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UCSB HIST 133B Source Exploration Essay
March 19, 2019

A German Feminist's Fight to Achieve Social Equality

Helene Stöcker (1869-1943) was a women's rights activist and sexual reformer during the early 19th century in Europe, the country in particular being Germany. The article, "Marriage as a Psychological Problem," was first published in a magazine in 1929. The name of the magazine was *Die Neue Generation*, translated into English as *The New Generation*. Stöcker was the editor of this magazine from 1906 to 1932 and began to publishing her own articles in 1908. Stöcker used the magazine to create a platform that would distribute and publish other works that advocated for women's right to be able to control their own bodies as well as trying to begin to improve the legal and social position of unmarried mothers and their children during the early 19th century.

According to Helene's Wikipedia page, she also is known for co-founding *Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform*, translated into English as *The Association for the Protection of Mothers and Sexual Reform*, later becoming the editor of the organization's magazine *Mutterschutz* (1905-1908). Her influential ideology, which advocated for women's rights, became known as the "New Ethic." Helene spoke out on the topics of abortion, political and social equality, and sexual education. In 1902 she was one of the first females in the world to earn a doctorate degree in Literature. Her following was made up of youth groups, the elderly, and middle aged women. Unfortunately, during the National Socialists rise to power, Stöcker's articles and documents were put on a list deeming them undesirable and harmful materials. Eventually, her work had been destroyed and set a fire, being burned upon the hopes that people, especially women, would not be able to read her inspiring work against the German authority and the social norms. Shortly after, her citizenship was revoked, and she immigrated to the United States, where she died of cancer in New York in February 1943.

The article, which had been originally published in 1929, was translated by editor Norman Haire for The Sexual Reform Congress, which took place in September 1929 in London, England. According to his Wikipedia page, Haire was a medical practitioner and sexologist, also called "the most prominent sexologist in Britain" between the World Wars. He translated

Helene's original text from German into English to use as arguments and points to add in his speech during the *World League for Sexual Reform* at the 1929 congress. There is no evidence that Helene Stöcker attended the *Sexual Reform Congress* of 1929, but the two individuals did have some similarities in terms of avocation and interest for the improvement of the discussions of sexuality as well as reform for equality on the basis of sex or gender. Long after the first English publication, in 1995, excerpts from the article were reprinted in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. I have found that Helene worked with many other famous individuals who were calling for change in social order and openness of the display of public sexuality. I had found it to be unique that even though she was a woman, Helene worked with various influential male figures such as Magnus Hirschfield, a German sexologist, and Wilfrid Wellock, a British politician.

Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

- 1.) Stöcker, Helene. "Die Ehe als psychologisches Problem," *Die neue Generation* 25 (1929), 8-9, pp. 271-82.

This is the source of the original text, the article which was published in 1929 the magazine, *Die neue Generation*. In the article, Helene wanted to make clear that she was a strong advocate for the protection of mothers and children, but also for the proper uses of contraception as well as the legalization of abortion. She claims that women have had a slow start of progress for the understanding of sex between a man and a woman, but it is because only in very recent times have women themselves begun to take any part in the study of sex problems. She goes into further depth by suggesting that it is not only the younger generation who has problems in their marriage revolving around the subject of sex, but that older couples as well experience the same struggles. She ends the short article by saying, "It is our task, it is the task of sexual reform of sexual science, to teach people how to best enjoy life." *Die neue Generation* is held by Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. In addition, the magazine can also be found in the city records office in Obersulm, Germany.

- 2.) Haire, Norman. *Sexual Reform Congress, London 8.-14. IX 1929 : W.L.S.R. World League for Sexual Reform : Proceedings of the Third Congress = Weltliga Für Sexualreform : Bericht Des Dritten Kongresses = Ligue Mondiale Pour La Réforme Sexuelle : Compte*

Rendu Du Troisième Congrès = Tutmonda Ligo Por Seksaj Reformoj : Dokumentaro De La Tria Kongreso. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1930.

This book is available at the UC Santa Barbara library. Within one book, the translation of the original text can be found in German and French as well, making it convenient for those who speak those languages to not have to search far in order to read the text.

Norman mentions Helene to further elaborate on her position of living life as a woman in the 20th century.

- 3.) *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. University of California Press, 1994, pp. 705-08.

This is where I was able to actually read the article in text form as I went to the UCSB library to confirm that the article was in fact published in the book. The authors who published the article in the sourcebook express their concern that women in the early twentieth century faced obstacles that are still evident in today's society. Their struggles of the past are still continuing into the present, reproduction and the expectations of gender continue to be a popular topic of interest. It was fascinating to be able to pull something off of the internet to find out that a physical copy of a book with the article exists at the university that I currently study at.

- 4.) Braker, Regina. "Helene Stocker's Pacifism in the Weimar Republic: Between Ideal and Reality." *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 3 (2001): 70-97.

This article speaks to Helene's early life, and how she grew up came to shape her viewpoints of marriage, family style, and women's reproductive rights. As her mother passed on the duties of the home to the eldest child, (Helene) Braker suggests that a potential explanation as to why she became the woman that she had grown into was because of this responsibility. This along with Stöcker's generally tense relationship with her own mother, prompted her to think about the constraints reproduction placed on women and their development as individuals.

- 5.) Crozier, Ivan. "Becoming a Sexologist: Norman Haire, the 1929 London World League for Sexual Reform Congress, and Organizing Medical Knowledge about Sex in Interwar England." *History of Science* 39, no. 3 (2001): 299-329.

This thirty page article is about Norman Haire during his speech in the 1929 London

World League for Sexual Reform Congress. The League was created to coordinate policy reforms related to greater openness around sex. In addition to this, Crozier mentions Haire's acknowledgment of a ten point platform, which included the idea of Helene's viewpoint for the protection of unmarried mothers and illegitimate children, in addition to subject talks about homosexuality and lesbianism.

- 6.) Deutscher, Penelope. "Die Kunftige Generation: Helene Stocker's Future from Malthus to Nietzsche." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48, no. 1 (2010): 18-35.

Deutscher discusses Stöcker's position of the new upcoming modern female and her personal prematurity. The paper mentions some of her advocacy regarding reproduction and marriage, Deutscher suggests that their context could have provided the resources which would have been able to change the way Helene saw herself as a woman living under those social conditions in Europe. In addition, the mention of a woman's right to control her reproductive system is compared to the side of science such as using references to biological makeup developed theoretically by Charles Darwin. Deutscher says Helene did not take into consideration the ideology that in order to be considered and viewed as a powerful country requires that reproduction and having children was the feminine role, making women responsible to carry out those expectations for their country.

- 7.) Leng, Kristen. "Culture, Difference, and Sexual Progress in Turn-of-the-Century Europe: Cultural Othering and the German League for the Protection of Mothers and Sexual Reform, 1905–1914." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25, no. 1 (2016): 62-82.

This article speaks to Helene's organization that she founded, Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform (The Protection of Mothers and Sexual Reform). The prominent German organization brought together a unique group of feminists, scientists, physicians, politicians, and artists who sought to transform sexual life through social work and philosophical inquiry. Among the league's diverse and high-profile members was feminist and founder Helene Stöcker. Helene's article, "Marriage as a Psychological Problem" was used to compare Leng's perspective of sexual reform as well as the subject of modern day birth control.