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Abortion, Teen Pregnancy, and Feminism: Finding Women-Centric Solutions for Reproductive Justice

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**Abortion, Teen Pregnancy, and Feminism: Finding Women-Centric
Solutions for Reproductive Justice**

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Abstract

This two-part project seeks to understand, discuss, and address issues surrounding some of the most contentious debates in the United States: unplanned pregnancy and abortion. The first part of the project looks at the pro-life feminist movement's agenda and ideals through comprehensive interviews with nine self-proclaimed pro-life feminists. The goal of this research is to gain an understanding of a women-centric opposition to abortion and to reflect on possible solutions that would benefit women and gain support from both pro-life and pro-choice advocates. Taking into account the information gathered through qualitative research on pro-life feminism, the second part of this project takes on the issue of teenage pregnancy in Onondaga County. In a partnership with Planned Parenthood of Syracuse, a proposed community-based, comprehensive pregnancy and STD prevention program is in the process of securing major funding from the New York State Department of Health and plans to begin programming in the Summer of 2016.

Executive Summary

This project came about as a result of two courses that I took in the spring of my junior year. The first was the Citizenship and Civic Engagement research seminar, in which we were required to choose a topic and complete a substantive project based on either qualitative or quantitative research done on that topic. The second course that I took in that semester was the History of the Women's Suffrage Movement. That course introduced me to Women and Gender Studies in an academic setting and learning about the early feminist movement inspired me to focus on more current issues that women face. I decided to begin by researching the politics that surround abortion, and through that research, I came across an article about pro-life feminism. This small movement greatly appealed to me because I had never heard of those two terms being simultaneously used to describe the same person, group, or movement. Additionally, relatively little research had been done on the topic, which meant that the best course of action would be to conduct qualitative research through interviews of pro-life feminists.

I began by doing background research in order to become familiar with the movement as a whole. Through this preliminary research, I learned about the views that early feminists of the late 18 and early 1900s had on abortion. Many pro-life feminists claim that these early feminists were against abortion and use this idea to legitimate their anti-abortion stance. I learned, however, that the history of the early feminists and their views on abortion is controversial. Through this research, I also learned about the history of the abortion debate post-Roe v. Wade, when the term "pro-life feminist" first emerged. This research connected me to many of the pro-life feminists and pro-life feminist groups that I contacted to interview later on in the semester. I conducted interviews with nine pro-

life feminists and became familiar with some of the nuances that exist within the movement.

Becoming so familiar with this small aspect of the abortion conversation in the United States led me to get involved with Planned Parenthood of Syracuse. I completed an internship doing patient outreach and education during the summer of 2015, and I then worked with them on my Action Plan that fall. I had a difficult time trying to bridge the gap between pro-life feminism and the work that Planned Parenthood does because the issue of abortion is so contentious. One major issue that concerns me is the fact that women's healthcare can be held hostage by radical abortion opponents, as has been the case with many Republicans voting to eliminate government funding of Planned Parenthood. My Capstone was an effort to find solutions that both sides of the abortion debate could support that promote reproductive justice and keep the interests and voices of women at the forefront of the conversation.

My Action Plan addressed teenage pregnancy the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases in Onondaga County. These issues, although they do not directly address abortion, are intimately connected to feminism, reproductive justice, and it certainly has a place in discussions of abortion. I worked with the Education and Outreach Directors of both Syracuse and Central New York to design a comprehensive, community-based pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention program in Onondaga County. The New York State Department of Health funds such programs, and the grant that Planned Parenthood of Syracuse is applying for is called the Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (CAPP) grant, which, if awarded, would offer Planned Parenthood \$400,000 a year for five years to run the program.

I focused on the community partnerships aspect of the CAPP program, and I contacted several organizations within the Syracuse community, asking them to provide programming to participating teenagers. Some of the organizations that have agreed to participate include the Open Hand Theater, Talent Agency, La Liga, Media Unit, YWCA Girls Inc., and Teen Talk Podcast. The concept of comprehensive pregnancy and STD prevention programming is to engage teenagers in activities that expand their opportunities to participate in the community, even if those activities do not explicitly have anything to do with preventing pregnancy and STDs. When teenagers are involved in the community and have life experiences beyond home and school, they are more likely to postpone the onset of sexual activity or, if they do choose to become sexually active, are more likely to use contraception effectively (ERIC, 1992, 3).

I hope to see the grant application process through and to be involved in the implementation of the program, which is expected to happen sometime in the summer of 2016. I plan to work with the community partners that have agreed to join this project to develop programs for the participating teenagers. Teen pregnancy rates in some areas of Onondaga County are one in of every five females between the ages of 15 and 19 (NYS Dept. of Health, 2012). This project is going to be an incredibly important addition to the Syracuse community, and I am looking forward to its implementation and impact.

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of Planned Parenthood of Syracuse for allowing me to be a part of their organizing team and making my project possible.

Chapter 1: Pro-Life Feminism

Introduction

With the political climate more polarized than ever, it seems that there is little common ground on which pro and anti-abortion activists can agree. This research looks at a small, but important, pro-life movement that is based on strong feminist ideals. Pro-Life Feminists believe that abortion is a tragic response to a society and culture created by and for the benefit of men and capitalist gains. They work to dismantle the patriarchal structures that they believe cause women to have abortions by advocating for a universal respect for human life as well as improving resources for pregnant women such as improved access to quality maternal care and paid maternity leave. This research is based on a series of comprehensive standardized, open-ended interviews with eight self-proclaimed pro-life feminists, either individuals, representatives of pro-life feminist organizations, or self-proclaimed pro-life feminists who represent organizations that hold and promote feminist ideals, although the organizations may not be explicitly feminist. This research sought to understand how pro-life feminists fit within the context of both the pro-life and feminist ideology and movements.

The most basic definition of feminism is the idea that all genders are equal, or more specifically, it is the idea that women enjoy the same political, social, and economic equality as men. Different feminists and feminist groups choose to interpret this definition differently in terms of the way that they think that this equality should be achieved. Pro-choice feminists believed during the Roe era, and still do believe, that for women to be equal to men, women must have control over our their bodies in terms of when they choose to become pregnant and have a child. Many pro-choice and pro-life feminists believe that

current American society is not working for women because it was created for men and therefore society should be altered to better cater to the needs of women. Where pro-life feminists diverge is in their belief that if society continues to function in a way that compels women to have abortions, women and the female gender will continue to be devalued in relation to men and maleness.

I chose to research this topic because I am interested in women's history and feminism, but my two majors—Political Science and Citizenship and Civic Engagement—don't often provide the opportunity to study it. During the spring of 2015, I took a class on the History of Women's Suffrage, and that inspired me to do research on a feminist topic. I began by focusing on the Second Wave Feminist Movement of the 1960s and 70s, and I came across an article about the changing rhetoric of the Pro-Life movement that included pro-women stances. I continued to pursue women-centric anti-abortion arguments further, and I came across an article about the history of the pro-life feminist movement, beginning in the years immediately following *Roe v. Wade*. I was intrigued by the concept of pro-life feminism because I had always had the understanding that feminists exclusively pushed for and supported abortion rights. As someone who considers herself a pro-choice feminist, I wanted to gain a better understanding of the pro-life side.

Early History

Pro-Life Feminism claims to find its roots in the middle of the 19th century with the First Wave Feminists of the suffrage era. Prominent women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony are pointed to as the historical legitimacy of feminism holding anti-abortion values. In their article "Feminism and Abortion," Mary Krane Derr and Angela

Kennedy contend that Elizabeth Cady Stanton was opposed to abortion, quoting her as referring to it as “infanticide” and “murder” (Derr and Kennedy 1999, 34). According to Derr and Kennedy, the publication *Revolution*, that was run by Anthony and Stanton, refused to “carry advertisements for abortifacients” and ran anti-abortion articles written by Paula Wright Davis, Eleanor Kirk, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (Derr and Kennedy 1999, 34). Additionally, in his review of Laurence Tribe’s article titled “How Not to Promote Serious Deliberation About Abortion,” Michael McConnell reiterates that both Stanton and Anthony “frequently denounced the practice of abortion as ‘child murder,’ ‘infanticide,’ and a ‘horrible crime,’” (McConnell 1991, 1188).

These assertions about the early feminists, though they appear factual, are contentious. Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner asserts that while some early feminists opposed the “the procedure of abortion on safety grounds,” they “also exposed the contradiction that the law outlawed birth control, forcing women to dangerously abort what they couldn’t safely prevent” (Wagner 2015, 1). Additionally, “The feminist rallying cry of the day, ‘voluntary motherhood’ meant that every child born would be a chosen one,” which calls into questions the true stance that early feminists had on abortion (Wagner 2015, 2). Tracy A. Thomas strongly refutes the idea that early feminists opposed abortion in her article “Misappropriating Women’s History in the Law and Politics of Abortion,” and asserts that the beliefs of the early feminists have been misconstrued by organizations such as Feminists for Life. There may be sufficient evidence that some early feminists such as Alice Paul and Mary Wollstonecraft did oppose abortion, but abortion was not a major part of the early feminists’ platform and, Thomas argues, many prominent feminists including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were not, in fact, opposed to it (Thomas

2012, 19). According to Thomas, Anthony never spoke on the matter of abortion despite the fact that women close to her were frequently aborting unwanted pregnancies (Thomas 2012, 15).

Additionally, it is important to note the historical and social contexts of abortion during this time. From the late 1700s to the mid-19th century, “abortion was legal and a common medical practice” (Hardy 1990, 4). More specifically, abortion was legal during the first half of pregnancy, until the “quickening” period began--“the time when a woman first felt fetal movements, usually late in the fourth month of pregnancy” (Thomas 2012, 20). It wasn’t until the second half of the 19th century that abortion began to become criminalized, an effort that was spearheaded by the medical profession (Thomas 2012, 21). Many upper-middle class, white women commonly used abortion as their primary form of birth control at the time, often with the support of their spouses (Thomas 2012, 22-3). Because of the primary demographic of abortion seekers, the rhetoric used by physicians speaking out against abortion was “infused with nativist implications in appeals to white Protestant women to bear children to counter the rising numbers of immigrants and non-white children” and was “anti-feminist at its core” (Thomas 2012, 23).

Some feminists entered the abortion debate by publishing articles, often redirecting the blame of abortion on to men. Matilda Joslyn Gage, Mattie Brinkerhoff, and other women “argued for voluntary motherhood and the right of a woman to be ‘the owner of her own body’” (Thomas 2012, 27). In 1891, Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, addressed the National Council of Women, stating that:

“Woman’s intuition backed by reason” compels a woman to ask three questions to determine if she will birth: “She asks first, will the child be welcome? Second, what will be its inheritance of physical, mental, and moral character? Third, can the child be provided for in life?...Men talk of the

sacredness of motherhood, but judging from their acts it is the last thing that is held sacred in the human species. Poets sing and philosophers reason about the holiness of the mother's sphere, but men in laws and customs have degraded the woman in her maternity. Motherhood is sacred--that is, voluntary motherhood...while the birth of most human beings is a sexual accident." (Wagner 2015, 2).

Many of the publications and presentations that pro-life feminists point to in order to support the claims that early feminists were opposed to abortion are the same documents that feminist scholars such as Sally Roesch Wagner and Tracy A. Thomas examine in hand with a more nuanced historical context and use as evidence that the early feminists were, in fact, not opposed to abortion as a whole.

Additionally, marital rape was legal in the time of the women's suffrage movement, and the power and authority to decide when and if women would have children was reserved for husbands alone. During the First Wave Feminist movement, women--especially married women--had few rights and little control over their own bodies. Early feminist Matilda Joslyn Gage was the third pillar of the women's suffrage movement next to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony but was essentially written out of history due to her public and radical criticism of the Church. In a letter to the editor the Women's Rights Newspaper, *Revolution*, Gage, states that "nowhere has the marital union of the sexes been one in which woman has had control over her own body" (Gage 1868, 215). Gage supported abortion rights, but she also recognized its health and safety implications for women as well as the power dynamics present and protected by law between husbands and wives. In support of abortion, birth control, and most strongly of consensual sex, Gage states that "enforced motherhood"--a term that includes but is not limited to marital rape--"is a crime against the body of the mother and the soul of the child" (Gage 1868, 215). She also believed that husbands view children "almost solely from a money standpoint" (Gage

1868, 215). Husbands and fathers, she says, may not desire an increased family size because it is also an increased expense, and this issue of family finances could lead to women--especially lower class women--being coerced or forced into having unwanted abortions by their husbands. Interestingly, Matilda Joslyn Gage, is cited in the book *Pro-Life Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, a collection of essays written by early feminists that work to prove that they were, as a whole, generally opposed to abortion. However, in an article titled "Our Book Table", published in 1878 in *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, Gage says "The law of motherhood should be entirely under women's control, but in order to be that, woman must first of all be held as having a right to herself" (Gage 1878, 2). An essay written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton was also included in *Pro-Life Feminism: Yesterday and Today* as proof that early feminists opposed abortion, however Stanton has also said that "A woman should have the right 'to become a mother or not as her desire, judgment and conscience may dictate,'" (Wagner 2015, 1).

It is important to understand the historical context and the gender dynamics of the First Wave Feminist movement because society has since progressed in many ways in terms of women's rights. Now, marital rape is, of course, illegal, and abortion, in theory, is a woman's choice to make. The RESULTS section of this report discusses pressures to have abortions that women may experience, but the circumstances that women faced during the First Wave Feminist movement are generally different from those that women currently face. The beliefs of many modern pro-life feminists are rooted in the idea that the "original feminists" opposed abortion. However, it is important to acknowledge the context and extent of this opposition and point out that many prominent early feminists either supported abortion explicitly or supported the sentiment of women having sovereign

control over her body and reproduction but may have opposed abortion because of the legal power that husbands possessed over the bodies of their wives as well as the safety implications of abortion in the 19th century.

Post Roe Pro-Life Feminism: Politicization and Polarization

Pro-life feminism as it exists today is rooted in the supposed values of the early feminists, but it is a direct product of the monumental 1973 Supreme Court decision known as *Roe v. Wade*—a decision that legalized abortion on the grounds of a woman’s privacy. In 1973, the Second Wave Feminist movement was reaching its height, and *Roe v. Wade* became what many today call the crowning moment of the women’s movement. However, not all Second Wave Feminists supported abortion, and the decision to legalize it caused many anti-abortion feminists to become marginalized. Some joined the organization Feminists for Life (FFL), which was formed in Ohio in 1972 by Patricia Goltz and Catherine Callaghan and consisted of progressive pro-life feminists who argued that abortion allowed men to use women sexually without suffering any consequences (Ziegler 2013, 237-8). Both Goltz and Callaghan were active members of the Columbus chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW), but “Goltz was expelled by the local chapter because of her outspoken opposition to abortion” (Thomas 2012, 11). At the time, a woman’s bodily autonomy and access to abortion was a major platform of NOW, and feminists who disagreed left to join spinoff organizations such as Feminists for Life (Thomas 2012, 11). In its early years, Feminists for Life actively fought for the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment, they supported government funding of maternal care, health-care, contraception or sex education, as well as the guarantee of protections against pregnancy

discrimination and experienced early marginalization due to the larger and more conservative national right-to-life movement (Ziegler 2013, 239; Thomas 2012, 12).

Similarly, another early pro-life feminist organization, American Citizens Concerned for Life (ACCL), sought common ground with pro-choice feminists in order to find ways to reduce women's need for abortion. They believed that women could only avoid abortion if they could effectively avoid unwanted pregnancies (Ziegler 2013, 241). The ACCL "worked closely with feminist organizations on contraception access and sex discrimination law" (Ziegler 2013, 241). They also "encouraged abortion opponents to identify common ground with those on the other side of the abortion issue, particularly since the pro-life movement had an obligation to help women avoid the need for abortion" which is an approach largely unexplored today by the overall pro-life movement, but many current pro-life feminists do tend to search for common ground with pro-choice activists to reduce the demand for abortion (Ziegler 2013, 241).

This holistic and cooperative approach began to become polarized in the late 1970s and early 80s when some pro-life groups that advocated against the Equal Rights Amendment "helped to convince anti-abortion activists that it was politically impossible to oppose abortion while supporting the women's movement" (Ziegler 2013, 246). Among them was Phyllis Schlafly, who led the fight against the Equal Rights Amendment, and said that "the women's movement endorsed abortion rights and excluded any women who disagreed" (Ziegler 2013, 246). On the other side, The National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL), Planned Parenthood, and the National Organization for Women (NOW) began to say that pro-lifers were inherently anti-feminist (Ziegler 2013, 251). It was during this time, too, that the "Religious Right" began to reshape American politics and

offered the pro-life movement valuable financial support and political influence, which has contributed to “pro-life” becoming synonymous with social conservatism and has very much polarized pro-choice and pro-life feminists (Ziegler 2013, 246).

Literature Review

The pro-life feminist movement is a small movement and because of this, many scholars have written it off as insignificant. The ideology of pro-life feminism contains aspects that have elements that contradict both the pro-choice feminist and pro-life movements, so it has not been successfully blended into either. The existing literature that is written both directly and indirectly about pro-life feminism focuses on the varying definitions of feminism itself, the history of the abortion debate and pro-life movement in congruence with Second Wave Feminism, the emergence of the strong conservative party that claimed a pro-life agenda, and the evolution of the Women’s Movement, of which, as has been previously mentioned, the *Roe v. Wade* decision is often considered the crowning moment.

There is a spectrum of pro-life feminism that flows from ultra-conservative to ultra-liberal. Conservative pro-life feminists tend to adhere mostly to socially conservative ideologies and are often largely rooted in religion. Liberal pro-life feminists tend to adhere mostly to socially liberal ideologies except for (and they would say including) the fact that they are pro-life, and they tend to consider abortion a human rights violation rather than a theological issue (Oaks 2009, 194). According to Laury Oaks in her article titled *What are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus*, pro-life feminism “has found the anti-abortion movement a better ally than the feminist movement” because the feminist movement has,

according to Feminists for Life, “unfairly [used] the abortion rights perspective as a ‘litmus test’ for its membership” (Oaks 2009, 181). Oaks says that Feminists for Life, the most prominent pro-life feminist organization in the United States, claims to have an understanding of “real” feminism, which is that, as FFL president Serrin Foster puts it, “violence is a violation of basic feminist principles” and because of that, abortion is inherently anti-feminist (Oaks 2009, 183).

This idea is echoed, unsurprisingly, in *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, which was coauthored by Rachel MacNair, Mary Krane Derr, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl. The book is divided into two parts, the first of which offers writings from early, so-called pro-life feminists, focusing on the years of the women’s suffrage movement until 1960. These writings assert that abortion is actually an institution of and by the patriarchy, rather than allowing women to break away from patriarchal norms, and that abortion is another way in which that patriarchy continues to imprison women. The second part of the book emphasizes the differences between early and modern pro-life feminists, including some early feminists’ support for eugenics and discrimination of working class women and women of color. They assert that modern pro-life feminism is based on nonviolence and a radical commitment to human rights, both reiterating the idea that abortion is caused and perpetuated by the patriarchy, but reframing it to include the idea that abortion is also a result of classism, racism, and sexism (MacNair, Krane Derr, and Naranjo-Huebl 2005). This means that abortion is connected to and fueled by many other systemic issues that must also be addressed and that abortion disproportionately impacts some groups of women more than others.

Dr. Mary Ziegler's *Women's Rights on the Right: The History and Stakes of Modern Pro-Life Feminism* offers a comprehensive history of the emergence of pro-life feminists or pro-life progressives immediately following the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Pro-life organizations such as Feminists for Life, American Citizens Concerned for Life (which had disbanded by the mid-1980s), and the National Right to Life Committee of the 1970s were interested in working with pro-choice groups to push progressive agendas that included anti-pregnancy discrimination legislation, maternal and health care funding, the destigmatization of unwed motherhood, and sex education programs, among other things that are proven to reduce the demand for abortion (Ziegler 2012, 239-40). They understood that in order to eliminate abortion, women had to feel like there were other workable options.

This was not the case for long. With the emerging power of the New Right and Religious Right in American politics, these groups became overshadowed and then absorbed by more conservative, and in some cases even anti-feminist, pro-life groups (Ziegler 2012, 250). The religious component was solidified when the religious conservatives claimed the anti-abortion platform; today Conservative pro-life feminists, including Sarah Palin, have followed the linear progression of anti-abortion claims—beginning with the polarization after the *Roe* decision and anti-mainstream feminist rhetoric perpetuated by Phyllis Schlafely and then being absorbed by the Religious Right—while also redefining feminism to support the notion that women already enjoy liberation and equal protection under the law (Ziegler 2012, 259). Ziegler claims that this narrative is dangerous to feminism as a whole because the idea that we have reached the point of gender equality inherently undermines feminism at its roots and makes the movement out to be petty and irrelevant.

The pro-life movement was and is deeply rooted in religion, and religion is still intertwined with the vast majority of conservative pro-life feminist ideologies. Wendy McElroy's article *Religion and American Feminism* discusses the religious roots of First Wave Feminism. McElroy herself is pro-choice and an atheist, but she concludes that it would be in the best interest of pro-choice feminists to become more open to pro-life feminist ideologies, and that feminism and religion are, in fact, compatible. This is despite the strong anti-abortion stance and at times, anti-women rhetoric that the conservative right takes and uses, such as recent comments made by Donald Trump about punishing women who seek abortions (Matthews 2016) or Ted Cruz's implication that voters should "spank" Hillary Clinton in the same way that he spanks his five year-old daughter (Scott 2016).

To move on to directly addressing the role of conservative pro-life feminists, I now turn to the article titled *Palin, Abortion, and the Feminists*, written by socially conservative author, attorney, and self-proclaimed pro-life feminist, Erika Bachiochi. In the article, Bachiochi defends Palin and attacks mainstream feminists for their blatant disdain for her. She asserts that because Palin was successful in her career while raising a five children, the youngest of which has Down's Syndrome, she became an icon for the idea that women can combine work and family in a manageable way, and therefore, she is threatening to pro-choice feminists assertion that access to safe and legal abortion is necessary for women's equality. This argument has its flaws, but it is important to include because Palin is one of the most publicly recognized socially conservative pro-life feminists in America. Additionally, Bachiochi's favorable analysis of what Palin stands for is part of what Ziegler calls the narrative that is dangerous to feminism, which is that because Palin believes that

women are already equal to men, it is possible for them to “have it all”, showing a complete disregard for the necessity of feminism and the existence of gender inequality (Ziegler 2012, 258).

None of the preliminary research that I came across examined specific similarities and differences within the pro-life feminist movement. Unlike previous research, this project examines pro-life feminists and pro-life groups that hold feminist ideals through interviews. It seeks to understand the fundamental values of the movement as a whole, as well as the differences between individuals and groups that identify as pro-life feminists. It expands upon the notion that there is a conservative to liberal spectrum of pro-life feminists.

Chapter 2: Research Methods and Results

Research Questions

Before conducting this research, I had two broad-reaching questions about pro-life feminism. The first was: how does the feminist pro-life movement fit into the context of pro-choice American feminism? I asked this because mainstream feminism is generally associated with placing value in greater access to safe and legal abortions. I wondered how pro-life feminists defined and practiced feminism and how they interacted with the many other feminists who are strongly pro-choice. Additionally, I asked: how does the feminist pro-life movement fit into the context of the modern American abortion debate? In the same way that mainstream feminists are pro-choice, mainstream abortion opponents did not strike me as having a large feminist base. I wondered if and how pro-life feminists worked and interacted with other pro-life groups in order to place the value and wellbeing of women at the center of the abortion conversation. I kept these two questions in mind as I did my preliminary research, and I developed a series of interview questions that I thought could best capture the sentiment of pro-life feminism as it relates to both mainstream feminist and pro-life groups.

Methods

I conducted eight interviews with individual pro-life feminists and representatives from pro-life feminist organizations. My participants included:

1. A pro-life feminist with a Ph.D in Social and Personality Psychology and author of several texts that explore the morality of abortion.

2. A self-proclaimed feminist and representative of, an organization that is dedicated to the promotion of the interconnected, universal human rights of nonviolent choice and life.
3. A representative of a pro-life, pro-woman organization that seeks to open minds to its philosophy of pro-life feminism, the belief that all people, by virtue of their human dignity, have a right to live without violence from conception to natural death.
4. A self-proclaimed feminist, with a Ph.D in Psychology and Sociology and a Quaker background, with a strong affiliation with a prominent pro-life feminist organization, though she was not representing the organization during our interview, and the author of several prominent books about peace and violence, including issues of abortion.
5. A self-proclaimed feminist and representative of a new media movement dedicated to building a culture of life and ending abortion.
6. A self-proclaimed feminist and representative of an organization that works to end abortion and has no religious affiliations.
7. A self-proclaimed feminist, attorney, and author of several pro-life texts that explore abortion and the church.
8. A representative of an organization of self-proclaimed “Badass Pro-Life Feminists.”

I selected my participants by noting pro-life feminist organizations and individuals mentioned in my preliminary research. Many of the people I interviewed were directly mentioned in the literature I came across. I was connected with a few groups through references given to me during other interviews. All of the women I interviewed were white. Because I did not have access to every pro-life feminist group, I can not say whether or not this is significant or that pro-life feminists tend to be white women. However, this may be important for future research on pro-life feminism and it would be interesting to further explore the history and demographics of pro-life feminism and pro-life feminist values. The ages of my interviewees ranged between early 20s and 82; half were in their 20s and 30s

and the other half were 40 and older. There was also some religious diversity: three Catholic respondents, three respondents representing secular pro-life feminist groups, one group had a mixed religious background that included Christian, Atheist, and Buddhist roots, but the person I interviewed is Atheist herself, and another person I interviewed is a Quaker.

Interviews with women representing three of the organizations and with all three women who were interviewed as individuals rather than representatives of organizations were conducted over the phone and lasted between thirty minutes to an hour, with the exception of one condensed interview which lasted about twenty minutes. That interview was shortened due to scheduling reasons on the part of the organization. One interview was conducted in person at Syracuse University, and another was conducted via email due to scheduling conflicts. I conducted standardized, open-ended interviews, asking each respondent the same set of eight questions, with the exception of the condensed interview.

The questions I asked are as follows:

1. What does it mean to be a feminist to you and how does that influence your perspective on abortion?
2. How would you respond to, probably the broadest and most widely understood argument for abortion, which is that without women having control over their own bodies in relation to the timing and circumstances of childbirth then they ultimately don't have control over their own lives since the responsibility of raising a child still seems to normally fall on women?
3. Do you believe that abortion inherently harms women?
4. In your opinion, what specifically needs to change in order for our society to undergo the profound transformation of eliminating the demand for abortion? Do you think these changes are possible in the near future?

5. Do you think that in a case where the birth would compromise the dignity of the woman and present an unfit life for the child, an abortion should be allowed, such as in the event that a woman is raped and becomes pregnant?
6. Do you think it's important to work with pro-choice organizations that focus on increasing access to contraception, sex education in schools, and maternal care, all things that lead to a decrease in abortion demand, even if you do not agree with them on whether or not abortion itself should be legal?
7. Why do you think the issue of abortion is still dividing America in the way that it is, and do you think it will ever be resolved?
8. What, if any, critiques do you have of the overall pro-life movement?

In the case of the organization that requested a condensed interview, many of the answers to these questions were available from past interview clips and transcripts with the organization's representatives. In order to gain a better insight into the perspective of that organization, the list of interview questions was slightly edited and subsequently shortened in the interest of time. The questions asked are as follows:

1. What does it mean to be a feminist to you and how does that influence your perspective on abortion?
2. Do you believe that abortion inherently harms women?
3. Do you think that in the case that the woman's life is compromised, say, she will die if she carries the pregnancy to term, then an abortion should be performed?
4. What do you think will lead to decreasing abortion in the United States?

Unlike the other seven interviews, for this particular interview, I chose to reword the question "In your opinion, what specifically needs to change in order for our society to undergo the profound transformation of eliminating the demand for abortion? Do you think these changes are possible in the near future?" to "What do you think will lead to decreasing abortion in the United States?". I asked this question differently simply in the

interest of time and because it was one of my final interviews; the previous wording had been confusing to some of the other respondents. Additionally, this particular organization was also quite religiously conservative with a relatively large political presence in the United States. I had a difficult time finding any practical solutions that they offered to address the issue of unintended pregnancy while I was researching them, and I was interested in learning if they believed that certain kinds of resources and support, particularly increased access to contraception and sex education, would cause fewer women to seek out abortions.

Results

The analyses of the interview-based research data focused first on unprompted trends in responses and second, on response trends that were prompted by questions. This approach was taken because during the interviews, certain patterns emerged, unprovoked by questions, and unprompted consistencies between individual actors or groups representing pro-life feminism are important indicators of the movement's overall ideology. In order to analyze the interview-based data and response trends, each interview was manually transcribed and common themes in response to the questions were noted. A table to view the frequency of responses was created and is presented in the "Results" section.

Below is a list of six common *unprompted* trends and interview responses that were collected in the data taken from a total of eight interviewees:

1. Six respondents discussed the patriarchal structure of American society was a key issue for them as pro-life feminists

2. Five respondents discussed the idea that women are inherently different from men as key concerns of pro-life feminism.
3. Four respondents said the pressure women feel to get an abortion was a key issue of concern for them as pro-life feminists.
4. Four respondents discussed their opposition to using violence to overthrow a violent system as a key reason for being a pro-life feminist.
5. Four respondents mentioned the idea that capitalism makes it difficult to raise children and that pro-life feminism arrived to address that problem.
6. Four respondents mentioned ideas of universal equality and the valuation of all life as a reason for being a pro-life feminist.

Valuing and Accommodating All Human Life as it Exists

I have decided to combine the two themes of “Universal Equality for all Human Life” and that “Men and Women are Different” into one section title “Valuing and Accommodating All Human Life as it Exists”. I chose to do this because in the pursuit of universal equality, accommodations must be made for certain groups. In the effort to value men and women equally and achieve gender justice, differences between men and women must be acknowledged and the reproductive capabilities of women must be recognized as vital to the health and success of the society as a whole.

Six of the eight respondents either noted differences between men and women in terms of accommodating each gender accordingly, or they discussed the idea that all humans should be treated with universal equality, including men, women, and children and regardless of sex, age, or gender identity. Half of the respondents claimed that feminism inherently stands for universal equality and values all life. Abortion, they say, is incompatible with feminism because it does not respect or value the life of the unborn,

which is deserving of equal protection. Moreover, many went on to say that women cannot achieve equality by projecting their own oppression onto the lives of the unborn. The following quote describes this theme:

“I think that in a way the kind of ideals of feminism which are that power and domination should not be controlling and that one should respect the potential of life ...is very important for abortion because this is a life and women have been for equality, for their own equality, so why not...defend equality of the new life of the embryo.”

This statement embodies the notion that feminists and feminism must intuitively defend the equality of all life because they are fighting for their own equality in terms of gender. Three other respondents made similar statements. This is one of the most important of the themes that appeared over the course of these interviews because it forms the essential basis of pro-life feminism. Pro-life feminists define feminism as being inherently nonviolent and respectful, even defensive, of the equality of all forms of life—and they extend that definition to the unborn. An argument can be made that this is a highly radical, compelling, and legitimate feminist perspective that serves as the basis for the uncommon belief that feminism and abortion are incompatible.

This leads to the theme that women and men have different needs that should be, but often are not, accommodated by society accordingly or justly. These pro-life feminists argue that without a society that values the lives of both the unborn and the lives of women as equal to men, abortion will continue to harm both groups. Abortion concerns pro-life feminists because they believe that it violates a woman’s inherent ability to reproduce, and devalues women by saying that their pregnancy potentially will not work in conjunction with their personal and social circumstances and that this mistake can be reversed. Rather

than having paralleled equality, women and men may need different things in order to achieve gender-based justice. As one of my respondents explained:

“Women and men may need different things in order to be given the same opportunities. In biological terms, men and women are different, of course, in the sense that women can have children and men can’t. That means women’s needs must be accommodated so that we have the same opportunities as men do to pursue an education or a career and raise a family.”

A member of another organization that I interviewed offered an alternative example of inherent differences between males and females, not necessarily referring to solely biological differences. Instead, this representative claimed that innate personality differences exist between the sexes:

“Femininity is special and unique from masculinity in more than just the biological sense. Women often possess gifts that men do not, especially in terms of forming relationships. Women must be given the opportunity to develop her full potential as a feminine woman.”

This relates to the following section that discusses the patriarchy and capitalism because these two intertwined systems often fail to recognize and accommodate all human needs at the expense of profit and the hegemonic power that heteronormative men have enjoyed throughout the history of the much of the world. Five out of eight respondents noted what they call inherent differences between men and women—referring both to biological and essentialist personality and behavioral differences--and the failure of society to address and accommodate those differences as another factor that cause women to seek abortions.

Capitalism and the Patriarchy

I chose to combine the themes that both capitalism and the patriarchal structure of society serve as the cause for and main factor propelling the continuation of abortion in America. Participants in my research argued that capitalism pushes women to obtain an education and enter the workforce, just like men, which is a good thing. However, capitalism is also patriarchal in that it considers the “efficient worker” a worker that does not reproduce. Pro-life feminists recognize that without providing women who face unplanned pregnancies with the resources they need to continue their education or advance in their careers, and without providing an increased access to resources such as paid maternity and paternity leave, subsidized day care, and tax breaks to parents, etc., women will continue to have abortions because the patriarchal and capitalist society in which we currently live is not conducive to unplanned pregnancies.

Seven of the eight participants cited either patriarchy or capitalism (three cited both) as one major underlying cause of women and children’s oppression. Several participants noted the lack of value that our capitalist culture places on all human life in relation to profit and luxury. The idea that if society inherently valued all human life more than material objects, then abortion would become a less considered option for women who become unexpectedly pregnant is embodied in the following quote:

“Children need to be valued inherently for just being human beings, and not as, kind of, trophies, and not as sort of a lifestyle choice...I think that if we valued human beings that much, if we valued human beings more than commodities, more than wealth, more than prestige and power, if we valued human beings that much, then women would be valued more.”

Six of eight respondents claimed that the patriarchal structure of society is responsible for devaluing femininity and driving women to have abortions in the first

place. The following statement embodies the notion that what one respondent calls the “New Patriarchy” has caused women to pass their oppression onto their children through the act of abortion. She, and others, argued that the right to have an abortion does not actually improve the condition of women; it simply furthers the agenda of men in that it allows them to refuse their liability of the consequences of sexual activity.

“The NEW patriarchy, the one we should be fighting, still wants to use women, but only for sexual satisfaction. He despises her fertility though, because children are a liability. Nothing has really changed. Women are still viewed as nothing more than objects. The feminist movement to date has not stopped men from treating us that way. All we’ve gained is the right to pass that same objectification down to our children, which the new patriarchy loves because kids no longer equal free labor, but expense and responsibility.”

Both quotes illustrate the convoluted nature of capitalism and the patriarchy and their impact on women and the unborn through the act of abortion. The underlying message of many of the pro-life feminists that I interviewed was that society must be restructured in order to include the needs of all of humanity, particularly women and children who have been historically marginalized. There are differences among pro-life feminists and pro-life feminist groups as to how this restructuring should occur, but the restructuring itself was one recurring theme throughout the research that was particularly important.

Abortion as a Pressure Rather than a Freedom

Women who become unexpectedly pregnant face a lot of societal pressure and, sometimes, social pressure to have abortions. Young and poor women, in particular, disproportionately face these pressures. They may choose not to have the child due to the lack of financial support and resources that would make them able to raise a child and still

pursue their educational or career goals. Feminists for Life has a campaign focused specifically on reducing abortion rates in college-aged women and providing them on-campus resources that make it possible for them to continue school during their pregnancies and after they give birth. Social pressures can include pressure from the father of the child, possibly a boyfriend, friends, and family members—all people who look at the world and see its lack of structural support for mothers. The following quote provides a direct insight into the idea that abortion can often be pushed onto women who do not necessarily want one.

“So I don’t see [abortion] as a wonderful, liberating thing, so much as I see it as a response--a really tragic response--to a society that is built by and for the benefit of people who don’t bear children, and people who do bear children are just considered a special interest that they might be nice enough to cater to, but those needs aren’t really seen as quite legitimate.”

This statement is similar to the pro-choice argument: that abortion itself is not desirable in the sense that women don’t hope to become unexpectedly pregnant. It also draws upon the idea that society is not set up for women. Instead, society is designed for men, a theme that was discussed in both the “Valuing All Human Life As it Exists” and the “Capitalism and the Patriarchy” sections. As was said, within our capitalist society, there is a perception that the efficient worker does not bear children. Pro-life feminists argue that society needs to improve upon the resources that it provides to pregnant women, mothers, and families in order to make our capitalist society more conducive to child rearing. This, they say, would be for the benefit of all people, not only those who are biologically able to have children.

This argument is very similar on both sides of the abortion debate: pro-life and pro-choice feminists agree that society must improve its structures to allow all people to

develop to their full potential and that the patriarchy is an institution that is detrimental to women. That is a general principle of feminism that is shared by both pro-life and pro-choice feminists. However, pro-life feminists take this concept a step further by claiming that allowing women to become pregnant in the first place and then taking that pregnancy away through the procedure of abortion denies femininity at its roots and continues to reproduce and perpetuate patriarchal structures and systems.

Research Conclusions

The significance of this research is that the pro-life feminist movement has indeed failed to assimilate with both the pro-life and mainstream feminist movements. Pro-life feminists seek to redesign society to be more responsive to the needs of women, specifically to their reproductive and maternal needs. Many pro-life feminists take politically liberal stances on most issues, but the politicization of abortion and the polarization of our political system has led to hostile relations between both sides and an overall lack of dialogue and understanding.

Pro-choice feminists respond to gender inequality by arguing that by giving women more power and control over their own bodies through safe and legal access to abortion, women become more equal. Pro-life feminists argue that the accessibility of abortions creates more problems by adding pressure to seek and obtain abortions. This, they say, takes responsibility away from the father because of the strong rhetoric of choice that surrounds abortion; abortion causes society to consider it is the woman's sole decision whether or not she gives birth. Open access to abortion, they say, also takes some of the patriarchal oppression off of women and places it onto the unborn. Ultimately, capitalism

and the patriarchal structure of society causes women to seek abortions as answers to unplanned pregnancies. I think most feminists, regardless of their stance on abortion, would agree that there are current systems in place that put a disproportionate financial burden on working mothers that make it difficult to have and raise children without facing difficult, and in some cases, extreme hardships.

In conducting further research, I would like to explore ways in which pro-life feminist groups have worked and could work with pro-choice groups to address these structural societal shortcomings. With cooperation and collaboration between the two sides that agree on a large number of policy changes and programs, positive change will happen more quickly. I would also like to explore the demographic makeup of pro-life feminists and how they may be able to interact and collaborate with other individuals and groups that hold similar values but may not explicitly consider themselves pro-life feminists simply because they are not aware that it exists as a movement. I think that pro-life feminism has the potential to bring both pro-life and pro-choice advocates together and depoliticize abortion enough to take steps towards a more progressive and balanced society. Although small, the pro-life feminist movement is an important bridge that has the potential to connect the incredibly polarized sides of the “Abortion Wars” in order to find answers that are best for all life, including men, women, children, the unborn.

Chapter 3: Policy Development

Introduction to the Action Plan

For the Citizenship and Civic Engagement program, students must use their research as a base for invoking tangible change in the Syracuse community. Upon the completion of my comprehensive quantitative research on pro-life feminism, I sought ways to develop policy initiatives in the Syracuse community that would benefit women facing unplanned pregnancies while gaining support from both abortion supporters and opponents. I struggled to come up with an idea regarding abortion that could be implemented over the course of a year, with little funding, and that both sides would agree to support. I proposed and later discarded several ideas, until eventually connecting with Caitlin McArdle, the Education and Outreach Program Director of Planned Parenthood of Syracuse, who was in the process of applying for funding to launch a comprehensive teenage pregnancy prevention program in Onondaga County.

My completed project is the result of many preliminary ideas that were rejected and revised or redone, which eventually evolved into what I am presenting in this paper. Working within the community to implement a substantive policy certainly taught me a lot about nonprofit organizing and coalition building--concepts that I will describe further in this section.

Brief Description of the Action Plan

This project seeks to work with Planned Parenthood of Syracuse, New York in order to apply for Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (CAPP) funding from the New York State Department of Public Health. This funding will be used to implement a

comprehensive teen pregnancy and STD prevention program in Onondaga County. One major component of the program is that it incorporates a variety of community partners to lead afterschool programs for teenage participants because pregnancy and STD prevention is more successful when programs take a comprehensive, opportunity-based approach rather than focusing solely on sexual health and safety. The official “Action” of this project is the connection that I made with the Open Hand Theater in Syracuse. The Open Hand Theater specializes in mask and puppet theater traditions, and they currently run a variety of afterschool and summer programs in the Syracuse community. They have agreed to partner with Planned Parenthood in applying for and carrying out this new CAPP program by conducting mask and puppet workshops with participating CAPP teenagers.

Challenges in Community Organizing and Program Development

It is important to note the process that led to the final Action Plan that I am discussing in this report. The work that went into this project is much larger than the results, and every step allowed me to broaden my understanding of the context of feminism, abortion, and reproductive health, the Syracuse community as a whole, and the trickiness of community organizing. I would like to briefly explain the challenges that I encountered while I was working on my Action Plan, many of which were due to the fact that my project relied on the willingness and cooperation of many community actors.

The policy proposal that I initially came up with would have created a foundation supported by both pro-life and pro-choice groups. The foundation would help to financially support women who had become unexpectedly pregnant and could not afford to raise and care for a child. My idea was that the funding would have come from pro-life organizations

looking for a women-centric approach to reducing and eventually eliminating abortion. The women who would receive the funding ideally would have had to be seriously considering having an abortion because of the financial burden that raising a child poses, and more importantly, they would not have an abortion if that burden could be eased, either in full or in part. Pro-choice groups and abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood that work regularly with women in this position would refer them to this new foundation where their financial situation would be evaluated and then, upon meeting the requirements, they would either receive an individual sponsor who agrees to partially provide for the child or monthly payments from the foundation as a whole for as long as the women's income is not sufficient to care for the child.

I struggled to find an organization that would lead in the implementation of this proposed foundation, and more importantly I discovered that Planned Parenthood, a major abortion provider in the Syracuse community, would not have been legally able to participate in such a program without spending time and resources analyzing and vetting it. This project would have been highly connected to my research on pro-life feminism, however it was clearly not possible to pursue such a project in one semester. I learned a lot through this initial failure. I made several connections with women's health organizations in the Syracuse community, which eventually led to the creation of my final Action Plan. I also learned what challenges community organizing poses and how those challenges are best overcome. Community organizing must come from a place of open-mindedness and flexibility. The women's health organizations that exist in Syracuse know of their own needs and policies much better than I do, and I learned that it's best to approach them with "What can I do to help?" rather than "This is how I am going to help you."

Fortunately, I was able to reach out to Planned Parenthood of Syracuse, where I had completed a Health Center Advocacy internship the previous summer. The ties that I had to the clinic helped to get my project in the door, and the fact that I had already worked and had relationships with several of the Planned Parenthood employees made them much more willing to allow my project to supplement their already existing effort in applying for the CAPP grant. This experience additionally taught me that building off existing partnerships and coalitions makes projects and organizations stronger. It also taught me that people who have seen the work you can do are more willing to help with future projects.

Chapter 4: Comprehensive Pregnancy Prevention

Justification for a New Teenage Pregnancy and STD Prevention Program in Onondaga County

Teenage pregnancy is a significant issue in and around Syracuse, New York. According to data collected from 2010 to 2012 by the New York State Department of Health, pregnancy rates for teenagers ages 15 to 19 in the state of New York, are 21.2 per 1,000. In Onondaga County, that number more than doubles to 45.8 per 1,000. In the 13204 zip code in the heart of Syracuse, teen pregnancy rates increase to a staggering 143.5 per 1,000. Teen pregnancies are disproportionately impacting teenagers living in particular areas of Onondaga County as compared to the state as a whole, and there is a clear need for community intervention.

Literature Review

Of the relatively little research that exists on comprehensive pregnancy prevention programs, the concluding message largely emphasizes the success and necessity of the comprehensive approach. I refer to comprehensive pregnancy prevention program components as aspects of pregnancy prevention programs that may not directly or explicitly relate to preventing teen pregnancy.

One study conducted by researchers Marilyn Johns, Fe Moncloa, and Elizabeth Gong in the Journal of Extension in August 2000, looks at current literature as well as their original fieldwork, to identify the ten best practices for preventing teen pregnancy. These practices are:

1. Youth Development

2. Involvement of Family and Other Caring Adults
3. Male Involvement
4. Cultural Relevance
5. Community-Wide Campaigns
6. Service Learning Programs
7. Programs to Improve Employment Opportunities
8. Sexuality Education and AIDS Education Programs
9. Outreach in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs
10. Access to Reproductive Health Services

Of these, the first seven components qualify as *comprehensive* methods to pregnancy prevention because they do not necessarily directly discuss, educate, or revolve around sexual or reproductive health. Moreover, many of the first seven components of this list include broadening the experiences and opportunities given to the participating teenagers, including involving a wider range of supporters such as parents and family members and offering new experiences such as service learning programs and employment opportunities. The final three components of this list are directly related to pregnancy prevention, and make up the educational and health aspects of comprehensive sex education. It is important to note that the majority of the items on this list does not directly address sexual health programs in its efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy.

Additional research conducted in a 1992 study sponsored by the Illinois State Department of Child and Family Services looks at an Illinois program dedicated to preventing teenage pregnancy. The program focused on providing resources that helped adolescents develop to their fullest capacities, including helping “young adolescents stay in school, [delaying] sexual activity and pregnancy, and [developing] realistic career goals” (ERIC 1992, 3). The mission of the Illinois programs were to address the root causes of teen pregnancy, which the article claims are due to teens having “little hope for a better life and

few plans that a baby would disrupt” (ERIC 1992, 3). By providing adolescents with the opportunities to develop their abilities with a strong network of support, the belief is that they will be more likely to make better choices in terms of sexual activity and birth control (ERIC 1992, 3). This echoes the beliefs of many of the pro-life feminists that I interviewed in my research and could, perhaps, serve as a starting point for cooperation and collaboration between abortion opponents and supporters in efforts to pursue women-centric approaches to sexual health and reproductive justice.

The Illinois article makes recommendations on elements of pregnancy prevention programs that contribute to reducing teen pregnancy rates. These include: developing a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, peer interaction, recreation, discussion groups, community service opportunities, academic support, exposure to the world of work, family-life education, parental involvement, and linkage with school and community resources (ERIC 1992, 4). A relationship with a caring adult, recreation, community service opportunities, academic support, and exposure to the world of work are all comprehensive elements of the program, and like the previous research presented, account for more than half of the elements of a successful pregnancy prevention program.

The “In Control” Program in Rochester, New York

Many of the comprehensive pregnancy and STD prevention program elements discussed in the literature review are the basis of the Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (CAPP) funded “In Control” program model employed by Planned Parenthood of Rochester, New York. The primary components of all CAPP programs are to provide teens with evidence-based sex education programs, ensure access to a clinic that

provides sexual health services, expand opportunities for teens, both for fun and for career development, and to place a focus on community engagement. “In Control” was implemented in 1993, and has since then recognized that teenagers are far more likely to effectively use contraception if they have higher levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy. By providing teenagers in the Rochester community with opportunities to participate in community-based activities to which they would have otherwise not had access, “In Control” has reduced the rates of teen pregnancy by half in the targeted zip codes (NYS Department of Health 2010-2012).

More specifically, “In Control” offers educational, vocational, and recreational programs, including information and educational programs about sex and relationships, access to health care services for young women and men, opportunities for teens to educate other teens through the peer educator program, access to a comprehensive music industry, production, and performance program, dance classes, marching band, and a teen-led television program series in which teenagers discuss both sexual and non-sexual health and wellness issues that are currently impacting their lives.

The goal of the “In Control” program is to educate and empower participants in order to build self-esteem and self-assurance with the belief that with these new opportunities and skills, participating teenagers will be more equipped to effectively use contraception. The “In Control” model aligns with what the research has proven to work. “In Control” takes a totally comprehensive approach to reduce and prevent teenage pregnancy and the contraction of STDs in Rochester. Importantly, all ten of the pregnancy prevention practices presented in the research done by Jones, Moncloa, Gong are provided

by Planned Parenthood’s “In Control” program, and the majority of the programs that were utilized in the Illinois program are also present in “In Control.”

Developing a CAPP Program in Onondaga County

I am working alongside the Director of Education and Outreach for Planned Parenthood of Central New York and founder of “In Control” in Rochester, Rick Bartell, and Director of Education and Outreach for Planned Parenthood of Syracuse, Caitlin McArdle, to apply for CAPP grant funding in order to implement a pregnancy prevention program modelled after “In Control” in Onondaga County. We have reached out to various potential community partners in order to provide a variety of opportunities that are appealing to teens, to gain expertise in diverse areas, and because coalitions are better able to meet the needs and interests of all participants. We are also looking for a space in the community (possibly a community center) that is located in or near the zip codes that have the highest rates of teen pregnancy to serve as a “home base” for our programming. In the future, we hope to have our own CAPP program building.

The success of the program will first be determined by whether or not the New York State Department of Health approves Planned Parenthood’s CAPP newest grant application. We are confident that the funding will be approved based on the success of the “In Control” program in Rochester in particular, as well as the success of various other Planned Parenthood-led CAPP funded programs throughout Central New York. We applied for the CAPP funding this past winter and we hope to have the program up and running by the summer of 2016. We are still in the process of connecting with potential community partners because that is the most important component of the CAPP program. We will

borrow the structure and sex education materials from “In Control,” but we must create a program coalition that is unique to Syracuse. As of April 2016, we have connected with several community organizations in Syracuse, including the Somali Bantu Community Association, Vera House, the Y.W.C.A., the Media Unit, and the Open Hand Theater. The Open Hand Theater is the organization on which I chose to focus this project, and they agreed in early December to become a CAPP partner.

The “Open Hand Theater” as a Key Community Partner

I chose to connect with the Open Hand Theater because they already have established afterschool and summer programs for elementary, middle school, and University students. The age demographic that they lack are high school students, which will be the ages of the many of the youth participating in the CAPP program. The programs that the Open Hand Theater currently offers include comprehensive theater production programs which teach participants how to write a script, create the masks and puppets needed for the show, how to determine stage directions and lighting, and then perform the production that the participants produced entirely themselves. The theater also offers costume design programs that they say have appealed highly to pre-teen and teenage girls in the past. This type of partnership and comprehensive programming has proven to be incredibly successful with “In Control’s” television and music production programs. I chose the Open Hand Theater because of this as well as the uniqueness of mask and puppet theater--most people have never had the opportunity to interact with puppets and masks on a regular basis. This type of theater may be more appealing to the less outgoing participants because it does not require that they present themselves on stage, rather they

can use masks and puppets to convey their message. Another appealing aspect of the Open Hand Theater is its commitment to social justice. The theater was established in response to the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 70s, and their goal is to use mask and puppet theater as a platform to discuss “the real issues” that are impacting the community. They have communicated to us that they are interested in working with CAPP teenagers to put on a puppet show about issues that they are dealing with, similar to the teen-led television production program offered by “In Control.”

The CAPP grant would provide the Open Hand Theater with compensation for the programs that they offer and for any additional programs that they design specifically for the CAPP program. By partnering with Planned Parenthood, the Open Hand Theater will be able to offer a program that combines their current theater participants with the teenagers participating in the CAPP program, engaging more community members in puppet and mask theater. The theater will have nearly complete control over the programming design and implementation and is not obligated to focus on pregnancy prevention education. The CAPP community partners are essentially sub-contracted by Planned Parenthood. They will offer the programming and Planned Parenthood will provide the funding for such programming through the CAPP grant. Planned Parenthood will be in charge of organizing the partners and distributing funds. After one year, we will assess the effectiveness of each program and the overall interest of the participants to determine if the partnership will continue.

It is important to reiterate that the Open Hand Theater will be one of many community partners working with Planned Parenthood to reduce teen pregnancy and STD rates in Onondaga County. The goal is to provide as many opportunities as possible to

appeal to a wide range of teenagers with diverse interests and potential interests. The Syracuse community is unique from Rochester, and we can not and do not want to create a program that is identical to “In Control” in Syracuse. The goal is to create a CAPP program that reflects the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County and engages community members and teenagers to interact with the community and each other in new ways. Planned Parenthood will be responsible for the sex education component of the CAPP program as well as providing access to a reproductive health clinic.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The issue of abortion has made women's reproductive health contentious for reasons including religious beliefs, personal ethical values, and conservative politics. Through this research, I have not discovered an answer to the question of how we can mediate the feud between abortion supporters and opponents and I did not expect to find that answer. I chose to approach my research on abortion opposition through an exploration of uniquely feminist voices and perspectives that are often silenced or ignored in the larger arena of abortion rhetoric because I wanted to understand if there was a way for feminists of all sorts to come together to work for reproductive justice and create policy changes that put women's voices and needs at the forefront of the conversation.

I do not have a definitive answer for how pro-life and pro-choice feminists can put abortion aside because it is an issue that is deeply rooted in personal morality. What I did find is that both sides generally agree that our society is profoundly lacking in structural support for women and mothers. Both pro-life and pro-choice feminists generally agree that we must advocate for policies that provide welfare services to women and families, such as paid family leave and subsidized day care. Sexual education and distributing contraception to young people was a more contentious issue for some pro-life feminists who held strong religious beliefs, but many pro-life feminists do support pregnancy prevention in all its forms. Working with Planned Parenthood to develop a comprehensive teenage pregnancy and STD prevention program for the Action Plan portion of this project is one way to support young women and men so that abortion never needs to be a choice that they make. Such programs improve the quality of life of the individuals involved, their families, communities, and, if realized on a large scale, the United States as a whole would

benefit from such programs. Comprehensive pregnancy prevention programs such as the “In Control” program in Rochester and the program that, if grant money is provided, will soon be implemented in Syracuse, is one possible solution to directing the conversation away from abortion and towards reproductive health and personal and community development. The main goal of the CAPP program is to provide structured support to teenagers in order to improve their self-confidence and self-efficacy in hopes that they will be more likely to postpone sexual activity and avoid unprotected sex. This program may be something that many pro-life feminists would also support, although the fact that it is led by Planned Parenthood may be a deterring factor. However, the ideals of the comprehensive approach to pregnancy and STD prevention are a substantive and workable solution to reducing the demand for abortion and creating an environment that is more conducive to constructive discussions of reproductive health and the development of society as a whole.

There are many subsets of reproductive justice, and as an issue, it is closely tied to economic and social justice. The factors that impact whether a woman becomes unexpectedly pregnant, whether or not she can and does have the child, and then whether she can support the child once it's born, are issues deeply intertwined with many other structural problems that we must overcome. In the future, I hope to continue to learn about the many nuances of reproductive politics and work to improve the structural programs that assist women and families and dismantle the patriarchy that is still so prevalent in our society.

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