

Fighting for Life: Pro-Woman Framing in the Pro-life Movement

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

How do marginal actors change hearts and minds? Social movement scholars have long recognized that institutional outsiders target a range of potential allies to press their agenda. While much of the movement research historically privileged formal political activities in explaining social change, understanding the way actors draw upon culture and identity to garner wider support for a variety of social, political, and economic causes has become increasingly important. Ultimately, research that incorporates political process theories with the seemingly dichotomous notions of cultural and collective identity is especially valuable. To better understand how movement actors achieve broad change, I draw on recent attempts to examine how change occurs in fields. I argue it is necessary to examine how a field's structural and cultural components, as well as the more individual actions, resources, rhetoric, and ideologies of relevant actors, interact to affect field change or maintain stasis. This research does so through an analysis of the current debate over abortion in America, arguably the most viciously divisive religious, moral, political, and legal issue since slavery. Over the past four decades, the American abortion debate has been glibly characterized as fight between the rights of two groups: women and fetuses, with pro-choice groups championing the rights of the former and pro-life groups the latter. Yet recently, a growing contingent of the pro-life movement is attempting to alter this dichotomy by using pro-woman rhetoric to argue that instead of advancing women's equality, abortion is actually harmful to women. I use a combination of focus groups, individual interviews, participant observation, and content analysis to

explain why a faction of the pro-life movement is attempting to alter the debate's field frame by replacing the fetal rights focus with an emphasis on how abortion is harmful to women. Ultimately, this faction believes changing the field frame will persuade more actors to become pro-life. They believe that this, in turn, will lead to decreased abortion rates, higher percentages of Americans arguing that abortion should be illegal, and more restrictive abortion laws. As a result of these changes, actors in this faction of the pro-life movement believe abortion will eventually become illegal and unthinkable in America. Overall, this research contributes to our understanding of how change in fields is situated in both political and cultural struggles over meanings and resources.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Theoretical Framework

INTRODUCTION

Everyone approaching the National Mall in Washington D.C. on the unseasonably warm morning of January 22, 2009 sensed the anticipatory static in the air; something was about to happen. From far away, oblivious tourists sauntering toward the Washington Monument and docents hurrying to begin another day of leading tours at the National Gallery may have deduced a demonstration was taking shape. If they remembered the day's date, congressional scholars, law students, and historians could easily make an educated guess. It was the 36th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* and a sea of pro-life activists, along with a motley straggle of pro-choice protesters, were gearing up for the annual March for Life.

Docent, tourist, or historian, anyone marginally familiar with the American pro-life movement may also feel confident in predicting the types of signs pro-life activists would carry – poster boards with graphic, full color images of curled fetuses and slogans like “Abortion=Murder” or “It’s A Child, Not a Choice.” While all of these signs were present, they were dwarfed by the popularity of another presence: sturdy black, white, and yellow glossy pieces of cardboard, about 3 feet wide and 3 feet tall, each one boldly proclaiming “Women Regret Abortion.” That these signs accounted for about one third of all the signs brought to the march that day may surprise many. After all, most people believe the American pro-life movement typically addresses fetal rights far more than it

ever mentions the feelings of women who undergo abortion. Yet members of the Silent No More Awareness campaign, who made the signs and thrust them into any available hand willing to grab hold, are affiliated with a faction of the pro-life movement referred to as pro-woman, pro-life (PWPL).

PWPL actors want to change both the focus of the pro-life movement and Americans' understanding of the abortion debate. Since the 1973 Supreme Court Decision *Roe v. Wade*, the American abortion debate has been most frequently characterized as fight between the rights of two groups: women and fetuses, with pro-choice groups championing the rights of the former and pro-life groups the latter. Of course, this understanding of abortion is not ahistorical; many scholars have demonstrated how the general understanding of abortion changed over the last two centuries, from physician control to a struggle over competing rights (Luker 1984; Mohr 1979; Sollinger 2007). Yet recently, the PWPL contingent of the pro-life movement has emerged and is attempting to alter this established woman vs. fetal rights dichotomy by using gendered rhetoric to argue that instead of advancing women's equality, abortion is actually harmful to women.

This knowledge may provoke many questions: why are actors associated with one of the largest, most recognizable, and most active countermovements in recent history trying to change the focus of both the pro-life movement and the broader understanding of the American abortion debate? How do PWPL actors go about realizing this change? How do more traditional fetal-centric pro-lifers respond to these attempts? More generally, how can activists be convinced to abandon arguments based on ideological

purity in favor of more strategic ways to present an issue? And what impact will this new pro-woman, pro-life rhetoric have on the American abortion debate?

To begin addressing these questions, I first turn to the literature on framing and ideology, and the frame alignment processes of extension and transformation. I argue that PWPL actors are attempting to extend traditional pro-life ideology by combining the ideologies of fetal personhood and gender essentialism. PWPL actors also advocate for strategic frame transformation within the pro-life movement. They believe that arguments emphasizing how abortion is harmful to women will be more successful than fetal centric frames in winning new pro-life converts and challenging abortion's legality. Faced with the limited political and cultural effectiveness of a movement frame focusing on fetal rights, the PWPL wing of the pro-life movement seeks to redefine the terms of the debate from "woman vs. fetus" to a dispute over which position best represents the rights, health, and interests of women – pro-life or pro-choice. The PWPL movement seeks to cast doubt on the notion – heretofore shared by actors on both sides – that the pro-choice movement is focused on the interests of women and the pro-life movement is concerned with the rights of fetuses. It seeks to show that the pro-life position is more authentically pro-woman than the pro-choice movement – which PWPL actors attempt to cast as actually anti-woman.

This attempt at frame transformation does not simply mean transforming the master frame of the pro-life movement. PWPL actors seek to transform how all Americans fundamentally understand the abortion debate. Thus PWPL actors challenge the shared assumptions of all actors involved in the abortion debate. To explain this attempt at movement and field transformation, I draw on to recent research combining

social movements and organizational theory. This research highlights the importance of studying how change occurs in fields (Clemens 1996, Rao 1998, Strang and Soule 1998; Armstrong 2005; Davis et al. 2005; Evans and Kay 2008). Organizational analysis uses a field perspective to explain the relationship between individual action, general cultural beliefs, and access to resources. Here, a field is more than a sum of its parts; the interactions between actors and organizations that make up the field, and the beliefs, identities, and resources each field component contributes, create a shared understanding of the field's state and each actor or group's position within the field.

In relation to social movements, fields are spheres of contestation. Locating social movement organizations (SMOs) and movement actors in a broader field helps to identify other actors that are largely unaffiliated with an SMO but still influence SMO goals and the movement. In the American abortion debate, activists, journalists, politicians, lawyers, doctors, and religious officials are just a few of the categories of actors invested in molding this debate. At the organizational level, SMOs, courts, political bodies, medical groups, religious organizations, and the media all influence the field of the abortion debate to varying degrees. Within this field, the strategies and tactics actors employ to press their agendas are not simply rooted in utilitarian calculation, but in a “feel for the game” and knowledge of how to act that is acquired through experience (Crossley 2002: 176). Examining the abortion debate at this field level helps to explain the reasons for and implications of PWPL actor's attempts to transform the master frame of the pro-life movement and alter the abortion debate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Relationship between Frames and Ideology

Frames are mental structures that help people “locate perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Snow *et al.* 1986: 464).

Frames guide actions and ground experiences by providing a context to help people interpret these actions and experiences. Framing occurs when movement actors “actively engage in the construction of meaning, the portrayal of injustice and the definition of pathways to change” (Zald 1996: 269). Through framing, people choose the meanings and methods they will use to convey a message to others. The framing process helps people make sense of grievances and identify how to act or what to say in response to grievances in order to bring about effective change (Ryan and Gamson 2005). Thus framing involves talking, persuading, arguing, and marketing. As this description implies, framing is a strategic activity. People actively select frames to mold the beliefs and actions of targets and achieve desired goals.

But where do frames come from? Although frames are actively and strategically constructed, they do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, people cobble frames together using their preexisting opinions, emotions, and experiences (Morrill and Owen-Smith 2002; Benford 1997; Polletta 1997; Swidler 2001). Frames are often rooted in ideology or cultural stock (Westby 2005). Describing the difference between frames and ideology, Oliver and Johnston define ideology as “a system of meaning that couples assertions and theories about the nature of social life with values and norms relevant to promoting or resisting social change” (2005: 192). Here, values refer to moral or solidaristic commitments to a sense of what is right and wrong, important or unimportant. Norms

refer to standards of behavior and rules about how things are supposed to be done.

Finally, theories or assertions about the nature of social life refer to understandings about how people, groups, societies, and the universe operate (Oliver and Johnston 2005). Thus ideology links a theory about how the world works with norms regarding how to act and values denoting right and wrong.

Ideology is often a framing resource. For example, a person may evaluate how she sees the world and choose to exaggerate or emphasize aspects of this vision to draw other's attention (Snow and Benford 2005). In other words, frames have both strategic and ideological components. In another example, the American pro-choice movement typically uses a rights frame structure to argue women have the right to control their bodies. However, the pro-life movement also uses this general structure to advocate for the fetal right to life, which is based in an entirely different ideology. Because people use frames strategically, to shape how others think and act, frames are rarely a straightforward extrapolation of ideology.

The strategic components of frames can also be constrained by ideology (Benford and Snow 2000). Ideology and cultural stock have ruled out many potentially successful strategic frames for the pro-life movement. For example, pro-life actors could adopt a responsibility frame. Using this frame, they could emphasize the importance of contraception for sexually active people who do not currently want children. If this frame positively influenced behavior, the number of unplanned pregnancies, and thus abortions, would be reduced, a central goal of the pro-life movement. The religious culture and beliefs pervading the modern pro-life movement, however, place a high value on procreative sex and the vision of children as "unique and unrepeatable gifts from God"

(Pope John Paul; quoted in Meehan 1984: 148). From the perspective of many religious institutions, sex is sacred and transcendent because it produces human life. Contraception removes these sacred qualities, decreasing the importance of sex and turning it into something that is recreational and cheap (Luker 1984). In this way, the religious culture of the pro-life movement limits options by making one potentially successful frame unappealing.

Interestingly, secular pro-life organizations also avoid promoting contraception. Typically, even the most liberal secular organizations will only state that they are neutral or take no stance on issues related to contraception. For example, when Serrin Foster became president of the PWPL organization Feminists for Life, she initially advocated putting “contraception in the water” to prevent unplanned pregnancy. Foster soon discovered, however, that this strategy splintered her membership base, as “people who are against birth control for religious reasons [and] hippies and vegans who say no chemicals” objected (quoted in Bazelon 2007b: 1). As a result, Foster decided her organization would not take a stance on contraception. This example demonstrates how religious ideology pervades the pro-life movement affecting the framing strategies of secular organizations as well. Secular actors must walk a fine line between religious ideology and secular strategy to avoid alienating potential allies. More broadly, this example shows why it is necessary to look at ideologies and culture that pervade the movement as a whole to understand why some potentially successful strategies are not employed.

Frames are generally considered to be more strategic and malleable than ideology. Yet the more a frame is associated with an organization, the more likely it is to become

stagnant or fixed. Frames generated by movement leaders and passed down to general members become “sticky” as members embrace and spread the party line. This is similar to the process of isomorphism that new institutional theorists describe. In this process, divergent organizations begin to follow the same rules, leading to increasingly similar structures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). As Scott describes, “compliance occurs in many circumstances because other types of behavior are inconceivable; routines are followed because they are taken for granted as ‘the way we do things’” (2001: 57). Master frames function in a similar way. Master frames are metanarratives or enduring themes, such as rights, nationalist, or injustice frames. In their most general form, they persist across space and time. Master frames work at a broad level, to orient movement participants toward a readily recognizable spin on an issue. Many grievances can be framed as an injustice, from famine to high taxes. Similarly, both the ability to abort and be born can be presented as rights. People draw on master frames to describe a perceived situation or injustice in a manner that fits “the tenor of the times” and parallel other recent movements (Oliver and Johnston 2005: 189; Snow 1992). In another example, the evolution of a rights frame can be traced from the civil rights movement to second wave feminism and on to the GLBT movement. Thus a master frame functions as a readily recognizable perspective or angle on an issue. The more a frame is embraced by and embedded in multiple organizations, the more fixed it becomes, and the more difficult it is to change. Yet master frames are not necessarily trapped in an iron cage; they can be altered or replaced through frame alignment processes, such as the process of frame transformation.

Ideological Extension and Frame Transformation

While ideology can supplement or limit framing, frames can also challenge ideology (Westby 2005). This is seen in the process of frame transformation. Frame transformation involves changing old understandings or meanings and generating new ones. Frame transformation sometimes occurs when an SMO's frames do not resonate with, or are antithetical to, conventional understandings of the world. If this is the case, "new values have to be created and nurtured, old meanings or understandings discarded and erroneous beliefs reframed" (Snow et al. 1986). Snow and colleagues argue that transformation is contingent on "the development and adoption of injustice frames and correspondent shifts in attributional orientation," such as from self-blaming to structure blaming or victim blaming to system blaming (1986: 473). Oliver and Johnston (2005) contend that what Snow et al. describe as frame transformation is better characterized as ideological transformation because this process truly describes changing a deeply held system of meaning. After transformation occurs, pieces of this new ideology can function as new frames, but Oliver and Johnston maintain the term ideology better characterizes the shift to a "whole new system of meaning and all points to the social processes of adopting it" than the term frame (2005: 196).

In reality, the process commonly referred to as frame transformation may exist on a continuum, where transformation of deeply held beliefs about how the world works may best be described as ideological transformation and purely tactical or strategic decisions about framing choices without a preceding change in ideology may be referred to as strategic transformation. But because frames are composed of ideological and strategic elements, either of these outcomes is an extreme outlier. In most cases, there

will be a joint change in ideology and strategy. It is more likely for ideological change to lead to strategic change, but a reversal of the process could also potentially occur.

But what happens when a preexisting ideology is merely extended to encompass new beliefs that cohere with older beliefs? Movement scholars are likely familiar with the term frame extension, which occurs when an SMO “extends the boundaries of its primary framework so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives or activities as attending to or being congruent with the values or interests of potential adherents” (Snow et al. 1986: 472). But if ideology is extended, the new interests or points of view Snow and colleagues refer to may no longer be incidental to primary objectives. These interests or points of view may be encompassed in this extended ideology.

In the case examined here, PWPL actors have undergone ideological extension and are advocating for strategic transformation of pro-life frames. In terms of ideology, PWPL actors are not abandoning old pro-life meanings and understandings. Instead, they are cultivating new values and beliefs besides old ones. Compared to traditional pro-lifers, PWPL actors have an extended ideology. Many original PWPL advocates began as fetal centric pro-life actors. They already believed that abortion was unjust because it was violence against a preborn human. This injustice belief is often rooted in a religious or secular ideology of life as a seamless garment from conception to the grave, which should not be interrupted by another. This injustice belief did not change as they began to simultaneously believe that the evil and violence of abortion also harmed the women who underwent the procedure.

To illustrate this extended ideology, I draw on an example provided by the PWPL organization The Justice Foundation. This organization collects legally admissible affidavits of women who feel they have been harmed by abortion. In one affidavit, a Georgia woman using the initials M.C.C. wrote:

the hearts and minds of women are being destroyed because they are being deceived into believing they are not mothers even though inside they feel pain and grief. We grieve for 1 killed in a car accident. Why do we not grieve for over 50 million babies murdered? Abortion is murder! (2005: 1)

This statement clearly demonstrates that M.C.C. and other pro-life actors believe abortion has two victims, the mother (and sometimes the father as well) and the fetus. This conviction is based in a combination of ideologies, fetal personhood and gender essentialism. Thus the fetal personhood ideology is consistent between traditional pro-life and PWPL actors.

Yet PWPL actors do undergo a shift in attribution. This shift is not strongly related to whom to blame or target, but *how* to target potential pro-life adherents. Thus, this is frame transformation in a very strategic sense. PWPL actors are critical of the utility of frames based on fetal personhood. They maintain that the pro-life movement will be more successful in achieving its central goals if adherents emphasize how abortion is harmful to women. PWPL actors strategically advocate for transforming the focus of pro-life movement frames from fetal rights to women's rights. This does not mean that PWPL actors believe fetal rights are unimportant. Instead, they believe this strategic frame change will advantageously transform how most people think about abortion. As opposed to understanding this debate as contestation over fetal versus women's rights, the focus of the debate will be whether abortion is harmful or helpful to

women. PWPL actors trust a focus on how women are hurt by abortion will eventually be adopted by many traditionally pro-life actors and by many people who currently side with the pro-choice movement. They are also confident this strategic frame transformation will appeal to many bystanders who have not been highly involved in the abortion debate. Thus they believe this strategic shift will motivate previously unmotivated bystanders to join to pro-life movement. To help explain why this strategic shift is occurring, I turn to a discussion of how social movements are embedded in fields.

Fields and Social Movements

In this section, I begin by discussing how organizational theorists developed the concept of fields, and then turn to more recent efforts by social movement scholars to incorporate a field-level approach in their research. As McAdam and Scott (2005) note, “the concept of field identifies an arena – a system of actors, actions, and relations – whose participants take one another into account as they carry out interrelated activities” (10). New institutionalists use the field perspective to explain the relationship between individual action, general cultural beliefs, organizational structure, and access to resources.¹ In this conceptualization, a field is more than a sum of its parts; the interactions between actors and organizations that make up the field, and the beliefs, identities, and resources each field component contributes, create a shared understanding of the field’s state and each actor or group’s position within the field. Identifying field structure and logic can help to put people’s strategies and actions into context.

¹ Like new institutionalists, Bourdieu (1998) also describes how fields are governed by implicit rules that can lead to homogeneity. Yet overall Bourdieu is more concerned with the process of distinction, where people mark the differences between themselves and others through the use of economic and cultural capital.

Organizational analyses that employ a field level focus often examine how organizations adapt to survive within a larger environment and how organizations often become similar to others within the field. These processes are unlikely to be the focus of movement scholars because the very presence of a social movement suggests there is disagreement between two or more groups. As a result, movement studies that examine field level change should be more concerned with conflict between groups, debates over meanings, and struggles over scarce resources - processes that are less likely to be acknowledged by organizational theorists (but see Mohr and Guerra-Pearson 2007; Scott et al 2000).

In relation to social movements, a field emerges when multiple actors, such as activists, journalists, politicians, professionals, and citizens come together to define what to do and how to act. The actors within a field are focused on a similar central issue and interact more frequently with each other than those outside the field (Scott 1995). These actors usually have a shared understanding of the general state of the field. Yet because social movements typically involve conflict between groups, the field serves as a sphere of contestation, where actors seek to advance opposing strategies and goals. Changes in field characteristics, such as the introduction of new actors, organizations, or strategies, the establishment of links between previously unconnected actors, and shifts in the relative power of groups within the field can all lead to field level change (Sauder 2008). Studying changes at the field level is important because the composition of the field and shifts within it influence “collective rationality, individual and group foci, state (regulatory and legal) structures, and organizational forms,” all of which affect specific actors’ goals and tactics (Morrill and Owen-Smith 2002: 92). In other words, changes

within the field may affect the logic actors confront and the strategies they use to realize their goals

New institutional approaches examine how the state and political ideology affect organizations and demonstrate how framing can help outside observers understand organizational action (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Polletta 1997; Fligstein 1990). Powell and DiMaggio define an organizational field as “those organizations that, in aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services and products” (1983: 64-65). New institutional theories often focus on how organizational sectors interact with broader professions or industries. Here, external environments often take on a subtle but important role; “environments penetrate organizations, influencing how organizational actors view the world and the very categories of structure, action, and thought” (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). New-institutionalists demonstrate how the culture an institution is embedded in affects norms of rationality. Instead of simply operating on objective criteria and concerns for efficiency, organizational operations are often the result of less rational routines, rituals, and myths that dictate appropriate organizational forms and practices (Meyer 1994; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Meyer and Scott 1994).

Moving away from a more traditional conceptualization of social movements characterized as a struggle between a social movement organization (SMO) and the state or another target, the field level approach produces a more complete understanding of social change. Previously, many movement scholars narrowly focused on the political process and the role of political opportunities (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). The

political opportunity structure is “a set of formal and informal political conditions that encourage, discourage, channel, and otherwise affect movement activity” (Campbell 2005: 44). Overall, it is important to remember that although political opportunities can offer the incentive for movement action, opportunity does not produce social movements and is not the only factor affecting movement outcomes (McAdam 1994; Polletta and Amenta 2001; Meyer 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 1999). Both power holders and challengers are located in webs of meaning and beliefs, identities, and moral convictions also shape political and nonpolitical outcomes (Embrayer and Goodwin 1994). Opportunities are not only structural or formally political; they can also be constructed through strategic actions and frames (Raeburn 2004; McCammon, Campbell, Granberg, and Mowery 2001; Schurman 2004). Other field actors, such as journalists, can shape movement actors’ perceptions of opportunities, and in some cases, beliefs about the presence of opportunity is just as important as its actual existence (Roscigno and Danaher 2001). Thus, the field perspective takes some of the explanatory power away from narrowly political processes by examining at how a wider variety of cooperative and competitive processes shape outcomes.

Studying interactions within the field unveils how opportunities, both political and non-political, are created and utilized. Yet the focus on interactions also demonstrates how both field structure and individual actors can create boundaries that restrict opportunities. The simple opening and closing of a metaphorical window oversimplifies this intricacy. Instead, it is helpful to think about movement actors on a playing field, negotiating obstacles opponents put in their way, implementing plans to block opponents, and strategizing how best to use any advantages they possess in order to shape the field in

their desired way. If actors are lucky or able to read the field correctly, they may be successful; if they are unlucky or make mistakes, they are likely to fail.

Field Frames

Framing, like other movement processes, does not occur in isolation. Recent research combining social movement and organizational theory has demonstrated that many movement activities take place in fields. Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch (2003) have advanced field research by creating the field frame concept. This concept examines how (1) a field's structural and cultural components, (2) the actions, resources, frames, and beliefs of the relevant field actors, and (3) conflicts between field actors affect field level change or maintain stasis (Hoffman 2001). Unfortunately, the description of a field frame is murky and narrowly political. Lounsbury et al. describe a field frame as:

a component of discourse that can be altered as a direct or indirect result of political action. More concretely, we define field frames as political constructions that provide order and meaning in the fields by creating a status ordering for practices that deem some practices more appropriate than others (2003: 77).

Lounsbury et al. (2003) apply the field frame concept to the practice of recycling and show how recycling shifted from a neglected strategy championed by a few community activists to the basis of a major for-profit industry. They demonstrate how one competing logic or mindset (recycling) replaced the previously dominant logic (incineration) as the best way to manage waste. Yet an expansion of the field frame approach should prove invaluable to movement scholars as well. A field level analysis allows movement researchers to focus on a greater diversity of actors than the limited four or five groups of actors typically present in movement studies: a social movement organization (SMO), its targets, the public, the media, and the state. Examining the field an SMO is embedded in

helps in understanding how and why actors make the decisions they do and helps to conceptualize the outcomes of these decisions.

In the struggle over abortion, many actors beyond the most visible activists and politicians shape the abortion debate field; the field is influenced by an ensemble of journalists, medical professionals (especially gynecologists, epidemiologists, psychiatrists, and therapists), legal scholars, academic researchers, judges, clinic employees, crisis pregnancy center volunteers, and religious officials. Those less familiar with the field may be surprised that some of these actors, such as academic researchers, have a profound influence on the abortion debate. While many psychiatrists and epidemiologists typically do not conduct their research with a pro-life or pro-choice agenda, activists on both sides of the debate use their research as evidence that women are either helped or harmed by abortion. This field level focus is important for accurately understanding when, why, and how new frames and tactics challenging field stasis emerge, as well as the outcomes of these challenges. In this model, actors' success in changing a field frame is dependent upon using tactics that appeal to other existing field actors or that draw in new actors, and framing that resonates with both field level and broader cultural values and beliefs. Because the field frame concept is so helpful for accurately explaining change, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of what field frames are. Therefore, I propose to clarify and expand Lounsbury et al.'s definition of the field frame. I will then use this new definition to explain recent changes in the American abortion debate

I argue a field frame is the culmination of discourse constructed by and among all actors in a field, which creates a primary field discourse and focus. In the context of a

movement related field, this means that actors have some shared understanding of what they're fighting over and what the stakes are. This conceptualization helps to explain the effectiveness of actors' strategies and puts their agency into context, as field factors both create opportunities and constraints. Although this conceptualization draws on framing theory and the concepts of master and organizational frames (Swart 1995; Evans 1997), a field frame cannot necessarily be altered by individual actors to fit their specific purposes in the same manner as an organizational frame. Unlike an organizational frame, a field frame does not belong to any single organization. In fact, when studying fields in the context of movements, the beliefs of opposing actors are all incorporated in the field frame. Thus while a master frame often represents the unified beliefs of an SMO, a field frame implies that actors have a shared understanding of what they are fighting over. Therefore, a field frame describes opposing actors' shared understanding of their basic contestation. It is more general, and often more stable than an organizational frame, yet a field frame can also be challenged and modified.

Focusing on the current debate over abortion in America, the field frame is the widely accepted focus of the debate: the contestation over the rights of living women versus the rights of the unborn (Burns 2005). This understanding of the abortion rights field frame gets to the very heart of the debate. Although not using the term "field frame," many scholars have demonstrated how people's general understanding of abortion changed over the last 150 years, from physician control to a struggle over competing rights (Luker 1984; Mohr 1978; Sollinger 1998). I use the field frame perspective to understand recent changes in American the pro-life movement. Specifically, I examine how PWPL attempts of ideological extension and frame

transformation challenge the pro-life movement's fetal centric master frame. Yet these actors do not stop here. They also want to challenge the abortion debate field frame by directly addressing pro-choice actors in a debate over whether women are helped or harmed by abortion.

This study also advances the idea that a struggle over meaning is at the heart of many debates and conflicts. The current debate over abortion in America may be the best illustration of this struggle. The interaction between two worldviews is present in all aspects of this debate, down to the names of both sides. The debate over names represents a much deeper conflict over morality, equality, and worldviews. The most common labels for the two primary sides of the abortion debate are pro-life and pro-choice, so those are the labels I use here.² Both sides, however, try to reframe the opposition's position by changing the opposition's name. For example, pro-choice advocates typically object to the pro-life label. Pro-choicers see the fetus as only a potential life. To them, the only real life that exists is that of the pregnant woman. Instead, they perceive the abortion debate as a debate over choice, especially the ability to choose whether or not to be pregnant (Luker 1984). This choice is important because they believe pregnancy affects all aspects of a woman's life and is often an obstacle to advancement and equality for women as individuals and as a group (Petchesky 1984). Therefore, pro-choice advocates believe people who oppose them oppose a woman's right to choose her future and are most accurately labeled as anti-choice. Similar arguments over meaning exist on the pro-life side as well.³

² Except in direct quotations.

³ For example, those on the pro-life side often refer to pro-choicers as "pro-aborts" (i.e., pro-abortion).

This conflict over names is just one example of why it is important to look at interactions between actors, and how actors' claims are received by others in the field and represented by the media to the broader public, both of which shape people's understanding of the abortion debate. Complicated views of the world are often only represented by a few words or phrases, and it is important that actors select the right words or phrases to frame their viewpoints and causes. The selection, however, is influenced by many factors, such as culture, identity, emotions, and perceived resonance, all of which affect the important task of framing.

Culture, Framing, and Social Change

In order to accurately understand groups' strategic choices and the state of the field as a whole, researchers must examine the influence of culture (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2006; Gerner 1997). Like ideology, culture can both constrain and enable field actors.⁴ As Swidler writes, people are limited by ideas describing the world and specifying what they can seek from it. Thus, culture shapes action by defining "what people want and how they imagine they can get it" (1995: 25). Yet culture can also aid actors in picking the correct tools to optimally navigate situations (Polletta 2006; Swidler 1995). To explain an actor's strategic decisions, scholars must pay attention to the cultural beliefs that influence a tactic's attractiveness.

Individual choices are embedded in cultural and historical frameworks. People cannot freely choose the institutions, symbols, norms, or laws that best serve their purposes. While actors are constantly faced with choices, they are limited by the

⁴ Culture is viewed and defined in many ways. In this analysis, I use Gregory's (1983) definition of culture as "a system of meanings that accompany the myriad of behaviors and practices recognized as a distinct way of life" (364). This understanding of culture incorporates ideas (beliefs and meanings), materials (artifacts and symbols), and the actions (behaviors and practices) that field actors employ.

knowledge, experience, and opportunities available to them. Even the most calculated plans are influenced by moral visions of the world, collective identity, and shared understandings of how goals can be realized (Steinberg 2002; Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). Within the pro-life movement, culture particularly influences the frames groups use, the ideologies they espouse, and their communication with other actors. For example, the previously mentioned religious culture of the pro-life movement has led some pro-life leaders to reject potential allies. In 2002, Nellie Gray, organizer of the national March for Life, told members of the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians (PLAGAL) that they could not march with signs identifying themselves as gays and lesbians because these signs were offensive. When members of PLAGAL disregarded Gray's request, she had them arrested. As a result of this incident, Cecilia Brown, president of PLAGAL, wrote:

It has always bothered me that when I look around at a typical pro-life event I see predominantly white Christians. Where are other pro-lifers? Certainly pro-lifers come from every color of the spectrum, every religious and non-religious belief and every political affiliation. Sadly, I must conclude, they are not there because they are made to feel unwelcome (Brown 2002).

In this case, the conservative religious culture of many pro-life organizations sometimes prompts pro-life authorities to reject potentially helpful and like-minded allies on the basis of religious beliefs.

Yet cultural knowledge can also supply actors with tools, especially in framing decisions (Swidler 1995; Taylor 1999). Individuals in most modern cultures see babies as sweet innocent creatures that only a monster would hurt. Petchesky argues "the fetus as an image of the small, the helpless, and the mortal is made to *embody* one's desire for protection, for the safety of the womb; hence its power as a symbol to manipulate

emotions” (1984: 339, emphasis in original). Pro-life activists can and do use this cultural knowledge to their advantage by tapping into predominant cultural perceptions of babies as innocent beings in need of protection and by equating abortion with the killing of babies. Therefore, when analyzing a field, it is important to take the broader cultural values encompassing the field and specific cultural values within the field into account to understand strategic decisions.

Movement actors broadly conceptualize other individuals and groups in the field as supporters, opponents, or neutral/uncommitted parties (Silver 1997; Evans 1997). Within the field, supporters and neutral parties are ideally targeted using frame alignment strategies, and opponents are targeted using counter framing. However, activists do not have the time or information to customize different frames to appeal to all of the individuals and organizations within the field. Therefore, most SMOs are typically associated with one main organizational frame that activists will use to appeal to diverse groups.

Furthermore, it is difficult for SMOs to send specific frames to different targets when information about SMOs is distributed through the media. If this is the case, information will reach multiple targets simultaneously, and the framing message will most likely be condensed, simplified, and sensationalized. This suggests SMOs have a small repertoire of frames that they apply to a myriad of targets. Adopting a field level perspective helps to examine how such frames resonate among a broad set of actors.

In order to be successful, a frame must resonate with individuals outside of the SMO that created it. Widespread culture knowledge can help movement actors choose frames with the broadest resonance. It is unlikely, however, that even the most well

constructed frame will resonate with all parties in a multi-organizational field. Movement actors may need to moderate a frame's message to appeal to a wide range of actors. Activists must weigh the importance of constructing a frame that resonates with many parties against the strength of a frame's message. An imbalance between these two considerations may explain some movement failure. For example, an SMO's failure may be due to the heterogeneity of targets in its field. Heterogeneity may lead to a weak organizational frame that does not resonate well with any of the targets (Evans 1997). Overall, field composition influences which frames are chosen, how frames are interpreted and portrayed by other field actors, and framing outcomes.

In Chapter Two, I describe my data and methods. Chapter Three describes the current abortion debate field frame, explains why PWPL organizations and actors want to alter this field frame, and addresses who PWPL advocates think this new field frame will appeal to. In chapters four, five, and six, I examine three types of frames used by PWPL actors: gender essentialist frames, institutional frames, and health frames. In all three of these chapters, I examine how these frames are created and strategically deployed, as well as how they are all both constrained and informed by culture and ideology. In these chapters, I also examine other field actors' responses to PWPL frames, noting how others believe PWPL frames will impact them, the abortion debate field frame, and the legality of abortion. Finally, I discuss the theoretical implications of this work, focusing on the general factors that may lead to movement actors' attempts to transform a field frame, and the conditions necessary for successfully altering a field frame.

Chapter Two: Data and Methods

This dissertation seeks to identify the factors that motivated PWPL actors to engage in frame transformation emphasizing how abortion is antithetical to woman's rights and health. This dissertation also seeks to identify why PWPL actors want to change the abortion debate field frame from a debate about competing rights to a debate about whether women are helped or harmed by abortion. Finally, this study seeks to identify the effects diverse field actors believe these changes have or will have on public perceptions of abortions, abortion's legality, as well as the future of the field.

In order to do this, information on key players' ideology, tactics, and framing is gathered through a combination of focus groups, individual interviews, participant observation of pro-life and pro-choice meetings and events, and content analysis of newspaper articles, government documents, academic research, pro-life and pro-choice group websites, propaganda, and other pro-life and pro-choice group materials. This "triangulation" of methods is used to decrease threats to validity associated with any single method and increase analytic comprehensiveness (Denzin 1989).

Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

I chose qualitative design relying primarily on semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews given the absence of prior research on the subject, and the complicated nature of relationships between PWPL groups and other field actors. Although the use of focus groups is slowly becoming more common in movement research, it is surprising that discussions among social movement participants is not used

more frequently. Focus groups provide insights into collective motivations, aspirations, and fears, in depth insights not easily generated through other methods (Johnston 2002; Blee and Taylor 2002). All focus groups and interviews are semi-structured, meaning I rely on a question guide with a consistent set of topics but also have the flexibility of digressing or probing further based on interactions during the focus group or interview.

To recruit participants, I began with the knowledge of field actors or organizations I acquired through preliminary research and began to contact these actors about participating in either a focus group or interview. In most cases, I began by visiting identified organization's website and contacted the head of the organization or the designated contact person via phone or email. I asked if the contact person could send out an email to the group's members about the project, or if I could come to the group's next meeting to discuss the project. I then used snowball sampling, a well-established practice in qualitative research, to reach out to more groups (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Interviewees and focus group participants were asked to provide the names of any field actors or organizations that might be prospective participants.

In a qualitative study of this sort, there is not any easy formula for initially determining how many focus groups and interviews are needed. Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Morgan (1996) advise researchers to watch for a saturation point. This is similar to a point of diminishing returns, after which the researcher begins to hear the same themes repeatedly. The most common "rule of thumb" for focus groups is that most projects consist of four to six focus groups with 6 to 10 participants per group (Morgan 1996). Yet because it is necessary to talk to a variety of actors with differing, and often directly oppositional, viewpoints on abortion, I used segmentation to create groups that

consist of particular categories of participants. Because of the antagonism between pro-life and pro-choice actors, I made sure each focus group contained only pro-life or pro-choice actors from a single organization. Segmentation facilitates discussion because participants are similar to each other and allows for comparison between groups.

Ultimately, I conducted 12 focus groups: four with traditionally pro-life activists; four with PWPL activists; and four with pro-choice activists. Each focus group lasted about 2 hours. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Focus groups and interviews were primarily carried out in a large Midwestern city, and supplemented by data collected in five other cities throughout the eastern and midwestern United States.

The questions I asked in focus groups were grounded in initial research I had done on the pro-life and pro-choice movements. However, questions were modified as I conducted focus groups. I refined, added, or discarded questions based on the answers of early groups. Once again, the focus groups were semi-structured, but after conducting four focus groups, I developed a question template that I used in subsequent groups, which is described below.

I began focus groups by asking participants to briefly describe their views on abortion. This question was mainly designed to help participants get comfortable discussing the topic in a group setting. From there, I often asked a variation of the following question: *Of course many of people feel that their views on abortion are personal decisions, but sometimes views are influenced by other people, other events, or things we've heard or read. What are some of the most important people, ideas, or events that shaped your views on abortion?* This began to give me a sense of how participants became activists. Many people on both the pro-choice side and the pro-life side discussed

how their parents, peers, or role models influenced their views. Some discussed particular situations where their views “crystallized.” For example, one woman described how she originally did not have strong feelings about abortion, but became firmly pro-choice after her younger sister was raped as a teenager. Many people brought up books they read that further cemented their views, such as Randy Alcorn’s *Pro-life Answers to Pro-choice Arguments*. I read all of the books and articles suggested that I could find and incorporated many of the authors’ arguments into my studies. Participants also often mentioned the websites of other activist organizations that they found particularly useful. I also made sure to visit these websites whenever possible.

I then went into a variation of my third question: *Do you know the names of any other (pro-life/pro-choice) organizations? Which organizations are the most prominent? Successful? Are there any that you disagree with or think are unsuccessful?* Often, the conversation would naturally evolve into this question as participants mentioned other organizations that influenced their views. I actually asked a variation of this question twice: first asking about the side of the movement participants were affiliated with (pro-life or pro-choice) and then asking about the opposing side. I used this question to identify which organizations on both sides of the debate participants believed to be most influential and powerful in the field.

Discussion on this topic often allowed me to easily transition into my fourth question: *What are the major arguments people in the (pro-life/pro-choice) movement use to convince others abortion is (wrong/alright)? In your opinion, which of these arguments are the most successful? Which are the least successful?* Again, I often only had to ask parts of this question, as the discussion about organizations and arguments was

tied together. I was interested to see what variations of traditional pro-life and PWPL arguments were mentioned.

From here, I prompted participants to discuss PWPL arguments that hadn't previously been mentioned. Specifically I asked if respondents had heard about pro-life arguments regarding pro-life feminism, the negative psychological consequences of abortion, the link between abortion and breast cancer, and arguments related to the negative characteristics of abortionists and abortion clinics. I asked participants how effective they thought these arguments were, and how prominent these arguments were. These questions were designed to get a sense of the reactions to PWPL frames and to understand how pervasive these frames were in the field.

I then readdressed the question of which pro-life arguments respondents thought would be most effective in converting the apathetic and opponents to their side of the movement. I first asked: *Although you have relatively defined views on this topic, many people may be unsure of how they feel about abortion. Imagine you are talking to such a person right now who wants to know why you feel the way you do. What would you tell this person?* I then asked a version of the following question: *Now as you realize, abortion is often a polarizing topic. You may have even gotten into debates or discussions with people who hold views on this subject that are different from your own. Say you got into a discussion with a thoughtful and rational person who claims to be (pro-choice/pro-life). What types of things might you say to this person to convince him/her of your view or at least point out the strong arguments associated with your view?* These questions were also designed to assess the perceived effectiveness of different arguments in more concrete situations. Following this, I showed participants a variety of fliers and

advertisements that used either traditional pro-life framing or PWPL framing and asked which ones they thought were most and least effective. Once again, this was designed to allow participants to evaluate the persuasiveness of specific frames.

Finally, I ended each focus group with a wrap-up question: *Now I have a recording of our discussion and eventually I will be transcribing and thinking about this discussion. I'd like to end with you telling me one thing I should especially think about or pay attention to when I am analyzing this discussion.* This type of question is common in focus groups because it allows participants to bring up previously undiscussed topics that were overlooked or reiterate a point that they thought was particularly important.

Focus groups were supplemented with in-depth interviews with key informants, in this case higher-level officials in pro-life and pro-choice organizations, as well as politicians, doctors, and religious officials. Key informant interviewing is used to gain access to insider understanding of various organizations or groups of actors that make up the field including insight into how members are recruited, average levels of commitment and participation, and the evolution of organizational frames, as well as other considerations such as a group's structure, strategies, and culture (Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Staggenborg 1991; Blee and Taylor 2002). This coupling combines the greater breadth of focus groups with the depth of interviews (Morgan 1996).

I conducted 17 individual interviews: three with heads of traditionally pro-life groups, two with the heads of PWPL groups, two with the heads of pro-choice-groups, two with lawyers, and six with other field actors (two doctors, two nurses, and two religious officials). These interviews typically lasted around three hours. I often asked many of the same questions that I asked in focus groups, but I also asked questions more

specific to each respondent. For example, I asked the heads of activist groups questions about their organizations, such as when and it was founded, how many members it had, the level of involvement of members, the main goals of the organization, and what direction they thought the organization would take in the future. I asked other actors about both what they and colleagues thought about the abortion debate. For example, I talked with lawyers about their perceptions of court cases restricting abortion and the possibility of overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Similarly, I talked to religious officials about what role they thought organized religion played in influencing people's views on abortion.

Participant Observation

I observed various pro-choice and pro-life group meetings and attended pro-choice and pro-life group events. Similar to the focus groups and interview recruitment, I began with my knowledge of organizations based on preliminary research and asked the head of each organization identified if I could attend and record at least one meeting. Again, I then used snowball sampling to find out about other organizational meetings I could attend. Through various avenues of my research, I also learned about and attended many local and national events related to the abortion debate. These events include pro-life and pro-choice rallies, protests, marches, events featuring guest speakers, and conferences at city, state, and national levels. Ultimately, I attended 12 group meetings, three national marches, six national conferences, three state conferences, and six special events (N=30). Special events included activities like praying outside of Planned Parenthoods and placing roses in front of the White House fence to symbolize children killed by abortion.

While some events lasted less than an hour, other events, such as conferences, lasted for almost ten hours each.

This observation gave me a wider picture of the pro-life and pro-choice movements and exposed me to a greater variety of organizations and people. During most these events, I was able to take pictures and notes. I found that taking pictures of the types of signs that were prominent at marches was particularly useful. Since people typically can only carry one sign, they have to choose the message that best represents their beliefs in a few words or an image. I was also surprised how willing strangers were to talk to me, especially when they saw me taking notes. While the crowd was waiting for the 2009 March for Life in Washington D.C. to get started, a few people even approached me while I was taking notes and asked if I was a reporter. I told them I wasn't and explained the project; they were almost always happy to talk to me and often recruited other members of their group to speak with me as well.

At conferences, I was able to gather literature from dozens of pro-life and pro-choice groups and listen to prominent figures give speeches. I was often able to interact with representatives of the dozens of organizations present and ask these representatives questions. I also heard speeches from the heads of leading pro-life organizations, such as Serrin Foster of Feminists for Life, David Beruit of 40 Days for Life, Marjorie Dannenfelser of Susan B. Anthony List, Kristin Hawkins of Students for Life, and Angela Lanfranchi of the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute.

Secondary Sources

I supplement this data with secondary source information distributed by pro-choice and pro-life groups through newsletters, e-mails, websites, and presentations. The information

on websites is particularly important because it is used to influence local pro-life groups and the general public. I also look at both national and local political decisions related to abortion, and legislative proposals. For this analysis I used primary and secondary archival sources such as transcripts and summaries of legislative hearings, government reports, and political speeches.

I also analyzed newspaper articles related to abortion to understand how the media frames the abortion debate, pro-life groups in general, and pro-life groups that hold an explicitly pro-woman stance in particular. The primary goal was to answer the following questions: Does the media acknowledge these groups, and, if so, has the number of articles on pro-women pro-life groups increased? Do the majority of articles about PWPL groups portray these groups in a positive, negative, or neutral tone? Which actors do the media name as key players in the debate? Focusing on these questions will also help to understand and analyze recent changes in the pro-life movement and abortion debate.

To gather newspaper data, I conducted LexisNexis searches of the second, third, fourth, and fifth US Newspapers with the largest circulation.⁵ These Newspapers were *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*. I conducted three main searches for each newspaper source.⁶ The first was for the terms antiabortion OR pro-life and feminism or feminist. The second was post abortion syndrome and other variations of this name. The third was for the terms abortion AND breast cancer. These searches yielded 127 relevant articles. The date, source, title, search terms, section, word length, and summary of every article was recorded. Furthermore,

⁵ The US newspaper with the largest circulation, *The Wall Street Journal*, was not on LexisNexis and did not have multiple search term capability on its online archives.

⁶ Searches covered the time period of January 1, 1980 to December 31, 2010.

each article was coded in terms of how pro-life and pro-choice groups were presented. Articles could be labeled as having positive pro-choice framing, negative pro-choice framing, positive traditional pro-life framing, negative traditional pro-life framing, positive PWPL framing, negative PWPL framing, or neutral framing.

I also paid attention to other field actors or ideas mentioned in all of these secondary sources. Often politicians, academic researchers, medical organizations, journal articles, family planning clinics, pregnancy centers, judges, court decisions, lawyers, and law review articles were mentioned. Unfortunately, I simply did not have the time to study everything mentioned; however, I did seek out information on people, organizations, or documents mentioned repeatedly. As a result, I was able to incorporate information from many of these sources here.

This thorough combination of focus groups, interviews, secondary source research, and participant observations provides in-depth understanding of each group's goals, strategies, and priorities. It also helped to establish the current state of the field and to understand how field level changes can affect the dominant field frame.

Chapter Three: The Abortion Debate Field Frame and Why PWPL Actors Want to Change It

Traditional Abortion Debate Field Frame

Since *Roe v. Wade*, the American abortion debate has most frequently been expressed in the language of competing rights – the right of women to control their bodies versus the fetal right to life. While actors from all sides of the debate have varied reasons for their positions on and feelings about abortion, answers to questions about abortion’s legality and morality are most often presented in terms of rights. For example, pro-life author and activist Mark Crutcher states:

Activists on both sides have narrowly defined their turf. Abortion advocates myopically defend ‘the right of women to make up their own minds about abortion,’ while those of us who are their opponents seem equally focused on the ‘right to life of the unborn child’ (1996: 9).

As a result, actors strongly tied to the debate and the American public in general have come to understand the abortion debate as a contestation between the rights of living women versus the unborn. While the American abortion debate is undeniably complex, the abortion debate field frame (i.e., the overarching and predominant discourse and focus) is that the debate is primarily and fundamentally about competing rights. Actors and organizations maintaining this field frame are embedded in everything from civil society to politics, academia, law, and media, and exist at the local, state, regional, and national levels (Munson 2008).

As the field frame over the past four decades was primarily understood as a struggle over competing rights, most actors involved in the debate fall into one of two

camps - the pro-life camp, which emphasizes the rights of the fetus, or the pro-choice camp, which emphasizes the rights of women. There are many nuances within each of these camps and differences of opinion about the use of frames and other tactics. Yet fundamentally, actors involved in this debate explain their actions and motivations as a struggle to secure rights for either women or fetuses.

Since *Roe v. Wade*, the pro-life camp has largely focused on fetal rights. For the purpose of this paper, pro-life activists with this focus will be referred to as traditionally pro-life. Traditional pro-life ideology, whether religious or secular, is based in the belief that abortion is wrong because it takes a human life. The main opposition comes from the conviction that abortion kills a living human being. As Munson argues:

the belief that abortion is killing and therefore wrong is central to the movement's moral evaluation of the issue . . . at the core of the pro-life moral universe is the belief that the unborn fetus is a person, and, therefore, abortion is morally wrong because it ends a person's life. *This is the central idea around which all other beliefs in the movement revolve* (2008: 134, emphasis added).

Therefore, the central tenet of the traditional pro-life faction is that the fetus is a person, and as a result, abortion is the killing of a human being. This ideology is so central to those in the traditional pro-life camp that it is not challenged by its adherents. It is also one of the few beliefs that everyone in the traditional pro-life camp agrees with.

As a result of this ideology, there is little room for deviation in pro-life reasoning (Luker 1984). The fetal right to life limits concessions to the competing rights of other groups. For example, Scott Klusendorf, author and president of the pro-life organization Life Training Institute, writes:

The answer to the question, What is the unborn?, trumps all other considerations in the abortion debate. Objections to the pro-life view based on choice, privacy, bodily rights, and back-alley abortion miss the point entirely (2002: 2).

According to traditional pro-life activists, the focus on the personhood of the fetus, and the resulting belief that abortion is the killing of a human, tantamount to murder, should be the primary motivation of the pro-life movement, guiding all of the movement's strategies and actions. The largest, most well funded pro-life groups, including the National Right to Life Committee, American Life League, Human Life International, and Life Dynamics, all share this ideology, as do the majority of actors in the pro-life movement.⁷

In contrast, since the 1960s, the pro-choice camp has focused on women's rights, particularly a woman's right to control her fertility (Petchesky 1984; Luker 1984; Segers 1984; Doan 2007). For those in the pro-choice camp, women's access to full equality is dependent on this ability. For example, in the *Guttmacher Policy Review*, Director of Policy Analysis Rachel Benson Gold wrote that "being able to determine whether and when to bear children is one of the most basic aspects of self-determination, and it has become a prerequisite for women's full participation in modern life" (2006: 2). Similarly, author and academic Rosalind Petchesky wrote that as long as pregnancies occur in women's bodies, change their bodies, and restructure their lives, "there can be no conditions in which women will not need safe access to abortion and the ultimate right of decision" (1984: 360). Therefore, actors on the pro-choice side are motivated by feminist ideology and focus on women's right to decide what to do with their bodies.

⁷ The NRLC is the largest national pro-life group, with an annual budget of nearly \$14 million and several hundred thousand members. American Life League, Human Life International, and Life Dynamics all also have thousands of members and annual budgets of over \$1 million.

Yet along with providing women with autonomy over abortion decisions and keeping the procedure safe and legal, most pro-choice advocates also believe that in the best of circumstances, abortion is a rare occurrence. Unlike those on the pro-life side, however, they feel the best way to lower abortion rate is to give women better access to contraceptives in order to prevent unintended pregnancy (Gold 2009). This strategy gives women control over reproductive decisions, while reducing the need for, not legality of or access to, abortion.

As previously stated, the majority of pro-life activists in America typically frame their opposition to abortion in terms of fetal rights to life. Recently, however, in their effort to win broader public support and legitimacy, the PWPL faction of the pro-life movement has begun to argue abortion is not only morally wrong because it denies fetal rights, but also because it harms women (Cohen 2006). The PWPL faction is composed of groups such as The Elliot Institute, Feminists for Life, The Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer, Operation Outcry, and Silent No More.

PWPL Ideology

In terms of ideology, PWPL actors are not abandoning traditional pro-life meanings and understandings. Instead, they are cultivating new values and beliefs besides old ones. Compared to traditional pro-lifers, PWPL actors have an extended ideology. Like traditional pro-lifers, PWPL actors believe in fetal personhood and that abortion is the killing of a human being. Yet they also adamantly believe that the mother of that human being is also devastatingly harmed by abortion. Thus, they believe abortion has two victims, the mother (and sometimes the father as well) and the fetus. This conviction is based in a combination of ideologies, fetal personhood and gender essentialism.

In terms of gender essentialism, PWPL advocates believe there are uniquely masculine and feminine essences, which exist independently of socialization. Women, according to these advocates, have the inherent desire to nurture, protect, and love others (Farmer 1997; Kennedy Johnson 2004; Hays 2004; Reardon 1987; Tinvan 1995; Bachiochi 2004; Johnson 2002; Winn 2004; Conover 2006). PWPL actors claim this essential female nature creates a natural desire to give birth and become a mother. These actors associate motherhood with sacrifice, nurturance, morality, and love. They claim the desire to be a mother unites women across classes, races, ethnicities and national origins (Fox-Genovese 2004). PWPL advocates think abortion violates women's innate desires to protect and nurture others. They believe abortion undermines women's unique gifts and encourages them to adopt unnaturally masculine characteristics (Ciampa 2004; Reardon 1987).

So if women inherently want to be mothers, why do they undergo abortion? PWPL actors assume women do not autonomously choose abortion; they are coerced into it. If women naturally want to be mothers, then women who abort must be pressured to turn against their innate desires. The Elliot Institute has used this belief in its PWPL informational advertisements, which members and supporters are encouraged to post in their communities. One features an open wallet with the caption "He picked up the tab ... but she'll never stop paying for the abortion." Smaller text below the caption contains the testimony of Lori, a woman pressured into abortion. It reads "his family pushed for the abortion . . . They said I was being selfish, Part of me died that day." Another features a broken lamp with the caption "Like most women, Mary didn't want an abortion . . . but

her husband can be very persuasive,” indicating violence was used to force her to have an abortion.

PWPL advocates claim the majority of women do not freely choose abortion, but are coerced by third parties, such as misguided partners and parents, radical feminists myopically focused on abortion, or clinic staff “corrupted by the vast profit-making abortion industry, the sex industry, and the organizations that promote aggressive population control” (Glendon 2004: 13; Ertelt 8/15/08b; Ertelt 9/8/08a; Ertelt 06/15/09a; Reardon 1987, 1996; McCorvey 1997). As a result of this belief, PWPL actors conceptualize women who abort as sympathetic victims, as opposed to selfish or immoral (Ertelt 9/18/08a: 1). Because women are manipulated into abortion, PWPL advocates are convinced that abortion causes devastating physical and mental health consequences for women.

While it is often difficult to trace the roots of ideology, the evolution of the PWPL organization Feminists for Life (FFL) provides one example of this ideology’s evolution. As the name implies, the organization was created by two women that were both involved in the second wave of the woman’s movement, but were also opposed to all forms of violence, including abortion. There are many origin stories about how this group emerged, but a main point of each is that Pat Goltz, one of the founding members, was rejected from the Ohio chapter of National Organization of Women (NOW) for her pro-life beliefs (Oaks 2009). In 1972, Goltz met Cathy Callahan, and the two created Feminists for Life. Goltz, Callahan, and other early FFL members are described as “strong conservative” feminists (Bottcher 2002: 2). While less liberal than many other second wave

feminists, they supported woman's equality, but also believed that abortion was a form of violence, and therefore anti-feminist. In 1976, the Wisconsin FFL chapter took over the day-to-day management of the organization. As a current FFL member describes, "this was a tiny, eclectic, mostly left-wing, antiestablishment, alternative lifestyle, free spirits – in other words, hippie sympathizers" (Bottcher 2002: 4). These women were considerably more ideologically liberal than the original FFL members, but they still believed that abortion was a form of violence and would not advance women's equality. Since then, FFL has undergone many image changes but the core ideology has remained. In 1984, Rachael McNair, a Quaker Pacifist from Kansas City, was elected president. During this time, FFL began to achieve national exposure related to the organization's involvement in many traditionally liberal life issues, such as opposition to the death penalty, support for the peace movement, and opposition to nuclear weapons. For McNair and other FFL members, opposing the death penalty while being peaceful and pro-life maintained ideological consistency. In 1994, FFL's board of directors decided to move national headquarters to Washington, D.C., and Serrin Foster was hired as executive director. In response to the criticism that the feminist label is merely strategic, Foster has argued that the group's feminism is deeply rooted in their ideology. As she told journalist Emily Bazelon "this is not a ploy-its who we are! We're feminists *first*" (2007b: 1, emphasis in original).

While the organization has undergone many changes, members claim FFL has consistently argued that abortion is not in women's best interest. They argue that abortion is anti-feminist and that women only get abortions because they are

coerced or because they feel there are not enough societal resources available to help them support a child. Laury Oaks, a Feminist Studies professor, has argued FFL's ideology is rooted in the logic that "feminism is 'pro-woman' and abortion is 'violence against women;' therefore, feminism is anti-abortion" (Oaks 2009: 183).

It is important to remember, however, that while FFL members believe that abortion is harmful to women, they also believe in the fetal right to life. Yet this belief is combined with their feminist ideology. A Boston College student's assessment of FFL captures how this extended ideology affects FFL's message. She says that FFL address every aspect of the pro-life movement: "They talk about how a woman feels after abortion, how abortion kills a child, how rape is not an 'excuse' for allowing abortion, and even how the founders of the women's movement felt about abortion" ("What Students Are Saying" 2004: 11). Similarly, David Reardon, once referred to as the "Moses" of the PWPL movement, argues that focusing on women should be both strategically and ideologically motivated (Bazelon 2007b). Reardon argues pro-lifers have always had compassion for women, but reminds pro-life activists and politicians that they must always "place arguments for the unborn in the middle of a pro-woman sandwich. Our compassion for women must be voiced first and last in our arguments, and in a manner which shows that our concern for women is a primary and integral part of our opposition to abortion" (Reardon 1996: 21). While most PWPL actors openly admit they believe focusing on how women are harmed by abortion is strategically effective, they are also adamant that these strategies are the products of ideology.

Pro-choice and Traditional Pro-Life Response

Pro-choice opponents are very critical of PWPL actors and do not believe PWPL arguments are based in ideology. Instead, they conceptualize PWPL claims as an opportunistic and convenient strategy for countering widespread criticisms made by pro-choice activists, politicians, and the American public that pro-lifers are too focused on the fetus. For example, ethicist and author Leslie Cannold has argued PWPL actors' key motivation is to change this perception by replacing the fetus with "the guilt-ridden, self-hating, grief stricken, victimized, and finger-pointing 'woman hurt by abortion' as the summarizing image of what is wrong with legal abortion" (Cannold 2002: 173). Pro-choicers frame PWPL actors as strategists who cater to public opinion by attempting to lessen women's culpability for abortion and instead blames less sympathetic targets, such as abortion practitioners, in hopes of reducing public resentment of the pro-life position (Cannold 2002; Kamar, Hessini, and Michell 2009; Lee 2003).

Traditional pro-lifers, on the other hand, have a mixed reaction to PWPL ideology. Some are opposed to PWPL groups' efforts because they feel the ideological extension and frame transformation they advocate dilutes the ideological purity of fetal rights claims. Others feel that the PWPL focus is an important side issue or secondary argument that may help strengthen the pro-life message or win new converts. Yet even the most supportive traditional pro-life advocates are committed to the current abortion debate field frame and feel pro-lifers primary focus should remain on the fetal right to life.

A third group of traditional pro-lifers are critical of both PWPL ideology and strategy. Usually they argue that for every woman that says she is hurt by abortion, pro-

choicers will be able to find another woman who is thankful she was able to abort. Thus, pro-lifers in this group maintain the argument that women are hurt by abortion is not particularly useful or credible.

Why do PWPL actors want to change the pro-life movement's master frame by focusing on how abortion hurts women? As I will show, PWPL advocates argue this focus is strategically advantageous. They believe this focus will better appeal to other field actors and the American public in general. If this change is able to convert the ambivalent and portions of the opposition to the pro-life side, those in the PWPL camp are confident this shift will lead to decreased abortion rates and increasingly restrictive abortion laws. As a result, abortion will eventually become illegal in America.

PRO-WOMAN PRO-LIFE STRATEGIC FRAME TRANSFORMATION

PWPL actors believe changing the pro-life movement's master frame will then transform the abortion debate field frame. Instead of understanding this debate as contestation over fetal versus women's rights, the debate will focus on how abortion affects women. PWPL actors trust their focus on how abortion is harmful to women will eventually be adopted by many traditionally pro-life and pro-choice actors. They are also confident this focus will attract many people who have not been highly involved in the abortion debate.

PWPL advocates hope this focus on women will appeal to the majority of the American public that feels abortion is morally wrong but is uncomfortable with making it illegal.

They also hope this focus will resonate with traditionally pro-choice groups such as college women, and women who have previously had abortions. Thus, PWPL actors emphasize how embracing their ideology is strategically advantageous for the pro-life movement. For example, David Reardon, founder of the PWPL organization the Elliot

Institute, argues that a better understanding of how women are harmed by abortion will transform and energize the pro-life movement by making members more strategically effective. He writes that it “is not about fighting harder in the defense of human life . . . it is about fighting smarter . . . [it] is about fundamentally redefining the abortion debate, redrawing the lines of battle to reemphasize our commitment to being both pro-woman and pro-life” (Reardon 1996: 6). If altering the abortion debate field frame is able to convert the ambivalent and portions of the opposition to the pro-life side, those in the PWPL camp are confident this shift will lead to decreased abortion rates and increasingly restrictive abortion laws. As a result, abortion will eventually become illegal in America.

Capturing the Middle Majority

In order to achieve change, many social movement organizations (SMOs) target the public. In the abortion debate, public opinion strongly affects the field. Pro-life actors target the public for two main reasons. First, if pro-life actors can convince the public that abortion is wrong, people may be less likely to have abortions, a central goal of the movement. Secondly, if public opinion about abortion changes, politicians will listen to their constituents, and abortion laws will become more restrictive, or the practice may even become illegal, allowing the movement to achieve its ultimate goal. PWPL groups share these goals. Yet unlike those in the traditional pro-life camp, they believe that frame transformation will cause a significant shift in public opinion. PWPL actors are convinced a focus on how women are harmed by abortion will better resonate with people than fetal rights arguments. They argue the fetal rights master frame has not convinced the majority of Americans that abortion should be illegal. They claim that this lack of persuasion is evidence of the need for frame transformation.

Over the past four decades, American public opinion regarding abortion's legality has remained fairly consistent: about 20 percent of voters feel abortion should be legal in all cases, 30 percent feel abortion should be legal in most cases, 25 percent feel abortion should be illegal in most cases, and 15 percent feel abortion should be illegal in all cases (Belden 2008; Hayt 2003). Some scholars argue this consistency means it is unlikely American public opinion on abortion will ever significantly change. Yet other field actors, including politicians, researchers, organization directors, and activists on both the pro-life and pro-choice sides of the debate disagree and actively work to alter public opinion.

Lifenews, an internet publication devoted to news affecting the pro-life community, often publishes stories about public opinion whenever polls indicate there is a pro-life majority. For example, a Gallup survey administered in May of 2009 found 51 percent of Americans identify as pro-life, and 42 percent identify as pro-choice. Similarly, Lifenews excitedly reported on a 2008 Zogby International poll that showed 59 percent of American respondents said human life begins at conception, 16.8 percent said it begins when a fetus can survive outside the mother's womb, and 17.2 percent said life does not begin until birth (Ertlet 2008a: 1). Furthermore, a 2009 Rasmussen survey found that 58 percent of Americans feel abortion is morally wrong most of the time (Ertelt 2009a: 1). These findings are often used by pro-life leaders to energize activists and reassure them they are changing hearts and minds.

Although pro-life actors welcome these results, they are also puzzled. If the majority of Americans feel abortion is morally wrong, why, they wonder, is abortion still legal? Despite pro-life beliefs, polls consistently show that less than a quarter of

Americans believe abortion should be illegal in all cases (Ertelt 2009a; Belden 2008). Instead, the majority believe abortion should at least be available for what are often referred to as the “hard cases,” such as fetal defects,⁸ pregnancy resulting from or rape or incest, or pregnancy that threatens the mother’s life (Elshtain 2004; Munson 2008; Ruse and Ruse 2009). This evidence indicates most Americans do not conceptualize the legality or morality of abortion in black and white terms (Burtchaell 1982). While Americans are uncomfortable with abortion and want it to be treated as a last resort, they also want it to remain legal (Dailard 2005).

Pro-life actors sometimes call people with ambivalent feelings about abortion the “mushy middle” or “middle majority.” These terms refer to Americans who are personally against abortion but do not believe it should be illegal (Bachioeci 2004; Elshtain 2004; Reardon 1996; Schreiber 2009; Crutcher 2000). Members of this middle majority have divided loyalties. While they feel abortion ends a human life, they are uncomfortable imposing this belief on others. They also believe that in some cases, abortion is needed. In other words, although the middle majority finds abortion regrettable, they sometimes believe it is necessary. As a result, the middle majority is does not want to ban abortion. They also feel many pro-life advocates are overly judgmental and insensitive to the plight of women. For many pro-life activists, this contradiction in attitudes about morality versus legality is a signal that current pro-life strategies are not very effective, provoking strategy debates within the pro-life movement. While some pro-lifers argue that the fetal rights frame should be reinforced, PWPL activists argue that in order to completely gain the support of the middle majority,

⁸ For example, since 1972, the number of Americans who believe abortion should be legal in cases where there is a high chance of fetal defects has remained between 78.5 and 85.5 percent (Munson 2008).

pro-lifers have to transform their master frame and focus on how abortion is harmful to women.⁹

PWPL actors argue that traditional pro-life tactics, such as use of pictures of fetuses intrauterine, images of aborted fetuses, medical illustrations of abortion procedures, and general arguments about the rights of the unborn, do not appeal to this middle majority. For example, prominent feminist pro-life author Frederica Mathewes-Green writes that convincing Americans that the fetus is a person has succeeded, yet the middle majority wants to keep abortion legal:

The ‘It’s a baby!’ strategy has succeeded. When we tell America one more time that the life in the womb is a baby, we’re answering a question that no one is asking . . . Pro-lifers will not be able to break through this deadlock by stressing the humanity of the unborn (1994: 31-32).

Similarly, pro-life activist Mark Crutcher writes that one of his favorite sayings is “If you always do what you always did, you’ll always get what you always got” (2002: 3). He goes on to write that this could be the motto for the traditional pro-life movement. “We keep doing the same things year in and year out while thinking that one day we’ll get

⁹ Many people in diverse factions of the pro-life movement have argued a prime strategy for making abortion illegal is to appeal to this middle majority. Yet there is disagreement about the best way to do so. Some in the traditional pro-life camp argue for the use of graphic pictures, because they feel this is the best way to shake the middle majority out of its ambivalence. For example Mark Harrington, executive director of The Center for Bioethical Reform Midwest, is an advocate of the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP), a traveling photo exhibit that compares abortion to slavery and the Holocaust. He argues that graphic photos of aborted fetuses help Americans realize that abortion is murder and a national injustice. Similarly, James T. Burtchaell, a priest and theologian, has argued fetal photographs “are to abortion what the My Lai photographs were to Vietnam: persuasive in a different way than the revealing dispatches of reporters . . . for they revealed something we already knew but did not want to see” (Burtchaell 1982: 90). Thus, many traditional pro-lifers feel graphic images are the best way to demonstrate the atrocity of abortion to the apathetic.

Yet others have argued against the use of graphic images. Steve Ertelt, founder and director of Lifenews, has argued:

to throw them [fetal photographs] out there willy nilly, in my view, turns off as many people as we turn on, um and that’s, I guess it goes to the question, what’s the point. I mean do we want to be out there, maybe showing some pictures just to make ourselves feel good, feel like we’re doing something, or do we really want to persuade people? Do we really want to bring people to the pro-life position? (Life Report Podcast # 83).

different results. . . . what we've got is one year of experience thirty times" (2002: 3).

Finally, post-abortion researcher and Elliot Institute founder David Reardon has argued:

While efforts to educate the public about the unborn's humanity may help to motivate pro-lifers, such efforts will have no effect on those who support abortion. This ambivalent majority may admit abortion is wrong, but they believe it must be tolerated as an 'evil necessity' . . . nothing we can say on behalf of the unborn will sway them from this position. Their concern is focused totally on the woman. *We must change the abortion debate so we are arguing with our opponents on their own turf, on the issue of defending the interests of women* (Reardon 1996: 8, emphasis added).

In all three examples, each author has evaluated the state of the field and determined that traditional pro-life strategies are largely ineffective. They believe that in order to achieve real change, they need to change the beliefs and opinions of the middle majority.

PWPL advocates recognize the middle majority's moral qualms about abortion are blocked by a greater concern for the welfare and freedom of women. Because of this concern for women's rights, PWPL advocates feel the middle majority has "hardened their hearts to any moral appeals on behalf of the unborn" (Reardon 1996: 24; Bachiochi 2004). Furthermore, when pro-lifers use hyperemotional language, such as referring to abortion as murder, this alienates the middle majority and backfires. For example, political philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain argues this language "washes out all ambivalence and precludes reflecting on the troubling ambiguities of abortion" (1984: 51). Ultimately, PWPL proponents argue Americans have shown themselves to be unsympathetic to moral, fetal-centric pro-life arguments. Although the traditional pro-life movement has politicized abortion, "it has gained far less than it might have hoped to. . . it is apparent that the claim that the fetus has a right to life has made very little headway" in terms of reversing *Roe v. Wade* (Lee 2003: 114).

PWPL advocates feel the typical “woman vs. fetus” understanding of the abortion debate field frame has been successful for those on the pro-choice side, but detrimental to pro-lifers, as it depicts them as uncompassionate and opposed to women’s rights (Bachiochi 2004). When pro-lifers counter the pro-choice focus on women’s rights by talking about the sacredness of human life, they only enforce the woman vs. fetus field frame. As PWPL advocates argue, this pro-life strategy is ineffective because it “does not truly alter the arena which defines the debate’s dynamics;” it only reinforces the typical abortion debate field frame (Reardon 1996: 25). Similarly, Theodora Ooms, social worker and senior consultant to the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, has argued true success for the pro-life movement is not possible “as long as we [pro-life activists] accept the terms of the debate as defined by the polar positions of pro-life and pro-choice: as being between two mutually exclusive individual rights” (1984: 107).

In order to fully change public opinion and successfully challenge abortion’s legality, PWPL actors feel they must employ new discourse that more fully resonates with the middle majority (Schreiber 2009). As Karen (36) said in a focus group:

The so-called women’s rights argument has been great for pro-aborts. It’s working for them. But it’s completely ridiculous, but they’ve convinced people women need abortion. So we need to show them, hey, no way! I mean no one needs an abortion. Abortion [is] bad for you. We’ve got to redraw the lines, to let everyone know, yes, it’s true. Abortion hurts women.

PWPL supporters like Karen emphasize the need to redefine the abortion debate through frame transformation; instead of emphasizing the human rights of the unborn, PWPL actors are focusing on a theme typically linked to the pro-choice side of the debate: the impact abortion has on women. As Reardon writes:

To truly reframe the political debate to our advantage, it is not enough to highlight the part of the frame touching on the rights of the unborn. Instead, we must expand the frame to include more parties, so that we can convincingly show it is we who are defending the authentic rights of both women and children. In short, *we must insist that the proper frame for the abortion issue is not women's rights versus the unborn's rights, but rather women and children's rights versus the schemes of exploiters and the profits of the abortion industry* (Reardon 1996: 25, emphasis added).

PWPL advocates want to alter the abortion debate so that they are arguing with pro-choice opponents “on their own turf, on the issue of defending the interests of women” (Reardon 1996: 8). This is done by demonstrating that abortion is *not* a right that benefits women. Instead, abortion is actually harmful to women's mental and physical health. Because of these negative outcomes, abortion does not help women achieve equality; it inflicts devastating harm. Thus, PWPL actors argue that it is in women's interest to be pro-life.

PWPL actors also believe opposing abortion protects women's mental health and emotional well-being. They hope to advance the pro-life position by reaching the middle majority, who may be swayed by claims that abortion psychologically and physically harms women (Schreiber 2008). Reardon succinctly summarizes the purpose of PWPL arguments this way: “It is only by leading the middle majority to the understanding that the welfare of a mother and her unborn child are permanently intertwined that we will open their hearts to the unborn” (1996: 24).

PWPL advocates also attempt to alter the abortion debate field frame by claiming the “safe, legal and rare” slogan used by the pro-choice side is a lie. They argue abortion is inherently unsafe, and that over a hundred significant physical and psychological complications have been linked to abortion. These advocates claim the widespread belief that legal abortion means safe abortion is fooling most Americans. Even if they feel a life

is being taken, most Americans tolerate abortion because they believe a woman is being helped. Therefore, these pro-life advocates are working to erase the link between legality and safety. As Brenda, a 39-year old PWPL activist stated in a focus group:

If we can show everyone abortion is bad for women, they won't just feel that it's wrong, they'll want it to be illegal. Then they will really be able to see we really do care about the mother and the child. We want what's best for both of them.

Furthermore, PWPL advocates believe that by focusing on how abortion is harmful to women, they will be better able to convince Americans that abortion should even be illegal in the "hard cases" of rape and incest. Traditional pro-life advocates' focus on fetal rights has been particularly unsuccessful in convincing most Americans abortion should be illegal in these hard cases. By focusing on how abortion is harmful to women, PWPL advocates believe they will be able to convince Americans that abortion only adds more heartbreak to an already difficult situation. As Brionna, a 29-year-old pro-life nurse said:

This is the information that everyone needs to know but no one tells you. The news isn't telling you. Planned Parenthood is never, I mean never, gonna tell you this. But abortion just makes that really bad, you know truly, truly awful situation worse. The poor woman is worse off afterwards.

PWPL advocates feel it is their responsibility to inform women that abortion does more harm than good. By doing so, they believe they will convince the middle majority that abortion should be illegal in all cases.

Through frame transformation and exposing what they feel is a lie constructed by pro-choice opponents, PWPL advocates are confident that the middle majority's thoughts will dramatically change. People will no longer see abortion as a necessary evil that needs to be tolerated to ensure women's rights. As a result, the middle majority will

begin to believe abortion should be illegal because it is causing women pain and suffering. Eventually, public opinion will shift, and abortion will become illegal.

Capturing College and Professional Women

Another reason PWPL groups argue for frame transformation is because they believe this will appeal to a broader female audience, especially young college-educated women, “who were generally considered to be the immutable constituency of the pro-abortion feminism movement” (Bottcher 2002: 5). PWPL actors believe that if they can appeal to college women they will increase the size and power of the pro-life movement by taking away a demographic that is typically pro-choice side of the debate. This, as a result, will reduce the number of abortions college women undergo while in school and in the future, and create a new and influential group of life long adherents to the pro-life movement.

Feminists for Life (FFL) is one of many PWPL groups targeting college women. Previously, FFL primarily pursued its pro-life agenda by lobbying on capital hill to pass violence against women laws and family and medical leave acts, but FFL wanted a more direct path to change. In a meeting with Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Shriver asked FFL members which group was most at risk for abortion. When they told her it was college students, Shriver urged FFL to focus on them, find out why they had abortions, and determine what would lead to a decrease in abortions among this group (Callahan 2004).¹⁰ Other traditional pro-life groups were reaching out to teenagers and women in poverty, but PWPL groups like Feminists for Life felt college students were an important at risk group that had not been sufficiently targeted by the pro-life movement.

¹⁰ For example, one FFL member wrote: “One out of every five abortions is performed on college-aged women. No other group of women is more vulnerable” (Milanowski 1999: 18).

PWPL groups also felt it was essential to focus on college women because they are likely to be pro-choice. PWPL groups viewed colleges and universities as “machines churning out pro-abortion voters.” (Hoopes 2004: 23). Members of these groups often cited statistics claiming most college students, particularly college women, enter college with pro-life views but leave with pro-choice views.¹¹ For example, Feminists for Life member Rosemary Bottcher wrote:

Most students enter college with pro-life views but are so inundated with pro-abortion rhetoric when there that by the time they graduate, they’ve given in to pro-choice orthodoxy. FFL challenges students to ‘Refuse to Choose’ and ‘Question Abortion’ through ads, presentations, and workshops (Bottcher 2002: 6).

PWPL groups, however, felt conventional pro-life tactics would not appeal to this group. They believed that although many college women might feel that the fetus is a human being with a right to life, they align themselves with the pro-choice camp because they are terrified of giving birth while in school (Hoopes 2004). Focusing on the fetus was not working to erase the fear driving college women to be pro-choice and have abortions. Therefore, PWPL groups thought it was crucial to change the fetal centric focus of the pro-life movement by instead emphasizing how giving birth and being pro-life was actually healthier and more empowering than having an abortion. In fact, Patrick Kane, Chair of the Feminists for Life Board, has argued the FFL slogan “*Women Deserve Better than Abortion*, is the catchphrase of the decade, and points to *the* only way to move

¹¹ A 1996 Gallup poll showed that going to college had little influence on men’s attitudes toward abortion (men consistently favor abortion more than women) but college dramatically affected women’s views. “According to the poll, 47% of women were pro-choice going into college. By the time they completed two years of college, 59% were pro-choice. By the time women graduated, 73% were pro-choice” (Callahan 2004: 4).

beyond the debate over one of the defining issues of our time” (Kane 2011; emphasis in original).

PWPL members also felt it was important to convert college women to the pro-life cause because this directly affects the pro-choice movement by taking away a large portion of their adherents. Abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood often have a visible presence on college campuses, and PWPL actors claim this presence is reflected in college students’ attitudes toward abortion. PWPL members felt that by targeting students, they could counteract the pro-choice message and contribute to the decline in both pro-choice adherents and the abortion rate. For example, in a PWPL focus group Sheila said “by targeting college students, we’re also getting at Planned Parenthood. We’re taking away their clients. The pro-aborts know this and that’s why they’re worried.” In another focus group May claimed that by targeting college students, PWPL groups are “combating Planned Parenthood where they’re usually most effective. We’re directly fighting their abortion ideology.” Therefore, by shifting the pro-life movement’s focus to appeal to college students, PWPL adherents feel they are also directly fighting against the pro-choice message spread on college campuses by organizations like Planned Parenthood. By showing college students that abortion is not their only option, and that it will harm them in the short and long term, PWPL adherents feel they are “forcing abortion advocates to scramble to find new ways to sell abortion” (Callahan 2004: 8).

Feminists for Life members also believe they will be able to attract younger women because their pro-woman message eradicates “the perception that to be pro-life must be outdated at best, fanatic and violent at worst” (“Meet” 2002: 9). Beyond using feminist pro-life rhetoric, FFL tries to design its website and promotional materials to

appeal to college or professional women. As one FFL member writes, the organization “undertook an image makeover, which I saw as a transition from hippie to hip . . . I was one of the many people who believed there were hordes of people who had latent pro-life instincts, but were put off by the staid and stodgy image of the pro-life movement. We wanted to appeal to a broader audience that included young professional women” (Botcher 2002: 5). FFL members also emphasize how all of their promotional material is “sleek and smart . . . aimed at catching the eye of young women who may not be picking up promotional materials at church . . . the look and feel of the campaign just exudes coolness” (Callahan 2004: 8).

Ultimately, by changing the field frame to appeal to college women, PWPL members believe they are creating and nurturing a sizeable group of educated, professional, and lifelong pro-life adherents. As one FFL member wrote, “the mind of college students is wide open, ready to set in one block of concrete or another until retirement.” (Hoopes 2004: 23). PWPL members claim “college campuses produce future lawyers, doctors, educators, journalists, and future employers” (Callahan 2004: 4). Recruiting these future professionals would be a coup for the pro-life movement as it can provide them with many potentially powerful future allies and spokespeople, strengthening the pro-life cause and helping the movement achieve its goals.

Capturing Post-abortion Women

PWPL groups also believe frame transformation and a change in the abortion debate field frame will appeal to women who have previously had abortions, often referred to as post-abortion women. Field actors including PWPL activists, academics, and mental health professionals work together to emphasize how abortion leads to negative physical and

mental health outcomes and to reach out to women who have previously had abortions. They hope their focus on women's health will resonate with any woman who had an abortion or is considering abortion (Schreiber 2009). PWPL actors believe that convincing post-abortive women that abortion is harmful to their health is crucial for reducing the repeat abortion rate and making abortion illegal. PWPL actors frame post-abortive women as both victims of the abortion industry and as experts or insiders who can personally speak to the dangers of abortion. They maintain convincing average women to publicly acknowledge their negative experiences with abortion is crucial for persuading the general public, politicians, judges, medical professionals, and other field actors that abortion really is harmful to women and should be illegal. Reardon argues that focusing on post-abortive women will strengthen the pro-life movement. He claims that "post-abortion issues are key to converting hearts - - the key to winning the battle for life" (1996: 5). Thus, while Reardon and other PWPL actors truly believe that women are harmed by abortion, they also recognize that converting these women to the pro-life cause is an intelligent strategy.

PWPL actors argue abortion leads to psychological and emotional consequences for women, including increased rates of depression, guilt, anxiety, alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, and suicide. They argue women who abort may later experience "post-abortion syndrome" (PAS). Post-abortion syndrome symptoms are similar to those of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and include intense sadness or guilt on the anniversary of their abortions, reoccurring nightmares, and anxiety over future fertility and childbearing (Ciampa 2001; Lee 2003; Reardon 1996).

PWPL actors feel that identifying and emphasizing the negative outcomes of abortion is the best way to convert post-abortive women to the pro-life movement. Organizations like Silent No More and Operation Outcry encourage post-abortive women to attend meetings and retreats to help them heal from the trauma of abortion. Once post-abortive women attend these programs, women are encouraged to talk to their friends, family, and the general public about how abortion harmed them in particular and women in general. PWPL actors want to appeal to post-abortive women so that these women can then share firsthand their negative abortion experiences and convince the general public and other field actors about how abortion is physically, emotionally, and spiritually harmful to women. PWPL actors argue that this strategy will aid in their goal of making it unacceptable for anyone to recommend abortion as a solution to unplanned pregnancy.

Emphasizing the negative effects of abortion also aids pro-lifers in addressing the suitability of abortion in the “hard cases” of pregnancy after rape and incest. PWPL actors argue that when women abort after conceiving through rape, they are doubly traumatized by both the rape and the abortion. As Agatha (39) said in a focus group “suggesting a rape victim get an abortion is basically the worst thing someone could do for her. She’ll mourn that baby after her rape memories have faded away.” In addition to arguing that abortion compounds the tragedies of rape and incest, PWPL actors maintain pro-choice activists and politicians are actually exploiting victims of rape and incest to further their pro-abortion agenda. For example, female survivors of rape affiliated with PWPL organization The Justice Foundation released a statement on this topic:

those people who claim to be defending our [women who have conceived through rape] interests have never taken the time to actually listen to us to learn about our true circumstances, needs, and concerns. We are deeply offended and dismayed each time our difficult circumstances are *exploited*

for public consumption and to promote the political agenda of others . . . In pursuing their political agendas, these exploiters have reduced our concerns, needs, and circumstances to a crude caricature. . . Just as we were once used, without our consent, to gratify the sexual desires of others, so we continue to be used, without our consent, to gratify the political goals of others (“Petition” 2009: 1, emphasis in original).

Therefore, PWPL actors from organizations like the Justice Foundation and Silent No More work to convince post-abortive women to share testimonies and experiences regarding how they were hurt by abortion.¹² PWPL actors then use these testimonies and experiences to frame pro-choice actors as exploitative and frame pro-lifers as the true defenders of women’s rights and interests.

Appealing to post-abortive women and using their testimonies to illustrate how abortion is harmful to women is also used to question pro-choice actors’ commitment to women’s rights and health. PWPL actors claim those on the pro-choice side consider women’s mental health expendable because they oppose “Women’s Right to Know” laws requiring abortion providers to warn women about risks like post-abortion syndrome. As Kathleen, a 37-year-old PWPL focus group respondent stated:

the abortion industry won’t tell women about all these problems that come from abortion. Right there, that says to me they’re hiding something. They know what’s going on. They know the outcomes [of abortion] are bad, but I guess they just don’t really care.

In the same focus group, Jo (40) responded to Kathleen by arguing that this “pro-abortion cover up” demonstrates that pro-choicers care more about money and politics than

¹² The Justice Foundation has organized the Million Voices Campaign, which seeks to collect one million legally admissible testimonies on how abortion hurts men and women. Similarly, Operation Outcry works with churches and religious officials, encouraging churches to hold “Repentance Sunday” services that address the problems of post-abortive women and those hurt by abortion. Operation Outcry representatives claim the goal of Repentance Sundays is to “educate and equip the church to embrace those hurt by abortion. . . Abortion strikes at the very heart and soul of America: the family. It destroys relationships and marriages. America needs to see the many faces and hear the heartrending stories of abortion grief” (“Outreach” 2005: 1).

women's health. PWPL actors believe recruiting post-abortive women to talk about post-abortion syndrome is essential for discrediting the pro-choice argument.

They also feel that the use of post-abortive women's stories is crucial to making abortion illegal. According to David Reardon, founder of The Elliot Institute, U.S. abortion policy is built on the notion that abortion is a safe procedure. If it is found that abortion is actually dangerous to women, governments should regulate or prohibit abortion to protect citizens. The question of women's rights and what these rights entail is reversed here. Whereas most pro-choicers emphasize women's rights as freedom from state interference, PWPL actors argue that the state must intervene to protect women from abortion. Therefore, PWPL actors engage in frame transformation and use post-abortive women's testimonies in their effort to redefine women's rights as the right to be protected by the state from the physical and psychological harm of abortion, from doctors who perform abortion, and from women's relatives and friends who pressure them to end pregnancies (Lee 2003).

Chapter Four: Gender and Feminist Frames

I turn now to a more specific discussion of *how* PWPL advocates attempt to win the support of current field actors and draw new actors into the field. In order support the master frame that women are harmed by abortion, PWPL actors use three more specific frames related to gender, the abortion industry, and women's health. PWPL actors hope these specific frames will transform the pro-life movement so that pro-lifers are debating pro-choice opponents "on their own turf, on the issue of defending the interests of women" (Reardon 1996). Essentially, PWPL actors advocate co-opting pro-choice women's rights frames and reversing them to demonstrate how abortion is harmful to women. They believe that changing the abortion debate field frame into a debate about whether women are helped or harmed by abortion will allow them to show that pro-lifers are the true advocates for women's rights, health, and safety.

In the following three chapters, I describe three broad categories of frames used by PWPL actors: gender frames, institutional frames, and health frames. As I will show, these gender, institutional, and health frames are connected and rely upon each other to form the overall strategic argument that women are harmed by abortion. PWPL actors use gender frames to show that women naturally want to give birth, and that abortion violates this essential desire. If this is the case, why then, are women undergoing abortion? PWPL advocates use institutional frames to answer this question. They argue abortion clinics are profit driven institutions, and that abortionists manipulate women to have abortions to fulfill their greedy, criminal, or racist ambitions. Finally, because women violate their

essential nature and undergo unwanted abortions, PWPL actors use health frames to argue women experience negative psychological outcomes after the abortion. PWPL actors also argue that abortion increase women's risk of breast cancer. In these chapters, I also examine other field actors varied responses to PWPL frames. Finally, I explain the impact a variety of field actors believe PWPL frames will have on the abortion debate field frame.

GENDER FRAMES

In June of 2010, Ramesh Ponnuru, journalist and editor of *National Review* magazine, wrote a *New York Times* Op-Ed column titled "The Year of the (Pro-Life) Woman." This was one of many articles published in the spring and summer of 2010 discussing politician Sarah Palin and other prominent women who claimed to be both pro-life and feminist (Ponnuru 2010; Parker 2010; Valenti 2010; Campbell 2010; Dominus 2010). Although many women had previously claimed a pro-life feminist identity, no one was able to shine a spotlight on this identity quite like Palin. By declaring herself a feminist, Palin reignited the debate over whether one can be both pro-life and feminist (Parker 2010). Over 71 percent (37) of the 52 pro-life feminist newspaper articles analyzed depicted this issue and pro-life feminism in general in a neutral manner. The authors of these articles did not take a clear position on pro-life feminism. Of the journalists that did take a stand, the numbers were roughly equal. Fifteen percent of the articles (8) depicted pro-life feminism positively and 13 percent (7) depicted it negatively. These articles were much more likely to be editorials than the neutrally depicted articles.

Despite what some journalists argue, PWPL actors claim that not only *can* people be both pro-life and feminist, true feminists *must* be pro-life. One way PWPL actors

publicize this link is through gendered pro-life frames. As this chapter will show, these frames are based on the ideology of gender essentialism.

Gender Essentialist Frames

A central tenant of PWPL arguments is based in gender essentialism. PWPL advocates believe there are uniquely masculine and feminine essences, which exist independently of socialization. Women, according to these advocates, have the inherent desire to nurture, protect, and love others (Farmer 1997; Kennedy Johnson 2004; Hays 2004; Reardon 1987; Tinvan 1995; Bachiochi 2004; Johnson 2002; Winn 2004; Conover 2006). PWPL actors claim this essential female nature creates a natural desire to give birth and become a mother. These actors associate motherhood with sacrifice, nurturance, morality, and love. They claim the desire to be a mother unites women across classes, races, ethnicities and national origins (Fox-Genovese 2004). Support for gender essentialism is evident in the statements of many PWPL advocates. For example, Patricia Monroe, a pro-life crisis pregnancy center volunteer, wrote “what young girl hasn’t dreamed of the day when she would have a baby of her own? It is one of the most natural desires a woman can have” (2000: 1). Similarly, celebrity Feminists for Life spokeswoman Patricia Heaton has argued:

Sacrifice and privilege are the two words that sum up being a mother. The sacrifice is easy to spot from the moment of conception. But the change is more than physical. We know it from the moment we hear the heart beating in the ultrasound. That first picture of our child inspires a feeling of awe and humility that we, as women, have been granted the great gift of housing such an astounding event – the creation of another human being. (Heaton 2004: 1).

In focus groups, many PWPL actors discuss motherhood in a similar manner to Cindy (42), who said “I appreciate the other things of done in my life, like working and college,

but nothing compares to me being a mom. It's the best thing I've ever done, and I've got more out of it than anything else." For PWPL advocates, motherhood is associated with status, pride, and joy.

PWPL advocates believe feminism should celebrate women's unique capabilities and encourage women to embrace their natural inclinations (Tinvan 1995; Hays 2004; Bachiochi 2004). Another article in Feminist for Life's newsletter *The American Feminist* states, "Feminism is not about women passing as men. Women should celebrate our life-giving capacity" ("You're a Feminist?" 2003: 14). Feminist for Life members and other PWPL actors strategically argue women should adopt a form of feminism more prevalent in the first wave of the women's movement (Voss Koch 1985). Instead of trying to compete with men, women should emphasize their unique feminine abilities (Fox Genovese 2004). Most PWPL advocates support this goal. For example, in a focus group Debra (44) explained that women should take pride in their innate desire to help the weak and less fortunate. She sees this as a mark of good character, not something women "should be ashamed of or deny. It's silly some ladies feel they need to be more like the guys, be all masculine, competitive. It's not right." Others echoed Debra's sentiment, saying "different is normal" and "there's nothing wrong with people being different."

PWPL advocates argue that abortion violates women's innate desires to protect and nurture others. They believe abortion undermines women's unique gifts and encourages them to adopt masculine characteristics (Ciampa 2004; Reardon 1987). For example past president of Feminists for Life Rachel McNair argues:

It is not normal or healthy for a woman to want the death of her child. If she does, then that is a clear sign that injustice has been perpetrated against her. The basic premise of abortion advocacy pits mothers and children against each other. The pro-life feminist asserts that any wedge

put between mother and child originates in male dominance, and that no woman really benefits from being alienated from her own body and her own child. There should not be conflict between women and unborn children. The rights of both must be asserted against a society that is cruel to both. . . . The more justice and equality women have, the more the abortion rate will plummet (1997: 84).

Thus, abortion is framed as an unnatural procedure that must be imposed on women, not something they willingly choose (Fox-Genovese 2004; Ciampa 2004; Farmer 1997).

Furthermore, these statements imply that if women are granted full equality and sovereignty, they will undeniably choose birth over abortion. PWPL actors use this framing to shift the blame for abortion from women to coercive parents or partners and a greedy manipulative abortion industry. They also use it to undermine the pro-choice claims by arguing that most women who abort actually feel they have no choice (Reardon 1996).

PWPL advocates believe that glorifying women's essential nature and motherhood, along with emphasizing the unnaturalness of abortion, will appeal to most field actors. As Pia (26) said in a focus group, this reframing of feminism even appeals to the most "conservative or religious people." Pia and other PWPL actors argue the majority of women, regardless of age, employment, or marital status "can appreciate the exaltation of motherhood, as it urges people to take women's work more seriously" (Schreiber 2008: 120). This framing is effective because it encourages field actors to give women what they naturally want and desire, something few people would object to. For example, Serrin Foster, president of Feminists for Life, stated she wants everyone involved in the abortion debate to truly focus on what women want and deserve. She claims "if people on both sides of the debate focus on what women really wanted, the number of abortions would decrease – a goal that most people share" (Foster 2000c: 16).

Furthermore, PWPL actors are convinced that most people agree with their essentialist viewpoint. As Nicki (35) said:

I think for the most part that's common knowledge. I mean, who wants an abortion? What kind of women is like, 'yes, I actually want to kill my baby and murder part of myself'? Now, I don't really know if most people really think, um, about what abortion does to a woman, um, how devastating it is. But that's, it's something they will realize, if they would be asked.

Other PWPL actors agree with Nicki and feel their arguments are effective because they resonate with the beliefs most people already hold. Those on the fence regarding abortion may be particularly susceptible to these claims. For example, *Washington Post* journalist Kathleen Parker writes that “many women who have had babies find it harder, if not impossible, to see abortion as nothing more than a ‘choice’ to eliminate an inconvenience” (2010: 1). Thus Parker implies this framing may particularly resonate with mothers.

Although PWPL advocates do not address men's essential nature in as much detail, they do emphasize a few essential differences between men and women. A main difference they focus on is disparities in desired relational commitment. They believe men value casual sex over stable, loving relationships while women crave stability and loyalty in romantic relationships and are hurt by casual affairs (Meehan 1984; Thomas Bailey 1995; Reardon 1987; Maroneck 1985; Beck-Sague 1986; Stith 2009). They argue that the availability of abortion helps men pressure women into sex without commitment. This pressure makes it more difficult for them to establish the stable committed relationships they desire.

PWPL advocates maintain the availability of abortion makes it difficult for women to object to sex based on fears of pregnancy. As one pro-life feminist writes,

“abortion provides the ultimate rationale when pressing for sexual favors. It makes the female a perpetual, reusable sexual object” (Maroneck 1985: 41). Women, especially young women, are framed as hesitant to have sex, but willing to do so to please their male partners. Thus PWPL actors maintain abortion’s decoupling of sex and pregnancy means that women have lost an excuse for not engaging in casual sex and will give in to male demands as a result. Although PWPL actors present this argument as feminist, it is very similar to the arguments for abstinence only sex education and purity pledges that present females as the guardians of morality and virginity. As a result, this sort of rhetoric is appealing to many conservative politicians and religious leaders as well.

If women do become pregnant, PWPL advocates claim there is no incentive for men to commit to women when abortion is legal. Once again, they argue that abortion denies women the commitment they crave because a man can simply pay for a woman’s abortion instead of committing to raising a child with her. PWPL actors think that once a man pays for the abortion, he no longer feels he must provide any other financial or emotional commitment to his female partner (Maroneck 1985; Meehan 1984). Even if women do decide to give birth, PWPL advocates argue that the availability of abortion makes it easier for men to shirk their fatherhood responsibilities (Stithe 2009). For example, Thomas Bailey writes:

Abortion perpetuates the image of women as reusable sex objects. If she gets pregnant, all it takes is \$250 and she’s slender and happy again. If she decides to give birth, the father feels justified in claiming it’s not his responsibility to help care for the child since he offered to pay for an abortion (1995: 163).

PWPL advocates assert that when abortion is legal, men do not see a baby as resulting from sex. Instead they see a baby as the result of the women’s decision not to abort

(MacNair 1997). Therefore, abortion allows men to indulge in casual sex and prevents women from establishing committed romantic relationships.

Overall, this essentialist PWPL rhetoric culminates in the argument that because of their essential nature, women do not freely choose abortion; they must be coerced into it. If women naturally want to be mothers, then women who abort must be pushed to turn against their innate desires. PWPL advocates cite studies claiming the majority of women do not freely choose abortion, but are coerced into it by third parties, such as partners, parents, or doctors (Ertelt 8/15/08b; Reardon 1987, 1996). This framing directly contrasts pro-choice arguments that abortion must be necessary for women to achieve full equality. As a result of this belief, PWPL actors frame women who abort as sympathetic victims, as opposed to selfish or immoral (Ertelt 9/18/08a: 1).¹³ PWPL advocates are then able to present themselves as the protectors of women, arguing that abortion must be illegal to prevent women from being coerced and exploited.

PWPL advocates believe convincing the public and other field actors that women do not freely choose abortion will be very effective in making abortions more difficult to obtain or illegal. For example, Reardon argues emphasizing the coercive aspects of abortion can establish an arena of common ground. He writes that pro-lifers will support PWPL efforts to defend women's rights, and "the vast majority of those who describe

¹³ Very rarely, some PWPL actors will acknowledge that some women may freely choose to abort, but they frame these women as abnormal, especially as less motherly and more aggressive, self-centered, and materialistic. Thus, women who freely choose abortion do not possess the same essential nature as the average woman or they ignore this nature. Reardon writes that these women are simply unwilling to sacrifice "their own immediate ambitions or their own material possessions for the sake of unwanted responsibility. . . they abort to prevent disturbances in their lifestyles or careers . . . These women are chronic exploiters, used to manipulating people as objects, and so are inclined to think of the unborn as disposable property." (1987: 140-142). Therefore, PWPL actors preserve their claim that women are coerced into abortion by framing women who freely choose abortion as a few pathological and selfish deviants.

themselves as pro-choice would also argue that an effort to stop coerced abortions is reasonable and necessary” (Reardon 1996: 27). This framing may be effective because most people, including pro-choice opponents, want to protect women from coercion.

Yet many on the pro-choice side stringently object to these arguments. Pro-choice activists accuse PWPL actors of deliberately lying to the public. For example, in a *Washington Post* column, Jessica Valenti labels these PWPL arguments as “fake feminism” (2010). She argues that this is just “part of a larger conservative move to woo women by appropriating feminist language. Just as consumer culture tries to sell ‘Girls Gone Wild’ – style sexism as empowerment, conservatives are trying to sell anti-woman policies shrouded in pro-woman rhetoric” (2010). Similarly, in a pro-choice focus group, Paula (29) said “I’ve seen these people in action, and they don’t know what they’re talking about. I’m like where did you get this, how can you tell people this stuff? It’s, um, it’s obviously lies and they should be ashamed of it. It makes me so furious!”

Likewise, in a study titled “Reasons U.S. Women have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives,” researchers for the Guttmacher Institute find that contrary to PWPL claims, only one half of one percent of the women surveyed indicated that their partners’ or parents’ desire for an abortion was the most important reason for their decision to abort (Finer *et. al.* 2005; see also Cooper 2001). These researchers argue that PWPL activists use highly selective samples to claim the majority of women are coerced into abortion. Such claims suggest that women “lack control over their own lives, but our findings attest women independently make the decision to have an abortion” (Finer *et al.* 2005: 118). Similarly, a psychologist I interviewed stated that while women often consider the opinions and possible reactions of parents or partners, he believes coercion is

very uncommon. He said that although he has never seen a female patient that said she was pressured into abortion, he has seen a number of male patients who were upset their female partners chose abortion because they wanted her to have the baby. Thus pro-choice activists, as well as psychologists and researchers, often contradict PWPL arguments and claim the vast majority of women are freely choosing abortion and are not coerced into it.

Yet in focus groups, many pro-choice advocates admit they are concerned with PWPL arguments regarding coerced abortion and the pro-choice response. For example, Erin (28) stated:

My first response to this is that no one could take these people seriously. Why would anyone believe this bullshit? But if you take a step back, you know, if I put myself in the shoes of, or well, in the shoes of someone that isn't as informed on the issues, I'm like, okay, I can see how this could work. I could get how people would believe it. And that's really scary.

Responding to Erin, other participants also explained they felt PWPL arguments could be persuasive and that they sometimes had difficulty countering these arguments. Ryan (27) later responded to Erin's comment by admitting he was confused about how to address claims of coercion:

Right off the bat, it throws me off. I think, wait a second, we're [pro-choice advocates] the ones protecting women from coercion, not them. But how do you counter that? You know, 'no you're wrong, you're lying' just doesn't cut it. It turns into he said she said, um, into a they said we said type of thing.

Many pro-choice activists also acknowledged they were unsure of how to respond to claims of coercion beyond attacking the validity of PWPL research. They stated that although it is possible that a few women may be coerced into abortion, this situation is very uncommon, and making abortion illegal is not the answer. Many agreed with Sandra

(37) who claimed that dealing with PWPL arguments was “new territory” for her. She said that she was prepared to deal with arguments about the fetal right to life, but generally found it difficult to persuasively rebut PWPL coercion arguments. Sandra agreed with Ryan that countering PWPL claims will inevitably turn into a:

he said she said situation. It’s like they took our arguments. How can you fight your own arguments with your own arguments? The master’s tools won’t dismantle the master’s house and so on. At the end of the day, it’s going to come down to who’s more credible. I know it’s us, hopefully most other people do too.

But Sandra, Ryan, and other pro-choice activists feel that PWPL advocates have co-opted the pro-choice movement’s concern for women’s rights and health and used these same concerns to argue abortion should be illegal. They are often unsure of how to combat these claims beyond attacking PWPL methodology and arguing PWPL advocates are untrustworthy. This concern has even been expressed by senior Planned Parenthood officials. For example, Susan Soesz, who runs the Planned Parenthood office that oversees the Dakotas and Minnesota, told a *Washington Post* journalist that “it’s going to take us a while to find our bearings” (10/24/2008). Similarly, Yale law professor Reva B. Siegal argues that the pro-woman pro-life focus is appealing because it combines “the modern language of trauma and women’s rights with some very traditional ways of understanding women” (Toner 2007). Thus, pro-choice activists, officials, and academics all recognize that PWPL arguments are often strategically effective and appeal to many liberal and conservative field actors.

Overall, this shows pro-choicers are uncomfortable with PWPL attempts to transform the pro-life master frame to alter the abortion debate field frame. They are confident in responding to traditional pro-life arguments, but less certain of how to

respond to PWPL arguments, especially claims of coercion. While pro-choicers are positive that they are correct, and that most women freely choose abortion, many feel this response is not a sufficient or particularly persuasive response. Yet they have difficulty finding a response beyond citing statistics and attacking PWPL advocate's credibility. Some pro-choice actors are worried that this limited reaction is not enough to convince the general public that PWPL arguments are false.

Priscilla Smith, a Senior Fellow at Yale Law School, has argued that the pro-choice movement's failure to demonstrate that abortion serves "women's interest in, and respect for, motherhood divides the pro-choice movement from its constituents and creates the vulnerability that the anti-abortion movement now exploits" (2008: 99). She argues that in order to keep abortion legal, pro-choice advocates must show that access to legal abortion is consistent with being a good mother because abortion allows women to decide how they will mother children they bear. Smith implies that pro-choicers can counteract PWPL framing by reminding the public that many women who seek abortion are already mothers. These women choose abortion because they feel they won't be able to adequately care for their current children and another baby at the present time. This framing presents the decision to abort as consistent with being a good mother. Freedom to choose the conditions one's children are raised in allows women to decide what kind of mother they want to be and how they will raise their children.

While this is undoubtedly part of many pro-choice activists ideology, these arguments seem to have "lost salience in the pro-choice movement" (Smith 2008: 142).¹⁴ While many of the pro-choicers I spoke with emphasized a woman's right to choose whether or not to be pregnant, few discussed how this decision related to motherhood. In

¹⁴ Indeed, the pro-choice activists Luker (1984) talks to address this issue in detail.

fact, in focus groups, pro-choicers rarely spoke about the relationship between motherhood and abortion. Pro-choicers may feel that emphasizing motherhood reinforces gender essentialism and traditional gender stereotypes. They may also feel that emphasizing how abortion can allow women to choose the type of mother they want to be will alienate those who want to remain childless. This concern may have especially prevented focus group participants from speaking up on this subject. In fact, it was only in three individual interviews that any of the pro-choice respondents discussed how access to abortion could make a woman a better mother. In one interview, Rosa, a pro-choice nurse, discussed her sister Mercedes and Mercedes' five children. Although Rosa loved all of her nieces and nephews, she worried about Mercedes every time she became pregnant. Rosa said at first she worried about her sister's health. "You know she won't always take care of herself. Mercedes, she's always running around and busy and she doesn't always eat or sleep. She's a good mom. She takes care of everyone except her. So worry, I worry she's not getting what she needs." Rosa went on to say that although Mercedes never considered abortion, Rosa thought she might if she were in Mercedes's shoes. Rosa said

I guess cause I'm the worrier. I would be thinking I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I could be mom for so many. [pauses] I don't think that about Mercedes. She's, she's always real good about it. But I would, I would have to think what about my others? And I have just two! But if I was her I would have to think can I have one more right now? And I don't think that's bad to think like that. Cause you have to be real and think about your real kids that you already have and what might happen to them.

Smith (2008) argues that emphasizing motherhood concerns in the decision making process is likely to resonate with most women, especially given the high percentage of women who have either had an abortion or known someone who has. In fact, many

women may currently be less likely to sympathize with the public image of the abortion patient because women obtaining abortions “are not portrayed in a way that they recognize. Moreover, this argument may be comforting to those who . . . still hold on to some old-fashioned notions of pregnancy, motherhood, and gender roles” (Smith 2008: 153). This type of framing may also resonate with people who accept that abortion is sometimes necessary but are also comforted by the belief that women still see caring for children as an central part of their lives.

Coerced Abortion Legislation

As a result of the PWPL belief most women are coerced into abortion by a parent or partner, PWPL actors support laws to prevent coerced abortion. For example, Denise Burke (2002) wrote in the Feminists for Life publication *The American Feminist* that a 1992 study published in the *Journal of Social Issues* found 81 percent of women felt victimized by the abortion process, either because they felt coerced into abortion or because important information was withheld. Burke argues that the law must hold people accountable for pressuring women into abortion by withholding financial resources or emotional support. Currently, it is illegal in America for anyone to force a woman into abortion. However, many affiliated with the pro-life movement argue coerced abortion is still a regular occurrence.

Supporting this belief, pastor George Grant cites a survey of women who had abortions at Planned Parenthood. Grant reports that:

60 percent stated that their counselor had ‘very strongly encouraged them to choose abortion as the best solution to their problem.’ This is especially significant in light of the fact that over 90 percent of those encouraged to abort by their Planned Parenthood counselor said that ‘there was a strong chance’ they would have chosen against the abortion if they had ‘not been

so strongly encouraged to abort.’ Over 60 percent were ‘still hoping to find an alternative’ when they went in for counseling (2000: 60).

Similarly, Ken Freeman (2011), an evangelical preacher, called forced abortions one of the greatest problems facing the pro-life movement. Focusing on the influence of friends, family, and partners, Allan Parker, a representative of the Justice Foundation and Operation Outcry, claims the most common coercive situation is teenage girls forced by their parents to have an abortion, followed by adult women forced into abortion by their male partners. As Parker told Freeman in an interview, “we think all abortions should be illegal and no one should have the choice, but clearly no one should be forced to have an abortion” (Freeman 2011). By discussing this issue, Grant and Freeman are able to spread the PWPL perspective to their congregants, many of whom may be ideologically pro-life but not yet actively involved in the movement. Both Freeman and Grant encourage their followers to learn more about coercion and become more active in the pro-life movement.

Currently, anyone who forces a woman to abort can be arrested for fetal homicide. Parents or partners can also be found guilty of kidnapping or assault if they take a woman to an abortion center against her will. Furthermore, parents cannot legally threaten to kick a minor child out of the house if she doesn’t have an abortion because every parent has the duty to care for their minor children. Legally, abortion must be the result of a woman’s informed, voluntary decision.

Yet PWPL actors argue that this legislation is not enough because coercion is still occurring. They push for legislation requiring abortion counselors to tell patients that they cannot legally be forced or coerced into abortion. Currently, legislation in nine states requires clinic employees to tell women seeking abortion that consent cannot be coerced.

These states are Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin (Gold and Nash 2007).

The Elliot Institute has created legislation called the Prevention of Coerced and Unsafe Abortions Act. This act would hold abortionists responsible for failing to screen for coercion. A version of this act went into effect in Nebraska in July of 2010. It requires a physician, physician's assistant, or registered nurse to tell female patients that no one can require or force them to have an abortion at least 24 hours before the abortion takes place. Then, at least one hour prior to the abortion, a physician, mental health practitioner, physician's assistant, registered nurse, or social worker must evaluate the woman to identify if she feels pressured or coerced into having an abortion.

Similar legislation was introduced in Minnesota in 2009 by democratic representative John Ward and republican Senator Michelle Fischbach. This legislation would require abortionists to inform women prior to the abortion that no one can pressure them into having an abortion against their will. The bill would offer women assistance to remove themselves from dangerous situations where coercion exists and would establish civil and criminal penalties for anyone who forces a woman to abort. According to Jordan Marie Bauer, legislative associate for Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life, "coerced abortions are one of the ugly secrets of the abortion industry . . . forced abortion is a very real threat to pregnant women. This crucial legislation protects the rights of women and seeks to restore respect and safety for pregnant women" (Ertelt 3/31/09a: 1). Thus, she argues, this legislation deserves support from politicians and the public, regardless of their position on abortion.

A similar law went into effect in Ohio in 2009. The Protecting Pregnant Women from Coercion and Violence Bill requires abortion facilities to display a poster in their waiting areas stating that no one can coerce or pressure women into having an abortion they do not want (Ertelt 4/7/09a: 1). The Ohio legislation only allows abortion to be performed once a woman has signed a consent form. The bill informs women that if they are coerced into abortion, they should not sign the consent form and should tell the clinic staff. According to Georgette Forney, co-founder of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign:

Going through a voluntary abortion is horrific enough. We should do everything we can to insure that a woman is not being coerced into this life changing surgery by a boyfriend or abusive husband. Whether someone calls himself pro-choice or pro-life, there's simply no option but to support H.B. 280 (<http://priestsforlife.org/pressreleases/1308-silent-no-more-leaders-urge-unanimous-approval-of-anti-coerced-abortion-bill>).

PWPL actors believe this form of legislation is politically savvy and widely appealing, as it is something that even the most zealous pro-choice actors will support. They argue that someone would truly have to be pro-abortion, that is prioritize forcing women into abortion over letting them make their own decision, to be against such legislation.

Finally, a bill in South Dakota is the most restrictive form of this type of legislation. Set to go into effect July 1, 2011, this bill requires a licensed physician to screen a woman 72 hours prior to an abortion to ensure her consent is not coerced. Women are also required to undergo counseling at a pro-life pregnancy resource center to learn about other options, such as adoption, and resources available to pregnant women. The abortion cannot be scheduled until after these requirements are met. Like the Nebraska law, this bill was also based on Elliot Institute model legislation ("South Dakota" 2011). Reardon, founder of the Elliot Institute, argues that this legislation is

necessary because a survey of American women who underwent abortions found “64 percent of respondents reported being pressured to abort by someone else and more than half said they felt rushed or uncertain before the abortion” (Rue *et al* 2004).

In response, pro-choice actors conceptualize these bills as another way for pro-lifers to chip away at abortion rights. Some see them as an intimidation tactic, designed to scare abortion providers by threatening them with coercion lawsuits. Others believe that because these laws require counseling 24 to 72 hours before the abortion takes place, this is just another attempt to make it more difficult for women, especially poor women or those living in areas without a nearby abortion clinic, to get access to abortion. As Gretel (34), the head of a pro-choice organization, said: “these types of laws aren’t really about protecting us from unwanted abortion. They’re actually all about coercing women into childbirth.” Other pro-choice actors cite the fact that women may be required to go to a pregnancy resource center as evidence supporting her position.

Pregnant and Parenting Students Act

To make it easier for women to fulfill their essential desire to give birth and become mothers, PWPL actors also support work and education programs that offer parental leave, flexible scheduling, job sharing, telecommuting, and childcare benefits. FFL members claim that workplace principles regarding pregnancy discrimination should be applied to colleges as well. Specifically, FFL members argue that: discrimination on the basis of pregnancy should be prohibited; pregnancy should be treated the same as any other temporary physical disability; employers and educators should provide women with medical benefits and sick leave; and women returning to school after pregnancy should

have the right to be reinstated in their program and be provided any other benefits of enrollment (Kennedy Johnson 2001).

With the support of Feminists for Life, Senator Elizabeth Dole and Congresswoman Melissa Hart introduced the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act in 2005. This act seeks to establish a program to provide \$10 million to fund 200 grants for colleges and universities to set up pregnant and parenting student services offices. These offices would be in charge of assessing the on-campus resources available for pregnant and parenting students and setting improvement goals in the areas of child care, housing, maternity coverage on student health plans, and more flexible schedules for pregnant and parenting students. The legislation was modeled on Feminists for Life's Pregnancy Resource Forums, where FFL representatives, pro-life college students, and other pro-life university faculty and administrators conduct an inventory of resources available for pregnant and parenting students and decide which resources are most needed. As Serrin Foster says of the act:

For almost thirty-three years, one side in the polarized abortion debate has asked "What about the woman?" The other has asked, "What about the baby?" The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Students Act of 2005 holds the answer to both questions: working together to the address the unmet needs of women. A peaceful revolution on campuses has begun . . . The legislation introduced by Senator Dole and Congresswoman Hart can help shift the focus from bitter debate to woman-centered solutions (Foster 2005: 1).

In 2010, the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act was incorporated into the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act's Pregnancy Assistance Fund. The fund is a \$25 million program that provides grant money to state governments to design programs to help pregnant and parenting young adults and women. Money will be used to help pregnant women pay for childcare,

school, and housing. While FFL's website declares this a "major victory" other pro-life groups are skeptical (<http://www.feministsforlife.org/news/major-victory.htm>). They are worried that some of the resources will go to pro-choice organizations. For example, the Family Resource Council released a statement declaring that the organization "strongly opposes the idea that these grant recipients should include any group that financially profits from abortions" (quoted in Ertelt 07/12/10). Furthermore, Joe Young, vice president of ministry for Heartbeat International, said the \$25 million dollars is a "drop in the bucket" compared to the amount of funding pro-choice organizations receive (quoted in Ertelt 07/12/10).

Other field actors are also critical of this fund. Journalist Emily Bazelon referred to the original Stanton Act as a "largely hollow 'message bill'" (Bazelon 2007b: 1). Bazelon also quotes Frances Kissling, President of Catholics for a Free Choice, who describes the act as "not serious" and goes on to state "if we support these message bills that don't really give women much help, then the real message we send is that we're not committed to women" (Bazelon 2007b:1). While these actors do not oppose funding for pregnant and parenting women, they argue these measures provide more publicity for PWPL actors than resources for pregnant and parenting women.

Misguided Feminist Frames

Although feminism is typically associated with the pro-choice movement, PWPL advocates argue the main tenants of feminism actually support a pro-life orientation. They claim abortion furthers women's oppression and limits their freedom. PWPL actors

anchor these arguments in claims that first wave feminists, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were pro-life (Ciampa 2004; Johnson 2002; Foster 2003).

According to Representative Helen Chenoweth (R-Idaho), Susan B. Anthony “referred to abortion in her writing as evil . . . [but] her pro-life heritage has been shamefully hijacked by the extreme feminists who refuse to face reality” (Groer and Grant 1997). Members of Feminists for Life often argue that first wave feminists believed that instead of helping them achieve equality, abortion hurt and exploited women. To support this framing, a popular advertisement on FFL’s website contains a large photo of Susan B. Anthony with the caption “another anti-choice fanatic” directly below. Website visitors are encouraged to print out these ads and post them around their communities or campuses. FFL members argue first wave feminists thought abortion was primarily promoted by men to hide extramarital affairs. For example, Feminists for Life member Mary Krane Derr wrote Susan B. Anthony conceptualized abortions “as male wrongs against women. Anthony argued that laws pertaining to these matters, made and enforced exclusively by men, further victimized women while absolving men of all responsibility” (Derr 1998: 19). Furthermore, Feminists for Life member Suzanne Schnittman quoted an 1873 letter in which Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote “when we consider women are treated as property, it is degrading to women that we should treat our children as property to be disposed of as we see fit,” and uses this as evidence that Stanton was pro-life (2002: 14). Serrin Foster, president of Feminists for Life, has argued “without known exception, the early feminists condemned abortion in the strongest terms” (Foster 2004: 29).¹⁵ These

¹⁵ Members of FFL are typically very adamant that most early feminists were pro-life, but sometimes waiver in this assertion. They admit they have no direct statement from Susan B. Anthony saying she was anti-abortion, but clues, such as the fact that her newspaper did not print ads for abortion and opposed restellism, the selling of abortifacient medicines, indicate that Susan B. Anthony was pro-life. Pro-choice

women also claim that first wave feminists fought for equality of all people, including unborn children. Therefore, because feminists today also want to ensure equality and justice for all, they should defend the fetal right to life.

Moreover, PWPL actors believe first wave feminists opposed abortion because they considered it an act of violence against both the child and the mother. Past Feminists for Life president Rosemary Bottcher wrote she “is disheartened to hear abortion-choice feminists justify the violent destruction of unborn humans with the very same ancient arguments used by men to excuse the contempt, neglect, abuse, and violence targeted toward women throughout human history” (Bottcher 2000a: 5). PWPL advocates argue that a central tenant of feminism is nonviolence. Because they believe abortion is violence against women and children, they argue abortion is anti-feminist.

Most traditional pro-life actors simply ignore these arguments. A few argue that the terms feminist and feminism are outdated and off-putting to many people. While they don’t object to these PWPL arguments, they see little utility in them. A few traditional pro-life organizations, such as Abort73, include this PWPL argument as one of the many “secondary arguments” they present in their arsenal against abortion. The “Feminism Perverted” article on the Abort73 website states that first wave feminists “celebrated the biological capacity of women to bear children and did not wish to see this capacity reproached by abortion. They believed that a society where abortion was necessary was a society that had greatly failed women” (2009: 1).

Many academics object to the assertion that early feminists were pro-life. Most historians agree it is impossible to know how Anthony would interpret the contemporary

advocates maintain that Anthony was a homeopath who “refused to run ads for any ‘patented medicine advertisements, not just abortifacents’” (Janice 2010: 2)

abortion debate According to Ann Gordan, a Rutgers University professor and editor of the *Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers*, there is no evidence that Anthony ever made her opinion on abortion known (Janice 2010; Stevens 2006). Pro-choice activists use this to argue that Susan B Anthony and other first wave feminists were dedicated to empowering women to speak for themselves and make their own choices. Like historians, they emphasize that Anthony's thoughts and statements cannot be taken out of context or used to support the modern pro-life movement. For example, an article published on the website of the pro-choice organization RH Reality Check asserts that many social and technological changes since the nineteenth century (e.g, the birth control pill, the increase in the number of women working outside the home, and *Roe v. Wade*) that have altered the circumstances in which women make reproductive choices. The article goes on to argue the basis of PWPL actor's claims:

that abortion is bad for women because Susan B. Anthony said so in 1889 has little or no relevance in 2009. Furthermore, it is still possible to view Susan B. Anthony's claims as feminist within the context of their time - in a time when families were larger, labor unions had yet to organize and women could not earn their own discretionary wages, it was very important for women to ensure that their husbands were not spending their wages on the costs associated with extramarital affairs. When viewed in context, their condemnation of abortion may be considered acceptable on feminist grounds ("Feminists for Life" 2009: 1-2).

Thus, pro-choicers are annoyed by this PWPL argument but do not believe it is particularly effective. For example, Michelle (27) said:

Susan B. Anthony was pro-life? (laughs) Not to be mean or anything, but who cares? At this point, it really doesn't matter if she was or wasn't. I don't think anyone is going to decide to be pro-life just cause someone tells them Suzy B. was. It doesn't make sense to me. It kinda shows how screwed up some of these people really are.

Overall, many pro-choicers agree with feminist author Jessica Valenti, who argues PWPL claims about first wave feminists are part of an attempt to “knock 1960s-era feminism as hooey while claiming to support women’s rights” (05/30/2010).

To be sure, PWPL advocates are very critical of second wave feminists. To compare first wave feminists with second wave feminists, Serrin Foster describes the creation of NARAL Pro-choice America. After lobbying state legislatures and governors to overturn antiabortion laws, Larry Lader and Bernard Nathanson, two of NARAL’s founders, noticed the second wave women’s movement was an emerging, powerful, and vocal force. According to Foster, Lader and Nathanson convinced leaders of the second wave women’s movement that having children held women back in the workplace. They argued that in order to achieve equality in the workplace, women needed the ability to control their fertility. Essentially, Foster claims Lader and Nathanson convinced second wave feminists that if women wanted the same rights as men, they would have to function like men (Foster 2001: 9). From this story, Foster surmises:

So many of the problems we face today can be traced to abortion advocates Lader and Nathanson’s persuasion of the ‘70s feminists, who turned abortion into the centerpiece, the litmus test, of feminism. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other early suffragists would have stood up to these men and demanded equality in the workplace as women (2001: 9).

This is an example of what Morrill and Owen-Smith refer to as a subversive story.

Subversive stories “dramatize specific events that point to failures and crises of social institutions and fields” (Morrill and Owen-Smith 2002: 97). The pro-woman, pro-life narrators of this subversive story argue that instead of leading to equality, abortion has furthered the sexual exploitation of women and caused them great physical and mental harm. This story would not resonate in an environment where women’s rights and

equality were fully established or a non-issue. Because there is substantial debate over women's rights and equality, this subversive strategy is able to gain resonance.

Other PWPL advocates use similar stories and rhetoric to frame pro-choice feminists as misguided, bitter, angry, or out of touch with the average woman. Many PWPL actors frame feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, a time when the pro-choice position was adopted by NOW and other feminist organizations, as angry, radical, and reactive. For example, Jane Thomas-Bailey argued that pro-choice feminists turned their "frustrated vengeance on those even weaker than themselves. The unborn is the natural scapegoat for the repressed anger and hostility of women" (Thomas-Bailey 1995: 164). Returning to a comparison between first and second wave feminists, Glendon (2004) argues that early feminists such as Anthony and Stanton would have regarded second wave feminists as confused or deranged. She claims that what differentiated second wave feminists from first wave feminists was a "puzzling combination of two things that do not ordinarily go together: anger against men and promiscuity; man-hating and man-chasing" (2004: 7).¹⁶ Overall, PWPL advocates maintain that because second wave feminists were hurt by men, they became angry and used this anger to justify their pro-choice beliefs.

PWPL advocates also frame pro-choice feminists as upper class elitists (McCorvery 1997; Bachiochi 2004; Voss Koch 1985; Joyer 1985; Kennedy Johnson 2002; Foster 2000c). This framing attempts to discredit the legitimacy of pro-choice feminists as it implies they are different from most women and will not be able to adequately represent them (Schreiber 2008). For example, in her book *Won By Love* (1997), Norma McCorvey (also known as Jane Roe, the plaintiff in *Roe v. Wade*)

¹⁶ Glendon also argues second wave feminists were angry because their husbands divorced them to marry younger women (2004: 9).

explains how as a blue-collar woman she felt excluded by the “the Ivy-league educated feminists who ran the abortion movement” (17). McCorvey claims that Sarah Weddington, her attorney in the *Roe v. Wade* case, regarded her as “a blue-collar, rough-talking embarrassment” (1997: 21). McCorvey believes Weddington and other feminists used her as a figurehead in the fight to legalize abortion, but secretly disdained her. Similarly, Glendon has framed pro-choice feminists as profit-oriented, myopically focused on abortion, and “corrupted by the vast profit-making abortion industry, the sex industry, and the organizations that promote aggressive population control” (2004: 13). In sum, PWPL activists label pro-choice feminists as selfish elitists, who value wealth and recognition more than improving women’s lives.

Because of this elitism and myopic focus on abortion, PWPL advocates claim pro-choice feminists ignore the needs, wants, and desires of real women. They claim pro-choice feminists are primarily motivated by the desire to keep abortion legal and advocate for this at the expense of other causes that would more directly benefit average women (Ertelt 9/8/08a; Ertelt 06/15/09a). Furthermore, pro-choice feminists are framed as disdainful of feminine virtues that were prized by first wave feminists and are still valued by most modern women. Instead, PWPL actors claim pro-choice feminists teach women to prioritize their own ambitions and desires over helping others, and to value power above all else. As a result, they argue, pro-choice feminists have sacrificed their “very womanliness- most manifest in their ability to bear a child- by having abortions to continue pursuing success in the public sphere. Such a course of action is inherently anti-woman and anti-feminist” (Bachiochi 2004: 31). As long as mainstream feminists focus

on abortion, PWPL actors believe they will continue to deceive and misrepresent real women.

Testimonies post-abortive women give to The Justice Foundation reinforce this point. As one Nebraska woman known as L.S. wrote “under the false pretense of empowering women with a choice, abortion is victimizing numerous women such as myself” (2008: 1). Similarly, an FFL promotional advertisement pictures female protesters with the caption “Question Abortion” below. The text below the caption reads: “Abortion rights activists promised us a world of equality and reduced poverty. A world where every child would be wanted. Instead, child abuse has escalated, and rather than shared responsibility for children, even more of the burden has shifted to women.” PWPL advocates claim pro-choice feminists will eventually lose support from women like L.S. because most women will understand these feminists take a very narrow view of women’s rights and empowerment. Average women will realize that pro-choice feminists do not feel their lives are important and are not addressing their problems (Kennedy Johnson 2002; Joyer 1985; Romano 2010).

PWPL actors further argue that pro-choice feminists are out of touch with average women because they don’t care about real women’s concerns regarding childrearing and family issues. They argue pro-choice feminists have nothing to say to women who are trying to juggle work and family obligations. In fact, they claim pro-choice feminists actually denigrate marriage and motherhood. In a May 2010 speech to the Republican pro-life PAC SBA list, Sarah Palin said pro-choice feminists send the message “that ‘Nope, you’re not capable of doing both. You can’t give your child life and still pursue career and education. You’re not strong enough; you’re not capable.’ So it’s very

hypocritical" (quoted in Valenti 2010). Glendon argues pro-choice feminists believe the only work that matters is "market work. It is no wonder that four out of five young women today are so turned off by these negative attitudes toward men, marriage and motherhood that they reject even the term 'feminism'" (2004: 10). Overall, PWPL advocates maintain pro-choice feminists ignore traditional feminine concerns regarding motherhood and childrearing and only care about succeeding in the male dominated working world.

Therefore, PWPL advocates believe they can better understand the needs and desires of real women and better represent their interests. Drawing on their gender essentialist beliefs, PWPL actors claim most women do not feel they have to act like men to be equal to them (Nardelli 2004; Mahkorn 1985; Beckwith 1993). They argue that feminism's primary message should be that "women as women can make a significant, and equal, contribution to human life and be rewarded equally" (Tinvan 1995: 32). Similarly, they claim "true support for women's rights is to be pro-life and cherish and honor women's special capacity to bear and nurture life" (Kennedy Johnson 2002: 13). Therefore, they maintain PWPL actors are better able to represent real women because they focus on what women want and deserve, including reducing the abortion rate and making abortion illegal (Foster 2000c).

Overall, framing pro-choice feminists as elitists, out of touch with real women challenges their legitimacy and authenticity. PWPL actors present pro-choice feminists as radical extremists, who want to deny women's natural abilities and turn them into men (Bordlee 2004). PWPL advocates are then able to claim their beliefs are more comparable to those of average women. As a result, PWPL actors argue their organizations are more

inclusive and represent women better than those of pro-choice feminists, who only speak for a few extremists (Romano 2008; Schreiber 2008).

Of course, pro-choicers are angered by PWPL claims. Journalist Jessica Valenti argues PWPL advocates like Sarah Palin co-opt “the language of the feminist movement” and deliberately misrepresent “real feminism” (2010). She argues that the PWPL form of feminism “isn’t an analysis of patriarchal norms, power dynamics or systematic inequities. It’s an empty rallying call to women who are disdainful of or apathetic to women’s rights” (Valenti 2010). Yet although they are angry, Valenti and other pro-choice actors are also comfortable refuting PWPL arguments that pro-choice feminists are misguided, bitter, or radical elitists. As Meredith, an assistant director of one pro-choice organization said:

these people can join the club. People have been criticizing feminists for all sorts of reasons for centuries. It’s not a novel approach, it’s been done. There have even been many debates between feminists. The only thing that’s different here is that these quote unquote feminists are arguing that feminists should be pro-life.

Other pro-choice activists also state that they are accustomed to opponents framing them as radical, elitist or angry. In one focus group, Katherine (34) said “bring it on, right? Feminist has been used as a dirty word for decades, more than that even, and we’ve survived. Feminism is still alive and well.” Pro-choice actors like Katherine are accustomed to being labeled negatively because they are feminists and are not particularly threatened by these labels. Similarly, Rebecca Traister, a senior writer at Salon.com, wrote that “it’s no great news that “feminism” -- the word and, by extension, the movement -- has an image problem. Women of all ages and colors have, at turns,

bristled at the term, embraced it, lauded it and disdained it, practically since it was coined” (2005: 1)

Overall, pro-choice actors are annoyed by the misguided feminist frame but do not believe it is effective. Commenting on Feminists for Life and SBA List, Brian (32) said in a focus group:

they’re woman’s groups that don’t really like women. It’s obvious to see they think babies are more important than women. Yeah, I don’t really think they’re fooling anyone. And they’re the radicals. Because they don’t even believe in birth control! So, uh, it’s, I don’t get why they even call themselves feminists. It makes no sense to be like all feminists are bad. Except for us. We’re feminists and we’re good. So listen to us feminists, not those feminists. [laughs] Everyone’s just going to be like ‘what are you talking about?’

Liz (28) agreed “they say all we care about is abortion. But that’s really all they care about. Abortion and the bible. They’re like a sheep in wolves, oh, I mean wolves in sheep’s, no, in God’s clothing.” Pro-choice activists feel that most people will not be persuaded to become pro-life based on the misguided feminist frame. They typically view pro-lifers as either anti-feminist or ambivalent about feminism and do not believe pro-life feminist arguments will be helpful in pro-life recruitment efforts.

Chapter 5: Institutional Frames

“Fourteen years ago, I was offered a job in an abortion clinic in Birmingham, Alabama. A very short time after working there, I realized this: we were not there to there to help women. We were a business – a money-making organization” – Joy Davis, former abortion clinic employee (Davis 2011: 1)

“Among the most contentious issues in America today are race and abortion. Fuse them into a single issue and you've got a nuclear bomb” – *Chicago Tribune* journalist Dennis Byrne (2011: 1).

As the previous chapter discussed, PWPL actors often argue women are coerced into abortion by friends and family. Yet PWPL actors maintain women are confronted with more pressure, coercion, and manipulation once they enter an abortion clinic. PWPL actors frame abortion as a profit-driven institution and abortion clinic workers as avaricious and manipulative. They claim abortion is a multimillion dollar industry driven by profit, not concern for women’s health, equality, or safety. PWPL actors use this framing to present women who have received abortions as the victims of a profit-oriented industry and abortion clinic workers as savvy, but devious, villains.

This chapter also details PWPL and traditional pro-life actors accusations that abortionists are racist population control zealots and criminals who rape or kill their patients and then lie to cover up these crimes. This chapter also discusses how pro-choice actors, legal scholars, the media, and religious officials respond to these claims and to malpractice legislation proposed by PWPL actors.

Profit and Greed

Many PWPL advocates describe how abortion clinic workers market and sell abortion (Reardon 1996; Foster 2000c; Ertelt 04/2908b; Everett 1997). One way they do this is by encouraging former abortion clinic employees to describe what happens “behind the scenes” in clinics. For example, when former abortion clinic director Carol Everett spoke at the United Methodist Church’s national convention, she told attendees she persuasively sold abortions. Everett describes her job as “talking teenagers and young women into having abortions they may not have had without persuasion. ‘I sold abortions.’” (quoted in Ertelt 04/29/08b: 1). Similarly, former abortion clinic staffer Luhra Tivis claims that when she was trained to answer phones at an abortion clinic in Kansas City, she thought she would learn how to fill out information sheets and keep phone records. Instead she learned “how to be a high pressure salesperson over the phone, like telemarketing: how to convince somebody to buy your product” (Tivis 2011: 1). PWPL actors use the testimonies of former clinic workers like Everett and Tivis to argue that abortion offices are businesses designed to pressure consumers, in this case pregnant women, into buying abortion.

Beyond simply selling abortion over the phone, PWPL advocates maintain that like other businesses, abortion clinic operators actively study the market and strategically place clinics in areas they believe will maximize profit. For example, Serrin Foster accuses Planned Parenthood and the Alan Guttmacher Institute of studying the demographics of women who have abortions and the reasons women give for obtaining abortion in order to better market abortion and increase profits (2000c). Other PWPL actors claim the abortion industry teaches providers to sell their services to especially

high-risk or vulnerable groups, such as college women, young working women, and poor women. They also claim abortion counselors are trained to ask questions that play on patients' vulnerabilities, such as whether patients or their partners have the financial resources to support children or how patients' parents or peers will react to the pregnancy.

Because they believe abortion clinic employees are motivated by profit, PWPL advocates argue these employees do not care about women's health. David Reardon, president of the Elliot Institute, argues that most abortions are performed under unsafe conditions because "the pursuit of high profit margins has displaced the welfare of patients" (1996: 30). Reardon maintains that abortion providers are "incompetent, compassionless, unethical technicians dispensing abortions on request without review of risks or consideration of better treatment options" (Reardon 1996: 30). Because clinic employees have profit-driven motivation, protecting women's health will never be their primary goal. Instead, PWPL actors argue these employees have a financial incentive to raise national abortion rates, thereby raising profits. Joan Appleton, formerly a nurse at an abortion clinic in Washington, D.C., claims that clinic employees purposely kept the levels of estrogen in birth control pills low to increase birth control failure rates and keep abortion rates high. Appleton claims:

Now the pharmaceutical companies and Planned Parenthood and the abortion industry were not stupid. They knew that the less dose of estrogen in those pills, the more likely it was they were going to fail. But you don't have to worry. We can bring you right back here for another abortion. They even used percentages, by the way. Thirty percent failure rate, because were going to use the real low estrogen pill. So that means thirty percent will come back. And if we forget to tell you, by the way, that if you get the flu and have to be put on antibiotics, the chemical reaction between the birth control pill and the antibiotic renders the birth

control pill worthless, and totally ineffective, so we have another twenty percent. Thank you, come back around (Appleton 1993: 2)

PWPL and traditionally pro-life actors highly prize the testimonies of former clinic employees. They claim that the best way to learn the truth about abortion is to observe the procedure performed and the inner working of the clinics firsthand. They maintain one of the second best ways to learn the truth is to hear it from people like Appleton and Everett who have observed the procedure first hand. These former employees are framed as experts on what really happens inside abortion clinics.

Because of these financially driven and coercive motives, PWPL actors also criticize legislation that provides funds for abortion clinics (Ertelt 1/20/09a). For example, criticizing the Prevention First Act of 2009 (H.R. 463), the director of one PWPL organization argued this act would give “hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money to Planned Parenthood, which already gets almost 300 million dollars of taxpayer money a year.” PWPL advocates claim most Americans do not realize Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest abortion provider, is also the largest recipient of taxpayer dollars through Title X (Ertelt 1/22/09). They argue that Planned Parenthood is already a multi-billion dollar conglomerate with programs across the world. Thus it is already a very profitable “nonprofit” organization and does not need government funding.

Furthermore, PWPL actors claim abortion clinics should not receive funding because their employees attack non-profit pro-life pregnancy care centers and deduct resources from these needy and worthy centers. They frame these pregnancy care centers as the true nonprofit defenders of women’s rights and health. For example, Kristin Hansen, a representative of the pregnancy resource organization CareNet, argues that Planned Parenthood criticizes pregnancy resource centers because its leaders are

frustrated with the success of these pro-life centers, “which unlike abortion providers, offer a wide range of free services to men and women facing unplanned pregnancy and sexual health related concerns” (Ertelt 10/09/08a: 1). Similarly, Jenny (37), a PWPL activists and pregnancy resource center volunteer argues that Planned Parenthood is threatened by pregnancy care centers. She says these centers receive support from many people; “not just people like me, or just like pro-life activists, but ministers and social workers, uh, reporters, all sorts of people. Planned Parenthood knows we’re turning people on to a, to the culture of life and they know that’s not good for them.” Overall, PWPL actors frame Planned Parenthood and other abortion clinics as profit-driven organizations that nonetheless receive unnecessary taxpayer money to exploit women while non-profit pregnancy care centers are denied the resources they need to aid women in carrying their pregnancies to term.

Population Control and Racism

Beyond financial motivations, PWPL actors sometimes claim that abortionists are also motivated by population control. Reardon describes how abortionists strongly manipulate women into abortion when they arrive at clinics to receive counseling about pregnancy options. Reardon compares abortionists to Nazis, arguing:

the similarity between Nazi manipulation of the Jews and the abortionists’ manipulation of women faced with crisis pregnancies is striking. Just as the Jews were forced to choose between loosing everything or just a little, so abortion counselors encourage the victim-woman to view this pregnancy as a threat to everything she has, her relationships, her family, her career, her entire future. She is assured that by sacrificing this one thing (a tiny unborn child), she can save the rest. During this process, the victim-woman is urged to view the abortion decision not as a moral choice, but as a rational choice of ‘saving what you can’ (Reardon 1996: 49).

Reardon claims that abortionists prefer to manipulate women into choosing abortion, but because they are population control zealots and eugenicists, they are also willing to force women into unwanted abortions. He writes:

The imperative of controlling the quantity and quality of our population, they believe, must take precedent over a few torn uteruses and grieving hearts . . . in this sense, pro-abortionists are truly anti-women's rights. They would prefer that women seek abortions voluntarily, but they would be quite willing to enact a program of forced abortions if it became 'necessary' . . . pro-abortionists are not driven by the ideals of either compassion or freedom. Instead, they are driven by a desire to control and shape society into a man-made utopia (Reardon 1996: 24).

Reardon and other PWPL advocates argue that pro-choicers are focused on creating a perfect society through population control, and therefore ignore abortion-related complications. Furthermore, they assert Planned Parenthood officials and other pro-choicers believe the inconveniences of a few should not stand in the way of their population control goals. Thus, Reardon maintains that all pro-lifers, especially pro-life politicians, should speak up about the need to protect women from the unscrupulous abortion industry and its representatives that force women into unwanted abortions. Traditional pro-life organizations, such as the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP) and Abort73, also sometimes compare abortionists to Nazis and frame abortionists as population control zealots. The difference is that in this comparison, traditional pro-lifers compare fetuses, not women, to Jews killed by Nazis. Because of the similarity of this framing however, it is more likely to be accepted and embraced by traditional pro-life actors as well.

PWPL advocates also negatively frame abortion and abortion providers by joining with other pro-life groups to argue that abortion is a racist institution and racism motivates abortionists to perform a disproportionate number of abortions on African

American women. Pro-lifers often mention how Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, supported eugenics and maintain that Planned Parenthood is still guided by eugenicist and racist motivations (Solinger 2007; Ertelt 10/09/08b). The primary piece of evidence PWPL and traditionally pro-life activists use to support their accusations of racism is that a disproportionate number of US abortions are performed on African American women. For example, an article published on the traditionally pro-life group Abort73's website states:

Abortion, by the numbers, is a racist institution . . . it has everything to do with the simple, undeniable reality that in the United States, abortion kills minority children at more than 3 times the rate of non-Hispanic, white children . . . black women make up 12.3% of the female population in America, but account for 35% of all U.S abortions. . . . abortion has thinned the black community in ways the Ku Klux Klan could only have dreamed of ("Abortion and Race" 1-2).

PWPL advocates join with other pro-life organizations like the National Black Pro-life Union and LEARN to argue that abortion is not "an equal opportunity killer" ("Abortion and Race" 4; Ertelt 04/25/08a; Ertelt 05/11/09a). These claims were furthered when controversial billboards highlighting the relationship between abortion and race were placed in major cities throughout the country. For example, a Texas minister posted pro-life billboards in traditionally African-American neighborhoods in Chicago. Each billboard has a picture of President Barack Obama next to the caption "Every 21 minutes our next possible leader is aborted" (Bryne 2011: 1). Georgia Right to Life sponsored 80 billboards in Atlanta and other cities that have a close-up picture of an African-American child with the caption "Black children are endangered species" (Dewan 2010: 1). PWPL actors focus on black women and claim that because of higher rates of abortion, black

women are at risk for higher rates of premature and extremely premature births than women of other ethnicities (Ertelt 12/03/08).

In an attempt to find evidence that Planned Parenthood is racist, pro-life activist Lila Rose launched an undercover investigation. She called Planned Parenthoods, asking employees to accept donations to fund abortions only for black women. Rose reported that Planned Parenthood accepted the money in all cases (Ertelt 9/6/08a: 1). Rose's recordings prompted Day Gardner, president of the National Black Pro-life Union, to state that "the evil hand of racism is still at work in this country and is living in the bowels of Planned Parenthood" (Ertelt 7/15/08b: 1). Gardner goes on to claim that Planned Parenthood is "overtly racist and drenched in the blood of black folk" (Ertelt 7/15/08b: 1). Other pro-lifers add to these charges by claiming the majority of Planned Parenthoods are located in poor communities with large minority populations because of Planned Parenthood's racist desire to reduce the black population. Although the tactics of traditional pro-life and PWPL advocates are very similar, once again the motivation behind these tactics differs. While traditional pro-lifers believe abortion is a racist institution because it leads to the genocide of black babies, PWPL advocates emphasize how abortion harms black women.

In response, pro-choice representatives confirm that black women do have a disproportionately large number of abortions relative to their population, but argue this is not the result of racism.¹⁷ They maintain pro-life activists are distorting the facts and

¹⁷ For example, in the *Guttmacher Policy Review*, Susan Cohen writes that currently 34% of abortions are obtained by white women, 37% by blacks, and 22% by Hispanics. Although abortion rates for blacks have fallen along with the general population, black women have consistently had the highest abortion rates. This holds true even when controlling for income. Abortion rates mirror unintended pregnancy rates across these same groups. Black women are three times as likely as white women to experience an unintended pregnancy

ignoring the fundamental reason why women have abortions: unintended pregnancy. Pro-choice advocates claim that minority women have higher unintended pregnancy rates than white women because women in minority communities have more difficulty accessing high-quality contraceptive services and using birth control consistently and effectively over long periods of time (Cohen 2008: 2). Furthermore, studies published in the *Guttmacher Policy Review* show sexually active black women who do not want to become pregnant are less likely to use contraceptives than white or Hispanic women (Cohen 2008; Boonstra et al. 2006). Therefore, pro-choicers conclude that pro-life accusations of racism are inaccurate and misleading; higher abortion rates among minority women are the result of higher unintended pregnancy rates, not racism.

Other pro-choice actors have criticized pro-life frames that single out the African-American community. For example, Lorretta Ross, executive director of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective in Atlanta argues that these billboards paint “black women as either monsters intent on destroying their own race or victims of whites who control abortion clinics” (Dewan 2010: 2). Similarly, Planned Parenthood representatives referred to these billboards as an “offensive and condescending effort to stigmatize and shame African-American women while attempting to limit their ability to make private, personal medical decisions” (Bryne 2011: 1). Furthermore, Ross argues that “the reason we have so many Planned Parenthoods in the black community is because leaders in the black community in the ‘20s and ‘30s went to Margaret Sanger and asked for them . . . controlling our fertility was part of our uplift out of poverty strategy, and it still works” (quoted in Dewan 2010: 2).

Yet although this pro-choice argument is logical and supported by a wealth of data, pro-choicers are worried it might not convince the general public that claims of racism are false. While pro-choice activists feel it is important to present their case in a clear and logical manner, they also acknowledge that their arguments are dry and uninspired, especially compared to pro-lifers' impassioned charges of black genocide, racism, and conspiracy among abortion providers. For example Kim (33) a Planned Parenthood volunteer tried to explain why she was frustrated with these charges of racism:

Okay, I hope this makes sense but my friends and I have a rule that is if you're arguing about something not related to Jews or the Holocaust, you can't bring up Hitler (laughs). So if say, you were arguing with someone about why Wal-Mart is bad, uh, I mean a really terrible corporation, you still can't, it's not fair to compare Wal-Mart to Hitler or the Nazis. If you do that you automatically lose. Because no matter what, it's just such an overstatement and you just shouldn't use it. Come up with a better argument that's smarter than that. And that's how I kinda feel about this. We're, I mean we're obviously not racist. And they know it. It's just a tool, its lies. But it puts us on the defensive and it just forces us to explain things in detail that's boring to most people. I mean what is the average person going to pay attention to? Saying someone is a racist or a lot of statistics about the relationship between birth control, and the relationship between contraception and abortion?

Others feel they have had some success passionately responding to charges of racism.

Stephanie (41) says whenever she hears an accusation of pro-choice racism she says being pro-choice:

means exactly what it sounds like. I am in favor of all women, poor women, rich women, black women, white women, brown women, of all women being able to freely choose their reproductive futures. I support free choice and equality, and would never, ever, ever support anything even slightly affiliated with racism or genocide. Don't call us racist because we want to help all women, because we want everyone to have access to reproductive services. It's just false, um, and anyone who says this stuff is either ignorant or is lying and should be ashamed of themselves

Yet pro-choicers feel the media is far less likely to report on the relationship between contraception, unintended pregnancy, and abortion rates than to report on pro-life charges of racism. It's simply a much less sensational story. Furthermore they sometimes worry that the public may be less likely to pay attention to this argument when faced with shocking arguments comparing abortionists to Nazis or Ku Klux Klan members and charging them with racism. As one pro-choice organization director explained, there is a balance of sensationalism and legitimacy. People are drawn to sensational claims but they will not believe these claims unless they perceive the source is legitimate and trustworthy. So she believes pro-choicers must continue asserting their claims are accurate, but they also need to do so in a way that captures the public's attention. This is the best way to discredit PWPL and other pro-life actors and convince the general public of the pro-choice position.

Incompetence

Beyond being accused of greed and racism, abortionists are also framed as incompetent doctors who accidentally harm or kill women during abortions and lie to cover up their mistakes. To illustrate this point, one advertisement available on the Elliot Institute website has a picture of a wheelchair and a caption that reads "Susanne used to ride horses in California . . . After the abortion, she need a different way to get around." Smaller print below tells Susanne's story; she "walked into an abortion clinic but left on a stretcher . . . lapsed into a coma [and] . . . awoke in a nursing home, unable to talk and paralyzed from the neck down." While this advertisement implicates abortionists in general, sometimes specific doctors are targeted. After the Kansas late-term abortion provider George Tiller was shot, Lifefews reported that Tiller routinely botched

abortions so badly that patients routinely had to be taken to the hospital. Lifenews also reported that Tiller killed a 19-year-old disabled girl during a routine abortion procedure. Similarly, Carol Everett, the former abortion clinic employee turned pro-life advocate, argues that a successful abortion clinic needs “doctors who are willing to put their licenses on the line in the cover-up of botched abortions. That’s the only way to keep families from filing lawsuits” (Everett 1997: 92). Finally, another former abortion clinic employee describes how her boss, abortionists Tommy Tucker, taught her how to perform abortions. Although she was a lay person with no professional medical training, Davis claims she was more competent at the procedure than Tucker. She states “I felt I did it better than he did. I never put a woman in the hospital, and he was putting them in the hospital almost every month” (Davis 2011). Once again, abortionists are framed as inept doctors who routinely disregard the health and safety of their patients.

Pro-choice actors criticize these attacks on abortionist’s characters and the safety of abortion clinics. Once again, they maintain that if this framing is effective, it will prevent women from receiving preventative health care and necessary reproductive services. To positively frame abortionists, they have designated March 10th as the National Day of Appreciation for Abortion Providers. They argue abortion providers enable women to exercise a constitutional right to reproductive choice. Pro-choicers recognize that the term abortionist does not have a positive connotation for most people, largely because of pro-life attempts to frame abortion providers as greedy and manipulative deviants. In one focus group, Helen (42) stated she believes people’s reluctance to talk about their abortions because of fear of public stigma only serves pro-life efforts to negatively frame abortion. Helen argues that in actuality, she and other women who have

had abortions were treated with care, competence and respect by all abortion clinic staff during a scary and confusing time. She and other pro-choicers recognize the need to publicly and privately thank abortion providers for their commitment to giving women choices. Helen feels public thanks and acknowledgement of the good work abortion providers do is necessary for showing the public that these providers are “talented medical professionals who treat their patients with dignity and care.”

An abortionist referred to by the pseudonym Dr. X told *Salon* magazine that she has seen evidence that negative framing of abortionists has been successful. She says that when she sees patients they often comment “‘Gee, you’re so much better looking than I expected,’ As if we were supposed to come in with hunchbacks and moles on our faces” (Peri 1997: 8). Dr. X says that to combat this image she talks about her children. Yet, if patients ask, she also tells them that she previously had an abortion. Although other clinic employees are shocked she admits this, Dr. X claims this humanizes abortionists and the abortion procedure. It also lets patients know that unplanned pregnancy can happen to anyone and abortion “doesn’t have to mean the end of your life, or that you’re doomed to a life of bad decisions. It doesn’t have to be a shameful thing” (Peri 1997: 8).

Criminal Activity

Beyond framing abortionists and their employees as greedy, racist, and incompetent, PWPL actors also refer to these clinics as “abortion mills.” They argue employees of abortion mills cover up the rape or sexual abuse of minors, perform forced or unwanted abortions, engage in criminal activity, and lie to cover up these endeavors. In short, abortionists and other abortion clinic employees are framed as deceitful criminals, willing to engage in unsafe and deceptive practices to perform as many abortions as possible.

PWPL advocates claim abortionists often sexually abuse or rape patients under anesthesia during the abortion procedure. For example, Lifenews reported on a Marie Stopes International anesthesiologist, Narendra Scharma, who was accused of rubbing his genitals against the hands of patients during abortions (Ertelt 4/3/09a: 1). PWPL actors frame this situation as common and pervasive in the abortion industry but underreported. They state abortionists have intimate access to young women and know that these women often want to keep their abortions secret. Therefore, they claim women often do not report the sexual assault and mistreatment because either they were under anesthesia and unaware of the assault or because they do not want their sexual histories and abortions to become public knowledge.

One of the most sensational stories reported recently covers the criminal activity of Philadelphia abortionist Kermit Gosnell. Gosnell's clinic was referred to as a "house of horrors" and "the worst licensed abortion clinic in the United States" in the media (Johnston 2011; Saletan 2011). Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams told the *New York Daily News* that bottles and bags containing aborted fetuses were scattered throughout the clinic and jars containing severed feet lined the shelves. Gosnell was charged with the death of one female patient and seven babies who were reportedly born alive and then killed. Gosnell reportedly routinely delivered viable babies and then severed their spinal cords. His treatment of female patients was also astounding. According to a grand jury report, Gosnell "used unlicensed workers to administer anesthesia, failed to obtain patients' informed consent, gave them expired drugs; endangered their health with poor sanitation and broken equipment, and caused the deaths of at least two women" (Saletan 2011: 1). Although PWPL actors do not

necessarily claim that atrocities of this nature occur often, they argue that this incident points to dark, criminal elements of abortion that need further investigation. They also argue this example demonstrates that just because abortion is legal does not mean it is safe for women.

On a milder note, PWPL actors also allege Planned Parenthood workers cover up the rape of minors by performing abortions on young women without reporting crimes. Lifeneews has published multiple stories about Lila Rose, formerly a pro-life UCLA college student, who went to Planned Parenthoods pretending to be a young teenage girl impregnated by her 31-year old boyfriend (Ertelt 12/03/08a ; Ertelt 1/6/09a; Ertelt 2/5/09a; Ertelt 3/18/09a ; Ertelt 06/30/09a). She tells Planned Parenthood workers that she needs a secret abortion so her parents will not find out about her sexual relationship with the older man (Ertelt 06/30/09a: 1). Rose reports that Planned Parenthood officials are willing to bend the rules and perform abortions without reporting statutory rape. According to Rose, Planned Parenthood “offers no solutions to the victims of statutory rape – they give her an abortion and a bag of condoms and send her straight back into the arms of the abuser” (quoted in Ertelt 12/03/08a: 1). PWPL advocates use these stories as evidence to reinforce their claims that abortion clinics, and abortion in general, are harmful to women.

It is important to note that while this tactic is focused on how women are harmed by Planned Parenthood, more traditional pro-life organizations sometimes use similar arguments to target Planned Parenthood and other abortion clinics. For example, the pro-life organization American Life League has developed a project called STOPP International. STOPP is dedicated to defeating Planned Parenthood by preventing its

representatives from talking about sex education in schools, impeding Planned Parenthood's efforts to open new clinics, working to close existing clinics, and banning government funding of Planned Parenthood.¹⁸ While STOPP, The Family Research Council, Human Life International, Americans United for Life and other traditional pro-life organizations share some of PWPL actor's goals (closing down abortion clinics and defunding Planned Parenthood), the ideological motivations behind these efforts are often different. PWPL actors oppose Planned Parenthood because they believe its employees engage in criminal activity and coerce vulnerable women into having unsafe and unwanted procedures to increase their profits. In contrast, traditional pro-life organizations oppose Planned Parenthood primarily for religious and fetal centric reasons. For example, STOPP assumes that its followers are already against abortion clinics because they kill unborn children. Therefore, STOPP spends little time explaining why Planned Parenthood is a dangerous organization; they assume their pro-life followers already agree with them. Thus they devote more effort to explaining how to defeat this organization and less time to negatively framing it as criminal, profit-driven, manipulative, and harmful to women. Furthermore, STOPP heavily incorporates religious texts into its directions. For example, STOPP's description of "The Plan" for fighting Planned Parenthood advises that:

as you prepare to fight Planned Parenthood, you read the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 10. In this chapter, Christ gives you the basic instructions on how to spread His word. These instructions fit well into the fight against Planned Parenthood. Those who rely on God and follow Matthew 10 will see positive results-if they will persevere (<http://trainingandactivism.com/plan/>).

¹⁸ Similarly, Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, argues "the Prevention First Act would direct hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to the abortion industry, a business that already receives over \$286 million each year from federal taxpayers" (Ertelt 1/22/09b: 1).

Because PWPL advocates are attempting to alter the abortion debate field frame and appeal to a broader group of people that may not be familiar with pro-life arguments, they spend more time explaining exactly how abortionists harm and manipulate vulnerable women. Ultimately, although both factions of the pro-life movement have similar goals, traditional pro-lifers argue Planned Parenthood is bad because it violates religious scripture and fetal rights; in contrast PWPL advocates argue women are harmed at Planned Parenthood and other abortion clinic facilities.

In response to claims about funding of abortion clinics, pro-choice actors assert that this money is necessary to provide sexual and reproductive services to Americans. They emphasize that Planned Parenthood is the largest source of reproductive health care in America and that funding is used to provide patients with many reproductive health care needs beyond birth control and abortion. Planned Parenthood also provides many screening and health services, including treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, breast exams and cancer screenings.¹⁹ Other pro-choicers emphasize how they, or someone they know, have been helped by the staff at a Planned Parenthood, and not just in the case of unwanted pregnancy. For example Devon (31) recalled how Planned Parenthood treated a friend for syphilis. She said that her friend was not wealthy and was lucky enough to visit a local Planned Parenthood. She also emphasizes that her friend might not have received treatment if there wasn't a nearby Planned Parenthood:

I am so thankful she was able to get, uh, to get treated so quickly. She couldn't afford driving hundreds of miles to Planned Parenthood, like if she lived in South Dakota or something. People think of abortion when they think Planned Parenthood, but it isn't all that they do. They saved her life, you know, they probably save lives about every day.

¹⁹ For example, in *The Colorado Independent*, journalist John Tomasic (2009) reported that Planned Parenthood provides over one million cervical cancer screenings each year.

Therefore, pro-choicers emphasize this funding is necessary to provide a myriad of health and reproductive services to women in a safe and efficient manner.

Institutional Legislation

As this section documents, both traditionally pro-life and PWPL actors support legislation to defund Planned Parenthood. Another recent strategy embraced by both PWPL and traditionally pro-life actors is the push to sue abortionists for adverse physical or mental outcomes women suffer as a result of abortion. Essentially these actors argue that if abortions are unsafe, abortionists should have to pay for damages. As David Reardon, of the Elliot Institute, writes:

By focusing on expanding women's rights to redress, we are in essence saying 'Let the market decide.' If abortion is already safe, then nothing will change. But if it is dangerous, women have a right to recover damages and by making it easier for them to receive compensation for their injuries, the abortion industry will be forced to improve their screening, counseling, and abortion practices (Reardon 1996: 22).

Reardon and others argue that abortionists cannot provide "cheap assembly line abortions without violating every standard of good medical practice and abusing the rights of women" (Reardon 1996: 23). Law professor Theresa Stanton Collette argues that abortion malpractice suits may help to demonstrate the financial motivations of abortionists, as well as "the duplicity of those who seek to characterize all abortion providers as defenders of women's rights" (Collett 1995: 249).

Pro-life lawyers and activists argue that the abortion industry is only able to maintain these negligent, unsafe standards because it is very difficult for women to sue their abortionists. Currently, women can seek compensation for abortion related injuries through malpractice suits. The specific claims that can be made in these cases include

“negligence, failure to obtain informed consent to the abortion, battery, infliction of emotional distress, fraud or negligent misrepresentation, breach of contract, deceptive trade practices, and any statutory claims that may be created by state statutes” (Collett 1995: 250). In any of these claims, the defendant must establish that the abortion provider engaged misconduct and that this misconduct was the proximate cause of the injury the defendant seeks compensation for. Legal scholars argue it is often difficult for women to establish all of the requirements for a successful malpractice suit. In the case of negligence, for example, a woman must establish four things:

1) the abortion provider owed her a duty to conform to a certain standard of conduct; 2) the provider failed to conform to the standard of conduct; 3) the failure was both the factual and legal cause of the woman's injuries; and 4) the injuries were of the type and extent that the law requires compensation for. Failure to establish any one of these elements is fatal to the woman's claim (Collett 1995: 249-250).

In order to establish that the provider failed to conform to the standard of conduct, expert testimony is usually required. Many courts require this expert to either have performed abortions or to have conducted extensive scholarly studies on abortion. Since many pro-life doctors have never performed abortion, they are unable to testify.

Similarly, in informed consent or battery malpractice cases, the defendant must establish that the abortionist did not disclose relevant information on the material risks involved in the abortion procedure. Pro-life lawyers and activists familiar with this requirement and court cases involving it often cite the case of *Reynier v. Delta Women's Health Clinic*. In this case, the court ruled that a “perforated uterus was a normal risk of an abortion that need not be discussed with the patient prior to performing the abortion” (Collett 1995: 252).

Mark Crutcher, president of Life Dynamics, Incorporated has spearheaded the effort to make it easier for a woman to win abortion malpractice cases. His organization provides litigation support and connects women to malpractice attorneys who sue on behalf of women that have been injured or killed during abortion.²⁰ Crutcher argues the legal system needs to make it easier for abortion injured women to recover damages. He claims that there should be a uniform standard of care abortionists must comply with that can be used in all malpractice proceedings as the guideline for determining when malpractice has occurred. Crutcher also advocates for legislation to lower the burden of proof needed to recover damages from an abortionist. Currently, a woman must prove she is injured because the abortionist violated the standard of medical care typical of elective abortions. Crutcher believes this is problematic because:

the abortion industry has been so successful at fighting abortion regulations that violating the minimum standard of care is almost impossible. For example, a Colorado Board of Medical Examiners determined that knowingly sending a woman home with a fetal skull remaining inside her did not violate the reasonable standard of care. This board also said performing abortions on non-pregnant women did not violate the standard of care (Crutcher 1996).

Crutcher also argues that “legislation should make it easier for women to bring civil action for psychological injury. Currently, it is virtually impossible for this to happen unless there is accompanying physical injury” (Crutcher 1996). For example, in *Humes v. Clinton*, the court ruled that abortionists are not liable for failing to warn women about

²⁰ Life Dynamics Abortion Malpractice (ABMAL) program provides lawyers with the support services they need to bring malpractice cases against abortionists. Currently, Life Dynamics has a network of over 700 lawyers representing women injured by abortion throughout the US. These services are free for attorneys. Life Dynamics is working to create a “super-fund” that women can use to finance abortion malpractice cases. Most women cannot fund a malpractice lawsuit, so these types of cases are typically taken on a contingency basis or not taken at all (Crutcher 2000).

the psychological risks abortion may pose (Collett 1995: 252). As the following chapter will show, however, this is beginning to change.

The 1998 “Women at Risk” conference promoted the use of civil liability laws to hold abortion providers liable for payment of damages where it is shown that abortion has harmed women’s health. After the conference, a public advocacy organization, also called Women at Risk, was launched as an offshoot of the Elliot Institute. Reardon has argued that civil liability laws could revolutionize the abortion debate. Specifically, he has written that “it won’t be moral arguments that topple the abortion industry. It will be women’s rights . . . and the right to sue abortionists and hurt the only thing they care about – their bank accounts (Reardon 1996: 7).

One example of this type of civil liability law was introduced in Louisiana when the state passed Act 825 in August 1997. The law made abortion providers civilly liable under tort law for any mental health damage occasioned or precipitated by abortion. The law was challenged the day before it was supposed to go into effect. The District Court of East Louisiana issued a temporary restraining order. They argued that concerns about psychological complications should be put in women’s right to know laws and that Act 825 “has the purpose and effect of infringing and chilling the exercise of constitutionally protected rights of abortion providers and women seeking abortion. Such backhanded and subtle attempts that chip away at a vital component of a person’s liberty will not be tolerated” (quoted in Lee 2003: 130). Yet this act has been debated every year since 1998 and the ruling has been challenged.

Reardon and other PWPL activists argue that women’s rights legislation to make it easier to prosecute negligent abortionists will be particularly crucial in getting middle

majority politicians to take a stand on abortion. They argue that this form of legislation forces politicians to take a stand. Do politicians “stand on the side of women injured by abortionists? Or are they defending abortion industry profits at the expense of women?” (Reardon 1996: 64). Other argue that only people who are truly pro-abortion, as opposed to pro-choice, could oppose these laws because they are designed to “shield women from abortion doctors who flout existing medical, ethical, or legal standards” (Burke 2002: 19).

Pro-choice actors argue that pro-life activists and politicians are simply promoting these laws as a platform to tell stories about women hurt by abortion and exaggerate the risks of abortion. As the Guttmacher Institute states: “The risk of abortion complications is minimal: Fewer than .3% of abortion patients experience a complication that requires hospitalization” (Guttmacher 2008). They argue that these forms of legislation are not really about improving women’s health. Instead, they are part of an attempt to impose unnecessary and burdensome regulations on abortionists “in an obvious attempt to drive doctors out of practice and make abortion care more expensive and difficult to obtain” (“Targeted Regulation” 2011). Thus, they argue pro-lifers use the guise of regulation simply to chip away at abortion access. Furthermore, they argue these bills imply abortion clinics are “uniquely dangerous and in need of special regulation,” promoting “an unfounded fear of abortion” (“Threats to Abortion” 2010).

Chapter 6: Health Frames

“Once a young woman is pregnant . . . it is a choice between having a baby and having a traumatic experience” – Elliot Institute Founder David Reardon (2007: 3).

“Women’s responses after abortion do not only reflect the meaning of abortion to her; they also reflect the meaning of pregnancy and motherhood, which varies among women. Furthermore, women obtain abortions within widely different personal, social, economic, religious, and cultural contexts that shape the cultural meanings and associated stigma of abortion . . . for these reasons, global statements about the impact of abortion can be misleading” – Report of the APA Task Force on *Mental Health and Abortion* (American Psychological Association 2008: 9).

Gender and institutional frames serve as precursors to the most prominent claim made by PWPL advocates: that abortion should be illegal because it is harmful to women’s health. PWPL actors claim that abortion causes women to experience post-abortion syndrome (PAS) and elevates the risk of breast cancer. Ideologically, they argue it is unsurprising that women have negative reactions to abortion because most women did not freely choose abortion in the first place. Therefore, they assert that the state should protect women from the psychological and physical harm of abortion by making it illegal. PWPL actors believe emphasizing the negative health risks associated with abortion will especially resonate with people who are personally opposed to abortion but are uncomfortable with making it illegal based on moral or religious concerns for the fetus.

This chapter will depict how a large variety of field actors influence the debate. While the role of activists is still critical, psychologists, psychiatrists, surgeons, biologists, lawyers, judges, the media, and religious organizations play an increasingly

important role. Additionally, this chapter will demonstrate how many field actors begin to take on a dual role: activist and researcher. David Reardon is a prime example. Founder and head of the PWPL organization the Elliot Institute, Reardon also conducts his own research on post-abortion syndrome and publishes in peer reviewed journals. The basic findings of his research are then condensed and presented to his supporters on The Elliot Institute's many affiliated websites and publications. In this way, Reardon's research is the basis for much of the framing he uses as an activist. Biologist and endocrinologist Joel Brind takes a similar path. Brind researches the link between abortion and breast cancer. Yet he also created the pro-life organization called the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute. This Institute provides summaries of Brind and colleague's research to pro-life activists. Activists then use this research to argue there is scientific proof that there is a link between abortion and breast cancer.

The Rise of Post Abortion Syndrome

Differing opinions regarding how abortion affects mental health were consistently debated in the American medical literature between the 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1960s and 1970s, critics began questioning earlier reports that concluded abortion leads to mental illness, typically because studies were based on small, anecdotal samples and largely relied on researchers' personal impressions instead of to empirical studies.²¹ As a result, members of the American Psychological Association (APA) conducted more

²¹ There was little published on the psychological effects of abortion in the first half of the twentieth century because abortion was not considered a legitimate or respectful issue for those associated with medicine to discuss publicly. Yet, the few times it was written about in the medical literature, abortion was often framed "as a pathogen, likely to cause mental illness" (Lee 2003: 152). This conceptualization of abortion began to change in the 1950s as the emotional and psychological effects of abortion became a more acceptable topic for research. Published investigations during this time were usually made up of doctors' clinic reports, and conclusions were typically that abortion caused trauma and posed a threat to women's psychological health. The popular sense at the time was that women would feel and unconscious sense of guilt following abortion, often called "post abortion hangover" (Lee 2003).

rigorously scientific studies on the psychological effects of abortion and published peer reviewed papers beginning in 1971, which concluded that abortion does not lead to mental illness. The APA continues to regularly reconfirm this opinion. By the 1980s, the leading American psychiatric and medical organizations conceded that abortion did not lead to mental illness.²²

Yet in 1981, Vincent Rue, a psychotherapist and professor at California State University, first used the term post-abortion syndrome (PAS) when testifying about the negative mental health effects related to abortion before the US Senate (Lee 2003). He was the first to develop diagnostic criteria for PAS, which he modeled on the diagnostic criteria of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) found in the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Rue argued that symptoms of PAS, including flashbacks, denial, and lost memory of the abortion were similar to those for PTSD.²³ He claimed that PAS was associated with increased levels of depression, anxiety, suicide, alcoholism, and drug addiction. Rue also maintained that following abortion, women numb themselves, deny the trauma of the event, and repress negative memories. As a result of these reactions, it may not be obvious that women are suffering from PAS, which explains why women are not immediately or visibly traumatized after abortion.

²² However, studies have conceded that certain groups of women may be at risk for emotional problems following abortion. For example, studies have found that women with ambivalent feelings about abortion, women with negative cultural or religious feelings about abortion, women with previous psychiatric problems, and younger women were more likely to be at risk for having negative reactions to abortion (Cohen 2006).

²³ Critics have argued that to be diagnosed with PTSD, a stressor outside the realm of normal experience must precipitate this disorder, and given the number of women who have abortions, it is not event outside the realm of normal experiences. Rue argues that abortion can be a trauma because many women have experienced it that way. Only where abortion is experienced as a death is PAS likely to develop (Lee 2003).

Still, Rue maintained any future depression or negative feelings can be attributed to the abortion.

After Rue's testimony and subsequent articles published on the topic throughout the 1980s, many pro-lifers compared post-abortive women to those with PTSD, particularly Vietnam veterans, the first group widely recognized as vulnerable to PTSD. In 1986, Dr. John Wilke, then president of the National Right to Life Committee, publicly pointed out similarities between veterans and women who had abortion, further increasing the visibility of PAS claims. Wilke explained that the pro-life movements "'next big move' would be to increase their political power by recruiting women who feel guilty about having abortions" (Lee 2003: 25).²⁴

The argument that abortion harmed women psychologically became even more visible to the general public in 1987, when President Reagan asked Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to undertake an inquiry on the health effects of abortion. Prior to the Koop inquiry, many pro-lifers felt there was a stalemate in the abortion debate because restrictive legal measures were not being passed in Congress. Perhaps as a result of this stalemate, a new strategy began to develop, in which a medicalized argument against abortion, focusing on women's mental health following the procedure, was intended to play a greater role. Lee (2003) speculated that Reagan and his advisors believed more people would become pro-life if pro-lifers focused less on the legality of abortion and more on new ways to persuade the public that abortion is wrong. While people may

²⁴ After leaving NRLC, Wilke became the president of Life Issues Institute. Like many PWPL organizations, Life Issues Institute's mission statement emphasizes that pro-lifers "must emphasize our compassion to women much more than in the past." Yet unlike PWPL organizations, Life Issues Institute also emphasizes traditional pro-life "back to basics" teaching. The mission statement states "Until people are also convinced that this is truly a baby in the womb, no other arguments will be successful" (<http://www.lifeissues.org/whoweare.html>).

support abortion but dislike it, Lee (2003) suggests abortion opponents felt many people's views could be tipped toward the pro-life position if abortion, like smoking, became associated with significant health risks.²⁵

As a result, Reagan directed the Surgeon General to identify the health risks associated with abortion. After 15 months of reviewing the scientific and medical literature, Koop told the president he would not issue a report because "the scientific studies do not provide conclusive data about the [mental] health effects of abortion on women" (quoted in Cohen 2006: 8). In a March of 1989 hearing of the House Government Operations Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations, Koop explained that he would not pursue any further inquiry into the safety of abortion because obstetricians and gynecologists had concluded that the physical risks of abortion were no different than giving birth. Koop also stated that the psychological effects of abortion were miniscule from a public health standpoint (Cohen 2006).

Representing the APA in this hearing, Nancy Adler, professor of psychology, testified that severe psychological reactions to abortion are rare and similar in occurrence to reactions following other life stresses. Given that millions of women have had abortions, Adler testified that "if severe reaction were common, there would be an epidemic of women seeking treatment. There is no evidence of such an epidemic" (quoted in Cohen 2006: 9). The 1989 APA review determined that the legal abortion of an unwanted pregnancy is not psychologically harmful for most women; however, women who abort a wanted pregnancy or lack support for the abortion may feel a

²⁵ For example, Allan Parker, president of The Justice Foundation, argues educating the public about post abortion syndrome is similar to "the long struggle to inform Americans about the risks of smoking. 'We're kind of in the early stages of tobacco litigation'" Parker told a *New York Times* journalist (Toner 2007).

heightened sense of loss, anxiety, or distress. Overall though, the APA report stated most women experience the most distress *before* an abortion. After the abortion, women often report feeling relief or happiness. To date, claims about negative health risks associated with abortion have failed to gain traction with the APA, AMA, or any of the nations' other leading medical associations (Cohen 2006).²⁶

The most recent Report of the APA Task Force on Mental Health and Abortion (2008) evaluated 50 papers published in peer reviewed journals that address the psychological experiences related to abortion. The Task Force concludes that “the most methodologically sound research indicates that among women who have a single, legal, first-trimester abortion of an unplanned pregnancy for nontherapeutic reasons, the relative risks of mental health problems are no greater than the risks among women who deliver an unplanned pregnancy” (American Psychological Association 2008: 92). The task force qualifies this finding, however, by stating that given the diversity and complexity of women and the circumstances under which they undergo abortion, it is unlikely that there will ever be a single definitive study “that will determine the mental health implications of abortion ‘once and for all’” (American Psychological Association 2008: 93).

Post Abortion Syndrome Frames

Yet neither the APA report nor Koop's statement ended pro-lifers' conviction regarding the reality of PAS. Pro-lifers have continued to argue women are hurt by abortion. PWPL advocates conduct and frequently cite PAS studies that demonstrate a link between abortion and increased rates of depression, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and anxiety.

For example, members of the PWPL organization the Elliot Institutes have authored or

²⁶ For example, the American Medical Association published an article on PAS in 1992, titled “The Myth of Abortion Trauma Syndrome.” It began with the line “this is an article about a medical syndrome that does not exist” (quoted in Lee 2003).

co-authored over 20 peer-reviewed papers claiming abortion is associated with higher rates of suicide, substance abuse, psychiatric hospitalization, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, and parenting or relationship difficulties. Lifenews and the Elliot Institute have both reported on a study published in the *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, lead by Dr. Patricia Coleman, a professor of Human Development and Family Studies. Coleman *et al* (2005) found women who abort had a 120 percent increase in risk for alcohol abuse, 79 percent increased risk of drug abuse, a 167% increase in risk of developing bipolar disorder, and a 45 percent increase in depression, 111 percent increased risk for panic attacks, and a 59 percent increased risk for PTSD, compared to women who have not had abortions. The authors also claim abortion is “directly responsible for 10% of the population incidence of alcohol dependence, alcohol abuse, drug dependence, panic disorder, agoraphobia, and bipolar disorder” (quoted in Ertelt 11/28/08a: 2). PWPL advocates also frequently cite a New Zealand study that demonstrates that having an abortion raises the risks of depression and anxiety. This study finds that that 42 percent of women who abort experienced depression or anxiety, which is almost double the rate of women who have never been pregnant. This study also finds that women who abort are almost twice as likely to drink high quantities of alcohol and three times as likely to be addicted to illegal drugs compared to women who have never been pregnant (Ertelt 8/7/08a: 1). Studies of this sort may multiply if the Post-Abortion Depression Research and Care Act passes. Introduced by Representative Joe Pitts (R-PA), this act would require the National Institute of Mental Health to conduct further research on the incidence and prevalence of post-abortion complications (H.R. 1350 2009).

PWPL organizations use these statistics and studies to convince field actors, including journalists, politicians, academics, doctors, lawyers, doctors, and medical organizations, that scientific evidence demonstrates PAS is real and that abortion is not a healthy choice for women. For an example, in an article published on the Elliot Institute website “The Unchoice,” Coleman explains that she and six other colleagues used these studies in a petition letter sent to the APA, which urged the organization to recognize PAS. Furthermore, Coleman uses these studies to argue that “any interpretation of the available research that does not acknowledge the strong evidence now available in the professional literature represents a conscious choice to ignore the basic principles of scientific inquiry” (Coleman 2010). Thus, these studies are used to frame relevant academics and medical professionals who ignore PAS or claim it does not exist as incompetent, biased, or deceitful.

Although the APA recognizes that certain subgroups of women may be more likely to experience negative reactions to abortion, the APA and AMA deny that post-abortion syndrome exists and are critical of studies indicating it does. In fact, an APA panel argued that *restricting* abortion is more likely to cause women harm than the procedure itself. The panel argues that a woman’s right to choose abortion is a “mental health imperative” (quoted in Specter 1990). According to Nadia Stotland, head of the APA Committee on Women and professor of psychiatry at the University of Chicago, the APA is “in favor of choice and of the government staying out of doctors’ offices” (quoted in Specter 1990). Stotland cites a Swedish study that followed 120 children of women who were denied abortions. Both the mothers and children were more likely to suffer from depression and alcoholism compared to women who were not denied abortion and

their children. Other academics have published studies showing that unwanted birth is more likely to affect mental health than abortion. For example, psychologist Nancy Felipe Russo of Arizona State University told *USA Today* that “women with the poorest self esteem are those who have unwanted births, not the ones who choose to have kids or seek abortions” (quoted in Elias 1992). Russo bases this conclusion on a study in which she tracked the “emotional health and reproductive lives of 5,295 women of childbearing age over an eight-year span” (Elias 1992).

Furthermore, APA representatives argue that negative psychological experiences post abortion may be due to the current sociopolitical climate that often stigmatizes women who have abortions. They argue that when women are told they are likely to have a negative reaction to abortion, their feelings of guilt, emotional distress and internalized stigma may increase. APA representatives also highlight the role of co-occurring factors. They argue there are often “systematic, social, and personal factors that are precursors to unintended pregnancy, and hence, place women at risk for having abortions and or/predispose them to experience mental health problems” (American Psychological Association 2008: 13). These co-occurring factors may include poverty, exposure to physical or sexual abuse, and drug or alcohol abuse. These factors are correlated with both abortion and negative mental health. Therefore, these co-occurring factors may lead to negative mental health outcomes that are mistakenly attributed to abortion.

Pro-choice activists often first respond to PAS claims by stating that post abortion syndrome does not exist (Cooper 2001) They also question the methodology of studies positing a link between abortion and negative mental health outcomes, as well as the motivations of the researchers and the organizations they represent (Boonstra et al. 2006;

Cohen 2006; Nash and Gold 2007). For example, visitors to NARAL Pro-Choice America's website are advised that pro-lifers "might say that women who choose abortion develop a mental illness." Viewers are advised to learn the fact about this "distortion of science" and share them ("Distorting Science" N.D.) In a more in depth example, writers for the *Guttmacher Policy Review* criticize David Reardon, director of the Elliot Institute, and Priscilla Coleman, family studies professor, who conducted many of the PAS studies. They claim Reardon and Coleman's studies and those they cite are so methodologically flawed that they cannot establish a causal relationship (Dreweke 2010; Serena 2009; Robinson *et al.* 2009). Pro-choice advocates argue these studies do not address the fundamental question of whether women who have abortions experience more harmful reactions than similar women who have carried unwanted pregnancies to term (Cohen 2006). They maintain that the most methodologically sound research conducted over the past 30 years does not find a causal relationship between abortion and negative mental health outcomes. Instead they point to studies, such as one published in *Archives for General Psychiatry* in 2000, that asserts the best indicator for a woman's mental health after abortion is her mental health before abortion (Serena 2009).²⁷

Furthermore, they argue that women typically feel the most distress before an abortion; after an abortion, women often report feeling relief or happiness (Nash and Gold 2007; Cooper 2001). Pro-choice actors use this common feeling of relief as evidence women freely choose abortion and are at peace with this choice. Finally, pro-

²⁷ Similarly, pro-choice advocates also often point to another study conducted by the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists and of General Practitioners in the United Kingdom. This study followed over 13,000 women over an 11 year period. The study compared two groups. Both groups of women had an unintended pregnancy, but one group was made up of women who had an abortion, the other of women who gave birth. The study concluded that women who had an abortion were not at higher risk of mental health problems than women who gave birth (Boonstra *et al.* 2006; Serena 2009; Robinson *et al.* 2009).

choice actors question PAS claims by arguing that this syndrome is not recognized by any of the nation's leading medical organizations, including the American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, or American Medical Association (Cohen 2006).

Therefore, pro-choice actors view PAS arguments as strategic, but unfounded. They argue PWPL advocates and other pro-lifers are taking advantage of the fact that the general public and most policymakers do not know what constitutes rigorous science or sound methodology. They claim that because PWPL actors could not convince major medical groups that abortion threatens women's mental health, they turned to the political process and use women's personal stories of PAS to convince politicians to pass pro-life legislation (Cohen 2006). Therefore, as subsequent sections will show, pro-choice actors frame state laws requiring abortionists to inform women of the possibility of PAS as manipulative and misguided.

If PWPL advocates relied on statistics and psychological studies alone, their claims might easily be dismissed given the opposition of leading medical organizations. Yet this is not the case. Instead, PWPL advocates strategically combined these statistics with personal stories of women who believe they suffer from PAS. For example, Dr. Janet Orient, physician and executive director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, cited the personal stories of post-abortive women when she testified in favor of Nebraska's Prevention of Coerced and Unsafe Abortions Act. Oreint testifies that although the APA does not recognize post abortion syndrome "there are support groups for women who report postabortion emotional symptoms comparable with PTSD, some long delayed. While some say postabortion stress syndrome does not exist, there

are nearly 2 million postings to message boards on the website www.afterabortion.com, which take no political or religious stand.” (Orient 2010: 5). These personal stories have been effective in creating pro-life legislation, even without conclusive science to back them up. This is also seen in Justice Kennedy’s Ruling in the Supreme Court decision *Gonzales v. Carhart*. This decision upheld the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. In the majority decision, Justice Kennedy wrote:

while we find no reliable data to measure the phenomenon, it seems unexceptional to conclude some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained . . . It is self-evident that a mother who comes to regret her choice must struggle with grief more anguished and sorrow more profound when she learns, only after the event, what she did not know: that she allowed a doctor to pierce the skull and vacuum the fast developing brain of her unborn child (*Gonzles v. Carhart* 2007: 28-29).

Even lacking rigorous scientific evidence, Kennedy used the belief that women may be psychologically harmed by abortion to allow a ban on the abortion method of intact dilation and extraction outright.

Furthermore, in her article describing the scientific PAS studies, Coleman refers to “millions of women struggling in isolation to make sense of post-abortion” (2010: 1). Similarly, Feminists for Life has a regular column in their *American Feminist* newsletter entitled “Voices of Women Who Mourn.” Women anonymously recount their negative experiences with abortion in this column and often emphasize how pro-choice advocates and abortion clinic employees never warned them about the negative effects of abortion. For example, one woman wrote:

No one told me that after you have an abortion you hear babies screaming in your sleep, or that the counseling services they offer you after abortion are not really there for you even though they say they are. You can’t get close to anyone, including your living child . . . no one told me that I would suffer panic attacks and fear my own death or the death of my

living children. No one told me that a quick fix would cause a host of other emotional problems that I would be dealing with my whole life (“Voices” 2001: 22).

Similarly, in her book *Blood Money*, former abortion clinic employee turned pro-life activist Carol Everett wrote:

My abortion served to further destroy my self worth and compound my destructive habits toward my family, my co-workers, and ultimately toward all of society. I take full responsibility for aborting my child, yet I also consider myself the victim of abortion. I was the victim of an abortionist too – an entrepreneur in a budding industry that has experienced phenomenal growth since 1973 (1997: 69).

PWPL advocates use these personal stories to appeal to the public, and to demonstrate the negative effects of abortion in vivid and emotional language. Women’s personal stories are often condensed and turned into posters, flyers, and commercials to appeal to the public. For example, the religious organizations Priests for Life and Anglicans for Life have launched the Silent No More Awareness Campaign. Campaign members create signs that are extremely visible at pro-life marches, with phrases like “Women Regret Abortion,” “I Regret My Abortion,” and “Men Regret Lost Fatherhood.” They also use these phrases on billboards, radio and television commercials, and retail products.

The Justice Foundation and its sister organization Operation Outcry also seek to raise awareness of how women are damaged by abortion. These organizations have created the Million Voices Campaign, which seeks to collect one million legally admissible testimonies on how abortion hurts men and women. Operation Outcry also works with churches and religious officials, encouraging churches to hold “Repentance Sunday” services that address the problems of post-abortive women and those hurt by abortion. Representative of Operation Outcry argue it is important to increase religious awareness of post abortion syndrome because “abortion strikes at the very heart and soul

of America: the family. It destroys relationships and marriages. America needs to see the many faces and hear the heartrending stories of abortion grief” (“Outreach” 2005: 1). Operation Outcry representatives claim Repentance Sundays will educate church members about post abortion issues and equip the church to embrace all people harmed by abortion. Other PWPL organizations, including the Elliot Institute, provide materials for churches that are specifically designed to increase religious congregations’ knowledge of PAS.

The general public is also often exposed to these personal stories in an unlikely place: the subway. In 2009, Michaelene Fredenburg, created “Abortion Changes You, a web site intended to serve as a “safe place” for people dealing with the aftermath of abortion to share their stories and emotions and read those of others. Yet according to journalist Susan Dominus (2010), the emotions presented on the site range from depressed to racked by guilt. In 2010, ads for the Abortion Changes You site began appearing in New York City Subways. Dominus describes them in the *New York Times*:

The woman in the ad is young and has a short, hip haircut, the kind you see all over the East Village. Her solemn face is half in shadow. ‘I thought life would be the way it was before,’ the copy reads. And then: ‘Abortion changes you.’ (2010: 1).

Website visitors can read that abortion can lead to many unhealthy behaviors, such as cutting/self abuse, gambling, fear of children, and self medicating. Visitors are given information on organizations they can contact for help with specific unhealthy behaviors as well as information on post abortion ministries and counseling services in their area.

Although many activists and organizations are religious, the role organized religion has played in the abortion debate has waxed and waned.

Through PWPL efforts, however, many churches and other religious organizations are active in post abortion counseling. The majority of the abortion recovery counseling services women are referred to by sources such as “Abortion Changes You” are religious in nature. The Catholic Church began financing abortion recovery counseling in the 1980s. As of 2007, the Catholic Church ran abortion recovery ministries in at least 165 dioceses (Bazelon 2007). Many other evangelical and protestant denominations run similar recovery ministries. In 1986, psychologist Theresa Burke began to run weekly support groups and weekend retreats for women suffering from post abortion syndrome. In 1993, Dr. Burke founded Rachel’s Vineyard. This organization offers hundreds of Catholic and interdenominational weekend retreats for people suffering from post abortion syndrome (“Rachel’s Vineyard” N.D.). Ramah International is a similar organization that offers post abortive women “christian principles that lead to God’s healing touch” (Massi, N.D.). Ramah also provides training for others to learn how to conduct post abortion seminars and ministries in their area. Founded by Sydna Masse, a self identified post abortive woman and former manager of Focus on the Family’s Crisis Pregnancy Ministry, Ramah International provides books on post abortive recovery as well as referrals to local post abortion ministries and pregnancy resource centers. Many women considering abortion are also exposed to post abortion claims through pro-life pregnancy resource centers.²⁸ Center employees give visitors information about the dangers of

²⁸ “ In addition to the diocese-based services paid for by the Catholic Church, the Bush administration, in its first four years, spent more than \$30 million on the 50-some crisis pregnancy centers, according to a report by Representative Henry A. Waxman, a Democrat from California” (Bazelon 01/21/2007).

abortion, such as the link to breast cancer and post abortion syndrome (Kaminer 2010).

PWPL advocates believe their efforts are paying off. For example, Lifenews.com reported a poll sponsored by the PWPL organization the Elliot Institute and conducted by DialingServices.com finds 85 percent of Americans believe negative emotional problems after an abortion are common or very common. Even 60 percent of those who say they are pro-choice believe emotional problems are common or very common after abortion (Ertelt 10/01/08b: 1). The Elliot Institute attributes these results to “the success of our twenty years of research and education efforts” on PAS (Elliot Institute’s 20th Anniversary Report 2008).

These post abortion syndrome stories are also used to frame women who have had abortions as the victims of pro-choice advocates and abortion industry officials, who cover up information about the negative consequences of abortion. They argue that mental health of women is considered expendable by the pro-choice movement because pro-choicers oppose laws requiring abortionist to give information on the risks of abortion to women considering the procedure.

To further demonize pro-choice activists and increase public sympathy for those suffering from PAS, PWPL advocates claim the women who are most likely to suffer from PAS and who experience the most severe symptoms are also the women who were coerced or pressured into having an unwanted abortion. For example, David Reardon, director of the Elliot Institute, writes:

The more a woman agonizes over making an abortion decision, the more she is likely to agonize over the abortion afterwards. Maternal desires, moral doubts, and feelings of being exploited do not disappear after abortion. They continue. They grow. They become sources of constant

reflection, of stifling avoidance. They can even become the source of crippling self-condemnation (Reardon 1996: 48).

This framing is also useful in appealing to traditional pro-life activists, as it presents women who have had abortions as misguided, but regretful victims, not women who have independently chose abortion with full knowledge and consent. Furthermore, this framing presents PWPL activists as more sensitive to the plight of women than traditional pro-life, or pro-choice, adherents.

While traditional pro-life activists do not believe psychological complications should be a primary reason for making abortion illegal, they do often recognize PAS as a complication of abortion. As previously stated, John Wilke, former president of the traditional pro-life organization National Right to Life Committee, was one of the first pro-life activists to acknowledge the similarities between veterans and post-abortive women. According to Dr. Wilke “there are profound, serious, and long-lasting physical effects of abortion. . . . There are even more psychological complications” (quoted in Painter 1989). The NRLC has maintained this position for over 20 years. In 2007, Wanda Franz, current NRLC president, told the *New York Times* “we (NRLC) think of ourselves as very pro-woman. We believe that when you help the woman, you help the baby” (quoted in Toner 2007) Leading traditional pro-life organizations, including the National Right to Life Committee, the American Life League, Life Dynamics, and Human Life International, address the issue of PAS. Many traditional pro-life organizations train activists to inform pregnant women about PAS when they are sidewalk counseling outside abortion centers.

Yet few traditional pro-life organizations finance post abortion counseling. This may partially be because this form of counseling is already financed by churches and the government, but it also demonstrates traditional pro-life groups' position on PWPL arguments. Again, traditional pro-life groups maintain that the primary opposition to abortion should be based on the fact that abortion kills a living human being, not on the belief that it causes psychological harm to women. Therefore, traditional pro-life activists view PAS as a convenient secondary argument at best. For example, an article on the website of traditional pro-life organization Abort73 informs its readers:

there are two reasons why it is still important to lay out the medical risks of abortion. There may be many women (and men) who don't care about the violence that abortion does to a baby, but there will be far fewer who don't care about the violence abortion does to their body. A greater understanding of the medical risks will dissuade them. Secondly, the abortion industry's refusal to adequately inform women of the potential risks of abortion is further proof they care more about money and politics than they do about a woman's health. If they didn't have a vested interest in her 'choice,' why would they lobby so hard against disclosing all of the potential risk ("Abortion Risks" N.D.: 1).

Traditional pro-life organizations like Abort73 maintain that while PAS does not make abortion unjust or immoral, when added to all the other evidence, PAS makes the case against abortion stronger.

Yet a few traditionally pro-life actors are vocally skeptical of the utility of PAS claims. For example, Dr. Francis Beckwith, pro-life philosopher and professor at Baylor University, has criticized PWPL activists for their questionable, if not altogether inaccurate, interpretation of scientific data and for undermining the ideological purity of the fetal right to life argument. According to Beckwith, "for every woman who has suffered trauma as a result of an abortion, I bet you could find half a dozen who would

say it was the best decision they ever made . . . And in any case, suffering isn't the same as immorality" (quoted in Bazelon 2007a). Another traditional pro-life leader made a similar statement in an interview. When I asked Russel if he thought arguments about post-abortion syndrome could help convince people to become pro-life, he said:

Can the argument that abortion hurts women help the pro-life movement?
Well personally, I feel I'm skeptical. You can say to me you know,
abortion hurts me but I can just come right back and say abortion is the
best idea I ever had. So then, where does that leave us?

While many other pro-lifers may also feel this way, they are not vocal in their criticism. As a result, it appears the majority of pro-lifers consider PAS to be a strategic side issue supplementing the primary right to life master frame.

Yet many pro-choicers have been caught off guard by the ideological power of PAS claims. For example, Sarah Stoesz, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota said "the abortion hurts women movement is the most serious issue we are dealing with in the election in South Dakota" (quoted in Siegel and Blustein 2006: 23). Similarly, in response to The Justice Foundation's friend-of-the-court brief filed with the Supreme court in *Gonzales v. Carhart*, one Planned Parenthood representative said "We thought that brief was so extraneous that we didn't even bother coming up with a response to it" (quoted in Toner 2007). Since then, pro-choicers have become very aware that PAS rhetoric resonates with many field actors from Supreme Court Justices to average women.

Although pro-choice advocates may not deny having an abortion is difficult for women, they often fail to directly address the challenges women face after having the procedure for fear of drawing attention to the downside of the process (Schreiber 2008). In a 2002 article published in *Reproductive Health Matters*, author and ethicist Leslie

Cannold compares the pro-choice response to PAS claims to the movement's response to the 1980 pro-life film *The Silent Scream*. This film claimed to depict the abortion of a 12-week fetus. The pro-choice response focused largely on rebutting the film's authenticity (e.g., arguing that at 12 weeks a fetus has no cerebral cortex to feel pain, a scream is not possible without air, and the movements of the fetus did not represent attempts to escape the suction, but were camera trick). Cannold (2002) and other pro-choice advocates like Rosalind Petchesky have argued that the literal rebuttal of the film could not combat its ideological power. Cannold also argues literal rebuttals attacking the flawed methodology of PAS studies cannot squelch the ideological power of PAS claims. When PWPL activists talk about PAS, they also assert the pro-choice movement cannot be trusted to disclose all the facts about abortion. Therefore, Cannold maintains:

Duels between experts about the validity and weight of evidence for or against a particular risk, while necessary, do not address or undermine the power of this assertion. Alongside a literal rebuttal, pro-choice activists may find it useful to assure women that abortionists are committed to disclosing all valid information about risks associated with induced abortion (2002: 176).

Overall, pro-choicers seem to have difficulty coming up with equally powerful arguments to rebut PAS claims. They believe that until they are able to refute these claims in an ardent and compelling manner, many field actors, especially politicians and members of the general public, will be receptive to PAS claims.

One recent response to PAS claims by pro-choicers is to acknowledge that PAS is “a crack in the armor of abortion rights activists” (Dominus 2010: 1). This means some pro-choicers believe PWPL actors have strategically succeeded in their framing, and that pro-choice actors should take them seriously. For example, Keli Conlin, President of NARAL Pro-choice New York agrees pro-choice

activists should accept that although most women feel relief after their abortion, a minority will feel shame or remorse (Dominus 2010). There has been a push from some in the pro-choice movement to counsel women who experience negative feelings after abortion. Many who have worked in abortion clinics have noted that in the years following *Roe*, women who had abortions mainly felt grateful the procedure was legal. Yet in the 1980s, pro-choice abortion counselors began to notice that “the emotional tide began to turn along with the political one . . . some clinic directors decided it was not enough to treat abortion as a straightforward medical procedure” (Bazelon 2007a). For example, Peg Johnson, founder of Southern Tier Women’s Services in Binghamton, NY, wrote a pregnancy options workbook that she gives to women who feel ambivalent about the decision to abort or are grieving afterwards (about 10 percent of her clients). Ava Torre-Bueno, head of counseling at Planned Parenthood San Diego, emphasizes that although abortion may not be the source of negative feelings, the procedure may act as a catalyst to “open the box where old anxieties have been kept” (quoted in Bazelon 2007a). Therefore, pro-choice advocates like Johnson and Torre-Bueno argue abortion may bring up past traumas and that abortion counselors should help women with these complications.

Like the PWPL relationship to the traditional pro-life movement, pro-choice actors who support intensive after abortion counseling are not always supported by others in the pro-choice movement. Torre-Bueno, for example, recalls that after publishing a pro-choice book about abortion recovery, she then

director of Planned Parenthood San Diego called her a “dupe of the antis” (quoted in Bazelon 2007a). Both Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Federation have informed consent guidelines and inform patients that a minority of women may experience brief feelings of sadness or guilt after an abortion and that serious psychiatric complications rarely occur. While some abortion clinics, like Planned Parenthood of Manhattan, are able to provide after abortion counseling with a social worker, few clinics have the resources to do so. In these cases, distressed women are typically referred to a therapist, clergy member, or to abortion counseling hotlines.

In response to this lack of after abortion counseling, Aspen Baker set up Exhale in 2002. Exhale is a volunteer staffed after abortion counseling hotline based in Oakland, CA. While Baker is pro-choice, Exhale volunteers counsel women without taking sides. A similar after abortion counseling hotline, Backline, was started in Portland, OR by Grayson Dempsey. But while both Baker and Dempsey report that Planned Parenthood and other abortion clinics refer patients to their hotlines, this has not translated into much financial support from the pro-choice movement.²⁹

Pro-choice actors also point out that the number of women who seek out after abortion counseling are only a small percent of the women who have abortions. Each year, there are about 1.3 million abortions in the United States, meaning that almost one-third of U.S. women will have an abortion before the age of 45. Bazelon (2007) estimates that the numbers of women who get post abortion

²⁹ “Exhale has an annual budget of \$315,000, most of which comes from foundations that don't advocate for or against abortion. Backline's budget is a tiny \$36,000” (Bazelon 2010).

counseling is in the tens of thousands. Yet pro-choicers cannot deny that post abortive women are being heard and embraced by the pro-life movement and the PWPL has achieved political and legal victories.

Abortion Breast Cancer Link

PWPL actors also claim that abortion increases women's risk of breast cancer. Claims about the link between abortion and breast cancer began to achieve prominence in the US in the early 1990s. Because breast cancer affects so many American women, some PWPL actors believe that a link between abortion and breast cancer will be "the ultimate weapon in the battle to end abortions" (Goodstein 11/1/93). To briefly summarize, there are two ways that abortion is possibly related to breast cancer. The first way is referred to as the "protective effect of childbearing." As the PWPL organization The Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer summarizes on its website:

Today's medical experts agree that the best way women can reduce their lifetime risk for breast cancer is by: 1) Having an early first full term pregnancy (FFTP) starting before age 24; 2) Bearing more children; and 3) Breastfeeding for a longer lifetime duration. It's undeniable that abortion causes women to change their childbearing patterns. It leads them to forego the protective effects of early FFTP, increased childbearing and breastfeeding. Consequently, scientists do not debate that it increases breast cancer risk in this first of two ways ("The ABC Summary" N. D.).

The second association between abortion and breast cancer is more controversial. Once a woman becomes pregnant, her breasts enlarge and the number of type 1 and type 2 lobules (where breast cancer can form) begin multiplying. This means there are more places where cancer can grow as the pregnancy proceeds. Once 32 weeks of pregnancy pass, the type 1 and 2 lobules become type 3 and 4 lobules (which contain cancer resistant milk producing cells) so there are then fewer places where cancer can form than before the pregnancy started. If a pregnancy is aborted before the 32 week mark, PWPL

actors argue the risk of breast cancer is higher than it would have been if the woman had never been pregnant (Ertelt1/23/09b: 2). Some pro-life actors argue “peer-reviewed medical studies indicate that a woman who aborts her first pregnancy during the first-trimester is “at least 30% more likely to contract breast cancer by the time she is 40 than had she carried her pregnancy to term. Since breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women today, one that kills 40,000 women annually, the connection between abortion and breast cancer should not be ignored” (“Abortion Risks” N.D.: 2). PWPL actors believe that if women believe that abortion increases risks of breast cancer, they will be less likely to have an abortion. Yet the debate about whether abortion truly leads to breast cancer is far from settled. Both those who claim there is a link between abortion and breast cancer and those arguing no such link exists maintain they have definitive studies to support their beliefs and accuse their opponents of deceiving women and covering up the truth for political reasons.

Dr. Joel Brind was one of the first to discuss a link between abortion and breast cancer. Brind is an endocrinologist who teaches undergraduate science courses at Baruch College of the City University of New York (Goodstein 1993). In 1992, Brind read an article in *Science News* that stated pregnant adolescent girls carrying a pregnancy to term were less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer later in life. Brind wondered what would happen to teens that terminated their pregnancies. After reviewing 40 years of studies examining the relationship between abortion and breast cancer, Brind concluded abortion was a significant risk factor for breast cancer. To publicize his conclusion, Brind made pamphlets titled “Women Have a Right to Know” that detailed the link between

abortion and breast cancer. He then took the pamphlets, his wife, and daughter to Washington D.C. in attempts to meet with representatives (Yeoman 2003).

In 1993, Brind joined up with Scott Sommerville, a recent Harvard Law School graduate employed at the Home School Legal Defense Association. Sommerville became interested in the abortion breast cancer link after hearing it discussed on a Christian radio station. Brind and Sommerville began to collaborate, talking about the link between abortion and breast cancer on Christian radio stations, writing articles for pro-life publications, and selling pamphlets discussing the abortion breast cancer link at pro-life conventions (Goodstein 1993).

Also in 1993, Michael P. Farris, a colleague of Sommerville's and candidate for lieutenant governor of Virginia, stated that one of the reasons he opposed abortion was because it increased a woman's risk of breast cancer. This statement, along with the efforts of Sommerville and Brind, began to reach pro-life activists, giving them new ideas about how to increase opposition to abortion. For example, the pro-life organization Life Dynamics sent mass mailings to physicians, asking them to advise female patients of studies tying abortions to a higher risk of breast cancer. These mailings also contained an appeal to refer any woman who had an abortion and was later diagnosed with breast cancer to Life Dynamics for "inclusion in a proposed class-action lawsuit." (Lewin1995).

As with postabortion syndrome, one way the general public became aware of the abortion breast cancer link was through promotional materials placed in city subways. In 1996, Christ's Bride Ministries, INC placed posters in 25 Philadelphia subway and rail systems. The posters proclaimed "Women who choose abortion suffer more & deadlier breast cancer." (Clymer 2002). The Washington D.C. Metro Transit System also posted

1,100 similar free public service ads for Christ's Bride Ministries in buses and subway stations (Loose 1996). Also similar to PAS claims, information on the ABC link is often given to individual women through pregnancy resources centers (Dominus 2010). For example, some PRCs reportedly give women fliers describing abortion as the "most preventable cause of breast cancer" (Kravitz 2009). Furthermore, many pregnancy resource websites, like the one for the Pregnancy Resource Center of Cleveland County, inform visitors that "most studies conducted so far show a significant linkage between abortion and breast cancer" ("Considering abortion?" N.D.).

Although claims about the link between abortion and breast cancer began to gain traction in the 1990s, they were also often greeted with skepticism. Colleagues told Brind that in order for these claims to be taken seriously, he would have to publish an analysis in a peer reviewed journal. Brind contacted Walter Stevens and Joan Summy-Long, both pro-life endocrinologists, as well as Vernon Chinchilli, a pro-choice biostatistician. After analyzing 28 previous studies that correlated abortion with breast cancer, they concluded that "women who had induced abortions appeared to suffer from breast cancer at a rate 30 percent higher than those who didn't" (Yeoman 2003: 56).³⁰ These findings were first published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* in 1996, leading to heated debate about the relationship between abortion and breast cancer.

Brind became involved with the PWPL organization founded in 1999 called the Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer, an "international women's organization whose purpose is to protect the health and save the lives of women by educating and providing

³⁰ "In biostatistical terms, this is called a 'relative risk' or 'odds ratio' of 1.3 (A risk of 1.0 means there's no danger). Because there are so many variables that can corrupt data, epidemiologists regard any risk under 2.0 with skepticism unless it appears consistently from one study to the next" (Yeoman 2003: 67).

information on abortion as a risk factor for breast cancer”

(http://www.abortionbreastcancer.com/about_us/). He also co-founded the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute with breast cancer surgeon Angela Lanfranchi, obstetrician John T. Bruchalski, and family practice physician William L. Toffler. Both organizations promote the idea that the best way to prevent breast cancer is by encouraging women to carry pregnancies to term instead of having abortions (Lee 2003).

Yet the majority of scientists and doctors dismiss the link between abortion and breast cancer. For example, Phyllis Wingo, chief of the cancer surveillance branch for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, argues that a lack of consistency between studies suggests there is not a true link (Yeoman 2003). Many researchers maintain the design of studies looking at the link between abortion and breast cancer may have produced exaggerated results. These studies typically compare two groups of women: those who have breast cancer and those who don't. Women in both groups are asked if they have had an abortion. Critics argue that studies suffer from response bias; healthy women are less likely to tell the truth about having an abortion than women who have cancer (and are searching for any cause of their illness). Studies conducted in countries that keep records of abortion, like Sweden and Denmark, support this supposition. Researchers in these countries have compared women's self reports of abortion to official abortion records. They found healthy women are more likely to report they have not had an abortion when official records show they have. One example is a 1997 study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Danish epidemiologist Mads Melbye looked at the records of 1.5 million women born in Denmark between 1935 and 1978. Melbye linked Denmark's national abortion records to the country's national cancer registry and

found women who underwent abortions developed breast cancer at exactly the same rate as women who did not. Based on the large population and lack of response bias, many scientists became convinced earlier studies indicating a link between abortion and breast cancer suffered from problems of response bias (Yeoman 2003).

Furthermore, the National Cancer Institute, American Medical Association, and American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists have all issued statements maintaining there is no association between abortion and breast cancer (Kravitz 2009; Clymer 2002; Turner, Richardson, and Nash 2006; Gold and Nash 2007). In response to these statements, Brind and others convinced of the abortion and breast cancer link argue that the representatives of these organizations are pro-choice, biased, and therefore reluctant to publish studies on the link. As expected, officials from these organizations deny these claims. For example, Florence Hastline, director of the Center for Population Research, told the *Washington Post* that Brind and his colleagues are “full of nonsense . . . epidemiologists would love to find the cause of breast cancer” (Goodstein 1993). This debate perseveres as those on both sides of the abortion breast cancer debate continue to accuse their opponents of bias and political cover-ups. For example, Dr. Angela Lanfranchi, assistant professor of surgery at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, argues that many doctors acknowledge that there is a link between abortion and breast cancer but are unwilling to publicize the link because they believe the issue is “too political” (Malec 2003: 42).

Representatives for pro-choice organizations like Planned Parenthood, NOW, and NARAL all dismiss this purported link as a poor science, propaganda, or a scare tactic. Similarly, pro-choice focus group participants often referred to pro-life arguments

supporting this link as a baseless “fear campaign” designed to scare women away from abortion. These participants also referred to the PWPL actors making these claims as “scientifically illiterate.” As Torrence (36) said, “How can you believe them? These are the same people that don’t believe in evolution or global warming. Of course they’re going to ignore hard evidence and just use whatever they can find, whether its true or not.” Overall, pro-choice actors present the abortion breast cancer link as a myth and use medical studies and statements by the National Cancer Institute, American Medical Association, and other organizations to support claims that a causal link between abortion and breast cancer has not been scientifically established.

Yet pro-choice actors also believe that the debate over whether or not abortion leads to breast cancer will continue for the foreseeable future. For example, Kate Michelman, former president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, told a Washington Post reporter: “I cannot imagine that any amount of scientific fact would deter the anti-choice movement from continuing in this deceitful campaign . . . We have the truth on our side, but they have Congress, the White House and a majority of legislative chambers” (Vedentam 03/26/2004).

Additionally, media has certainly kept public awareness of the debate alive. Studies both supporting and refuting the link between abortion and breast cancer are frequently summarized in the news (e.g., Bakalar 2007; Altman 2004; Rovner 1997; Brody 1997; Painter 1997; Supless 1994; Friend 1994; Altman 1994) . For example, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today* all published stories in October of 1996 discussing the abortion breast cancer metanalysis study headed by Dr. Brind. These media organizations also all covered Melbye’s Danish study published the

following year that found women who have abortions do not have an increased risk of breast cancer. While the most recent studies reported on tend to indicate that there is not a link between abortion and breast cancer, the fact that studies have shown abortion increases risks of breast cancer, decreases risks of breast cancer, and has no effect on breast cancer can all be selected to support actors on all sides of the debate (Brody 1997).

Women's Right to Know Legislation and Litigation

PWPL actors have successfully introduced their PAS and abortion breast cancer link frames into the legal arena. Many states have or are working to pass what are often referred to as “women’s right to know” laws. This type of informed consent legislation mandates women must be provided with various pieces of information at least 24 hours before they undergo an abortion. Under many of these laws, a physician must tell the woman the name of the doctor scheduled to perform the abortion, a description of the abortion procedure, the medical risks associated with it, and information about the traits of the developing child. These laws also often require the woman be given a booklet with color photos depicting a fetus at two week intervals; information on the father’s responsibilities and adoption; and a directory of agencies that can help if the woman chooses to carry the child to term. Laws in some states also force abortion providers to give information about alternatives to abortion, such as adoption, and information about pre-natal and post-natal care. Women are also be referred to government material about fetal development, a possible link between abortion and breast cancer, and the psychological impact of abortion. Although women do not have to accept any of this material, the information must be offered to women at least 24 hours prior to a scheduled abortion.

In the public policy realm, enacting mandatory informed consent waiting periods have been popular. These policies have been addressed by the Supreme Court on three occasions. In a 1983 ruling regarding an Akron, Ohio city ordinance, the Supreme Court struck down the law that required abortion providers to give women “a litany of information the court considered to be ‘designed not to inform the women’s consent but rather to persuade her to withhold it altogether’” (Gold 2009: 20). In 1992, the Court revisited this issue in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania et al. v. Casey*, and allowed states to provide informed consent information, even if the State’s purpose was to “‘persuade the woman to choose childbirth over abortion’” (quoted in Gold 2009: 20). Then in *Gonzales v. Carhart*, the Court invited states to take a new look at the information women are required to receive prior to an abortion, particularly that regarding a description of the actual abortion procedure, on the grounds that a “necessary effect of [such a requirement] and the knowledge it conveys will be to encourage some women to carry the infant to full term” (quoted in Gold 2009: 20). As of 2009, 33 states have some law or policy requiring women be provided with specific information prior to an abortion.

The information given to women under various forms of these “Women’s Right to Know” laws varies by state. A 2007 Guttmacher analysis found that information required in 10 of the 33 states falls in line with widely held principles of informed consent. The information women receive describes the procedure that will be performed and fetal development throughout the stages of pregnancy. Guttmacher analysts feel the information provided in the remaining 23 states is designed to influence instead of inform the woman’s decision. They argue these laws “may exaggerate the physical or mental

health risks of abortion or include information on either fetal development or abortion procedures irrelevant to the abortions being sought by most women” (Gold 2009:20).³¹

Most relevant to this analysis, 19 states require abortion clinics to address the psychological and emotional aspects of abortion. In 12 of the 19 states providing written counseling materials on this topic, women are told they may feel a range of emotions after abortion, from sadness to relief. Materials in the remaining seven states focus the likelihood of negative emotional reactions to abortion. In four states – South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia – the materials assert either that a woman may experience suicidal thoughts or may suffer from ‘post abortion syndrome (Nash and Gold 2007: 11). For example, the Texas Woman’s Right to Know Law states:

Some women have reported serious psychological effects after their abortion, including depression, grief, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, regret, suicidal thoughts and behavior, sexual dysfunction, avoidance of emotional attachment, flashbacks, and substance abuse. These emotions may appear immediately after an abortion, or gradually over a longer period of time. These feelings may recur or be felt stronger at the time of another abortion, or a normal birth, or on the anniversary of the abortion (“Woman’s Right to Know” 2010).

Finally, claims of a possible link between induced abortion and breast cancer are found in the required abortion counseling materials in five states. In two of these states, the legislature directed the health department to include information about abortion-breast

³¹ In 24 states, a counseling requirement is combined with a mandatory waiting period. Thirteen states have some provision that relates to an ultrasound but does not require one. The provisions range from requiring all women considering abortions be given information on ultrasound technology to requiring abortion providers offer women the opportunity to have an ultrasound and view the image. Beginning with Arizona and Louisiana in 1999, five states require abortion providers perform an ultrasound on at least some women seeking abortion and offer them the option of viewing the image. In 2008, Oklahoma adopted legislation requiring an ultrasound be performed prior to every abortion and requiring the physician to review the image with the woman. The woman, however, is able to avert her eyes if she chooses. The implementation of the legislation is enjoined pending legal action, but similar legislation has been introduced in Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, and Wyoming (Gold 2009).

cancer relationship. In the other three states, the health department included information without a specific state mandate to do so. The materials in all five states proclaim that the evidence linking abortion and breast cancer is inconclusive (Turner Richardson and Nash 2006: 8). The Texas Woman's Right to Know information states "While there are studies that have found an increased risk of developing breast cancer after an induced abortion, some studies have found no overall risk. There is agreement that this issue needs further study" ("Woman's Right to Know" 2010).

Both PWPL and traditionally pro-life actors maintain that these laws simply give women full and complete information about abortion. For example, Judith Koehler, senior legislative counsel for Americans United for Life, argues that these laws "give women time to reflect upon information that is material to their health and well-being" (quoted in Brennan 1998). They argue that informed consent laws are necessary because unless required to provide this information, clinic counselors will withhold it in order to sell more abortions and make a higher profit. PWPL actors argue that abortion has lifelong consequences and any woman considering the procedure should be aware of all the possible consequences. Thus, many PWPL and pro-life actors are pushing for a national Woman's Right to Know law to consolidate these standards and provide women with the truth about abortion.

Pro-choice actors claim many of these policies are based on the idea that women who may abort and the broader public don't really understand what abortion is. For example, in the *Guttmacher Policy Review* Rachel Benson Gold quotes state Sen. Tony Fulton of Nebraska. Fulton sponsored a Nebraska legislative proposal to require women to be shown an ultrasound of the fetus before abortion. He argued "If we can provide

information to a mother who is in a desperate situation – information about what she’s about to choose; information about the reality inside her womb – then this is going to reduce the number of abortions” (Gold 2009: 19). Thus, they argue these laws are demeaning to women and paternalistic. Pro-choice actors also argue that laws requiring that the counseling be done in person at least 24 hours prior to an abortion require women to make multiple visits to the clinic, and often leading to the delay of abortion.

Therefore, pro-choice actors claim these policies may result in procedures taking place later in gestation, when they are “more troubling and more expensive” (Gold 2009: 21).

Pro-choice actors are particularly critical of laws requiring abortionists inform women about post abortion syndrome, claiming these requirements are paternalistic and unscientific. For example, Gold and Nash summarize Justice Anthony M. Kennedy’s majority opinion in the *Gonzales v. Carhart* decision by writing that this opinion moved the court and the future of the abortion debate to the heart of the issue of informed consent. They write:

Replete with paternalistic and moralistic pronouncements, Kennedy’s opinion asserts the ‘reality’ that ‘respect for human life finds an ultimate expression in the bond of love the mother has for the child.’ Although forthrightly acknowledging the existence of ‘no reliable data to measure the phenomenon’ it nonetheless labels ‘unexceptionable’ the conclusion that ‘some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained (Gold and Nash 2007: 6).

Thus, as with all claims about post-abortion syndrome, pro-choice actors argue the information states compel physicians to provide women with is inaccurate or incomplete, “lending credence to the charge that states’ abortion counseling mandates are sometimes intended less to inform women about the abortion procedure than to discourage them from seeking abortion altogether” (Turner Richardson and Nash 2006: 6).

PWPL advocates have also been successful in convincing post abortive women to pursue civil litigation. In 2003, a 17-year-old female using the pseudonym Sarah sued her abortionist Charles Benjamin. The case was settled out of court on October 17, the day before the trial. This was the first federal malpractice lawsuit in America to receive a settlement based on a claim of the failure of the doctor and abortion clinic to inform a woman about the emotional risks of abortion and that abortion may increase the risk of breast cancer. While Sarah does not currently have breast cancer, she was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder. The undisclosed settlement amount was based Sarah's need for future psychological counseling and medical monitoring for early detection of breast cancer. Sarah's case was financed by the Women's Injury Network (WIN). Founded by an attorney, WIN provides case expenses for abortion injured women to pursue litigation. Malec, president of the Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer, states that "this settlement will teach the medical establishment that it can no longer profit by keeping women in the dark about the breast cancer risk" (Malec 2003: 2).

Before the case was settled Linda Rosenthal, an attorney for the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (CRLP) petitioned the court to serve as a lawyer on the case on the side of the defendant. A press release from WIN states that Sarah was upset that the CRLP chose to support "the legal interests of those performing abortion over her legal and medical interests as a vulnerable teenage victim" (Women's Injury Network 2003: 2).

Yet a California court refused to hear the case of three plaintiffs who accused Planned Parenthood for providing misleading information about the link between abortion and breast cancer. The court alleged there was insufficient scientific evidence

and claimed the plaintiffs did not have a reasonable likelihood of success. When the plaintiffs appealed to the Supreme Court, it also refused to hear the case (Malec 2004).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation details how the pro-woman pro-life faction of the pro-life movement has attempted to change the movement's master frame from a focus on fetal rights to a focus on how women are harmed by abortion. PWPL actors argue that this frame transformation will lead to a change in how America understands the abortion debate. Instead of conceptualizing abortion as a struggle over fetal versus women's rights, the field frame used to make sense of the abortion will be that this is a debate over whether women's rights and health are harmed or advanced by legal access to abortion.

As I have shown, PWPL actors believe frame transformation will appeal to more field actors than the fetal rights master frame. They particularly believe that this focus will appeal to the majority of Americans that believe abortion is morally wrong but are uncomfortable making it illegal and to contingents previously affiliated most closely with the pro-choice movement, namely educated and professional women and women that have previously undergone abortion. PWPL actors maintain that converting these previously pro-choice contingents to the pro-life movement will drastically impact the state of abortion in America. They argue successful conversion will lead to an increase in pro-life values. As a result of this change, PWPL actors argue increasing levels of pressure will be placed on those in power and eventually abortion will become both illegal and unthinkable in America.

This dissertation also details how multiple field actors have responded to PWPL arguments. Because of their novelty, PWPL claims have been extensively covered in the

media and dispersed to the general public. The nation's leading medical organizations, including the National Cancer Institute, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Medical Association have all become familiar with PWPL claims and research and have been forced to seriously evaluate this research. The very fact that these established and authoritative organizations have addressed these claims in depth multiple times means that PWPL actors have had a great deal of success in publicizing their claims. Ultimately, all of these organizations have disagreed with PWPL researchers and concluded that abortion does not uniformly lead to traumatic stress syndrome or increased rates of breast cancer. Despite these conclusion, however, PWPL actors have been successful in using the testimonies of women who believe they were harmed by abortion to convince some doctors, academics, journalists, religious officials, judges, and politicians that these authoritative organizations are biased or simply incorrect.

As a result, politicians have introduced legislation requiring abortion providers to warn women that abortion may lead to negative mental health outcomes and an increased risk of abortion and this proposed legislation has been codified into law in many states. Post abortive women's testimony has been used by Supreme Court Justice Kennedy to uphold the Partial Birth Abortion ban and by Professor Priscilla Coleman and Dr. Janet Orient to support informed consent legislation. Furthermore, churches have funded ministries and therapeutic sessions to treat these post abortive women.

While not all traditionally pro-life actors have embraced PWPL claims, most have accepted them as at least a side argument. The nation's leading pro-life organizations portray post abortion syndrome and the link between abortion and breast cancer as a

reality. The most zealous pro-life side walk counselors refer women considering abortion to pregnancy resources centers where they can learn of the dangers of abortion. PWPL actors are included in national pro-life conferences and marchers. Finally, the Republican party platform on abortion, which has contained fetal centric pro-life language since 1980, began to contain PWPL language starting in 2008, with the addition of the PWPL catchphrase “women deserve better than abortion.”

Even some pro-choice actors have admitted that some women do have negative emotional reactions to abortion and have created after abortion hotlines for these women. While the majority of the pro-choice movement is dismissive of PWPL claims, they often admit that their rhetoric is powerfully persuasive and are concerned about the impact PWPL frames will have on abortion’s legality.

It is difficult to determine where the abortion debate will go from here. While it is impossible to predict if PWPL actors will be able to achieve pro-life frame transformation, it does seem these actors will continue to advance their claims as long as they are able to achieve success. It is possible that PWPL legislation will combine with fetal centric pro-life legislation requiring ultrasounds and banning abortion once a fetal heartbeat can be detected or once the fetus develops the capacity to feel pain. If a combination of woman-centric and fetal-centric restrictions continue, abortion may remain legal in theory but become so restricted that it is illegal or inaccessible in most cases.

Turning away from the specifics of the case, this research advances recent efforts to bridge social movement theory and institutional analysis and to develop the concept of the field frame. Institutional theories of organizational change have demonstrated how

shifting cultural belief systems can lead to the emergence of new strategies, practices, and understandings. Alternatively, social movement scholars have demonstrated how individuals or groups craft strategic frames to align movement goals with potential adherents' beliefs to mobilize these adherents for collective action (Snow *et al* 1986; Zald 1996; Benford 1997).

It is important to understand not just how organizational actors craft frames, but where these frames are situated in field and how they impact the field as a whole. Studying framing processes at a field level draws attention to activist's interactions with other relevant political and organizational actors and situates change in these interactional dynamics.

In relation to social movements, fields are spheres of contestation. Locating social movement organizations (SMOs) and movement actors in a broader field helps to identify other actors that are largely unaffiliated with an SMO but still affect SMO goals and the movement. In the American abortion debate, activists, journalists, politicians, lawyers, doctors, and religious officials are just a few of the categories of actors invested in molding this debate. At the organizational level, SMOs, courts, political bodies, medical groups, religious organizations, and the media all influence the field of the abortion debate to varying degrees. Within this field, the strategies and tactics actors employ to press their agendas are not simply rooted in utilitarian calculation, but in a "feel for the game" and knowledge of how to act that they have acquired through experience (Crossley 2002: 176). Examining the abortion debate at this field level helps to explain the reasons for and implications of PWPL actor's attempts to transform the master frame of the pro-life movement and alter the abortion debate.

I argue a field frame is the culmination of discourse constructed by and among all actors in a field, which creates a primary field discourse and focus. In the context of a movement related field, this means that actors have some shared understanding of what they're fighting over and what the stakes are. This conceptualization helps to explain the effectiveness of actors' strategies and puts their agency into context, as field factors both create opportunities and constraints. Although this conceptualization draws on framing theory and the concepts of master and organizational frames (Swart 1995; Evans 1997), a field frame cannot necessarily be altered by individual actors to fit their specific purposes in the same manner as an organizational frame. Unlike an organizational frame, a field frame does not belong to any single organization. In fact, when studying fields in the context of movements, the beliefs of opposing actors are all incorporated in the field frame. Thus while a master frame often represents the unified beliefs of an SMO, a field frame implies that actors have a shared understanding of what they are fighting over. Therefore, a field frame describes opposing actors shared understanding of their basic contestation. It is more general, and often more stable than an organizational frame, yet a field frame can also be challenged and modified. Applying elements of movement and organizational theories to a field level focus directs attention to how interactions between field actors create a shared understanding of the nature of contestation; in other words, these actors share a field frame. Shifts in field frames can lead to changes in practices, understanding and outcomes. As such, this research contributes to our understanding of how change in fields is bound in both political and cultural struggles over meanings and resources.

Future research should address what motivates social movement actors to attempt to change a field frame. In this case, the extended ideology made frame transformation a possibility. Furthermore, frustration with the perceived ineffectiveness of the pro-life master frame and the competing rights field frame, which PWPL actors thought benefited the pro-choice movement, made this possibility more compelling. A comparison of the attempts of actors involved in other movements to change the relevant field frame may help to reveal if these are general processes or specific to PWPL actors.

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