

A WOMAN'S PLACE: THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER  
IN THE RHETORIC OF ABORTION ACTIVISTS

by

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A THESIS

IN

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of Texas Tech University in  
Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for  
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Approved

May, 1997

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have written this thesis without the support and inspiration of many people. I would like to thank them here. First, the members of my committee have my respect and admiration, both as scholars and as instructors. Dr. David Williams has been a teacher, mentor, and friend for the majority of my college education. His approach to working on this thesis has been an invaluable source of both motivation and calmness, and his demeanor concerning academics and his students is something I hope someday to emulate. Dr. John Bliese has taught me much about Burke, rhetoric, and how to become a better writer. Dr. Brian McGee's enthusiasm and knowledge about movements and rhetoric have been a great help in research and writing this thesis.

Bonnie Goggans, my closest friend for six years and counting, has given me much encouragement as I have undertaken this project, as well as provided inspiration through her actions and dedication to the abortion issue. Bonnie is much of the reason I chose to write on abortion. This thesis is as much hers as it is mine.

My parents, Al and Donna Robertson, who have continuously supported my educational endeavors as well as always taught me to speak my mind, are two of the best people I know. Their love and belief in me has given me the desire and confidence to write this thesis. My brother Brad Robertson is not only my oldest and dearest friend, but is also one of the smartest people I know. I have sought, throughout my life, to be worthy of the kind of love and encouragement he offers unwaveringly.

Finally, the love and tireless support of my husband, David Worth, both as a husband and as a scholar, has help me and this thesis tremendously. I thank him for his willingness to put up with me during the last several months, to constantly answer my questions, and convince me over and over that I could do it. He is my best friend and the person I admire most in the world.

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	2
Terminology.....	3
The Issue Itself.....	5
II. THE HISTORY OF ABORTION IN THE UNITED STATES.....	8
The Nineteenth Century.....	9
The Twentieth Century.....	14
Abortion Today.....	22
III. METHOD.....	24
The Definition of a Movement.....	26
Abortion Rhetoric and Social Movements.....	31
Dramatism as a Method.....	36
Review of Abortion Rhetoric Literature.....	42
Selection of Material for Analysis.....	46
IV. ANALYSIS OF THE RHETORIC OF ABORTION ACTIVIST GROUPS.....	49
The Pro-choice Movement.....	50
Common Language and Themes: The Mother as the Agent.....	51
The Anti-choice Movement.....	66
Common Language and Themes: The Mother as Scene and Agency.....	67
The Role of the Mother: What does that Reveal?.....	81

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V.	DISCUSSION.....	90
	The Two Movements Now and in the Future.....	90
	Social Movement Studies and Abortion Rhetoric.....	92
	Limitations.....	94
	Directions for Future Research.....	95
	REFERENCES.....	99

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In February, 1969, in Chicago, the National Conference on Abortion Laws met for the first time. It was organized by two men: Lawrence Lader, who was a leading abortion rights activist at the time, and Dr. Lonny Myers, the founder of the Illinois Citizens for the Medical Control of Abortion. As Kaplan (1995) relates, three hundred-fifty people attended the conference, with the intent of determining how to persuade people towards supporting the appeal of abortion laws. The attendees also wanted to create a national organization, which would later become the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws. The author of the landmark feminist book *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan, attended the conference. When she suggested that the preamble of their charter, which argued only for the rights of physicians to control abortion, include a statement about women's rights, the activists were aghast at that. Objectors took to the microphone with statements like, "Abortion is not a feminist issue," and "What has women's rights got to do with abortion?" (Friedan, 1976, p. 122). The addition that Friedan suggested, that a woman has "the right to control her own body and reproductive process as her inalienable, human, and civil right, not to be denied or abridged by the state or any man" (Friedan, 1976, p. 122) was eventually added to the preamble, despite the objections. This was one of the first times, even among abortion rights activists, that the idea of abortion as an issue to do with women was introduced.

## Purpose of the Study

It might seem obvious that abortion is inherently a woman's issue (Blanchard, 1994; Kaplan, 1995; Simonds, 1996), and it would seem to follow that abortion rhetoric should reflect that. However, upon examination of the persuasive statements of both sides, it becomes clear that this is not always the case. In fact, sometimes the pregnant woman, the mother, is ignored entirely or becomes a part of the background in the abortion debate. Sometimes this is true even for those who take the pro-choice position (Kaplan, 1995).

This thesis is devoted to examining the rhetoric of the current abortion controversy. I explore the rhetoric of activists from both sides of the issue, the so-called "pro-choice," and the "pro-life" groups, of which there are many, for both viewpoints. The questions guiding this study are "What is the role of the mother within the rhetoric of abortion activist groups?" and, "What does the role of the mother within their rhetoric reveal about the group behind it?"

In some rhetoric, the mother clearly plays a major role, or is even the main crux of the argument. This is most obvious in the graphic photographs of Geraldine Twurdy Santoro, who died of an illegal abortion in a hotel room in 1972, and whose photograph is featured in many pro-choice posters to this day. In other rhetoric, where there is often much mention of physician's rights, or family values or religion, the mother is seemingly nonexistent. The purpose of this study is to discover where the mother is within the rhetoric of the different groups involved in the abortion controversy. The answer to that inquiry then provides insight into the rhetors themselves.

Most papers and books that deal with abortion seek to be as objective as possible when discussing abortion rhetoric and abortion activists. Presumably because of this objectivity, some authors do not even reveal their own views on the issue. These authors are sometimes too generous towards both sides with their analysis . (Luker, 1984). The researchers find a middle ground where no one will be offended and, as Luker (1984) describes, perhaps both sides will feel like the researcher is arguing for theirs.

Because I am pro-choice, and have been my entire life, I suspect this will not happen with this thesis. I will be objective, and will present neither side as right or wrong, but rather will allow the reader to determine that for herself/himself. However, my views, while not present in my analysis, are reflected in my writing. I do not see any other way for me to write on this issue, about which I have such strong opinions. I will not draw conclusions about the effectiveness or correctness of the messages; merely provide analysis of them.

I have been interested in the abortion controversy and have been researching it for many years. Through my research, I have been able to recognize the types of emotional arguments both sides use in their rhetoric, and I also recognize that it is difficult not to be persuaded by much of it. Therefore, all of my research and resulting feelings on abortion rights have interested me in the rhetoric of both sides of the abortion controversy, not just the side in which I believe.

### Terminology

Terminology and definitions that will be used throughout need to be established. First, when I use the word "abortion," I am using the legal definition from *Black's Law Dictionary*, which is as follows: the artificially induced expulsion of an embryo or a fetus (p. 7). Second, when I refer to the "mother," I am speaking of the

pregnant woman, at any stage of the pregnancy, whether or not she is considering abortion.

Next, the words used to refer to the abortion activists need to be explained, since, for example, "the terms *pro-life* and *pro-choice* are political statements by particular sides in the abortion controversy" (Blanchard, 1993, p. 1). I am in agreement with this statement to the degree that the labels both sides utilize are usually political and often not the most accurate way to describe the other side. However, almost any label will be in some way political. Because of this, I have sought to be as precise as I can be in the determination of terms with which to describe each side, and in doing so will be using terms that may not be the ones favored by the people holding that view, or their opposition.

The term *pro-choice* is the phrase I will use to describe those groups who favor abortion rights, for two reasons. First, it is accurate. Second, as this thesis looks at the role of the mother within the rhetoric, it is important to use terms which include the mother as a consideration within the debate. Those who are against abortion rights often use such terms to describe the other side as *pro-death* and *pro-abortion*, neither of which is objective, because "it is difficult to find anyone who is pro-abortion" (Blanchard, 1994, p. 24), so both phrases are inaccurate. The label *pro-choice*, on the other hand, is the most accurate description of those who support abortion rights, because it is essentially a shortening of the phrase which describes those who favor the right of a woman to *choose* abortion.

And, although I am aware that people against abortion rights often refer to themselves as *pro-life*, I will be using another phrase to describe them. I believe that "pro-life" is an inaccurate description, because:

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...those opposing abortion are not unified. Some organizations have a single-issue orientation, opposing abortion alone, while others take what they consider to be a "pro-life" stance on many issues, opposing abortion as well as euthanasia, capital punishment, and the use of nuclear and chemical arms. (Blanchard, 1994, p. 37)

In other words, the term *pro-life* means all life, not just the life of the unborn, and those involved in the movement against abortion rights are not necessarily involved in the other issues, nor do they necessarily agree with them. Indeed, many anti-choice activists even favor capital punishment. The pro-choice side often tries to use the word *anti-woman* when referring to the other side, but that is also emotion-driven and inaccurate. The commonly-used phrase *anti-abortion* is also not entirely correct, for the simple fact that the phrase does not necessarily describe someone who is against abortion rights *per se*. As many people can attest to, it is possible to be *both* anti-abortion *and* pro-choice. For this reason, and because "anti-choice" acknowledges the pregnant woman in the rhetoric, I will be using the term *anti-choice* when I refer to those who do not favor abortion rights. It is the most accurate phrase for my purposes in this thesis, because it is essentially a shortening of the phrase which describes those who are against the right of a woman to choose abortion.

### The Issue Itself

The moral, medical, religious, and legal issues surrounding abortion are among the most divisive, as well as significant, that we know today. It is difficult to turn on the news and not be bombarded by images of protests and arrests outside of clinics, or updates on the legislatures' and courts' latest actions with regards to abortion rights. As Luker (1984) describes:

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By now, no level of American political life has escaped a confrontation with it. Adoption of the federal budget has been delayed several times over the past decade while Congress has debated the issue. The same kinds of delays have confronted state legislatures across the country. Even on the local level, once-sleepy school boards have become tumultuous when asked to consider the place of abortion in sex education curricula, and zoning boards have split over whether an abortion clinic should be permitted to operate in a community. (Luker, 1984, p. 1)

Some would, and do, describe it as a war (Miller, 1993). People have been stalked, attacked, stabbed, shot, threatened, harassed, and kidnapped because of abortion (Blanchard, 1993; Blanchard & Pruitt, 1993; Condit, 1991; Miller, 1993; Monagle, 1995), from federal judges to doctors to clinic workers to patients. This litany of violent acts does not include actions taken against clinics and personal property; as recently as January, 1997, there were five different abortion clinic bombings in the U.S. Perhaps most incredibly, five people involved in the abortion industry have been killed in the last four years by abortion protesters: two doctors, one doctor's body guard, and two Planned Parenthood receptionists (Monagle, 1995). Approximately 1.2 million women obtain abortions every year in this country, according to the Centers for Disease Control (Meyer, 1997). Because of the nature of the issue itself, and the effect it has had and continues to have on the people of this country, it is one of the most important issues of the day. The rhetorical strategies both sides use to persuade are a primary part of this highly disputed issue, so it is worth examining the rhetoric of the people involved in the controversy.

Abortion is a legal issue with a long and interesting history, as is shown in Chapter II, and it is also a social movement, which is discussed in Chapter III. As all movements are inherently rhetorical (Wilkinson, 1976), it is also a rhetorical movement, as I will show in Chapter III. This thesis will examine abortion rhetoric, that of both the anti-choice and the pro-choice movements. I begin the study in

Chapter II with an exploration of the history of abortion in the United States, with the laws, Supreme Court decisions, and organizations involved in the controversy. In Chapter III, I discuss the definition of social movements, present abortion as a movement, then explore Kenneth Burke's dramatism and the dramatistic pentad, and close with a review of literature on abortion rhetoric. In Chapter IV, I show the analysis of the rhetoric, and the results and implications are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II  
THE HISTORY OF ABORTION  
IN THE UNITED STATES

The history of the abortion issue in the United States is a complicated and, frequently, misrepresented one. Often people assume that abortion was, from the founding of the colonies, illegal in the United States and that it was not until the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* Supreme Court decisions that abortion first became a legal medical procedure. However, it was not until 1821 that the first laws involving the abortion procedure were passed by the different United States legislatures.

There have been different stages in the battle over abortion rights, which has been going on for over one hundred fifty years in the United States. Patricia Miller (1993) divides the abortion movement into what she refers to as "wars." The first war was the fight to criminalize the abortion procedure, during the nineteenth century. The second, the fight for legalization, lasted from 1965 to 1973, and the third began in 1973 and continues today. This third war "has been waged throughout the *Roe* period, during which abortions became *both* safe and legal for the first time" (Miller, 1993, p. 307). The Fourth Great Abortion War, Miller asserts, will happen if policymakers overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

This chapter seeks to examine the history of abortion laws in this country, beginning in the nineteenth century, and ending with the *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* Supreme Court decisions. I will also look at the creation of the pro-choice and anti-choice groups as well as, briefly, some of the more recent Supreme Court decisions and their effect on the movement. Finally, I provide a discussion of the current status of abortion and abortion activists in the United States.

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## The Nineteenth Century

### A Common Practice

A commonly-held belief about abortions is that women seeking to terminate pregnancies and people providing abortions are a twentieth century phenomenon. However, fertility control and abortion have been practiced since antiquity (Judges, 1993), and, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, abortion was a widely accepted and common practice in the United States (Blanchard, 1994; Costa, 1996; Faludi, 1991; Miller, 1993; Radl, 1989; Rubin, 1987). In fact, abortionists in the early nineteenth century were often midwives, apprenticed "doctors," and faith healers, rather than "regular" physicians. These abortionists also openly advertised in newspapers, magazines, even religious publications throughout the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Home medical manuals from those times often included home remedy advice for what was often referred to as "menstrual blockage" (Costa, 1996).

Because there was no legislation involving this widely accepted practice in most states until the middle or late nineteenth century, it is therefore worth examining exactly how and why the criminalization of abortion occurred, how it remained illegal in almost every state until 1973, and how the legal status of abortion was again reinstated.

Much of the public policy on abortion in the United States until around 1850 revolved around the idea of "quickening," when a woman could feel the fetus inside her move. Although precisely when this quickening happens differs from woman to woman, it usually occurs around the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. This quickening occurred when the fetus first manifested "some semblance of a separate existence: the ability to move" (Mohr, 1978, p. 3).

The policies held by most states were based on British common law, which previous to 1803 criminalized nothing about the abortion procedure prior to quickening. In 1803, however, the British Parliament passed, as a part of an omnibus crime bill, a

statute making abortion a crime. According to this law, prior to quickening the punishments for providing a pregnant woman with an abortifacient or with an abortion included exile and whipping; after quickening, abortion through poisoning was a capital offense. Called Lord Ellenborough's law, this policy was initially not adopted by any of the states in the Union, at least not for several decades (Costa, 1996).

### The Initial Criminalization

The first criminal abortion law in the United States was passed in Connecticut, with Missouri, New York, and Illinois shortly following suit. The Connecticut law specifically made abortion illegal only after quickening, and was apparently "aimed not at abortion itself but at the use of poisons as abortifacients, which put the life of the woman at risk" (Blanchard, 1994, p. 12).

Clearly, these first abortion laws, for the most part, were not passed with the express purpose of making abortion *per se* a crime. They were, instead, aimed only at protecting women from "poisonous remedies, and criminally incompetent practices" (Rubin, 1987, p. 13). Indeed, the Connecticut law, passed in 1821, made abortion illegal *only* if it involved "'deadly poison' or 'noxious substances' after quickening" (Miller, 1993, p. 310). The Connecticut legislature outlawed only the one particular method of inducing abortion. Other abortion procedures, whether mechanical or surgical, were not affected by this law in any way.

Similar to these laws in Connecticut, Missouri, and Illinois, much of the early abortion legislation dealt with the protection of the woman from poisoning, or protection of the fetus after "quickening." For the most part, they were an attempt to guard women from unsafe medical practices. Because of the lack of antiseptic surgery, it was then more dangerous for a pregnant woman to have a surgical abortion than for her to carry the pregnancy to term (Weddington, 1992).

This idea of safeguarding women was eventually not the only reason for the passing of criminal abortion laws. Later laws, such as those passed in Maine, outlawed abortion "by any method," and no matter "whether such child be quick or not" (Costa, 1991). And, by 1900, every state in the union had laws prohibiting abortion for "virtually any reason" (Miller, 1993, p. 309). These abortion restrictions were not passed because of religious reasons or because policymakers had decided that the fetus needed legal protection from the moment of conception. Indeed, even the Catholic Church, which has been so vocal in its opposition to any abortion procedures in the twentieth century, had no official stance on the issue, as long as the abortion was performed before "quickening," or "viability," prior to the mid-nineteenth century. In 1854 Pope Pius IX began espousing the sacredness of the woman's childbearing role, and in 1869 threatened excommunication to anyone performing abortions (Blanchard, 1994). Other religious organizations and religious spokesmen in the United States were virtually silent on the issue until the physicians in the newly founded American Medical Association asked them to get involved (Mohr, 1978).

The literature on the history of abortion laws chronicles many different reasons for the crusades against legal abortion. Among them was the idea that it was mostly a moral campaign aimed at encouraging and enforcing chastity in women (Melton, 1989) and ensuring that unwed mothers would not escape "deserved public censure" (Blanchard, 1994, p. 13). Also, "regular" physicians and state legislators were concerned with sustaining traditional sex roles and keeping women in their places (Mohr, 1978). Falling birthrates in the United States that occurred between 1800 and 1900 added fuel to the fire of the fight against legal abortion, because some were concerned with the lack of "native" Protestant American high birth rates and thought abortion was at least partially responsible for that (Petchesky, 1984). In fact, an article published in the 1925 *American Journal of Sociology* accused "100 percent Americans"

of "committing 100 percent race suicide" because "negroes" were having babies at a faster rate (Boehn, 1925). This fear of immigrant and Catholics' birth rates exceeding those of the Protestants also played a role in the changing attitudes towards abortion as well. But, the group most responsible for abortion becoming illegal in the nineteenth century was the newly founded American Medical Association.

### The "Regular" Physicians

In terms of the criminalization of abortion beginning from the 1860's, the medical community almost single-handedly spearheaded the movement to make abortion a crime, "under the guise of protecting women against unsafe practices" (Radl, 1989, p. 26). The American Medical Association was formed in 1847, and one of the organization's first goals was the criminalization of abortion. Rather than being concerned with women's health alone, the physicians had other reasons for their crusade: They were attempting to increase their credibility, they wanted to put midwives and "nonregular" doctors out of business, and they believed that the abortion issue was just the issue with which to accomplish this goal (Blanchard, 1994; Costa, 1996; Faludi, 1991; Mohr, 1978; Radl, 1989). They also wanted to increase professionalism among regular physicians and enforce a strict code of ethics. Finally, there was the desire to:

recapture what they considered to be their ancient and rightful place among society's policymakers and savants. From ancient times through the end of the eighteenth century, physicians believed, doctors had occupied positions of high status and great influence. (Mohr, 1978, p. 163)

By establishing the American Medical Association and fighting for the criminalization of abortion, the doctors involved were attempting to recapture some of that status and

power in the United States they felt doctors had lost. They thought, too, of what they were doing as "missionary" work:

...it was time for the enlightened once again to come forward and guide the benighted public in a key question of social and moral policy. In that way the medical profession might recapture some of the luster of its golden past, when the physician had been a major voice in his society and enjoyed the status of a "god." (Mohr, 1978, p. 165)

The physicians in the movement did not want to outlaw abortion completely. Instead, they wanted to have the power to determine a woman's need for a "therapeutic" abortion. Initially, the doctors lobbied for very specific restrictions as to when an abortion was and was not justified. This decision would be left up to the physician, and not, as had been practiced prior to the quickening for centuries, the pregnant woman herself.

#### Other Groups and Abortion

Once the AMA began their fierce crusade to criminalize abortion, the physicians realized that they needed help in order to persuade the public and aid their cause. They sought that help from the religious community, but they did not have any "notable success" in this area (Melton, 1989, p. xxi). The AMA physician who led the crusade, Horatio Robinson Storer, was able to procure some supportive letters from notable Catholics of the time, but for the most part, religious organizations did not get involved. It was the late 1860s before any religious spokesperson would endorse the physicians' efforts, and then it was only from two denominations (Mohr, 1978).

The feminists of the time were among those who were in agreement with the criminalization of abortion. These women, who were vying for the rights for wives to refuse their husbands' advances occasionally for health reasons, a practice they called

"voluntary motherhood" (Faludi, 1991, p. 413), agreed with anti-abortion legislation. In their view, abortion was not a means through which women could elect not to have children and employ "voluntary motherhood," but just another way for men to exploit women (Mohr, 1978). Later, some feminists would continue to oppose abortion as a reason to support birth control (Condit, 1990), but the majority of the twentieth-century feminists would be pro-choice.

### The Twentieth Century The Physicians' Success

Physicians who had originally fought for the criminalization of abortion had been successful in their attempt to, as Luker (1984) points out, redefine abortion as a medical problem as opposed to a "moral, ethical, religious, social, legal, or economic problem" (p. 42). Blanchard (1994) adds that they had also been successful in denying abortion was "a female problem" (p. 16). As the twentieth century would prove, the idea of abortion as a woman's issue would take a long time before being accepted. In fact, there are groups involved in the abortion battle who still consider abortion to be not a woman's issue, and some of those are groups who consider themselves pro-choice (Kaplan, 1995).

By the turn of the century, every state had laws outlawing abortion in most cases. Some states allowed for abortions only in such cases as when the life of the mother would be threatened by continuing the pregnancy, or if a hospital review board determined that the woman was emotionally incapable of carrying a pregnancy to term. By 1970, abortion in America had become;

...the only medical procedure in the United States generally requiring various combinations of (1) clearance by a panel of physicians rather than only the individual practitioner, (2) clearance by a psychiatrist, (3) a length of residence in a particular state by the woman seeking the abortion, (4) the consent of someone other than the patient, normally her husband or parent, and, (5) a unique definition of "informed consent." (Faux, 1988, p. 121)

### The Practice of Abortion, Changing Public Opinion and the Laws

The twentieth century saw many changes in attitudes about abortion, as well as many groups that were created with the goal of fighting both contraception laws and abortion laws (Melton, 1989, p. xxii). However, until the mid-nineteen-sixties, there were not any changes in the abortion laws as they existed early in the twentieth century.

In 1967, Colorado became the first state in the United States to implement a reform law (Radl, 1987). In drafting this law, they used the "new" standards, which had been created in 1959 by the American Law Institute, stipulating cases wherein a woman "deserved" an abortion: if the pregnancy had resulted from rape or incest; if there were the possibility of a deformed fetus; or if evidence proved that continuing the pregnancy would hurt the woman emotionally or physically (Cisler, 1969). This required approval by a hospital board before an abortion could be performed. By 1969, ten more states had passed similar reform laws.

Then, in 1970, New York became the first state to pass a "liberal" abortion law, which legalized abortion-on-request through the first twenty-four weeks of pregnancy. As Merton (1981) explains, a New York senator who opposed abortion wrote a bill so liberal he believed it would never pass. But, it did pass, by one vote, and the author voted against his own bill. Hawaii passed the first abortion law that repealed virtually all restrictions in the same year (Blanchard, 1994). By that time, it

had been almost one hundred years, and much more than that for most states, since abortion had been a legal choice for women, under any circumstances, in the United States.

The illegal status of abortion during that time, however, did not stop the actual practice of it. Although abortion was illegal in most states up until the 1973 *Roe and Doe* rulings, handed down simultaneously and now referred to as *Roe v. Wade*, American women were still terminating about one in three pregnancies, as they had been for the previous one hundred years (Faludi, 1991, p. 403). By 1973, even before the *Roe v. Wade* decision, abortion was the most frequently performed surgical procedure in the United States (Blanchard, 1994). One in four women had abortions, and there was one abortion for every four live births in the United States (Cisler, 1969). As has been chronicled in such books as *The Worst of Times*, *The Choices We Made*, and *Over Our Live Bodies*, anti-abortion legislation did not stop women from practicing what had previously been enjoyed as a common law right for centuries, prior to the mid-nineteenth century.

## The Movements

### The Pro-choice Movement

The pro-choice movement did not begin to grow strong until the 1960s (Staggenborg, 1991). That was when many groups were created as a direct reaction to the realization of the effects of illegal abortion. These organizations included legal scholars in groups such as Association for the Study of Abortion in New York, and underground abortion services, such as Jane in Chicago and The Clergymen's Consultation Service on Problem Pregnancies in New York (Kaplan, 1995). Other groups were fighting for liberalized abortion and contraception laws, some arguing for repeal, and some arguing for reform of the existing laws.

Also at that time, some already existing groups came out publicly as pro-choice. Most of these already-established organizations settled for advocating reform rather than complete repeal. Many of them were specifically women's rights or abortion groups, such as National Organization of Women, or NOW, and the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws, or NARAL (later changed to the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League). Planned Parenthood Federation of America was founded by Margaret Sanger in 1952, with the intent of promoting reproductive rights, including legalized birth control and abortion.

Many pro-choice groups were not women's rights groups, but only added abortion reform as a part of their current positions. These groups included the American Public Health Association, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (Staggenborg, 1991), the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, and the Humanists (Cisler, 1969). Individual physicians began advocating reform around 1930, but there was no strong movement towards it until 1967, when the American Medical Association became a vocal group in support of abortion reform. Because it no longer felt threatened by "irregular" competitors (Staggenborg, 1991, p. 14), it had reversed its stance and was fighting against what it had been responsible for implementing.

Since the handing down of *Roe v. Wade*, many state legislatures have passed abortion limitations, and organizations such as NOW, the Feminist Majority, and NARAL have been struggling against the passing of those laws as well. Because abortion is still legal for the most part, the pro-choice side of the movement is in some ways a part of the establishment. However, those organizations began their fight outside of institutions and, along with most of the movement, continue to operate that way.

## The Anti-choice Movement

As in the case of the pro-choice groups, anti-choice groups in the twentieth century remained relatively quiet until the mid-twentieth-century, and really became organized only when the first wave of reform laws were signed into law (Blanchard, 1994). Most of the organizations were Roman Catholic (Blanchard, 1994), and reactions to the implementation of reform laws were primarily Catholic as well. In fact, the groups that exist today began mostly within the Catholic Church, because the right-to-life movement essentially began there (Petchesky, 1984).

The Catholic anti-choice movement in New York was just taking off at the same time the Colorado reform bill was signed into law. In California, a Catholic obstetrician who decided to crack down on doctors performing abortions (on women who were likely to have deformed fetuses) headed a crusade that led to the charging of seven physicians with illegal abortions by the Board of Medical Examiners. This action, ironically, ultimately led to public support for a liberalized bill that was introduced to the legislature in 1967 (Radl, 1989).

In 1967, just as the first laws were passed in Colorado and Hawaii, the Catholic Church made official its opposition on abortion by allocating \$50,000 for campaigning against the practice at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The implication was that the Church itself would not become politically active, but Church members would be expected to oppose liberalization of abortion laws (Radl, 1989). This National Conference of Catholic Bishops created the Right-to-life organization through their Family Life Division (Petchesky, 1984), and, in 1973, recommended to the National Catholic Conference four key goals:

(1) organize right to life groups in every state; (2) call on dioceses to fund church and ecumenical anti-abortion endeavors; (3) help the National Right to Life Association in any possible way; (4) use one day each month for prayer and fasting in "reparation" for abortions. (Blanchard, 1994, p. 32)

Following the *Roe v. Wade* decision, before which the "anti-abortion forces had believed the battle was turning in their favor" (Faux, 1988, p. 314), the anti-choice response was again led by Catholics, when they sent protest letters to the Court through a huge organized effort (Faux, 1988). The Committee of Ten Million, again a Catholic organization, also sponsored a massive letter campaign aimed at Congress, followed by a national campaign for a human rights amendment (Blanchard, 1994; Faux, 1988).

There are today more than twenty different organized and publicized national organizations that fight against abortion rights (Blanchard, 1994; Radl, 1989), some with memberships in the millions. Most of these groups were founded after 1973 (Blanchard, 1994), when it became clear that they were losing the battle against abortion rights. Not all of these are associated with the Catholic Church, although most are at least associated with an organized religion of some kind or are a spin-off organization from the National Right to Life Committee, also begun by the Catholic Church (Blanchard, 1994). Anti-choice groups operate outside of institutions for the most part, however, as they are fighting against most "liberal" abortion laws that exist today.

### The National Tragedies

Nearly all of the literature that focuses on the history of the abortion movement makes reference to the 1962 Sherri Finkbine case (Blanchard, 1994; Radl, 1991; Staggenborg, 1991; Weddington, 1992). There is much agreement that this was one of the cases that helped to eventually bring the abortion issue to national prominence in

the media and created much support for abortion law reform. Ms. Finkbine, pregnant with her fifth child, discovered that a prescription drug she had taken could cause severely deformed children. She was granted permission by an Arizona hospital to have the procedure, but Ms. Finkbine then contacted her local newspaper with her story on the condition that she would remain anonymous. Her identity was discovered, and the hospital withdrew their support for the abortion.

She eventually went to Sweden and aborted a severely deformed fetus that probably would not have survived more than a few days (Radl, 1991). Her case, as well as the outbreak of rubella in 1963, which caused 20,000 stillbirths and 30,000 deformed babies in the United States, brought the issue of abortion reform to national attention. During 1962 and 1963, several religious groups began calling for abortion reform. Among them were the United Presbyterian Church and the Lutheran Church (Merton, 1981).

### The Supreme Court Cases

Activists fighting for abortion rights were able to bring to the Supreme Court two cases that decided for the states what was constitutional, and struck down almost all states' existing laws at the time. There were two contraception rulings, *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965, which allowed married couples the right to contraceptives without governmental interference, and *Eisenstadt v. Baird* in 1972, which extended those rights to unmarried people. These were predecessors to *Roe v. Wade*, which called upon *Griswold* and *Eisenstadt*'s privacy doctrines for its own ruling.

Since 1973, there have been seventeen Supreme Court rulings dealing with abortion (Shapiro, 1995). *Danforth*, *Harris*, *Matheson*, *Webster* and *Casey* are the most important decisions because they have had the most effect on abortion in this country, whether upholding or chipping away at *Roe v. Wade*.

The first decision following *Roe v. Wade* was the *Planned Parenthood of Central Missouri v. Danforth*, which was decided in 1976. In it, the Court upheld the statute requiring that a physician obtain written consent of the patient after informing her of the dangers and alternatives of abortion. The 1980 decision, *Harris v. McRae*, upheld the Hyde Amendment, which forbade the use of federal Medicaid funds for abortions. The following year was the *H.L. v. Matheson* ruling, in which the statute requiring parental consent for minors was upheld, providing that the woman is living with her parents, not emancipated and not married, and has not sought judicial approval.

The next major ruling was perhaps the most damaging to *Roe v. Wade* to date (Miller, 1996; Staggenborg, 1991), the *Webster* decision. This technically upheld their 1973 decisions, but allowed states to regulate abortions in the first trimester, which *Roe v. Wade* did not allow. In *Webster*, the Court allowed for fetal viability tests, parental consent, no use of public facilities for abortions, and abortion clinic regulations. This decision "had the effect of reawakening both sides at the state level" (Blanchard, 1994, p. 35), and, as Staggenborg (1991) argues, it was a "critical event, marking the beginning of a new round of intense conflict over abortion in which the state legislatures and political arenas would become the primary battlefields" (p. 137).

The *Webster* decision opened the floodgates, in effect, and many legislatures immediately passed laws restricting abortion. Among them were Utah, Louisiana, Guam, and Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania legislation led to the final major abortion decision, *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, which was handed down in 1992. The Court asserted that, while it was restricting *Roe v. Wade*, it was also reaffirming the "fundamental" right of a woman to choose. This was a 5-4 decision, and allowed for requirements that a woman hear about fetal development and then wait 24 hours before obtaining the procedure. While striking down the one part of

the law that required spousal consent, the Court upheld parental consent requirements and stipulations that physicians keep detailed records of their patients which may be subject to public disclosure. This decision claimed to be keeping the right to abortion "fundamental," but it also set up a new standard by which future laws can be judged: "undue burden." This standard allowed restrictions which, in the Court's view, did not present an "undue burden" on the pregnant woman. To the Court, parental notification laws and waiting periods did not constitute undue burden, and spousal consent did.

### Abortion Today

The Supreme Court decisions have allowed for many states to continue to pass strong restrictions on abortion. In the U.S. in 1995:

Eighteen anti-choice laws were enacted...Thirteen states enacted anti-choice laws...171 anti-choice bills were introduced...anti-choice legislation was introduced in 44 states. (NARAL, 1996c)

Eighteen states currently employ mandatory waiting periods; twenty-nine have parental notification or consent laws; and only seventeen use public funds for abortions in all or most circumstances (NARAL, 1996c). In 1996, the president vetoed legislation that both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed, which would outlaw the intact dilation and extraction procedure, the so-called "late-term," or "partial-birth" abortions.

Currently, there are approximately seven million people who are members of the National Right-to-Life Committee (Blanchard, 1994), which is considered to be the most powerful group fighting abortion rights today. As well, NARAL, the largest single-issue abortion-rights-centered organization, claimed 500,000 members at its most recent count (NARAL, 1996a), with Planned Parenthood, the largest reproductive

rights-centered organization, claiming over 17,000 volunteers and staff and more than 400,000 donors (Planned Parenthood, 1996).

This chapter has examined the long and interesting history of abortion in the United States, from the first laws enacted in 1821 to the most recent significant Supreme Court decisions and state legislation in 1995. Organizations involved in the abortion social movement were also discussed, both the pro-choice and the anti-choice sides of the debate. The next chapter will look at the literature dealing with social movements, as well as dramatism, and the dramatisic pentad. Finally, Chapter III deals with the research that has been done on abortion rhetoric to date.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision represented a giant step in the battle over a woman's right to choose abortion. Although the Supreme Court decision was essentially pro-choice in nature, in the sense that it legalized abortion without any interference from the state for at least the first trimester of pregnancy, people on both sides of the debate were neither satisfied nor any less determined to get what they wanted. For most pro-choice activists, that would mean no abortion laws at all; for many anti-choice activists, that would mean no legalized abortion at all. People involved in the issue would not give up or change their minds; in some cases, they would change their actions and rhetoric, but not their dedication to the issue.

This chapter will lay the groundwork for analyzing the rhetoric of activists who are involved in the abortion social movements. To do that, abortion must be outlined as the pro- and anti-choice movements before moving on to the more specific analysis of the rhetoric. In this chapter I will first examine some of the arguments about and the definition of social movements. Following that is a discussion of why the abortion controversy is indeed a social movement. I present one method of studying social movements, dramatism, next. I then examine some of the uses of the dramatic pentad. I will show why dramatism is the best means by which to study social movements as well as to answer my research question. Finally, I explore the literature on women's rights and the rhetoric of abortion activists.

## Arguments For and Against Social Movement Studies

There is some disagreement in the literature as to how to examine movements rhetorically. Indeed, some have asserted that there is no difference between studying the rhetoric of social movements and any other kind of rhetoric. McGee (1980) argues that what is referred to as a social movement is "a set of meanings" that the critic attributes to a situation "and not a phenomenon" that actually occurs (p. 233). Zarefsky (1980) agrees with McGee's stance; he also argues that the rhetorical situations as well as the rhetoric of social movements are not unique occurrences. Zarefsky also holds that the rhetorical behaviors of "movements" are not distinct from "nonmovements." In his critique of both Zarefsky and McGee, Simons (1980) concludes that, while there are important similarities between movements and nonmovements, there is indeed a difference in their rhetoric, and they should be studied as such.

While acknowledging arguments against social movement studies, I hold that it is important to examine abortion rhetoric first as occurring within social movements, because the movement perspective forces examination of rhetorical acts within a much larger interpretive scene. The critic must realize the "greater social forces" working in and around the rhetoric and the "importance of the interaction among a variety of external and internal supporters and foes" (Sillars, 1980, p. 18). Recognizing the scene in which the rhetoric occurs as a social movement allows for a more focused examination of how that rhetoric functions within the greater social context. Because the abortion issue consists of two rhetorical movements, and there are approaches to rhetorical analysis that are more appropriate than others for examining movements, I will look at the rhetoric of the abortion movements from this perspective using one of the most widely accepted methods for studying movements, dramatism.

## The Definition of a Movement

Rhetorical social movement studies have a relatively short history in communication studies. Griffin (1952) presented one of the first rhetorical models of social movement studies, which spawned much debate, discussion, and research on the rhetoric of social movements. Through 1992, one hundred-forty social movement studies had been published (Riches & Sillars, 1980; Williams, 1992). Charles Stewart, Craig Smith, and Robert Denton (1994) provide the most comprehensive view to date on the definition and characteristics of social movements. Their definition is useful for providing a foundation for understanding social movements because they provide a comprehensive view and list of characteristics for how a social movement functions rhetorically.

According to Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1994), a social movement has seven characteristics that together distinguish it from other types of collective action. The first characteristic is that a social movement must be organized. This means that there must be identifiable leaders as well as proclaimed followers within the organization. As Simons (1970) asserts, the survival and effectiveness of the social movement is dependent upon, among other things, loyalty to the leadership of the movement, a collective willingness to work for the goal of the movement, and member satisfaction. These are all indications that the social movement is indeed organized. If the first characteristic is not met by the group in question, then most likely the phenomenon is not a social movement. It can probably be classified as a trend, a fad or hostile outburst (Simons, 1970). This is not to say that a fad, trend, or unrest cannot or will not evolve into a social movement, but those things do not meet the first criterion (Stewart et al., 1994). It is also worth noting that within a social movement it is not necessary that the entire movement be represented in the same group, with the same leaders, and with one organization. Within a social movement, there can be, and often

are, many discernible groups working towards a certain goal (Woodward & Denton, 1988). And, there might be some differences in exactly what those goals are between organizations involved in the movement, as well as differences in strategies for achieving those goals (Blanchard, 1994). The organizations in a movement can be mistaken by the media and represented as social movements themselves, but they are most often merely different organizations working within a common movement (Stewart et al., 1994).

The second characteristic of a social movement is that the movement must be "an *uninstitutionalized* collectivity" (p. 5). This means that participation in the movement must be by "non-elite" individuals (Blanchard, 1994, p. 3), who do not have access to most of the resources and avenues that are available to institutions. By this definition, groups created by institutions in order to reach a goal are not social movements. These are merely establishments "changing themselves and striving for goals through institutionalized means and procedures" (Stewart et al., p. 5). On the other hand, in order for the social movement to even begin, there must be a "rising up and crying 'no' at the existing order" (Griffin, 1966, p. 460). Indeed, this may be the defining characteristic of social movements, because the movement must have the goal in mind to change the established order. Consequently, if the movement becomes a part of that order, it then ceases to be a social movement.

A movement must also be large in scope. This is determined by the number of people involved, the geographical area, the time in which it takes place, and the events that occur within the movement. The scope of a phenomenon alone "distinguishes social movements from most pressure groups, religious cults, lobbies, PAC's, campaigns, and protests" (Stewart et al., p. 7).

Scope includes many factors other than just the amount of people involved. Wilkinson (1976) argues there are other things that can make a movement significant besides just its size in number. These include timeliness, purpose, methods, and the notoriety of its members. Thus, even a movement that is small in size can become large in scope with these other factors taken into account.

Fourth, a social movement "proposes or opposes a program for change in societal norms, values, or both" (p. 9). The movement must advocate some type of change, or fight groups that are advocating the change. Stewart et al. (1994) present three different ways that movements do this, which they call programs, and any social movement is representing one of these three at any given time: the innovative program, the revivalistic program, and the resistance program. First, the innovative social program wants to replace or reform current norms and values that exist with new norms and values. The revivalistic program strives to go back to some type of an idealized past. Finally, the resistance program wishes to support the status quo and often arises in opposition to newly formed movements (Woodward & Denton, 1988).

Significant in this classification system is that the category in which a movement falls can change dependent upon things such as the perceptions of the audience determining the category, or the exact organization within the movement that is chosen as an example to be studied. People in a movement might view themselves in a reform movement, while a person opposed to their ideals might see it as a revolutionary movement (Stewart et al., 1994). Also, the category for a movement can change over time and vary from group to group. Stewart et al. (1994) conclude that it is possible that all movements can be placed along a reform-to-revolution continuum, and where a movement falls at any given time depends upon the perceptions of the audience.

The rhetoric of a social movement is also moral in tone, which is the fifth criterion for social movements. Griffin (1966) notes that, according to Kenneth Burke, all movements are "essentially moral - strivings for salvation, perfection, the 'good'" (p. 456). A movement's leaders and members, therefore, assume the sole power to "distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and ethical from unethical..." (Stewart et al., 1994, p. 11). And, as Cathcart (1980) argues, it is only within the tension of the moral arena that the establishment "and change-seeking groups alike begin to engage in the rhetorical and symbolic behaviors necessary to the recognition of a social movement" (p. 271). Therefore, moralism is necessary for the social movement to exist and to encounter opposition. This concept of moralism can perhaps help to explain some of the "radical" behavior of many social movements, from environmental activists destroying forestry machinery to anti-choice activists bombing abortion clinics. If the people in a movement believe that only they know and can dictate what is right and wrong, as well as that the establishment itself is immoral, then laws against their activities that were created by that "immoral" establishment would most likely become a small consideration in their actions for a cause, if indeed they are a consideration at all.

The next characteristic of social movements is that they must encounter opposition (Stewart et al., 1994). Cathcart (1978), who defines movements essentially as confrontations, agrees with this assertion. He later adds that the members of the movement are also struggling with each other and themselves (Cathcart, 1980). If the movement does not encounter this opposition, the movement would not need to exist, or would perhaps become a part of the establishment quickly, and then cease even to be a movement. Opposition is necessary. The institutions need not necessarily be governmental, and can range from universities to churches to businesses; any institution which has access to resources to enable them to counter the movement's

actions (Woodward & Denton, 1988). The members of the established order are usually not willing to accept too many challenges to norms and values. Indeed,

...for a movement to come into being there must be one or more actors who, perceiving that the "good order" is in reality a faulty order full of absurdity and injustice, cry out...that...salvation cannot be achieved unless there is an immediate corrective applied to the established order. On the other hand, there must be a reciprocating act from the establishment or counter rhetors which perceive the demands of the agitator rhetors, not as calls for correction or re-righting the prevailing order, but as direct attacks on the foundations of the established order. (Cathcart, 1972, p. 87)

Once this happens, and the institutions have responded to the movement, institutions then have the ability to shape the movement itself. The established order can "repress, partially incorporate, give symbolic reassurance to" the social movement through their actions (Zald & McCarthy, 1977, p. 5). For example, President Bush provided this type of reassurance for the anti-choice movement when he refused to speak out against the illegal activities of anti-choice activists when they staged demonstrations in Wichita, Kansas in 1991 (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1993).

The seventh and final characteristic is the pervasiveness of persuasion within movements. A movement must meet several requirements if it is to remain a movement long enough to change what it wants to change, and persuasion is used for each of those four requirements. They are: transform perceptions of reality, prescribe and sell courses of action, mobilize the disaffected, and sustain the movement over time (Stewart et al., 1994). Persuasion is not just something that the movement uses at certain times or with certain audiences. To satisfy the above requirements, the movement utilizes, along with occasionally coercion and bargaining, persuasion in all of its efforts: to convince people of the movement's ideas about history and society by focusing on certain instances and ignoring others; to convince people to act the way the

movement sees fit; to convince unconvinced people to join their cause; and to keep people in the movement motivated.

### Abortion Rhetoric and Social Movements

The abortion issue meets each of the conditions for a social movement advanced by Stewart, Smith, and Denton. There are some of the seven characteristics that the abortion movement clearly illustrates more so than other features, but every defining characteristic of movements can be found within the abortion controversy, both the pro-choice and the anti-choice side.

First, the abortion movements are organized. There are clearly identifiable organizations on both sides, each with leaders and followers. On the pro-choice side, there are groups such as National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League and Voters for Choice, which are dedicated solely to preserving reproductive choice (Radl, 1989), as well as the National Organization for Women and Feminist Majority, which include abortion as one of the issues in which they believe and for which they fight. Blanchard (1994) presents twenty abortion-centered organizations who fight against abortion rights. Some of those are: Concerned Women for America, Missionaries for the Unborn, Lambs of Christ, and, the most vocal and the largest, The National Right to Life Committee, which claimed seven million members in 1992, more than any other group in the anti-choice side (Blanchard, 1994).

Neither the pro-choice nor the anti-choice movement is institutionalized, which is the second characteristic of social movements. While it can be argued that the pro-choice movement is indeed a part of the establishment, because of *Roe v. Wade* and subsequent decisions (Bowers et al., 1993), it is also clear that both the pro-choice and anti-choice activists are unsatisfied with the current status of the laws, and both are dedicated to making their view the one that is accepted by the establishment. It is also a

resistance movement, fighting the anti-choice activists in their attempts to outlaw abortion. Each side does have religious organizations, political action committees (PACs), and groups that are officially sanctioned by members of the establishment, such as the Roman Catholic Church or different businesses and government officials; however, these institutions do not represent the whole or even the majority of the people in movement.

Being large in scope is perhaps the most easily recognizable characteristic of the abortion movement. There is not only a large enough number of people involved, but there are also enough places wherein abortion has a group representing a viewpoint to qualify as something that is indeed large. Every state and many towns and cities have a chapter of NARAL, and every state also has a chapter of the Right to Life Committee. Abortion has existed as a controversial issue for more than one hundred and fifty years in this country, so clearly the movement is well established. Finally is the condition of simply having enough events to qualify as a movement. Ignoring the violence and criminal activities of a small faction of abortion activists, there are still enough events involving abortion to represent this characteristic. In 1992, for example, in what is considered the largest single demonstration in the history of the nation's capital, three quarters of a million people marched for reproductive rights in Washington, D.C. (Monagle, 1995). Anti-choice activists, such as the Lambs for Christ, demonstrate in different cities every year by creating "life chains" wherein a group of people stand holding anti-choice signs across a major street in a city to demonstrate their support for the unborn. Sometimes these "life chains" can go on for many miles (Pierson, 1990).

Fourth is the characteristic of proposing or opposing societal norms and values, a requirement that clearly fits the abortion movement. There are three different programs here: innovative, revivalistic, and resistance; and at different times in the history of the movement, the anti-choice and pro-choice sides have represented, or still

represent, each of those three. Of the three programs, there is first the innovative social movement, which strives to reform the norms and values that exist now. The pro-abortion (as it was called then)/ pro-choice movement in the fifties and sixties was essentially this type of program, attempting to get legislatures to implement abortion reform laws; or, as in the case of many feminists of the time, completely repeal existing laws (Kaplan, 1995). The original anti-choice movement, led by the regular physicians, was this type of program, initiating legislation that did not exist before in essentially every state that restricted or eliminated almost all abortion rights.

Next is the revivalistic movement, which involves people idealizing some time in the past that they hold as better than the present. When it is examined in a different way, the pro-choice movement of the fifties and sixties was also representing this program, striving to go back to a time when there were no formal abortion laws at all, although movement goals were not always represented that way by the media or the people in the movement. The anti-choice movement since *Roe v. Wade* is also a revivalistic program. Anti-choicers, for the most part, would like to go back to the "idealized" pre-*Roe v. Wade* times, when abortion was illegal in most states (Blanchard, 1994).

Finally, there is the resistance movement, which supports the status quo and often arises in opposition to newly formed movements (Woodward & Denton, 1988). While the pro-choice movement of today has obviously existed for a while, it can be seen that the organizations and people who are pro-choice today are fighting a different fight than they have been in previous years. With the legalization of abortion in 1973, the anti-choice movement was forced to rise up in opposition to the establishment. The anti-choice movement has evolved, particularly in the past decade, both in member size and scope, as well as in tactics used (Blanchard, 1994; Blanchard & Pruitt, 1993; Condit, 1991; Faludi, 1991; Simonds, 1996), and, consequently, the pro-choice side

has had to evolve as well to resist those changes and defend women's rights. Granted, pro-choicers are continually fighting to change some of the existing laws. However, they are also supporting the status quo, in that as recently as the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* Supreme Court decision, a woman's right to abortion was essentially supported. Even the members of the establishment have been forced to rise up and oppose the ever-changing anti-choice movement in that support of the status quo. An example of this is in the Wichita, Kansas Operation Rescue demonstration in the summer of 1991, wherein the pro-choicers were energized by the anti-choice opposition and came out to fight, even making a hero out of one of the doctors who was harassed by the anti-choice demonstrators (Bowers et al., 1993).

The rhetoric of abortion activists is inherently moral in tone, which is feature number five. Moral strivings that bring "human agencies into conflict" (Cathcart, 1972, p. 87) are at the heart of social movements. A quick look at the rhetorical statements of both viewpoints will prove that abortion activists believe, as Stewart, Smith, and Denton assert, that they alone are representing what is ethical, moral, virtuous, and righteous, and have a moral obligation to raise the consciousness of the people and "thus reveal the moral, intellectual, and coercive bankruptcy of the opposition" (p. 11). In fact, the word "moral" itself is used often by both sides of the abortion movement. Alan Keys, an anti-choice Republican activist, in a speech given in 1995, used phrases such "moral obligation," "moral capacity, and "moral identity" to aid in his argument against abortion rights. Anti-choice activists often portray, as Mr. Keys does, abortion as an immoral act and an abomination against God. Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority, in a 1995 *Ms.* article, argued that abortion is right because, not only is abortion legal, but it is "ethical, medically necessary, moral, responsible" (p. 60). Pro-choicers often make the argument that abortion is a moral

decision, in which mothers make the choice not to bring an unwanted child into the world.

The last two characteristics of a social movement, encountering opposition and pervasiveness of persuasion, help to complete the definitional requirements for showing abortion as consisting of social movements. First, both positions encounter opposition from each other as well as from the establishment, be the establishment the government, law enforcement, organized religion, or all of these. Second, both pro-choice activists and anti-choice activists have met every requirement that falls under this category, as I have shown in this thesis: (1) transform perceptions of reality, which each side does by highlighting what it sees as the most important part of the debate and ignoring others (Condit, 1990; Luker, 1984); (2) they prescribe and sell courses of action - this issue exists because people want to tell others to do what they see as moral and correct; (3) they have mobilized the disaffected because both sides have clearly gotten millions to join their cause (Blanchard, 1994); and (4) they have sustained the movement over time because it has existed for over one hundred and fifty years in this country (Mohr, 1979). Along with the other six characteristics, this is evidence that the abortion controversy is indeed comprised of two social movements.

In sum, to utilize the Stewart et al. (1994) synopsis (p. 17), the pro-choice and anti-choice movements are organized, uninstitutionalized, large collectivities that have emerged to bring about and resist programs of change in societal norms and values. Both views operate through persuasive strategies and encounter opposition from different institutions and each other in the moral struggle for or against abortion rights.

In this section I have presented a review of the literature on social movements, and examined the characteristics of the most comprehensive definition of movements to date, that of Stewart, Smith, and Denton (1994). I have also shown abortion to be comprised of two social movement using the characteristics listed in the Stewart et al.

(1994) definition. In the next section, a method that is utilized for studying social movements dramatism, is discussed.

### Dramatism as a Method

#### The Definition of Dramatism

Now that it has been established what a social movement is, and that abortion is indeed a social movement by Stewart, Smith, and Denton's (1994) definition, I will introduce one method of studying social movements: Kenneth Burke's dramatism. In this section, I discuss the basic components of dramatism as well as the dramatistic pentad and ratios of the pentad. Following that, I consider how dramatism and the pentad have been used in the past as rhetorical methods, then I show why conceptualizing movements as drama is an important idea. Finally, I conclude with an explanation of how I use this method of criticism in an attempt to answer my research questions.

"Dramatism" is the word that Kenneth Burke uses to describe the examination of human motivation through the study of drama. The dramatistic approach is designed to help the critic discover attributions of motives in rhetoric, which are determined from how the rhetor utilizes language. Burke chose the word "dramatism" to describe this method, because, "it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action" (Burke, 1969, p. xxii). The pentad allows a "synoptic way to talk about" a rhetor's "talk-about. For the resources of the five terms figure in the utterances about motives, throughout all human history" (Burke, 1969, p. 56).

An important idea advanced by Burke that is central to the concept of dramatism should be pointed out here, which is that language itself makes action, as opposed to motion (Burke, 1969, p. 61). Only humans are capable of action, because only they can create language through the use of symbols. This concept of action is at the heart of dramatism, because the rhetorician is to study language in order to discover the motive for the action, with dramatism as a tool. Action, or symbolic activity, has three conditions which must be met: choice, purpose or will, and motion. Without choice, there is no action, merely motion, like a non-sentient animal or an inanimate object. "Purpose" implies there is intent to choose to perform the action. Motion, while it can exist without action, is necessary for action, because while "no symbolic action is possible without a grounding in nonsymbolic motion" (Burke, 1978, p. 330). Because humans are inherently symbol-using animals, and therefore capable of action, by the definition presented above, the drama of human relations can be discovered through a study of the language (symbols) that people use (Rueckert, 1966).

### The Dramatistic Pentad

This language Burke utilizes to describe human activities as dramas is encompassed in what is called the dramatistic pentad. The pentad enables the critic to look at the language of a rhetor from every perspective - from five interrelated motivational or causal points of view (Holland, 1966). These are the five key terms of dramatism: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose (Burke, 1969). Burke asserts that motives can be discovered through the use of these five principles, because the rhetorician, when analyzing human action, must have for each of the parts of the drama: a word;

...that names the *act* (names what took place in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*), and the *purpose*. (Burke, 1969, p. xv)

Burke also offers another dimension for the pentad, which is often included in pentadic analyses. That other dimension is attitude. Attitude designates the manner in which the act was committed by the agent. It is not a sixth part of the pentad, although Burke says he often wishes he had presented it that way, and created a hexad (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991). Rather, attitude falls under the heading of the agent, because attitude is the state of mind of the agent that could or could not lead to the performing of the act (Burke, 1969).

It is also important not to mistake the purpose for the motive, for they are not the same thing. For example, when an individual speaks about the immorality of abortion, she/he probably has the purpose of stopping the act in question. However, that does not tell us the *motive* behind the rhetoric, or the act. The motive may be the person is religious and thinks God is against abortion; she/he may believe that women should not be allowed to make choices about their own reproduction; or the person may believe that freedom of choice is irrelevant in the broad scope of the world. These are but a few possible motives, not purposes.

Because Burke holds that human beings act through language, it follows that he also believed the way a person views the world manifests itself in her/his language use. The person creates messages that highlight a certain part or parts of the five elements of the pentad, and this inherently reveals something about her/him. Burke (1969) referred to that something in different places in his *Grammar of Motives* as the "motive-force" (p.9), "background" (p. 12) or "context" (p. 41), but, as I stated above, the key here is

that the word "motive" not be mistaken for "intent" or "purpose." The rhetor's intent or purpose is usually fairly obvious, particularly when that individual is arguing for or against abortion rights, so discovery of intent does not tell us much. The motive, however, is usually less clear. This is where the pentad comes in. The five terms of the pentad are loci of motivation for acts, so the word "motive" stands for something more than intent. It means essentially that the critic determines where the rhetor is coming from because it is revealed through her/his language, which necessarily makes use of the pentad.

A rhetor's locus of motives can be discovered by examining her/his language through what are referred to as the ratios of the parts of the pentad. Ratio is the word Burke uses to describe pairing of two elements of the pentad in order to learn the relationship between the two and the effect they have on one another. Burke gives a possibility of ten ratios that allow for an in-depth analysis of those relationships: scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose (Burke, 1969, p. 15). These ratios can also be reversed to give an additional ten ratios.

When examining all of the possible ratios, the critic can discover which terms receive the greatest attention by the rhetor. This aids in the discovery of the attributions of the motive, or motives, behind the rhetoric. The use of specific ratios does not need to be applied to just the verbal message itself, where the rhetorical artifact is seen as the act, the speaker is the agent, and so on, which is an external pentadic analysis. The pentad can be used to study what is meant by the verbal message: how the rhetor uses ratios to highlight what is important to her/him. This is what Burke means when he says the critic should use the pentad for an internal - that is, within the rhetorical artifact itself - analysis of the rhetoric. Foss (1989) argues that this is the most effective and insightful method of using the pentad.

The internal use of the pentad should focus not only on the actual words themselves, but rather the meaning behind the words, for discovery of the ratios and then motive. Often, what is said and what is meant by the words are in conflict with one another. The critic is to "ask of the work the explicit questions to which its structure had already implicitly supplied the answers" (Burke, 1978. p. 332), by determining which part or parts of the pentad are the focus of the rhetor, and, by that same token, which parts of the pentad are ignored.

As one example of an internal analysis, by Ling (1970), in Edward Kennedy's 1969 Chappaquidick speech, Kennedy's overt statements are exactly the opposite of what is actually presented in the speech itself. Kennedy says explicitly in the speech that he seeks not to escape blame for the accident, and then proceeds to, in his explanations take the focus away from his own actions by discussing only the scene. He is blaming the scene for the accident by repeatedly stating that he did not have control over what happened. Kennedy shifted the focus of the speech from the agent to the scene. This speech is just one example of how there can be "rhetorical motives behind the manipulations of the grammar" (Burke, 1969, p. 105). The study, as well, is an example of how the pentad has been used for an internal analysis of rhetoric in the past.

### The Pentad and Movements

Dramatism, and the pentad, can also be used for other types of analysis besides an internal ratio analysis of one speech or rhetorical situation. It can be used in any study in which the determination of a motive, or motives, is sought. It is also used as a method for "external" pentadic analysis of a single rhetorical artifact (Foss, 1989). The rhetoric of social movements has also been examined with dramatism as a method. Use

of dramatism for the study of social movements can utilize the pentad for both an external study, or an internal examination of the ratios presented by the rhetoric.

There is much agreement in the literature that dramatism is an appropriate method to use when studying movements (Cathcart, 1972; Griffin, 1966; Griffin, 1980; Stewart et al., 1994; Wilkinson, 1976). In fact, Griffin (1966) argues that "to study a movement is to study a drama" (p. 462). Like dramas, social movements contain all of the essential elements for the making of a comedy or a tragedy: different scenes, acts, agents, agencies, and purposes. Also, within this social movement "drama," as in an actual drama, there are "heroes and heroines, victims and villains, successes and failures, hope and disillusionment" (Stewart et al., 1994, p. 71). Dramatism, according to the Riches and Sillars (1980) survey of current social movement criticism, was used in seven social movement studies up until 1980. Since that time, dramatism has been used as a method in at least five social movement studies (Williams, 1992).

Often, when studying the rhetoric of a social movement, the rhetorician does not present it as a movement study *per se*. However, this does not mean it is not a movement study. One such example wherein the critic analyzed a movement with the pentad is Brummett's (1979) article studying the rhetoric of gay rights and anti-gay rights activists. Gay rights is indeed a movement, and Brummett looks at the rhetoric of both movements within the gay rights controversy, using dramatism and applying the concept of ratios. In his article, Brummett examines arguments both for and against gay rights to determine which aspect of the pentad is highlighted by the rhetor representing each viewpoint, and from that extrapolates the ideology from which each is operating. Brummett uses slogans, editorials, and statements made by activists as his rhetorical artifacts.

This thesis performs a similar task, analyzing the pro-choice and anti-choice movements in the current abortion controversy. Texts from key organizations within both movements will be used to determine the role of the mother in their rhetoric and, from that, the ideology of the rhetor. In some artifacts, she will be the agent; in some, she is the scene; and in still others, she may be the agency. The way the group's members view the place of women in the world, or the value they place on the agent or free will, will be manifested in the rhetoric. That can be discovered by determining which role the mother plays in their messages.

In sum, Burke believes that what constitutes ideal criticism of rhetoric is "something more than historical, biographical, sociological, or psychological criticism;" it is, instead, "the 'whatness' that emerges from a consideration of the overlap and interrelationship" of the five approaches the pentad offers the critic (Holland, 1966, pp. 301-302). This whatness from the relationships of the parts of the pentad will present the best tool for determining the answer to my research questions. My first research question deals with the mother's role in society according to the rhetor; the second research question seeks to determine the motives prevalent in the rhetoric of different groups. Dramatism is the only rhetorical perspective which includes both the examination of one's placement by the rhetor in the greater whole, and an investigation of the guiding motive.

### Review of Abortion Rhetoric Literature

A review of literature on abortion rhetoric would not be complete without acknowledging that which has been written on feminism and women's rights. For this literature review, I will focus on the research dealing with the rhetoric of abortion activists from the communication studies field, as well as significant works in the field of women's studies. I will also show why these studies are incomplete in their

examination of the rhetorical construction of the mother within the rhetoric, and why it is important to look at the rhetoric from this perspective.

Arguably the most significant researcher in the field of communications with respect to abortion rhetoric is Celeste Condit. Condit (1984) looks at the different stages in recent abortion rhetoric, such as the narratives used in the 1960's and the clashing ideologies of the late 1970's. Her 1991 book *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric* is the one of the most complete to date on the subject. It follows up on some of the arguments she presented previously and examines all forms of abortion rhetoric, pro- and anti-choice, from film and television to the courts to the recent violence of abortion activists. Condit utilizes discourse analysis to study "ideographs, narratives, and character-types used in the controversy" (p. 14). The book provides an overview of much rhetoric in the abortion controversy, but not specific analysis of the role of the mother within the rhetoric.

Zurakowski (1994) studies the rhetoric of pro-choice activists. She performs a case study on the rhetoric of the Minnesota Council for the Legal Termination of Pregnancy, and, using a social movement approach, determines that the arguments in the abortion controversy "shifted to ones more 'feminine' in nature and form as a result of the infusion of women into the movement" between 1966 and 1973 (p. 46). Zurakowski concludes that because, as in Gilligan's (1984) view, women operate under a different world view from men, what Gilligan calls the ethic of care, their influence on the abortion debate is clear in the rhetoric that came about after their joining the group.

Several researchers have examined the legal rhetoric about abortion in several Supreme Court decisions. Bartanen (1987) analyzes the rhetoric of dissent in Justice O'Connor's dissenting *Akron* opinion. Hagan (1976) examines the choice of arguments and evidence used in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, both by the arguing

attorneys and the majority opinion written by Harry Blackmun. She determines that the semantics of the abortion controversy reveal the status of it; i.e., the use of the word "fetal tissue" by the pro-choice side and "unborn child" by the anti-choice side shows the philosophical differences between the two groups.

Solomon (1980), Lake (1984) Haaland (1989), and Branham (1991) examine anti-choice rhetoric. Lake (1984) and Solomon (1980) use Burkian analysis. Lake argues that anti-choice rhetoric dealing with the "human moral condition" is grounded in the Burkian idea of guilt, that it victimizes women, and that it "posits childbearing and legislation against abortion as twin paths to Redemption" (p. 427). Solomon (1980) argues that anti-choice rhetoric aimed at "rallying the troops" uses a motif of guilt and redemption to define their activities and shape members' perceptions of their struggle. Branham (1991) and Haaland (1989) both examine the effectiveness of the anti-choice propaganda film *The Silent Scream*, which is intended to convert people to the anti-choice movement. Branham also examines the film *Eclipse of Reason*, a companion film to *The Silent Scream*. He looks at "conversion" tales of anti-choice activists in two of the most famous anti-choice films. He argues that the films' use of convert tales is ineffective, because they have the effect of alienating those whom they are trying to persuade. Haaland reaches the conclusion that the film *The Silent Scream* presents its message using inclusion and exclusion, along with implicit and explicit messages, to decontextualize the subject. Women, by their exclusion in the film, become either non-persons or merely containers of the fertilized ova.

Outside of the communication studies field, Friedan, Thurer, Gilligan, Blanchard, and Staggenborg present analysis of women's rights and/or the abortion movements. Friedan (1963) wrote what is considered to be the catalytic work of the women's movement, in which she concluded that women, although not "allowed" by society to feel that way, were not being fulfilled by only becoming mothers. Friedan

argues that women do not hold a "mystique" just because they can give birth, and must "learn to be complete, then, not as a woman, but as a human being" (p. 361). Thurer (1994) examines the way that cultures mythologize mothers, which includes an analysis of views of abortion in different societies. Thurer reaches the conclusion that throughout history, the mother has;

been feared and revered. She has been the subject of taboos and witch hunts, mandatory pregnancy and confinement in a separate sphere. She has endured appalling insults and perpetual marginalization. She has also been the subject of glorious painting, chivalry, and idealization. Through it all, she has rarely been consulted. She is an object, not a subject. (Thurer, 1994, p. 299)

Gilligan, whose landmark book *In a Different Voice* has sparked and influenced much research on women's roles and rights, argues that women are taught to believe in the ethic of self-sacrifice, which, she claims, "has complicated the course of women's development by pitting the moral issue of goodness against the adult questions of responsibility and choice" (p. 132). Blanchard (1994) presents a history of the rhetoric of the anti-choice movement, while Staggenborg (1991) does the same for the pro-choice movement.

The literature to date on abortion rhetoric has not done a complete examination of the place of the pregnant woman, or mother, in the rhetoric. While several studies have looked at the mother in the context of a larger study, or done analyses which include conclusions about the treatment of the mother, none has focused solely on the rhetorical role of the mother and the implications of that role. This thesis is dedicated to filling that gap. This thesis analyzes the rhetoric of abortion activist groups in hopes of realizing "where the groups are coming from." Women who are pregnant mothers are viewing rhetoric from the role of the mother, but thus far abortion has not been studied

from that perspective exclusively. Therefore, if we study abortion rhetoric from the view of the mother, it might help in our understanding of the abortion issue.

### Selection of Material for Analysis

There is a criterion for selection of the groups whose rhetoric is to be analyzed. That criterion is utilizing the rhetoric from groups that have the greatest voice in the abortion controversy today. The "greatest voice" is measured by one or more of the following: The number of people in the organization, the media attention the group receives, the influence it has had on its movement, and the power the group has in the political arena. All of the following groups but Planned Parenthood Federation of America are mentioned in one of the books about the two movements (Blanchard, 1994; Staggenborg, 1991; Pierson, 1990; Radl, 1990).

This criterion for group selection presents six groups: NOW, Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), and NARAL, for the pro-choice movement with the National Right-to-Life Committee (NRTLTC), The American Life League (ALL), and Operation Rescue (OR) representing the anti-choice movement. With 250,000 members in 600 chapters in 50 states (NOW, 1995a), NOW is the largest organization of feminist activists in the United States, and abortion is one of their key issues. NARAL and PPFA, with 500,000 members and 400,000 donors, respectively, are two of the most powerful pro-choice voices on abortion in the political arena.

The NRTLTC is a "splinter group" from one of the most powerful organizations in the abortion conflict today, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, and claims over seven million members. Operation Rescue was also co-founded by the author of what is considered the catalytic book for the recent anti-choice movement, *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortion in America*, Joseph Scheidler (Radl, 1989). ALL is a spin-off group from the NRTLTC, but is even more

focused on activism to be conducted outside of clinics and doctors' houses. Along with Operation Rescue, this organization is likely to have members picketing clinics and using "nonviolent direct action" to stop abortion (Blanchard, 1994, p. 63). Through their tactics, mirrored by similar groups, these organizations have had an influence on the availability of abortion in the United States (Blanchard, 1994).

Once the groups are identified, there is one criterion by which the artifacts from the selected organizations is determined. The artifacts that represent the most consistently accepted viewpoint, aimed at a general audience, for each group are analyzed. I examined the artifacts and determined which arguments appear the most consistently, and excluded any arguments from each group that the other organizations might consider "controversial." This criterion also precludes messages in direct attack of another view, or messages created exclusively for a sympathetic audience. For each group, I called the headquarters for the organization and asked for an "information packet" to be sent to me. I also went to each of the organizations' Homepages on the Internet, and downloaded artifacts from there as well. The results were, for each group, five or more of the following types of artifacts: Pamphlets or brochures, information from that organization's Homepage, newsletters, newspapers, magazines, press releases, and statements of policy or mission statements. Here is what I have from each group, and, after receiving, examined to find themes present throughout all their artifacts:

From NOW are the following: Two copies of their newsletter, the *National NOW Times*, a catalogue of items that list NOW slogans and brochures, and three Websites linked from their Homepage.

From Planned Parenthood Federation are the following: One pamphlet, seven "Fact Sheet" brochures, and five Websites linked from their Homepage.

From NARAL are following: One copy of each of their information booklets *Reproductive Rights Issues Manual*, *Sexuality Education in America: A State-by-state Review*, and *Promoting Reproductive Choices*; three pamphlets, two Websites linked from their Homepage, and a newsletter from their Texas affiliate, TARAL.

From NRTLTC are the following: Two copies of their newsletter, *National Right to Life Committee News*, four pamphlets, two Websites linked from their Homepage, and a copy of their 1993 *Convention Handbook*.

From the American Life League are the following: One ALL Website written by their president, Judie Brown, six pamphlets, and several articles from a copy of their magazine, *Celebrate Life: Celebrating and Defending Human Life*.

From Operation Rescue National are the following: One press release, four pamphlets, and two Websites linked from their Homepage.

This chapter has examined the nature of social movements. It first defined social movements, using Stewart, Smith, and Denton's (1994) characteristics. Next was an argument why abortion is necessarily a social movement, by that definition. The next part of this chapter was an analysis of dramatism. Also present within that analysis was Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad, a discussion of different methods of using the pentad, and an argument as to why dramatism is indeed a good method for the study of social movements. The intended use of the pentad as a method for studying movements, and why it is the best possible tool for the purposes of this study, was presented. The chapter concluded with a review of abortion rhetoric and women's rights literature. The next chapter will present the analysis of the artifacts selected for the study.

CHAPTER IV  
ANALYSIS OF THE RHETORIC OF  
ABORTION ACTIVIST GROUPS

This chapter explores the rhetoric of the six most vocal activist groups involved in the abortion movements, three pro-choice: National Organization for Women (NOW), National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL), and Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA); and three anti-choice groups: National Right to Life Committee, Inc. (NRTL), American Life League (ALL,) and Operation Rescue National (OR). The analysis of the artifacts of each group provides overarching themes and common language use present in their rhetoric, which aid in the discovery of the rhetorical role the mother plays, which is the first question guiding the research in this thesis. In this chapter, I examine first the rhetoric of the pro-choice groups, look at the anti-choice groups, and then explore the conclusions that can be drawn based on the rhetorical construction of the mother by the groups in each movement.

First, I provide a brief overview of the role of the mother in the rhetoric of the three pro-choice groups, and proceed to detail the seven common themes which emerge from the analysis of the groups' artifacts. These themes represent a rhetorical construction of the mother. Next I look at each pro-choice organization individually for arguments and language they use that are not present in the other organizations' artifacts. This provides further evidence for the consistency of the role of the mother. In the case of pro-choice groups, the mother is exclusively presented as the agent. The analysis of anti-choice groups will follow the same procedure, first briefly examining their rhetoric as a whole, then the common themes present throughout most of their

artifacts, and finally the specific rhetoric of individual groups, in each case determining what role the mother plays. She is the scene and the agency for anti-choice activists. The final section of this chapter will answer what the rhetorical construction of the mother within the rhetoric reveals about the group behind it.

### The Pro-choice Movement

As demonstrated in Chapter III, Burke presents the five parts of the pentad as the act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. The agent is defined as the person or kind of person who performs the act (Burke, 1969). In terms of the Burkian definition of what an agent is, an analysis of the artifacts of the three pro-choice groups revealed in all of their rhetoric the role of the mother to be consistently that of agent. The act is generally presented as that of making the decision about the pregnancy and abortion, and the mother is the one performing the act.

It can be seen in their rhetoric that the three pro-choice groups believe that abortion is inherently a woman's issue, that the mother is the one who acts, as an agent acts, by making the choice, and that it is up to her to carry out her decision. Their rhetoric never ignores the mother. Indeed, the mother is usually the focus, rather than the background, of their rhetoric.

These organizations manipulate language differently and highlight different terms in their rhetoric; however, the common link is the focus on the mother-as-agent. As can be seen in the following detailed examination of their language, these organizations often relate abortion directly to women's rights. They also discuss the words "choice" and "reproductive health choices" much of the time. These are but a couple of examples of the rhetorical construction of the mother as agent in the rhetoric of the pro-choice movement. In this section, I will first discuss the seven themes the organizations' rhetoric shares: the concept of "rights," the theme "freedom," the use of

the words "decision" and "choice," the theme of life and death and the "back-alley" abortion, the words used to describe the pregnancy, the public and private domain, and the idea of "reproductive health." This will be followed by an examination of the National Organization for Women, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America, discussing the individual groups' ideas and language perhaps not shared with the others.

#### Common Language and Themes: The Mother as the Agent

This part of Chapter IV is dedicated to examining specific themes, those that are found in much of the literature from at least two of the three pro-choice groups I have chosen for analysis. The following are the seven most prevalent themes I found. Most were present in all three groups' artifacts, but all of them rhetorically construct the mother as the agent.

#### "Rights"

This is perhaps the most commonly shared idea between these groups. All three groups consistently use the concept of "woman's rights" or "human rights" to further their arguments. Frequent application of the word "rights," or implying that abortion is a mother's right, which NOW, NARAL, and PPFA do often throughout their rhetoric, is the first indication of casting mothers in the role of agent.

In the mission statements and general information pages of all three pro-choice organizations, as well as throughout their pamphlets, the concept of rights is either implicitly or explicitly utilized. First, at the top of their "General Information about NOW" Webpage, the question is posed, "Who cares about women's rights?" Under this heading, many feminist causes supported by NOW are listed. Abortion rights is

included in the list of issues. Also, in a description of their history, NOW refers to anti-choice activists in a very specific way: "...and thousands of abortions rights opponents were bused to Capitol Hill by the Christian Coalition...(after the *NOW v. Scheidler* Supreme Court decision which allowed for the use of anti-racketeering laws to prosecute anti-choice "extremists") (NOW, 1995b, p. 3). It can be seen that NOW refuses to see the debate in any other terms other than an argument about what belongs to the mother: her *rights*. These are references to the mother's rights in the abortion debate.

Similar to NOW, PPFA also directly equates abortion rights with women's rights. "Planned Parenthood recognizes the interrelationship between reproductive freedom and social, economic, and political rights for women" (PPFA, 1995d). In PPFA's mission statement, adopted in 1984 and revised in 1995, it is stated that "Planned Parenthood believes in the fundamental right of each individual, throughout the world, to manage his or her fertility" (PPFA, 1995a, p. 1). PPFA also uses the phrase, "fundamental right" in their policy statement, which was adopted in 1989. It is explained that reproductive freedom, to have or not to have children, is the "fundamental right of every individual" (PPFA, 1995c). Always the "fundamental right" is whether or not to have a child. The individual is the focus here, what she or he has the right to. Again, the person managing her/his fertility is the agent.

In its very name, National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, NARAL shows their rhetorical construction of the mother as agent. The mother has abortion and reproductive *rights*. "Learn More about NARAL" explains how they are dedicated to "building broad-based support for the right to safe, legal abortion" (NARAL, 1996b). They also see restrictive abortion laws as an attempt by the government to interfere with the rights of mothers. "Government and religious leaders have intruded upon women's reproductive rights...in unprecedented and alarming ways

[since the fall of 1995]" (TARAL, 1996, p. 1). The mother has the right not to have children if she chooses. Only by viewing the mother as an agent can this conclusion be reached: she can perform the act, choosing abortion or not choosing abortion, and she has the right to do so.

NOW refers implicitly to mothers' rights, who are therefore agents, when the statement is made that, "NOW supports access to safe and legal abortion" (NOW, 1995a, p. 2) . The agent, and no one else, has the right to access to safe and legal abortion. This theme suggests that mothers deserve to have the option to decide on abortion. This option is presented as the potential act: the decision by the mother to have an abortion if she so chooses, and the carrying out of that decision. This act, the exercising of rights, is something that comes from the agent, insofar as acts are derivatives of agents (Burke, 1969).

The agent, the person who performs the act (Burke, 1969, p. xv), is the one with the *right* to do so, according to these groups. In the view of pro-choice activists, the mother is the agent because she inherently has the right to perform an act; and any efforts to restrict her attempts to exercise her rights is an attempt to trample on her rights to behave as an agent. The mother is the agent with sole rights to those decisions.

### "Freedom"

"Freedom," along with "rights," perhaps more than any other words that are featured in their rhetoric, reveal how these pro-choice activist groups view the role of the mother in the abortion controversy. She is unquestionably the agent, who must be provided by the government with the freedom to behave as such, so, "freedom" is another concept that is used frequently in the rhetoric of these groups, both implicitly and explicitly.

Explicitly, in many cases, throughout their artifacts, these pro-choice groups refer to abortion rights in the phrase, "Reproductive freedom" (NARAL, 1996a, p. 1, 1996b, p. 1; PPFA, 1992a, p. 2, 1995c, p. 1, 1995d, p. 1). The implication is, that if someone is to be free, she must first have the ability to control her reproduction. The mother is the agent in this phrase, because the rhetoric is bestowing upon her the characteristics of someone with the freedom to act. At the very least, she is someone with the ability to act, who should be granted the freedom to do so.

In NARAL's literature, it can be seen that freedom is an important concept in the abortion debate, although it is not stated explicitly at all times. Nearly all artifacts from NARAL include pictures of the Statue of Liberty, one of NARAL's most famous symbols; this is clearly equating abortion rights with freedom and liberty. The agent performs acts, but only if she has the freedom to do so, and the frequent use of the Statue of Liberty reflects that. They believe that access to abortion is paramount to a woman's freedom. They are equating the freedom to make the choice of abortion, the choice not to have children, with the freedom to which all Americans, men or women, are entitled, which the Statue of Liberty represents. The mother is the agent who must have that freedom.

Planned Parenthood provides another distinct example of implicitly equating abortion rights with a mother's freedom to act as an agent. This can be seen most clearly in one of their pamphlets, *Listen to these Anti-choice Leaders and Help Us Stop Them Before it's Too Late!*, wherein they are showing several statements from anti-choice activist, such as Joseph Scheidler, Judie Brown, and Randall Terry, as arguments for the pro-choice position. "They want to return women to a position of subservience!" declares the caption of one photograph, that of a crying Rev. Jimmy Swaggart, who is a staunch believer in the anti-choice position (PPFA, 1992,a p. 1). If abortion is readily available, PPFA argues, then and only then are women free to

behave as the agents they are. Otherwise, they are subservient to men, because, if they do not have safe, legal choices, they must risk their lives or have babies, and, again, men are making choices for them. According to Planned Parenthood, there is no freedom in that.

### "Decision" or "Choice"

"Decision" and "choice," as with nearly all pro-choice rhetoric, are favored arguments of pro-choice activists, and this can be easily seen first from the name they choose for themselves: they are not pro-abortion, they are pro-choice. This is true for all pro-choice groups. The word "choice," often interchanged with "decision," is present or implied throughout their newsletters, pamphlets, and Webpages (NARAL, 1996b; NOW, 1995b; PPFA, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d, 1996). There exists for mothers, according to these activists, the fundamental ability, right or freedom to *choose* to have or not to have children.

In Burke's pentad, the agent is the one who does the choosing. In pro-choicers' view, the mother, behaving as an agent, is the only one who can make choices about her body, her life and her future. Restrictive abortion laws try to take those choices away, and give the decision to someone else: the father of the baby, the woman's parents, or even, in the case of adolescents seeking abortions in many states, a federal judge (PPFA, 1992b). Any of these situations, according to the rhetoric, will relegate the mother to the background of the process of making the choice.

As they argue throughout their rhetoric, NARAL wants the mother to be at the helm of the decision-making. For example, in their slogans discussed on one of their Webpages, NARAL explains that they created a "Who Decides?" campaign, printed on posters, flyers, and buttons, which asks the question of women, men, and mothers: "Who decides - you or them?" (NARAL, 1996b). The answer to that question is clear

to NARAL: the mother decides. It is apparent here that they hold the mother to be the agent, the only one who should make this choice, because only when behaving as an agent can someone make decisions and choices. This is yet another example of how pro-choice rhetoric casts the mother in the role of agent.

Planned Parenthood also makes frequent use of the idea of choice in their rhetoric, much like NARAL (PPFA, 1995d, 1995c, 1996). However, at times, their application of this concept is not quite as explicit as that of NARAL. In their Mission Statement, there is an implication of their belief in the mother's right to make her own decisions and choices in the statement, "Reproductive self-determination must be voluntary and preserve the individual's right to privacy" (1995a). Self-determination can only come with the ability to make decisions on one's own. As with NARAL, by focusing on this type of statement, PPFA is showing how they believe the mother inherently has the right to act as an agent in making reproductive choices.

### Life and Death: The "Back-alley" Abortion

One of the most common themes throughout all pro-choice rhetoric is that of the "back-alley abortion." This is the idea that, as discussed in Chapter II, women have abortions by any means they feel necessary, legal or not, and that many women die from illegal abortions when restrictive abortion laws are implemented. NARAL, for example, makes use of this theme frequently; indeed, one of their pamphlets is titled *The Road to the Back Alleys*. Much of their literature makes the assumption that, because women must control their own lives and bodies, they will continue to do so, even if it is not safe (NARAL, 1994; NARAL, 1996c). In this theme, women, and mothers, are presented as agents. They are people who can and do make their own decisions, and will always make their own decisions, whether the laws agree with them

or not. The question is not whether the laws can prohibit women from choosing to have abortions, but rather, which is it going to be: safe or "back-alley?" The laws must protect the ability to choose a safe abortion, because mothers, according to NARAL, whether the laws want them to or not, will continue to behave and perform acts as agents.

NOW also discusses the "back-alley" theme, although not in so many words. In their "General Information" page on the Internet, in which they explain where NOW stands on a variety of issues, the rhetorical construction of the mother in terms of illegal abortion is revealed clearly under the "Reproductive Rights" heading. "NOW affirms that these (reproductive issues) are issues of life and death for women, not mere matters of choice" (NOW, 1995c, p. 2) is their first statement on the topic of abortion. They go on to state, "NOW supports access to safe and legal abortion..." Here it can be seen that the focus is on the mother as agent, because they are speaking of *her* life and *her* death, presumably from the back-alley abortion. Nowhere in this section do they mention the fetus, and this puts the mother firmly at the helm of their argument: "life and death for *women*."

### "A Pregnant Woman"

The use of language when discussing the condition of a woman who is pregnant reveals the groups' belief in the mother-as-agent. There are a variety of ways, seen in many different arguments, to express this concept, and the choices that pro-choice groups make to do so support the woman-as-agent rhetorical construction. It can be observed through NOW's comments on the late-term abortion issue, and through PPFA's choice of words to describe the pregnant woman, the state of being pregnant, and the abortion process.

First, in commenting on the late-term abortion issue, which is currently one of the most hotly debated issues in this country, NOW also reveals its placement of the mother as the agent, in two different ways. The controversy is discussed in one of their articles in their newspaper, the *National NOW Times*. "A woman's medical treatment became public domain again this fall as both houses of Congress passed a bill to ban a rare, late term-abortion procedure" (Bennett-Haigney, 1996, p. 1) is how one article in their newsletter begins. Here NOW is constructing the mother to be agent, in that the medical treatment in question belongs to her. Also present behind the language is the argument that the mother's medical treatment does not belong in the "public domain." Underlying this is the implicit understanding that NOW believes that a mother's medical treatment and pregnancy is something that belongs to her privately. This privacy is something only an agent can claim.

Second, their choice of phrases to describe this type of abortion also presents the mother as the agent. NOW uses a term for the procedure, "late-term abortion," (Bennett-Haigney, 1996, p. 1; Erickson, 1997, p. 9) which focuses on the mother-as-agent. Anti-choice groups, the Congress, and the media as well much of the time, choose to refer to the procedure as the "partial-birth abortion" (Bennett-Haigney, 1996; Franz, 1996; NRTLTC, 1996c), but NOW does not use that terminology. The phrase NOW uses instead, "late-term abortion" clearly refers to a time in the mother's pregnancy, which focuses on the mother as the agent, whereas the other phrase, "partial-birth abortion" focuses only on the stages of growth and status of the fetus' life. By highlighting the stages in the mother's pregnancy, NOW is showing again that they believe the abortion controversy is indeed a mother's issue. The pregnancy is happening to her; she is the agent who is late in the stages of pregnancy.

The rhetoric of Planned Parenthood highlights several common phrases used throughout the pro-choice movement that refer, much like the NOW statements, to the status of the mother: she is the one who is pregnant. PPFA chooses to construct their arguments about abortion with the word "pregnancy," and not "fetus," or "child," and that is the phrase which puts the focus squarely on the mother. This includes what is happening to the mother, and what the mother's desires are. For example, PPFA makes the assertion that the mother must be informed of the,

nature, consequences, and risks of the procedure, and counseling on the alternatives available to women, so as to assure an informed and responsible decision concerning the continuation or termination of pregnancy.  
(PPFA, 1995b)

Also, they state in their "Policy Statements," which were adopted in 1989, that they believe:

no family should be threatened with economic ruin as a result of unintended pregnancy, and no person should ignore the consequences of unwanted pregnancies.  
(PPFA, 1995c)

First, the pregnancy (inside of her body) is something about which she has feelings and thoughts ("unplanned;" "unwanted"). The mother must be the agent here, because only an agent can have thoughts and act on those thoughts. Second, "Continuing or terminating a pregnancy" (PPFA, 1995b) involves the mother implicitly in the occurrences as well; they happen in her body, and the expression "continuing a pregnancy" implies that the pregnancy is occurring because mother is allowing it to continue, and for no other reason. Again, the mother is being attributed by PPFA the qualities that make her an agent.

## The Public and the Private

The aforementioned reference by NOW to "late-term" abortions shows the important role privacy plays in terms of the abortion issue. The meaning behind the words in the article is that a woman's health care, including abortion, is not something that should be a public issue any more than a man's health care should be of public concern. This is very common with pro-choice activists, especially given the grounds upon which *Roe v. Wade* was argued in 1972. NOW's Homepage on the Internet also includes explanations of the Court case, which was founded on the "implicit" right to privacy in the *Bill of Rights* (NOW, 1995c). What belongs to the woman, in this case the pregnancy, is considered to be within the realm of the private. The mother's medical decisions and medical care are considered by pro-choice activists to be included in that; therefore, the woman, who has the right to her privacy, is the agent, solely charged with making such choices.

Planned Parenthood's mission includes providing health care services which "preserve and protect the essential privacy" of each person (PPFA, 1995a). They also advocate that reproductive freedom, which includes abortion, encompasses "the right to privacy, especially in human relationships," as well as "the right to nondiscriminatory access to confidential" health care (PPFA, 1995c). To PPFA, no one but the individual needs or has the right to know about reproductive choices. PPFA here again is rhetorically forming the mother as the agent, by attributing to her the right to her own privacy; which is something only agents can have.

## Reproductive Health

Another commonly-used phrase in pro-choice rhetoric is "reproductive health," as in this passage from the *National NOW Times*, "The new welfare law also has a number of provisions affecting reproductive health" (Erickson, 1997, p. 9). When

most people think of the word reproduction, they perhaps think of reproducing, and of the product of that reproduction. NOW, on the other hand, sees reproduction as a part of a woman's life, so the focus is still on the mother; hence, when they refer to reproductive health, they are seeing the *mother's* health as the health in question. The rhetoric still highlights the mother as the agent.

There is also an implied reference to the mother's health in the statement that, "the right of women to have...appropriate pre-natal care" is supported by NOW (1995a, p. 2). Here, even though the health of the fetus is affected by pre-natal care, NOW is referring to the pre-natal care in terms of the effect it has on *mothers*. The mother has the right to the care, not the fetus.

NOW argues in the majority of their messages something that can be seen most clearly in the above examples. They are arguing against any provisions that would take away the ability of the mother to decide for herself on issues that affect her; reproductive health is a part of that. To the activists of NOW, the mother is the agent, and it can be seen through their language that they view any laws which could negatively affect her "reproductive health" as an attempt to thwart her ability to behave as an agent.

Planned Parenthood and NARAL also refer frequently to the issue of abortion as effecting a woman's "reproductive health." They also make reference to reproductive health care, which includes such things as breast cancer and prenatal care, and encompasses abortion (NARAL, 1993). Planned Parenthood, because it exists for the sole purpose of promoting health in reproductive choices (PPFA, 1995a), also makes reference to the mother's regulation of her reproductive health. They are presenting, as NOW, the concept of reproduction as something about which the decision belongs solely to the mother in the abortion debate, and not the fetus, the

father of the fetus, the government, or the mother's parents. Again, the mother is the agent.

### The Pro-choice Organizations

There is rhetoric present in pro-choice literature which does not necessarily fit into one of the above themes. Each group has individual arguments of its own, sometimes only appearing once but nonetheless deserving mention. Here I will present the organizations NOW, NARAL, and PPFA, and the language use of each group that is not shared with the others but is worth noting because it also shows the mother to be the agent. I begin each part with a discussion of the group itself, and then discuss the original messages that organization offers.

#### National Organization for Women

This group does not exist for the sole purpose of the abortion issue. Unlike the other five organizations included in this thesis, NOW fights for all rights for women, from lesbian rights to rights for housewives and minority and elderly women. The legality and safety of abortion are a part of their fight for women's rights. They are a feminist organization, and all "feminist" issues are on their agenda. Consequently, they approach abortion rights as another feminist issue. The mere inclusion of abortion as a feminist issue is an example of how they hold the mother in the abortion argument to be the agent. Abortion is a woman's issue to NOW. Their rhetoric that deals specifically with abortion and reproductive rights also reveals the role of mother to be that of agent.

"NOW is the largest organization for feminist activists in the United States" (NOW, 1995b). "Feminism" is a word that is found peppered throughout their literature. And to NOW, abortion rights go hand-in-hand with feminism. For example, when discussing their history and goals, they stress that *feminist* activities

bring about social change for the betterment of women. They encourage people to join their "feminist" organization and "Stand up for front line action...fight for reproductive freedom for all women" (NOW, 1995b). The assumption is that feminists are pro-choice because it has to do with women's rights. The reverse is also true; pro-choice people are inherently feminists, because they view this as an issue having to do with women, and only women.

### National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League

Unlike NOW, NARAL exists with the express purpose of supporting and securing abortion rights, as well as reproductive rights such as contraception and education about sex and sexuality. An examination of NARAL's artifacts reveals that they also view the mother as the agent, without exception. In this discussion about NARAL's specific rhetoric, I show how they consistently present the mother as the agent in all of their rhetoric, through some common themes found in the artifacts, as well as their language. I do this by looking at the idea of NARAL's "human face of abortion" and their arguments about how to make the United States great, through reproductive freedom.

NARAL's own arguments consistently place the mother in the forefront of the abortion debate, and present her as the agent. According to NARAL, discussion about abortion too frequently leaves out the mother. Their *Learn More About NARAL* Website explains NARAL's "Silent No More" campaign, which "put a human face on the right to choose" (NARAL, 1996b, p. 1) by putting photographs of mothers on posters and using quotes and stories from women who had had abortions in the past, or children of women who died from illegal abortions. Women are at the heart of this issue, and women will die if they do not speak up for themselves, NARAL is saying; this is something that affects *their* lives, and policymakers and anti-choice activists

either do not realize this or choose to ignore it. To NARAL, that human face is clearly that of the mother, not the fetus, and by having rights and exercising those rights, she is behaving like the agent they consider her to be.

NARAL is arguing here, as they do throughout their literature, that we should not ignore the mother in a discussion about abortion, nor should we focus on other parts of the abortion controversy. Rather, NARAL believes that the mother is the most important aspect of the abortion debate, the one who does the act: the choosing. Hence, the mother is the agent.

In their arguments about the state of the nation, the mother is constructed as the agent, and by giving mothers the ability to control their own futures, the United States' future can also be made great. The mother is constructed rhetorically here as the agent. NARAL is making the argument that the abortion issue, along with all reproduction-oriented issues, is one that can potentially affect the future of America, as it affects the present (NARAL, 1995b). The mother is the agent because only by giving mothers the power to determine what happens to their own bodies and lives can "this nation...march confidently and prosperously into the 21st century" (NARAL, 1995b). Through this it is clear that NARAL is arguing that the mothers, when behaving as agents, have the ability to affect not only their futures, but the future of America. It is when women are not "allowed" by the government to behave as agents and make decisions on abortion for themselves that adolescents have children of their own and children are born to women who do not want them.

#### Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc.

Much like NARAL, PPFA's sole reason for existence is to promote "voluntary reproductive health care" (PPFA, 1996, p. 1), which includes fighting for and supporting the legalization of abortion, both in the United States and throughout the

world. Founded by Margaret Sanger in 1916, it is the world's oldest and largest organization of its kind. As with NOW and NARAL, they construct the mother as the agent in nearly all of their rhetoric. Activists from PPFA have different statements of their own that they highlight, which also show their notion that the mother is the agent. In examining the last group in my first section, I will briefly discuss the words and themes that are highlighted exclusively in PPFA's artifacts: first the way PPFA describes the act of getting an abortion, and then the term "responsibility," and their words for the condition of being with child. These will show that the mother is rhetorically constructed almost entirely as the agent in their arguments as well.

First, in their literature, PPFA activists often discuss the abortion procedure itself as something that the pregnant mother may decide to have, and they do this using very specific language choices. PPFA's choice of terms to describe this occurrence is particularly revealing of their view of mothers. They maintain that the mother "obtains" the abortion (PPFA, 1992b; PPFA, 1995b). Here again is the example of highlighting terms that feature the mother behaving as an agent. Having decided on her own future, she is the one who is getting the procedure. She is not presented in their rhetoric, as she in many cases, as having the abortion "performed" on her; she is "obtaining" it. In fact, the doctor is rarely mentioned in their pamphlets, just the mother and her different choices, and decision. The mother, acting on her decision, is the agent.

Another theme present in the literature of PPFA is the idea of responsibility. Anti-choice activists hold that abortion is an easy way out, a way to avoid responsibility for previous actions. PPFA, on the other hand, argues that abortion is a responsible decision to make in the case of an unwanted pregnancy, and when abortion, as well as contraception, is unavailable it is impossible for women to behave responsibly (PPFA, 1995b, 1995c).

They present both men and women as agents when they declare that they are dedicated to enabling every "individual" to "make and implement a responsible decision" about reproduction (PPFA, 1995c, p. 1). The agent, because she commits acts, takes responsibility for them. By focusing on the idea of responsibility, PPFA is placing the abortion decision in the hands of mothers; mothers are agents and responsible for their actions and the consequences of those actions. Abortion as well as childbirth are also responsible decisions, and the mother must be able to make that decision on her own. Often, PPFA argues, it is irresponsible behavior to have an unwanted child. Always, though, whether she makes the most responsible decisions or not, the mother is the agent because, Planned Parenthood believes, she has within her the ability to do so.

This section examined the rhetoric of three pro-choice activist groups: NOW, NARAL, and PPFA. Initially presented was an overview of the role of the mother in most pro-choice rhetoric: the agent. Then I provided a detailed examination of the specific language use and themes present in the artifacts of the three organizations. Finally, I explored the separate word choices that each group has unique to itself. The next part of this chapter will follow the same format for the anti-choice groups.

### The Anti-choice Movement

Whereas the pro-choice arguments highlighted the mother, the anti-choice rhetoric focuses almost entirely on the fetus inside the mother. For the most part, the act is ported as the abortion itself, which is performed on the agent, the fetus. The mother then becomes the scene or the agency.

Burke defines scene as the "background of the act; the situation in which it occurred" (Burke, 1969, p. xv). For the majority of the anti-choice literature, the mother is rhetorically constructed as the scene: she is the background, or the place

where the act occurs. Many times this is true in cases where the mother seems to be not present in the argument at all. In fact, this is true; she is not there, exactly, but is behind, or she is what surrounds, what you can see. As will be shown, there are also several instances wherein the mother is presented as the agency, or the "means or instrument" used to reach various ends (Burke, 1969, p. xv).

In this section, I present an analysis of anti-choice rhetoric, showing the role of the mother to be the scene and the agency. I begin with a discussion of themes and language that are present in the rhetoric of two or more of the groups: the idea that life begins at fertilization or conception, the words used to describe the fetus and use of the word "innocent" in that phraseology, the idea of "murder," with graphic descriptions of abortions, the recurrent appearance of the word "womb," the photos of the fetuses or "real live" babies, the descriptions of the fetus' development inside the mother, and the downplaying of the mother as the agent in references to health and procuring the abortion. Then I show analysis of the individual groups, and present some themes that are not in the other organizations' rhetoric.

#### Common Language and Themes: The Mother as Scene and Agency

The following is an analysis of the shared themes and language present in the rhetoric of the anti-choice organizations who are the most vocal: National Right-to-life Committee, American Life League, and Operation Rescue. The examination of the artifacts produced eight recurrent themes and grammar shared by the organizations, which all show the mother to be rhetorically constructed as either the agency or the scene, or both.

## "Life begins at Conception"

The rhetoric of these groups showed that one of the most widely held beliefs within the anti-choice community is that life begins at conception or fertilization, and at that point, a human being is created. Every artifact made at least one reference to this concept, either implicitly or explicitly, as though it is a given assumption within their movement. If the fertilization creates a life immediately, the next logical question might be what happens to the mother when she becomes pregnant? According to the rhetoric of these groups, she becomes both the scene, the background, as well as the agency, the means or instruments used. First, she is the agency because she is the only means by which the fetus, which needs her for its own survival, can remain alive and be born a live baby. For example, in an American Life League pamphlet, the fetus is described as a:

human being at fertilization, and throughout the nine months of pregnancy that human being simply grows and prepares to be born. (ALL, 1995b, p. 2)

The fetus is presented as the agent, and the act is that it is developing as a human being; it only needs the mother in order to be able to grow.

Second, the mother is also the scene in this argument, because she is the place wherein the fetus does the maturing. As NRTLTC states in an answer to the hypothetical question they pose, "When does life begin?": "A new individual human being begins growing in the mother's uterus at fertilization" (NRTLTC, 1996c, p.1). The focus is on the occurrence happening *within* the mother; she is the scene surrounding the event that is going on: the fetus is growing and developing.

The placement of the mother as the agency and the scene in terms of fertilization can also be seen very clearly in the "Paramount Human Life Amendment," the passage of which is the "ultimate goal of the pro-life movement" (ALL, 1992). This proposed amendment to the *Constitution* states:

The paramount right of life is vested in each human being from the moment of fertilization, without regard to age, health or condition of dependency. (ALL, 1992)

This proposed amendment does not even mention the mother; she is relegated to the background, or the scene. The fetus inside of her is given the qualities attributed to an agent; she is the place where the fetus can reside for nine months. She is again the agency because the fetus must employ her body for survival for the nine months following the fertilization.

"Voiceless Unborn Babies"  
and "Innocent Preborn Children"

The way in which the anti-choice literature chooses to refer to the fetus is significant insofar as the role in which it casts the mother. As discussed above, anti-choice rhetoric strives to create the idea that the fetus is a human being, and one method for promoting this idea is through the language anti-choice organizations use to describe the fetus, which reveals again the way they view the mother. American Life League states it concisely in this policy statement, "We must continue to emphasize the personhood of the preborn baby" (ALL, 1993). The attempt to create this "personhood" with their language, and when they do so, the mother is at the same time playing the dual pentadic roles of the scene and the agency.

Anti-choice literature does not once refer to what is inside of the pregnant mother as the "fetus" or "embryo." It is pervasive in all of their literature that the fetus is a "baby," "human being," "person," or "child." American Life League uses the phrase "fetal people," to describe fetuses (Brown, 1994). The sentence, "The battle for the lives of children in their mother's wombs is being won..." (OR, 1996d), clearly does not delineate between the possibly-aborted fetus and already-born children, and,

as already-born children live in the environment surrounding them, the fetus lives in the mother: she is the scene.

The fetus also seems to have a gender much of the time. In a pamphlet discussing the effects of the Human Life Amendment, the statement is made about the "pressure needed for the public to see the child, even as early as his or her first hours of life, as a human being" (ALL, 1995b, p. 2). Wheeler (1996) presents a description that also attributes the fetus with a gender, in a statement describing the procedure, "he (the fetus) burns to death" in the saline abortion (p. 4). This granting the fetus with a biological sex aids in its depiction as an agent, and this helps create the role of scene for the mother.

When painting the fetus as a person, by calling it a "child," or "baby," the rhetors also surround the words "child" and "baby" with descriptive terms, which aid in the creation of the fetus as an agent. The words chosen for this are such things as, "preborn children" (ALL, 1995a; 1995b; 1994b; Brown, 1994), or "unborn children and babies" (Franz, 1993; NRTLTC, 1993), or "innocent human life" (ALL, 1993). This shows even more the attempt that is being made to construct the mother as the scene and the agency. The mother is the scene because she houses the as-yet preborn "child," and she is the agency because the "innocent" (ALL, 1993) and "voiceless" (OR, 1996b) life depends on her for survival.

In their continued recognition of the fetus as its own individual person, separate from the mother, the focus is again placed on the fetus and not the mother; indeed, the mother is nowhere to be found in this language. This is meaningful for what is not being said. The anti-choicers see the mother as merely a place where one of the stages of life occurs: the "preborn" stage, which is followed by the stage of infant, then toddler, etc. The mother is the scene in this sense, because she is the place where the first stage of life happens for the baby inside of her.

The mother is the agency, too, because she is only important insofar as the way she can aid in the delivery of a "full-grown" baby. She is the means or instrument necessary to the act, that of the developing baby.

### Abortion as "Murder" or "Killing"

These rhetors believe that human life begins at conception, so to anti-choice activists, the deliberate ending of that life is inherently murder. The act in question happens inside of the mother, therefore she is the *scene* of the murder much like the street corner can be the scene of a crime.

"1.5 million babies are killed every year" (NRTLTC, 1996c). This statement is representative of something that can be seen upon examination of any amount of anti-choice rhetoric. The theme of abortion as murder, committed not by the mother but by abortion doctors, is one of the most common throughout anti-choice literature. This rhetoric also tends to include graphic descriptions of what happens to the "baby" in the operation. Operation Rescue even creates the analogy comparing legalized abortion to the Holocaust of World War II, in the sentence, "Jesus Christ is the only answer to the abortion holocaust" (OR, 1996d, p.1). As with the life begins at conception argument, this idea of "murder" is accepted as an absolute throughout all of the artifacts. Presenting abortion as the killing of a human being is yet another example of the rhetorical creation of the mother as the scene.

"Abortion stops a beating heart 4300 times a day" (NRTLTC, 1993, p. 3). This is a depiction of the fetus as a human being, with a heart that beats and organs that are developing, who is killed through abortion. In doing this, the rhetors are at the same time depicting the mother as the scene, because the heart is stopped, or the murder occurs, inside of her body.

Nearly all of the groups' artifacts include at least one reference to the abortion procedure, or use strong language in an off-handed way that is very graphic, to illustrate their point that abortion is murder and that someone experiences pain. For example, the instruction by Operation Rescue to bring to a protest the photographs of "the baby with its head and arms ripped off" (OR, 1996b) is pretty graphic. This tactic is used with some frequency, describing the abortion in terms of the fetus, and its pain and suffering. A pamphlet from the NRTLTC explains that the doctor performs the abortion by using "a medical instrument resembling pliers" to cut the fetus "into smaller parts" (NRTLTC, 1995).

An entire pamphlet from Operation Rescue is dedicated to painting the abortion clinic as a place that loves to make money from the pain of other people, i.e., the children they kill (Wheeler, 1996), and there are several deliberately appalling, horrifying descriptions of the different abortion procedures. The drawings show a doctor describing the procedure as "sucking the kid out limb by limb," or explaining to the patient that they will, "Go in 'ya with a hook shaped knife and chop the little critter up and then scrape out the broken pieces" (p. 3). These graphic descriptions show the mother to be the scene. She is, as can be seen in the language, "We go in 'ya with a hook and...chop the little critter up" (Wheeler, 1996, p. 3), not the person *to whom* something is occurring. That "person" is the fetus. Rather, the mother is the place *wherein* all of this is happening.

Under the heading "Fetal People," an ALL article describes the case of a Florida woman accused of firing a gun at her abdomen in these words:

"A Florida woman who shot herself in the stomach in an attempt to kill her 25-week-old preborn baby...has been charged with murder." (Brown, 1994, p. 2)

The "preborn baby" was "twenty-five weeks old." It was not a stage in a *pregnancy*, which is a reference to the mother, but a stage in its own life; the mother is simply its agency for continued life.

### "The Womb"

For the most part, the most recognition the anti-choice activists give the mother is through referring explicitly to her "womb," as the place where the baby grows, or where it lives for the first nine months of its life. All three groups make a reference to the mother's womb or uterus at some point. NRTLTC makes use of this term with the phrase to describe fetuses, "innocents of the womb" in the statement "we may not vote for those who would deny the fundamental right to life to the innocents of the womb" (Franz, 1994, p. 3). This is creating the mother as the scene, by referring to the fetus inside the womb in much the same way one might refer to the "Rastas of the Caribbean." The analogy is clear: the "innocents" are residents of the womb, and the Rastas are residents of the Caribbean. The mother is the scene in that sentence, insofar as the womb is inside of her, and she is housing the "innocent."

American Life League goes a little bit further in their description of the mother's uterus, and at the same time makes the analysis very clear as to what role the mother is playing. The pamphlet, "Creating a Pro-life America," explains what the organization's goals are, and number eleven is as follows:

We must continue to reach out to our fellow Americans, showing them the reality of who we are, what we do and how one person can make a difference. We will provide them with a "window to the womb" as well as a deeper appreciation for the needs of those vulnerable due to age, illness, or incapacity. (ALL, 1993)

Here it can be seen that, by providing that "window" into the "womb" of the mother, ALL is attributing to the mother the qualities of a room or a house with a window into

which one can look. This is an example of a setting, or, in Burkian terms, a pentadic *scene*.

The mother is again constructed as the scene in the statement Operation Rescue makes involving the same word, "womb." Operation Rescue's "Welcome to Operation Rescue" Webpage exclaims, "The battle for the lives of children in their mother's wombs is being won as the Gospel is being brought to the streets" (OR, 1996d). In this argument, the mother's body is somewhere that a battle is taking place, or the "scene" of a type of war.

### The Photographs and Drawings

Some of the most popular images of anti-choice activists involve photographs of fetuses, which may be only a few weeks of gestation and which look like full-grown babies. This shows the rhetorical construction of the mother to be the scene; she is surrounding the "baby" in the picture. There is also the use of photographs of real live babies in which the mother is, or was, the agency. For example, Operation Rescue's directions on how to protest at a high school call for "minimum of four large pictures" of the fetus (OR, 1996b) or photographs of "Baby Jeremiah," which is described as "a beautiful picture of live baby" (Benham, 1996). Several of the American Life League pamphlets and essays include a drawing of a fetus, as well as photos of smiling, happy "live" babies (ALL, 1994b, Brown, 1995).

As Condit (1991) points out, the existence of these fetus photos is irrefutable proof to the anti-choice activists of the humanity of the fetus in the womb. Frequently, these organizations include pictures or drawings of a fetus sucking its thumb and appearing to be a "real" baby, after birth.

National Right-to-life Committee, Inc. publishes a pamphlet wherein they ask the question, "Is this a child or is this a choice?" (1996a). Underneath the inquiry is a giant photo of the fetus at eight weeks gestation. This picture is evidence to these activists that the fetus is indeed a human being, and that to abort it is murder. The answer to the question is supposed to be a resounding "no, it is a child." What is not stated in the pamphlet is where that "child" is at the moment. Obviously, the "child" is inside of its mother; in this argument by NRTLIC, she is relegated by omission to background, to scene. The utilization of these fetus photographs constructs the mother again as the scene. She is the place where the fetus in the picture is living.

The times wherein the activists are using photographs of real "live," beautiful babies (Benham, 1996) are examples of when the mother is playing the role of agency. Because these posters and drawings are created to argue against abortion (i.e., look what will happen if the mother just allows the baby to grow until it is ready to be born), it is assumed that the baby in the picture needed the mother in its past. Otherwise the baby wouldn't be where she/he is today, and happy and beautiful. Without having used the mother as the means to life, the baby would not be alive. The mother, not appearing in the pictures with the baby, was its agency until it was born.

### The Fetus' Development

Often the pictures of the fetuses are accompanied by descriptions of its growth. Again the mother is portrayed as the scene as well as the agency. From the "Precious Feet" pins, which are created to show the actual size of a fetus' feet at ten weeks (Allen, 1995), to the step-by-step reports on the fetus' daily or weekly development, the mother is constructed as the scene and the agency in these arguments.

In the American Life League magazine an article appears that contains a drawing of a fetus with its hand to its ear, with the caption underneath, "Let me guess! Is it Bach? Beethoven? The Beatles?" (Ammerman & Ammerman, 1996, p. 46). The implication is that the fetus in the picture can recognize different sounds. Next to the drawing is a description of the growth pattern of the fetus, which is told in second person. There are such statements as, "Your inner ears began forming around week eight of your life in the womb." Similarly, a pamphlet from the NRTLTC provides the same type of report (NRTLTC, 1993), describing the fetus' development week-by-week. The mother is the agency here because it is a given that she provides the means through which the development can occur. At the same time, she is also the scene because she is what surrounds the fetus, the place where the growing occurs every week.

#### Mother Constructed as Not an Agent

As I have shown, the anti-choice activists tend to leave out the mother in most of their rhetoric. However, there are times in their literature when they do make mention of her. When they do bring up the subject of the mother, it is usually when they are downplaying her ability or right to act as an agent. They do this through references to the mother's health and her actions in obtaining the abortion procedure. Again, the mother is either the scene, as in the health statement, or the agency, as in the procuring of the abortion, in these arguments.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the pro-choice activist groups focused much of their attention on the health of the mother. Anti-choice activists, as well, sometimes discuss the idea of health. When they do so, they are generally referring to the health of the fetus inside of the mother or dismissing health considerations for the mother. By doing this, they are also revealing much about the way they view the role of the mother.

In her editorial page in the *National Right to Life News*, the president of the organization dismisses the health of the mother as a consideration in the abortion debate with the statement, "But Bill Clinton wants a 'health' exception (in the late-term abortion legislation) which...would ensure this exception swallows the rule" (Franz, 1996, p. 3). The way in which the author refers to the word "health" shows the view she has of the mother in the abortion controversy. She is rejecting the mother as a part of this debate. *Her* health is not even an issue. It is what is inside of her, this language is revealing, that is important. Stated another way, it is what she surrounds that is important, which is the baby. This is also a clear indication of the mother's role being portrayed as scene.

The mother is also often shown as a victim who is lured by the evil abortion industry, which is comprised of people who are waiting to take advantage of her situation. For example, in the above-mentioned pamphlet from Operation Rescue, entitled, "The Clinic," the mother is presented as someone who is used by the clinic to make money (Wheeler, 1996). The cartoon clinic doctor is drawn as a smiling man with dollar signs for eyes. By creating this image, the anti-choice activists are portraying the mother as something that the abortion industry sees as a means to the end of making money. This group also refers to the abortion industry in very specific terms, which reflect the mother as agency as well. "Death merchants" are the doctors and clinic workers (OR, 1996a), and clinics are "abortion mills" (OR, 1996c). Abortion industry workers are marketing death, and the only means through which they can achieve their end, which is making money through death, is the mother. They use her to get what they want. This is clearly an example of the mother as an agency, who is not making a decision as an agent, but has the decision made for her by the abortion doctors.

American Life League explains its stance in terms of the direct role the mother plays in the abortion decision in its "Total Protection" pamphlet. In answer to the rhetorical question, "Do we really believe that abortion victimizes women?", the answer is revealing of the rhetorical role the mother plays:

When we offer the common "exceptions" for rape and incest, we tell society that abortion can be a positive experience for women. Instead of insisting on compassion for victimized women, we send a message that more victimization at the hands of an abortionist will somehow lead to healing." (ALL, 1994b)

The mother is someone whom the abortionist sees as a means to an end. She is not an agent who has determined her own future; she is an agency who, when she visits an abortion doctor, becomes an instrument "at the hands" of someone else.

### The Anti-choice Organizations

As is the case with pro-choice groups, each of the anti-choice groups has its own language that is not a part of larger themes in the anti-choice movement. This section will explain the arguments and language used by each individual anti-choice group which is not seen in the other two organization's rhetoric, and show how the mother remains either the scene or agency here as well. Following is a brief description of each group, and then, when possible, a discussion of their ways of portraying the mother as agency and scene. I will begin with National Right to Life Committee, then discuss American Life League, and finally, Operation Rescue.

#### National Right to Life Committee, Inc.

NRTLTC is one of the original anti-choice organizations, and is still the largest. It was founded in 1973, the year *Roe v. Wade* was handed down (NRTLTC, 1993). As of 1993, it was comprised of 3000 chapters throughout the United States. This

organization is focused on lobbying against abortion rights and campaigning for the election of anti-choice policy-makers. They have a monthly newsletter, and annual conventions.

National Right to Life Committee, Inc. sets the standard for other groups to follow. They share every theme with the other groups: life begins at conception, the use of language to describe the fetus and pregnancy, the photographs and graphic techniques, etc. However, they have a focus on the political side of the debate, which the other groups do not share. This legislative/political focus leads to the one type of original argument which places the mother in the role of agency.

Frequently in their rhetoric, NRTLTC describes President Clinton and pro-choice government officials as having the desire to increase abortions in this country (Andrusko, 1996; Franz, 1996). "Clinton...exhibits an appetite for multiplying the number of abortions that most people would find repulsive" (Andrusko, 1996. p. 2). Their argument is also supported by the statement that the president has promised to sign the "Freedom of Choice Act" if ever given the opportunity (Franz, 1996). The anti-choice activists are painting mothers as agencies because they view mothers as so incapable of making decisions on their own that they think the government can "increase" the number of abortions simply by making the process legal. This assertion is casting mothers in the role of agency, because, if the government wishes to increase abortions, it is only through mothers that these abortions can occur.

### American Life League

American Life League is a spin-off group from the National Right to Life Committee. They are "committed to working with our fellow pro-life Americans to create a society in which all human life is respected and protected" (ALL, 1993, p. 2), which means that they are more focused on activism and support sidewalk counseling

and the more radical activities of Operation Rescue (Blanchard, 1994). They construct the mother as agency through one very specific argument, which is not present in the other groups' rhetoric.

American Life League argues against the family cap (governmental regulation of the number of children citizens can have) in one of their pamphlets and reveal much about their view of mothers in the process. She is the agency, because she is seen, ALL is saying in this type of argument, by the government as the means to the end of preventing population growth. The mother is the only means for controlling population. "This pressure to have fewer kids is not exerted in everyone, only on those who are vulnerable because they are dependent on the State for food and pressure" (ALL, 1995a). The government will be able to control population growth through the mothers who are forced to have abortions. The mother, unable to make a decision on her own, is the government's agency.

### Operation Rescue National

Operation Rescue National is comprised predominately of Protestant fundamentalists (Blanchard, 1994). This is a very activist organization that has been staging clinic blockades since they began in Cherry Hill, Pennsylvania, in 1987. More recently they have been protesting outside of high schools, beginning last year in Plano, Texas, when a protester was arrested for trying to "inform passersby of the evils of abortion" outside of Clark High School (AFA Law Center, 1996). Their rhetoric attempts to draw power from a religious foundation.

Operation Rescue rhetoric is resonant with religious statements, references to God and Jesus, and Biblical passages. One of the most prevalent underlying themes throughout all anti-choice rhetoric is that God and Jesus are against abortion, that abortion is against God's wishes, and the anti-choicers are promoting God's wishes

and carrying out his demands. A separate section for this theme in the above analysis was not selected because, although it is prevalent, with the exception of OR, there were no implications for the role of the mother. Generally the religious-natured statements featured references to the *Bible* or about Jesus, but were separate from their arguments that involved the mother.

Operation Rescue does include a rhetorical construction of the mother in their references to religion. "God wants to help you. After all, he's the one who made your baby in the first place" (Wheeler, 1996, p. 6). This is an example of the type of religious language OR uses in its arguments. They construct the mother as the agency, in that she is the means through which God is bringing his children into the world. He made the baby, and it is up to the mother to be the instrument for its growth.

#### The Role of the Mother: What Does that Reveal?

Chapter III explained Kenneth Burke's view on the idea of motives, revealed through language. What is highlighted by the rhetor reveals much about her/him. A person's language serves as loci of her or his motives, or shows attributions of motives. "Motive" is a term that refers to background or point of view of the rhetor. Insofar as one's language is a result of that background, someone's background can also be determined from an analysis of her/his language. The pentad is one way of analyzing language with the purpose of discerning the motives of the rhetor. As Burke says, the rhetor,

features a different one of the five terms, in developing a vocabulary designed to allow this one term full expression with the other terms being comparatively slighted or being placed in the perspective of the featured term. (Burke, 1969, p. 127)

Thus far this chapter has used the pentad to analyze the language of abortion activists, thus answering the first research question: What is the role of the mother within the rhetoric of abortion activist groups? The resulting examination has shown which terms were highlighted by each organization. This, as Burke (1969) explains, sees the other aspects of the pentad only in the perspective of the "featured term."

I have shown the rhetorical construction of the mother in the rhetoric of abortion activists. The mother is presented exclusively as the agent throughout the pro-choice artifacts, whereas the anti-choice activists cast her in the roles of agency or scene, sometimes both at the same time, at the expense of the role of agent. Insofar as the groups are representative of the movements they represent, it can be deduced that what is revealed about them is that they are a part of a movement that sees mothers in the abortion controversy in these very specific ways.

This analysis reveals several interesting conclusions about the motives of the activists. The last part of Chapter IV is an exploration of the answer to the second research question: What does the role of the mother within their rhetoric reveal about the groups behind it? In this final section, I will discuss this answer in two ways. First, I will show what the answer to research question one shows of the groups' respective movements view of women in general. Second, I will show what the potential for communication is between the groups, and thus the movements, given the answer to the first research question.

### A Woman's Place

As has been stated previously, anti-choice activists portray the mother in two ways: as the agency, through which the child is born or doctors make money; and as the scene, what surrounds the baby. The mother is featured as these two aspects at the expense of the role of agent. In other words, the fact that she is not the agent, but two

other elements of the pentad, tells us much about the way anti-choice activists view women. The pro-choice movement, on the other hand, sees the mother in the abortion debate as the mother exclusively. This also reveals much about their view of women. What follows is an exploration of the two movements' perspectives on women in general, first the anti-choice, then the pro-choice, in terms of decision-making, the place of women in society, morality, and the movements' world views, as revealed by their rhetoric.

### The Anti-choice Movement

The anti-choice view of the mother as agency and scene has implications for the way that these activists view women in general. This can also be extrapolated into the place women have in society, the role women have in the decision-making process, as well as the world view that the anti-choice movement has. Women, to anti-choice activists, are not entirely agents; and if they are, then they cease to be agents once they become pregnant. Women, therefore, are meant to do what is determined by their biology, or by men's behavior, not by what the women themselves decide. The woman disappears once she becomes pregnant, and she becomes the scene and agency for the child inside of her. Once they do this, they are fulfilling their real role. This can be seen clearly by the fact that nowhere in the anti-choice literature is the woman portrayed as an agent. Pregnancy, and the motherhood that is to follow, are not seen as a part of a woman's life; they are seen as the sum of her life.

This limits the role of decision-maker by the woman. The woman who can make those choices ceases to exist as soon as she becomes a pregnant mother. Women are the "life-givers," the anti-choice rhetoric is saying. Women are the way that life is created and perpetuated. If women do not reproduce, or attempt to rebel against their role by choosing not to carry a child they do not want, they are not fulfilling their roles.

It is considered unnatural for women not to do what they are here to do: have babies. They are the means that men use so that they can reproduce.

Women, once pregnant, are not portrayed in any way as the agent in the anti-choice rhetoric, and they are no longer to determine the course of their lives; that was already decided by the fact that they were born women. Pregnant women are not agents who have the right or responsibility to make decisions for themselves. The “decision” was made when they were born women. They are to give up their autonomy for the purpose of fulfilling their role. Men’s actions, not women’s, determine the future of a woman's life: if she is pregnant she is to remain pregnant. That is one of the places wherein the decision-making lies: in the prerogative of men or policymakers, which are mostly men.

Pregnant women cannot act on their own because they are not cast in the role of agent, which would allow them to do so. One of the most important events in a woman’s life can be that of becoming pregnant and either having or not having children. However, anti-choice rhetoric does not show that the activists see pregnancy as something to do with women at all. She has no voice in this decision that affects her life. Women do not have a role in the entire decision-making process. Anti-choice rhetoric takes the woman out of the equation of a potentially monumental event in a woman’s life; therefore it can be seen that anti-choicers see women as deserving little or no control over every aspect of their lives. According to the anti-choice rhetoric, this significant event, the pregnancy, is not a part of the woman’s life alone, but rather a part of the way society works.

From this, some implications can be seen for the world view of anti-choice activists. The world that is created by their rhetoric is one that is very mechanistic, wherein everyone has a role that she/he must play. For example, women, when pregnant, are to play their role according to what is dictated by the workings of the

machine, and women must have the children of which their biology shows them to be capable. If the woman instead aborts the pregnancy, this disrupts the operation of the machine. Here it can be seen that, in the anti-choice view, women are not necessarily viewed as unequal to men in the operation of that machine; men also have a role to play. But, what is also clear is that the role women play is creators of life.

Anti-choicers see as immoral women not wishing to live out what the activists see as women's destiny. Women who are pregnant should become mothers because that is what they are supposed to do. If they act in a way that is like an agent and choose not to have a child, thus interrupting the workings of the machine, then that is immoral, in the view of the anti-choice movement. Were the anti-choice activists to cast the pregnant mother in any way as the agent, then this analysis would prove to be false; however, their rhetoric shows that in no way is the mother an agent who is capable of making and carrying out her own decisions. There should be no question whether she should have the baby if she is pregnant; this is the woman's purpose, within the operations of the machine. She is the agency for creation of life, and the scene surrounding it.

### The Pro-choice Movement

Pro-choice literature, by presenting the mother in their literature solely as the agent, the one who acts, is showing their view of women in general as agents. Women are portrayed as decision-makers, people who act on their own accord, and who are not to be victims of either their "biological destiny," men, or other people who want to take advantage of them.

Pro-choice rhetoric shows that the movement believes that women are here for a purpose that is quite different from the anti-choice determined role of reproducers. Pro-choicers believe that the only thing that women have to do is live a self-determined life.

Pro-choicers see pregnancy as just another aspect of a woman's life; an option that women can choose if she wants. Women are not solely here to reproduce. That is an option she can choose if she wishes to, but *only* if she wishes to, and not only if a man wants her to. Indeed, by presenting the mother as the agent, pro-choice rhetoric is showing that they see women not as reproducers, but as individuals first, who can, pregnant or not, choose their own path. The fact that a woman can reproduce is secondary to who she is and what she does with her own life. Otherwise, the woman would only exist for men, or for her potential children. Pro-choice activists see women, pregnant or not, in terms of their own worth, and whether or not they have babies is unimportant.

Pro-choice activists also include abortion within their morality. They are allowing the woman to behave in the way that she sees fit. They are leaving the question of morality up to the agent, the pregnant mother. To pro-choicers, it is more moral to abort an unwanted pregnancy than it is to deny an agent the ability to behave as an agent. This concept of leaving decisions about such issues as morality up to the individual has potential implications for a broader analysis of the world view of the pro-choice movement.

By allowing the decision-making process to include such things as pregnancy and reproduction, pro-choice activists cast women in the role of agent exclusively. This could be extrapolated to the larger idea that pro-choicers hold that individuals determine their own course, in all aspects of life. While this is a significant concept within their rhetoric, the entire pro-choice world view cannot necessarily be pinned down to one specific view from this analysis. These activists could hold one of many views of the world. It is clear, however, that they are in disagreement with the anti-choice outlook, where society is a machine, and wherein an individual's role is already

determined. Pro-choicers allow for the individual to determine the course of society, rather than society determining the path of the individual.

### Communication Between the Two Movements

One of the most significant ideas Burke created is that language both creates action and reveals the motive of the speaker. Where an individual "comes from," or what motivates her/him is shown through her/his language manipulation and language use. When analyzing the way a rhetor acts through language, as one does in rhetoric, the terministic screen of the rhetor is revealed. The terministic screen is simply the way someone views the world, a window through which one sees things. This has implications within the abortion movement in that the action of language is caused by the place each person or movement is coming from, and the language creates different screens with which to see the world. The two movements are speaking different languages, and are viewing the world from their own terministic screens caused by, and encapsulated in, that language.

Their screens have been shown through their portrayal of the mother in the abortion controversy, which reveals their view of women in general. The pro-choice movement sees women as agents with rights and freedom to live self-determined, autonomous lives. The anti-choice movement, on the other hand, see decision-making as belonging not to women, but to their biology and to men.

As can be seen, the terministic screens are completely different for the groups and for the movements; there is very little overlap on their screens. They are coming from different places and, essentially, they are speaking different languages. This at once helps to explain both the reason for the conflict itself and presents very little

potential for meaningful communication between the two movements. Without a common language, there is too much difficulty in attempting communication.

The pro-choicers refuse to see the mother as anything other than an agent, and the anti-choicers see her as anything but the agent. Pro-choice activists, in their refusal to recognize any possibility of the mother playing any other role than agent, also refuse to grant any room for compromise in their goals. Anti-choicers, in their refusal to acknowledge the mother as the agent, cannot see the mother as having the right, ability or freedom to make decisions about her own future. Hence, neither side can communicate with the other because they see things through different screens and cannot create a common language with which to begin a dialogue.

### Conclusion

This chapter has shown the analysis of the rhetoric of abortion activist groups: National Organization for Women (NOW), National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL), and Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA); National Right to Life Committee, Inc. (NRTLIC), American Life League (ALL,) and Operation Rescue National (OR). In this chapter, I discovered answers to both questions guiding the research: What is the role of the mother within the rhetoric of abortion activist groups?, and, What does the role of the mother within their rhetoric reveal about the group behind it? I have also explained my findings.

In terms of research question one, there are seven major themes in pro-choice rhetoric which reveal that the mother is the agent. For anti-choice rhetoric, there are eight commonly shared themes which all create the mother to be either the scene or the agency.

For research question two, I discussed the implications of the role of the mother in abortion rhetoric. The role of the mother can be extrapolated to signify the

movements' view of women in general. Pro-choicers see women as autonomous decision-makers destined to live the life they choose for themselves, whereas anti-choicers see women as having little to do with the decision-making process. The answer to research question one also has implications for the potentiality for communication between the two movements. Because they share no identification, in Burkian terms, and looking at society through different terministic screens because of this, the two movements have very little chance of finding enough common ground for negotiation.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will discuss the analysis reported in Chapter IV. The discussion begins by looking at the answers to my research questions in terms of the possible futures of both social movements, and then in terms of social movement studies. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of the limitations of this study. Finally, I explore the possible directions for future research.

#### The Two Movements Now and in the Future

Chapter IV discussed the languages of the two abortion movements. It was shown that, because of its rhetorical construction of the mother, each movement comes from, and finds its motivation from, two very different places. This motivation is seen in their language used in their rhetorical construction of the mother in the abortion controversy. The anti-choice and pro-choice movements are essentially lacking any identification between them, even if they are utilizing the same explicit words. Because the two movements cast the mother in different pentadic roles in their rhetoric, conclusions can be drawn on the future of the two movements in relation to each other.

It can be seen from this analysis that, without a common language, no common ground can be found between these movements upon which to base a resolution in the abortion debate. Each side is operating from within its own terministic screen, and because of this, neither side is willing to, or perhaps cannot, understand the other's viewpoint.

This lack of common ground, or identification, between the two sides begins with the way in which they view the pregnant mother in the debate. While the two movements might even be speaking face -to-face, and seem to understand one another's explicit words, they are really not interpreting the same words in the same way. The same word or words hold different meanings for the two movements, as different aspects of the pentad are highlighted by their language. For example, the pro-choicers might use the somewhat common argument, "But, what about the pregnant woman (or the mother)?" and believe, because of their own terministic screen, that when they say this the anti-choicers are hearing, "What about the mother's ability to behave as an *agent*?" Unable to see past that the mother is obviously the agent, this could be seen by pro-choice activists as one of the strongest arguments they have.

But the anti-choicers believe the mother in the abortion debate is not the agent, but either the scene or the agency. So, when faced with this type of argument, the anti-choicers translate it into their own language and are perhaps really hearing, "What about the scene?", or, "What about the agency?" To anti-choicers, these are probably not very compelling arguments. Only people who see women as agents can be persuaded by an argument based on that concept. Anti-choicers do not see women as agents. Therefore, the "What about the woman-as-agent?" argument is not persuasive to them; their terministic screens do not allow for that. This might help to explain why the anti-choicers usually respond to those statements with such arguments as, "What about the baby (or the human being) inside the mother?" To them, the *baby* is the agent which is surrounded by the mother and needs her for survival.

By that same token, the anti-choicers might be arguing to pro-choicers, "But, what about the baby?" And pro-choicers, not seeing the mother as anything except the agent, do not hold this to be much of an argument. These two arguments are based in, and restricted to, the terministic screens of the rhetors, created from their motives or

backgrounds. In this case, this lack of commonality allows for no overlap in screens, and leaves no room for arguments that hold any weight from either side to be heard by either side.

Those who see the mother as the agency and scene cannot identify with those who see her as an agent. The reverse is also true. The activists either see women as having the primary function of creating life, or as people who are individuals first, who choose their own path. Given their respective terministic screens, anti-choicers will not be able to see arguments that attempt to paint women as anything but life-givers or life-creators, and pro-choicers will not see women as anything but the agent; hence, no common ground, and no identification can be found. Without identification, there is no chance for real communication to occur. The concept of the mother, as well as women in general, means two completely different things to the two different movements. There is no starting point where the debate can begin. Created from and bound to their languages, and without a starting point, the two movements are at a standstill and will most likely stay that way.

### Social Movement Studies and Abortion Rhetoric

This study has implications for social movement studies for two reasons: the usefulness of the movement perspective and the dramatic pentad, and Griffin's (1952) idea of the rhetorical crisis. Chapter I introduced the two questions guiding this thesis: What is the role of the mother within the rhetoric of abortion activist groups?, and, What does the role of the mother within their rhetoric reveal about the group behind it? The answer to the questions were revealed in Chapter IV: pro-choice rhetoric shows the mother to be the agent, and anti-choice rhetoric shows her to be the scene and the agency, sometimes both at once. The answer to the second research

question is that pro-choice activists see women as autonomous free agents, while anti-choicers see women's primary function as that of life-giver; they cease to be agents once they become pregnant. They are the agency and the scene for the fetuses inside of them.

The pentad has clearly been an effective tool in answering the two research questions about the two movements involved in the abortion controversy. It provided insight into the rhetoric of abortion activists that a different outlook, without the consideration of the movements perspective, might not have. Therefore, it is true that dramatism would also be helpful in studying other social movements, such as the gay rights/anti-gay rights movements, or the religious right movement. This method proved to answer my research questions about the abortion movement directly, and the same would prove true if utilized for other movement studies.

Griffin (1952) argues that social movements are forever changed when they reach what is called the rhetorical crisis, which is when an event occurs which creates a conflict between the movement opponents, which then creates a change in their rhetoric. This study could aid in advancing Griffin's thesis in terms of redefining the rhetorical crisis. In this study, utilizing the language perspective in the dramatic pentad as a means for defining a phenomenon rhetorically expands Griffin's argument to include motives in his definition of rhetorical crises. Griffin said that an issue causes the crisis. This study shows how the idea of an "issue" causing a crisis includes the creation of a world-view and language that reflects that world view.

The pro- and anti-choice movements encounter the rhetorical crisis not just because of a series of events but also with their conflicting view of women, and hence their view of the mother in the abortion controversy. One movement begins at a place wherein they consider women in one way, as agents; the other begins at a place in exact disagreement with the view of that movement, seeing pregnant women as life-givers

only, who have no say-so in the determination of their futures when they are pregnant. Griffin's rhetorical crisis occurs when people begin espousing the rhetoric that reflects their particular terministic screen. Another social movement, when studied first from the movement perspective and analyzing the language and its inherent motives, could perhaps be seen as beginning with this type of rhetorical crisis.

### Limitations

In terms of the artifacts analyzed, this study is limited in four possible ways: the number of groups from each movement that were analyzed, by the criteria that were used to determine the groups, the selection of artifacts, and the method selected. First, Blanchard (1994) identifies over twenty groups who are in the anti-choice movement, and Pierson (1991) presents over twenty as well. This thesis only looked at three anti-choice organizations, and it is possible that others could deviate from the themes identified in this study. The pro-choice books show at least ten major organizations in the pro-choice movement, and, again, this study only used the literature from the three "most vocal." The use of only three out of at least twenty groups also limited the amount of artifacts available, as did the selection of those artifacts.

Second, the criteria for determination of groups was: the number of people in the organization, the media attention the group receives, the influence it has had on its movement, and the power the group has in the political arena. A broader definition of what constituted "the most vocal" abortion groups could have been created, and brought in such criteria as length of time it has been in existence, amount of money the organization is worth, or the perceived power of its founder or founders. As it was, the six groups could perhaps not be the most representative of the entire movements from which they come. The groups that were the "most vocal" in the movements by

my definition may not be those that are the most representative of their prospective viewpoints.

The next way this study is limited is by the selection of artifacts. I elected to limit the artifacts by only using those that are aimed at a general audience. I ended up with pamphlets, on-line materials, newsletters, press releases, information packets, and catalogues. This neglects much that could possibly be analyzed, such as films, protest activities, the current abortion-related violence of the groups, or t-shirts and buttons. Also among what could have been studied is the self-directed messages or messages aimed at those believing in the opposite view.

Finally, the method for analysis is limiting in both its intention and its implementation in this study. Dramatism is not the only way that social movements can be studied, nor does abortion necessarily need to be seen in terms of movements for there to be a study of their rhetoric. For instance, the way in which rhetors attempt to create cognitive dissonance in their audience reveals much, as well as something different than dramatism, about them, as would a metaphorical analysis of messages. Also, I chose not to do a complete pentadic analysis with this thesis, wherein the pentad is applied to a certain act or artifact, and all five aspects of the pentad are discussed. Instead, this study revealed only the role of the mother and what is necessary for that, such as that the doctor or the fetus plays the role of the agent in some scenarios. Another method, or different use of the dramatisic pentad could prove to be insightful into abortion rhetoric.

### Directions for Future Research

There are several directions in which future research could head. This study could lead to much discovery about the abortion movements which has not been analyzed here. First is an extension of the discussion on two of the limitations shown

above: a pentadic study including all aspects of the pentad, and an investigation of more and different artifacts. Finally, I will show some possible areas of research to which this thesis could lead. Among them are: inclusion of more viewpoints within the movements, how to find common ground between the movements, looking at the way the movements see themselves and the other movement, and discovering the way that the role of the mother has changed over time.

While I applied the pentad as a method, I did not do an entirely pentadic analysis of the rhetoric, complete with ratios of the different parts of the pentad. It would be interesting to find what role, for example, the fetus plays in pro-choice rhetoric, or what role the father of the fetus plays in the rhetoric of both sides. It would be worth discovering the rhetorical construction of the act in pro-choice rhetoric, or the purpose in anti-choice rhetoric. An entire pentadic analysis might prove to be very revealing of motives of the movements.

Another possible area of research would involve looking at more materials, such artifacts as protest acts, films and counterfilms, and confrontations. These might prove interesting for implications about the role the mother plays, or the movements as a whole. I only considered print messages and photographs, and that excluded much information, especially given the inherent confrontation that there is in this issue, and that much of the information exchange which occurs in person, in front of abortion clinics.

The next, and perhaps most interesting area of possible research would be to broaden the scope of the study, with the inclusion of all viewpoints within the movements. In the pro-choice movement, it would include the medical-centered view, the religious view, and the libertarian/capitalist view. For the anti-choice movement, pro-life feminists would be included. This might tell us even more about the place that women are seen to have within this issue.

It would also be worth investigating whether the findings of this study can be implemented for creation of common ground, for exploration of a resolution between the two groups. We know from this thesis that language is different, but perhaps the language can be changed for them in a way that allows for widening of terministic screens. Some possible research questions might be: can messages be created that allow for that? If so, do groups involved in this controversy have the ability to see their own screens? Can views of women be altered at all? Or would that just create another terministic screen on its own? According to Burke, yes, it would. But, the question then could be, is there a "better screen" that can be created from both of these views?

This study examined messages not specifically designed for one certain group. It could prove interesting to explore whether messages aimed specifically at one's own group, or messages aimed at the other side or refuting their arguments create different pentadic roles for the mother in the rhetoric. It is possible that a groups' "true" colors are revealed in its "hostile" messages, rather than those that are aimed at just everyone.

Finally, another way of looking at this rhetoric would be to follow the way that the role of the mother had evolved over time. I showed that Betty Friedan was one of the first people to point out the inherent investment that women have in this issue, so it might prove fruitful to see whether the rhetoric has changed to include the mother more since the 1960's, whether it is still the same as it always was, even before the woman's movement.

This thesis examined the rhetoric of the activists involved in the abortion controversy. I asked the questions: What is the role of the mother within the rhetoric of abortion activist groups?, and, What does the role of the mother within their rhetoric reveal about the group behind it? The answer to the first question was that the mother is the agent in pro-choice rhetoric, and the agency and scene in anti-choice rhetoric. This reveals that the pro-choice activists see women as independent and autonomous.

whereas anti-choice activists see women as here to provide life, not choose their own way. These two movements have created languages that are virtually incompatible; as it is now, their narrow terministic screens do not allow for any foundation upon which to build identification between them for which a resolution in this debate can be reached.

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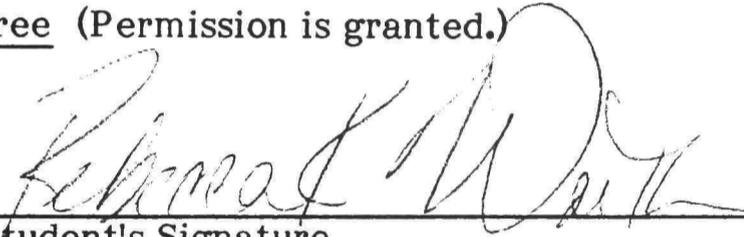
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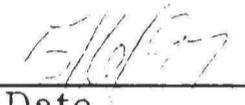
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