discusses the significant American and British influence of the birth controllers, Margaret Sanger and Mary Stopes (respectively) on early Canadian birth control activism and awareness. Canada had no clear woman leaders in a national movement for birth control leaving women’s rights on the wayside.¹²⁰ Similarly, in “The Triumph of Family Planning” McLaren investigates the gradual growth of birth control activism and acceptance of its mandate in Canada. Starting in the 1920s at the beginning of Canada’s first birth control movement McLaren summarizes fifty years of birth control activism until the decriminalization of birth control in 1969.¹²¹ Both articles discuss the public debates around birth control and abortion, highlighting the importance of the public lectures put on by Sanger and Stopes,¹²² and the public and political arguments for and against birth control¹²³. For example, the economic and political debate around population control, as well as the social issues and women’s issues that were used to publically advocate for birth control as fundamental to women’s sexual health and freedom. He highlights the feminist motivations of Margaret Sanger, who turned “the defense of birth control into a free speech

¹¹⁹ The argument that Earth’s population is increasing faster than its food resources and will eventually end disastrously. In this theory, war, famine, and disease are seen as population controls that prevent disastrous over population.

¹²⁰ Angus McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920,” *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 3 (1987).

¹²¹ Angus McLaren, “The Triumph of Family Planning,” in *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1990).

¹²² McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion,” (1987).

¹²³ McLaren, “The Triumph of Family Planning,” (1990).

issue”¹²⁴ by conducting her public lectures. “The Triumph of Family Planning” briefly describes the debates around women’s rights to birth control and abortion essentially focusing on early twentieth century male dominated debates around eugenics and population control.

Birth control as population control in developing countries was encouraged, implemented, and supported because of socio-economic, eugenic, and global population concerns. Schoen investigates population control theories through the discussion of public, economic, and social arguments and controls in Puerto Rico and India in the 1950s and 1960s.¹²⁵ She compares Puerto Rico and India because of the amount of North American attention both received during the ‘50s and ‘60s in terms of population control. Schoen’s study reveals that this attention was not grounded in women’s call for choice but rather what was considered “the moral duty of a poor country on the verge of a population explosion.”¹²⁶ Schoen’s investigation into the development aid given to Puerto Rican and Indian people by the US government health agencies reveals intentions of population control and reducing poverty expressed by Malthusian arguments of the time.

As McLaren and Schoen both determined, the popular and international preoccupation with limiting developing nations’ populations is grounded in the prevalence of eugenic and economic concerns. In “Sexual Revolutions and Revolutions of the Sexes, 1965-1973” Owrarn discusses the eugenic and population control arguments over those of women’s rights to birth control through his exploration of the sexual revolution of the 1970s. Owrarn argues that it was “easier to promote birth control for the huddled masses overseas than to discuss the moral

¹²⁴ McLaren, “The Triumph of Family Planning, 216.

¹²⁵ 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.

¹²⁶ Schoen, “Taking Foam Powder and Jellies to the Natives, 218.

implication of promoting it for the daughters of traditional middle-class American families.”¹²⁷ By emphasizing “daughters” rather than referring to North American children Owram implies that the problem of unwanted pregnancy was perceived as parental responsibility. Furthermore, popular focus on Canadian “daughters” reinforces the double standard of the man as a sexual instigator and virtuous women victimized by uncontrollable male sexual appetites. Further the growing immigrant populations threatened the perceived superiority of white North American men as wealthy developed countries would be called upon to help over populated countries by accepting immigrants or sending aid in the form of labourers or, worse, money.¹²⁸ In addition, popular international debates around population control attempted to avoid, or distract from, Canadian “daughters” use of birth control to prevent pregnancy. The North American preoccupation with oversea countries deflected attention from domestic (i.e. Canada) women’s use of contraceptives and reinforced race and gender divisions. Owram discusses how rising moral anxieties over foreign invasion coincided with the increasing domestic promiscuity around birth control and the parental push back in response.

Issues around birth control have been, and will remain plastic. The context of the time and place influences the debates around contraceptives and generates different motivations and support. The plasticity of reproductive rights debates supports the overarching argument of the McLarens’ *The Bedroom and the State*: that the state’s involvement in contraceptive disputes through the criminalization of birth control and abortion forced the debates into the public and political forum. Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren reference the public/private debate throughout *The Bedroom and the State*, strengthening their ultimate argument that,

Fertility control has not been, as it is often assumed, simply a private matter, an unchanging political issue or an unequivocally feminist cause. Indeed, as this book has

¹²⁷ Owram, “Sexual Revolutions,” 265-266.

¹²⁸ Owram, “Sexual Revolutions,” 265-266.

shown, birth control and abortion have been important issues in both the private and the public domains, and these issues have been profoundly affected by changing political interests and social concerns.¹²⁹

They affirm that birth control became a public concern when contraceptives and abortion were criminalized despite the private and public disagreements around access and rights. Moreover, McLaren and Tigar McLaren show that the debates would never remain completely private again. To emphasize their argument they discuss Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's famous claim, "the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation,"¹³⁰ arguing that the Canadian government's interference in 1892 had made birth control and abortion distinctly political and, despite Trudeau's best intentions, will remain political.¹³¹ By the time Trudeau made this statement fertility control was already public and political because of the state intervention for the last century: from the criminalization, decriminalization, and regulation of birth control and reproductive rights. As many of the scholars to whom I have referred have argued, the state is implicated passively or actively in birth control and abortion since 1892, making women's control over reproductive rights a public and political matter. Trudeau recognized the states involvement and attempted to privatize reproduction and sexuality in 1969, but was it too late? It is ironic that the 1892 Canadian government politicized and birth control in their attempt to prevent it and yet by 1969 the Canadian government could not privatize birth control because it had been public and political matter for too long.

¹²⁹ McLaren and Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 139.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

¹³¹ Canada has seen the continued political interference of the Federal and Provincial governments through, decreasing funds to abortion clinics under Premier Ralph Klein in 1990s Alberta, and in 2012 when Stephen Woodworth brought Bill M312 to the House of Commons.

Advocacy and Ignorance: The *Meliorist* and the *Herald*

The use of newspapers, magazines, and editorials by Canadians to express their opinions on birth control and abortion illustrates the public nature and interest in of birth control. Rebick discusses the public debates around birth control and abortion in the media’s coverage of the VWC abortion caravan. Not only did the action of women activists driving across Canada attract media attention but the significant amount of news coverage it received increased the public audience for the abortion caravan and its purpose. One of Rebick’s interview subjects recalls, “[e]verywhere we went there was publicity waiting for us. In Calgary, I opened up the paper and I couldn’t believe it. It seemed the paper was all about reproduction, and before the caravan you wouldn’t have seen that.”¹³² Rebick’s interviewee claims that topics of birth control and reproduction were not included in the media until after the widespread protest and activism like the Caravan in the 1960s and 1970s. Following Foucault’s theory of the repression of sexuality through language, the media coverage of the abortion caravan brought the topic of reproductive rights to the public discourse, reversing the previous discursive repression of abortion and birth control.¹³³

Angus McLaren, however, notes that eugenic and population control arguments for birth control and abortion were included in the news media since the late nineteenth centuries in his articles “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870-1920” and “The Triumph of Family Planning.” In fact, McLaren, and many other historians writing about birth control and abortion, frequently reference the prominence of these issues in newspapers, magazines and other forms of media from all time periods. Shannon Lea Stettner, for example, investigates public

¹³²Judy Rebick, “The Women are Coming: The Abortion Caravan,” in *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005), 39.

¹³³ Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), originally published as *La Volente de savoir* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976), 17.

discussions of abortion in the media from 1959-1970 in her dissertation, “Women and Abortion in English Canada: Public Debates and Political Participation, 1959-1970.” She elaborates on the use of popular women’s magazine, *Chatelaine*, the national newspaper, *Globe & Mail*, and the United Church *Observer* to debate issues around abortion before and after partial decriminalization in 1969. Their discussions of media illustrates that the debates around birth control and abortion were completely public and reached a literate audience no matter what arguments were employed. Canadians who contributed their opinions and comments might have revealed their identity or remained anonymous, however either way their comments and opinions reached a large readership and spread the debate around contraception further into the public sphere.¹³⁴

The public and political awareness of birth control access and information was furthered by regional print and broadcast media in Lethbridge during the 1970s. Two newspapers I examine in this chapter provide two different perspectives and two different strategies in their support or opposition of the ambitions of LBCIC. The University of Lethbridge Student Union’s the *Meliorist* was run by students for students. The *Meliorist*, like many student newspapers at the time, supported the women’s movement and the birth control movement. The city paper, the *Lethbridge Herald*, on the other hand provides a more reserved perspective on the women’s movement and birth control movement without taking a specific position on either topic.

Two interviews subjects were directly involved in these publications. Rita Moir, editor of the *Meliorist* from 1972-1975, and Lynne Van Luven, family editor at the *Lethbridge Herald* from 1976-1979, offer insight into the differences between the two papers. Moir remembers feeling that her role as a “student journalist was to show the other side of the picture. ... [and]

¹³⁴ Shannon Lea Stettner, “Women and Abortion in English Canada: Public Debates and Political Participation, 1959-1970,” (Canada: York University, 2011): 84.

work for progressive causes.”¹³⁵ When asked to explain the differences between the *Meliorist* and the *Lethbridge Herald* she said, “(Laughs) Well that’s because we were student activists and we supported things like, you know, women’s rights and the birth control centre and the *Lethbridge Herald* would have been a much more established newspaper. ... But you know the *Lethbridge Herald* was very establishment newspaper and we’re talking about Southern Alberta, which is one of the most conservative places in all of Canada.”¹³⁶ Van Luven agreed and explained that even the degree to which women’s lib. and birth control activism covered by the *Herald* at that time would have been small and, in terms of perspective taken, largely unsupportive. She recalls, “Oh yes, I think there was some, there was some reporting [on women’s lib. activism] because, you know, there were things happening nationally. ... I think if you looked back through their morgue, back in to ‘72, ‘73 you would find some stories but I’m not sure that they were handled very supportively and often they were kind of buried somewhere. You know, they were never kind of front page news.”¹³⁷ Both Moir and Van Luven recall differences between their newspapers. Van Luven even recalls feeling as though she had “sold out” by working for the “establishment” *Herald* that was comparatively conservative to the *Meliorist*.

Although Van Luven describes feeling as if she had “sold out”¹³⁸ by working at the “establishment newspaper,” her presence at the *Herald* made a significant difference in the coverage of the LBCIC in its last two years of operation from 1976-1978. One of the most significant examples of this difference would be the coverage allocated to the issue over municipal funding of the LBCIC. During the 1974 municipal funding controversy the *Herald*

¹³⁵ Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Lynne Van Luven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

failed to cover any of the debates, meetings, or the success of the LBCIC. In 1976 and 1978 when in two consecutive years the funding of the LBCIC was brought up for review again Van Luven covered both, especially in 1978 when municipal funding ceased. The numbers of articles on the LBCIC rose from two between 1973-1976 to four between 1976 and 1978.

Although the difference between pre- and post- the presence of Van Luven as a *Herald* writer is not staggering, the coverage of the LBCIC is significant to the discussion of the public/private divide in 1970s Lethbridge. The fact that Van Luven reported on the funding and closure of the LBCIC in 1978 while the funding controversy of 1974 was not covered in the *Herald* prior to her employment illustrates a difference in the public/private divide. Before Van Luven, the *Herald* covered the LBCIC rarely and the intermitted articles on the LBCIC were diminutive and buried among other larger articles. The fact that the entire 1974 funding controversy was not covered in the *Herald* also illustrates that the writers and editors in 1974 lacked commitment to a city facility and did not cover something that was obviously big news during the time. Why was this? Why did the *Herald* initially ignore a significant civic controversy over the municipal funding of the LBCIC in 1974, whereas by 1978 the potential funding, de-funding, and closure of the LBCIC was covered? I believe that the *Herald* ignored the 1974 funding controversy and neglected the LBCIC because they accepted the popular perception that birth control and sexuality ought to be a private matter. Therefore by avoiding coverage of the LBCIC in their newspaper they circumvented publicizing and politicizing the issues. When Van Luven started at the *Herald* in 1976 she believed that birth control access and information should be a public right and service so she demonstrated coverage of the LBCIC in the *Herald* as part of her commitment to the “Family” pages.

This oversight of the early *Herald* illustrates one of the many differences between the perspectives of the *Meliorist* and the *Herald* in 1970s Lethbridge. The coverage of the LBCIC as seen in table three, Newspaper Coverage of the LBCIC, 1970-1979, shows the staggering difference in the number of articles mentioning or covering the LBCIC. Article scale is also very telling; the *Meliorist's* articles on the LBCIC ranged from fifty-eight to eight hundred words while all of the articles on the LBCIC in the *Herald* were less than three hundred words. Both the amount of coverage and the word count illustrates the early *Herald's* neglect of the LBCIC and the *Meliorist's* dedication to it. Moreover, the manner in which the LBCIC was covered in the *Meliorist* and the *Herald* also respectively illustrates their divergence in terms of understanding the issue of birth control and sexuality.

Table 3: Newspaper Coverage of LBCIC, 1970-1979				
	<i>Lethbridge Herald</i>	%	<i>Meliorist</i>	%
Number of issues from 1973-1978	1825	N/A	136	N/A
Articles about the LBCIC	3	0.16	14	10.29
Articles mentioning the LBCIC	2	0.11	12	8.82
Funding of the LBCIC	3	0.16	7	5.15
Services/progress of the LBCIC	1	0.05	13	9.56
Outreach education and programs of the LBCIC	1	0.05	9	6.62

By comparing the coverage of the LBCIC one can distinguish the *Meliorist's* attempt to make birth control a public and political issue versus the *Herald's* neglect, which inspired the opposite. Both newspapers covered the opening of the LBCIC as well as the public sexuality seminars sponsored and coordinated by the LBCIC in the first months of operation. Each paper,

however, covers these events differently. The *Herald's* coverage of the opening of the LBCIC consisted of one small article titled, "Ten use clinic."¹³⁹ The article is small, ninety-five words, and the majority of the text consists of quotes from "Claranne"¹⁴⁰ Bush – who they refer to as counsellor rather than as Dr. Claranne Bush. The article also provides the address and phone number of the LBCIC. The *Meliorist*, on the other hand, published an article, titled "New Birth Control and Information Centre," providing the LBCIC's contact information; describing the rationale of the LBCIC; reporting on the reactions to literature and films at the opening, and offering information on upcoming events.

In addition to the difference in what was covered there was also an inconsistency in the two papers coverage on the number of people who used the LBCIC. While the *Herald* reports on February 1, 1973 that ten people used the LBCIC in its first week of operation the *Meliorist* claims on January 26, 1973 that two hundred people came to the LBCIC opening on its initial weekend. Moreover, the number of people using the clinic was highlighted in the *Herald* article through the headline, "Ten use clinic." These inconsistencies in attendees, the *Herald's* emphasis on "ten" visitors; and the *Herald's* reference to Tinky Bush as a counsellor rather than recognizing her formal title, and thus authority, suggest the *Herald's* subtle challenge to the value and authority of the new public health service.

Coverage of the LBCIC's sexuality seminars also illuminates the difference between the *Herald's* and the *Meliorist's* commitment. The *Herald* reported once on one of the six seminars in a series sponsored by the LBCIC. An article titled "Child care offered at sex seminar" the *Herald* potentially attempts to make readers ill at ease by pairing the terms "child" and "sex" in close proximity in the headline. In contrast, the *Meliorist* covered all six seminars, four at

¹³⁹ *Lethbridge Herald*, "Ten Use Clinic," February 1, 1973, 15.

¹⁴⁰ I quote the *Herald* for using Claranne instead of Tinky as they were the only ones who referred to her as Claranne in the media.

university and two at YWCA and surveyed all other discussion groups held at the LBCIC. This *Meliorist* article also lists the purpose, work and services provided, the need for volunteers, and the contact information of the LBCIC, therefore announcing public access to the LBCIC. The difference in the coverage of the sexuality seminars clearly illustrates the attempt to favourably advocate the LBCIC by the *Meliorist* and the less than supportive attitude towards the LBCIC by the *Herald*.

Furthermore, the differences in the way the *Meliorist* and the *Herald* covered the opening of the LBCIC and the sexuality seminar illustrate the way both papers used their articles to respectively publicize and privatize birth control and sexuality. The headlines the *Herald* uses do not directly or specifically identify the LBCIC. Moreover, the article on the sexuality seminar in the *Herald* only mentions that the seminar is “sponsored by the Birth Control and Information Centre”.¹⁴¹ Similarly, the *Herald’s* article on the opening of the LBCIC uses the headline, “Ten use clinic” fails to identify the name of the LBCIC. By including only the word clinic the *Herald* offers an ambiguous headline so the readers have to read the entire small and hidden article to even know what it is about or learn about the LBCIC. In contrast the *Meliorist* credits the LBCIC in their headlines and the body of their articles. Clearly the *Meliorist* publicly promoted the LBCIC and its mandate.

The writers and editors at the *Herald* and the *Meliorist* understood the public/private divide and how to use it to support or oppose the LBCIC, respectively. Did conservative-minded *Lethbridge Herald* editors keep the LBCIC out of the public media in attempt to reinforce the idea that birth control and sexuality were private topics? Fortunately, Lynne Van Luven did cover the LBCIC while Family Editor at the *Herald* from 1976-1979, publicizing birth control

¹⁴¹ *Lethbridge Herald*, “Child care offer at sex seminar,” March 30, 1973, 18.

and sexuality. Van Luven followed the example of the *Meliorist* who actively covered the LBCIC and other women's lib. topics in attempt to promote, publicize, and politicize the LBCIC and women's access to reproductive rights it advocated.

1974 Letters to City Council: Arguing for Privacy in the Public Domain

The letters to City Council written during the 1974 funding controversy also illustrate a divide between the opposers and supporters regarding the LBCIC. Much like the conflicting beliefs outlined by the *Herald* and the *Meliorist*, opposers actively advocated for reproduction, birth control, and sexuality to be kept private matters while supporters argued that the LBCIC provided an essential public service by liberalizing birth control access and education. Whereas the *Meliorist*, unlike the *Herald*, had actively supported discussions of reproductive rights in the public sphere by covering the LBCIC, the letter writers to City Council in 1974 actively brought the opposing opinions to the municipal government.

Letter writing opposers of the LBCIC argued that birth control and sex education should remain among family, and thus the private household, as consistently expressed in their letters to City Council in 1974. Nadene Baifou's letter to City Council epitomizes the common argument of opposition. She states, "This [birth control and sexuality] is something that needs to be taught in the home and should not be discussed in this sort of organization [the LBCIC]."¹⁴² Many others argued for the privacy of sex and birth control education as well. Sarah L. Stringam similarly affirmed, "I believe that things which have to do with sex and family life should be taught in the home, where moral and ethical values can also be stressed."¹⁴³ Both Stringam and Baifou believed that birth control and sexuality were matters, best taught and discussed in the

¹⁴² Nadene Baifou, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 3, 1974.

¹⁴³ Sarah L. Stringam, letter to Lethbridge City Council, April 2, 1974.

private sphere. However, they argued their points in a public venue by writing letters to City Council. Moreover, they reinforced the publicization and politicization of the LBCIC by writing to City Council because they recognized, and expected, the political power of the municipal government to act upon the matters of birth control and sexuality education.

LBCIC supporters, on the other hand, wrote to City Council stressing the LBCIC was a viable part of the community and an essential public health service. As Hans Pefeffel stated in his letter to City Council in 1974, “I believe that the Birth Control and Information Centre is a necessary part of the community.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Pauline L. Hoskin wrote, “In an age when people want to know more about their bodies, social relationships, and disease prevention, , [sic] the Lethbridge Birth Control and Information Centre is providing an essential service to the people of Lethbridge.”¹⁴⁵ Pefeffel’s and Hoskin’s claim that the LBCIC was rightly part of the community in providing an essential service were reinforced by several others writing to City Council. The supporters’ arguments suggested that birth control, sexuality, and reproductive rights belonged in the public and political sphere; by arguing these points in the public sphere and to the city mayor and counsellors they strengthened and reinforced their claims.

Supporters recognized that birth control access and education was an essential public service. They wrote to City Council because the economic involvement of the municipal government brought the LBCIC into the political and public sphere, making birth control and sexuality a political and public issue. The mere act of writing to City Council strengthened the argument that the LBCIC was an essential public service. Yet, by writing to City Council LBCIC opposers were also actively politicizing birth control and sexuality and, in a sense, weakening their own arguments that reproduction was a private matter of the home.

¹⁴⁴ Hans Pefeffel, letter to Lethbridge City Council, March 23, 1974.

¹⁴⁵ Pauline L Hoskin, letter to Lethbridge City Council, March 21, 1974.

Conclusion

The recognition and manipulation of the public/private divide was a significant ideological component of the support and opposition to the LBCIC. Citizens writing to City Council in opposition did not recognize their active role in publicizing and politicizing the very matters they wanted to return to the private domain. However, others who opposed the LBCIC used the public/private divide to help argue their point. For example, the *Lethbridge Herald* underrepresented the LBCIC and by doing so reduced public visibility of the service. Others tried more aggressively to keep the LBCIC out of the public eye as well. In 1974 Moir reported, “To its dismay, the centre has not been able to advertise its existence, an example being its contract with the Lethbridge transit service, for which they painted two large signs, and found one removed from the bus several weeks later.”¹⁴⁶ The removal of the sign advertisement from the transit service illustrates an attempt to prevent the LBCIC from publically educating Lethbridge citizens about their organization.

The public/private divide also configured the eventual closure of the LBCIC. In 1978 Lethbridge City Council chose to stop funding the LBCIC because, as the *Meliorist* reported, the City Counsellors believed it violated private and parental rights.¹⁴⁷ The City Council tried to extract themselves as a political body from the LBCIC in their attempt to return birth control, sexuality, and reproductive rights to private control. However, I would argue, with their financial involvement in the decision of the LBCIC’s funding, City Council reinforced the public and political aspect of the birth control service access and education. Much like McLaren and Tigar McLaren argue in *The Bedroom and the State* by the time the municipality attempted to re-

¹⁴⁶ R. Moir, “Support for Centre look Favourable,” *Meliorist* April 4, 1974, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Brett Loney, “March 31 Closing Possible: Birth Control Centre Loses Funding,” *Meliorist* February 17, 1978, 2.

privatize birth control and sexuality in the 1960s and 1970s it was too late.¹⁴⁸ Over a century of state intervention had made birth control, sexuality, and reproductive rights a public and political matter. Whether it was the criminalization or decriminalization of birth control, abortion, and homosexuality, or the renewal or cancelation of the LBCIC's funding state intervention of any kind had firmly established the political and public nature of these matters.

The LBCIC closed in 1978 in response to the opposition and withdrawal of municipal support. Nonetheless, reproductive rights and behaviour became a provincial public service a year later when the Alberta government approved a Family Planning Centre to be run in conjunction with Alberta Health Services in Lethbridge. Terri Forbis, who ran the Family Planning Centre and continues to run the Sexual and Reproductive Health Centre in Lethbridge today, believes that the provincial support in 1979 progressively advanced the recognition for reproductive rights as central to public health. She states, "Well I think it [sexual health] was recognized as a public service in 1979. I think it was recognized ... absolutely, when the Alberta government had started funding it. And I think that um putting it with a provincial department rather than a municipal department was really important because uh I think that there's strength in numbers and um that we're going to try and improve access to services."¹⁴⁹ Similarly, Judy Burgess believes that provincial support benefitted the birth control movement more broadly: "I know that the Birth Control Centre later got-the work of it got taken into the public health unit and, you know, I think that was good. It made it more than just open and certainly didn't use feminist theory but it did create um, you know, an institutional reputation that was helpful for the movement of women's health and women's rights."¹⁵⁰ Both Forbis and Burgess

¹⁴⁸ 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):134-138.

¹⁴⁹ Terri Forbis, interview by Karissa Patton, January 24, 2013, transcript.

¹⁵⁰ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

realize that backing of provincial government for birth control and sexuality access and education strengthened the movement as a public and political responsibility. The public side of the public/private debate had won in the end but the initiative belongs to the second wave of feminism's birth control movement, made up of a small circle of forward thinking students, doctors, nurses, and women's liberation activists in Lethbridge.

CONCLUSION
PROGRESS(?): PRESENT AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Although birth control activism seemed to win over the public/private debate in the end, many of the interviewees described a discontent with contemporary discourse and institutions concerned with birth control and sexuality. Lynne Van Luven expresses her disappointment in the progress of women's rights since the second wave of feminism, and expresses that sometimes she finds it difficult to feel positive about the future:

[Y]ou know, sometimes I feel that all that work in the seventies has kind of, has been lost. You know, and the results of it ... And maybe that's how history moves forward, that every generation has to kind of reinvent itself or at least rediscover what's important. So on my positive days I say, you know, women like you are rediscovering what's important for you, and through your course work and through your research, you're restating the case and I find that very positive. However, I would have liked to have believed that there would have been more forward progress by now.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Lynne Van Luven, interview by Karissa Patton, January 29, 2013, transcript.

Her feelings are understandable as someone who actively fought for women's rights in the 1970s; it must be difficult to see the erosion of the values and rights she fought for. Rita Moir similarly describes this erosion and the toll it can take on the activists who fought for these rights. She reveals,

[T]hat always happens, you make big strides and big changes and then there's a time where you all go, "Oh god I'm going to go. Now I'm going to go home and um, you know, live my life I've been out on the front line for all these years, it's somebody else's turn. It's a younger person's turn" and all of that kind of stuff. And there's a generation that gets to enjoy those rights and not necessarily have to fight for them. And then somebody else fights back. So it's always, you know... It's like, in the women's movement, you never finish. You never finish.¹⁵²

She believes that the progress of women's rights has slowed because the generations after the second wave had less to fight for. The achievements of the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement allowed the next generation to enjoy increased freedom and prevented them from having to fight more significant inequalities. Judy Burgess believes that the discussion around sexual health, reproductive rights, and sexuality is still very closed down and there is a long way to go to achieve the goals of LBCIC and the larger 1970s birth control movement:

[T]he dialogue around sexuality is really closed down ... we don't talk about it very much. Honestly the ... *Fifty Shades of Grey* books. They are the first dialogue that's occurred around sexuality in a long time. So why is that? ... Their popularity is opening up the dialogue ... So I think we need more ways to do that. ... Yeah, I think we're not there yet.¹⁵³

Other scholars have discussed the significant need to normalize and implement more discussion around sexuality and reproductive rights. Sara Todd and her colleagues analyze how people discuss (or avoid discussing) abortion through their analysis of the contemporary discussion, or lack of discussion, of the labour performed by abortion clinic workers. She states that abortion clinic workers and their jobs have been left out of discussions in the public sphere.

¹⁵² Rita Moir, interview by Karissa Patton, December 13, 2012, transcript.

¹⁵³ Judy Burgess, interview by Karissa Patton, December 8, 2012, transcript.

She argues that abortion clinic work is considered “dirty work,” meaning it “is defined by powerful others as morally reprehensible and work that general society may require, but would prefer to avoid even thinking about.”¹⁵⁴ In other words, Todd argues that because people find the topic of abortion uncomfortable they prefer not to discuss it or the labour health providers do in abortion clinics. Todd’s argument is significant because abortion clinic workers frequently face threats and danger from reactionary protestors. Todd states that “[w]hen the danger that originates in our workplaces slips incessantly into our private spheres, our ability to find ways to address these concerns within existing frameworks seems grossly inadequate.”¹⁵⁵ Todd outlines the danger abortion clinic workers face and argues that until society overcomes their discomfort and begins to talk about these dangers and issues, the avenues for protecting these workers will remain limited or unaddressed.

As an example, contemporary discussion of abortion, seems to epitomize Foucault’s discussion of how language impacts the repression of sexuality. He argues that repression begins when society fears the discussion of certain topics, feel uncomfortable when specific terms are used, and begin to speak in innuendos, or not speak about such topics at all; after the topic or word is rejected in speech it is easily repressed. In his book, *The History of Sexuality*, he states, “[a]s if in order to gain mastery over it [sexuality] in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present.”¹⁵⁶ Today people are often uncomfortable speaking about abortion to the point where the term itself is avoided. Because the topic is repressed in our language, it is difficult to discuss the issues around

¹⁵⁴ Sara Todd, Andrew Parnaby, and Todd McCallum, “Secrecy and Safety: Health Care Workers in Abortion Clinics” *Labour/Le Travail* 50 (Fall, 2002): 403.

¹⁵⁵ Todd, “Secrecy and Safety,” 404.

¹⁵⁶ Micheal Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), originally published as *La Volente de savoir* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976), 17.

abortion, as Todd and her colleagues argue. Foucault’s theory can also be applied to the 1970s reproductive rights activism and the LBCIC. The repression of a topic, such as birth control, can be reversed as society begins to bring the topic back into public discourse. From the 1970s reproductive rights activism “[t]here emerged a political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex.”¹⁵⁷

Despite the significance of reproductive rights activism in the 1970s, and the particular significance of the LBCIC regarding reproductive rights in Southern Alberta, the topics are absent from our historical literature. In fact reproductive rights activism in Alberta has only been covered in one article thus far: Beth Palmer’s “‘Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages’: Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s.”¹⁵⁸ In terms of reproductive rights activism, Southern Alberta specifically has not been written about at all. Therefore, this paper acts as the beginning of my historical research on Southern Albertan women’s reproductive rights activism during the second wave of feminism in order to include the region and the activists in our nation’s historical literature and memory. In addition, I hope that this paper and further research on this topic will challenge the perception of Albertan and Southern Albertan history as totally conservative, and raise awareness of the progress that is yet to be made in Albertan women’s rights.

¹⁵⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 23.

¹⁵⁸ Beth Palmer, “‘Lonely, Tragic, but Legally Necessary Pilgrimages’: Transnational Abortion Travel in the 1970s” *Canadian Historical Review* 92 (December, 2011).

Appendix

Research on the Religious Conservatism in Lethbridge, 1974

Churches in Lethbridge, 1974¹⁵⁹:

- 1) Beth Israel Synagogue (Jewish)
- 2) Bethany Baptist Church (Protestant)
- 3) Bethel Baptist Church (Protestant)
- 4) Bethlen Presbyterian Church (Protestant)
- 5) Buddhist Church (Buddhist)
- 6) Central Church of Christ (Protestant)
- 7) Christ Trinity Lutheran Church (Protestant)
- 8) Christadelphian Ecclesia Church (Christadelphian)
- 9) Christian Tabernacle Church (Protestant)
- 10) Church of Christ (Protestant)
- 11) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS)
 - a. Three Locations
- 12) Church of Nazarene (Protestant)
- 13) Church of Saint Mary the Virgin (Catholic)
- 14) Evangelical Free Church (Protestant)
- 15) First Baptist Church (Protestant)
- 16) First Church of Christ Scientist (Church of Christ Scientist)
- 17) First United Church (Protestant)
- 18) Gospel Hall (Protestant)
- 19) Greek Orthodox Church of Holy Trinity (Greek Orthodox)
- 20) Immanuel Lutheran Church (Protestant)
- 21) Jehovah Witness Kingdom Hall (Protestant)
- 22) Lakeview Mennonite Brethren Church (Protestant)
- 23) Lethbridge Alliance Church (Protestant)
- 24) Lethbridge Christian Reformed Church (Protestant)

¹⁵⁹ *Henderson's Lethbridge Directory*, (Calgary: Henderson Directories Alberta, 1974).

- 25) Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (Protestant)
- 26) McKillop United Church (Protestant)
- 27) Netherlands Reformed Congregation (Protestant)
- 28) Norbridge Community Church (Protestant)
- 29) Orthodox Church of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin (Orthodox – Russian or Ukrainian)
- 30) Our Lady of the Assumption (Catholic)
- 31) Pentecostal Tabernacle Church (Protestant)
- 32) Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church (Protestant)
- 33) Saint Augustine’s Anglican Church (Anglican)
- 34) Saint Basil’s Church (Protestant)
- 35) Saint Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church (Catholic)
- 36) Saint Peter’s and Saint Paul’s Church (Protestant)
- 37) Seventh Day Adventist Church (Protestant)
- 38) Southern Alberta Japanese United Church (Protestant)
- 39) Southminster United Church (Protestant)
- 40) Ukrainian Catholic Parish of Saint Vladimirs (Catholic)

Table i: Religious Denominations in Lethbridge, 1974 ¹⁶⁰		
Church Denomination	Number	%
Jewish	1	2.38
Protestant	28	66.67
Buddhist	1	2.38
LDS	3	7.14
Catholic	4	9.52
Greek Orthodox	1	2.38
Orthodox (Russian or Ukrainian)	1	2.38
Anglican	1	2.38
Christadelphian Ecclesia	1	2.38
First Church of Christ Scientist	1	2.38
Total	42	N/A
*Lethbridge Population, 1974: 42 816		

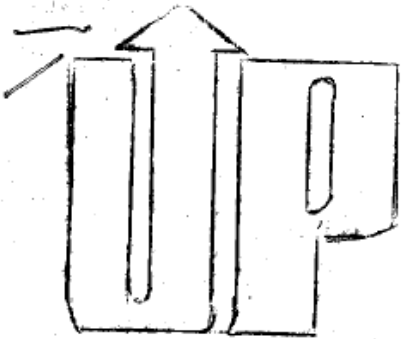
¹⁶⁰ Henderson’s *Lethbridge Directory*, (Calgary: Henderson Directories Alberta, 1974).

Media coverage in Lethbridge, 1968-1980

Table ii: Newspaper coverage of select topics, 1970-1979				
	<i>Lethbridge Herald</i>	%	<i>Meliorist</i>	%
Abortion	150	4.57	46	23.23
Sexuality	33	1.00	14	7.07
Contraception	36	1.10	10	5.05
Number of issues from 1970-1979	3285	N/A	198	N/A

Table iii: Lethbridge Herald coverage of birth control, 1968-1980	
Year	Number of articles
1968*	25
1969	2
1970	2
1971	6
1972	0
1973	1
1974	0
1975	0
1976	0
1977	0
1978	8
1979	2
1980	6
TOTAL	52
Total articles	22
Total mentions	30
*1968 was the year the Pope renounced the use of birth control making the coverage of the topic greater than usual.	

Edition of *Up*, the newsletter put out by the Lethbridge Women's Centre. September 10, 1974, page one. Courtesy of Rita Moir.



"NO matter what you fight,
don't be ladylike."
Mother Jones

SEPT 10, 1974 LETHBRIDGE ALBERTA VOL. NO. 8

WHERE WE'RE AT

The Women's Place is at a crucial crossroads in its growth and development. At the end of August, the Manpower grant (paying the salaries of the six full-time workers) terminated. At this moment, what we have is a few volunteer workers, and no official organizing focus. And if you suspect that's a chancy way to operate the Women's Place and its many diverse activities, you're quite right.

What's being done? Volunteers have written a variety of sources to discover what--if any-- additional financing might be available to the W.P., for the purpose of hiring a full-time or part-time co-ordinator to give the centre the foree and direction required. We can only wait--for the agencies to reply--and hope--that some funding will be available.

As a stop-gap measure, Lynne Van Luven will serve as a part-time volunteer co-ordinator at the W.P. until the end of September. She'll be at the Centre from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and hopes to give the (somewhat disgruntled) volunteers some meaningful tasks to carry out, geared to widening the W.P. base in the community.

Right now, what we need most desperately are the continued services of our regular, loyal contingent of volunteers, plus the help of any new or interested people.

If we do not get this individual support, a sad possibility exists; all the hard work, definite achievement and good will of the past few months could come to naught if the W.P. is forced to close because of a shortage of committed workers.

IN A VERY REAL SENSE, THE FUTURE OF THE W.P. IS IN YOUR HANDS.



LET'S think
positively *Up*ity

WPI PUBLICATION

THIS IS A WOMENS PLACE

*Nov. 18 / Legislative Behaviour 9-10
Date of Legislature 8-9*

Up, September 10, 1974, page two.

THE BIRTH CONTROL & INFORMATION CENTRE

WHERE?

-In Lethbridge, at the corner of 6th Avenue S. and 7th Street (542 7th St.S)
-The Centre is open from:
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Monday to Friday

The Birth Control and Information Centre was established in January of 1973 as a "storefront" information centre, which means that there is always someone, during working hours, who can answer questions about birth control, venereal disease and a variety of other topics related to sexuality.

Birth Control

Information is available about the different types of birth control, how each works, and the possible side-effects and effectiveness of each method. In addition, clients are referred to physicians at their own request, for prescriptions and medical procedures. All medical decisions are made between physician and patient.

Medical referrals are also made, upon request, for sterilization, pregnancy, and gynaecological problems. All referrals and counselling are completely confidential and free of charge.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy testing is done at the Centre by a registered nurse, at no charge. Results are confidential. Cases of unwanted pregnancy are referred to the appropriate medical and social agency resources.

Venereal Disease

Persons who believe they may have contracted V.D. are referred to:

Division of Social Hygiene
Lethbridge Municipal Hospital
(basement)

9th Ave. & 18th St. S.

where free and confidential treatment are available.

The Birth Control Centre has information available concerning symptoms, cause, treatment and PREVENTION of V.D.

Community Education

Resource persons from the Centre are available to make presentations to local groups upon request. Topics have included birth control, Venereal disease, abortion, sex roles, sexual development, the operation of the Centre etc. The Centre has also sponsored films, special seminars, and guest speakers.

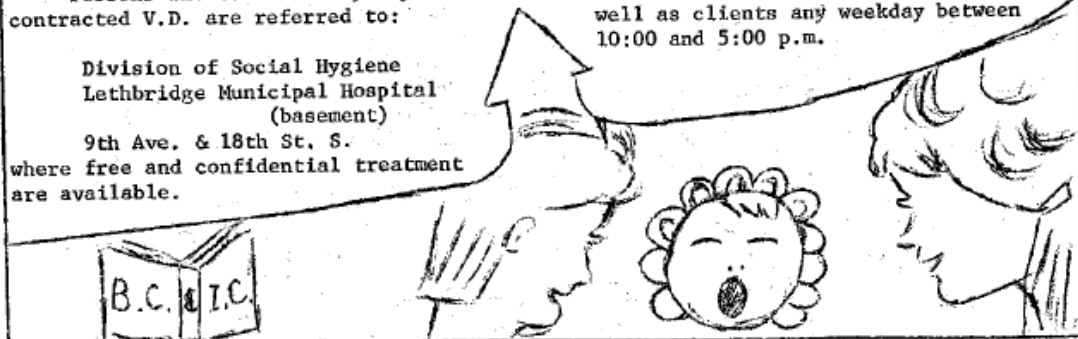
Library

There is a small lending library at the Centre and a large supply of free literature relating to sexuality, geared to all ages.

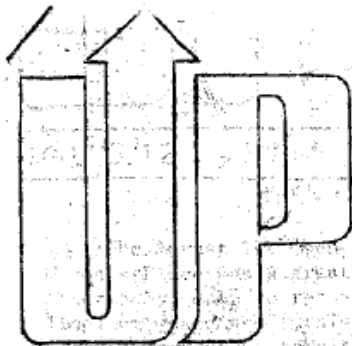
Volunteers

During the past year the Centre has trained approximately 20 persons as volunteers in three sessions (fall, spring, summer) Due to a large number of people moving away we now have 5 volunteers. As these people are invaluable in the continuation of our educational program we are starting another training session Sat. 21 of September. The program will begin with a day-long workshop in Sexuality and will open to the public as well as to prospective volunteers. Resource persons from Calgary and Lethbridge will lead the workshop. Please watch the Newsletter for specific details or call the Centre at 328-0196 or 329-0477.

We welcome interested visitors as well as clients any weekday between 10:00 and 5:00 p.m.



Edition of *Up*, August 12, 1974, page one. Courtesy of Rita Moir.



MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' 1792

"She was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused."

AUG. 12, 1974 LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA VOL. 1, NO. 6

The August 1st Open House at the Women's Place was a great success. After a mad dash to re-paint, rip up linoleum, sand and furnish, volunteers & staff were happy to sit down and talk to the more than 100 visitors. 50 women signed up for courses and projects,

such as the newly formed auto mechanics class. Women who are interested in the Women's Place can become involved on a day-to-day basis by attending the newsletter workshops and volunteer training sessions. See schedule this newsletter.

TENTATIVE Presentations AT THE LIBRARY

August	21st	"Day Care in Lethbridge"	Co-ordinator - Dorothy Fritz
"	28th	"Motherhood-Uneasy Life"	" " "
		Film and Day care discussion	
Sept.	5th	Record - Claire Bloom in "Doll's House"	
"	11th	"Women and Gynecology"	" - Lynne Van Luven
"	18th	LIBRARY NOT AVAILABLE - NO PRESENTATION	
"	25th	"Welfare Rights"	Co-ordinator - Dorothy Fritz
Oct.	2nd	Civic Elections Forum	" - Lynne V.L. & Rita Moir
"	9th	"Women and the Environment"	" - Barb Huston
Oct.	16th	"Women and Rape"	" - Elaine Parry & Pauline Hoskins
Oct.	23rd	"Children's Rights"	" - Jo Staddon
"	30th	"Witches" (Come in costume)	" - Jo Staddon & Eudene Luther
Nov.	6th	"Women in Sports"	
"	13th	"Women and Mental Health"	" - Lynne Van Luven

Wed 8:00 P.M.
 this is a women's place publication

Up, August 12, 1974, page two.

THE NEW COPPER 7

Copper 7 is a new I.U.D. (intrauterine device) from the Searle Co. that is considered to be a safe effective contraceptive even in women who have never been pregnant. It is easily inserted by a doctor and usually causes nothing more than minor cramps, vaginal spotting or slight bleeding. Like all I.U.D.'s, it can not be felt by either partner during intercourse. When first inserted it should be checked by the women after 2-3 days, then after a week, then after each menstrual period. If the rare occasion occurs that the I.U.D. is expelled, another contraceptive (foam, safes) should be used and the doctor consulted as soon as possible. Regular return to the doctor is recommended at about 1 month, then at a year. The intrauterine device is easily removed by a doctor if the women wants to become pregnant.

The CU-7 (copper 7) is a small seven-shaped piece of plastic containing a copper wire with a nylon thread attached to the base. The copper is a chemical agent that apparently inactivates the man's sperms so that an egg can't be fertilized and a pregnancy is prevented. The contraceptive effect of the copper is effective for 2 years: then the CU-7 should be replaced by the doctor.

As with other I.U.D.'s, research is still being done, and no exact reason has been found as to why they work.

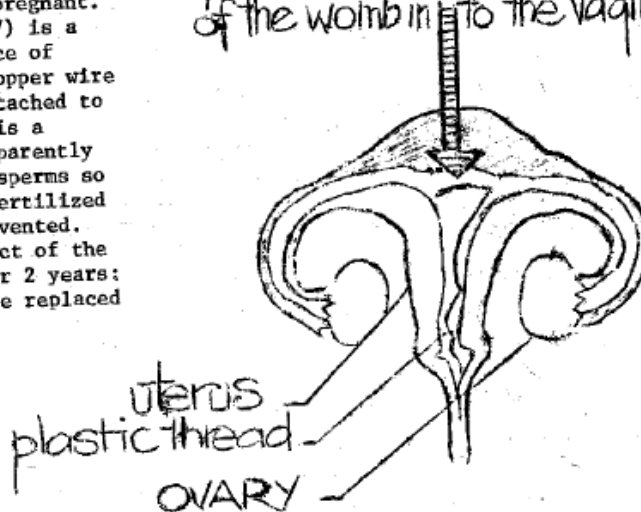
For information on this and other effective contraceptives, consult the Birth Control and Information Centre:

328-0196

542 - 7th St. S.

Please Note: Due to new evidence the Shield is no longer being manufactured and the ones already in use are being recalled. If you have a Dalkon Shield please call the B.C.I.C. or your doctor.

Cu-7 fits snugly in the womb. The plastic thread passes through the neck of the womb in to the vagina.



Presented by:

The Birth Control and Information Centre

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