THESIS

VALUE WEAVING:

SUPERORDINATE MEDIATORY FRAMEWORK

THROUGH DISCURSIVE APPLICATIONS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

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This study is concerned with establishing a theoretical framework of mediation that provides an applicable framework for mediating antagonistic societal groups. Drawing from a variety of fields, including conflict resolution, structuralism/post-structuralism, social psychology, and political science, this interdisciplinary approach attempts to create novel forms of positive communication where communication does not currently exist by exploring the ways in which partisanship shapes belief systems into seemingly exhaustive wholes. Arising from an exploration of intersubjective epistemological claims, a theoretical groundwork of functional communication is rendered and ventures into post-structuralist conceptions of discourse. The researcher imposes himself as a third party mediator upon pro-life and pro-choice cultures in an attempt to compel members of these respective groups to cooperate with one another where they can, specifically in supporting low-income women facing a crisis pregnancy. Data was collected via in-depth qualitative interviews from partisan members on both sides of the abortion debate.

DEDICATION

To Keri and Joe,

for obvious reasons.

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Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

The purpose of this inquiry is to implement a new framework of mediation that creates a superordinate issue discourse between antagonistic social groups. This discourse attempts to make salient the common beliefs shared by antagonistic groups through the establishment of an umbrella mediatory organization known as a conduit group. This group's functional existence is wholly derived from the interlacing of existing discourses through the rhetorical process of what I call "value-weaving," yielding a new ideology that will attempt to create cooperative behavior between competing groups. The goal is the creation of a new ideology that will attempt to bridge the divide that has been constructed and perpetuated through partisanship and will serve as the rhetorical justification for the conduit group's existence. Its intent is to enable the partisan members of a group with the rhetorical tools necessary to situate themselves according to the discourse set forth by this mediatory organization. The ultimate purpose of the research described in this paper is the creation of communication where communication does not currently exist.

This research approach was formulated under the assumption that it is often difficult for human beings to accept that those who we perceive as our enemies are actually capable of acting decently toward the same recipients of our own compassion. Our goal is to expose partisan leaders to the discourse of a mediatory organization, whose ideology not only overlaps in part with their own but their opposition's as well. Ideally, this will result in partisans becoming more

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self-reflexive of the group to which they belong, becoming less extreme, less polarized in their conceptions of reality, while advancing a more cooperative and harmonic discourse. I believe this may be important for the progression of society as a whole, for when this happens, people become capable of collectively defining a problem together, instead of letting a problem define the collective.

Literature Review

High Involvement Partisanship

This study is concerned with understanding the beliefs and attitudes derived from social belief systems that are characteristic of high involvement individuals, often referred to as partisans, when associated with a particular group or cause. A person of high involvement is understood by the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) as an individual who perceives an issue-relevant communication as having important consequences for his or her own lives and is therefore motivated to engage in issue-relevant thinking (Petty & Wegener, 1999). This suggests that high involvement individuals will be well versed in the rationalizations that constitute their viewpoint on a particular issue and that any attempt made by a mediator to change their attitudes through persuasive means should be attempted down the *central route* of the ELM. The central route toward persuasion features intentional cognitive activity that elicits prior experience and knowledge in an attempt by the receiver to carefully scrutinize all of the information relevant to determining the primary merits of the advocated position (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The rationalizations of high involvement individuals are known as biases and can be observed through the logical positioning of an individual's social-group membership and corresponding political behavior, which will often align with established ideological agendas held by a particular social group (Converse, 1964). As a result, partisans apply preexisting group loyalties and enmities simultaneously to account for patterns of political leadership and partisan conflict with the intent of establishing reasonable decisions that are capable of convening with predisposed belief systems (Berinsky, 2009).

The shaping of such belief systems into seemingly logical wholes capable of being

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perceived as credible to vast numbers of people is a synthesized creative act characteristic of only a small proportion of a population, which suggests belief systems tend to be diffused in packages that consumers (partisans) see as natural wholes (Converse, 1964). Thus, salient groups, and their corresponding belief systems, provide structure to individual political judgments (Berinsky, 2009) and license citizens to evaluate groups and politicians according to their expected favorable or unfavorable treatment of various social groupings within society (Converse, 1964). This gives rise to the existence of narrow-issue publics, which are conceptualized as groups of individuals with relatively crystalized attitudes regarding a given issue (Hutchings, 2003).

Understanding the implications of partisanship is important not only because of the influence it has on partisans themselves but also because of the significant influence over the ways in which citizens understand ongoing events (Bartels, 2002) and competing policies (Druckman, 2001). Consequently, partisanship can influence the political decisions made by poorly informed citizens when they emulate the behavior of well-informed citizens by conforming to political cues (Berinsky, 2009).

Intersubjectivity, Linguistic Form, and Narrative Mediation

For many thinkers, the inherent public nature of language serves as a means of overcoming the solipsistic enigmas that arise from egocentric attitudes regarding states of being, and as a result, language is viewed as a phenomenon that is inseparable from our mental development as well as our perceptions of reality (Frie, 1997). Ours is a shared environment, where the other and the self exist under obligations of reciprocity in which we attempt to overcome our narcissistic

egoism by understanding the alterity of the other (Bernstein, 1992).

Hegel understood consciousness as only being capable of achieving a state-of-being when it is manifested through another consciousness, in that the self seeks to realize its fundamental desire for self-consciousness by recognizing another (Hegel, 1998). As a result, an unavoidable conflict ensues that Hegel conceptualizes in his dialectic of *Master and Slave*:

> Thus the relation of the two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. They must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being for themselves to truth, both in the case of the other and in their own case. And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, not the immediate form in which it appears, not its emergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure being for itself.

Hegel, 1998

Hegel contends that self-consciousness cannot realize itself unless it engages in a mutual recognition of other consciousnesses through its participation in the human community (Melchert, 1999). The other, therefore, establishes the realm of possibility for self-consciousness that arises from intersubjective relationships (Frie, 1997). The self preserves its capacity of recapturing its freedom when it refuses to be identified by what the other understands it to be, which is a requirement for the other who exits in opposition to the self (Sartre, 1974).

For Sartre too understands intersubjective relations as being motivated through the

subjugation of others, who possess the power to make the self into an object (Sartre, 1974). However, Sartre posits a clear distinction between being and knowledge by claiming that consciousness is independent of knowledge since the existence of consciousness inherently precludes any possible knowledge one might have of the self (Sartre, 1974). Thus, the other is delimited in terms established by the self as a result of its reflective awareness (Sartre, 1974). But since the self desires to obtain the free subjectivity of the other, the struggle to subjugate the other by affirming the self's own subjectivity inevitably reduces the other to an object (Sartre, 1974). Therefore, all intentions toward the other are akin with the other's intentions toward the self, and thus it can be posited that all relations are fundamentally conflictual in nature, which renders the concept of intersubjectivity as a fundamental struggle for self-preservation (Frie, 1997).

The inherency of being perceived and subjugated by the other while simultaneously existing in the same capacity toward others is recognized by Lacan, who asserts that from this initial realization, the self is transformed with the knowledge that it perceives itself as becoming an object for the gaze of others (Lacan, 1977). From this point of view, the relationship is nonreciprocal since the other also perceives the self as an object that is aware of its presence as an object through its ability to engage in self-awareness (Lacan, 1977). As a result, the otherness of language countermands the possibility of mutual understanding in communication (Frie, 1997).

Habermas disputes this claim by postulating the existence of intersubjective agreement through an ideal speech situation that is enacted by the concept of communicative rationality that is based upon the theories and rules postulated by social institutions and agreed upon by all

members of a community (Frie, 1997). The rational basis of communicative action is rooted in reason's ability to consolidate and unify thinking once it has been recognized (Habermas, 1984). Thus, intersubjective understanding, through the process of communication, establishes the groundwork for an all inclusive theory of communicative rationality that is based on the emancipatory power of language (Habermas, 1984). Through illocutionary development, individuals become empowered with the ability to differentiate among the three aspects of validity (truth, normative legitimacy, and authenticity), which are then employed by the individual to assist the self in making rationality assessments according to the actions of the other (Habermas, 1984).

It is the structure of language that allows for the creation of different meanings within it and is intricately connected to how we think about and make sense of the world (Ives, 2004). Language is the shared medium through which things are represented in thought and is therefore the medium in which ideology is generated and transformed (Hall, 1983). This can be realized through the intimate connections that exist between membership recognition of groups and their use of a particular language or dialect (Brown, 2000). As a result, language becomes the fundamental thread by which identity is spun within social groups. Language also serves as the primary means by which a group communicates with an outgroup, including lines of communication which seek to incorporate groups cooperatively or sever ties entirely (Brown, 2000). The capacity for understanding communication is significantly augmented when one considers the communication process as a structure produced and sustained by the observation of connected but distinctive moments, which is to consider the process as a "complex structure in dominance" capable of being maintained through the articulation of interlinked yet disparate

practices that possess its own modality, "its own forms and conditions for existence" (Hall, 2001).

This existence is conveyed through a chromatic flux of impressions, which are significantly bounded by the linguistic systems prescribed by our minds, and as a result, the communication experience becomes inherently contingent upon the organization and classification of information through the codified patterns of language (Whorf, 1940). Thus, human beings function in a world that is largely built upon the unconscious language practices that are embedded within the conventions of a particular group (Sapir, 1958). The structure of language, then, is what allows for the creation of different meanings within it and is intricately connected to how we think about and make sense of the world (Ives, 2004).

The sense making of reality through language is achieved through its manipulation, where one proposition becomes fused to another in a chain of connected meanings, where social connotations and historical meaning coalesce and reverberate off one another (Hall, 1983). When individuals participate in language, they not only position themselves according to the other individual with whom they are speaking but also to the multitude of diverse utterances made by others in previous conversations (Bakhtin, 1986). As a result, every utterance functions as a rejoinder to a previous utterance and can only be comprehended when situated within a set of conversations that have been spoken before (Winslade & Monk, 2008). The phenomenon of human conversation, then, can be understood as a demonstration of echoed utterances that arise from previous conversations (Bakhtin, 1986). It is the interpretation of ideological signs in language that becomes the arena through which the battle for hegemonic control is fought (Morton, 2007) and can be realized as the decisive dimension of political and cultural

stratification of the class system that crosses and defines the ways of thinking and feeling of entire populations (Gensini, 2010).

Moreover, Heidegger considers affect as a fundamental indicator of an individual's ontological disposition, with language as the window that human beings use to illuminate and process the world (Frie, 1997). Language does not produce the material world, but rather equips human beings with the tools necessary to discover it (Heidegger, 1985). Discourse, then, serves as the constitutive basis for the inherent ontology of language since it is manifested through the symbolic structures that exist within language (Melchert, 1999) and can be said to presuppose forms of established understanding (Frie, 1997).

Foucalt understood discourse as a social practice capable of being extended throughout the parameters of culture and applies authoritative limitations upon the language and subsequent thinking of a particular culture (1971). Discourses exist in the form of a restricted collection of statements that serve to define a distinctive set of existential phenomena (Foucault, 1972). It is here that certain discourses are accepted or denied by the recognized authoritative institutions of a social system that transmit discursive elements according to the acceptable truth standards that are promulgated by these power structures (Howarth, 2000). But this should not imply that authoritative forms of discourse are immutable arrangements capable of resisting the various internal and external forces that seek to subvert definitive aspects of established discourse.

> Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one;

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but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play at various strategies.

Foucault, 1979

Thus, discourse analysis provides a way of drawing attention to the different versions of discursive realities that are constructed through language and cues us to the numerous alternatives that exist in our attempts to classify phenomena by reminding us that every discourse has the potential of being renegotiated, resisted or reconstituted (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). When discourse becomes commonplace and naturalized, speech patterns have a way of blinding individuals to alternative ways in which things could be organized (Winslade & Monk, 2008).

Since any interpretation of events can be deconstructed, it can be construed that no specific version of events is superior to any other version (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999) and that societal power relations rest upon the mutual acceptance of an interconnected system of experience that has the effect of producing an agreed upon arrangement of logic and strategy but is produced by no one in particular (Foucault, 1990). Power, according to Foucault, must be understood as a myriad of force relationships constitutive in an operative realm that sustains its own particular brand of organization while simultaneously constructing the chain or system that functions to isolate and distinguish it from other systems (Foucault, 1990). It is through communities of associated individuals that meaning is derived and applied to reality, which is where the potential exists for new power structures to emerge from new channels of dialogue and through the refashioning of discourse (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). In this sense, discourse becomes not only capable of transmitting and producing power, but it is also capable of subverting itself through exposure, making it possible to undermine the discursive foundations of dominant

modes (Foucault, 1990).

Indeed, since discourse can be considered the product of a nearly unlimited number of previous conversations, this can enable a stubborn malleability that renders it impossible to change during the course of one conversation alone (Winslade & Monk, 2008). The rigid nature of discourse becomes especially salient during instances of conflict, where individuals will often resort to a discourse of summative accusations that work to undermine efforts toward negotiation (Winslade & Monk, 2008). However, not all conversations are necessarily doomed to repeat the same position over and over again. A person can be described as shifting his position when he resolves to discard certain aspects of conflict-saturated discourse for a discourse that is more inclusive and tolerant of other forms of expression (Winslade & Monk, 2008).

Like parties in a dispute, a mediator's position is inexorably established by prevailing forms of linguistic information that give rise to discursive and moral locations (Winslade & Monk, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial that mediation practitioners demonstrate a capacity and willingness to exercise, to a large extent, a degree of self-reflexivity that renders their own positions susceptible to change when new information is presented to them (Winslade & Monk, 2008). However, this approach does not require or construe a mediator to enter the fray of conflict from a standpoint of neutrality; on the contrary, it simply equips mediators with the ability to acknowledge that their discursive positions will shape and potentially influence the manner in which conflict is managed by opposing parties (Winslade & Monk, 2008). This openness allots the mediator with the power to deconstruct conflict by interrogating the absolutist positions held by divisive parties that work to undercut progress on the issue under consideration (Winslade & Monk, 2008). In this sense, discursive deconstruction empowers the

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mediator with an ability to challenge status quo interpretations of reality that serve to perpetuate conflict through the suppression of alternative interpretations by presenting individuals with an alternate awareness that sees beyond the restraints of contemporary issue discourse by adding an alternative discursive arrangement (Winslade & Monk, 2008).

Value Weaving

The dynamic group affiliations that are available to individuals in flexible social structures allow them to refrain from applying their total personalities to any one single group identity (Croser, 1956). These complex cross-cutting patterns that differentiate social practices within the individual have been shown to increase thresholds of social stability and tolerance (Gluckman, 1973). As understood by social categorization theory, intracategory assimilation and intercategory contrast function to counteract one another when categories are perceived as cross-cutting, and as a result, subverts the cognitive rationale for ingroup bias (Doise, 1978).

Cross-cutting group identities will be predominantly ignored, however, if the salience of the social categorizations is unequal and will lead to an increase in the amount of intergroup discrimination according to the inherent characteristics of the category in dominance (Brewer, 2000). Therefore, for psychological effects to occur within the context of applied cross-categorization, it is imperative that two or more category distinctions possess functional significance within the context of the same social group (Brewer, 2000), involving the simultaneous activation of two categories, with at least one category crossing the threshold of conventional boundaries (Doise, 1978). Two categories that often possess significance to a partisan include the alignment of attitudes toward a political party and the political party's policy

position toward an issue; as such, when a party changes its position toward an issue and becomes so unequivocal that the partisan cannot deny the change has occurred, the element more likely to change is the element that possesses less importance to the partisan's belief system (Converse, 1964)

Value weaving is an original concept explored in this paper. Keeping in mind the idea of the power of cross-categorization, members of antagonistic groups are exposed to the key arguments of their ideological enemies. The trick is to identify ideas that these antagonistic groups share. As we will see, even seemingly incompatible groups share values, often at very deep levels. Value weaving is primarily interested in facilitating communication between antagonistic groups by encoding rhetorical beliefs through a mediatory discourse that addresses the shared concerns of both groups through the application of these concerns to accepted institutionalized standards that are recognized and publicly advocated by both discourses. These mirrored beliefs rest upon the assumption that partisan members of a particular group become cognizant of their own loyalties and affiliations toward the group to which they belong when they attain the capacity to realize that those on the other side of the ideological divide possess similar, if not identical, loyalties and affiliations toward their respective groups and are motivated by similar processes. Value weaving is founded upon the belief that the values adhered to by all social groups are essentially the same and that these similarities can be exploited to elicit commonality through the process of rhetorically examining discursive structures.

Before delving further, a functional definition of values and beliefs is in order. For current purposes, values are beliefs that are largely deprived of institutional contextualizations in that they exist as dyadic representations of fundamental moral concepts located within the realm of

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the human psyche. Of course, if one is capable of subscribing to post-structuralist understandings of discourses as incomplete linguistic systems that function to mediate and systematize our shared experiences of the world (Howarth, 2000), then the postulation that values are capable of being dismantled from the intersubjective linguistic ties that bind meaning to abstract ideas becomes paradoxically rendered. However, as will be explored below, the linguistic interpretation of social structures is contextually dependent upon the level of discourse in which it is socially practiced, allowing the categorization to be analyzed according to the discursive level in which it is situated.

Values are being treated as foundational dyadic concepts that predicate institutionalized belief systems for the purposes of mutual validation. Thus, it is imperative to establish a framework of conceptual meaning that can be applied to the term value, specifically how values manifest linguistically within the realm of intersubjective conceptualizations of reality and how these processes permeate and ultimately give rise to discourse.

Within natural language, syntagmatic relations obtain meaning through the linear nature of language that arranges functional units into cohesive syntagms, which are understood by the linking of signifiers from paradigm sets, including sentences and groups of words built upon regular patterns and the various ways elements within a shared text relate to each other (Saussure, 1966). Paradigmatic relations, on the other hand, function as a complex of applicable linguistic units which are structurally replaceable through substitution and exclusion; therefore, the use of one signifier instead of another (e.g. a particular word) from the same paradigm set (e.g. modifiers) influences the favored meaning of the text (Chandler, 2007). Saussure argued that signs acquire value through language by what they are not, meaning that a sign must be

compared with disparate signs of similar value that are not selected and subsequently stand in opposition to the chosen sign (1966). Thus, paradigmatic analysis is concerned with comparing and contrasting textual signifiers with absent signifiers that in other instances might have been chosen, while simultaneously considering the implications of the choices made (Chandler, 2007).

Jakobson (1990) specified the relationship between oppositional terms further by articulating the concept oppositive duality, which asserts that when the meaning of one term becomes manifest, then the other term, though absent, is inexorably conjured in thought. However, this should not imply an equality of significance between the term that is present and the term that is absent. It is the "markedness" of the term used and the "un-markedness" of the term in absence that relegates the hierarchical relations within paradigm sets (Jakobson, 1990). The study of binary selections serves as a practical approach for studying the various phenomena that are inherent within the communication process, specifically the representational codes that are imposed upon the actors participating within a discursive practice (Jakobson, 1990).

Partitioning the meaning of linguistic signs into oppositional components renders understanding about how and why groups of individuals adopt particular discursive forms that arise from salient core value concepts. Central to this understanding is the pervasive human tendency to regard the self in a positive capacity (Aronson, 1999). If this statement can be accepted, and if it can be accepted that the values an individual holds are at the crux of identity formation (Erikson, 1950), then it can be posited that values are the foundation of an individual's ability to regard him- or herself in a positive capacity. By utilizing a structuralist methodology that considers all linguistic referential terms as functioning dyads, then it becomes apparent that values (being linguistic referential terms that indicate fundamental moral concepts) can only be

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fully realized when paradigmatically analyzed according to the oppositional value that intrinsically accompanies the linguistic meaning of the term, e.g. freedom does not exist without subjugation, life does not exist without death, prosperity does not exist without destitution, etc. When viewed through a dyadic lens such as this, it becomes apparent that the total meaning of a value as an individual term can only be fully realized when regarded dualistically with one referent signifying positive attributes, while the other antinomically signifies the negative attributes. And since most human beings possess positive conceptions of the self, then most human beings will likewise identify with the aspect of a value concept that is positively signified, as opposed the constitutive diametric value that is negatively signified.

Here a question arises: If the majority of human beings identify with positive value concepts, and if positive value concepts can only be fully understood when contrasted with a negative signifier, then how is the existence of negative value concepts reconciled by the self? How does the self become capable of conceptualizing negative value concepts when the self is only, or generally, capable of identifying with positive value concepts? There are two answers to this question:

First, the self is able to envisage negative value concepts by observing the behavior of others, specifically behavior that the self interprets as an embodiment of a negative value concept. When one human being witnesses another human being behaving in a way that repudiates a positive value concept that he or she subscribes to, then the self becomes capable of characterizing the other as someone who subscribes to negative value concepts. For example, when someone views a news clip that displays images of dead civilians killed in a conflict that is taking place between two groups with which the observant self holds no personal identity

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affiliations, the observant self becomes capable of contrasting the positive value concept that he

or she subscribes to, in this case life, with the negative value concept that is being externalized

by the actions of others, death. Thus, the self is left with a negative conception of the other that

serves to contrast and reinforce the positive conception of the self.

But what happens when a group that the self identifies with engages in behavior that would

usually be deemed negative, according to his or her values? For example, what if the identifying

group has left civilians dead as a result of a conflict with another group? Here it becomes the

responsibility of the individual to rationalize and accept behavior that would normally epitomize

negative value concepts that are carried out either by the self or by members of an ingroup for

the purposes of maintaining a positive self concept. But a new question arises: How does the self

accumulate the linguistic tools that are necessary to rationalize the negative value concepts that

are actualized by the behavior of the self or identifying ingroup? It is provided to and augmented

by the individual through various channels of communication in the form of discourse. This is a

category of discourse that is concerned with communicating and legitimating a particular system

of beliefs. It is within the assemblage of corresponding beliefs that the self becomes capable of

marking its identity through a societal positioning that serves to demarcate a belief system by

means of semantic labeling, e.g. liberal, conservative, libertarian, independent, socialist,

capitalist, environmentalist, etc. By observing the various belief systems that are available in a

functioning democracy, the self becomes empowered with the opportunity to identify with a

corresponding discourse that exemplifies, interprets, and applicably renders positive value

concepts to intersubjective conceptualizations of reality.

A primary function of discourse, then, is to provide individuals with socially applicable

interpretations of positive value concepts that enable individuals with the capacity to apply this discursive information to the external social environment within which they exist. Discourse equips individuals with the rhetorical tools that are necessary for justifying their beliefs about social phenomena by means of activating cognitive schemata that situates these beliefs within the self's interpretation of the broader social context. Again, if it can be accepted that most individuals are capable of holding generally positive conceptions of themselves and that the discourses which individuals subscribe to are crucial to identity formations, then it can be posited that the key function of discourse is to provide the self with a socially applicable framework that allots individuals with the ability to positively regard themselves according to the rhetorical beliefs set forth by a particular discourse.

For the purposes of this inquiry, I intend to apply this understanding of discourse to a framework of conflict resolution that aims to mediate the competing discourses of antagonistic groups. Antagonism between groups occurs when one group's discourse makes salient and gives precedence to one particular positive value concept that is at odds with another positive value concept that has been made salient and given precedence by another group's ideological discourse. This should not imply that the one positive value concept made salient by a particular group is absent from the discourse of another, or vice versa. It simply means that the respective belief systems adhered to by both groups give rhetorical preference to disparate positive value concepts, even though both positive value concepts are pervasively recognized and substantiated by all competing or noncompeting groups that exist within a social structure. Thus, it can be stated that the power struggle that groups engage in over discourse is really a struggle over the interpretation of values and that beliefs arise from these interpretations.

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The abortion debate provides an obvious example. If it can be accepted that life and liberty are positive value concepts that most Americans adhere to, then it can also be posited that most Americans possess a desire to subscribe to belief systems that promulgate such values. But what happens when the unavoidable circumstances that accompany reality, like an unwanted pregnancy, render two positive value concepts at odds with one another? Institutional discourses emerge that not only serve to interpret a particular value concept differently via belief systems and corresponding discourses, but also disparage the belief system of an institutional antagonist by interpreting its discourse as adhering to a negative value concept. This becomes obvious when one considers the value laden labels of pro-life and pro-choice. While both terms label the respective intuitions according to a positive value concept (assuming that choice is synonymous with liberty) they also label their institutional antagonists as subscribers to a negative value concept. If you are not pro-choice, then you are pro-subjugation, and if you are not pro-life, then you are pro-death. And this is exactly how both groups attempt to define one another.

Unfortunately, neither group seems capable of or willing to recognize that the values of life and liberty exist within the other's discourse. As a result, conflict arises from the interpretation of these values through oppositional belief systems. For instance, both pro-choice and pro-life groups share the *value* that hurting other people is wrong. However, both *believe* that the other group is hurting others through their attitudes and subsequent behaviors regarding the issue of abortion as a result of the belief systems that are nested within respective discourses. As such, pro-life groups believe that abortion clinics, such as Planned Parenthood, are hurting other human beings by providing access to abortion, which they interpret as a killing practice, while pro-choice groups believe that pro-life groups are hurting other people by ignoring the liberty of

women who face the prospect of raising a child in unfavorable conditions. But what is really happening, according to the criteria set forth by the model of discourse under consideration, is that one group is simply giving precedence to one positive value concept over another by cognitively employing the rationalizations that are transmitted to them through a particular brand of discourse, e.g. pro-life and pro-choice, which arises from the incongruous nature of the circumstances that exist within the environmental conditions under consideration: unwanted pregnancy in America.

The first phase of mediation toward antagonistic groups through the strategy of value weaving lies in the deconstruction of an individual's behavior, or affiliated group's behavior, through the reduction of group attitudes and beliefs to its determinate positive value concept. In the same way that structuralist scholars distill social discourse by following chains of interpretive meaning back to the power actors who formulate it, or to the historical references that conceal it, so too can mediators dismantle behavior by tracing it back to the positive value concept that serves to actuate successive behaviors. For if it can be accepted that values influence beliefs, beliefs influence attitudes, and attitudes influence behaviors, all a mediator need do, then, is follow this progression in reverse to deconstruct behavior to the determinant value that directs and ultimately determines a behavioral form. The challenge for a third party mediator is to find common behaviors that exist pervasively between both groups by observing behavioral forms that are manifested through public engagement.

Again, the abortion debate will be used to illustrate. Regarding behavior: On the pro-choice side, 75 percent of the clientele that Planned Parenthood serves live at or below the poverty line (Planned Parenthood, 2012). On the pro-life side, Evangelical charities, such as The Salvation

Army (2012), as well as numerous organizations associated with Catholic Charities USA (2012) make it their work to address issues of homelessness and poverty across the nation. This *behavior* indicates that both groups have an unfavorable *attitude* toward poverty, because they *believe* that poverty is a detriment to individuals in society. What substantiates this belief? It is the positive value concept of charity and compassion, specifically charity and compassion toward human beings existing in states of destitution. When behavior from both sides is capable of being reduced to a similar, if not the same, positive value concept, it then becomes possible to weave the subsequent discourses that arise from these positive value concepts in an attempt to direct new forms of behavior through the establishment of a mediatory discourse. Thus, it is not the value that is being weaved, indeed both groups already adhere to and promulgate the same positive value concept (e.g. charity and compassion), but rather it is the value that is weaving together components of socially antagonistic belief systems and their corresponding discourses.

The Conduit Group

Social identity theory is widely perceived as a theory that places an emphasis on understanding the psychological processes of intergroup discrimination (Brown, 2000). Two broad generalizations purported by social identity theory include: a person has not one self but rather several that correspond with various degrees of group membership, and the individual's self-concept will be derived from his perceived membership of social groups (Robinson, 1996). In other words, it is an individual-based perception of what defines the collective 'we' that is associated with any internalized group membership. Individuals ascertain their conceptions of the social world through distinctive categories that serve to transpose continuous variables into

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distinct and manageable classes (Brewer, 2000).

Social identity theory asserts that group membership creates positive ingroup self-categorization in ways that favor the ingroup at the expense of the outgroup (Brown, 2000). Once an individual categorizes herself as a group member, she seeks to achieve positive self-esteem by differentiating characteristics of her ingroup from those of an outgroup by means of social comparison; as a result, the need for positive social identity encourages an individual to establish a sense of positive distinctiveness toward her own group (Tajfel, 1981). Individuals are likely to display favoritism when an ingroup is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is meaningful to their sense of identity (Tajfel, 1981).

A proven method for subverting the favoritism members of ingroups apply to themselves and the derogatory attitudes they hold toward members of an outgroup is to manifest a superordinate category that provides members of both groups with the capacity to address a problem cooperatively, so long as the cooperation is reciprocated by both sides (Brown, 2000). This entails the implementation of a superordinate goal that provides antagonistic groups with an outlet for exercising a common objective in which they become positively interdependent (Sherif, 1967). Three requirements must be met for a superordinate goal to be effective: (1) The goal must appeal to both parties, (2) accomplishing the goal must be beyond the capabilities of any one party, and (3) both parties must be willing to table other issues that could conflict with their ability to interact with one another (Folger & Poole, 2009).

Sherif's boy's camp study illustrates this. In the 60s, a group of adolescent boys were recruited to participate in an experimental summer camp. They placed the participants into two groups and set about getting them to dislike one another through a series of mean spirited

competitions. Once acrimony was established, the researchers attempted to flip the switch again by getting the two groups to like one another. They achieved this by establishing a superordinate goal that entailed driving the boys in a truck several miles away from camp then intentionally breaking it down close to lunch time. The researchers then told them that the only way to get the truck running again was to push start it, but it was too heavy for one group to do this alone. Only by both groups pulling on a rope attached to the bumper, which ironically was the same rope they had used earlier for a tug-of-war competition, were they able to start the truck. The researchers found that the more superordinate goals they were able to get the two groups to participate in, the less aggressive they became toward one another. They also noted a clear reduction in the amount of ingroup favoritism (Brown, 2000).

When groups become entrapped within their own deontic logics, it becomes difficult for those groups to break away from the patterns of interactive conflict that defines a particular social issue for those groups and, as a result, they get caught in the loop of their own moral orders (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). The concept of dual identification asserts that individuals are capable of having significant attachments to a particular subgroup while simultaneously possessing the ability to identify with a superordinate group that incorporates other social categories and groups, allotting individuals the opportunity to identify with outgroup members through their mutual affiliation with a superordinate group (Brewer, 2000). Thus, partially overlapping group membership lowers the evaluative significance regarding the self as it applies to intergroup comparisons (Brown & Turner, 1979).

When a superordinate group identity is achieved and salience is established, subgroup comparisons lose some of their impact and relevance, which in turn reduces or eliminates

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intergroup competition and as a result, prospects for cooperative decision making increases (Kramer & Brewer, 1986). However, it is crucial for individuals who identify with large groups to maintain their ability to identify with these particular subgroups since it provides an optimal platform for them to exercise their need for distinctiveness and assimilation (Brewer, 1991).

A conduit group, an original concept explored in this inquiry, satisfies this requirement because it functions as an independent mediatory organization that positions itself according to common and salient concerns embedded within respective group discourses. In fact, the entire discourse of a conduit group arises from the ideological overlap that exists between, or among, competing discourses. This positioning allows a conduit group to manifest its mission rhetorically, according to the parameters of discourse set forth by respective social groups. Conduit groups avoid threatening notions of ingroup identity since they exist in an auxiliary capacity to the larger ingroup. The goal of the conduit group is not to diminish or trivialize the importance of group affiliation, but to augment it by transmitting established lines of discourse in a novel way. If a mediator can effectively persuade both groups that by addressing the concerns of their antagonists they will in turn be helping the concerns touted by their ingroup, then they are rhetorically prompted into a situation where they will ideally see the benefits of cooperation.

Another benefit that the conduit group brings to the table of mediation is the concept of cooperative segregation. Because the acrimony that exists between antagonistic social groups often precludes any chance of constructive, direct interaction, the imposition of a third party upon an existing conflict has the potential to germinate efficacious dialog. Since the functional discourse of a conduit group is intentionally situated within common ideological beliefs espoused by respective group discourses, partisans from both sides have the potential to

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empathize with the mediated conduit discourse since it can be inferred as being in consonance with consequential aspects of the discourses subscribed to by respective groups. However, the discourse set forth by a conduit group can never fully align itself with both discourses without falling into the same rhetorical trap that exacerbates conventional social conflict; therefore, it is imperative that a conduit group emphasize the similarities that exist between antagonistic groups by not only bringing this to the attention of partisan members but also by giving them an outlet in which they can cooperatively address these concerns together, even if this cooperation is segregated through the filter of a third party mediator.

Thus, the primary function of a conduit group is to establish a superordinate goal that arises entirely from common beliefs that are embedded within both groups' ideological discourses by rhetorically merging this information into a viable mediatory discourse. The form that this novel discourse takes is predicated upon a confluence of discursive information that exists within both groups' ideological pools. The superordinate goal becomes manifested in reality through the establishment of a conduit group, whose ideological interpretations serve to direct, delimit, and make salient alternative behaviors that reflect new attitudes manifested in a mediatory discourse. The arrangement of this discourse is not intended to supplant current interpretations of an issue; rather, it is meant to augment these interpretations by giving issue partisans an option to cooperate with one another when addressing a shared concern and is designed to make salient the beliefs both sides have in common while deemphasizing the beliefs in which they differ.

While there can be no question that most of the value interpretations regarding life and liberty are irreconcilable between pro-life and pro-choice groups, it is also apparent, through the deconstruction of their behavior, that both ideologies share the positive value concept of charity

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and compassion toward individuals living in poverty. And when 75 percent of all individuals who have an abortion give financial constraint as the primary reason for undergoing the procedure, with four out of ten living below the federal poverty line (Guttmacher, 2011), then a foundation for a superordinate goal becomes manifest. The exigence of reducing poverty among at-risk individuals already exists within the ideological discourses on each side of the debate. It is an exigence that both already actively address. Again, we know this through the deconstruction of behavior: through Planned Parenthood and other health clinics serving a low income clientele and Catholic and Evangelical charities actively addressing homelessness and poverty.

Given the above information, what would a conduit group look like with regard to the abortion debate? Consider the following rhetorical construction of a hypothetical organization, Step Forward, which is a sponsorship program for at-risk individuals who are facing a crisis pregnancy and are only considering an abortion solely as a result of their financial situation (Appendix F). This mediatory organization would be funded in large part by pro-life institutions, while all clients would be screened by Planned Parenthood or other abortion providers. In this hypothetical scenario, both groups become interdependent upon each other to satisfy the superordinate goal of reducing poverty among individuals who are facing an at-risk pregnancy. Equally important, as a conduit group Step Forward would not require partisans to abandon their discursive notions of positive identity toward the self. It does not require that partisans refrain from subscribing to pro-life or pro-choice interpretations of circumstantial phenomena; it simply exists to augment issue discourse by making salient something both sides of the debate already have in common. Thus, a mediatory issue discourse is rendered; one that provides a common goal to a common struggle.

Persuasive Implications of Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance can be realized as an occurrence of psychological discomfort that permeates the consciousness of an individual (Festinger, 1957). This discomfort can trigger significant motivational effects within an individual who will seek to reduce dissonance once it is elicited or with the prospect of it being elicited (Mills, 1999). Elicitation occurs when the interplay between two cognitions are psychologically inconsistent with one another (Festinger, 1957).

In a broader sense, and resting on the assumption that most people possess a relatively favorable view of themselves, dissonance theory is a theory that is rooted in sense making as it is chiefly concerned with how people attempt to make sense of their behavior with the goal of living sensible and meaningful lives (Aronson, 1999). Since human beings are imperfect entities who must exist in an imperfect world, the drive to achieve psychological consonance among many cognitions is futile. Despite this, most humans strive to harmonize existence by rationalizing our actions in accordance with our values and beliefs (Perloff, 2010).

Research has shown that dissonant processes are capable of eliciting persuasive effects and processes rooted in dissonance are more powerful and more sustaining than those resulting from persuasive effects based on rewards, punishments, or source credibility (Freedman, 1965). This is largely attributed to the ways in which dissonance elicitation involves high levels of personal involvement, which requires the self-justification of attitudes and behaviors to reduce dissonance. But not all dissonant cognitions are created equal: The more important an attitude or behavior is to an individual, the more pressure that individual will feel to keep that attitude or behavior in a state of cognitive consistency (Woodward & Denton, 2009). Thus, dissonant

persuasive effects make its strongest predictions when an important element of the self-concept is threatened as a result of behavior or attitude that is inconsistent with an individual's sense of self (Aronson, 1999).

The extent to which related but conflicted elements differ with one another increases the potential of experiencing dissonance (Woodward & Denton, 2009). Stephen Littlejohn distinguishes four criteria that influence the amount of dissonance experienced: First, the relative importance of a decision will impact dissonance. Second, the allure of the choice made will either mitigate or exacerbate dissonance. Third, the observed attractiveness of the alternative not chosen will influence our affect regarding a decision. Fourth, if a substantial amount of overlap exists between two alternatives, less dissonance will occur (Littlejohn, 2007).

Festinger argued that "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance" (1957). Aronson understood dissonance as a "a negative drive state which occurs whenever an individual simultaneously holds two cognitions (ideas, beliefs, opinions) which are psychologically inconsistent" (1968).

This negative drive state is solely concerned with curbing dissonant effects. Perloff identifies eight ways in which an individual can reduce dissonance:

1. Change your attitude.

2. Add consonant cognitions.

3. Derogate the unchosen alternative.

4. Spread apart the alternatives.

5. Alter the importance of cognitive elements.

6. Suppress thoughts.

7. Communicate positive aspects.

8. Alter behavior.

<div align="right">(Perloff, 2010)</div>

It is important to keep in mind that there is no guarantee that any of these mental maneuvers will reduce dissonant effects in the consciousness of an individual, only that individuals who are experiencing dissonant effects will take steps to lessen the extent of psychological discomfort (Perloff, 2010). These are processes that occur within the domain of the rationalizing mind, where pivotal decisions are made then reconciled by the individual (Festinger, 1964). Aronson notes that dissonance theory does not assume that the human being is a rational animal, but rather a "rationalizing animal—(one who) attempts to appear rational, both to others and himself" (1968). Roger Brown provides a summary of dissonance theory in this regard:

> A state of cognitive dissonance is said to be a state of psychological discomfort or tension which motivates efforts to achieve consonance. Dissonance is the name for a disequilibrium and consonance the name for an equilibrium. Two cognitive elements, A and B, are dissonant if one implies the negation of the other: i.e., if A implies not-B. Two cognitive elements are consonant when one implies not the negation of the other element but the other element itself: A implies B. Finally, two elements, A and B, are irrelevant when neither implies anything about the other. Dissonance is comparable to imbalance: consonance to balance.

<div align="right">(Brown, 1965)</div>

According to dissonance theory, persuasion occurs when inconsistencies are realized between two associated attitudes or behaviors, which force an individual to realign one of these in an attempt to achieve a state of consistency (Woodward & Denton, 2009). Dissonance theory organizes what we know about the ways in which humans handle cognitive inconsistency in a manner that seemingly points to some enigmatic conclusions, especially the notion that individuals may change their attitudes to fit their behavior instead of the other way around (Schneider, Gruman & Coutts, 2005).

Expenditure of Effort

The expenditure of effort rests on the assumption that the more effort an individual puts into gaining acceptance into a group, the more attractive that group will become. This can help explain why army recruits who have suffered physical and psychological abuse in boot camp are capable of looking back on their experiences with nostalgic fondness (Perloff, 2010). In 1959, Aronson and Mills elucidated the core notion of the expenditure of effort:

> No matter how attractive a group is to a person it is rarely completely positive; i.e., usually there are some aspects to the group that the individual does not like. If he has undergone an unpleasant initiation to gain admission to the group, his cognition that he has gone through an unpleasant experience for the sake of membership is dissonant with the cognition that there are things about the group that he does not like.

Aronson and Mills tested the accuracy of their observation in 1959 when they conducted a classic laboratory experiment in which they interviewed a group of college-aged women who

were manipulated into believing they were being considered for a possible opening in a provocative, in-vogue discussion group. The experimental groups were informed that they were being considered for admission into the discussion group and would be selected based on an interview screening process. This screening procedure was actually an embarrassment test that required those in the severe-initiation group to read 12 sexually explicit words out loud then describe two graphic descriptions of sexual activity in the presence of a male researcher, while subjects in the mild-initiation group read five sex-related words out loud that were not obscene. Subjects from both conditions were subsequently informed that they had been admitted into the group.

Then, all subjects were exposed to a tape-recorded discussion from a "previous" meeting. This staged recording revealed a dull and dry discussion. According to Aronson and Mills: "Participants spoke dryly and haltingly . . . contradicted themselves and one another, mumbled several non sequiturs . . . and in general conducted one of the most worthless and uninteresting discussions imaginable" (Aronson and Mills, 1959).

As predicted by dissonance theory, those in the severe-initiation group rated the discussion more favorably since they were allotted a greater opportunity to experience dissonance as they had more to lose than the mild-initiation group. In their efforts to reduce dissonance, the severe-initiation group convinced themselves that the group had enough positive characteristics to justify their expenditure of effort (Aronson and Mills, 1959). To put it another way: I am a decent person. Decent people do not express lascivious words in public, especially in front of the opposite sex. I expressed lascivious words in front of a male researcher to gain admittance into a group; therefore, the group must be worth my efforts since I publicly

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embarrassed myself to gain admittance.

In another study that highlighted the applied potential of effort justification, Axsom and Cooper (1985) recruited overweight female college students to participate in a weight loss experiment. Participants completed a series of cognitive assignments, such as reciting nursery rhymes with delayed auditory feedback, which was intended to enhance the difficultyof simple tasks . These tasks were touted by the researchers as possessing the capacity to increase neuropsychological arousal that would then enhance emotional sensitivity, and as a result, would lead to an increase in weight loss among participants. In actuality, this rationalization was a deception since the researchers possessed no evidence that these tasks were conducive to helping people lose weight.

Some participants were assigned cognitive tasks that were relatively difficult, while others received tasks that were relatively easy. A control group of participants was added, who did not complete any cognitive tasks. All participants were weighed at the beginning of the study. After four sessions were conducted over the span of three weeks, the high-effort participants had shed more pounds than the low-effort or control group.

In addition, this effect was capable of sustaining itself over a period of time. Even though they were unaware that they would be contacted again by the researchers, when participants were weighed a year later, the high-effort participants had lost 6.7 pounds, while the low-effort participants had lost an average of 1 pound and the control group had actually gained 2 pounds. The rationalization used by the high-effort participants to justify their expenditure may have gone something like this: Even though losing weight is challenging, I have expended a lot of effort through my participation in the experiment to lose weight. Therefore, losing weight must

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be worth my efforts since I have already placed a substantial amount of my time and energy into losing weight.

Hypocrisy and the Self

The second subset of dissonant theory used to guide this study concentrates on the induction of hypocrisy as it pertains to an individual's notion of self-concept. Why was it difficult for the women in the previous study to read sexually explicit words and scenarios out loud in front of a male researcher? Because it contradicted their sense of decency with relation to their learned social belief system, and, as a consequence, it induced feelings of hypocrisy (Aronson and Mills, 1959).

In another landmark study, Elliot Aronson was attempting to find an effective way to convince college students to use condoms during the AIDS epidemic of the early 1990s. The problem was that college students already knew that condoms prevented the spread of AIDS. Most of these students considered condoms to be a nuisance that detracted from the physical pleasures and romanticism of sexual contact. As a result, the students found themselves in a state of denial: "denying that the dangers of unprotected sex applied to them in the same way they applied to everyone else" (Aronson, 1999).

To combat this phenomenon, Aronson devised a strategy using a counter attitudinal paradigm in which he attempted to persuade others to argue against their own attitudes. The students' hypocritical attitudes regarding condom use were brought to light in an experiment where college students were situated in a high-dissonance (hypocrisy) condition where they were instructed to make a videotape urging their audience to use condoms (Aronson, Fried, & Stone,

1991). As predicted by dissonance theory, the subjects in the hypocrisy condition were more likely to increase their condom use than were subjects in other control/experimental conditions (Aronson, 1999).

The same processes were used again to elicit positive behavioral change regarding recycling. Fried and Aronson (1995) asked college students to write and deliver a speech that espoused the benefits of recycling. Prior to writing the speech, half of the participants (hypocrisy condition) were asked to provide recent examples of situations in which they had failed to recycle. Once the speeches were given, all participants were asked if they would be willing to make phone calls on behalf of a local recycling organization. Those in the hypocrisy condition, who were previously reminded of their behavior that was inconsistent with their expressed attitudes, volunteered significantly more and for longer periods of time than the students who had only composed and given the speeches.

Rhetorical Interpolation of Issue Discourse

In its drive to maintain cognitive consistency, the partisan self will employ a variety of strategies to reduce dissonance when rhetorically confronted with logical propositions that contradict the commonplace propositions that are in compliance with and embedded within a particular discourse. These propositions exist as irreducible anchor points of agreed upon, self-evident "truths" that are omnipresent within the applied discourse of a particular group and serve to guide the logical rationalizations that validate both a group's position on a particular issue as well as situate the group itself to the systemic functioning of a discursive social order. As a result, individuals obtain the capacity to rationalize their understandings of reality by adhering to

the tenants set forth by a particular issue discourse, which can be understood as a rhetorical system of propositions that are demarcated by the linguistic restraints of a particular issue that exists within the political realm of a functioning democracy. Issue discourses enable individuals to place themselves within a shared context of reality that is adhered to by other likeminded individuals. This should not imply that discourse is an inexorable force capable of definitively programming the minds of individuals in accordance with a particular worldview. The reader need only recall previous events in his or her own life to understand that perspectives of all discursive political issues are very much subject to change and that throughout the course of your own life you too have altered your perspective on an issue after being exposed to an alternative issue discourse, assuming you are not an obstinate ideologue incapable of or unwilling to examine the discursive propositions that are adhered to by members of disparate social groups. Either way, as human beings existing in a democratic society, our understanding of political issues is constrained by the self's interpretation of prominent discursive information that has been rhetorically transmitted through an array of available communication outlets.

If it can be accepted that most human beings posses positive conceptions of themselves, as understood through cognitive dissonance theory, and that human beings are also inherently rationalizing creatures, then it can also be surmised that the reasoning in which we apply to meaningful discursive issues and resulting interactions arise from our desire to regard ourselves, and to be regarded by others, in a positive capacity. Thus, it becomes the responsibility of the self to functionally organize and subsequently utilize the propositions that exist within an available issue discourse for the purposes of maintaining psychological consistency. Obviously, this does not indicate that most human beings are not in an interminable state of justification, only that

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when confronted with propositions arising from an opposing discourse, either by the self or another person, human beings have a tendency to repel this information with counter propositions that reinforce our own particular brand of discourse. Of course, existing in an expansive democracy that features copious discursive repositories of complex information precludes any human from being able to rhetorically address all the propositions presented by opposing issue discourses in a comprehensive manner. Indeed, it is the lot of the specialized, modern human to be competent in only a few discursive issues, often this competency is associated with employment. Otherwise, when rhetorically confronted with oppositional propositions from an adept member of an opposing or alternative discourse, the self enters a state of dissonance that results from its inability to adequately counter the propositions communicated by the opposing member with the propositions that arise from the issue discourse subscribed to by the self. As a result, the primary motivation of the self to engage in intersubjective argumentation with others comes from the self's desire to positively regard itself. Perhaps this is why most arguments occur subjectively in the mind.

The discursive issues this study is concerned with include those that are capable of being comprehended by ubiquitous sections of a democratic populace, which are created by institutional collectives of human beings who attempt to apply these issues through rhetorical discourse to their respective social and cultural systems. Of course, the specific makeup of these rhetorical discourses is limitless in scope and composition but is ultimately defined by the applied public outcome of an issue as understood by a particular group's preferred interpretation and ascribed labeling of an issue, e.g., climate change supporter's versus deniers, war hawks versus doves, pro-life versus pro-choice, are but a few examples of popular contemporary

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interpretations of discursive public issues.

It could be argued, and persuasively so, that all issues fall within the realm of an issue discourse. Since the limits of human understanding are largely determined by our ability to linguistically represent worldly phenomena to the conscious self, it would seem that all issues, no matter how private, are inherently discursive and derived from the public realm. For instance, when a parent confronts a child for not completing chores, it could be accurately stated that the issue of not doing chores possesses its own discourse, one that is learned by and conveyed through societal representations. For instance, how do both parent and child understand that the term *chore* represents commonplace housework? Did either make up the term for the purposes of communicating this task to one another? Of course not. It was learned through their exposure to a pervasively accepted lexicon that ultimately prescribes meaning to environmental referents. Both parent and child use the term chore as a linguistic building block in their efforts to communicate information with one another in an attempt to persuade the other to acquiesce to a preferred outcome. The subsequent rationalizations that transpire between the two are embedded within a dialogue that exists until some resolution is achieved. Just like when two pundits square off on a talk show to promulgate their respective positions about an issue, e.g. pro-life versus pro-choice, so too does the parent and child square off with one another in an attempt to promulgate a 'pro-chore' versus 'pro-play' discourse.

However, since much of a situation such as this chore scenario exists within and has developed through the exclusivity of only a few individuals, i.e. members of a particular family, the rationalizations that permeate the available pro-chore/pro-play discourses arise in large part from the unique circumstances that exist within the unique circumstantial determinants of a

particular household. These private issue discourses are wholly dependent upon the participating members' interpretations of the environmental phenomena that they share with the other individuals who exist within the parameters of this environment. As such, if an outsider were to observe a parent expressing to a child, "You must scrub the deck before you can swing with Big Bertha," much confusion and concern could be contrived regarding the parent's willingness to allow a child to participate in potential lascivious activities on the condition that an open platform of a seafaring vessel be cleaned. But if an outsider has had an opportunity to become acclimated to the referential terminology being used--in that the deck is the recognized name of the child's room, the swing is in the backyard, and Big Bertha is an affable nickname of a neighborhood friend--then it becomes possible to understand, participate, and ultimately augment the private issue discourse utilized by the family.

Similarly, public issue discourses arise from identical individual representations of circumstantial determinants, except the realm that encapsulates public issue discourse is pervasively shared by all members of a democratic society. These are discourses that are provided to individuals in a democratic society by the complex structure of dominance, to use Stuart Hall's terminology. It is the abstraction of circumstantial phenomena by some and the mutual acceptance of this abstraction by others that enables human beings to collectively apply and perpetuate meaning to a public issue discourse. The process of abstracting and communicating interpretive circumstantial phenomena to other human beings is a convoluted endeavor that is such a requisite aspect of our existence that we often take it for granted, and for good reason. As social creatures existing within a discursively partitioned cultural complex, our survival greatly depends upon our ability to meaningfully interconnect ourselves with other

participating members. For it is often, if not always, the case that we adhere to a particular discourse as a means to a tangible end. For instance, when an individual becomes a participating member of a social institution, such as a corporation or university, they are given monetary incentive to adhere to the institutions particular brand of discourse. But because these issues have become naturalized by the complex structure of dominance, it is very difficult if not impossible for participating members of society to think beyond these boundaries. Questions such as, "Are you pro-life or pro-choice?" and "Is she a communist or a capitalist" encapsulate this abstraction.

This study is interested in creating then subsequently interpolating a novel form of issue discourse upon the abortion debate that positively affects the ways in which partisan individuals perceive their institutional antagonists. As stated above, the superordinate goal guides much of the rhetorical direction of this discourse in that it draws equally from common beliefs that exist on both sides, pro-life and pro-choice, of the abortion debate. Specifically, this entails saturating the mediatory discourse with rhetorical elements that are derived from the positive value concept of charity to the poor, which both side share, as well as a corresponding belief system that rationalizes the emphasis being placed on this value. Though it is futile to concoct an appropriate label that fully encapsulates all nuances of any issue discourse, it may be helpful to relegate a title to this discourse. Because it places such an emphasis on the conditions poor women face when dealing with a crisis pregnancy, anti-poverty may be appropriate name. Again, this discourse does not seek to change the parameters of the abortion debate, indeed the discursive elements that emphasize charity to the poor are already embedded within the value frameworks of the abortion debate, as explored above; instead the end goal of the mediatory discourse is to establish new forms of cooperative behavior that both sides can willingly participate in.

But before new behavior can be definitively constructed, it is important to analyze the discursive framework from which shared values and interpretive beliefs are embedded. A structuralist model of discourse may help to clarify, specifically, a hierarchical drainage analogy that represents the stages of discourse that exist in a complex and massive democratic society (See Figure 1). At the top, serving as a catalyst of definitive rhetorical force, exists the discourse of the status quo, represented by the source reservoir. This body is a pervasive, ubiquitous discourse that all citizens participate in and serves to feed all other subsequent bodies of discourse via the dyadic value concepts, described above, that are embedded within it. For American society, status quo discourse includes such positive value concepts as capitalism, consumerism, representational government, life, liberty, justice, as well as the inherent negative value concepts that accompany and ultimately serve to holistically define these positive value concepts. The fundamental discourse that exists at this level is capable of being expressed in very simplistic terms (e.g. liberty is good or death is bad) and can be regarded as an associative network whose structure is largely determined by the positive or negative characteristics that human beings linguistically assign to distinctive value concepts.

While it is true that in any functional democracy all citizens will vary to the extent with which they accede to the values espoused by the discourse of the status quo, this paper will claim that the vast majority of the public abide by these value standards. Again, this can be confidently asserted if one is capable of subscribing to the notion that most human beings possess positive conceptions of the self, and it is the public's acquiescence to these positive value concepts that substantiates this claim through their behavior. Otherwise, capitalist democracies would become unstable and rife with revolutionary groups attempting to supplant status quo values with their

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own, which does happen from time-to-time. This is what Antonio Gramsci was referring to when he spoke about incentive (Gramsci, 1971). Capitalism, consumerism, representational government, all give the American public enough incentive to adhere to the values encompassed by status quo discourse.

But just because the vast majority of individuals acknowledge and acquiesce to these pervasive value concepts does not mean that all interpretations of them are identical. Take economics. A Keynesian economist will argue that capitalism works best when it is supported and monitored by the government. While a Libertarian economist will contend that government regulation stymies private sector growth. Both have distinct ideological interpretations of the same positive value concept of capitalism. This alludes to a subsequent discursive level, ideological discourse. These bodies are fed by mainstream channels of discursive information that are directed from the status quo to different belief systems, which serve to direct and delimit public thought on a variety of social issues. Ideological discourse can be understood as a transmittable manifestation of belief sets that are capable of being deciphered by individuals as affiliable markers of personal identification. Thus, when individuals identify themselves as conservative, they are not just identifying with one particular belief about one particular issue, but rather an entire network of interconnected beliefs that constitute a conservative ideology. However, this should not definitively imply that ideological discourse exists in a fixed contextual state. Individuals may consider themselves to be conservative on social issues and liberal on the economy, among many, many other interpretations. Indeed, the free flow of information in a democratic society allows for numerous amalgamations of interpretive belief sets. For the purposes of this inquiry, what is most crucial about ideological discourse is that it serves to

encompass, and subsequently direct, a collectivity of social issues that are capable of supplying individuals with ideological frames of reference for the purposes of identity formation and societal substantiation. It serves as a directive staging ground that transmits seemingly cohesive value interpretations, which work to give meaning to social reality according to the particular network of beliefs from which they arise. Ideological discourse is a foundational platform by which human beings linguistically organize themselves into inclusive categories. It is through the acceptance and use of these categories by established groups of human beings that social reality becomes ideologically prescribed and gives rise to the perception that ideological categories constitute absolute representations of the phenomenological circumstances that encapsulate social reality; even though they are nothing more than pervasively accepted interpretations of value concepts.

Again, using the abortion debate as an example, the two ideological discourses that guide the thinking of pro-life and pro-choice communities can be described as Conservative Christianity and Liberal Secularism, respectively. These ideological categories serve as learning devices to American citizens that provide them with linguistic sets of rhetorical options, empowering citizens with the ability to apply ideologies to their political realities. In the case of Liberal Secularism, the ideological belief set includes being sympathetic toward environmental considerations, respecting the right of the individual to live as they please without interference from the government regarding social issues, a tolerance for governmental interference regarding the distribution of capital, placing a greater emphasis on the individual regardless of citizenship status, among many others. This description should by no means imply that all individuals who describe themselves as liberal adhere to all the beliefs of Liberal Secularism, it simply means that

these beliefs are characterized and culturally defined by the particular ideological discourse in which they are embedded. These beliefs, along with the discursive rationalizations that substantiate them, are provided to citizens by a democratic society; citizens then have the option to pick and choose which beliefs suite their particular needs.

It is only in a functioning democracy that these ideological pools of discourse are capable of draining information into subsequent interpretive bodies. A democratic system that features a free exchange of ideas is what allows positive value concepts to be interpreted by pervasive belief systems, which are ultimately applied to the final bodies of discursive information: issue discourse. These basins contain the discourses that serve to define a social issue according to environmental circumstance and color the attitudinal evaluations individuals hold toward that issue. Many, if not most, individuals in a functional democracy spend portions of their lives treading water in the array of discourses that comprise an issue. Again, this can be realized with most Americans' understandings of the abortion debate: While most Americans classify themselves as either pro-life (51%) or pro-choice (42%) (Gallup, 2009), the voting record of the American populace proves to be much more ambiguous than these semantic parameters. Consider the Mississippi personhood amendment, which would have recognized a fertilized egg as a person that was roundly defeated by voters in 2011. Despite the fact that Mississippians have voted for the Republican presidential candidate every year since 1980 (270 to Win, 2012), their voting behavior reflected a willingness to think beyond popular discursive understandings of an issue. This suggests that a majority of the public is capable of considering the issue past the constraints set forth by issue discourse.

But can the same be said for issue partisans? Do they have the capacity to roam from one

issue discourse to another, or are they eternally destined to exist in the bounds of their own issue

discourse? The study below explores this question as part of its philosophical inquiry.

Methodology

By modeling itself after the expenditure of effort experiment as conceptualized through processes elicited by hypocrisy and the self, this study attempted to apply persuasive dissonant effects between two antagonistic groups, pro-life and pro-choice, through the use of in-depth interview questions aimed at eliciting dissonant processes with the intent of gaining both groups' support for a superordinate conduit group. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), a qualitative researcher is responsible for defining purposes of dialogue that transpire as in-depth interviews and is tasked with eliciting conversation about participant experiences that encourage continuous revisions of ideas and subsequent questions. This understanding is particularly relevant to the dissonance elicitation strategies featured in this study as it allots the researcher the opportunity to navigate the intersubjective landscape with which he and the participant are engaged. It provides the researcher flexibility to steer the conversation toward novel and unpredictable arenas of dissonant applications that could arise spontaneously from normal conversation flows. Because of the potentially volatile repercussions that may result from this undemonstrated approach, the researcher is cognizant of the methodological discipline Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe:

> Qualitative researchers are also disciplined. They must learn when to watch, when to listen, when to go with the action, when to reflect, when to intervene tactically (and tactfully). Their awareness of their own and others' actions and motives is an act of inner control fully the equal of the external control of the hypothetico-deductive researcher (p. 67).

An adaptable interview schedule was constructed using value weaving as a framework of

rhetorical strategy that interlaces inherent values common between oppositional ideologies and made dissonant effects possible through the process of rationalization. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) note that the interview schedule ensures that all interviewees are exposed to a similar line of questioning, even though follow-up probes can be utilized for the purposes of clarification. For this study, clarification will be defined as the researcher's attempt to peer deeper into the rationalizations that partisans use to substantiate their beliefs. Since the strategy of value weaving requires a significant amount of knowledge on the part of the third party mediator regarding the discursive formations of both antagonistic groups' rhetoric, an interview schedule provides a consistent conveyance of information to all participants, allowing their responses to be juxtaposed with one another for the purposes of rendering insight into their corresponding belief systems. Ultimately, the end goal of these efforts will be twofold: to persuade participants to support the mission set forth by the conduit group Step Forward and to garner a meaningful understanding of the partisan mindset, not only as it relates to cultural affiliations but psychological underpinnings as well.

Lastly, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 109), "In qualitative studies, *anything* can become data." For the purposes of this study, it is crucial that this premise be applied to the analyses of study participants. The administrative researcher in charge of this inquiry has come to conceptualize the academic researcher as a vessel of interpretive understanding whose analysis of phenomena is simultaneously constrained and set free by the impressionistic kaleidoscope of interpretive understanding that has been infused into his notions of scholastic ontology by means of established academic vessels. Thus, it is important that all cards have the chance to be played in this cerebral casino.

Participants

Samples were obtained through a convenience sample of high-involvement individuals by contacting advocacy groups such as Planned Parenthood and various right-to-life organizations/churches along the Front Range of Colorado. Even though convenience sampling is widely regarded as unreliable in conventional quantitative sampling strategies (see Wimmer and Dominick, 2011), it is conducive to qualitative studies that are interested in deeply examining the identifying social and psychological constructs individuals use to assemble their realities. These participants would either be paid employees or volunteers at pro-life/pro-choice oriented organizations.

A pro-choice organization can be understood as any organization that actively seeks to protect, facilitate, or advocate for a woman's right to have legal access to an abortion. A pro-life organization can be understood as any organization that publicly disavows or seeks to restrict a person's legal access to abortion. The researcher contacted the pro-life/pro-choice organization, explained his intent, provided informed consent (Appendix A and B) and set up a time and place with the participant to conduct the interview. Sample size was determined by the restricted number of pro-choice partisans, as defined by the sample parameters, the researcher had access to. Of the eight pro-life/pro-choice groups that were contacted, six agreed to participate (three pro-life and three pro-choice) while two declined (one pro-life and one pro-choice). In the end, this was not enough to achieve discourse saturation, which is important for ascertaining a comprehensive understanding of any cultural issue. However, the amount of information gleaned from the six participants was sufficient to apply a meaningful amount of analysis to the psychological and cultural processes that determine participant understanding of the abortion

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debate. Interviews were conducted at a venue convenient to the participant, which was usually

held in a building associated with their organization. Participants were interviewed one-on-one

with the researcher. Participants were not debriefed at the end of the end of the interview largely

because the Colorado State University Internal Review Board did not mandate it. Additionally,

the researcher did not feel the need to debrief participants since this study did not utilize

deception as part of its methodological underpinnings. The interviews were recorded using a

digital hand held recording device. This study proceeded to procedural implementation after

obtaining approval from an internal review board.

Procedure

As juxtaposed with the expenditure of effort experiment, the "discussion group" in which

pro-life/pro-choice partisans are seeking to gain acceptance into is a conduit group called Step

Forward, which addresses the concerns of both groups by seeking to reduce instances of abortion

by empowering at-risk women who are existing in a state of poverty. Pro-life partisans are

admitted into this group by providing a financial contribution to aid with the organization's

mission of reducing the abortion rate through the treatment and prevention of poverty by

sponsoring an at-risk person. Pro-choice partisans are admitted into this group by screening

individuals who fit the population parameters set forth by Step Forward, namely at-risk women

who are solely seeking an abortion as a result of living in impoverished conditions.

STEP 1: Through an introductory telephone call/email correspondence, which highlighted

the pro-life or pro-choice aspects of the conduit group respectively, the participants initially

perceived Step Forward as a desirable group to belong to (just as the subjects' initial responses to

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the discussion group were positive). This introductory phone call/email correspondence identified the researcher as a graduate student from Colorado State University who was conducting research on the discourse surrounding the issue of abortion and as a part of that research. For pro-choice participants, the researcher emphasized the aspects of the conduit group that addressed issues concerning the empowerment of at-risk women. For pro-life participants, the researcher focused on the aspects of the conduit group that addressed reducing instances of abortion. Either way, it was expected that both participant groups took an interest in being a part of the study since a representative from a reputable organization was conducting research aimed at advancing their respective causes. This is not a deception since, as described in Appendix E, the conduit group Step Forward is concerned with reducing the abortion rate by empowering at-risk women. During the telephone call/email correspondence, the researcher made arrangements with participants to conduct a live in-depth interview. A signed copy of informed consent was obtained before the interview takes place (see Appendix B).

STEP 2: The interview served as a doppelganger for the screening process of verbalizing explicit words and phrases in public by getting the participants to participate in an in-depth interview that elicited cognitive dissonance through the technique of value weaving. Since the purpose of the research was to uncover the values that guide the respondent's belief systems, the central route was kept in mind and exploited by the researcher when analyzing the beliefs of a high involvement respondent.

However, the banality of the discussion group was revealed to all participants in the form of a pitch that will lay out the entire mission of Step Forward. This pitch outlined the group's superordinate qualities of addressing the issue of abortion through the empowerment of

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impoverished individuals in an attempt to persuade participants to support the superordinate goals set forth by Step Forward's mission. At the end of the pitch, the subjects were asked several questions intended to qualitatively gauge the persuasive effects rendered, if any, by dissonant persuasive effects (see Appendix F). The participants were thanked for their participation and the interview was concluded. The average interview took about one hour to complete.

Measurement

As stated above, in-depth interviews were initiated with a series of rapport building questions that were aimed at ascertaining a sense of participants' views regarding the issue of abortion, pervious circumstances that led to the manifestation of those views, and of the participant's perceptions of the opposition. The interview then transitioned into questions aimed at eliciting dissonance through the rationalization process by using the rhetorical technique of value weaving as a framework for question construction. Please refer to Appendix C and D for further details.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and qualitatively analyzed by using the following criteria to gauge instances of dissonance:

1. Change your attitude.

2. Add consonant cognitions.

3. Derogate the unchosen alternative.

4. Spread apart the alternatives.

5. Alter the importance of cognitive elements.

6. Suppress thoughts.

7. Communicate positive aspects.

8. Alter behavior.

(Perloff, 2010)

These observations were then scrutinized according to the answers provided by participants to ascertain the effectiveness of value weaving as a tool for eliciting dissonance through the rationalization process. Additional persuasive effects were qualitatively measured according to participant willingness to support or oppose the mission set forth by the conduit group Step Forward.

Besides functioning as a means to verify instances of dissonance and persuasive effects, these transcribed interviews also served as narratives of personalized discourse. A structural semiotic analysis renders itself particularly useful in this capacity since it is capable of being applied to a wide range of systemic phenomena that function within the limits of the communication process. Because the sign is solely regarded within the range of the psychological, a central theoretical weakness in the Suassurian model becomes a strength when applied to narrative analysis: While the approach is ostentatiously flawed for its inability to regard the process of signification in a referentially meaningful way, this also means that it is capable of, and indeed conducive to, treating signs as mutually dependent psychological abstractions, whose meaning is subsequently derived from the paradigmatic interplay among linguistic signs. This meaning is qualified through the range of experience manifested by an

individual within a paradigm set that is demarcated by the bounds of cultural discourse, where a coalescence of syntagmatic and paradigmatic inferences are compiled for purposes of identity and survival.

Through an awareness of the public discourse that circumscribes an issue, in this case abortion, a third party mediator becomes capable of positing an alternative intersubjective reality that is capable of being discursively palatable to partisans on both sides of an issue. In attempting to reframe the abortion debate by making salient the issue of poverty to pro-life and pro-choice partisans, this study attempted to garner an understanding of whether or not there is room for common ground within the partisan representations that help to define the issue of abortion.

Applied Validity

When conducting a study, most research scholars turn to their peers and other conventionalized sources to confirm or critique common conceptions of validity. Such notions include external validity, which is the extent to which research results can be generalized to other situations (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), and internal validity, which is concerned with eradicating artifacts from a study's design so that causation effects can be accurately attributed to the variables under scrutiny (Hayes, 2005). When considering a measuring instrument's ability to assess the face validity of a variable of interest, a researcher need only ask one question: "Does this measure appear to measure what I think it measures?" If the answer is yes, then there is a good chance the variable possesses face validity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Other forms of validity include concurrent validity, which pertains to an instrument's ability to produce measurements similar to other measurements obtained by another instrument measuring the same

construct, and predictive validity, which refers to the extent to which the measurement obtained by an instrument can predict something that should be predictable (Hayes, 2005). When assessing the content validity of a variable, a researcher needs to consider whether or not the measuring instrument for that variable encompasses the ubiquitous realm of relevant indicators for a particular construct (Hayes, 2005). Finally, ecological validity is concerned with a study's ability to mimic real life conditions to the artificial conditions inherent in research environments.

Indeed, validity is a concept that has been scrutinized by scholars to an excessive degree. Much of this enthusiasm arises from a sincere desire to produce research findings that are as free from the complications associated with artifacts and confounds as humanly possible. Unfortunately, while the pursuit of impeccability is obviously a worthy endeavor, it will remain a futile one so long a human beings command the world of known research in the social sciences. This is a fact that the academy is aware of and manifests itself in the form of limitations sections that appear at the end of published journal articles. These limitations, along with the methodological solutions by which scholars attempt to mend these deficiencies of causation, constitute the inevitable factions that scholars cling to in their efforts to substantiate epistemological claims.

For when a scholar seeks to establish credibility in the academic community, finding an authoritative methodology to model her research approach after greatly improves his chances of being accepted by an academic community, especially if this methodology is practiced in a conventionalized manner that addresses recognizable concerns of validity, as stated above. These notions unconsciously transmit themselves through research and, subsequently, the discursive channels in which they choose to transmit or report information.

This study adheres to a different form a validity to substantiate its epistemological claims. Known as applied validity, its primary aim is to apply research efforts to real-world situations. This form of validity is decisive within research conducted by scholastic activists and is paramount to all other forms of validity when considered within a study whose primary goal is to initiate an intentional effect upon an existing set of sociological circumstances.

As perceived through an activist lens: The applied validity of this study hinges on its ability to institute an unestablished charitable organization known as Step Forward (See Appendix E). According to the parameters set forth by applied validity, should this preliminary inquiry fail to serve as a catalyst for establishing Step Forward as a conduit group, then it will have failed. However, even if one at-risk individual receives education and childcare assistance through the cooperative efforts of pro-life and pro-choice institutions, it will have succeeded and can be said to possess applied validity.

Either way, the crisis of representation will have been superficially averted because the line that separates objectivity from subjectivity is demarcated by the success or failure of the study. In other words, we will know that applied validity is the ideal way to perceive and measure academic pursuits because the basic living standards (food, health, and the ability to acquire these needs through applied skills or education) of less-fortunate individuals will have been improved.

By no means should scholars mistake the lofty goals of this inquiry for setting the parameters of success for their own research efforts. Obviously, not all studies are applicable to real world situations, nor is it always feasible to design a study aimed at improving the greater good. Indeed, the concept of applied validity can be invoked to any study that seeks

epistemological substantiation through societal response, such as product advertising or

marketing. Thus, public reaction to an implemented study manifests as the determinant

bellwether for measuring validity and any positive societal change that occurs vindicates a

researcher's efforts.

Findings

Findings have been assigned to six conceptually distinct categories, including Identities of

Self/Ingroup, Perceptions of Opposition, Discursive Formations, Dissonance, Instances of

Hypocrisy/Contradiction, and Level of Support Expressed Toward Conduit Group. Other than

Participants, each category will be set off with an introductory paragraph that briefly describes

the concept being explored as well as the purpose for its inclusion. Representative examples

from study-interviews that corroborate the categorical concept being explored appear below each

section and in most cases are numbered for the purpose of demarcation and clarification. An

analysis follows each example that examines study phenomena from the various literature

perspectives that have been previously reviewed as well as novel perspectives supplied by the

researcher.

Participants

Sally Lester: Member of Students Uniting for Reproductive Justice (SURJ). A student run

organization embedded within Colorado State University that advocates for Planned Parenthood

and various reproductive rights causes.

Susan Randall: Member of 40 Days For Life Fort Collins. A branch of a national right to life

organization that seeks to bring attention to their side of the cause by demonstrating outside of

Planned Parenthood health centers.

Patty Wilson: Member of NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado. According to their Web site: The

mission of NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado is to develop and sustain a constituency that uses the political process to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive health choices, including preventing unintended pregnancies, bearing healthy children and choosing legal abortion.

Melissa Sanders: Member of the Alpha Center Fort Collins. A pro-life Christian medical clinic that provides support, education and counseling services to individuals facing decisions about sexuality, relationship, and pregnancy issues.

Jennifer Moonshadow: Member of Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains, a network of pro-choice health centers that empower individuals and families to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health by providing high quality health services, comprehensive sex education, and strategic advocacy.

Lee Smith: Minister at DaySpring Church in Fort Collins, Colorado. Lee is an outspoken critic of abortion, and he publicly advocates against the practice of abortion in America through his sermons.

Identities of Self/Ingroup

Sally

Sally: I was working at Hewlett-Packard and got laid off and I was having a really hard time

finding a job so I started volunteering at Planned Parenthood and I always was passionate about the organization so I was like, I'm just going to volunteer until I find a real job. And so I just started doing like admin stuff, filing and helping, and then I started going to training and learning about how to do educational seminars with people, and I want to say I've been there for almost two years now volunteering.

> Sally reveals that she initially got involved with Planned Parenthood while unemployed. Her enthusiasm for volunteering at Planned Parenthood has increased over the last two years and can be understood through her commitment to learning more about Planned Parenthood discourse through seminar training. In fact, Sally's exposure to pro-choice language systems has had such a profound impact upon her discursive understanding of reality that she commonly advocates for others to be educated in the same regard:

Greg: Yeah, seems like you guys are kind of the pro-choice answer to a lot of the pro-life groups, you know. But you're saying that you wish you weren't construed as. . .

Sally: We didn't want that to be our main. . . We knew that this is what we were about and we knew that this is what we support and we will continue to support, but we wanted to make sure that we also were at educational events because the mission is to provide sexual education to whoever wants it and who was ever out there, and you know, abortion being one of those topics. You know, letting people be educated about that. From both sides. We encourage both sides as well. So I changed it to Students Uniting for Reproductive Justice, so we tried to be at different

women's conventions different educations. We did sex trivia at the Skellar during spring break where we handed out spring break safety kits with condoms and information, so education is the main thing we're trying to do, including educating people, including abortion. So that's kind of how, in a nutshell, how we came about.

> Sally prefers to characterize her behavior associated with the abortion debate as educational. Indeed, this is a term that is often used by other partisans within this debate to assist them in the process of sense-making. But what do they mean by education? In the above context, Sally regards pro-choice events that propound a secular scientific ideology as being educational. In other words, because pro-choice discourse consummately aligns with her sense of identity, Sally comes to view education, at least within the abortion debate, as a social platform that conveys pro-choice interpretations of issue logics and regards its absence as a catalyst of conflict.

Susan

Greg: Oh wow, so it's (*40 Days For Life*) expanded quite a bit then from Texas.

Susan: It's expanded. Especially among young people. They like to portray, well I'm a little older, but they like to portray: "Oh well, they're just old people that are out there." No, the March for Life in Washington is by far young people, because they feel that many of their generation is missing. They are realizing it, so by far, it is a youth movement too. The youth are becoming more pro-life all the time.

Initially, Susan emphasizes the importance of semantically representing the pro-life cause as having a strong youthful presence. Apparently, Susan seems to hold the assumption that much of the American public associates the pro-life movement with older members of society. Why is age salient in her own private representation of the group with which she belongs to and identifies with? Is this a reflection of the emphasis our culture places on youth? Perhaps Susan feels that tapping into the enthusiasm that often accompanies youthful politics would provide a vital spark to the pro-life movement. Or, she could have mentioned youth in an attempt to make her politically conservative assertions regarding women's roles and the role of religion in society more palatable to the researcher:

Susan: For expectant moms, about 90% will keep their child when they see it on an ultrasound. They say, it's not a glob of cells, it's a person, there's a heartbeat, there's a heartbeat! Then they really come to realize, there's a person there. I mean women, we're meant to be moms, so it comes pretty natural.

Susan explores the biological recognition of a fetus by an expectant mother when viewing a heartbeat on an ultrasound monitor. This is not only indicative of her own private representation of when life begins but also serves as a characterization of Susan's hypothetical understanding of what occurs when someone experiencing a crisis pregnancy observes an ultrasound of a fetus in utero. This is not the only time Susan uses the example of an ultrasound to expound her claim that expectant

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mothers will rule out having an abortion if they bear witness to a monitored image of a fetus manifested through ultrasonic waves. Susan concludes her expository projection of fetal empathy by asserting that women are inherently suited to raise offspring. While the biological claim purported by this statement cannot be disputed, the cultural and political implications most certainly are. Thus, it can be stated with some certainty that Susan subscribes to a traditional Christian Conservative discourse that supplies partisans with applicable issue-relevant information. This information can be encoded by the subscriber to assist her in sense making applications. Public proclamations of faith, or worship, also serve to exemplify Susan's subscription to Christian Conservative beliefs:

Susan: First of all, 40 days for life is a prayer campaign. That's the foundation. Second of all is the public witness. It's important to be there and to say we don't approve what's going on. We can't physically stop it, we'd love to change laws, but we can't stop it and we know it.

Patty

Patty: I didn't want to go into a teaching career, which was kind of an anticipated career path for anyone with an English degree. And I didn't go out to the East Coast to pursue a high-class glossy mag publishing career. I wanted to stay in Los Angeles, that's how I ended up staying with the California Association of Realtors. And after about 6 years of learning a lot about real estate in California's then booming real estate market, the residential market, so I was out there from '98 till 2004, working with them. I realized that basically learning how to empower real

estate agents to earn higher commissions wasn't my calling in life, and it was really important for me to be able to use my education, my work ethic, my privilege, to do things that I cared about, and for me that was empowering women. And that is what drove me to come back to Denver, I'm originally from here.

Patty seems to have a difficult time applying her professional efforts to causes that she does not believe in. This is exemplified by her abandonment of a prosperous career in the real estate industry in favor of a less lucrative career as a women's reproductive rights lobbyist. Obviously, the private representations that Patty holds regarding women's rights is salient among other ethical considerations that exist within the parameters of her usable social script and has served to influence her public behavior. Much of this behavior seems to be directed by the belief that women should have the ultimate say when it comes to the reproductive health of their own bodies:

Patty: So at NARAL pro-choice Colorado we don't focus just on the issue of abortion rights and on abortion access, but it's is the full spectrum of reproductive services that influence an individual's ability to prevent unplanned pregnancy, to carry a pregnancy to term, and have a healthy pregnancy or to seek out and access safe legal abortion. So that's kind of the spectrum that we work on.

When describing her role as a public affairs specialist for NARAL, Patty is quick

to point out that her organization does not focus specifically on abortion but rather reproductive rights in general. Because she refrains from singling out any other component of the reproductive rights spectrum, it could be inferred that Patty prefers to have her organization rhetorically characterized as an organization that advocates for access to a variety of reproductive services, which it obviously is. Thus, it could be inferred that Patty is under the impression that NARAL is primarily, or has a tendency to be, regarded by the public as only an abortion advocacy group. This could be the result of the black and white conceptualizations many partisans possess about the issue of abortion.

Melissa

Melissa: The sanctity of life and life being valuable has always been on my radar screen. When I was young and in junior high is when the Roe vs. Wade decision was made. It was very heavy in the news and I remember asking my parents about it and when my parents explained to me what it was I was horrified and I thought, why is that legal, it shouldn't be legal. I had to be about 11 or 12 and I was like that's wrong, I don't know why we would allow that in our country but they did. And so from a pretty young age I knew it was wrong.

Even from a very young age, Melissa has subscribed to a pro-life discourse. She reveals that her first understandings of the abortion debate came from a discussion she had with her parents, where they explained to her the parameters of the debate; presumably, this discourse was conveyed to her through a biased

information source (parents), which may have acted as a catalyst and mould to shape her future constructions of the debate. However, Melissa frames this situation as if she somehow derived a pro-life discourse in a natural, or supernatural, manner that was void of cultural influence. This suggests that Melissa seeks to bolster the legitimacy of her belief system by representing it as a fundamental representation that heralds the values and beliefs of the pro-life community. Melissa goes on to describe how this manifestation of her beliefs continued to guide her private representations of reality throughout her life:

Melissa: As a teenager there was, the pro-life movement wasn't really organized yet. I know there was Operation Rescue but I wasn't comfortable with that. I didn't know that yelling at people going into a pregnancy center. . . abortion clinic is a good thing. So I didn't do that. But as I got older and my kids were pretty young, as they went off to school I had some time and I volunteered at a pregnancy center in our community because I like to talk. I did public speaking for them and I raised money for them and so I did that, and I really liked it. Then we moved to Colorado, my kids were young and life was busy and I ended up working with teen parents so I thought that's one way to value life, to value individuals. But I never really thought of it as a career path and I actually ended up in the business world for a long time.

As Melissa continues to describe how pro-life beliefs have shaped the trajectory of her life-path as well as how she was searching for ways to actualize these beliefs with an appropriate institution, something interesting happens: She

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accidentally describes an antagonistic institution, abortion clinic, using an associative label, pregnancy center. This shows how crucial it is for Melissa to maintain her sense identity through semantic inflection. Not even for one instance does Melissa want to convey any similarities she may have with the pro-choice community, even with something as superficial as a descriptive label. Contrarily, this instance shows how important and meaningful semantic descriptors are to an individual's sense of identity. Semantic labeling assists individuals in the construction of not only their own sense of identity, but in the construction of their out-group's as well. In this case, Melissa wants to be clear that health centers that provide abortions do not provide health at all; as will be shown below, in Melissa's mind they only provide death, and she in no way wants to be associated with them, neither in work nor words. Indeed, Melissa leans on other cultural manifestations that are suitable toward her own cultural and discursive understandings:

Melissa: And then about four or five years ago, with the economy, I got laid off from a really nice corporate job and was just really searching for what was next in my life. I did not want to work in ministry, period. That was not my vision for my life and just through reading scripture and talking to my pastor and just telling them, I don't know what I want to do next. And I felt strongly pulled to just serve and I didn't know what that meant but I knew it had to be something that was really about people. Not building houses, I know that sounds silly. But not building houses and digging wells. It was something that impacted people directly on a really personal

level. And so I just really prayed, just a lot of prayer, a lot of prayer, a lot of prayer and then really just through a series of circumstances was made aware of this position here, and when I saw the posting for this job I really just bursted into tears and had this overwhelming sense of that was what I was supposed to do.

As was revealed in Melissa's initial pro-life inferences as an adolescent, she affixes the components of her belief system associated with the abortion debate with supernatural representations rooted in Christian spirituality. Melissa is inclined to think that her actions are largely the result of divine intervention and guidance. This understanding is derived through Melissa's participation in prayer, which, in Melissa's mind, serves as a transmission practice of discursive elements. In other words, it is not the human experience that establishes and perpetuates meaning in the abortion debate, but rather supernatural powers that possess dispositional attitudes regarding the abortion debate. Melissa's supernatural understandings constitute a manifestation that substantiates and directs all of her corresponding beliefs and subsequent behaviors.

Jennifer

Jennifer: Just to give you some more background on me, I went to the University of Colorado, I was a journalism student there. And right after school I got a job as a television news reporter in Sioux City, Iowa. And Sioux City is a very conservative town. There is a Planned Parenthood health center there, and it is regularly protested. And as a reporter, my news director sent me a lot

to cover the protestors, but because it was a conservative town she wouldn't let me cover the

Planned Parenthood side of the story. Which I took. . . I had a lot of problems with it. It is very

difficult to have grown up in a pro-choice family, and I mean, I grew up in Denver so I grew up

in a pro-choice city, in a pro-choice state; I went to the University of Colorado which is very

liberally minded. And then suddenly going to Iowa where suddenly it was the exact opposite,

that culture shock was very difficult.

> Jennifer is unreserved when it comes to positioning herself ideologically within
>
> the constraints of American political discourse. She reveals that it was a great
>
> culture shock for her to move from the liberal Colorado communities with which
>
> she was raised to the conservative community of Sioux City, Iowa. By
>
> categorizing herself as someone with a liberal identity, Jennifer draws from the
>
> discursive pool that she adheres to for assistance in constructing her identity. The
>
> fact that Jennifer had a news director who failed to cover the abortion debate in a
>
> balanced way, seems to have reinforced her prejudices of conservative individuals.
>
> This gives Jennifer a tangible example of an outgroup member to contrast her own
>
> beliefs against, which affirms her perceptions of self as a liberal individual. But as
>
> a partisan, Jennifer is discontent to accept these circumstances as a part of life she
>
> must accede to, behaving in a way that flows counter to her beliefs:

Greg: You'd probably think that'd conflict with your journalistic values to of objectivity.

Jennifer: Even issue of being an objective journalist aside, it was difficult with me personally as

Jennifer Moonshadow, not as in addition to Jennifer Moonshadow reporter. So when I left journalism, I came back to Colorado and had a few random jobs, and when I saw the posting to be able to work for Planned Parenthood it was like this is my opportunity to almost redeem myself for all of that negative work that I did.

> In using the term *redeem*, Jennifer skirts with using religious terminology when describing her reincorporation into a liberal community by means of being hired by Planned Parenthood. The situation she describes could be juxtaposed with a born-again-Christian returning to the faith after an extended absence. But Jennifer is not returning to a God, she is returning to a discursive institution. Hers is a church and congregation that reside and worship behind the security fences of Planned Parenthood's Rocky Mountain campus. And the sins for which she must atone are not vindicated by a pastor or priest, but by those with the power to hire Jennifer and make her a functioning part of the pro-choice community. Jennifer is granted salvation through her sanctioned efforts of spreading the word of Planned Parenthood's message throughout the community (and by granting nosy graduate students interviews, of course). As a result, she is able to actualize her beliefs in a way that satisfies her convictions:

Greg: Really, you kind of saw it not as a crime, but like an infraction upon your morality?
Jennifer: Yeah.
Greg: Even though you were just doing your job.

Jennifer: Yeah, I did.

Greg: So when you saw the chance, you jumped on it.

Jennifer: I absolutely saw it as an opportunity to make right what I had done as a reporter.

Lee

Lee: And I think a lot of it goes to the basis of life. If you don't believe in God then, you know, there's no value then to the idea if you get rid of it or not, because there are no consequences, there's no heaven or hell, you don't have to deal with those kind of things. But if there are consequences and if you believe in the giver of life, then you have a whole different value system.

> Lee's understanding of human ontological categorization seems to be largely based on black and white conceptions of good and evil and perceives those who adhere to his own identifications regarding heaven and hell as having the ability to construct the necessary moral framework to live an ethical life. Without this theological foundation, Lee doubts that a human being could have the moral fortitude to make principled choices. His beliefs are largely rooted in supernatural beliefs regarding a monotheistic deity he refers to as the giver of life. For Lee, it is essential that other human beings share in this valuation of reality for there to be any viable configuration of societal morality, and Lee sees this configuration as having the potential of being singled out and persecuted:

Lee: So, 20 years down the road, let's say I don't want to know where as a Christian and I start getting prosecuted for saying stuff from the pulpit or whatever, it still doesn't make it right. So when you talk about choice and should people have the same right? Well, not based upon the standard. The standard is consistent regardless, again, of majority.

> Interesting how Lee conceives of his ingroup, Conservative Christianity, as a group that could be vulnerable to societal persecution, even though this demographic is one of the largest mainstream religious categories in America. Are his anxieties congruous to those that the pro-choice community feels concerning societal intervention upon their rights to have reproductive control over their own bodies? It is clear that Lee does not rely on democratic processes of moral decision making to establish his own ethical foundations nor would it seem that pro-choice partisans are privy to having their morality dictated by majority rule. As a pro-life partisan, Lee's goal is to impose his Conservative Christian framework upon the social structure in which he exists, not the other way around.

Perceptions of Opposition

Sally

Sally: There are some like that, but I've met some amazing pro-life people who just themselves need to get a little more educated. They don't support Planned Parenthood because you know they have abortions offered, but some of them think that there is the issue of funding, where the

money is coming from to keep Planned Parenthood running, and so a lot of them don't believe

that it's not funded by taxpayers on the abortion side, so there is the whole controversy there.

They won't go there to get information at all even though only 3% of what Planned Parenthood

does nationally is abortions.

> When expressing the conceptualizations she holds about pro-life individuals, Sally
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> stresses the need for education. In other words, Sally postulates the need for her
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> institutional antagonists to be influenced by the rhetorical representations
>
> postulated by pro-choice discourse. Perhaps this is because this particular brand of
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> discourse has resonated saliently with Sally's understanding of the issue and
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> served as a template upon which she's been able to model her own representations
>
> of this social issue. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Sally understands this
>
> practice and conceptualizes it by semantically labeling it education:

Sally: Exactly, and being like part of, that's one of my main missions with SURJ is education.

Because it's like you're not educating people by screaming and you know telling them they're

going to hell and hanging dolls. I don't understand, it does not seem very Christian (*referring to*

Planned Parenthood demonstrators in Denver). It's very confusing to me but I guess that's why

I'm not as negative towards the protesters here in Fort Collins because they're very peaceful, and

I could probably tell you all their names and I've talked to them and. . . try and educate them

from what they think and what they feel, and which, you know, if it works for them it does, but

it's hard. It's so hard because I'm just so passionate about Planned Parenthood, and I believe in

what they do.

In her conceptions of demonstrators, Sally seems to draw a line in the sand when it comes to suggestive violence and mentions the rapport that she is able to maintain with the peaceful demonstrators from Fort Collins, while disparaging the novel exhibitions of the demonstrators in Denver. In other words, she is willing to tolerate alternative behaviors that arise from beliefs that are disparate from her own so long as those behaviors refrain from expressing the behavior that she supports in a disparaging way. When Sally asserts that ". . .it's hard," it seems that she is referring to her difficultly in understanding how a bloc of other individuals, pro-life subscribers, are capable of adhering to an alternative education. Her confusion in this regard is manifested again when exploring the lack of empathy that she believes is embedded within pro-life discourse:

Sally: And it's again, it's like, just because our beliefs are so different. I don't think they understand what these women go through. I don't think they understand that to a full degree, and I don't think. . . I mean they would obviously never volunteer in a situation where that would happen and these women are desperate. But they would argue with me, "Well we do we know we understand we will adopt these children." That's the thing too. Well like, will you take them, will you adopt them, will you? The orphanages are filling, they're overflowing, and it's just really tough to ask someone to carry another human being for nine months when you don't know what that person is going through for those nine months.

In discussing her beliefs, or disbeliefs, about the lack of empathy pro-life individuals demonstrate toward at risk women who are facing a crisis pregnancy, Sally proceeds to engage in a hypothetical dialogue with her own private representation of a pro-life individual. This allows Sally to infuse our, Sally and researcher, intersubjective reality with a syllogistic proposition that she can logically uphold, which subsequently allows her to maintain a consonant state of being. When an individual projects this type of dialogue, it is very emblematic of the representations that she holds toward the individual being imitated. But obviously, this is not a specific person who is being imitated but is in fact a personified amalgamation of Sally's own private representations of pro-life discourse. In fact, a demonstrative act such as this can be likened to an actor performing a character on stage, except the script that guides a performance such as this can be construed as an immediate portrayal of a private representation.

Susan

Susan: . . .because we are not there to judge the people, we know very well in our society many people don't know right from wrong. They don't realize it's a life, they don't realize it's wrong because it's legal. If it's legal that must be fine. So we know that. Plus many of them are desperate. Here in Fort Collins sometimes they'll say, "Well, they are poor women." That's not really the case here: college students. But this morning, cars were coming in from Wyoming, you know, and they're driving nice vehicles here in Fort Collins. I see Lexus, BMWs, SUVs, these are not poor people coming in with their old junker. In Denver, it's different. You will see more

of the poor. And the poor are more responsive to the people that are praying.

Susan seems to regard wealthy people who have an abortion as more culpable than poor people who undergo the same procedure. She also insinuates that poor people are more receptive to her pro-life representations of the abortion debate. This suggests that Susan has developed a private representation where theological and socioeconomic considerations intersect with one another. Because of her strong religious affiliations, it is more likely that her religious beliefs direct her beliefs regarding poverty, rather than vice versa. Perhaps these beliefs also influence her contention that Planned Parenthood is inherently deceptive in its stated aims:

Susan: Giving out low dose birth control pills on one hand, plus on the other hand, promoting promiscuity, because eventually the low dose will most likely fail. And then they come in, the money is in the abortion. That's what all of these directors will say.

Susan's characterization of Planned Parenthood as a deceptive organization that is primarily interested in making money through abortion services is substantiated in her enthymematic claim that Planned Parenthood only offers abortions to make monetary gains from individuals who have been beguiled into taking low dose birth control pills. In doing so, Susan attempts to provide the researcher with a logical heuristic that seeks to intersubjectively influence the debate through the projection of her private representation. She then attempts to rhetorically bulwark

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this heuristic:

Susan: Planned Parenthood fights that with their big money, because if they see an ultrasound or if they have time to look at materials, they do come to realize and look at an ultrasound, to change their minds. So they don't want a waiting period. Some of the video documentaries I've seen, Karen Everett is one. She used to run three abortion clinics. And they'll come in and sometimes they wouldn't even tell them the truth. And she'd say, they practice how to do it. They'd say, "Oh you're pregnant, oh no." She'd say, "We'd grab the bony part of their elbow," I mean this was rehearsed, and we'd say, "If you have the money we can take care of this right now."

In an attempt to further characterize Planned Parenthood as a deceitful money-driven institution, Susan interprets Planned Parenthood's resistance to exposing patients to ultrasound images before undergoing an abortion as an obstacle to their monetary objectives. In an effort to substantiate this claim, Susan uses a pro-life biased media source to corroborate her beliefs. She then performs a role play of a private representation that she possesses of a Planned Parenthood employee encouraging a patient to get an abortion for nefarious reasons. This type of role-playing seems to assist Susan in her construction that Planned Parenthood is a duplicitous organization by providing her with another cognitive slot that is filled by hypothetical dialogue embedded within her partisan script. In the following excerpt, Susan provides the researcher with the one salient belief that appears to

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influence all others regarding her representation of Planned Parenthood:

Susan: I just think, I think it's the message that they're given basically in society as a whole. And I've been on campus a few times with Justice For All and so forth. And they'll just, sometimes it's just slogans, my body my choice, this is freedom, etc. etc. Except that's not their body. But see they don't get that, it's not filtered through. It's just, "Well I think everyone should have the right to choose." But what are you choosing? You're not choosing what to have for lunch. You can choose your friends, you can choose your career. It sounds so innocuous, but that's the wordsmithing that comes with it. Choice is an innocuous word. Why did that become synonymous with abortion? Why? The Devil knows what he's doing. Because the base of it, it is a demonic agenda. Because the devil is the one that takes life, and we know that many just don't realize that. I know many young people are just brainwashed, they really are. So that's why we don't judge them. We don't. Then later on they may come to realize. So really I feel pity for them a lot of times. I feel sorry for them.

After performing another hypothetical interaction between herself and her representation of a pro-choice individual discussing the ideological implications of choice, Susan reveals the fundamental beliefs that guide her negative attitude toward pro-choice discourse: the devil. Obviously, Susan is someone who conceptualizes reality in terms that have been semiotically provided by theological texts, which have a significant influence over her private representations of antagonistic individuals. Perhaps the ontological representations that Susan applies

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to her experience as a human being, including her experiences with the abortion debate, all stem from the belief that she, and everyone else, is in the middle of a supernatural power struggle between spirits and deities.

Patty

Patty: I have not had an extended conversation with anyone in the pro-life community. We have certainly sat in legislative hearings together, and we have exchanged pleasant greetings (*smiles suggestively*) in terms of, "Hi it's good to see you again." Okay. Then we go our separate ways. My experiences in terms of interacting with others from the pro-life community have been being yelled at as I walk into Planned Parenthood, as I parked my car, and being called a murderer and a baby killer. My experiences have been walking outside of the capitol and having those same things yelled at me as I'm walking outside of the capitol. Being sneered at during interviews with the media. Being yelled at during rallies. . .

> The script that Patty utilizes to apply meaning toward pro-life individuals places emphasis on the negative components that exist within her aggregated representation of this demographic, which suggests that either Patty does not possess a private representation for constructive interactions with those who subscribe to a pro-life discourse or she chooses to make salient the negative representations that reside within her script. The fact that she has never participated in an extended conversation with a pro-life individual obviously exacerbates the negative representations she holds since there is no previous

experiential interaction that would allow Patty to establish alternative representations that could promulgate positive attitudes otherwise. So what causal chain of phenomenological experience led Patty to the creation of these negative representations? The answer to this question lies well beyond the scope of this study; however, it can be stated with certainty, since Patty has never engaged in an interpersonal dialogue with an ideological antagonist, that her representations are the product of being exposed to fanatical demonstrators as well as through the mediated transmission of language:

Patty: Whereas my perception of the pro-life community is that the language that is spoken is an absolute belief in the sanctity of life above all things, and that no individual person has the authority to choose a value of life above what has been ordained by God.

> The assumption that Patty holds of pro-life individuals regarding the sanctification of life above all other things may in fact be a reasonable assumption to hold. However, by deconstructing her own behavior as a woman's rights advocate, it could be asserted that she too holds this value. The main difference is that she chooses to manifest this value (through her beliefs, attitudes and behaviors) to a disparate population, namely women facing a crisis pregnancy. Or does Patty consecrate something more abstract? It could be argued that she utilizes her subscription to pro-choice discourse, with all its embedded rationalizations and representations, in the same way pro-life subscribers adhere to their own

discourse.

Melissa

Melissa: Susan G. Komen is the perfect example (*of political "bullying" by the pro-choice community*). So at the beginning of the year, this year, they looked at their budget and said we don't have enough money to do everything that we do, so where can we make cuts? And a logical cut for them. . . let's make sure all of our grant money from next year is going to direct service providers. So if we're wanting to provide mammograms for women let's make sure that the money that we're filtering out to the communities is going to actual medical institutions that provide mammograms. Well, Planned Parenthood doesn't. They are a middleman so a poor woman can go into Planned Parenthood and go in and talk about her breast health and concerns and they will give her a manual exam and give her a voucher to go some place else. So they were like let's just have them go to a service provider that can do the mammogram. Well, that was not received well by Planned Parenthood and so they did a very large media campaign to say that Susan G. Komen doesn't care about poor women and Susan G. Komen is being prejudicial against them and they just went crazy and they were losing money, like I don't know the number so I can't give you an exact quote but it was like $100,000 a day. They were losing, people were withdrawing their money right and left and so they said we can't, so they backed up and said never mind, so that was a good example of . . . so actually one of the top people left, Susan G. Komen and those were her exact words: this was political bullying and I don't want to work for an organization that will bend to that. So she left, because she said this is ridiculous.

Melissa's characterization of the pro-choice community is one of intimidation and coercion. In this particular example, she may not be far from the truth, as she is correct to claim that Planned Parenthood does not provide direct mammogram services (Planned Parenthood, 2012), that Planned Parenthood is a "middleman" in the sense that they only provide mammogram referrals to outside providers, and that when the Susan G. Komen Foundation pulled funding for Planned Parenthood in 2012, they lost significant contributions from reliable donors in response to Komen's funding withdrawal from Planned Parenthood. However, is this a case of political bullying, or simply a public mobilization in a democratic society? This probably depends largely on the beliefs one holds toward Planned Parenthood and the larger pro-choice community. Obviously, Melissa's representations are negative, and she deems the actions of the pro-choice community in response to the funding withdrawal by the Susan G. Komen foundation to be an act of aggregated compulsion. Not only does Melissa view Planned Parenthood and the pro-choice community to be mindlessly callous at the macro level, but at the micro level as well:

Melissa: We had a young lady that came in for pregnancy options counseling; she was pregnant and had no idea what she wanted to do and really wanted to hear all of her options, what are my choices? And she lived in north Denver and we thought it was curious that she had come all the way up to Fort Collins. And so our nurse said why did you come here? She said, "Well I went to the Planned Parenthood in my community because they advertise pregnancy options counseling.

So I went in and told the woman I was pregnant and she said when do you want to schedule your abortion." And she said, "I don't know if I want an abortion. I'm here because I don't really know what I want to do. I want to understand all of my options," and the counselor looked at her and said "Honey, we're Planned Parenthood, we don't do that here," and so she left and was in tears and called a friend who lives in Fort Collins and said, "Go to the Alpha Center, and they will give you your options," so we had another girl this just happened to.

Here we have a transmitted scenario that characterizes Planned Parenthood not as an organization interested in providing comprehensive reproductive health-care to its clients, but rather an organization that considers its clients to be nothing more than vessels for abortion services. This is a situation that shows the heartlessness that exists within the Planned Parenthood of Melissa's private representation. It is a negative stereotype that permeates the minds of all three pro-life participants who were interviewed as part of this study. Is it true, is it false? There is no way to definitively confirm these secondhand claims nor is it entirely possible to fully understand why pro-life partisans share this pervasive attitude toward the pro-choice community. But what is clear is that Melissa is more than willing to share these anecdotes with the researcher in an attempt to frame Planned Parenthood in an unfavorable way. Why is it important for her to persuade the researcher, or any one else for that matter, that the pro-choice way of thinking is the wrong way of thinking about the abortion debate? Why not just go about her life, raising funds for her Christian health center without disparaging her institutional antagonists?

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The answer to this lies in the construction and subsequent formation of personal identity. Melissa owes much more than she could ever recognize or admit to pro-choice. Without pro-choice, there would be no pro-life, and vice-versa (obviously, pro-choice holds the same amount of debt to pro-life with regards to identity formation). Both subscribe to the same antagonistic discourse that perpetuates and characterizes the American abortion debate. For Melissa, the Alpha Center would not be the compassionate pregnancy center that it is unless there was a sinister institution for her to contrast her own beliefs and attitudes. Characterizations, such as the one conveyed by Melissa above, allow her to situate herself within the boundaries of an accepted issue discourse, where she can be accepted by those of her own kind.

Jennifer

Jennifer: The protesters are usually here every morning, and when my mom got here for us to go out to lunch they were here, and we were talking about them at lunch, and it was one of those like, you know it's awful that they feel that they need to be here, to keep their eyes on what we're doing. But at the same time, I see it as a reminder for why I come to work everyday. Knowing that there are people like these protesters who are fighting to take away a woman's right. And if I don't show up to work, who's to say that they won't win.

Jennifer conceptualizes pro-life protestors as opponents who she must compete against in order to fend off their assaults against Planned Parenthood. But what is at stake and where is this fight being waged? Jennifer seems to consider the

Planned Parenthood Rocky Mountain campus as a field of competition in that her competitors are infringing upon her turf, using their presence as a means for intimidation, like a fighter staring down his opponent in the opposite corner. But no punches are being thrown in this ring, at least not usually, and there is no referee to officiate the bout nor judges to declare a winner. Or is there? When Jennifer states that these protestors are fighting to take a woman's right to choose away, she obviously does not mean that she anticipates the protestors storming the gates and physically removing any client seeking to obtain an abortion; she is referring to the threat of pro-life discourse potentially influencing public opinion and subsequently the law in their favor. To stretch the boxing metaphor further, law enforcement could be viewed as the referee who ensures a clean fight and the government could serve as the judge who ultimately decides a winner, for both sides recognize the power of the government in that they will, for the most part, adhere to its decisions regarding matters of law and order even if they disagree with the decision. Of course, democratic courts of law and congressional bodies make decisions and pass laws based on prevailing societal discourses that are adhered to by influential population blocs. So the final judge in Jennifer's fight against pro-life resides in the court of public opinion. This is why it is important for her, and members of the pro-choice community, to advocate and utilize a discourse that promotes the pro-choice cause while disparaging their enemies. One of the ways Jennifer attempts to do this is by linguistically infusing their discourse with neologisms, such as anti-choice:

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Jennifer: Many in the anti-choice movement, their ideology is based in religion, and its definitely more difficult to argue with somebody who bases their argument on religion as opposed to someone who bases their argument on science.

Greg: So you think fundamentally it's a distinction between religion and science.

Jennifer: Yes, I think that that's something that we're seeing. . . Most recently in the 2010 election in Colorado we saw amendment 62, of the personhood amendment, of when does life start. Well, the anti-choice movement says that life starts the moment the egg is fertilized. Science doesn't really show that. Science has a different thought on you know—is it 20 weeks, is it 35 weeks—at what point does the child become viable outside the mother?

> Jennifer prefers to characterize the abortion debate in black and white terms. This can be understood not only in her linguistic designation of pro-life as anti-choice but also through two of the primary cultural institutions that assist individuals in generating belief systems, science and religion. While it is true that many of the discursive formations that arise from these institutions promulgate beliefs that are incompatible with one another, there is also a significant amount of value overlap that exists between the two, as understood through value weaving. However, Jennifer chooses to perceive these cultural institutions as antagonistic and characterizes pro-life individuals as being incapable of discussing the abortion debate in a constructive way. To Jennifer, it seems that anyone who uses religion as a basis for establishing their beliefs regarding the abortion debate should be qualified as misguided. She is, however, open to those with beliefs originating

from the same scientific value foundation as her own. But when exploring the issue of fetal viability, Jennifer is unable to offer a logical scientific premise as to when life begins, indicating that her belief system also arises from a foundation that is anything but solid. So why is she so quick to dismiss the beliefs of her institutional antagonists? It could be that Jennifer's identity construction is so dependent upon the presence of a diametrically opposed outgroup that she simply ignores any similarities in beliefs or common discrepancies in value formations that would interfere with her established mode of identity construction. For Jennifer, recognizing any similarities that she may have with the opposition would be such a threat to her own identity that it is probably easier just to ignore this information. This highlights one of the most daunting challenges that lies in mediating antagonistic social groups and represents the challenge third party mediators face.

Lee

Lee: I also think that it became driven by money. You've got thousands and thousands of unwanted pregnancies and doctors doing 10 or 20 of those a day. So it's really to me a sin again generated by a lie and about money. That main lie is the choice factor. I do say that it's, and again I'm just telling you from experience what I've heard, that Planned Parenthood would say it's not a viable human being. And again this argument goes back and forth but you have to deny the truth. There is a passage in the book of Romans that says "those who deny God have to suppress it in unrighteousness."

Money and greed seem to be common reasons pro-life give to explain the pro-choice community's reluctance to recognize a fetus as an unborn child, and Lee is no exception. He is quick to characterize Planned Parenthood as being significantly motivated by the profits they receive from performing abortions. However, Lee seems to be largely ignorant of the massive complex of his own church and the profits that must have been generated to build such a structure. When a partisan makes a living working for an organization that pushes a particular belief system and exercises public behaviors that reflect this ideology, they render themselves susceptible to the criticism that they are only "in it for the money." But of course, Lee would not perceive himself as being vulnerable to this criticism. He would conceive of himself as spiritual entrepreneur who is actively spreading the word of the Bible in a capitalist setting. As Lee sees it, he is accepting the ultimate truth that is embedded in his religion while his enemies deny it. But it's not just Lee's religious convictions that they deny, it's their perceptions of reality as well:

Lee: I mean it's hard to correct someone's perceptions of what they have been taught originally. I mean I found that out being a minister in the church. Once somebody's been taught something, it's hard to break that apart and re-teach that. Sometimes you can even have the strongest evidence, you know, where you can say "what do you think about the ultrasound?" and they go, "well that's misleading." How do you have an argument against that, "which part of that is misleading? Is it the photography?"

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Whereas Lee previously inculpates pro-choice's moral ineptitude as being rooted in greed and a lack of spiritual fortitude, here he gives upbringing a likely culprit for wayward modes of morality. Lee expresses frustration at his inability to break people of what he views as erroneous perceptions of reality. However, it would appear that Lee considers any perception of reality erroneous should it happen to interfere with his Conservative Christian ontology. He can even apply this to the way in which an ultrasound is viewed. For Lee, there seems to be a direct connection with individuals' beliefs and their direct perceptions of reality. In other words, if an individual has been raised to believe that a fetus is just an amalgamation of biological tissues, then any evidence, even evidence that is as clear as a modern ultrasound, will be insufficient to break those beliefs. Of course, the same criticism could probably be applied to Lee's beliefs, such as scientific evidence for evolutionary processes or, more generally, scientific substantiation of any secular human origination theory, but as will be revealed in the following sections, the line that separates fact from fiction is most certainly a thin one within the realm of the partisan mind.

Discursive Formations

It could be stated that the discourses partisans use to rationalize and validate their assertions regarding the salient cultural issues with which they subscribe to and identify with were all originally formulated by anthropological institutions that sought to impose a particular discourse upon the public for the purpose of influencing the decisions made by power elites as well as a

democratic populace. While most of these claims and concepts have long been naturalized within the self through the ineluctable process of a lived existence, points of textual origination serve to substantiate a partisan's rhetorical claims by providing them with definitive examples that are derived from pervasively accepted texts that are employed by societal blocs. However, as revealed below, some of these references have become so ingrained within the partisan mindset as a result of the self not being regularly obliged to symbolically associate the initial referent as the rhetorical basis for a claim that it transposes into naturalized assumptions about the issue.

Susan

Greg: So one last thing I have to ask, is there one place in the Bible that you can point to that says abortion is wrong?

Susan: I'm not a scripture scholar, have you found one?

Greg: I haven't, the closest one I found is that one in Exodus.

Susan: In Exodus? (*pauses*) Yes! Of course we have different translations. . . I was thinking about Romans today: "The senseless minds will become dark and they will become vain in their reasoning when evil procreates." There is a place here, where the Psalms are numbered. It talks about the blood guiltiness of the people who destroyed. . . Wait. okay: When the Israelites had gone into the pagan nations, they were supposed to destroy the nations, right, you know, but they didn't do it. "They did not destroy the peoples as the Lord had commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons." Abortion is blood sacrifice to the demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters. There

you have your passage. "When they sanctified to the idols of Canaan and the land was desecrated by their blood, they defiled themselves by what they did, by their deeds they prostituted themselves." Psalm 106.

Even though Susan frequently augments her pro-life understandings of the abortion debate with religious references, she provided a concrete textual example from the Bible only after being directly prompted by the researcher toward the close of the interview. In light of her disinclination to use the founding text of her religion as evidence to back her pro-life claims, it could be construed that much of Susan's textual substantiation regarding the issue of abortion originates from secular cultural agents, especially given her proclivity to use unsubstantiated evidence from biased media outlets and anti-abortion pregnancy centers. Thus, a contradiction arises: While Susan, executive director of the Fort Collins 40 Days For Life prayer campaign, conspicuously projects her Christianity though public demonstration, she is reluctant to or incapable of backing her claims through Biblical references. Perhaps Susan is a Christian devotee who simply chooses to refrain from giving too much credence to the sacrosanct texts of her religion. But if this were the case, Susan probably would not have made such a concerted effort to provide the researcher with a specific example when prompted, nor would she have been willing to explore other Biblical references brought up by the researcher. The seriousness with which she undertook these propositions suggests that the Bible is indeed an important resource that Susan uses to substantiate her

understanding of the issue. What can be inferred then about the textual evidence supplied by Susan? It could be inferred that Susan uses religion as a means of garnering public support and attention for the pro-life cause even if religious tenants play a subordinate role to the claim embedded within her issue relevant discourse. Therefore, the role that religious texts play in shaping Susan's script on the matter of abortion can be described more in terms of a means toward social facilitation and less in terms of a moral compass. Indeed, for Susan, most texts seem to originate from secular hearsay:

Susan: But things have changed now. The director of the Alpha Center told me, and I don't have it with me, you can go online. Planned Parenthood does sex education in the schools, this is how to. She told me, this is… they have a sex program for preschoolers.

Susan: Planned Parenthood is not going to persuade anybody otherwise. Absolutely not. You can get some of this, Google this, and you can get some of this Blood Money. It's a documentary.

Sally

Greg: Do you think that you have, or can you point to like certain texts that, you know, like you mentioned that pro-life uses like a religious stance rooted in like the Bible. Are there certain texts for you personally that act like that, sort of substantiates your belief that life does not start at fertilization.

Sally: I personally couldn't point to ones that specific ones; that I don't think I could give you. I know that I have read countless books on so many of these things but I don't have the authors or

the titles memorized so. . . but this is my life, this has become my life now, talking about it, and so for me it's just volunteering in clinics, talking with specific doctors, you know asking my own questions more so that others have done. I remember back in high school, I grew up in Colorado Springs so I came from a very conservative town, very Catholic home as well, so I always went to the library and read books and just kind of came to my own decisions on my own, and I guess volunteering in a clinic and seeing the women, I guess for me was the biggest factor more so than on the scientific, where life begins. And just seeing that it's not a fun process, no one wants this to happen and the majority of women that are going to get abortions are in some kind of situation that they don't want to be in or shouldn't have to be, and so I think that was the key factor in my personal beliefs I suppose.

As with Susan, Sally also seems reluctant to incorporate cultural texts into her projected discourse. But whereas Susan put a significant amount of effort into providing the researcher with a specific example from her religious text after being prompted, Sally does not trouble herself with corroborating her position as it relates to textual substantiation. Sally claims to have acquired much of her discourse experientially while working as a volunteer at Planned Parenthood, which involved Sally being exposed to women facing the burden of a crisis pregnancy. These experiences seem to have shaped and helped Sally to rationalize her private representations of the debate more than textual references. However, she does go on to reference institutions that play a large role in the development of cultural meaning, such as the scientific community:

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Sally: It's not as simple as: It's life, put it in an incubator and it will live. It most likely will not, but it's again science, again it's a choice, and the situation.

> It could be that Sally does indeed give credence to cultural texts when using evidence to support her private representation. Of course she does lack specificity in her reference to science by labeling it in the most general of terms, but she does nonetheless use it in coordination with 'choice' and 'situation,' which are both crucial building blocks in Sally construction of the issue. Yet, as revealed in the preceding example, Sally contends that she does not actively use textual references as evidence for the purposes of logically backing her pro-choice claims. This can be recognized by her inability to specifically name a textual reference when prompted by the researcher. Why then does Sally disregard science at one point only to rely on it during another? Perhaps Sally simply creates her own understanding of science to suit her needs as they arise. Thus, in substantiating her private representation regarding the claim that most premature babies will not survive in an incubator, science (or more accurately Sally's representation of science) serves to bolster her claims made within the rhetorical situation that she has contrived for the purposes of solidifying her pro-choice discourse.

Patty

Patty: No, I am a policy creator and that's actually what this is (*holds up a NARAL document*). This is our policy agenda as it plays into preventing unplanned pregnancy. So we have a 501C3

organization which carries out public education and research activities, some public policy activities, some lobbying activities, as allowed under the IRS regulations for nonprofit organizations. And through our regional research into women's use of contraception and their attitudes toward contraception, we conducted the research in 2006, based on that analysis we developed a public education campaign to increase the use of contraception consistently among the women who are at risk for unintended pregnancy as well as a public policy program to identify systematic barriers to access to contraceptive services. And so that has formed the basis of some of the proactive pieces of legislation that I have been working with our lobbyist and legislators directly.

> Patty is obviously well versed in her organization's (NARAL's) ideology and is very capable of articulating this discourse in a cogent manner. Her ability to lucidly express herself no doubt arises in part from her experience as a policy creator. In fact, it seems that many of the salient diagnostics she uses to privately represent her understanding of the abortion debate stem from research that she personally helped to conduct. Having a direct role in the formulation of evidence that serves to back the rhetorical claims promulgated by her discourse not only contributes to Patty's aptitude as a compelling social actor, but also reinforces the belief that her representation of the issue is the correct one. However, as a political representative of the pro-choice movement, one who lobbies state government, Patty's representation of the issue is by no means confined to the discourse adhered to by NARAL:

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Patty: Currently the argument that is coming to ban abortion is that there is an alleged belief that fetuses can feel and process pain at 20 weeks. If you talk to folks in the medical community, they'll tell you that's not true and that this allegation is based on research that was never validated and replicated. That's not fun sexy stuff that elected officials often take the time to listen to.

> In this passage, Patty seems to place a significant amount of importance upon textual inferences expounded by the medical establishment, especially when it comes to matters related to fetal pain. However, this significance appears to be limited only to the textual sources that are capable of corroborating her private representations of the issue and can be perceived through the caveat that she provides concerning the validity and reliability of a medical study that runs counter to her beliefs. But where do these textual sources come from? Who are these "folks in the medical community" that she refers to? She gives us a clue to one possible source in the following excerpt:

Patty: And actually there was recently a piece published in the *New York Times* today that verified that classification of a contraceptive because the chemical composition of the drug acts by preventing the release of an egg.

> Just as other partisans use textual references (biased news outlets, statistical Web sites, religious texts) to help substantiate their claims, Patty uses the *New York*

Times as a means of facilitating her own discourse. How and why she has come to regard this publication as a viable source of information and what this demographically suggests about Patty is beyond the scope of this study; however, what is important to understand is that the *New York Times* serves as a viable building block of cultural information which Patty uses to construct discourse. Of course, the discursive structure that one builds is wholly unique and representative of its component units, which is why the concept of discourse remains an elusive creature. But there can be no doubt that much of the contrast of meaning that exists among antagonistic groups, e.g. pro-choice/pro-life, manifests as a result of individuals adhering to differing textual subscriptions. Even though it is common for political groups to identify with conventional producers of cultural text, there is one producer that all subscribe to: the law:

Greg: Now what about a baby that would have been born like the day before its birth? Like a person starts to go into labor, and that child is going to be born the next day. Does that fetus who is about to be born have those rights?

Patty: Not under our current law. Not under current law.

Greg: But like in your current evaluation of matter?

Patty: Well, I would say that under our current law, we go under what the definitions are.

On matters related to the issue of personhood and late-term fetal viability, Patty appears to cognitively defer and derive her representations to and from the law.

What is fascinating about this application is that it illustrates Patty's inability to competently articulate herself regarding a central feature of the abortion debate. If this exchange had occurred with a disinterested citizen who does not regularly consider the abortion debate outside an occasional news blurb, this response could be construed as typical. But because Patty is in fact an activist partisan who serves as a political director for a pro-choice lobbying group, it is interesting that she has no employable script on the matter of personhood other than the cursory, 'because the law says so.' If Patty had previously struggled with applying an appropriate script toward topics associated with all aspects of the debate, then it could be surmised that Patty is simply an inarticulate communicator, but this was hardly the case. In fact, Patty was exceptionally skilled at articulating her organization's rhetorical claims regarding women's reproductive rights in a lucid manner. And while it is intuitive that someone in Patty's position would be more adept at articulating her group's discourse as opposed to the discourse of her antagonist's, most political actors, especially those who deal with policy, are usually capable of applying cogent scripts to counter claims made by the opposition. What this example underscores is the utter lack of regard both sides in the abortion debate have toward one another and part of the reason why any degree of reconciliation has be elusive.

Melissa

Melissa: So a lot of students took advantage of it (*STD testing*), and we were there (*CSU*

campus) talking about how our services are free, so a girl came up to the table, and she said, "Your services are free?" "Yeah, they're always free," and she goes, "That makes me mad," and "I say why does that make you mad?" And she goes. "That's because Planned Parenthood has been advertising its only $10." She goes, "However, when I went, it is only $10, but all they tested for was Chlamiddia and Gonorrhea." She goes, "And then anything else I wanted to do I had to make another appointment and it was going to be close to $300." She goes, "I really felt like it was a bait and switch," and so I was like, "I'm sorry," and we've had multiple occasions that clients say that when they go in the people there are mean to them.

In an effort to substantiate the negative beliefs she holds toward Planned Parenthood, Melissa chooses to recount an encounter that she had with a student on campus regarding STD testing. Apparently, this student was unhappy with the services that Planned Parenthood offered when juxtaposed with the services provided by the Alpha Center. Why does Melissa use this discursive formation to substantiate her beliefs to the researcher? This interpersonal strategy that Melissa employs is obviously meant to frame her organization in a positive way. But why not use a biased media source like Susan? Or a legal source like Patty? One advantage this strategy has lies in its unverifiability. It is impossible for Melissa's conversation partner, in this case the researcher, to discount her claims without suggesting that she is being untruthful; thus, Melissa is able to impose her claims upon the researcher without fear of rhetorical reprisal, as was the case with Patty's legal references. This strategy insulates Melissa within the discursive territory of

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her own reality, where she is able to maintain a presence of power while constructing an intersubjective reality in conjunction with the researcher. As a result, Melissa feels unburdened by any beliefs that may run counter to her conceptualizations of Planned Parenthood. Just as she relays secondhand accounts to substantiate her negative attitudes and beliefs regarding pro-choice, so too does Melissa use secondhand accounts to substantiate her positive attitudes and beliefs regarding pro-life:

Melissa: Yeah, so this is what we've been told by people who walk in here (*Alpha Center*). And often it's in the context of you guys are so nice you were kind and caring and loving and not judgmental. And when I went over there (*Planned Parenthood*) they were mean to me, so I'm like, I'm sorry.

Melissa's extensive use of secondhand accounts could also suggest that her sense of identity is sequestered from broader societal formations in the sense that she does not look significantly beyond her own experiences to construct discursive formations of society and self. Indeed, much of her discursive positioning and understanding appear to be the result of salient locations of previous personal experience, providing Melissa with environmental interactions that allot her with the necessary rhetorical tools to rationalize her belief system. Because Melissa provided these statements freely, without being pressed by the researcher, it could be surmised that she relies on personal accounts in her own experiences to

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substantiate the cultural ideology that she ultimately subscribes to, pro-life. This raises several questions: How does she handle the personal accounts that challenge her positive valuations of pro-life? Or do accounts that challenge Melissa's positive interpretations of herself and her affiliated discursive group even exist? Perhaps Melissa is adept at rationalizing most, if not all, of the environmental determinants that threaten her discursive position to herself. The following excerpt seems to suggest the latter. Note how Melissa attempts to rationalize the questionable tactics of a concomitant pro-life group that publicly displays the bloody images of aborted fetuses, which she does not support, by attempting to rationalize their actions in a way that is remissible to her own belief system, bringing public awareness about abortion:

Melissa: I think there's a place for all of it (*publicly displaying bloody photographs*). I mean I always think back to when I was a little girl, when I first heard about the Holocaust, I ended up reading a book by Cory tendon called the hiding place, he was actually a Christian that was hiding Jews and his family got thrown into the concentration camps. And to me I made that link instantly between abortion and the Holocaust. I didn't see how they were any different. And people always said, well if people had known and if people had spoken up it would have made a difference. And people didn't know and people stayed quiet. And so to me it's not any different. It's about life and valuing life. And so to me there's all different ways to speak up. So you know I think if there had been big pictures of all the piles of all the bodies at Auschwitz, maybe people would have been shaken awake. Because afterwords when the pictures all came up after the war,

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or after the camps were liberated, people were horrified. And if I had only known, if I'd only

known. And so I think there's a place for it. And so there's… no great social issue is resolved one

way. People are moved for different reasons.

Jennifer

Greg: Okay, alright, sounds good. Okay so this next one has to do with like . . . well I feel like

that you are not going to want to, like any implication of life is always going to be deferred to the

person, like the person having the procedure.

Jennifer: So topics of when life begins are debated philosophically, they're debated medically,

they're debated religiously. There is no one answer, which is why Planned Parenthood can not

say the answer, because there is not one answer, so all of those decisions are deferred to the

patient.

> After repeatedly trying without success to get Jennifer to engage in an exploration
>
> of her beliefs regarding life implications as they pertain to the abortion debate, the
>
> researcher veers away from the structured interview guide by confronting Jennifer
>
> on her insistence that every component of the abortion debate can be distilled
>
> down to considerations of individual liberty. In response, Jennifer attempts to
>
> displace any ownership of the beliefs she holds to exterior philosophical, medical,
>
> and religious cultural discussions. She then claims there is no one answer. While
>
> the accuracy of this statement is absolute, Jennifer seems to use this primarily as a
>
> means of avoiding an exploration of her and Planned Parenthood's beliefs

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regarding life implications as they relate to the abortion debate. Why is an individual working for the leading pro-choice advocacy and access institution in the United States reluctant to share her views about one of the most basic and fundamental components of this issue discourse? In an attempt to understand why, the researcher reframes the question by juxtaposing the abortion debate with another controversial social issue, euthanasia:

Greg: But so, when you think about other controversial medical issues like euthanasia, medically assisted suicide, people who are at the end of their lives because they have a chronic illness for which there is no cure. Now it seems like usually the doctors that I hear on that issue are pretty well versed in their rationalizations as to why they can provide the service to their patients, but you're saying that Planned Parenthood doesn't even consider that component of the debate.

Jennifer: We absolutely consider that component of the debate. We absolutely do; however, at Planned Parenthood we believe that a woman has the right to choose whether or not she should carry a pregnancy to term or not. That's the law in the United States.

When confronted on her unwillingness to explore Planned Parenthood's beliefs regarding prenatal life, Jennifer counters that Planned Parenthood does indeed consider the life implications of the abortion debate, but refuses to, or is incapable of, providing the researcher with evidence to bolster this claim. Instead, she immediately steers the conversation back to her preferred understanding of the abortion debate, individual liberty. At this point, it seems that Jennifer surmises

that she does need to provide some form of rhetorical substantiation for this claim, lest she give the impression that she is evading this topic of conversation, so she offers a discursive formation by way of legal justification. But this again seems to be a diversion from engaging in the topic with the researcher. The fact that the United States government deems abortion to be a legal and justifiable act has nothing to do with the discursive rationalizations that substantiate pro-choice belief systems regarding fetal viability, or does it? Could it be that the most influential pro-choice institution in the United States, Planned Parenthood, bases their rhetorical premise of fetal viability solely within the bounds of the legal system? Could an institution of Planned Parenthood's stature, with its influential powers of discourse and social mobilization, be incapable of articulating an adequate rhetorical response to one of the fundamental propositions that characterizes the abortion debate and solely rely on the discursive formation of United States legal doctrine to substantiate its claim? Superficially, the answer to this question appears to be yes. As will be divulged in subsequent exchanges, Jennifer continuously seeks shelter from this rhetorical disturbance by applying dissonance reduction strategies.

Lee

Lee: I think it's like any other topic from Genesis to Revelation, I don't know if you're familiar with the Bible. It's not like you pick and choose what you want to preach and what you don't want to preach, it's all relevant. So, as you go through whatever and as there are cultural and political issues, you just preach the biblical standpoint on them. So, I think based upon that we

take obviously God is the creator, take that angle, and He created all things, so that would create pro-life versus pro-choice. Because we would believe from Psalm 139 that life begins at conception. I think about Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and He was conceived. So you would think at that point that would be a pretty good argument that Jesus was conceived in that way that life begins in the womb.

Not surprisingly, Lee's interview is replete with Biblical references that assist him in substantiating his beliefs. Time and again, when the researcher posed a question to Lee, he had a Biblical verse waiting in the wings, ready to be applied to the rhetorical position in which he was placed. In his pursuit to infuse the psychological mindsets of participants with states of cognitive dissonance through the rationalization process, the researcher found it difficult to successfully implement these effects within Lee since he possessed such a vast knowledge of the Bible. Unlike Lee, the researcher had only had a limited knowledge base of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and found that the logical propositions rooted in Biblical discursive formations sputtered in their logical appeals to Lee, who was able to utilize the seemingly endless string of rationalizations that were encoded within his rhetorical script of the Christian Bible. It quickly became apparent that the researcher was no match for Lee when rhetorically engaged within the discursive parameters of the Bible, which was in alignment with the constraints established by this study. As a result, Lee's psychological state appeared to be resilient from the dissonant effects with which the researcher was

attempting to implement. However, this is not to suggest that Lee was

invulnerable from utilizing strategies of dissonance avoidance.

Dissonance

A syllogism precedes each of the following interview excerpts. The purpose of these rhetorical

instances of logic is to encapsulate the contradictory beliefs and behaviors being posed by the

researcher to partisans in an effort to engage participants in the rationalization process. When a

partisan is confronted with the underlying contradictions that exist in their own conventional

belief systems, they are forced into a state of cognitive dissonance and must utilize conventional,

and unconventional, means to reduce this negative psychological state:

Add Consonant Cognitions

Susan

The teachings of the Apostle Paul are lessons I should strive to model my own life after
Paul did not condemn abortion even though he lived within a society that sanctioned and practiced the procedure
Therefore, as someone living in a society that sanctions and practices the procedure, I should not condemn abortion

Greg: Right. Exactly. And again, I kept looking for, reading through Paul's writings, I kept

looking for him to address this with the Gentiles but I was unable to find that. Like what do you

make of that? Like why do you feel there is not a specific, like taking this issue and make it very

salient, much like our Christian groups today do, even though one of the founding theological

thinkers of the early Christian church didn't mention it himself?

Susan: One, as Christians, they were meant to be the leaven society, so they were part of society,

they were drawn in separate communities, they lived amongst the people. They lived differently. It took hundreds of years, for Christianity to really be widespread, but it was something different about them, why would they go singing to the lions, you know? There was something different about them. That was one way of the conversion. How they loved one another, how they lived their lives, moral lives, because many times there is no words. And we all know people who are just totally against God, and your words don't have much effect. But how you live your life might. You know, when they're open to that. But your words just might harden the heart. So he wasn't in there, storming that, but if people would convert to Christianity this is how they would live, they would live the moral life. Not to say that Christians don't have abortions, they do. But, they know how to repent too. See that's the thing. And that's also what we hope for. Repentance and reconciliation. We don't want people to live with guilt, we want them to find forgiveness in Christ. Absolutely. Absolutely, we do. So I think that might be part of it: Is that Christians went in there living their lives differently, and they could see that they were polygamists and so forth, and I think that's how they eventually changed society was by living a moral life, more than just, you know, pounding.

> Susan does something very interesting to maintain logical consistency regarding her salient beliefs about abortion and the lack of specificity that exists within the Bible concerning the topic. She decides to add consonant cognitions in an attempt to outweigh the negative aspects of this topic. She achieves this by evading, or sidestepping, the content of the question to other topics that she is able to logically reconcile. She achieves this by projecting a particular aspect of her discourse to

the researcher that focuses and adheres to the belief that actions speak louder than words; thus, Susan is able to subvert a logical inconsistency embedded within her discursive interpretation.

Melissa

Greg: Exactly and there was . . . I've run into Roman text that were written by like these prominent letter scholars back then. A guy named Dioscerides now one thing I've been reading in the New Testament is that Paul, you know he went from the Holy Land into Greece and Rome to spread Christ's message to the Gentiles. But you know in all Roman's, Acts, Corinthians, he never mentions specifically the taking of life through abortion, through the womb. I was just wondering, obviously Paul is like on the leading philosophical thinkers of the Christian faith. Like if he was existing in a society that tolerates abortion as the Romans did, why don't you think he discussed that to where our modern faith based groups, who also exist in a land that's tolerant of abortion, like why don't you think he failed to address this specifically?

Melissa: I don't, I have no idea except that maybe it didn't touch his life personally. He was a single man and he hung out with mostly men. And so maybe it didn't touch his life personally so he didn't talk about it. There's lots of things he didn't talk about, he didn't talk about everything. So I don't know. I saw something the other day, some pro-choice blogger and she was saying abortion is never mentioned in the Bible, no it's not, the word is not. But it's the principle behind valuing life no matter what. Paul does talk about life as valuable so it's like, yeah there's lots of things the bible doesn't talk about specifically. But it's that we love people and value life and

every life is valuable and had purpose and meaning and God created every life for a purpose and a reason.

        As with Susan, Melissa is unable to rationalize the lack of specificity that exists in the Bible regarding abortion, so she steps outside the constraints of the rhetorical situation posed to her by adding cognitions that serve to substantiate her pro-life discourse, which is rooted in Christianity. This is achieved by adding cognitions that arise from the discursive formations of the Bible that are capable of substantiating Melissa's belief that the practice of abortion is at odds with the teachings found in Bible, especially the valuation of life. However, even under the support of this premise, Melissa still fails to mention a specific discursive formation that rationalizes her beliefs, suggesting that perhaps she does not lean on the Bible as much as other cultural texts to derive a meaningful sense of personal identity.

Lee

Christ's lessons of forgiving our enemies are lessons to live by

The United States has enemies

Therefore, Americans should forgive their enemies instead of going to war with them

Greg: I think about passages in the Bible like I am trying to think of one where like Christ or another prophet spoke about defense, defending yourself. Can you think of one? Because one thing that is kind of coming out in my mind as far as defense goes is Christ teaching that we

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should turn the other cheek, right? We should find fault with ourselves before we find fault in

our aggressor, in our neighbor. Like can you think of something at all?

Lee: There are several things that's black and white. When he went into the temple and they

were selling pigeons and really what was happening was they were ripping people off and it was

basically his house, God's house, so they paid them and stick it back under the deal, so they

would sacrifice and sell it again and he said, "you're ripping them off" and he got…it's called

righteous indignation, and he went and flipped all of the tables over and said, "this is a house of

prayer and you've made it into a den of thieves." So I think again it comes down to there's right

and there's wrong and we have the justification to say if it's wrong to fight against that. . .so

again I think there's rights and there's mandates and there's laws and when people cross a certain

line I think you have the right to, I think Jesus told us, that you have a right to do those kinds of

things. I think the turning the other cheek was in relation to the idea that that makes an impact.

Retaliation creates what? It creates a fight. But in that…and I think some of that has to be with

your ability to discern when is it a time to fight and when is it not time to fight?

> When propositioned to defend his beliefs with regards to reconciling the
>
> contradiction that exists between having the right to defend oneself against an
>
> enemy and complying with Christ's lesson of forgiving one's enemies, Lee reaches
>
> into his bag of Biblical discursive formations and pulls out the narrative story of
>
> Christ's outburst in the Holy Temple. Of course, Christ's actions of flipping over a
>
> table of con artists who were ripping off unsuspecting worshipers could be
>
> considered quite distinct from carpet bombing a village of unsuspecting civilians

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whose only crime was to be living next door to a terrorist. Nonetheless, by adding

this consonant cognition to the rhetorical situation with which he has been

imposed, Lee allots himself enough rhetorical leverage to justify United States

military action against its enemies while maintaining his affiliations with

Christianity and its fundamental principles of nonviolence.

Communicate Positive Aspects

Jennifer

It is important for members of politically active social institutions to be able to rhetorically defend their beliefs

Planned Parenthood is a politically active social institution

Therefore, members of Planned Parenthood should be able to rhetorically defend their beliefs

Greg: Sure, absolutely, I understand but when there's like instances of life like whether like

you're not sure if something is alive or something is not alive. . .

Jennifer: It's deferred to the patient.

Greg: It's all deferred to the patient.

Jennifer: It's deferred to the patient.

Greg: But you still are providing access to that patient.

Jennifer: We are providing medically accurate information to our patients regarding where their

pregnancy is, what's going on with the fetus, and based on that information, the patient has to

make their own decisions. We cannot make decisions for them.

Greg: Right, no, certainly not. Yeah I know that you would never make a decision for the patient

but you do make a decision as far as policy goes with regard to access.

Jennifer: Uhh, how do you mean?

Greg: So when Roe vs. Wade was passed the government decreed that abortion is legal now and that people can have access to it should they deem so. Planned Parenthood obviously agrees with that aspect of it because they provide care to the individual. Now they provide a very specific care, at least, again I know that abortion is such a small component of it, but nonetheless because Planned Parenthood does provide abortion as a service doesn't it seem like Planned Parenthood has to be comfortable on their position on where life does and does not begin? Because they are . . .

Jennifer: I'm gonna say it again, we cannot make that decision for the patient. We are here to help a patient after they have made their decision. So we can provide the information to the patient so we can help them make their decision. The patient has to make their decision. Once they've made their decision, we'll help them find an adoption agency, we'll help them find the resources they need to parent, or we'll make an appointment so they can make an abortion. But they have to make the decision themselves. So we provide access to all options, we're an all options counseling facility. We provide that access. Absolutely. But we cannot make any decision for any patient that walks in our door.

> Jennifer evades the rhetorical situation being posed by attempting to usurp the trajectory of the conversation through the redirection of dialogue back to discursive notions of individual liberty. Obviously, the fact that Planned Parenthood empowers their clients to exercise their reproductive rights has nothing to do with the question being posed by the researcher: What is Planned Parenthood's beliefs regarding fetal viability? In other words, why does Planned

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Parenthood believe that abortion is not the taking of a life, or if it is the taking of a life, how are you able to justify taking a life in this particular context? It is clear that the researcher is looking to explore Planned Parenthood's belief system, but Jennifer is only interested in exploring one belief, which she uses over and over again as a default answer to almost every question posed to her. It seems that Jennifer is content with communicating the positive aspect of full and free access to reproductive care as a rationalization to all rhetorical situations with which she is placed, even if it has little to do with the topic under consideration. One could reasonably assume that when Jennifer is eating at a restaurant and is asked by her waiter if she would like fries with her hamburger, her response to that inquiry would be "No, but I will take a side of comprehensive reproductive healthcare." Joking aside, it is interesting that Jennifer is able to maintain a psychologically consistent state of mind by ubiquitously applying this rationalization to all rhetorical propositions that she is faced with. Or, it could be that Jennifer is not in a state of psychological consistency at all but instead is grappling with the effects of dissonance. It could be that Jennifer is desperately clinging onto this one rhetorical tool in a desperate attempt to force it to work with something that it simply was not made for, like a hammer striking a screw.

Altering the Importance of Cognitive Elements

Sally

Entities that possess a disability should not be discriminated against by other human beings

When a fetus is aborted because it possesses a disability, it is being discriminated against

Therefore, abortions allow other human beings to discriminate against entities that posses a disability

Greg: So somebody will say, this person with the disability, with like down syndrome, that person should have all the rights as anyone else in this world. They need assistance obviously but still they are a human being, and they shouldn't be discriminated against, whereas a fetus with down syndrome, where like they know that gene exists, that entity can be discriminated against because it can be aborted, do you see what I'm saying?

Sally: I see what you're saying but that again goes right back to, is that life? Is it?

Greg: Yeah, so you would say that that's not a life, even though both obviously share this characteristic?

Sally: My whole thing is, can that life live outside the womb? If that embryo or fetus or whatever stage it's at, if it's outside the womb, can it live? Can you do that? That's how I look at it personally. Now I'm not speaking for all of SURJ or all of the pro-choice community, but that's how I look at it. That's how, that's my belief. Can that fetus live outside the womb at that point?

> Sally places an emphasis on the independence of life. In other words, if life can be sustained outside the womb, then it deserves to be regarded as a person. This allots her a value-foothold that rhetorically anchors her belief system. Her ability to construct a belief system that arises from a positive value concept, in this case life, allows her to logically distill these beliefs to a point where she is able to rationally justify the abortion procedure, at least to the degree where a fetus is incapable of existing outside the womb, thus she is able to maintain consonance by means of

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altering the importance of fetal development before it reaches the point of external viability.

Susan

Being granted access to an eternity in heaven is something everyone should strive for
When an unborn child is aborted, its soul is granted access to heaven
Therefore, abortion enables the souls of unborn children to acquire something everyone should strive for

Greg: So if you feel that fetuses, unborn children, do go to heaven after an abortion, is that, isn't that in a way allowing them to just go directly back to their Savior without having to be corrupted by the sins of the world?

Susan: You could, you could say that, but there is another person involved. That's the soul of mother. I don't worry so much about the souls of the babies, I do worry about the souls of the mother and all those involved. An abortionist is just a hired killer. They're supposed to be doctors that heal, and help to give and save lives. They're being paid big money to take lives. That's just, you know, such an oxymoron. You're supposed to heal and save. So I worry more about… I worry more about the souls of the mother. I worry more about that mother who has to live with this. And who will need to find her way to repentance and reconciliation, because her soul is in danger.

To avoid dissonance, Susan mitigates the importance she normally places on an unborn child by emphasizing the concerns she has for the female who, in Susan's mind, is committing a grave sin. Obviously, this seems to be a situational response

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to the question posed by the researcher since many pro-life groups, including some associated with 40 Days For Life, make a public display of the loss of life that results from abortion. However, to avoid dissonant effects, Susan is rhetorically compelled to express a degree of ambivalence toward the soul of an aborted fetus and places a greater emphasis on the soul of the mother. Again, this seems to contradict pro-life discourse in that the welfare of the unborn child is not given precedence. This illustrate the power that dissonant effects can have on the individual as well as the extent to which the individual will go to avoid experiencing these effects.

Patty

All human beings deserve equal rights under the law
A fetus is not a human being
Therefore, a fetus does not deserve equal rights under the law

Greg: Sure, absolutely. But the aspect of personhood. That at no point does the baby become a person, and correct me if I'm wrong, that a fetus does not actually become a person until it is born into this world?

Patty: (*long pause*) I guess I am having a hard time understanding what you are pushing me to answer. It feels like you are not accepting the answer that I have provided.

Greg: Well, I guess because, if I got you right, you're saying that you don't know; which, I guess I don't know how to take that answer. Of personhood, right? And so I'm just trying to get more specificity, as to either why you don't know when personhood starts or . . .yeah, I guess that's

what I'm asking you. Like why is it that you do not know when an entity is established as a person?

Patty: (*pause*) Yeah, I don't know why. I also can't answer why. . . a miscarriage would not be considered the loss of a person, or why when an embryo fails to implant, that would be considered the loss of the person. Now, I do think that. . .

Greg: Although I do think the pro-life would probably feel that way.

Patty: I don't know.

Greg: At least from my research and interviews, that's the impression I've got.

Patty: I can't answer that question because I honestly have not heard conversations, and I haven't been exposed to conversations around what the expected mourning rituals would be for a fertilized egg that fails to implant or for a miscarriage, that's not part of the discussion.

> This passage clearly reveals Patty's reluctance, or inability to, rhetorically explore aspects of fetal personhood. She proceeds to dodge this component of the debate by attempting to explore hypothetical morning rituals that seem to be aimed at derogating pro-life individuals, though this assumptive and not entirely clear. Regardless, the important takeaway from this exchange is that Patty utilizes and places an importance upon the rhetorical situation of morning rituals in an attempt to distance herself from exploring notions of fetal viability with the researcher and avoiding dissonant effects, or at least keeping them at bay.

Melissa

Being granted access to an eternity in heaven is something everyone should strive for

When an unborn child is aborted, its soul is granted access to heaven

Therefore, abortion enables the souls of unborn children to acquire something everyone should strive for

Greg: You know it's interesting, the most important part of a Christian life is to live a good life so that you have an eternity with God in Heaven and this question that I'm about to ask you is something I've been trying to reconcile and I'm just wondering what your thoughts are on to. If what is most important is to live a good life, and be in Heaven with God, isn't that already occurring when the fetus is aborting? Like don't they go to Heaven and spend an eternity with God? And while it's true they got there through the sanctioned killing by our government, but at the same time it seems like they have already achieved what all of us are trying to achieve?

Melissa: Yeah, and that makes it all wrapped up in a bow. So to me it's still, and to me it's still, and I mean it's like where a lot of people are like it's okay because my baby's going to Heaven. Well, let's not worry about the baby, what about you. What have you just done? So again let's talk about the actual act and it's a horrific thing. I hope they go to Heaven. I have no guarantee that they do. I couldn't tell you. I hope so but you know, the Bible I read says the only way to Heaven is by accepting Jesus as my savior and recognizing that I'm a sinner, lost in my sin and I can't be with the Father in Heaven because I'm a sinful creature I have to accept his gift of salvation on the cross. How does that baby do that? It can't so I just think that innocent life hasn't had the opportunity to sin so I'm assuming they go straight to Heaven. So that's my theological take on it.

When confronted with the proposition that abortions provide unborn souls the opportunity to achieve instant access to heaven, Melissa recalibrates the rhetorical emphasis pro-life discourse places on the life of the unborn by shifting it to the sin

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of the mother who is having the abortion. It is interesting that in one context

Melissa is capable of characterizing the abortion debate as a modern day

holocaust, placing an emphasis on the shear number of innocent victims that are

unjustly killed, while in another context, the unborn child is almost an

afterthought, "Well, let's not worry about the baby." This seems to suggest that

maintaining cognitive consistency through the avoidance of hypocrisy is more

important to the partisan-self than maintaining consistency through a predictable

and stable belief system. In fact, it could be inferred that partisans are only

interested in adhering to a belief system to the extent that it provides them with a

means of avoiding hypocrisy.

Jennifer

It is important for politically active social institutions to be able to rhetorically defend their beliefs

Planned Parenthood is a politically active social institution

Therefore, Planned Parenthood should be able to rhetorically defend its beliefs

Greg: So when Roe vs. Wade was passed the government decreed that abortion is legal now and

that people can have access to it should they deem so. Planned Parenthood obviously agrees with

that aspect of it because they provide care to the individual. Now they provide a very specific

care, at least, again I know that abortion is such a small component of it, but nonetheless because

Planned Parenthood does provide abortion as a service doesn't it seem like Planned Parenthood

has to be comfortable on their position on where life does and does not begin? Because they are.

Jennifer: I'm gonna say it again, we cannot make that decision for the patient. We are here to

help a patient after they have made their decision. So we can provide the information to the

patient so we can help them make their decision. The patient has to make their decision. Once they've made their decision, we'll help them find an adoption agency, we'll help them find the resources they need to parent, or we'll make an appointment so they can make an abortion. But they have to make the decision themselves. So we provide access to all options, we're an all options counseling facility. We provide that access. Absolutely. But we cannot make any decision for any patient that walks in our door.

> Note how Jennifer sets off her response with the comment, "I'm going to say it again." This gives the impression that the researcher is not listening carefully enough to her responses and implies a sense of frustration from Jennifer as an interviewee. This allots Jennifer the opportunity to alter the importance of cognitive elements by placing an emphasis on the incompetence of researcher, who is not fulfilling his duties as an interviewer. However, through transcript analysis, it is clear that Jennifer is simply doing all that she can to avoid speaking openly about Planned Parenthood's belief system. It doesn't matter what rhetorical situation the researcher tries to place Jennifer in; she will simply use the same proposition over and over again then express frustration when the recipient of her recurrent rationalization seeks further clarification. As a result, she allots herself a rhetorical aid that serves as a psychological distraction in her attempt to avoid dissonance through an inability or unwillingness to speak openly about Planned Parenthood's discursive position regarding prenatal life implications as understood by the rhetorical situation posed by the researcher.

Lee

The works contained in the New Testament are works to model one's life after

The Book of Genesis 21-22 is vague in its treatment of a fetus/unborn child as to whether or not it is a living being

Therefore, I should not definitively consider a fetus/unborn child to be a living being

Greg: Like if somebody came to you and said well you know this second passage this is how I'm going to interpret it, what would you say to them?

Lee: There's several comments. The NIV is a little bit of a liberal translation. There are multiple passages where like in the New Testament Greek, the literal translation from the Greek to the English, the best translation is probably the New American Standard version. The American Standard Bible. So, what I would call the translation, whoever the people are behind that, the more liberal they are the more liberal the translation is going to be, does that make sense?

Greg: So the passages like this, you think that that's where some like inconsistency in theology might arise.

Lee: Oh yeah, I see it all the time. In Bible studies you've got six different Bibles in there and this one says this and that one says that, and then you've got to take five minutes to go, what really is the intent of this? Because as soon as you change the intent, you change the interpretation.

In this excerpt, Lee alters the importance of Biblical interpretation in order to maintain cognitive consistency regarding his assertion that the Bible is transparent in its conceptualization of the fetus as a living entity. He achieves this by questioning the interpretive validity of the New International Version Bible, which

is widely perceived as possessing a more accessible translation, and promulgating the New American Standard Version Bible, which is widely perceived as being the most literally translated of all English language Bibles. With this proposition bolstering his claim that the NIV translation sacrifices literal translation at the expense of content accessibility, Lee is able to subvert the claim made by the researcher that the Book of Genesis, chapters 21-22 are vague in their treatment of a fetus as a living entity. Thus, Lee alters the importance of accessibility while emphasizing the importance of literal translation.

Derogating the Unchosen Alternative

Sally

Disability based discrimination is wrong
When a fetus is aborted because it possesses a disability, it is being discriminated against
Therefore, abortions that result from disability based discrimination are wrong

Sally: But at the same time I also think, how many homeless people are people with disabilities, you know what I mean? Because they never got the care or mom could not afford the care or things like that. They never had the assistance, now they're homeless or in jail, or dead on the street because they were not given the assistance they needed, and I'm not saying abort everything with disabilities and things like that, it's so touchy, that's how I say when rights begin.

By weighing the two alternatives, Sally is able to rationalize her belief that discrimination against a disabled fetus is justifiable by derogating a hypothetical scenario in which society is plagued by disabled homeless people. This has the

effect of mitigating any concerns Sally might have regarding fetal viability and allots her the opportunity to avoid dissonant effects.

Sally

All human beings deserve equal rights under the law

It is unclear as to whether a fetus is a human being

Therefore, it is unclear as to whether a fetus deserves equal rights under the law

Sally: Well see, it's so touchy and it's so sensitive. And I'm not a doctor, but for me it's so hard. I would say life for me personally if it could be in an incubator and live I would. But there's points too early where they can put it in an incubator and, you know, it's not going to happen. It's very hard. But me, for me there is obviously premature babies that are put into an incubator and are great and fantastic, but at the end also I think about those women, that's always my underlying thing okay so that person has a disability, can the 14-year-old have that child with a disability who already clearly probably isn't being brought up in a great home. If she is 14 and is pregnant and if she gives it up for adoption where do you put a disabled child? In an orphanage? And will the child get adopted in an orphanage? Probably not. It's a big long chain of things they can just go on and on and again I think it just comes back to that.

Again, Sally derogates the unchosen alternative rationale of regarding a fetus as a living entity by pondering the difficult life a disabled child would have in an orphanage with a lack of care or growing up with a mother who is incapable of adequately providing for its needs This gives her enough rational to dissipate dissonant effects.

Alter Behavior

Patty

Gender based discrimination is wrong

When a fetus is aborted because of its gender, it is being discriminated against

Therefore, abortions that result from gender based discrimination are wrong

Greg: So obviously it is not okay and illegal to discriminate against women in our society, and you know, it wasn't always like that but today it's pervasively a publicly acceptable and even a required aspect to not be misogynistic. So if somebody were to have an abortion based on a criteria that can be applied to people, individuals in our world, the same as, the same criteria as to a fetus, like those don't conflict at all with you? Like because you say that you're not sure where life begins or not; however, this entity existing in another person, it does share the same, a very similar quality, as everybody else walking around. So do you see that as a different discrimination because that is a person, or if you're not sure if that is a person?

Patty: No I don't, I'm not coming from the same perspective that you are I don't think, and I have to be honest that I need to leave right now for a meeting.

> When confronted with the rhetorical situation of gender based discrimination as it relates to fetal entities, Patty chooses to abate dissonance by calling an end to the interview. It becomes clear that this meeting was a ruse intended to give her a viable excuse to abandon the interview, since she spent the next fifteen minutes continuing to discuss the issue with the researcher; however, this tactic successfully allowed her to avoid discussing this component of the debate with the researcher by allotting her a plausible means of escape. Because she was incapable

of adequately articulating herself, at least to an extent that would have allowed her to avoid dissonant effects, Patty altered her behavior by standing up out of her chair and calling an end to the interview.

Instances of Self-Reflexivity

Self-reflexivity serves as an additional way that the partisan can reduce dissonance. This largely results from an individual's ability to attribute blame to the self while simultaneously refraining from self disparagement. When one is capable of recognizing the inherent limitations that come with existing as a fallible human being, when one understands that she will never be able to possess all the answers to the world's problems, but especially to the problems that she cares about, then one becomes tolerant of her own logical deficiencies. It can be said, then, that one becomes comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Sally

Society should recognize that women face many challenges in life
Legal access to abortion allows women to mitigate the challenge of an unwanted pregnancy
Therefore, women who are facing an unwanted pregnancy should have legal access to abortion

Sally: It most likely will not, but it's again science, again it's a choice and the situation, I just think saying, and even though it's uncomfortable, you can't do it all. I'm sure there's women who take advantage and are not in an uncomfortable situation, I'm not saying that doesn't happen, I'm not so focused on this that I don't realize that, I do realize that that happens, but if you get rid of it, you're getting rid of it for people who are in extremely desperate situations. And that's what I

guess I always try to focus on.

Sally shows that she has the capacity to think beyond the constraints of her own discourse by expressing a willingness to believe that sometimes women will have an abortion for the sake of convenience, which is something that she disagrees with. By exploring and bringing to light the inherent deficiencies that exist in her own discursive rationalizations, Sally is able to live with this uncomfortable aspect of the debate that exists within her own understanding of the situation and lessen dissonant effects. Through her self-reflection, Sally demonstrates the extent to which she has pondered the endless rhetorical facets of this issue. It appears that she has faced this rhetorical wall before and understands that she, along with everyone else involved, can never be fully capable of fully justifying her beliefs.

Patty

All human beings deserve equal rights under the law
It is unclear as to whether a fetus is a human being
Therefore, it is unclear as to whether a fetus deserves equal rights under the law

Greg: So for you personally, when do you believe that life begins? Do you believe that it's after a live birth? Or does it occur at some point during the development of the fetus, while in utero.

Patty: I don't have the answer to that. I really don't know when that is, and the reason I don't know when that is because I think it's different in terms of a (*pauses for a few moments*). . . I don't even know how to talk about this (*laughs*). No, the reason I don't know the answer to this

is because every pregnancy is different. So I could say that from a biological development perspective, without fertilization you can't ever have a pregnancy. But I can also say that without an egg being released from an ovary, without the sperm being released, you can't ever have a pregnancy either. So I'm not going to say that just because these two things happen and then just because fertilization happens and then just because implementation happens and then just because gestation happens and this happens that gestation, boom (*claps hands rhythmically*) then life is recognized, so I don't know. I really don't.

This line of questioning seems to take Patty by surprise. She admits that she has no idea how to go about exploring this rhetorical situation presented to her by the researcher. She eventually offers an explanation of the human reproductive process that appears to be aimed at conveying the amorphous sequence of establishing human life. This explanation is intended to convey the futility of contemplating such matters and concludes with her stating that she does not know when life begins. Patty seems to avoid dissonant effects by leaning on this amorphous sequence of human reproduction as a means of pacifying her inability to speak definitively about the topic of when human life begins. As a result, it becomes acceptable for her to not know how to articulate herself.

Challenge Source Credibility

Lee

The works contained in the Old Testament are works to model one's life after

The Book of Genesis 21-22 is vague in its treatment of a fetus/unborn child as to whether or not it is a living being

Lee: So you get ten different Bibles out there, which one's the best, or which one's the best to read? The NIV became popular because why?

Greg: I don't know that.

Lee: It's easier to read.

Greg: Oh sure, sure. Absolutely. Because I started reading the King James and then I started reading the NIV and…

Lee: There's a translation out there called "The Message" but again when you read it and you go back to the original sometimes they take the liberties of saying things, I'll give you an example. . .

Lee: Well, there's a big difference between condemned and punished, isn't there?

Greg: Well, what's condemned? You're being damned, right?

Lee: Condemned is final, punished is like, sure you get a --. So one is kind of permanent and the other one is temporal. . .

Lee: So what do you think the intent of those 613 laws was?

Greg: Well, it was to guide the Israelites largely, guide the chosen people.

Lee: From what?

Greg: From themselves…

Lee: And consequences. And why couldn't they eat pork?

Greg: Because it wasn't good.

Lee: Yeah, it was dirty, so ultimately God said, "this law is to protect you. You know you're

going to get this kind of disease if you eat pork because you don't know how to take care of it yet, and we're not there, and so just don't eat it."

When confronted with a potential contradiction in the Old Testament's treatment of fetal viability, Lee does something unique to avoid dissonant effects: He challenges the credibility of the researcher by rhetorically engaging him within the discursive bounds of Biblical knowledge. Why did Lee feel the need to pose questions to the researcher that he already knew the answers to? From an intersubjective ontological perspective, it could be that Lee began to conceptualize himself as playing a subservient role to the researcher, who obviously had less knowledge-power with regards to Biblical discourse. In an effort to exchange interpersonal positions, Lee posed questions in an attempt to infuse the researcher's psychology with dissonant effects. Essentially, Lee was proposing this syllogistic logic to the researcher:

You, as a researcher, are asking me tough questions about the Bible
Researchers who ask tough questions about the Bible should be able to answer though questions about the Bible
Therefore, as a researcher, you should be able to answer my tough questions about the Bible

Lee's strategy was unexpected and did catch the researcher off guard. Even though the researcher did respond to most of Lee's questions in an adequate manner, it was obvious that the Biblical script the researcher possessed was quite limited in comparison to Lee's, who utilized his knowledge in an attempt to reposition the

focus of the conversation away from the rhetorical situations posed by the researcher. Thus, Lee was able to avoid dissonant effects by establishing himself as the dominant figure in his and the researcher's mutual construction of intersubjective reality.

Instances of Hypocrisy/Contradictions

Instances of hypocrisy or contradiction usually occur when participants are unaware that they are committing logical fallacies. Interestingly, when a participant conveys a proposition that contradicts another proposition, it often occurs momentarily after the initial proposition was made. The purpose of this section is not just to single out the logical inconsistencies of participants, but rather to show how cognitively complex maintaining and expressing a consistent belief system can be.

Susan

Greg: And so you would say that that, in certain instances, that would take precedence over you know, over Christ's lesson of forgiving enemies?

Susan: You forgive your enemy, you don't go in with hatred, but you have to go in for self-defense. You know self-defense has long been seen as legitimate. Someone comes into your house and they're going to kill you, your wife, and your child, and you keep a loaded gun in your house, you do have the right to use deadly force if you feel that it is deadly force coming at you. That's legitimate.

Greg: And that, to your knowledge, is that spoken about in the New Testament, in Christ

teachings? Like self-defense?

Susan: That's a good question. He, of course our Lord was peaceful, and he actually put down the eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth, but that was actually in retaliation. You know, "I'm going to get even with you for what you did." So no, you do forgive, and you try to turn the other cheek. But there are times when it's more legitimate.

> Susan seems to lack a sufficient discursive justification, specifically one found in a Biblical context, to rationalize other forms of sanctioned killing. While she does use Biblical passages and contemporary theological discourse as a primary means of justifying her position regarding understandings of fetal life, she is unable to rationalize her notion of violence through self-defense through a Biblical contextual channel.

Sally

Sally: At certain points, right. Like late-term abortions. Which the clinic here does not do. So like that's another big misconception: that Planned Parenthood does these huge late-term abortions and some Planned Parenthood clinics do around the country. But the majority here don't do that and it's not even the clinic it's whatever doctor is there that day doing the thing, it's tough. No, but late-term abortions make me very uncomfortable. I personally do not, would I myself get one? No. But would I tell someone else they can't? I don't know that situation, I don't know what's going on. If you're having a late-term abortion, something is probably happening in your life that's very, I don't know, I can't tell.

Even though she feels it should remain legal, Sally is still uncomfortable with the prospect of someone undergoing a late-term abortion. At one point, she seems uncomfortable even referring to a late-term abortion by name. She also appears to have difficulty affirming her position regarding the legality of late-term abortions.

Patty

Patty: I am uncomfortable speaking for the pro-life community. What I have come to believe very firmly from doing this work for 6 years is that the pro-choice community and the pro-life community, at least from an advocacy perspective, are speaking completely different languages. That the pro-choice community speaks from a position of. . . (*elaborates on pro-choice discourse for a few minutes*) Whereas my perception of the pro-life community is that the language that is spoken is an absolute belief in the sanctity of life above all things, and that no individual person has the authority to choose a value of life above what has been ordained by God. And so those are two very fundamentally different ways of interacting.

Just a few minutes before stating her reluctance to speak on behalf of the pro-life community, Patty contradicts herself by doing exactly that. Does this suggest that she actually wants to express the assumptions that she has for the pro-life community, but feels constrained? Why? What forces make her uncomfortable to speak on behalf of pro-life. It could be that she does not want to come across as someone who holds prejudices, which she obviously does, along with everyone else. Why is she initially reluctant to express these biases to the researcher? It's

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impossible to say with certainty, but she does eventually express the bias she holds regarding the absolutist position many pro-life individuals hold regarding the sanctity of life, which in my opinion is a fair bias to hold. So why try to take the high road when you're stuck in traffic with everyone else? My guess is that by not allowing herself to express her unfavorable beliefs about pro-life, Patty seeks to give the impression that her belief system and subsequent discourse are capable of existing above the fray and rooted in a discourse of logical consideration.

Patty: But I just feel it's very important for me to be clear and honest that I don't turn to religious texts for that understanding or working through with why I am pro-choice and why I am a pro-choice advocate. I do know that there are others who have specific references to passages in the New Testament or the Old Testament, depending on whether they're Christian or Jewish. I also have friends in the Muslim community who refer to a specific hadith and specific passages in the Koran to justify their belief in and being pro-choice. So I know that they exist for other people, those are not things that I turn to. My. . . the core of my belief comes from, it might actually have come from being raised Catholic and believing through the Catholic doctrine that all individuals regardless of gender are created equal and have the moral agency to make decisions that will have whatever consequences they have. But we are treated as individuals who have the ability to make those decisions and we should be trusted to make those decisions.

Interesting here how Patty begins this passage by specifically mentioning that she personally refrains from using religious texts as a contextual resource for

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understanding the abortion debate, only to express a contradicting sentiment a few moments later, where she speculates that the core of her beliefs may in fact come from Catholic doctrine. Again, it is difficult to fully understand the social and psychological implications involved that brought her to this expression of hypocrisy. It could be that Patty has just never given this component of the debate any serious consideration, which is unlikely since she is so immersed in the debate, though maybe not philosophically speaking; it could be that she initially sought to set herself apart from pro-life groups by eschewing the textual references that most pro-life groups use to substantiate their position, specifically the Christian Bible. Perhaps this commonality that she shares with members of pro-life is a threat to her own sense of identity as a member of pro-choice, and that as she struggled to find a plausible answer to the question posed, she felt compelled to honestly express the possibility that her beliefs may have been shaped by the same cultural texts adhered to by her cultural antagonists.

Melissa

Melissa: I guess for me, taking a life for taking a life's sake is a problem. When you're defending yourself, like if somebody tried to break into my house and come after me and my children, I do not have a problem taking them out. I mean it, I would defend myself, when I'm defending my home, when I'm defending my country, when I'm defending the values of our country.

Melissa: A lot of women will use that, well my baby's going to be in Heaven, so like it's okay. But you can take that to the Nth degree, my parent . . . you can take that into euthanasia and this

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person . . . well they're going to be in a better place so it's better to take their life and we don't get to make those decisions. I don't think we have the ability to make those decisions and we shouldn't make those kinds of decisions.

Toward the beginning of the interview, Melissa seems comfortable stepping outside of a Christian discourse that does not include the pacifist teachings of Christ, which are explicitly stated throughout the books of the New Testament. When it comes to discursive understandings of justice, by no means does Melissa restrict herself to turning the other cheek or searching within herself for her own sins before judging others. In fact, Melissa would not have a problem exercising vigilante justice in the form of "taking them out" if they violated the sanctity of her house or her value interpretations of country. Obviously, this is a secular understanding of justice that is disconnected from the pacifist discourse expressed in the New Testament, which demands allegiance to the values of God instead of country or arising from self-preservation. From her initial statement, it would seem that Melissa is an entity who constructs interpretive understandings of justice, at least in terms of self-defense, through means rooted in secular patriotism and legal doctrine. However, when confronted with the logical proposition of abortion granting unborn children instant access to heaven, Melissa defers to a discourse that is rooted in fulfilling behavioral obligations expressed by Christian dogma, specifically abiding a Calvinist understanding that dictates only God should have authority over matters of life and death. Why then is it so

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easy for Melissa to abandon these beliefs when she is placed in a rhetorical situation that explores vigilantism in the context of selfdefense? This becomes a matter of Melissa doing her best to rationalize her beliefs so that they fit without hypocrisy into the rhetorical situation in which she has been placed or has placed herself. Thus, it could be inferred that belief systems and the subsequent discourses that arise from these systems are not an end, in and of themselves, but rather a means with which individuals utilize in their attempts to maintain psychological consistency.

Jennifer

It should be noted here that the following exchanges took place over the course of two separate interviews. The first interview was conducted as part of an assignment for a qualitative research methodology class, while the second interview was conducted as part of this study. The interviewee, Jennifer, was concerned that there was going to be an overlap of content and requested that only the dissonance and mediatory inquiries be addressed in the second interviews, since the ingroup and outgroup perception questions had already been addressed.

Interview 1

Jennifer: The way we will be impacted by that (*funding cuts from the federal government*)—it's going to effect, you know, our ability to accept Medicaid patients because if the federal dollars can't be reimbursed, if they can't come to Planned Parenthood then our Medicaid clients, we wouldn't be able to be reimbursed for them. There's also, I think about three million dollars of

funds that we get to help us with STD and HIV testing, and then cervical and breast cancer screenings for low income women. And those programs will all be impacted by the funding cuts if they are passed in the senate.

Greg: What do you think the social impact of that's going to be? It seems like kind of an obvious question but what do you visualize?

Jennifer: It's huge, it's huge. Each month, Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains sees 3000 new Medicaid clients. And those are clients who in reality are seeing fewer and fewer options of where they can go. Because private practice doctors aren't accepting Medicaid at the same levels that they used to because that reimbursement level has gone down.

Interview 2

Jennifer: None of Planned Parenthood's services are free so we are not necessarily the resource for low income people. I think that's important for you to know.

Greg: Isn't it about 90% of the cliental are low income? I think that's what you told me last time.

Jennifer: That's not what I told you last time. As of our last annual report which we just submitted looks like were not releasing those numbers (*looking through form*). It's not 90% though.

Greg: But it's a good portion though. Wouldn't you say?

Jennifer: I don't feel comfortable answering that question. Eight percent of our patients qualify for Medicaid.

Greg: Eighty?

Jennifer: Eight. So if you want to use Medicaid as a guideline for people who qualify as low income I think that that is . . .

Greg: Closer.

The contradiction that exists in these two statements is not in the numbers—
perhaps 3000 monthly Planned Parenthood clients corresponds with eight percent
of the health center's total clientele. The contradiction lies in Jennifer's attitude
toward low income clients and the institutional impact they have on Planned
Parenthood as an organization. In the first excerpt, Jennifer explains the
potentially devastating consequences that could result from the federal
government cutting Medicaid funding from the entitlement program known as
Title X. According to Jennifer, the negative impact these cuts would have on
lower income populations would be huge. She speaks to the 3000 Planned
Parenthood clients who rely on Medicaid and would be unable to access proper
medical treatment because of these funding cuts. In the second excerpt, Jennifer
characterizes Planned Parenthood as not necessarily being the resource for low
income individuals since only eight percent of its clientele consists of low income
individuals and appears to be significantly less concerned about the potential
impacts low-income individuals could have on Planned Parenthood. What could
have occurred between the first and second excerpts to cause such a shift in
attitude? Context. In the first excerpt, it is clear that Jennifer is concerned about
Planned Parenthood's ability to be reimbursed for providing health care to low-
income individuals. This is not only a negative social consequence but a negative
business consequence as well, serving as a potential economic threat to the

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viability of Planned Parenthood. In the second excerpt, Jennifer utilizes low-income individuals and their role in Planned Parenthood's mission as a rationale for not supporting Step Forward as an organization (see Level of Support Expressed Toward Conduit Group below). After the researcher proposed Step Forward's mission to Jennifer, which includes funding low-income mothers facing a crisis pregnancy who are funded through pro-life institutions but screened through Planned Parenthood, she became determined to find a viable rationalization that she could use to justify her unwillingness to support Step Forward. When the researcher suggested that a sizable portion of Planned Parenthood's clientele could potentially benefit from the services proposed by Step Forward, Jennifer downplayed this assertion by deemphasizing the significance that low-income clients have on Planned Parenthood. Unfortunately for Jennifer, the mission of Step Forward was derived from beliefs common to both pro-life and pro-choice discourses by using the process of value weaving. Thus, the rationalizations that pro-choice individuals usually utilize in customary rhetorical situations cannot necessarily be applied to the rhetorical situation that Step Forward presents. So where Jennifer would normally utilize Medicaid and service to low-income clients as a rhetorical means to justify Planned Parenthood's position within the abortion debate, in the rhetorical situation presented by the researcher, Medicaid and low-income clientele become a hindrance to her ability to rationalize her way out of cooperating with Step Forward. In this case Jennifer is forced to concoct novel beliefs and subsequent rationalizations that contradict

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her beliefs regarding Planned Parenthood's role in helping low-income

individuals.

Interview 1

Jennifer: So you're saying if we had a client come in who is seeking an abortion and the only

reason they are giving for the abortion is financial reasons, are there the funds available to

provide them with that financial assistance that would then make them feel comfortable enough

to then not need the abortion. Is that what you're saying?

Greg: Exactly, and I'm not even talking about how they feel, I'm talking about socially

empowering them. Socially empowering those people.

Jennifer: Um, you know I don't know. I don't, at this point I don't think we have any programs

like that, I'm not sure that any affiliates nationwide have programs like that.

Interview 2

Greg: But I guess what I'm trying to say is this: is there something wrong about trying to help

people whose situation I have described to you? Like through funding through pro-life

institutions.

Jennifer: I don't feel comfortable answering that question. And the reason for that is, my

perception based on how you're describing is that, your describing a woman who is not okay

with abortion is what your describing. And if a woman comes to us and is not okay with

abortion, we're not going to do the procedure. We can't help that woman. We can refer her out but

the resources that we provide here in our office is not something we can help with. So I guess

what I'm saying is you're talking about how can Planned Parenthood essentially help a woman

that doesn't exist. Because maybe while there are women who are in situations where they have an unplanned pregnancy and they can't afford it, if they cannot afford it there are resources for them to go to, to help them access the resources that they need to be able to raise a child. If they cannot afford it and also don't want to continue the pregnancy, then that's what we're here for. But I don't think there's such as thing, in all honesty as someone who cannot afford it and cannot access any resources to make it happen if she wants to keep the baby. I'm not convinced that that person necessarily exists.

In the first excerpt, when the researcher described the characteristics of the potential client Step Forward would serve, Jennifer seemed capable of conceptualizing this demographic, specifically a low-income individual who is considering terminating her pregnancy through abortion primarily as a result of the poor socioeconomic living conditions in which she exists. Indeed, Jennifer reiterated this characterization back to the researcher who subsequently confirmed her conceptualization. After cognitively ascertaining this demographic category, Jennifer further demonstrates her understanding of this client demographic by confirming that she is not aware of any existing programs that address the needs of this type of clientele demographic. Obviously, she needs to be aware that this type of client exists for her to be unaware that support programs to help these clients do not. In the second excerpt, Jennifer eschews the understanding she applied in the first excerpt by claiming that the type of client Step Forward is attempting to serve does not actually exist and that community resources already

exist to help clients who are facing a crisis pregnancy due to financial constraints. But when asked to provide an example of a program that provides this service, Jennifer provided the following response:

Jennifer: Off the top of my head I don't know, but I'm confident that there are organizations out there that help young moms, there are organizations out there that help single moms, there are organizations in the community that provide those resources.

During the first interview, Jennifer was equally confident that this kind of support organization was nonexistent. What happened between the first and second interviews? Did Jennifer all of a sudden become knowledgeable of support agencies that offer support to young moms facing a crisis pregnancy? Apparently not, since she is incapable of providing the researcher with a tangible example. It should be clear by now that during the second interview, Jennifer was doing all that she could to rationalize her way out of supporting Step Forward by utilizing irresolute propositions that contradicted her belief system. In fact, her reluctance to support Step Forward was so strong that she deemed feigning ignorance about her knowledge regarding Planned Parenthood's clientele and available community support organizations favorable to supporting Step Forward.

Lee

Lee: I think there's so much technology now, scientific proof, that life begins pretty early in the

womb, so because of that we would do anything we could do to guard the child in the womb. Again just multiple scriptures and the book of Psalms about the child in the womb, even in the New Testament about the "child leapt in the womb." You know, different examples like that.

> Although this statement does not demonstrate a direct logical inconsistency within the parameters of Lee's ideology, it does provide an interesting example of a partisan using competing discourses to substantiate his beliefs. In his attempt to justify his belief that life starts in the womb, Lee utilizes both scientific and religious evidence to rationalize his claim. As a person who relies heavily on religious discourse to construct his conceptions of reality, it is surprising that he pairs a scientific premise with one that is inherently religious. While it is obviously very common for religious individuals in modern society to accept and participate in scientific discourse, as a partisan Lee disparaged scientific discourse several times throughout the interview, specifically when it had to do with biological evolution. For example:

Lee: You have God and creation and you have evolution and the big bang which doesn't put much priority on life. Again as you go through the Bible, we would just preach and teach on the issues that are there.

> So it seems that Lee will only utilize scientific discourse when it has the potential of rhetorically substantiating the claims of his existing religious discourse. It

probable that as human beings we have a natural inclination to affiliate ourselves with a particular group to satisfy our social needs. Of course, it is also natural for us to subscribe to an accepted system of interrelated signs that serve to linguistically bind members of an ingroup with one another, which could serve as a functional definition for discourse. Members of an ingroup subscribing to a particular brand of discourse are usually aware that there are other external discourses that are independent of their own. Living in a democratic society that features an unrestricted flow of discursive information allows groups to not only compete with antagonistic forms of discourse but also to integrate and put to use elements of outgroup discourse that serve to enhance ingroup discourse. In this case, Lee is integrating modern scientific imaging as evidence to help bolster his religious claims that life starts in the womb.

Level Of Support Expressed Toward Conduit Group

Susan

Susan: One, many of these services are available and for a number of years after birth. Planned Parenthood, their adoption rates are almost miniscule, they do not recommend. They are not there to give other choices. Their main choice, is abortion. And what I'm understanding is that, the Planned Parenthood's that don't do abortions now, they are being directed to head in that direction, so that they will do it. So, their services are not free. But many services are. You get your pregnancy tests and everything like that at places like the Alpha Center, Life Choices, those places are already funded and they do offer those services. They (*Planned Parenthood*) aren't

screening women to say, "Oh well you could adopt." They are not doing that, that is not what they are in business for. They do do some STD testing, but as far as counseling and stuff, if you go to a Christian based organization like the Alpha Center, they have their people come back several times. You go in for STD testing, they want to redirect these young people, especially the college students because this is really directed at that population, and to healthier choices, healthier sexual choices. You know, to talk to them. Do they have Christ in their life? They're going to bring up that thing. They do the post-abortive counseling to help women get out of that. But Planned Parenthood does not. . . you ever hear of live action and Lila Rose?

Greg: I haven't, live-action you said?

Susan: Live-action. Lila Rose has been undercover, she goes undercover into Planned Parenthoods. So one of the things Planned Parenthood, oh they provide mammograms. Well they called Planned Parenthoods in 27 states, they don't do mammograms. That's a lie. I understand they're trying to put them in now so they can say that after the fact. But they went in, Lila Rose, she's a young woman, she's like 22 or 23 now, in fact we're trying to get her here on campus. They protect under age girls when it's illegal for them to have abortions without parental consent. In fact, here in Colorado, there's a way they can do it through Wyoming courts, and some convoluted way they can do it, they can get around these things. Sex traffickers were also protected, they've got it on film. Go to live action.com, you can watch some of these things.

Greg: Sure, absolutely.

Susan: They've got them on film. So it's just trying to present this façade that we're all humanitarian, and we're all there for the women, it's all services. You know, birth control. But there is an ulterior motive, and it is the money, it is the profit, it is the abortion. It all comes down

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to that. Plus all the services that they have are offered at other places.

Susan's disdain toward Planned Parenthood manifests in her reaction to the aims of the conduit group. She juxtaposes her conceptualization of Planned Parenthood as an evil entity with other groups she considers to be good, such as the Alpha Center and other Christian based organizations. This black and white/good and evil approach is pervasive in her characterization of the debate and seems to stem from her religious beliefs. She then uses LiveAction as a credibility heuristic in an attempt to establish an intersubjective conceptualization of the debate upon the researcher, specifically that Planned Parenthood is a deplorable organization that is only interested in monetary gains from abortion services. This becomes evident again in the following exchange:

Susan: The thing with Planned Parenthood is, when you're dealing in death, when you are dealing in killing or lies, I don't trust them one bit. Even though you have an Abby Johnson, who was a sincere person at the time she. . . (*struggles for the right word*). She had the wrong mindset, she had been deceived. But I don't, what I know about Planned Parenthood is it's evil and you don't want to dance with the devil. I don't think that would be the way to go. Certainly other organizations that will provide choices. Now any of these places, any of the crisis pregnancy places, they don't stop anybody because. . . but they will show them the ultrasounds, they will give them information. And they will do that for them, to help them. But if they choose the abortion, they are not stopped. That is where the choices are truly presented. And you go

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adoption, the birth mothers who will see it through, there's a beautiful adoption agency, Hope's Promise is here in Fort Collins, that's a Christian adoption agency, so they're more than willing to provide the women that keep their babies like Birth Line, for years afterwards. So those things are there, I don't think you can see that with Planned Parenthood. Honestly.

Greg: For individuals who are going into Planned Parenthood and into abortion clinics and the main thing that's taking them there is that they cannot afford this child right now, you wouldn't see this as a way to intercept those people and to save those lives? And again, I know you have your doubts that Planned Parenthood would do it, but let's say that I. . .

Susan: That wouldn't be the organization to work with.

Greg: But it would be the organization that these people are working with. Because they are going there for an abortion, and so if they are already going there and they are already considering an abortion, and my organization, through Planned Parenthood, would be able to persuade them otherwise.

Susan: Your organization will be doing with. . . Planned Parenthood is not going to persuade anybody otherwise. Absolutely not. You can get some of this, Google this, and you can get some of this Blood Money, it's a documentary. You'll see what former abortion clinic directors have to say about that. Okay, and then you'll go watch "Amazing Grace," which will be an uplifting thing for you by the way. "Amazing Grace" is beautiful, the music too. And live action.com, Google Blood Money. (*Takes about thirty seconds to write this information down for the researcher*).

Once again Susan defines the debate in terms of good and evil. She resists the

alternative discourse of the conduit group by reiterating her nefarious

representation of Planned Parenthood. The researcher attempts to redirect her

focus by reminding her that Planned Parenthood is one of the primary

organizations that at-risk women will seek the services of when facing a crisis

pregnancy, and that it could serve to meet some of her aims by reducing the

abortion rate in this population. In light of this, she attempts to bolster her claims

once again by referencing a biased media outlet as a credibility heuristic. This also

serves as a typical example of how partisans become naturalized to their group's

discourse through the inculcation of biased rhetoric.

Greg: Well you see I, what my organization, again hypothetical organization, does is try to

emphasize what both groups have in common. Right? Poverty, poverty is something both groups

have in common. And addressing poverty, and if you could address poverty so that you are

preventing abortion and improving at-risk women's lives, I see that as a possible bridge to this

divide. Now, again, like you were saying, you try to keep reducing it to try to find common

ground. But there comes a point where it becomes irreconcilable with these two groups. And we

know that because of all the strife that has occurred over the last few decades, so again what my

organization is trying to do is. . .

Susan: Build that bridge.

Greg: Build that bridge, exactly.

Susan: I don't think you can that way. I think it's irreconcilable differences.

Greg: Even though this organization is exploiting the overlap that exists?

Susan: Because the services that will offer choices, that will fully educate, is not found at Planned Parenthood.

Greg: But what if I can implant that in the Planned Parenthood?

Susan: That would be awesome.

Greg: Yes!

Susan: You'd be like God!

Greg: Well I'm not really looking for that.

Susan: You're sensing some resistance here?

> An interesting thing happens once the researcher emphasizes the superordinate aspects (poverty) of the conduit group. Susan is capable of briefly stepping away from the biased private representations that she possesses toward Planned Parenthood and actually admits, albeit momentarily, that she is supportive of the conduit group's aims. But this support is anomalous and ephemeral, as Susan returns to her salient frames of good and evil:

Greg: Hypothetically, if I were able to do it. If I was able to get in there and have them screen.

Susan: I could never support them. I could never support them even through your agency because you might have 100 truths and one lie, do you let that lie go through? No, you have to go for the total truth.

Greg: Even if it's saving lives?

Susan: They are not there to save lives.

Greg: Through my organization, what if we were able to?

Susan: It's not possible.

Greg: Not possible?

Susan: No, they deal in death. It's the darkness and the light does not. . .

Greg: You wouldn't see this organization as a tiny ray of light in that organization?

Susan: I couldn't support it, because I know what the other side is. I've watched the girls go in. I've even seen some go out and get pulled back in. They're not there to turn them away.

Sally

Sally: I think it's a great idea, I see how it could work, but when you say screen, you can't make someone tell you why they're getting an abortion, so that's an issue. Because you want those privacy rights. Planned Parenthood is a judgment free zone, so that's kind of an issue I would see with it, like a flaw, but if a person were to divulge that stuff I could see how that would be a positive.

Greg: Because sometimes, I guess my question to that would be, obviously they would have to, sometimes clients will divulge that they want to have an abortion but they can't afford it, and is that when counselors will bring in organizations like the Justice Fund?

Sally: Yes as far as I'm concerned. I don't do many of those consultations, I have, and yeah that is pretty much in a nutshell is how works. . .I guess the screening process would be the hardest part, but I think it's a very good idea.

Even though she appears to view the conduit group's mission favorably, Sally has

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some concerns regarding the logistics of screening potential clients who could qualify for the sponsorship program. Most of her trepidation seems to stem from Planned Parenthood's privacy policies as they relate to patient confidentiality. The researcher uses an existing organization, The Justice Fund, to counter these privacy concerns. Since Planned Parenthood already intrudes upon a patient's confidentiality in certain situations, specifically when the Justice Fund is applied to a patient who can't afford to pay for an abortion, then this rationalization should syllogistically apply to patients who are reluctant to raise a child in poverty but want to see their pregnancy through, subsequently concerns regarding confidentiality are rhetorically neutralized. With this constraint addressed, Sally's acceptance of this alternative intersubjective reality increased:

Greg: So you would be okay, again hypothetically, if this organization had the funds to sponsor some (*low-income clients*)? I know it wouldn't solve the abortion debate, but some. If it had enough funding from pro-life organizations, would you support this type of organization in a similar aspect to the Justice Fund?

Sally: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. If everything was perfect as you could do it and privacy issues were good and everything, and the system was great and it was not bias, and it was all. I guess another thing for me would be, it wasn't all religious, and didn't get sent somewhere where they would pray for you later.

Greg: Certainly not, certainly not. No it would not be.

Sally: Then yeah absolutely. I would absolutely go for that. I don't know if a pro-life person. . .

Have you done this for the pro-life person? Are they for it?

Sally is not alone in her curiosity about the perceptions of her antagonists. This phenomena occurs on both sides of the debate and highlights the need for communication between these two parties. Unfortunately, at this stage of the study, the only pro-life individual who had been interviewed was not entirely receptive to the mission of the conduit group. As a result, the researcher could only provide Sally with the following information:

Greg: They are, but, do know what's the one thing holding them up?

Sally: It's under Planned Parenthood?

Greg: That has one thing to do with it. There's two reasons, and that's one. But the other reason is, and I think this is the strongest one that's preventing them, is that they feel that Planned Parenthood would never do it.

Sally: See I don't understand why, well because they feel that we, we have an abortion quota. Have you heard that?

Greg: Yeah.

Sally: We have an abortion quota and that's how we get our funds. So it wouldn't make sense that we would do that. But it wouldn't happen because it's a privacy thing and you can't screen patients, that's where I would see the issue, but I don't see why they wouldn't do that, I would be absolutely for that.

Again, the sentiments expressed by Sally regarding the impressions pro-life have

of Planned Parenthood exemplify the need for more understanding between these

two groups. Because she was under the impression that pro-life individuals would

not support the conduit group's mediatory discourse solely as a result of their

impressions regarding pro-choice, her positive impressions of the conduit group

may have been influenced by a desire to "take the high road" in an attempt to

project a positive impression of Planned Parenthood by rising above the fray.

Sally: Exactly. . . But no, I think we absolutely, if everything was said and done and perfect, I

think we would do something like that. Or we do refer, and dig as much as we can to refer

people, we do do those consultations, which a lot of Pro-Life don't know, because they think

we're so evil. We are required, I almost want to say it's a law, I'm not sure, but I know it's grilled

in your head that you sit with them and you say do you know what adoption is? They have to

fully understand the concept of adoption, what it is.

Greg: What would you think if there was a disclosure like that but for a program such as this? To

where you can get assistance, you can get educational and childcare assistance?

Sally: That's why, it could be done. It could be done. But it would be tough because you have to,

it's the screening and the privacy and how much are we digging into these people's lives. . . So

someone was in a pure panic and said I don't know what to do, I don't know why you couldn't

show them another option.

Although she still has some doubts regarding the screening process of the

proposed organization, Sally seems to regard its mission of assisting at risk

women through pro-life contributions quite favorably. She exhibited a willingness to be self-reflexive in her exploration of the topic by not only being open to exploring hypothetical scenarios but also through her willingness to explore the other side's position. In doing so, she garners the capacity to step beyond her private cultural representations of the issue by exploring those of her institutional antagonist's, which is crucial for establishing a meaningful cooperation and applying it toward a superordinate goal.

Patty

It should be noted here that the following exchange between Patty and the researcher occurred while Patty was escorting the researcher out of NARAL's headquarters. The recording device was kept in the researcher's pocket and picked up the vast majority of dialogue. It should also be noted that because Patty abruptly ended the interview, the researcher deemed it infeasible to read the entire mission statement of Step Forward and decided to quickly outline the essential components of the organization.

Patty: I actually think that you, your proposal (*Step Forward*), is happening after the fact. That the point to intervene is before an unplanned pregnancy occurs.

Greg: The point to intervene is before. . . can you explain that?

Patty: Again, I have to leave, but after an unplanned pregnancy has occurred, that's when there's not sufficient time to change things it's a very limited period of time. So what we should be

working on together is to prevent unplanned pregnancies from occurring. And to change the conditions in society that perpetuate that. When you have women who are not receiving the same educational attainment, and those lower income women being at risk for an unplanned pregnancy, your point of intervention is not after she gets pregnant, your point of intervention needs to be before the pregnancy occurs. Your point of intervention should be perpetuating and supporting a woman completing her high school education, and a woman being able to access and complete a college education. Because research shows that educational attainment is correlated with the incidence of unplanned pregnancy and incidence of unplanned pregnancy are correlated with pregnancy.

Greg: Right. But if somebody is having an abortion just because they are impoverished, and obviously that's going to occur because four out of ten people who have an abortion are living below the poverty line. Like if the only reason they are having an abortion is because they cannot keep this baby because they are so poor, wouldn't it be good if there was a choice for them that, I want to keep my baby and I have the community support to do that? But you're saying that that doesn't really jive with you.

Patty: No, that's not what I'm saying at all. And it's my understanding that those services already exist. Again, I have to leave, and I. . .

Greg: Yeah, sorry.

Patty attempts to characterize Step Forward's mission as misguided by contrasting it with the aims of NARAL's mission, which she perceives as a more effective strategy of addressing crisis pregnancies. This approach entails disrupting the

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occurrence of crisis pregnancies by intervening upon the at-risk populations who are most susceptible to experiencing them. While there can be no doubt that this is the ultimate solution to the debate—indeed preventing unintended pregnancies in the first place is something both pro-life and pro-choice can agree on—Patty uses this argument as a means of avoiding the mediatory discourse that has been presented to her and subsequently as a means of avoiding dissonance. Obviously, unintended pregnancies are going to occur. At this time, there is no ultimate solution, and it is reasonable to assume that Patty understands this. Thus, her response could be characterized as a rhetorical dodge that seeks to avoid discussion, as well as dissonance, about the strategy Step Forward is attempting to employ in its mission to positively influence the lives of young women who find themselves facing a crisis pregnancy. When pressed on this issue further, Patty does something surprising:

Patty: I would have a hard time not seeing that (*Step Forward's mission*) as paying someone to have a pregnancy, and paying her for her baby.

Greg: But even if that would improve her life? Like education, and. . .

Patty: That's a really slippery slope when you're paying a woman to have her baby. That commodifies the baby.

Greg: (*stepping out of the elevator and into a small lobby on the first floor*) But isn't it also like self-improvement, you know? Like improvement of the self, you know?

Patty: I don't see paying for a baby as self-improvement (*a few words inaudible*).

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In order to avoid conveying positive support for Step Forward, Patty conveys a position that is very similar to one espoused by her conservative antagonists, specifically that of the Welfare Queen. So-called government handouts in the form of welfare checks have long been criticized by conservatives as a system that pays people to be poor; even though this characterization of welfare recipients has long been recast as grossly simplistic and borderline misogynistic. It is surprising that Patty does not recognize Step Forward's end goals of empowering young moms to become independent, self-sustaining members of society. Or, it could be that she does view Step Forward this way but chooses to utilize the Welfare Queen characterization because it is the only rhetorical counter argument available to her that logically sidesteps the propositions that have been posed to her by the researcher. Indeed, Patty's characterization of institutionalized support for underrepresented women facing a crisis pregnancy is a far cry from her initial take, which occurred before dissonance questioning, about halfway through the interview:

Patty: And from that, if a woman decides to carry a pregnancy to term, she should have access to the healthcare services to have a healthy pregnancy, she should have access to, if she chooses to keep the baby, she should have access to and support for childcare services or be able to return to the workforce if she wants to return to the workforce. Whatever is necessary to support a woman's decision to carry a pregnancy to term and if she chooses to keep the pregnancy, I'm sorry, to keep the baby, then to be able to raise that baby.

Obviously, this perspective is well aligned with Step Forward's mission, since Patty views community support for childcare as key to empowering women with the ability to exercise another form of reproductive choice over their bodies and environments. Step Forward is also very much concerned with educating individuals so that they have a better chance of contributing to the workforce in a sustainable way and, in turn, have a better chance at providing for their children. So why does Patty concoct rhetorical resistance when confronted with Step Forward's discourse? The answer could lie in the following two statements:

Patty: I guess I am having a hard time understanding what you are pushing me to answer. It feels like you are not accepting the answer that I have provided.

Patty: And I don't know if this is a change in your interview style, but it became less listening and more pushing.

It seems that Patty felt under attack when pressed by the researcher to explore her beliefs in a deep and meaningful way, which was surprising since she is one of the leading pro-choice lobbyists in Colorado and very well versed at articulating her position. But it could be that her verse is more like a script that is only useful when used in the appropriate context. Step Forward's mediatory discourse goes beyond the conventional constraints that typically define the American abortion debate. Because Patty's rhetorical script was void of this novelty at the time of the interview, she lacked the capacity to appropriately avoid dissonance through the

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rationalization of her belief system. Essentially, Step Forward's discourse pushed

Patty into a rhetorical corner that required her to choose from two unfavorable

choices: 1) support Step Forward's secular mission of empowering women facing

a crisis pregnancy by providing them with childcare, education, and housing

assistance funded by pro-life, or 2) create novel rationalizations that

simultaneously counter the mediatory discourse and stay in alignment with the

conventional discourse of pro-choice. Unfortunately, Patty failed to achieve either

of these alternatives, since she adopted a classic rationalization (Welfare Queen)

that is frequently used by her institutional antagonists, rendering Patty's beliefs

hypocritical and leaving her psychology in a state of cognitive dissonance. This

can be affirmed by her behavior at the end and after the interview. Consider the

following exchange:

Greg: Well thank you very much, and take care (*turns and heads for the exit*).

Patty: (*sharp tone*) Will I see this interview? Will I see your research paper?

Greg: (*turns back* around) You can, yeah. So this is a part of my thesis, and basically I will be

working on this for about a month and then I should be done with the write up by the end of July.

My professor is interested in doing a, like a journal article out of it, or possibly like at an

international conference before the journal write up. And so I could either send you excerpts

from my thesis or I could send you that journal article writeup.

Patty: What international conferences is your professor interested in doing this in?

Greg: ICA, International Communications Association. Potentially, you know, yeah. We'll see

how things pan out. Would you like me to send you portions of my thesis as I'm going along or. .

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Patty: Yeah, I'd also be really interested in seeing a little bit more of the coursework that led to this topic, because it's an interesting topic, and it's interesting to come to a place where you don't have any experience with it. Especially considering that one out of every three women will have had an abortion in their life.

Patty indicates that she would be interested in reading this study and the research material that the study arose from. The researcher obliged this request and composed the following email with relevant attachments a few days after the interview. It did not receive a response and it can only be assumed that Patty chose to continue undercutting dissonant effects through avoidance:

Hey Patty,

Apologies again for my poor time management with our interview. I've been doing most of my conversing these days with professors who get paid to wax philosophically, so they obviously have good reasons to digress and it's been rubbing off on me.
Apologies also if the line of questioning in the second half of the interview made you feel uncomfortable. However, I make no apologies for exploring the issue of fetal viability. As we discussed, this aspect is at the crux of the debate, and I think it is fair game to explore critically with policy makers and advocates from both sides of the isle. What I'm beginning to understand through my research is that neither side is fully capable of substantiating their beliefs regarding when life begins through the cultural logics that are embedded within their respective discourses and texts.

For example:
The main cultural texts that pro-choice choice uses to justify the belief that a fetus is not a living entity are rooted in legal and scientific thought (I know you said that you personally don't, but NARAL absolutely does, and this is one of the main reasons why abortion remains legal). However, you have probably heard of AAPLOG, a group of pro-life obgyns recognized by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Why does this group of doctors feel that

life starts at the moment of fertilization?

On the other side, how are pro-life Evangelical Christians, who espouse compassion for life in all stages of development and view abortion as a systematic killing of a targeted population, able to rationalize their support for politicians, such as George W, who prefer to solve the worlds problems through the systematic killing of targeted populations, aka: war.

And these are just two of many examples. Most of the other questions I pose to pro-life individuals are rooted in Biblical passages. If you want, I can give you the entire repertoire I present to both sides.

But despite the inherent ambiguity that exists regarding notions of prenatal life and fetal viability, both sides choose to define the debate antagonistically by focusing on beliefs that are not only incapable of being scientifically/theologically/legally/personally substantiated but also serve to exacerbate and make salient the irreconcilable differences that exist in the issue of abortion.

Why?

Why not focus on the components of the issue that the two sides have in common? This is exactly what the organization I am proposing does. It is my hope that mediatory organizations, such as Step Forward, will one day have the potential to become instruments of social transformation. But as I state in the overview, it will only be possible if people like you, the leaders of your cause, are willing to lift the veil of antagonism that has colored this debate for so long.

I'm attaching the introduction of my thesis and the overview of this proposed organization. When you have some time, I'd truly appreciate knowing the level of support you might have for such an organization. If you still want all thirty pages of my lit review, just let me know and I'll send it your way. Structural critical theory rooted Marxist thought underpins most of it. It is also salted with a few social psychological theories such as Social Identity Theory, Cognitive Dissonance, and the Superordinate Goal. But the introduction is way less convoluted and sums up my intentions in two pages.

One last request: You mentioned you have a counterpart on the pro-life side. Would you be willing to tell me her name and organization? I think that would serve as an interesting comparative interview.

Thanks for all your time and take care.
Greg

Melissa

Melissa: I like it. I think that's what we're already trying to do. But I think my initial, is we have

to do that. And we already do that when girls come here and financial is the concern, what do you need, how can we help you, do you need housing, we'll get you housing. What are the issues? Right now a girl that chooses to parent, we follow for two years. So, and what do you need? We're there. So I think it's great. But my gut: Planned Parenthood makes their money on abortion, so it is cutting off a revenue stream for them so who knows, but I think why not, I think wonderful. . . So I agree with you, if we can offer housing services, childcare, education, childcare is huge, there's no money for that. It used to be if you were a low income with a kid, even in college you could get low or reduced cost childcare, you can't anymore, there's no money for it. If you're a teenager you can, you can get free childcare so you can continue high school, but once you graduate from high school there isn't anything. So that's sad, so we need to find a way that we can support them, subsidize that.

> Step Forward's mission seems to resonate with Melissa. In fact, much of the propositions conveyed within the mediatory discourse appear to be very much in alignment with Alpha Center's, especially the financial assistance aspect. Earlier in the interview, Melissa expressed frustration regarding the public's tendency to view Alpha Center as a religious organization that is overzealous in passing judgment and urges clients to follow their pregnancy to term. Perhaps she views Step Forward as a way to subvert this tendency while still fulfilling Alpha Center's ultimate goal of preventing abortions. Even though Melissa claims that her organization freely offers support services, such as housing assistance, there is little indication that Alpha Center actively promotes financial assistance as a

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means of reducing the abortion rate. Despite the fact reducing the abortion rate is not a goal of Step Forward, nor is it mentioned in the mission statement, it could very likely be viewed by Melissa as the most attractive aspect of the organization, which could potentially jeopardize the neutral positioning of beliefs Step Forward is attempting to establish with regards to life and liberty. This could have the potential of isolating members of the pro-choice community if they don't feel sufficiently compensated in terms of Step Forward providing them with an equivalent objective in which they could exercise their beliefs regarding choice. In other words, would the pro-choice community view Step Forward's mission as providing women with another choice? Based on Sally's reaction, the answer to this question would be yes. But Patty's reaction was the opposite; even though, it seems that in Patty's case, she was more concerned with Step Forward actually being a pro-life organization, deceptively wearing a badge of secular mediation. However, the fact Step Forward is secular does not disrupt Melissa's support:

Melissa: It would have to be secular. But with that being said, it would be an agency that I would send clients to but also maybe subsidize and they could do the same thing. If they (*Planned Parenthood*) really want to make a statement, that would make a statement that we (*Planned Parenthood*) really do care about women no matter what choice they make, that would make a statement.

Melissa seems to view Planned Parenthood's potential support of Step Forward's discourse as a bellwether for confirming her standards of compassion toward

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women, which is another potential hazard for getting these two antagonistic groups to work together, since Melissa seems to be more concerned about confirming the prejudices she holds toward the pro-choice community rather than fulfilling the superordinate goal of providing support to impoverished young mothers. Obviously, as seen in the preceding excerpt, Melissa is not adverse to the support component of Step Forward's mission, but she also might view Step Forward as little more than a gauge for confirming her prejudices. And even though this variable could be regarded as confounding to traditional understandings of theoretical and methodological validation, it would matter very little to this study, whose ultimate gauge of validity is understood through the concept of applied validity. So even if Melissa's motives for supporting Step Forward run counter to the mediation strategies propounded by this study, they can still be considered valid since Melissa appears to be highly supportive of the conduit group and its mission, as can be realized through this final assessment:

Melissa: No I love it. If that's something that you move forward with I would love to be apart of that even if it's anonymously. . . so with an organization like this I would totally love to be a part of it. Even on an advisory board, or board of directors or something.

Greg: And if that advisory board contained people from pro-choice . . .

Melissa: Oh, it would have to. It would have to, and it would. You'd have to be really clear that we're about helping women and we're not going to get into this part of it . . . we're going to be, "If women really have a choice, let's make sure they really have a choice."

As with the Instances of Hypocrisy/Contradictions section, the following content is partitioned according to context as well as time, Interview 1/Interview 2. In comparing the first interview with the second, the reader will note a significant change in Jennifer's attitude not only toward Step Forward but toward the researcher as well. Speculation as to why this change occurred is embedded within the following analysis.

Interview 1

Greg: But people who are born into poverty, it's a cycle, they can't get out of it, you know. And one of the things, it's obviously not a guarantee, one of the things that does solve that is education.

Jennifer: And everyone succeeds when someone goes to college. It's not only that person who succeeds but the whole community around them.

Greg: And I'm not looking at you know a four year college, though that would definitely be on the table. But a trade or anything to give them some hope. Now, you know, as far as time span goes I think that could be a little bit more feasible in keeping it to a doable amount. 'Cause think about how much money is being spent right now trying to make abortion illegal. Think of all those lobbyists, what pulling like 500 grand a year, come on. I mean I think the religious right has an ideological discrepancy that they are not addressing.

Jennifer: Right. And I think there was something, there was a political cartoon that I saw recently that, "The anti-choice movement cares deeply, deeply about every quote unquote unborn child until the instant it's born." But then things like Medicaid, the WICK program, food stamps,

all of those programs that are there to assist low income families, individuals, those are the programs that the Republican party and the anti-choice movements specifically are working against. So they care deeply about making sure that this child is born, but once that child is born there isn't that concern for making sure that this child is a productive member of society.

Greg: Basically what I want to be studying through these religious organizations is, why? Why are you focusing so much on this issue when there are just so many other social ailments out there that are actually causing abortion. You know, imagine if they were to be able to focus all of their energies that they put into making abortion illegal, and into actually improving the world in which they (*low-income women*) live in.

Jennifer: Absolutely.

Jennifer: There are definitely things working against all of these women. Innumerable things working against all these women. But I think, even looking at the logistics of it, coming up with a funding source, that could fund even just one woman for 18 years to raise a child, and you know okay, so we're getting to 18 years but are we going to help her put this child through college? Are we going, what's the limit of where this fund would go. Are we going to help this child get a car when he turns 16? Are we going to throw awesome birthday parties or are. . .It's one of those things that. . . If we could do it, awesome.

> In the first interview, Jennifer seemed open to Step Forward's discourse as it
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> relates to supporting at-risk individuals facing a crisis pregnancy, and even though
>
> she did have reservations regarding the practicality of Step Forward, she still

viewed the overall mission to be in alignment with her own beliefs regarding the empowerment of low-income individuals. As will be revealed in the second interview, her attitude toward Step Forward changed considerably. So it is important to explore the implications as to why Step Forward's discourse resonated with her during the first interview but not in the second. Much of this understanding can be revealed through ingroup/outgroup affiliation biases. Consider when the researcher conveyed his opinions about the religious right. In first excerpt, the researcher willingly crosses the conventional bounds of research objectivity by offering Jennifer his opinions on topics related to the abortion debate. This display allots Jennifer the opportunity to position the researcher within the boundaries of the conventional abortion debate as someone who is pro-choice, since he freely criticizes the religious right for adopting what he perceives as an ideological discrepancy, specifically the pro-life community engaging in behaviors of wealth acquisition while ignoring the plights of the poor. As a member of the pro-choice community, Jennifer seems to have allowed her perception of the researcher to color her attitude toward Step Forward. Again, in the second excerpt, the researcher continues to admonish pro-life religious organizations by characterizing them as hypocritical entities who are more concerned with advancing a righteous social discourse than supporting people who could truly benefit from their energies. Jennifer agrees with this sentiment to such an extent that even though she views the aims of Step Forward as largely impractical, she is absolutely willing to throw her ideological support behind its

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mission, as revealed in the third excerpt. Jennifer's reliance on group affiliation presents a significant threat to value weaving as a strategy of mediation. While value weaving does offer partisans on both sides of an issue the opportunity to maintain their ingroup affiliations, it does not address strategies for overcoming prejudices from the outset (recall that it does have a strategy for reducing prejudice but only after both side have agreed to cooperate). During the first interview, the researcher had the luxury of expressing his personal views regarding the abortion debate to Jennifer as part of a class assignment; however, he would be precluded from doing so as a third party mediator looking to maintain impartiality toward both sides. For if it ever came to light that a mediator's personal beliefs toward an issue under consideration were more in alignment with one over another, he would risk losing the trust of the side with which his views are at odds with. As will be revealed in the following exchange, Jennifer's attitude toward the researcher and Step Forward changed drastically when he presented himself an impartial researcher looking to explore her beliefs as well as a mediator looking to find common ground:

Interview 2

Jennifer: I obviously, I mean I'm speaking on behalf of Planned Parenthood, but I can't say that Planned Parenthood would absolutely support that, I think there would be a lot of conditions in place because we are very careful about who we refer our patients to. We don't want our patients to be in situations where they are getting inaccurate information, where they're essentially being coerced into doing something other than what they would like to do. So I can't say yay or nay

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from Planned Parenthood. I think if it ended up being that came to reality it would be something that would be discussed. But I can't give you a definitive answer.

Jennifer: To continue a pregnancy adoption services and resources in the community, we can absolutely refer you out for.

Greg: And would this be a resource (*Step Forward*) in the community that you would potentially be able to refer to?

Jennifer: Like I said, I cannot say that.

Greg: Just because you would need to know more particulars of the organization?

Jennifer: I don't have that decision making power. I cannot make that answer.

Greg: Okay, I'll ask you this: would there be someone with that decision making power that I could speak with?

Jennifer: No.

Greg: Could I ask you why that is?

Jennifer: Because we have policies in place that say I am the person who speaks to students.

Greg: So if I were able to get this organization funded and organized and I came in as a policy making body, would I be able to have access to that person or people?

Jennifer: In theory if you had all of that together I would imagine, yeah we could figure out how to make that meeting happen. But as a student, I'm your contact.

> These excerpts reveal how Jennifer's attitude toward Step Forward cooled
> substantially since the first interview. From regarding Step Forward as a
> community support organization that funds low-income moms as a positive,

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though ideological, pursuit, to regarding Step Forward as an unsubstantiated

organization with underdeveloped aims, Jennifer's attitude from the first interview

is antithetical to the same mediatory pursuits she was exposed to in the second.

The same affiliation biases that caused Jennifer to regard Step Forward as an

organization that promulgated beliefs similar to her own, now serve to color her

perception of Step Forward as an outgroup opposed to her beliefs. What could

have caused this shift in perspective to occur? As with all participants, Jennifer

was exposed to a round of questioning that was intended to invoke dissonant

effects within her psychological state. However, Jennifer would not agree to

participate in the study without being granted access to the questions before hand,

so as to give her the opportunity to review the material and prepare her responses.

As soon as the researcher met with Jennifer in the lobby of the Planned

Parenthood office, it was clear through her disquieted demeanor, which

manifested in a curt tone and abrupt responses to all of the researcher's inquiries

and salutations from the outset, that she was perturbed at the prospect of

participating in the interview. There is a possibility that Jennifer's attitude toward

the researcher was skewed negative even further as a result of Jennifer perceiving

the researcher as a traitor to her ingroup. Most of the dissonance inducing

questions revolved around a strategy of making salient belief system

contradictions through the construction of novel rhetorical situations. After posing

the introductory questions to Jennifer, she responded in a way that seemed

intended to characterize the researcher as ignorant to the issues he was attempting

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to explore, for example:

Jennifer: So I would definitely encourage you to do more research on that because the cultural aspects have a lot to do with that.

Jennifer: I would encourage you to do some more research on what leads cultures to sex selective abortions because. . .

This demonstrates that Jennifer's attitude toward the researcher shifted from one of affiliation to one of antagonism. Obviously, giving Jennifer access to these difficult questions beforehand precluded the researcher from establishing any kind of meaningful rapport with Jennifer before exploring her values and beliefs, but she was unwilling to participate in the study without prior observation, so there was no other recourse. Another interesting component to Jennifer's reaction to Step Forward is her reluctance to neither confirm nor deny that Planned Parenthood would or would not be willing to refer clients to Step Forward. While much of this has to do with Jennifer being in a non-policy making position at Planned Parenthood, it is rather apparent though her attitude toward the researcher that she is most likely unsupportive of Step Forward's mission. So why is she reluctant to express her opinion? There is really no way to know for sure, but it could be speculated that Jennifer simply does not want to admit that she is making a decision based on the prejudices she holds toward outgroup members. Not only is it probable that Jennifer now views the researcher as a member of the outgroup,

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but she is also being asked to support and cooperate with an organization that is being funded by an outgroup. Since she is incapable of providing the researcher with a valid rationalization as to why she can't support Step Forward, primarily due to the fact that Step Forward was constructed using salient pro-choice beliefs, and because she is unwilling to admit that she is making a decision based on the prejudices she holds toward her outgroup, she retreats to using her inefficacious position in the Planned Parenthood organization as a crutch to avoid responding in a definitive manner. Close to a year after the second interview, the researcher contacted Jennifer via email to see if she would follow through on her agreement to arrange a meeting between the researcher and a policy maker at Planned Parenthood. Based on the following email exchange, it is clear that Jennifer continues to feel the need to avoid the mediatory discourse proffered by Step Forward:

Hi Jennifer,

How have you been? Well, I hope.

At the end of our last interview, you informed me that you would be able to coordinate a meeting for me with a policy maker at Planned Parenthood where I would have the opportunity to present an overview of Step Forward, the advocacy/mediation organization I proposed to you.

However, at the time you said it would be infeasible since I was still a student and you handle all student requests. While I am still enrolled at CSU, I am graduating this spring (beginning of May) before starting PhD studies in the fall.

Would there be an opportunity this summer for me to speak with a policy maker at Planned Parenthood while I am not enrolled?

Thanks for your consideration, Jennifer.

Greg Russell

Greg,

I'm sorry but that is not something we would be able to do. Good luck with the rest of your studies.

Jennifer

Jennifer,

Could I ask what has changed since our last meeting?

As this investigation stands now, Planned Parenthood is the only organization that has refused to respond.

When the article that results from this study is published, all I will have is your statement indicating that you are unwilling to affirm or deny that Planned Parenthood would or would not be supportive of Step Forward's secular mission to educate and empower low income women who are facing a crisis pregnancy, and that when I asked you if I could speak with someone who would be in a position to fulfill this request, my request was denied.

If you are comfortable with this summation, I will go with it (though it will obviously be examined in much greater detail in the write up). If you would like add any additional information or reconsider my request for an interview with a policy maker, I would very much welcome that.

Otherwise, best of luck to you, Jennifer, I hope the future finds you well. And if you are interested in reading the articles that result from this study, let me know, and I'll send them your way.

Greg

Greg,

This hasn't changed. I don't recall saying you'd be able to meet with anyone other than myself as organizational policy dictates that. As a nonprofit agency, we simply don't have the resources to fill your request.

Thanks
Jennifer

Jennifer,

Here is a verbatim transcript of the final lines of our last interview:

Greg: Okay, I'll ask you this: would there be someone with that decision making power that I could speak with?

Jennifer: No.
Greg: Could I ask you why that is?

Jennifer: Because we have policies in place that say I am the person who speaks to students.

Greg: So if I were able to get this organization funded and organized and I came in as a policy making body, would I be able to have access to that person or people?

Jennifer: In theory if you had all of that together I would imagine, yeah we could figure out how to make that meeting happen. But as a student, I'm your contact.
I am well on my way to organizing pro-life organizations to fund this secular program and will have it secured by summer, when I won't be enrolled as a student.

So I do feel the need to ask you again: What has changed?

Lastly, isn't communication and the exchange of ideas a resource all organizations have in abundance?

Greg

Greg,

Can you please provide me with the contact information for your supervising professor?

Thanks

Jennifer

Jennifer,

Absolutely.

Name: Joseph (Joe) Champ
Phone: 970-491-3286

email: Joseph.Champ@ColoState.EDU

But please bear in mind that our most recent correspondence is independent of my graduate studies.

Greg

Lee

Lee: I am going to have to read it again, but let me go back to your original comment at the beginning. You said, "I don't know where I'm at with the issue." But then it sounds more specific than being a fence sitter.

Greg: How so?

Lee: It sounds like you're moving toward helping these people make an educated decision about what they're doing, and that kind of goes against Planned Parenthood, basically. I mean, you're trying to save kids. Based upon what you're telling me in that two pages is that your interest is in trying to minimize unwanted pregnancies, bring education to maybe it's abstinence, maybe it's safe sex, maybe it's whatever, but you're trying to minimize the problem is what it sounds like.

Greg: That's correct.

Lee: Um…so to me some of the conflict would be with the pro-life movement other than that you would be working with Planned Parenthood and I'm telling you how I'm reading it, just knee jerk, like I can't read it…it would take me some time to really go over it, but you're asking me for a knee jerk here.

Greg: Yeah, I apologize for putting you on the spot and we can explore it obviously.

Lee: Yeah and I'm for anything that helps the family and promotes the welfare of the child, and basically what I heard is most of that is what you're trying to do, so it almost sounds like you're

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more pro-life than you are pro-choice, and I'm not trying to put words in your mouth.

Greg: That's okay. I'm glad to hear that. Because what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to take values from both sides, I'm trying to like mingle them. I am not saying at all that this is going to solve the abortion thing.

Lee: It helps.

Greg: That's what I'm trying to do. You know, Susan was saying Planned Parenthood is just this dark entity. What I was trying to explain to her is that I see this just being a ray of light in that dark entity. I'm just talking how Susan was seeing this. That this has the potential to save some people. So that's a component of it, I think, that I'm hoping pro-life will be able to group around.

Lee: I don't see any good in Planned Parenthood, and their main objective is to destroy the child.

Greg: If they were willing to work with me which it seems like they have a pretty good chance.

Lee: If they have a chance to come in and say, "hey would you do this." I do see that as a ray of light.

> Step Forward's discourse obviously resonates with Lee. In fact, it may harmonize too much. The primary mediatory strategy of value weaving lies in blending common discursive elements rooted in the disparate belief systems of antagonistic groups to form a novel discourse that both groups can adhere to while simultaneously maintaining their ingroup affiliations. Based on his reaction, Lee not only seems to have the potential of adhering to Step Forward's mediatory

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discourse but he also seems to comprehend it as being largely derived from pro-life ideology. Obviously, this is not logistically detrimental in terms of establishing potential cooperation with pro-life groups; however, it could mean that pro-choice could also view Step Forward as being derived from pro-life ideology, which would be detrimental to the mediatory aims of the organization. And this indeed seems to be case both in Patty's and Jennifer's reactions to Step Forward. But what is it about Step Forward's discourse that causes its ideology to be more in alignment with pro-life than pro-choice? It's not difficult to see why pro-life would see Step Forward as having the potential to save unborn life, but why does pro-choice not perceive it as giving women another choice, especially since the women that Step Forward seeks to serve are making their decision on their own accord? Again, it could be an issue of outgroup biases being too strong on the pro-choice side to allow them to cooperate. As Lee states in the preceding excerpt, he doesn't see any good existing within Planned Parenthood and understands the main objective of the organization is to take life, but he is also capable of hypothetically allowing himself to concede that if Planned Parenthood would cooperate with Step Forward then he would be capable of setting his biases aside by viewing their actions as commendable. This is the type of reaction that is necessary for Value Weaving mediation strategies to work, but of course, it needs to work on both sides.

Reflection

In 1973 the Supreme Court handed down a ruling that would set into motion one of the most contested social debates in the history of the United States. The case concerned a poor and unmarried woman from Texas who challenged a state law that prohibited caregivers from providing abortions except when a person's life was directly threatened (Condit, 1990). *Roe* v. *Wade* pushed the rhetoric of abortion into the legal arena and subsequently qualified a national discourse for public understanding.

The abortion debate has often been characterized by the vituperative rhetoric and occasional hostile actions of one side against another: Abortion providers have been shot in the name of protecting unborn children, health clinics have been picketed relentlessly, accusations of murder are thrown at women who enter abortion clinics, and charges of insensitivity are leveled at those who fail to consider the struggles faced by at-risk women facing the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy or the plights of the unborn children they carry.

The purpose of this study was to implement a new strategy of mediation by creating a superordinate discourse that makes salient the common values shared by two antagonistic groups through the establishment of a superordinate mediatory organization whose functional existence was wholly derived through the interlacing of shared values. A novel ideology was rendered through the discursive strategy of value weaving that sought to exploit the moral overlap that exists between pro-life and pro-choice groups. This ideology attempted to bridge the divide that has been constructed and perpetuated through partisanship and continues to serve as the rhetorical justification for the mediatory group's existence. The intent of this discourse was to provide partisan members with the ability to discursively position themselves according to the

rhetoric set forth by this proposed organization, or conduit group.

This study aspired to bolster its mediatory model by exposing partisan members on both sides of the debate to experimental persuasive treatments rooted in the theory of cognitive dissonance. These effects were loosely based on classic psychological experiments that occurred in the 1950s-1980s when the field of social psychology was undergoing radical theoretical transformations through the work of consistency theorists. It was not the intent of this study to recreate these experiments verbatim in a real world setting; it *was* the intent of this study, however, to tap into any persuasive effects these strategies could lend to not only assist in the analysis of participant belief systems but also to convince participants to accept and support the mediatory aims of Step Forward as a conduit group. The former seems to have effectively materialized with the aid of qualitative analysis in the sense that insight was rendered about participant belief systems by observing the ways in which partisan group members rationalized their way out of the rhetorical situations with which they were presented and, for some, out of cooperating with their perceived opposition when presented with a viable alternative that addressed beliefs adhered to by both pro-life and pro-choice communities. The latter, persuasive appeals to support Step Forward, seems to have largely failed according to the parameters set forth by the concept of applied validity. Because even though the mediatory discourse was accepted and supported by half of the participants, the one participant who this study most depended on to actualize its aims, Jennifer, was dubious of Step Forward's aims at best. Without the support of Planned Parenthood, without their willingness to screen clients, the superordinate goal of supporting low-income women facing a crisis pregnancy becomes inexecutable.

There are many potential factors that could have caused pro-choice to be disinclined to

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support Step Forward. Much of this understanding can be revealed through ingroup/outgroup affiliation biases. As a member of the pro-choice community, Jennifer seemed to have allowed her perception of the researcher as an outgroup member to color her attitude toward Step Forward. Initially, Jennifer seemed to view the aims of Step Forward as largely impractical, though she was absolutely willing to throw her ideological support behind its mission. Jennifer's reliance on group affiliation presents a significant threat to value weaving as a strategy of mediation. While value weaving does offer partisans on both sides of an issue the opportunity to maintain their ingroup affiliations, it does not address strategies for overcoming prejudices from the outset. From regarding Step Forward as a community support organization that funds low-income moms as a positive, though ideological, pursuit, to regarding Step Forward as an unsubstantiated organization with underdeveloped aims, Jennifer's attitude from the first interview is antithetical to the same mediatory pursuits she was exposed to in the second. The same affiliation biases that caused Jennifer to regard Step Forward as an organization that promulgated beliefs similar to her own, now served to color her perception of Step Forward as an outgroup opposed to her beliefs.

However, this should not imply that insight has failed to materialize regarding value weaving as a strategy for mediating antagonistic social groups. The fact that three partisans, one pro-choice and two pro-life, were able to set their outgroup prejudices aside in the spirit of supporting an organization that relies equally upon both groups to carry out its discursive aims suggests that this line of inquiry could eventually yield meaningful outcomes of societal transformation. Indeed, Sally exhibited a willingness to be self-reflexive in her exploration of the topic by not only being open to exploring hypothetical scenarios but also through her willingness

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to explore the other side's position. In doing so, she garnered the capacity to step beyond her private cultural representations of the issue by exploring those of her institutional antagonist's, which is crucial for establishing a meaningful cooperation and applying it toward a superordinate goal.

Of course, if value weaving is to work as a viable strategy, it needs to find a more effective way of subverting outgroup prejudices from the outset. Jennifer's reactions to Step Forward from the first interview provide a potential augmentation to the model. If a third party mediator could establish camaraderie with ingroup members through the derogation of outgroup behaviors and beliefs without letting this occasion become known to the outgroup, then perhaps this would allot the mediator with enough initial rapport to secure ingroup support and, more importantly, participation. Or perhaps a rhetorical strategy could be devised that confronted partisan members on their willingness to let their prejudices dictate their behavior. It seems likely that most individuals in contemporary cultures consider prejudice behavior to be a negative value concept and do not regard themselves as being susceptible to acting on these impulses. If a mediator could somehow exploit this occurrence, perhaps it would render a partisan susceptible to dissonant persuasive effects in their attempts to avoid hypocrisy.

Because that it is a hard thing for many, if not all, of us to accept that those who we perceive as our enemies are actually capable of acting decently toward the same recipients of our own compassion. By exposing partisan leaders to the ideology of a mediatory organization whose discourse not only overlapped in part with their own but their opposition's as well, this study attempted to persuade partisans to become more self-reflexive of the group to which they belong and less extreme, less polarized in their conceptions of their societal opponents,

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advancing a more cooperative and harmonic discourse. This is important for the progression of

society as a whole, for when this happens, people will become capable of collectively addressing

a problem together, instead of letting the problem mutually address the collective.

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Appendix A

Introduction/Personal Identification

Initial contact by phone:

Hello, my name is Greg Russell. I am a graduate student at Colorado State University's Department of Journalism and Technical Communication. My thesis research is concerned with studying public discourse surrounding the abortion debate, and I'm hoping that someone from [*name organization*] would be willing to share their views with me. Could you please direct me to someone who you think might be willing to conduct such an interview?

After contact has been made by phone/email:

Hello, my name is Greg Russell. I am a graduate student at Colorado State University's Department of Journalism and Technical Communication. My thesis research is concerned with studying public discourse surrounding the abortion debate, and I'm hoping that you might be willing to participate in an interview where you can share some of your views with me surrounding the topic. Does this sound like something you would be interested in?

If no: Thank you and have a nice day.

If yes:

Great. Initially, the interview will explore the general beliefs and attitudes you hold, the circumstances that led to those beliefs, and how these beliefs have aided you in defining and making sense of the issue of abortion. Finally, the interview will conclude with an explanation of an advocacy organization I am proposing that seeks to *Pro-Choice:* empower at-risk women

through educational advancement/*Pro-Life*: reduce abortion rates in lower income populations. After that, I will ask a few brief questions concerning the level of support you might have for such an organization.

Please be aware that your participation is completely voluntary and that you can opt out of the interview process at any time. Also, your personal identity will remain anonymous, and you will only be identified in the study through [*insert organization name here*]. These details will be available in a letter of informed consent, which you can sign before the interview gets started. So if you are still interested, could we set up a time and location for an interview?

Hello,

My name is Greg Russell. I am a graduate student at Colorado State University's Department of Journalism and Technical Communication. My thesis research is concerned with studying public discourse surrounding the abortion debate, and I'm hoping that you might be willing to participate in an interview where you can share some of your views with me surrounding the topic.

Initially, the interview will explore the general beliefs and attitudes you hold, the circumstances that led to those beliefs, and how these beliefs have aided you in defining and making sense of the issue of abortion. The interview will conclude with an explanation of an advocacy organization I am proposing that seeks to empower at-risk women through educational advancement. After that, I will ask a few brief questions concerning the level of support you

might have for such an organization.

Please be aware that your participation is completely voluntary and that you can opt out of the interview process at any time. Also, your personal identity will remain anonymous, and you will only be identified in the study as an individual associated with SURJ. These details will be available in a letter of informed consent, which you will need to sign before the interview gets started. If you would be interested in participating, could we work on setting up a time and location for an interview?

Either way, thanks for your consideration and take care.

Appendix B

Letter of Informed Consent

Department of Journalism and Technical Communication
Campus Delivery 1785
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Tel: 970-491-6310

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Greg Russell and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the

Department of Journalism and Technical Communication under the guidance of Professor Joseph

Champ. I am conducting a research-study on public discourse surrounding the abortion debate.

The title of this project is Step Forward. The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs of pro-

life/pro-choice individuals, especially how these beliefs have come to shape your attitudes and

position on the issue of abortion.

I would like you to participate in a one-on-one interview that will allow you to share

some of your views on the matter. You have been selected because of you affiliation with [*name*

of organization here].

Initially, the interview will explore the general beliefs and attitudes you hold, the

circumstances that led to those beliefs, and how these beliefs have aided you in defining and

making sense of the issue of abortion. You might find some these questions to be thought

provoking or even challenging to answer, but they are not designed to be antagonistic. The interview will conclude with an explanation of an advocacy organization I am proposing that seeks to *Pro-Choice:* empower at-risk women through educational advancement/*Pro-Life*: reduce abortion rates in lower income populations. After that, I will ask a few brief questions concerning the level of support you might have for such an organization.

The interview will take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. The interview will be recorded then transcribed for the purpose of conversation analysis.

Your personal identity will remain anonymous, and you will only be identified in the study through the organization by which you are associated. While there are no direct benefits to you, I hope to gain more knowledge regarding your points of view in the hopes that it will eventually lead to a greater sense of understanding surrounding the abortion debate in general.

Other than exploring the values and beliefs that you use to justify your own position regarding the issue of abortion, which may make you feel uncomfortable, there are no known risks associated with this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We

may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in this study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have any questions, please contact my advisor, Joseph Champ, at 970-491-3286, or Greg Luft, department chair of Journalism and Technical Communication, at 970-491-1979. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655. I will give you a copy of this consent form.

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on [*approval date*].

Sincerely,

Greg Russell

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this

consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a

copy of this document containing 3 pages.

_____   _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____

Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____

Signature of Research Staff

I give my consent to be recorded (initial)_____YES _____NO

Appendix C

Interview Protocol: Pro-Choice

Participant Identification

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Interviewee: _____

Agency Affiliation/Location:_____

Phone Number: _____

Interview Questions:

1. To start with, what does a [*position*] do at [*organization*]? In other words, what are your

general responsibilities?

2. Was there a defining moment in your life, some might call it an epiphany, that made you

realize this is the cause that I want to spend my life advocating for, and that [*organization*] is the

organization I want to work for. Or are the circumstances that have brought you here less

dramatic? How would you characterize your path?

3. What are the biggest challenges you face both personally and organizationally at

[*organization*]?

4. With so many different variables constituting the issue of abortion, why do you think this issue

is perceived in such black and white terms? And what do you think is the root cause of this polarization?

5. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions related to the opposition. So first, can you relay some of the experiences you've had with anti-choice activists? If you haven't had much direct experience with them, could tell me about some of the perceptions you have obtained through the media? How have these experiences/perceptions come to shape your opinions regarding anti-choice individuals?

6. Regarding anti-choice individuals, what is the one thing that you see as being the most responsible for misinforming them the most about the issue of abortion?

7. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 75 percent of individuals who terminate their pregnancy give financial insecurity as the primary reason for having an abortion. Four out of every ten are living below the poverty line. Can you tell me what [*organization*] does to address the issue of poverty as it relates to unplanned pregnancy? Perhaps you could name some charitable efforts.

Begin Dissonant Questioning

1D. (**The Nature of Purposive Killing**): Initially, this next question may seem a bit off topic, but it will soon turn back to the issue. When our country involves itself in war and participates in the

organized killing of other human beings, how do you feel about our participation?

> **PROBE**: For a more concrete example, how did you feel when we went to war with Iraq in 2003? Did you agree with the Bush administration in thinking it was a necessary war? If not, when you saw all those protesters demonstrating against the war, were you able to empathize with them at all, especially their concerns about the taking of innocent life?

> **PROBE**: Anti-choice rhetoric often characterizes abortion as a systematic killing of a targeted population, much like war. When an anti-choicer tells you that they believe a fetus is a living person, what do you make of that? Do you believe them? If so, can you empathize at all with their position that they are attempting to protect life through public demonstration? Or do you think they are just using that position to promote some other agenda?

2D. (**Prenatal Gender/Disability Considerations**): We live in a society that, at least on the surface, values the diversity of our population. While there are obviously still instances of misogyny and racism that permeate our society, it is generally not acceptable for citizens to publicly hold these points of view. Two populations that have historically been targeted by institutionalized discrimination include women and disabled people. As I'm sure that you are aware, it is common in places like China for individuals to terminate their pregnancy based on the gender of the fetus and sometimes in the US people will terminate their pregnancy if they find out their child is disabled. Do you feel that it is justified for individuals to choose to

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terminate their pregnancy solely based on either of these criteria? If so, how are you able to make the distinction between a characteristic that is shared by a both fetus and a living human being?

3D. (**Evolving Entities/Moment of Life**): Do you feel that human beings are evolving entities who exist in a constant state of fluctuation? In other words, do you feel that you are the same person today as you were ten years ago or have you changed since then? If you perceive humans as ever evolving, do you feel that prenatal development is a part of that development? If not, where do you draw the line? Is it at the moment of birth?

> **PROBE**: Let me pose this hypothetical to you: What if a child is premature and is wholly dependent upon machines for its survival? If the parents of that child decided they wanted to take him off those machines for what ever reason, would you construe that action as a termination of a pregnancy or a killing of a baby? What about for fetuses who are aborted at a stage where they could survive with the assistance of machines? Or a fetus who is born premature the day before the mother planned to have it aborted?

4D. (**Mutual Dependence**): Human beings are communal creatures. Obviously, this gets a bit distorted when you live in a society that is as expansive and intricate as ours, but it's fair to say that you and I are mutually dependent in some capacity for each other's own survival: whether it be through taxation, laws, economic conventions or through the simple act of treating each other decently. If you agree that we are all dependent upon each other in one way or another for our individual survival as dependent entities, are you capable of translating that empathy to a fetus

who is mutually dependent upon its mother for its survival?

> **PROBE**: You may perceive this notion of mutual dependence as a stretch, but I think you can recognize that if the "womb" that is our society ever stopped providing for us, we would soon perish, just like a fetus would if the mother ever stop providing for it.

5D. (**Passing Genetics/Substantive Mass**): How do you distinguish abortion from other medical procedures? Could you offer another procedure that it is analogous to, such as the removal of a cancerous tumor or appendix?

> **PROBE**: Usually, when a medical procedure is performed, it is performed as a consequence of internal factors. Obviously, one of the main differences of these two procedures is that an abortion is performed as a consequence of circumstances beyond the body, such as poverty or a lack of support, among many other reasons. Because from an biological perspective, a fetus serves no function with regard to its mother other than to perpetuate her genetics through its existence as a genetically coded entity. As such, this characteristic is one that could be construed as being shared by both the fetus and living human beings. Do you feel that when an abortion is performed a genetically coded life, in some form, is being destroyed?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol: Pro-Life

Participant Identification

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Interviewee: _____

Agency Affiliation/Location:_____

Phone Number: _____

Interview Questions:

1. To start with, what does a [*position*] do at [*organization*]? In other words, what are your

general responsibilities?

2. Was there a defining moment in your life, some might call it an epiphany, that made you

realize this is the cause that I want to spend my life advocating for, and that [*organization*] is the

organization I want to work for. Or are the circumstances that have brought you here less

dramatic? How would you characterize your path?

3. What are the biggest challenges you face both personally and organizationally at

[*organization*]?

4. With so many different variables constituting the issue of abortion, why do you think this issue

is perceived in such black and white terms. And what do you think is the root cause of this polarization?

5. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions related to the opposition. So first, can you relay some of the experiences you've had with pro-choice activists? If you haven't had much direct experience with them, could tell me about some of the perceptions you have obtained through the media? How have these experiences/perceptions come to shape your opinions regarding pro-choice individuals?

6. Regarding pro-choice individuals, what is the one thing that you see as being the most responsible for misinforming them the most about the issue of abortion?

7. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 75 percent of individuals who terminate their pregnancy give financial insecurity as the primary reason for having an abortion. Four out of every ten are living below the poverty line. Can you tell me what [*organization*] does to address the issue of poverty as it relates to unplanned pregnancy? Perhaps you could name some charitable efforts.

Begin Dissonant Questioning:

1D. (**Personal Privacy/Autonomy**): Initially, this next question may seem a bit off topic, but it will soon turn back to the issue. What do you think of the new healthcare legislation known as

Obamacare? Do you think the the individual mandate, the provision that makes it mandatory for every citizen to purchase private health insurance, violates a person's right to privacy and self-governance?

> **PROBE**: One of the main concerns the pro-choice camp has with the issue of abortion is that they feel it is an infringement upon an individual's right to privacy and self-governance. Can you empathize at all with this point of view since you are capable of empathizing with individuals who will soon be coerced into buying health insurance?

2D. (**War/Abortion Considerations**): The central ethical foundation that drives Pro-Life discourse seems to be centered around the preservation of life. That life should be valued at all stages of development including prenatal life. As a consequence, the practice of abortion is perceived by pro-life discourse as a systematic killing of a targeted population and is therefore a morally reprehensible practice that is sanctioned by our society through its legality. This is why we see organized protests and legal efforts by Pro-Life groups that seek to subvert and bring public awareness to the issue of abortion. Now, there are other practices sanctioned by our society that constitute a systematic killing of a targeted population, such as war, that seem to be accepted or at least tolerated by Pro-Life/Evangelical/Catholic institutions, in the sense that war is not publicly protested as a life-taking practice through the process of organized and sanctioned killing. Could you educate me on how you are able to draw the line between these two forms of organized killing and why one is deserving of public protest (abortion) and the other (war) is not?

3D. (**Supporting Troops/At-Risk Women**): It is common in our society and in the Evangelical/Catholic community to publicly support our troops, especially during times of war. This support is important in light of the traumas many of our service men and women experience in wartime situations. Sometimes this support is manifested in the form of organizations that assist veterans in finding employment or funding for education. Now, it is estimated that over forty percent of girls and women who have an abortion exist in a state of poverty (Guttmacher, 2011). While it is true that existing in a state of poverty is different than existing in a state of war, I think it is fair to say that existing in a state of poverty comes with its own types of traumas, such as growing up in a household that is food insecure or not having stable access to shelter, that can impede an individual from living a meaningful and stable life. I know of organizations that support at-risk women during pregnancy, but do you know of any charitable organizations that provide support and assistance for at-risk women and their children in helping them to find employment, affordable daycare, or funding for education once the child is born?

4D. (**Concerns for the Wealthy**): There are several instances in the Bible where Jesus admonishes the rich. One example includes Matthew 19 v. 24: And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. According to the CIA (CIA Factbook, 2010), we live in a country that features one of the highest income inequality rates in the industrialized world. Do you think Christian/Catholic communities in the United States should be concerned with saving the souls of our wealthy neighbors by encouraging them to embrace their spiritual wealth through the relinquishment of

their monetary wealth to charities who assist those living in poverty?

5D. (**Fate of the Soul**): What do you think happens to the souls of the unborn after an abortion? Are they granted access to heaven?

> **PROBE**: When our nation goes to war with another nation, specifically one whose populace constitutes a religious makeup other than Christianity, such as Iraq or Afghanistan, do you believe that the souls of the people who are killed by our military are denied access to heaven? If so, and if you feel that eternity with God is the most important thing a believer should be striving for, do you think that war is a more egregious sin since nonbelievers are being sent to a place of eternal darkness (assuming you feel that the unborn are granted access to heaven)?

Appendix E

Pitching Step Forward

Well, first, thank you for taking the time to explore these issues with me. Now I'd like to briefly outline the mission of an advocacy organization that I've been developing as part of my research. The goals of this organization arise from the overlap that exists in the respective discourses of pro-life and pro-choice groups. Central to this overlap is the issue of poverty, especially the concerns both sides share regarding the effects of poverty on the well-being of our fellow citizens. Whether it's Planned Parenthood's commitment to providing affordable healthcare to low income individuals or the numerous Catholic and Christian charities, such as food banks and shelters, that ensure the basic humanitarian needs of at-risk individuals are being met, both groups recognize the need to actively address the issue of poverty by helping those who live under the weight of its shadow.

Now, it's no secret that 40 percent of the people who undergo an abortion are living below the poverty line. Seventy-five percent give financial insecurity as the primary reason for terminating their pregnancy. It doesn't take an active imagination to believe that many of these individuals would not even consider abortion as an choice if they were not being forced into it as a result of their living conditions.

The organization that I'm proposing is a sponsorship program that would be run by an unaffiliated non-profit charity I call Step Forward. This group would coordinate with Planned Parenthood in an effort to screen women who find themselves being coerced into having an

abortion solely as the result of financial constraints. It would be funded in large part by pro-life institutions that share a sincere desire to bring forth the spiritual mandates found in their religion by both reducing abortion rates and helping less fortunate people become healthy, contributing members of society.

Here's how it can be achieved. When a client visits a Planned Parenthood Health Center as a consequence of an unplanned pregnancy, she speaks with a staff counselor who advises her on the choices that are available to her. This counseling session will often times involve the client divulging the circumstances that brought about her unplanned pregnancy to the counselor. As a result, the counselor ascertains an understanding of the client's overall situation and can make appropriate recommendations. For example, if a client comes to Planned Parenthood and tells the counselor that she wants to adopt her baby, then the counselor can refer her to an adoption agency, or if a client tells her that she wants to go ahead with an abortion but is concerned about the cost of the procedure, then she can refer the client to funding organizations such as the Justice Fund. The organization I'm proposing, Step Forward, would operate in a similar manner, except it would cater to clients who want to see their pregnancy through and raise their children on their own. Obviously, these individuals must also possess a sincere desire and commitment to positive self-improvement.

But obviously, for this organization to succeed, it will need the funding to back up its intent. This is where Step Forward will coordinate with pro-life groups to raise funds in an effort to sponsor at-risk individuals, and not just through their pregnancy, but for a period of up to five years after the child's birth. Much of this funding will be directed toward childcare and educational assistance. Putting an emphasis on education is crucial for two reasons: First, by

instilling a sense of worth into at-risk women through education or skills training, by giving them the opportunity to stand on their own two feet, temporary welfare such as this would end up costing everyone less by preventing welfare dependence in the long run. Second, it has been shown that as a person becomes more educated, they become less likely to experience an unplanned pregnancy. As a result, the chances that an individual will experience another crisis will be significantly reduced. Additionally, Step Forward would help at-risk individuals locate all applicable government and charitable resources available to aid them through and beyond their pregnancy.

In this regard, the funding provided by pro-life groups would be supplemented by other sources of revenue, for I am well aware of the costs that will be associated with the kind of organization that I am proposing. The fact is, we live in a world that is driven by money. This is not necessarily bad, nor is it necessarily good. But money is a reflection of the things that we give priority to. Today I am asking you to give priority to our neighbors in need who are facing the challenge of an unplanned pregnancy.

No, I am not going to ask you for a check or money order, nor am I asking you to start screening potential clients, at least not today. I am simply trying to gauge whether or not the type of organization that I have proposed to you has the potential to even exist. Because it can't without the support of people like you, the leaders of your cause. You possess the ability to make these changes happen, to bring these ideas to life. Imagine, just for a second, the ripples of hope that would result from sponsoring just one at-risk person: Think of the stable home and of the future she could provide her child. Think of the positive impact this stability would have on her community. Think of the lives that could be saved. I hope you see that I'm not asking you throw

your money into the wishing well, all that I am asking of you today is to take a step forward.

Appendix F

Final Assessment

Did that message resonate with you at all or did you find it to be misguided? Would you be willing to support Step Forward by (pro-life) by fundraising and sponsoring an at-risk individual in the future/(pro-choice/Planned Parenthood) screening potential clients who qualify for assistance? Why or why not?
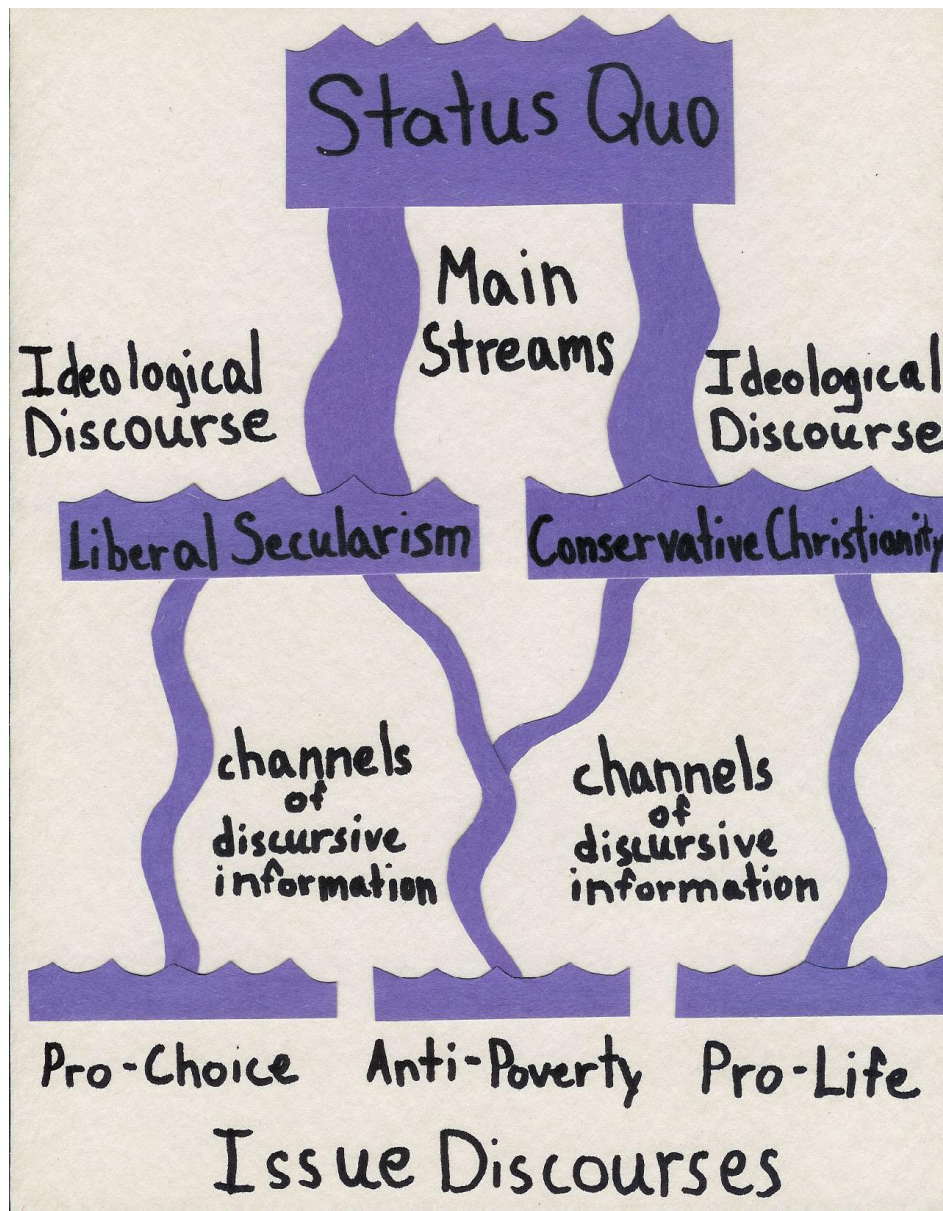
Figure 1