

CONSTRUCTING 'FETAL PERSONHOOD' IN THE PRESS:
A STUDY OF THE *VANCOUVER SUN*'S COVERAGE OF REPRODUCTION FROM
1969 TO 1989

by

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ABSTRACT

Recent feminist literature has traced the emergence of the notion of fetal personhood since the 1960s. Feminists attribute this development to a historical trend of growing 'expert' control over motherhood and reproduction; to advances in obstetrical technology, particularly the ability to visualize the interior of the womb using ultrasound; to legal decisions which recognize fetal rights; and to a strategic shift among anti-abortionists from a religious-moral argument against abortion to a scientific-technical one. However, there are two problematic aspects of feminist research and writing on the fetus: first, the tendency to focus on law as the primary site of the construction of fetal personhood; and second, the dominance of 'standpoint' theoretical perspectives. This thesis addresses these concerns through a feminist postmodern analysis of print media as one of countless sites at which meaning is constructed in society. In particular, the study involves the systematic quantitative and qualitative analysis of the news coverage of reproductive issues in the *Vancouver Sun* from 1969 to 1989.

The research findings affirm that the press play a role in constructing particular definitions of reproduction by consistently favoring moderate or presumably common sense views at the expense of immoderate or extreme views, and by presenting preferred definitions in terms of authoritative discourses which can make a claim to truth based on the scientific method. Specifically, the construction of fetal personhood in the *Vancouver Sun* is accomplished through an emphasis on assumptions about the role of motherhood, advances in fetal medicine, and the representation of the maternal-fetal relationship as an adversarial one. Overall, the analysis reveals that the construction of fetal personhood in the press is not a clear case of certain groups (namely, anti-abortionists) directly controlling the production of meaning at the expense of other groups (namely, women). Rather, it is part of a more complex process involving the discursive production of meaning in society, where ideas about motherhood and the fetus are constructed through a number of powerful discourses which can make claims to truth.

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OVERVIEW

The point of departure for this thesis is the argument appearing in feminist literature that since the 1960s the idea of 'fetal personhood' has pervaded public consciousness, and that the fetus has emerged as a key figure in current understanding of the abortion issue in particular. Noting how the moral, legal and biological status of the fetus has moved to the forefront of public attention, many feminists have claimed that the notion of fetal personhood places the pregnant woman in an adversarial relationship to the fetus, particularly if she deviates from medically, socially, or legally appropriate behaviour. Feminists have identified medical and legal professionals; technological advancements in the areas of obstetrics and fetal medicine; a conscious shift by anti-abortion campaigners to a strategy based on scientific rather than religious-moral rhetoric; a move to the political right in the 1980s; and patriarchal attitudes in society as the sources of the emergence of fetal personhood.

While there is significant agreement among feminists that the fetus has recently become a factor in the way that reproductive issues are viewed, there is less agreement about why and how this has occurred. However, explanations which on their surface appear to be diverse, such as those based on radical, liberal, or socialist feminism, actually share common assumptions. Specifically, many feminists working from within these perspectives assume that dominant ideas about reproduction, among other things, are based on patriarchal notions perpetuated by a group of people or by a social structure, and moreover, that *truth* about issues such as motherhood or the maternal-fetal relationship, is based on 'women's experience' which is suppressed by the dominant patriarchal view. Collectivized political struggle on the part of feminists is presumed to reveal the underlying reality of women's experience.

The specific tasks in this thesis are: to undertake a critical examination of the theoretical foundations in much of the feminist research concerning the emergence of fetal

personhood; to propose an alternative understanding of the construction of meaning which will be informed by postmodernism and poststructuralism; and to broaden the existing feminist research in this area to the mass media as an important site of meaning production.

This thesis focuses specifically on how the print media have contributed to the construction of fetal personhood. Press coverage in a British Columbian newspaper is systematically analyzed to determine how the intersection of various authoritative discourses and the marginalization or exclusion of others contributes to the notion of an independent fetus that is threatened by the pregnant woman. The inquiry is carried out from a postmodernist perspective. The press text is examined as contingent, contextual, and socially constructed language which is part of an overall structure of power/knowledge production.

The analysis of the press discourse is based on news reports of reproductive issues which have been randomly sampled from *The Vancouver Sun* for the two decades from 1969 to 1989. Developments in reproductive and obstetrical technologies and significant events regarding the abortion issue in Canada occurred during this period. Specifically, ultrasound was first introduced in the early 1960s and became commonplace by 1970. As well, in 1988 the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the restrictions on abortion that had been retained in the Criminal Code 1969 amendment. The first level of analysis is an overall description of the sample based on news and source formats used in the *Vancouver Sun*. The second level of analysis is a discussion of some of the recurring themes concerning the fetus and mother.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

The thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter One provides a survey of feminist literature that documents the recent emergence of the notion of fetal personhood and the changing nature of the relationship between the mother and the fetus. An examination of this literature raises questions about the theoretical assumptions which underpin much feminist research on the emerging theme of fetal personhood. Specifically, the precise way that certain ideas become prevalent in society is questioned.

Chapter Two begins with a more detailed critique of the assumptions outlined in the previous chapter. The critique is aimed at standpoint and structuralist feminist perspectives in particular. An alternative theoretical framework informed by postmodern, poststructural and feminist insights is presented. The framework is intended to provide an explanation of how definitions of the fetus, the mother and reproduction generally, are brought into being and given meaning, and how some definitions become more pervasive than others. Finally, the construction of fetal personhood is examined within the broader context of medical, legal and social developments in the 20th century. In particular, it is argued that the fetus has emerged from an especially powerful set of discourses which can make a 'claim to truth', namely, science and law, and that underlying these discourses are assumptions about women and motherhood.

In Chapter Three a similar analysis is undertaken with respect to recent literature on the mass media. Theoretical accounts in which the media is viewed as a tool of social control which perpetuates a particular set of ideas to the passive audience are critiqued. An alternative account informed again by postmodernist, poststructuralist and feminist insights is outlined. The final part of the chapter details the research strategy for the thesis.

In Chapter Four the aggregate sample of coverage on reproduction in the *Vancouver Sun* is examined using a variety of summary statistics. From this examination it can be seen that there is a consistent representation of the notion of an adversarial relationship between the mother and the fetus. Moreover, one of the primary ways in which this theme is manifested is through the newspaper's tendency to continually "maintain order" by favoring what is presented as the moderate view and criticizing immoderate views. In the process a particular set of meanings about reproduction is advanced. The analysis in Chapter Four is broken down into several components, each of which reflects the particular format constraints under which the print medium must operate, but they also reflect a comprehensive way of categorizing newspaper content.

Chapter Five takes a micro-approach to the adversarial relationship between the fetus and the mother through a focus on some of the most prevalent themes appearing in the *Vancouver Sun's* coverage of reproduction. In particular, three recurrent themes which form part of the construction of fetal personhood and maternal-fetal antagonism are examined: 1) the autonomy and viability of the fetus; 2) the pregnant woman as a threat; 3) the need to protect the fetus from the mother through education, advice or more coercive means.

Chapter Six draws some conclusions based on the findings and theoretical framework. The discussion centers on the patterns of coverage in the *Vancouver Sun*, particularly where the fetus and the maternal-fetal relationship are concerned. It is argued that the representation of fetal personhood in the press is not as straightforward or 'instrumentalist' as many feminist theorists would suggest. Rather, it is part of the discursive process of the construction of meaning in society. The emergence of the fetus into public discourse on reproduction reflects a particular set of historical circumstances in which there is a primacy of language which can make a 'claim to truth'. Finally, the questions that are raised in this examination of the media are addressed in an outline of future research directions.

CHAPTER ONE
THE CHANGING PERCEPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
MOTHER AND THE FETUS: ¹
A LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years many feminist scholars have focused on the moral, legal and biological status of the fetus, or the issue of 'fetal personhood'. Feminist literature frequently points to an emerging social theme which positions the pregnant woman in an adversarial relationship to her fetus, particularly if she deviates from medically, socially, or legally appropriate behavior. This chapter outlines some of the arguments found in feminist literature regarding the changing nature of the relationship between the mother and the fetus.

A number of factors are involved in the changing relationship. First, feminists have argued that since the 1920s 'expert' interest in and control over prenatal care and motherhood have increased and the autonomy of mothers over parenting has decreased. It should be noted that some commentators have observed that medical-scientific control over the domains of pregnancy and motherhood began in the 18th century (Donzelot 1979; Foucault 1990). However, events occurring in the 20th century have been particularly relevant to the relationship between the mother and the fetus. Second, during the 1960s, the development and use of medical technology allowing experts and the general public to view the fetus in the womb created a proliferation of information about the fetus (medical, legal, anti-abortion and pro-choice). And third, the theme of maternal-fetal conflict has been emphasized in recent years through child protection litigation, policies designed to protect the fetus and particularly invasive medical technologies.

¹ The term 'fetus' is used in this thesis to refer to the developing organism at all prenatal stages. Technically, however, the appropriate terms are 'conceptus' throughout the first two weeks of gestation, 'embryo' between weeks two and six of gestation, and 'fetus' from week six of gestation through birth (see Callahan and Knight 1992).

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF PREGNANCY AND MOTHERHOOD

Many feminist commentators have attempted to demonstrate that a romanticized and idealistic notion of the nuclear family has formed the basis for the control and regulation of women in Western cultures (Maher 1992; Strong-Boag 1982, 1988). In particular, feminists have asserted that the construction of an ideal image of the maternal role has reinforced a distinction between 'good' mothers who fit the prescription for motherhood, and 'bad' mothers who do not (e.g. Mitchinson 1979, 1986, 1988; McLaren and McLaren 1986; Gordon 1982; Chunn 1988, 1992; Smart 1982; Brophy and Smart 1985; Parr 1982).

Some researchers have claimed that the distinction between the 'good' and the 'bad' mother can be attributed to cultural and scientific shifts that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century (Strong-Boag 1982, 1988; Ehrenreich and English 1979; Maher 1992; Davin 1978; Rothman 1989). A community of 'experts' has increasingly relied on science to define duties of mothers, or the correct formula for motherhood (Strong-Boag 1982). As the expert interest in defining maternal responsibility increased, women were held accountable for the moral, and physical development of, first, school-aged children, and then preschoolers. Subsequently this responsibility extended into pregnancy, and finally pre-conception. It is noteworthy that feminists such as Strong-Boag do not make the argument that these were newly found responsibilities for mothers since women had always taken the primary role in child-care; rather, the feminist contention is that the expert definition of maternal responsibility had expanded. According to Strong-Boag, what had changed was that the medical-scientific community had usurped women as the primary definers of the role of motherhood, and in the process it had obscured the 'reality' of pregnancy and motherhood based on 'women's experience'.

Veronica Strong-Boag (1982) has identified the period from 1920 to 1940 as a time in which motherhood was reshaped most dramatically in Canada. She claimed that there was an unprecedented shift in the degree of interest taken by medical experts and other professionals in early childhood and mothering. Doctors, psychologists, social workers and

teachers led a peace time campaign to “reshape the critical preschool years” (*Ibid.*, 160). The literature produced in the various professions to advise women about mothering skills was rooted in the idea that the relationship between mother and child was deficient and that professional counselling and training was necessary in order to bring mothers up-to-speed. The “amateurism” of the average Canadian mother was cited as the cause of “mortality, disease, and dysfunction ... and failure later on in life” among children (*Ibid.*, 161). The Canadian government also played a significant role in the dissemination of advice material; particularly under the guise of the federal Division of Child Welfare which in the early 1920s sent out “Little Blue Books” on home and child care to thousands of mothers.² Subsequently, the Canadian Council of Child Welfare sponsored a nine month package of letters on prenatal care (*Ibid.*, 162). Beginning in the late 1920s, organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, the Victorian Order of Nurses and Metropolitan Life Insurance also provided information for mothers and mothers-to-be. The guiding principle in all of this literature was that the mother-child bond was vitally important but that it could only flourish with the external assistance of medical experts.

The inter-war period was also a time in which the medical regulation of pregnancy began to increase. Hospital births for pregnant women became the norm by 1940 (Strong-Boag 1992). The traditional informal links that had been forged among women during childbirth were supplanted by medical doctors who became the ‘guarantors’ of good health (Strong-Boag 1982, 163). In the new medicalized version of childbirth, the woman’s role was defined as caretaker to the developing fetus (Rothman 1989, Ehrenreich and English 1982). For example, women were told that they should avoid sexual activity during pregnancy to ensure the health of the fetus (Strong-Boag *Ibid.*, 163). Advice such as this

² The “Blue Book” series included titles such as *How to take care of the family* (1922), *How to take care of the baby* (1922), *How to take care of the children* (1922). (Strong-Boag 1982, 118). The Department of National Health continued to produce an advice manual for mothers called *The Canadian Mother and Child* (1967, 1970, 1979), which was subsequently called *You and Your Baby* (Health and Welfare Canada 1991).

firmly established the mother's role as the caretaker of children and home, and entrenched the idea that women needed to be trained or educated to be capable mothers.

An important aspect of many feminist critiques is that the current definitions of family, motherhood and even pregnancy are constructions based upon dominant ideas about gender relations. Definitions are contingent on the particular social, structural and power relations at a given point in time. For instance, Barbara Duden (1991) has argued that in the last 20 years, the social awareness of pregnancy has changed from a woman-centered to a fetus-centered definition. She argues that as a result of the invasion of medical practice into the whole area of human reproduction, society in general and women in particular have begun to view mothers as "uterine environments that have to be monitored in order that everything goes right. The medical machinery in a way invades the body and invades the senses so women cannot trust their own senses" (*Ibid.*, 8). According to Duden, women's bodies, and as a result the fetus, have become the objects of medical-scientific exploration.

Thus, feminist research has demonstrated that motherhood, pregnancy and the fetus do not have fixed definitions. Rather, the definitions have changed according to external factors such as medical and other expert advice. In this century women have increasingly become the objects of expert attention. The role of women as mothers, has been redefined and pushed further back into the time of the pregnancy, and even before pregnancy, such that mothers have become responsible for the moral and physical development of the child, then infant, then fetus. As a consequence of the redefinition of a mother's role, a distinction between the 'good' mother and the 'bad' mother became prevalent. Women who fell outside of the expert formula for motherhood were labeled as deviant. Finally, as a result of the increasingly invasive reach of medical-science, women's bodies were objectified, and pregnancy was defined in terms of medical discourse.

MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY AND FETAL PERSONHOOD

A second issue in feminist literature regarding the emergence of the public fetus has been the medical-technological advancements allowing doctors to visualize the interior of the

womb. For example, ultrasound imaging has been used since the 1960s and is now a routine part of most pregnancies (Petchesky 1987, 1990; Oakley 1986; Spallone 1989).³ By projecting the image of the fetus on a television screen the doctor can determine the gestational age and sex of the fetus, as well as look for any abnormalities in the uterus or the fetus. Ultrasound scanning has also been used increasingly for 'ante-natal' diagnosis, or for viewing the woman's uterus before conception (Spallone 1989, 203). This type of diagnosis is indicative of the increasing medical focus on all aspects of reproduction, as well as the increasing demand by women themselves to seek medical confirmation of their health and pregnancies.

Rosalind Petchesky (1987, 1990) was among the first feminist scholars to argue that technologies such as ultrasound have had implications reaching beyond the simple task of viewing the interior of the womb. The child-like fetus has become a familiar image of public discourse. Medical technology allowing doctor to peer into the womb has produced visual images that have been made commonplace in the mass media and through various other groups. The fetal image suspended in blackness was first made public in a June 1962 publication of *Look* magazine which featured what is now commonly recognized as the fetus in progressive stages of development. In the magazine "the fetus is solitary, dangling in the air... and in every caption it is called 'the baby' and is referred to as 'he'—until the birth when it turns out to be a girl" (1987, 61-62). The miracle of fetal development, and more significantly Petchesky argues, the miracle of fetal survival despite all odds is implicit in the images. The *Look* magazine spread emphasized the fetal image and ideas inherent in that image which have subsequently been utilized by anti-abortion campaigners and, Petchesky argues, drawn into the public vocabulary on abortion (*Ibid.*, 61-62).

³ There have been many critiques of the widespread use of ultrasound. For example, Oakley (1986) has suggested that the use of such an invasive technique that is presumed by the medical community to be safe (but is suspect), is not justified. She claims that "any mother can tell you that fetuses don't always move in the same way and that sometimes a healthy fetus doesn't move at all" (*Ibid.*, 11). Barbara Duden (1991) maintains that ultrasound constructs an artificial relationship between the mother and the fetus which is dependent on the medical technology rather than on the mother's intuition as it was in the past.

Petchesky and others (Gallagher 1985; Franklin 1991) have claimed that the image of the “tiny helpless and suffering creature” was well suited to the anti-abortion campaign, appearing frequently as part of their rhetoric. A vivid example of this is the American “pro-life propaganda film” *The Silent Scream* which was first shown on major network television in 1984, and since has become a show piece for the Right-to-Life movement in Canada and the U.S. In the film, still photos of a fetus being aborted were translated into real-time video. While the viewers watched the murky, black-and-white image representing a 12-week-old fetus, they listened to the “sober and bespectacled” narrator, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, a recognized American anti-abortion campaigner (*Ibid.*, 59). Nathanson interspersed moral anti-abortion rhetoric with presumably authoritative medical language. The intention of the film was to “reinforce the visual ‘bonding’ theory [between the mother and the fetus] at the level of the clinic by bringing the live fetal image into everyone’s living rooms” (*Ibid.*, 59). Petchesky noted that the idea of visual bonding which was the American National Right to Life Movement’s impetus for making the *Silent Scream* film, first appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and hypothesized that women who viewed the fetal image on an ultrasound screen were more likely to bond with the fetus, and therefore less likely to seek abortions.

According to Petchesky (1987, 58), the effect of this film was three-fold: first, the image of the helpless fetus entered public discourse on a mass-scale through the electronic media; second, anti-abortion rhetoric was transformed from a mainly religious-moral mode to a medical-scientific mode of presentation; and third, the fetal image took on the qualities of an already-born infant, and this idea was bolstered by Dr. Nathanson’s descriptions of the fetus as a “living unborn child” and a “human being indistinguishable from any of us”. Moreover, the image was described as an entity capable of human actions and thought in comments such as “the fetus does not sense aggression in its sanctuary ... attempts to escape [the instrument used in abortion], and ... rears back its head in a *silent scream*”.

Petchesky's arguments apply to the United States; however, Brodie (1992) Gavigan (1992) and Jenson (1992) note that the impact of the fetal image has been evident in public discourse in Canada as well. For example, Janine Brodie (1992) has demonstrated that political discussions of abortion in this country have been framed in fetal-centered terminology. In particular, Members of Parliament campaigning for the anti-abortion position in the House of Commons debates in July 1988, incorporated arguments based on medical-scientific observations of the fetus.⁴ The pro-life MPs evoked imagery such as:

... [at conception] the colour of our eyes, the size of the our feet, and the capacity of our brains have all been established. Nothing needs to be added other than food, shelter and care ...the unborn can cry, hiccup, develop individual tastes, be startled, and feel pain (John Reimer, Conservative M.P. cited in Brodie 1992, 80).

The basis for anti-abortion rhetoric in the House of Commons debates was the scientific evidence that life begins at conception. For example, Conservative MP John Reimer insisted that "... medical evidence is concrete. It is objective. It is compelling. Life is an uninterrupted continuum which begins at conception and ends at death", and, as Conservative MP Jake Epp concluded, "... to hold otherwise is bad science" (cited in Brodie 1992, 79). The consequence of this type of argument, Brodie argued, was a "discursive campaign" against women. This is contrary to the view espoused by many feminists that the woman and fetus are an indivisible living unit. Brodie claimed that by contextualizing the abortion issue in terms of rights, the female body is both expropriated and disenfranchised (*Ibid.*, 81; see also, Smart 1989).

Technological developments in the 1960s allowed medical professionals to visualize the interior of the womb, and subsequently these images reached the greater public. Feminists have pointed to the way in which the now pervasive image of the fetus (tiny man, suspended in blackness) together with medical descriptions of fetal behaviour, have been

⁴ For a similar discussion of parliamentary treatment of abortion in Britain see Off-centre: feminism and cultural studies, and particularly Steinberg (1991).

appropriated by anti-abortion supporters and the general public. The new visibility of the fetus has the dual effect of rendering women invisible, or de-emphasizing their importance in pregnancy, while at the same time constructing the notion of an adversarial relationship between mother and fetus. Thus, women are marginalized in their own pregnancies.

THE PREGNANT WOMAN VERSUS THE FETUS

A third area explored in recent feminist research is the idea of maternal-fetal conflict as it is manifested in the law. There is no explicit legal protection of the fetus in Canadian law, despite the fact that the question of fetal personhood has been raised on several occasions in Canadian courts. For example, in recent cases such as *Sullivan and Lemay*⁵ and *Daigle v. Tremblay*⁶ the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the fetus was not a person for the purposes of the Criminal Code. Thus, the courts have maintained a position of not assigning rights inherent in personhood to the fetus. However, it is interesting to note that in *R. v. Morgentaler*⁷, Supreme Court of Canada Justices Dickson, Wilson, Beetz and McIntyre all suggested that the state had a legitimate interest in the protection of the fetus.

In the decision the Court held that Section 251 of the Criminal Code was unconstitutional. Chief Justice Dickson argued that S. 251 was manifestly unfair on procedural grounds:

Forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a fetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations, is a profound interference with a woman's body and thus a violation of her security of the person (*Supra* note 6, at 402).

In his extraneous statement, Dickson criticized the notion of forced pregnancy yet he left room for the suggestion that the interests of the fetus, particularly in the third trimester, could be deserving of state protection. This idea was repeated in the comments of Justice Wilson and Justice Beetz, both of whom sided with the majority decision. Justice McIntyre

⁵ *R. v. Sullivan and Lemay* [1991] 1 S.C.R. 489 (S.C.C.).

⁶ *Daigle v. Tremblay* [1989] 2 S.C.R. 530 (S.C.C.).

⁷ *R. v. Morgentaler* [1988] 1 S.C.R. 30 (S.C.C.).

used explicitly anti-abortion language in his dissenting decision, claiming that in Canada "there has always been a clear recognition of the protection of the unborn" (*Supra*, note 6 at 471).

Although there has been no explicit recognition of the legal rights of the fetus in Canada, there is evidence of an emerging theme of fetal personhood and of antagonism between the mother and the fetus, particularly when she deviates from medically and socially sanctioned behaviour. In short, there are increasing numbers of situations where the woman's welfare is only considered in relation to the maternal environment she provides for the fetus. Examples of the manifestation of these social themes identified in feminist literature include: 1) child protection cases or intervention *en ventre sa mere*; 2) policies designed to protect the fetus from abusive mothers; 3) invasive medical technologies designed to treat the fetus.

Legal intervention *en ventre sa mere*⁸

Child protection cases represent the area of the law which has made the most significant contribution to the definition of fetal personhood. Feminists such as Overall (1986) Chavkin (1992) Maher (1992), Tateishi (1989), Grant (1989) and Rodgers (1986) have discussed the development of the body of law in Canada and the United States in which child welfare statutes have been used to define the fetus as a "child in need of protection". The primary result of this legal action on behalf of the fetus has been to control the woman during pregnancy. Most often, the woman was considered a threat to her fetus in cases where she ignored expert advice during her pregnancy by, for example, using illicit drugs, drinking alcohol, or as was the case in *Re Baby R*,⁹ refusing to have a Cesarean section. American litigation on behalf of the fetus has been more far reaching than in Canada. An

⁸ *En ventre sa mere* refers to "an infant in utero and therefore for beneficial purposes legally born" (Webster's Third International Dictionary).

⁹ *Re Baby R* (1988), 15 F.L.R. (3d) 225 (B.C.S.C.).

archetypal example of this occurred in 1980 when a Michigan court held that a “boy could sue his mother for taking anti-biotics during pregnancy, allegedly resulting in discoloration of the child’s teeth” (Chavkin 1992, 195).

Tateishi (1989) has outlined the progression of cases in which intervention *en ventre sa mere* has been alluded to or actually carried out. In 1974 a judge of the Ontario County Court made an extraneous comment in *Re Brown*¹⁰ which had repercussions for later decisions. Justice Stortini concluded that “every child has the right to certain basic rights such as the right to be wanted, *the right to be born healthy...*” etc. (*Supra*, note 8 at 323). In a 1981 case involving the apprehension of a baby born with fetal alcohol syndrome an Ontario Provincial Court judge made similar extraneous comments.¹¹ Although in the latter case the fetus was *not* apprehended before birth, in the subsequent application to have the baby made a ward of the Crown, Justice Bradley claimed that “the child was a child in need of protection prior to birth... by reason of the physical abuse of the child by the mother... and her neglecting or refusing to obtain proper remedial care...” (*Supra*, note 9 at 252). Subsequently in *M.(B.) and O.(D.)*¹² Madame Justice Proudfoot of the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that “it would be incredible to come to any other conclusion than that a drug-addicted child was born abused....” (*Supra*, note 10 at 283).

In 1987, the fetus was declared a “child in need of protection” for the first time in Canada under Ontario child welfare legislation.¹³ The case involved an “unmarried woman with no permanent address” who refused medical attention despite the recommendation of such treatment by the Children’s Aid Society. In his ruling, Justice Kirkland of the Ontario Provincial Court declared that based on the findings in *Re Brown* and *M.(B.) and O.(D.)* and the protection provisions of the child welfare legislation he was satisfied that he had “...the

¹⁰ *Re Brown* (1974) 21 R.F.L. (Ont. Co. Ct.).

¹¹ *Re Children’s Aid Society for Kenora and J.L.* (1981), 134 D.L.R. (3d) 249 (Ont. Prov. Ct.).

¹² *Superintendent of Family and Child Services v. M.(B.) and O.(D.)* (1982), 28 R.F.L. (2d) 278 (B.C.S.C.).

¹³ *Re Children’s Aid Society of Belleville and Unborn Child of L.T. and G.K.* (1987), 59 O.R. (2d) 204 (Ont. Prov. Ct.).

authority to find a child *en ventre sa mere* to be in need of protection” (note 11 at 8-9). Having laid the groundwork Kirkland went on to rule that in the case at hand it was not necessary to apply this action. He stated “although the fetus can be a child in need of protection..... he was unable to find this child in need of protection” (note 11 at 9).

Tateishi argued that these lower court decisions raised disturbing questions about the direction of this type of litigation. The direction in the lower courts, particularly prior to the decision in *Re Baby R*, has been for a generous reading of the child welfare statutes establishing the jurisdiction to protect the fetus from the mother (Tateishi 1987, 141). At a minimum these cases illustrate the extent to which issues related to reproduction have been framed in terms of the competing rights of the mother and the fetus. It is this characterization of the maternal-fetal relationship that feminists such as Smart (1989) claim has compromised women’s position regarding abortion most.

Many of the cases brought under child protection statutes have emphasized a socially constructed distinction between ‘good’ mothers and ‘bad’ mothers. For example, the typical woman in these cases was likely to be of low income, from an ethnic or racial minority, receiving social assistance and/or using illicit drugs. In these cases, courts argued, it was not difficult to “rule in favour of the unborn child”. In effect, it is easy to build public sympathy for the notion that the fetus is need of protection from the ‘neglectful’ or ‘incompetent’ mother in such cases. The presumption of maternal-fetal antagonism leads to the idea that rather than being a woman in need of assistance, she is a deliberate threat to her fetus.

Policies designed to protect the fetus from abusive or incompetent mothers

In Canada and the U.S. societal supervision of maternal health has been linked to public health efforts on behalf of children and/or fetuses. Policies which reflect a shift in public health interests from the child to the “unborn child” and consequently away from the mother include legislation requiring alcohol to be labelled, and licensed establishments to post signs warning pregnant women of the dangers of drinking alcohol. For example, the

City of Vancouver passed a by-law in 1991 specifying that local restaurants were required to post signs at the point-of-purchase of alcohol and in public washrooms (men's and women's) where alcohol is sold stating:

PREGNANCY AND ALCOHOL DO NOT MIX
Protect your baby. Do not drink wine, beer or other
alcoholic beverages during pregnancy. ¹⁴

There are also numerous government and privately sponsored programs designed to increase the life chances of babies born to low-income mothers. For example, in the lower mainland of British Columbia there are several programs aimed at teenage mothers, as well as those designed to assist mothers who use illicit drugs or alcohol including: *Healthiest Babies Possible* sponsored by the Vancouver City Health Department and *Infants and Children at Risk* sponsored by Sunny Hill Hospital. Wendy Chavkin (1992) has pointed out that programs such as these are generally targeted at the health of the baby rather than the mother, as is demonstrated in part by the names of the programs she examined in the United States, for example, Washington, D.C.'s *Better Babies Project*, Boston's *Healthy Baby Program*, Virginia's *Beautiful Babies* program, and Massachusetts' *Healthy Start* program. Since the primary emphasis in these and other programs is to "insure the health of the baby/fetus" or to protect the fetus from "abusive" mothers, Chavkin argued that they have had the effect of separating the health needs of the mother and fetus. The tone of such programs is accusatory, and effectively discourages rather than encourages pregnant women to seek assistance. Instead, Chavkin claimed that emphasis should be placed on access to family planning and abortion, and on improving the health and socio-economic position of the woman (since many pregnant women involved in court actions in Canada and the United States are from racial minority groups and are poor). At the moment, however, such

¹⁴ The enactment of the by-law concerning Advisory signs on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome was part of an amendment to the Health By-law (No. 6580—City of Vancouver) and occurred December 10, 1991.

programs “ascribe innocence to the fetus” and “express anger toward the errant pregnant woman”, and the result is “to distract attention away from the societal failure to provide resources to enable women to be healthy” (*Ibid.*, 201).

Invasive medical technologies designed to treat the fetus

It has been suggested by feminist critics that medical technologies intended to treat the fetus reflect a medical (and public) interest in the scientific frontier of the intrauterine environment and effectively separate the health of the mother from the health of the fetus (Rothman 1984; Spallone 1989; Burstyn 1992). For example, Rothman has pointed out that the fetus has been described in medical textbooks as “the second patient”. One such description states that the fetus has “...rightfully achieved the status of the second patient, a patient who usually faces much greater risk of morbidity and mortality than does the mother” (in Rothman 1984, 25-6). The status of the fetus as a patient was clear in the recommendations of the report of the Law Reform Commission of Canada, titled Crimes against the fetus (1989). In the report that made recommendations for an abortion law to replace S. 251 of the Criminal Code, (overturned in 1988), the commissioners suggested that medical treatment of the fetus is an allowable exception. The report states:

Except in the case of procedures carried out negligently or for the purpose of terminating pregnancy, no criminal liability attaches in respect of destruction or harm caused to a fetus in the course of medical procedures which do not involve risk of destruction or harm disproportionate to the expected benefits... (*Ibid.*, 53).

Unfortunately, as Spallone (1989) has suggested, the increased interest in methods of treating the fetus has not been paralleled by a similar concern for the issues surrounding intervention in the woman’s body. Thus, there has been a greater focus by the medical community’s on areas such as: “... the moral and ethical issues of treating the fetus in utero, the legal rights of the fetus, and the new concept of fetal personality, also known as fetal psychology” (*Ibid.*, 40). Moreover, Spallone claimed that there has been a recent trend in

the United States for medical institutions to appoint interdisciplinary committees of experts to serve the interests of the fetus, and women are not similarly represented (*Ibid.*).

Viewing the fetus as a potential patient emphasizes its separateness from the mother, or its viability, while at the same time it brings the mother's role in pregnancy under further scrutiny. Thus, Spallone has argued that "...the medical status of the fetus *as distinct from the woman who is pregnant* is becoming a star criterion to judge a women's behaviour before, during and after pregnancy" (*Ibid.*, 40). Doctors are viewed as acting in the best interests of the fetus, while women who do not follow the accepted behaviour are viewed as a threat to the fetus.

In summary, much recent feminist scholarship has been devoted to issues surrounding motherhood, pregnancy, and the relationship between the mother and the fetus. Specifically, many feminists have pointed to the emergent theme of fetal personhood in Western society which, they claim, was the result of an increasing medical interest in child rearing and motherhood, as well as the growth of obstetrical technologies which have transformed the fetus into a potential patient. Feminists have also argued that one result of the emphasis on the physical, social, moral, and legal status of the fetus in recent years has been to create a false sense of separation between the pregnant woman and the fetus. Moreover, the claim has been made that the separation has given rise to a theme of maternal-fetal conflict in public discourse such that women who do not follow the expert prescription for the role of motherhood, are considered to be a threat to the health of their fetuses. The boundary between what constitutes the 'good' mother and the 'bad' mother has become clearly delineated in terms of a medical-scientific definition. The preceding review of literature revealed that much feminist research has focused on the control by professional communities over the definition of reproduction in general. Thus, feminists have examined how the actions of doctors and lawyers, primarily, have effected dominant ideas about reproduction. An assumption which underlies many of these analyses is that the expert definitions are false,

based on dominant ideas perpetuated by a group, class, or social structure. For example, in a radical feminist perspective men are viewed as consciously perpetuating a patriarchal ideology to maintain their dominance. Other analyses are premised on the assumption that there is *one* reality about reproduction, pregnancy and the maternal-fetal relationship which is based on women's own experience. The solution, in this account, would be to dismantle dominant and oppressive 'male' definitions in order to expose the 'truth'. In the following chapter these assumptions are critiqued, and an alternative perspective on the construction of meaning surrounding reproductive issues is proposed.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRUCTING FETAL PERSONHOOD: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Underlying some of the feminist arguments described in chapter one is the assumption that a particular conceptualization of the relationship between the mother and the fetus has become dominant. Specifically, the claim is that definitions of pregnancy and child rearing generated by women have been marginalized by the prominence of definitions that support patriarchal relations, and/or the economic power relations of capitalism. Most importantly, such feminist analyses have held that definitions based on women's experience constitute 'reality' which is silenced by dominant ideology. For example, in Strong-Boag's words, women had to "surrender power over themselves and their offspring to childcare experts" and in the process had to suppress their own 'real' experiences as mothers (1982, 161).

Patricia Spallone elaborated the same position as follows:

To change our relationship to science and technology in the most woman-respecting, life-respecting way, we must start from the recognition that *we are our bodies...* We do not have to accept the man-made paradoxes and the splitting up of women into parts (eggs, embryos, wombs, placenta) which has been so ingrained as to seem natural... Knowledge of women's fertility and procreative powers must have to do with our bodies, and be grounded in experiences in the world... (1989, 193).

Spallone presumed the existence of an underlying reality, based on women's experience and their undeniable biological functioning, which is obscured by 'male-science' but which can be uncovered through feminist practices. Similarly, Rothman (1989) used a Marxist analysis to conclude that motherhood has been appropriated by and redefined within the economic and patriarchal structure of late 20th century capitalism. According to Rothman, the solution to overcoming women's oppression is to expose the 'false consciousness' surrounding motherhood, and to reclaim the real definitions based on women's experience (see also

Ehrenreich and English 1978; Gallagher 1985; Grant 1989; Tateishi 1989; Martin 1987; Rodgers 1986; Overall 1986).

While such analyses have pointed to the multiplicity of possible meanings surrounding notions like motherhood and the fetus, the assumption that the dominant view of these concepts is a falsification of an underlying truth based on women's experience or biology is problematic for a number of reasons. Carol Smart (1991), among others (Riley 1988; Weedon 1987), has criticized this assumption that is part of a general theoretical approach which has been labeled 'standpoint feminism'. This form of feminist epistemology asserts that dominant and taken-for-granted forms of knowledge are always 'gendered' and 'subjective' (based on patriarchal values), rather than objective and neutral (Hartsock 1990; Smith 1987; Martin 1987; MacKinnon 1987). Furthermore, the 'feminist standpoint' is presumed to be the only view that can provide a *correct* or *truthful* analysis of dominant patriarchal relations. Women's experiences are assumed to be outside of ideology, or to be "a direct unmediated expression of events" (Smart 1991, 198). Smart suggested that the approach is particularly attractive because,

... [i]t celebrates the existing politics of the women's movement; the key concept of experience gives the theory a much-desired materiality or concreteness, and, perhaps most importantly, it can claim a validity or scientificity which competes with most dominant theories of knowledge. ... it is a form of politically sound scientific feminism (Smart 1991, 199).

However, at least three inherent difficulties with standpoint feminism can be identified. First, as a feminist epistemology it is based on the assumption that 'women's experience' is monolithic and universal despite recent theoretical trends that have questioned the commonality of womanhood, stressing the divergence along class, ethnic and racial lines (hooks 1984; Riley 1988; Smart 1989, 1991, 1992; Weedon 1987). Second, the approach is based on a contradictory foundation. On the one hand, standpoint feminists identify and challenge 'truth' which is based on patriarchal scientific norms, suggesting that knowledge generated from these sources is constructed for ideological purposes. On the other hand,

'truth' based on women's experience is identified as neutral, objective and universal. Thus, Carol Smart has argued that "challenging men's truth with women's truth may have political purchase but it leaves us on shaky ground when truth itself is no longer an absolute—outside the fray—to which we can appeal" (*Ibid.*, 194). Since standpoint feminists assume that there is *one* underlying reality, namely women's experience, they cannot adequately argue that other 'truths' are constructed. Moreover, the approach cannot account for the diversity of women's experiences and understanding.

The central task in this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework that can be used to examine the emergence of concepts surrounding reproduction, particularly the notion of fetal personhood, without employing the assumptions of standpoint feminism. The framework is informed by postmodern and poststructuralist approaches to the conceptualization of knowledge, power, and truth in society as exemplified by the work of Michel Foucault and a number of feminist legal scholars. The term 'postmodernism' is used here in a broad sense to denote the deconstructionist perspective currently being used in many fields of study.¹ In the following discussion, postmodern arguments about the relationship between language and the social construction of 'reality' are elaborated, and finally, fetal personhood is examined as a constructed notion that emanates from several key discourses.

TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE, POWER: PRINCIPLES OF POSTMODERNISM

The deconstructionist approaches exemplified by postmodernism and poststructuralism provide one way of conceptualizing the relationship between language, social institutions, meaning and power. The term 'postmodernism' does not have a fixed

¹ The term 'postmodern' is not without controversy, particularly as it is applied to Foucault. It should be acknowledged that some theorists such as Richard Rorty (1989) have argued that Foucault remains 'trapped' within the modern period, in that his argument attempts to discredit 'modernism' using foundationalist claims. In other words, Rorty has suggested that in critiquing liberalism in the 20th century Foucault assumes that there is a 'better' alternative based on some 'non-constructed' truth. Barry Smart (1993) has also argued that Foucault's approach could be termed poststructuralist, rather than postmodernist because he succeeds only in critiquing structuralism, and uses 'modernist' and foundationalist assumptions to do so.

meaning, nor does it represent a unified body of theory; rather it refers generally to a range of theoretical positions developed in the work of theorists such as Lyotard (1984), Derrida (1973, 1976), Lacan (1977) and Foucault (1981). The common factor found in all these works, which discuss such issues as social organization, power, meaning or individual consciousness, is a focus on 'language'. Thus, postmodernist theorists have argued that taken-for-granted 'truths' underlying social relations, individual consciousness, and individual biological functioning are a product of language. From a postmodern perspective, language does not reflect a natural or given social reality; language constitutes 'reality'.

Foucault's analytical framework provides a critique of the notion that there is an objective and discernible truth. Distinctions between fact, myth and superstition are deemed to be internal to the traditions of the modern period. Moreover, the very existence of a criterion such as scientific objectivity is attributed to the creation and extension of related 'domains of power'. Specifically, Foucault focused on the widening influence of science over many spheres of life throughout modernity. He claimed that the discourses emanating from scientific practices emerging in the 19th and 20th centuries (particularly the social sciences) maintained a degree of authority and legitimacy because of their perceived ability to generate 'truth'. Finally, Foucault's method of analysis has implications for the understanding of power in society.

Language as discourse

Through an understanding of discourse as central to the construction of power/knowledge, Foucault wished to shed new light on certain privileged, Enlightenment, modernist, foundational assumptions. These included the assumptions that truth is found not made; that science has a particular 'claim to truth'; that power is repressive and unidirectional; and that history is linear and progressive. Foucault proposed *discourse* as an alternative to the concept of ideology which had been developed within Marxist-influenced

theory.² Social structures and processes are organized through institutions and practices such as law, the political system, the church, the family, the education system, the media, and professional disciplines such as psychology, social work, etc. Institutions are located in and structured by a particular *discursive field* which consists of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and/or organizing social institutions (Foucault 1972). Within a given discursive field the individual can encounter a number of ways constructing meaning. For example, individuals may encounter religious, medical, educational, or feminist discourses on the family. Not all discourses within a discursive field will carry equal weight or power, since some will justify the maintenance of the status quo while others will provide an alternative. Discourses which are viewed as challenging dominant meaning will be marginalized or silenced altogether.

The hierarchy of knowledge: authoritative discourses and the primacy of science in the modern period

It is a feature of the modern period that knowledge emanating from discourses which can make a 'claim to truth' will wield more power than those that do not. Specifically, Foucault held that, beginning in the modern *episteme*, discourses which were derived from science rather than from belief, myth, or superstition maintained a higher status.³

² It should be acknowledged that not all "Marxist-influenced" theories subscribe to the same definition of "ideology", nor do they ascribe the same function to ideology within the capitalist structural system. For example, in the classical Marxist conception ideology constitutes the 'ideas' of the ruling class, reflects a distorted view of society, and controls those subjected to it (The German Ideology Marx and Engels). Althusser moved away from this view, claiming that ideology was a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals with the real conditions of their existence. Thus, rather than being imposed from above, ideology is the medium through which all people experience the world. However, Althusser also maintained that the economic structure was ultimately the determining factor in capitalist society. Finally, Hirst (1976), among others, used the notion of the 'relative autonomy' of ideology from the economic structure of capitalism. For the purposes of this thesis, the distinction between discourse and ideology is based on the notion that discourse is not connected to any structural determinants such as the economy, whereas ideology is ultimately connected to the material conditions of the economic capitalist structure.

³ Episteme refers to a period in history which is marked by a particular 'way of knowing' or epistemology and the resultant practices. Foucault wrote that an episteme was "... the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems..." (1972, 191).

Foucault also proposed that various subjects in the modern period such as the insane, the criminal, the hysterical woman, or the homosexual could be considered as constructions of the discourses that came from social scientific categories such as 'madness', 'discipline', and 'sexuality.' Various human conditions which are presumed to be naturally existing and merely described through the language that we use, are products of language. For example,

... mental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own (Foucault 1972, 32).

In the period since the turn of this century, scientific objectivity or the ability to prove 'truth' and 'falsity' has had serious social implications. The scientific method which marks the current period in history is thought to produce knowledge that is objective, hence more truthful than other types of knowledge which may be based on opinion, belief or superstition. Not all discourse will be accepted as legitimate, authoritative or 'true'. Not all speakers will be able to speak with the presumption that what they say is 'true'. Foucault wrote,

... [m]edical statements cannot come from anybody; their value, efficacy, even their therapeutic powers, and generally speaking, their existence as medical statements cannot be disassociated from the statutorily defined person who has the right to make them, and to claim for them the power to overcome suffering and death (1972, 51).

Those who can make a 'claim to truth' by using discourses that are based on the scientific method will acquire more status and their discourse will be more valued than other discourses. It was Foucault's claim that a hierarchy of knowledge exists in post-Enlightenment Western society such that fields of knowledge that are defined as scientific are placed above non-scientific discourses that can only claim partial truth or untruths.

Power/knowledge

As mentioned above, Foucault conceived of power and knowledge as operating in a mutually productive fashion. In *Discipline and Punish* he proposed that,

... power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations....(1979, 27-28).

In this view power is not repressive and uni-directional (i.e. exercised from those with power to those without), and truth is opposed to power and therefore liberating. For example, there is an assumption that 'sexual freedom' can only be gained through the dissemination of expert knowledge or truth. Foucault argued to the contrary that power is generated by the proliferation of expert knowledge about sexuality. Beginning in the 18th century a "technical incitement to talk about sex" developed as part of administrative concern for the welfare of the population (Foucault 1990, 34). Empirical, scientific classifications of sexual activity were carried out in the context of a concern for life.

Bio-power and 'normalizing' the population

The backdrop to Foucault's theory of power/knowledge is the notion of *bio-power* which, he argued, emerged as a coherent political technology in the 17th century. This was the period when the central concern of the state shifted toward the fostering of life and the growth and care of populations. Bio-power marks the beginning of a period of the technical and bureaucratic (state) management of human populations (1978, 143). This consisted of an increased interest on the part of the state in the human species both as an object to be counted and classified, (hence, the beginning of aggregate statistics categorizing populations), and as an object that had the capacity to reproduce. Foucault claimed to have identified the "new focus on the human body" as an object of scientific discourse, to be ordered, classified and manipulated.

'Normalization' refers to the process, which occurred most prominently in the late 19th and 20th centuries, and made it possible and therefore important to manage bodies scientifically using disciplinary techniques and social/human sciences. The emphasis shifted from legal/moral norms for punishment and sexuality etc. to scientific/technical norms.

Foucault argued that the new norms held out no more possibility of 'success', i.e., in reforming criminals, than did the old. Nonetheless, these disciplinary techniques proliferated.

As Foucault showed in *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality*, "biopower" and the proliferation of categories such as "delinquent", "pervert", "hysterical woman" advance simultaneously. These categories are paradoxically the target of technologies of expert power and knowledge, and at the same time they sustain power and knowledge. In other words, Foucault proposed that the constant expert chatter about various abnormalities made them appear 'real', and at the same time, the abnormalities fed into the legitimacy and authority of the expert chatter. Thus, according to Foucault the legitimacy of social and human sciences such as psychology was based on the construction of certain psychological abnormalities. Similarly, fetal medicine is dependent on the fetus (as a viable entity worthy of medical attention) for its legitimacy. The entity produces the science (the discursive field) as much as the science produces the entity. Thus, Foucault claimed that the proliferation of scientific discourses was dependent on the creation of 'abnormalities' which in turn are in need of treatment by the very sciences that constructed them.

The interesting proposal in Foucault's analysis of power/knowledge is that he identified essential problems with liberalism, and consequently with modernism. Primarily, through the technologies of bio-power, 'abnormal behaviour' such as criminal recidivism, which might otherwise be considered to reflect a failure in the entire system, is constructed through scientific discourse and is consequently seen as a technical problem rather than a political problem. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) have identified the crucial point in Foucault's concept of bio-power and consequently of his critique of modernism:

.... technologies advance by taking what is essentially a political problem, removing it from the realm of political discourse and recasting it in the neutral language of science. Once this has occurred the problem becomes a technical one for specialists to debate. In fact, the language of reform is from the outset, an essential component of these political technologies.

Bio-power spread under the banner of making people healthy and protecting them. When there was resistance, or failure to achieve its stated aims, this was construed as further proof of the need to reinforce and extend the power of the experts. A technical matrix was established. By definition, there ought to be a way of solving any technical problem. Once this matrix was established, the spread of bio-power was assured, for there was nothing else to appeal to; any other standards could be shown to be abnormal or to present merely technical problems. We are promised normalization and happiness through science and law. When they fail, this only justifies the need for more of the same (*Ibid.*, 196).

In sum, Foucault's interpretive framework provides a basis from which to ask questions about the operation of language, truth, power and the status of scientific knowledge in modern Western society. This framework may be used in part to examine the emergence of fetal personhood.

FEMINISM AND POSTMODERNISM

Many feminist analyses which have employed postmodern principles have incorporated Foucault's interpretive framework. However, it should also be acknowledged that there have been many critiques of Foucault's method, and postmodernism generally, from within feminist camps. These critiques have stemmed from the apparent incompatibility of postmodernism, as a relativist, anti-foundationalist, and consequently 'apolitical' approach, and feminism, as a fundamentally political movement that depends on a 'truth' or 'foundation' based on the essence of 'womaness' (Hartsock 1990). However, Carol Smart, among others, has argued that postmodernism can be utilized to explore feminist issues precisely because it brings into question the foundation of all knowledge. A postmodern approach to issues involving women can take into account the multiplicity of individual experiences among women that feminism (particularly standpoint feminism described above) cannot. The assumption of one essential 'truth' that underlies Liberal or Marxist conceptions of feminism in particular can be discarded and replaced by the idea of a multiplicity of competing meanings. Woman's experience has no inherent or essential meaning; rather it is

given meaning through a range of discursive systems of meanings which are often contradictory and constitute different versions of reality.

In developing a postmodern approach to feminism, Weedon (1987), Riley (1988), Valverde (1992), Haraway (1991) and Smart (1991) have been concerned with the importance and function of language in the construction of meaning in modern society. Language is viewed as the primary tool through which social reality is constituted. Weedon has written,

... far from reflecting an already given social reality, [language] constitutes social reality for us. Neither social reality nor the 'natural' world has fixed intrinsic meanings which language reflects or expresses. Different languages or different discourses within the same language divide up the world and give it meaning in different ways ... (1987, 22).

Thus, there are range of possible definitions of motherhood, reproduction, the relationship between the mother and the fetus available to individuals. According to Weedon, the definitions that individuals encounter and take up as part of their own understanding depend on "the range and social power of existing discourses, our access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent" (1987, 26).

Similarly, Riley (1988) has claimed that what is or is not a woman is determined in historically specific ways through a number of different discourses. In Valverde's (1992) study of the Dionne quintuplets, she argued that just as the concept of woman is contingent on history and language, so too is the concept or category 'child'. She demonstrated that the term, 'child', as it has been used in various scientific fields such as social work, child psychology, pediatrics and finally obstetrics is not based on an underlying 'truth' about the child's physiology. A 'child' for the purposes of child welfare regulation does not have a fixed definition. Rather, Valverde has argued that what represents 'childhood' in Canada has increasingly been constructed through authoritative discourses emanating from various agencies of the state.

Donna Haraway has discussed the implications for women of the construction through scientific discourse of entities such as the immune system. She has claimed that the immune system is a site at which various discourses have converged and constructed “...an elaborate icon for principal systems of symbolic material ‘difference’ in late capitalism...” (1991, 204). Just as Foucault argued that ‘madness’ and ‘sexual repression’ resulted from discursive practices of the modern period, Haraway has identified the immune system as such a construction. However, Haraway has diverged from Foucault’s interpretation to the extent that she holds that the “postmodern scientific culture” of the 20th century is gendered. Consequently in her account, the patriarchal nature of society is an overriding factor in the construction of meaning. She holds that “...we are engendered in a culture which we constantly live within and through science and technology” (1991). Haraway’s approach is valuable to this discussion because she has acknowledged the inherent gendered practice of science. Scientific knowledge is laden with assumptions about women that are based on patriarchal beliefs. The following discussion examines the processes through which categories such as ‘woman’, and ‘child’ and most importantly ‘fetus’ are constructed.

THE EMERGENCE OF FETAL PERSONHOOD AT THE INTERSECTION OF VARIOUS DISCOURSES

The issues raised by postmodernism are at the centre of this study of the emergence of the notion of fetal personhood. Current public discussions about motherhood, pregnancy, abortion and reproduction in general can be examined as part of the discursive practices of power/knowledge. The argument developed in this section of the chapter is that the fetus (as ‘person’, ‘patient’, and ‘victim’) has emerged at the intersection of discourses that arise from ostensibly value-neutral medical, legal and political discourses, technology (including the ability to visualize the interior of the uterus), and cultural assumptions about motherhood.

In the late 20th century, powerful and authoritative discourses such as medicine and law have been used to construct and continually reconstruct notions of pregnancy, abortion, motherhood, and fetal personhood. Specifically, in recent years the terms of the abortion

issue have been constructed within the discursive fields of medicine and law which both make claims to scientific truth, and consequently exclude other putatively subordinate⁴ interpretations. Another factor that has contributed to the construction of fetal personhood is the language that has been used to formulate dominant or expert perceptions of the responsibilities of motherhood. The notion that mothers should behave in a particular way which conforms with medical advice and presumed cultural norms is constructed (and continually reconstructed) through medicine, law, the media, and women themselves. This common-sense perception of motherhood is conceived to be universalistic so that any deviations from this norm are labeled as such. For example, the 'good' mother ought to have a particular type of relationship to the child as well as to the fetus, and the 'bad' mother will not live up to this expectation. Thus, medical, legal and political discourses should be examined in relation to their potential to construct this 'common-sense' perception of motherhood.

The discourse produced by groups that hold a particular position, i.e., 'anti-abortion' or 'pro-choice' groups, should not be viewed as the primary contribution to the construction of fetal personhood. Rather, the ideas these groups put forward represent a small part of the plurality of discourses in the modern period.

Medical practices and the construction of fetal personhood

Many feminist critics have suggested that medical discourse has contributed greatly to the emergence of fetal personhood in the public debates over abortion (Franklin 1991; Fyfe 1991; Steinberg 1991). The science of embryology and fetal physiology became important medically in Western countries during the 1960s. At this time, medical texts highlighted the perceived importance of conquering the womb as a new 'frontier' of science.

⁴ By 'subordinate interpretations' I mean those ideas about pregnancy that are not based on recent scientific evidence. For example, the 'woman-oriented' interpretation that views mother and fetus as one inseparable unit until after the child is born (see Donna Haraway 1991; B. Duden 1991). The recent medical 'spin' on pregnancy tends to highlight the separateness of the needs of the mother and the needs of the fetus.

For example, comments in the preface of a book called *The First Nine Days of Life*⁵ written in 1962 underscore the attitude within the medical community at that time:

The prize for man in the study of embryology is not merely to satisfy curiosity. The knowledge of the biologist can enrich the skill of the physician. This is the frontier of embryology today: to understand the mechanism that governs and controls orderly growth in time perhaps to prevent, perhaps to treat, the puzzling departure from the orderly patterns. The prize is also that we can become intelligent about 'intra-uterine' mothering as we try to be today about the care of our children after they are born. This increased awareness can also bear the fruit of increased enjoyment (Flanagan 1962, 15).

The assumption was that science could be used to begin to uncover the mysteries of life and in the process the technologies that resulted could be used to provide medical care to the fetus. The medical community gradually began to view the fetus as a patient. However, one result of the medical attention directed at the womb was for the mother and the fetus to be viewed as separate medical concerns. Thus, 'fetal patienthood' was constructed at the expense of the mother. Sarah Franklin (1991, 192) pointed out that there was a shift in the medical literature away from a primary focus on maternal health, and toward the fetus. The editors of *Fetal Physiology and Medicine*, a medical text written in the mid-1970s described the shift:

The practice of perinatal medicine started when obstetricians, *having resolved most of the problems of the mother*, turned their attention to the fetus. Recording of the fetal heart rate has for many years been the only window available to the obstetrician through which to observe the condition of the fetus—a cloudy view on a world full of activity. It was therefore natural that efforts should be made to improve the technology of observation...this basic information is vital in the ultimate establishment

⁵ Petchesky (1987) notes that the *First Nine Days of Life*, depicting pictures of the fetus at various stages of development, was first previewed in *Look* magazine in 1962. The magazine story featured pictures of the fetus at one day, one week, forty-four days, seven weeks, and so on. The particular way in which these pictures were presented in the mass media support the assumption that the fetus is autonomous and the woman is absent or peripheral. Petchesky observes that "in every picture the fetus is solitary, dangling in the air (or in its sac) with nothing to connect it to any life-support system but a clearly defined umbilical cord. In every caption it is called 'the baby' and is referred to as 'he' ... Nowhere is there any reference to the pregnant woman..." (1987, 63).

of successful intra-uterine therapy. [emphasis added] (Beard and Nathanielsz, 1976 as quoted in Franklin 1991, 192).

The primary technology for observing the fetus is the ultra-sound image: “The fetus is ideal for ultrasound evaluation because it is floating in a fluid medium which provides maximum contrast with fetal tissues and, thus, optimum fetal anatomical characterization” (DeVore and Hobbins 1984, 1).

The creation of the ultra-sound technique to visualize the interior of the uterus shifted attention within the medical community toward a new science of the fetus. Doctors and scientists could shift attention away from the mother and toward the fetus as a patient. Also, once the interior of the uterus became less of a medical mystery the attention could again shift toward the development of the embryo (hence, embryology) and conception or the beginning of life itself.

By redefining the beginning of life in scientific terms, medical professionals accomplished two things: first they decreased the explanatory power of theological explanations of how life begins (which in turn could be used to objectify and rationalize the arguments used by anti-abortion groups against abortion); and second, they emphasized the developmental stages of life (the growth of the fetus) (Franklin 1991). By using language that described pregnancy in terms of developmental stages of the pre-embryo, embryo, and fetus, there was a new emphasis placed on the individuality of the fetus or the separation between the fetus and the mother. Pregnancy seen in medical terms became an issue of two distinct patients, with different needs. In fact, the needs of the mother and the needs of the fetus could be considered to overlap and conflict. Also, emphasis on the developmental stages of the fetus gave scientific legitimacy to the idea that late term fetuses which are more ‘viable’ or further along the developmental line ought not to be aborted.

There are several issues involved in medical discourse and the construction of fetal personhood. First, the recent trends in medical practice and advances in technology have intensified the attention directed at the womb. As a result, there has been a proliferation of

scientifically informed discourse about the fetus. Second, the construction of the fetus in medical discourse is part of an increasing expert involvement in the definition of reproductive issues. As well, the fetus represents a particularly tantalizing area of scientific discovery. This is demonstrated by frequent reference in medical textbooks to a general excitement about fetal medicine, and descriptions of the womb as the last frontier of science.

Legal discourse and the construction of fetal personhood

Foucault did not identify law as a discourse. He claimed that because the law did not operate in the same capacity as other discourses in the modern episteme, such as those emanating from the social sciences, it could not be considered to be productive of knowledge. Foucault reasoned that law did not have the same grounding in science and therefore did not have the same capacity to generate 'truth'. Thus, he claimed that law predated the modern episteme which was characterized by science and the 'will to truth.' However, critical legal theorists have attempted to revise Foucault's argument to suggest that law does in fact operate as other discourses do (Smart 1991; Hutchinson 1988). For example, Smart (1991) has argued that law makes claims which are similar to the claims of science and is deployed in a way similar to scientific discourses, and therefore, it should not be excluded from an analysis of the construction of meaning. Since, according to Smart, "law can make a claim to 'scientificity' and hence truth," it maintains the same degree of authority hence power that discourses emanating from science do (*Ibid.*, 197). Her point is that law is "...positioned on a hierarchy of knowledges which allows for the disqualification of 'subjugated knowledges'" (*Ibid.*, 196).

Legal discourse has contributed to the notion of fetal personhood in at least three ways. First, law upholds a particular set of values or norms based on assumptions of liberal individualism. Thus, the concept of individualism which is an important component of Western law has opened the door to the idea that the fetus is an individual with inherent legal rights. Arguments premised on the ideals of liberal individualism are frequently used in anti-abortion rhetoric. However, the notions of equality and individual rights are compelling in

this society and reach beyond the fringe arguments of the pro-life movement. Consequently, as Smart (1989) has argued, representing issues which affect women in terms of legal rhetoric is least advantageous for women themselves. When an issue such as abortion is presented in terms of individual rights, women lose control over their reproductive choices while the fetus, the father and the state gain control. Through legal rights discourse the fetus has gained the status of an individual, separate from the mother, that is worthy of medical care and possibly legal protection.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that the mother can pose a threat to the fetus. Judges in Canada and the United States have commented that the fetus in late stages of pregnancy becomes a concern of the state. In other words, as the fetus becomes more 'viable' it is more deserving of state protection of its individual right to survive or to be born healthy. The crucial point about the link between the discourse of liberal individualism and fetal personhood is that in the abortion debate pro-choice and pro-life defenders cannot help but speak of the relationship between the mother and the fetus in terms of rights. This has weakened the position of women in the abortion debate, while giving the fetus the status of a legal individual. Moreover, it is not only the fetus that has gained legal status in the abortion debate; in *Daigle v. Tremblay* and in *Murphy v. Dodd*, lower court judges demonstrated that they were also willing to consider father's rights in abortion cases.

Although to this point the Canadian Courts have not given legal status to the fetus, they have used language that supports the notion of fetal personhood. For example, in *Morgentaler* the Supreme Court implied that although it could not give legal status to the fetus in that particular case, it could be a worthy legislative objective to protect the fetus in latter stages of pregnancy. This is part of the discourse of rights: the reasoning is that as the fetus becomes more viable, it is more worthy of individual rights.

Second, legal discourse also contributes to the construction of fetal personhood through a frequent reliance on scientific knowledge which gives decisions a particular claim to truth and therefore authority. In particular, Canadian lower courts have used medical

discourse to establish the viability of the fetus in child protection cases. Information provided by medical expert witnesses about the state of health of the fetus and the mother has frequently been more damning for the woman. For example, in *Re C.A.S. for Kenora* the doctor's testimony was used to establish that the health of the fetus was threatened by the "mother's severe alcoholism", and consequently the "child was a child in need of protection prior to birth"⁶. Similarly, in *Re Baby R* the judge determined that the medical evidence of mother R's poor state of mental and physical health *would* have been sufficient cause to apprehend the fetus *en ventre sa mere*, although in the end this action was not necessary because the mother consented to a cesarean-section.

Finally, adversarial relationships are an inherent part of law and legal discourse. Again, child protection cases provide a good example of the result of legal intervention in reproduction. The mother and fetus necessarily enter into an adversarial relationship when such a case arises. The mother also enters into an adversarial relationship with the state.

Assumptions about motherhood: the Phallogentric Society

Underlying both legal and medical discourse are assumptions about gender, and in particular about the role that mothers are expected to play. The discourse of maternalism is actually a general way of thinking about motherhood in Western society. It invades medical thinking and legal thinking. For example, there is an attitude in the medical community that developments in the area of fetal medicine are a positive step in motherhood. Mothering can begin, and should begin, while the fetus is in the womb. Medical texts demonstrate this kind of thinking. In medical terms the 'good' mother is one who follows the advice of her doctor and attends to the prenatal care of the fetus; the 'bad' mother is one who neglects her duty to care and does not follow medical advice. One implication of the increased medical interest in the fetus is a medical re-definition of the motherhood role. That is, doctors take over where mothers are not capable of caring for the fetus. Thus, the advice and the actions of the doctor are seen as more important than the perceptions and abilities of the mother.

⁶ *Ibid.* at 252.

Legal discourse has also incorporated a particular conception of the way mothers ought to behave. This is particularly evident in the comments judges have made in Canada and the United States, in various cases. At the broadest level are comments which make the assumption that women ought to play a particular role when it comes to motherhood. For example, women who have children, and are perceived to fit into the category of 'good' mother, often receive leniency, whereas women who fall outside of the category do not (Chunn and Menzies 1990; Carlen 1983). This could be an indication of the general importance that the courts accord to motherhood, especially when the mother in question follows the guidelines for good motherhood. More directly related to this issue, courts have ruled against women who were seen to abuse their responsibility for the fetus. These cases include the *en ventre sa mere* rulings in Canada, as well as many examples in the United States.

In this chapter, postmodernist arguments about the role of language in the social construction of reality have been presented in order to provide a theoretical basis from which to examine the emergence of the idea of fetal personhood. Theoretical insights were derived from the work of Michel Foucault and a number of feminist scholars. The key points of interest for this analysis include: the idea that there is no foundational truth; that power is not exercised in a centralized top-down manner; that power and knowledge operate reciprocally; that discourses emanating from science in the modern period are powerful because of their presumed will to truth; and consequently, in the modern episteme with the emphasis on categorizing and managing the human body, power accrues to those with specialized scientific knowledge about the body. Expert practitioners who use the language of science have achieved the power to construct truths about women's bodies which are viewed as more authoritative than competing constructions, such as those based on feminism or women's own experience. Fetal personhood in particular emerges from discourses which make a claim to truth, specifically, medicine and law. The ideas put forward in this chapter

regarding the construction of meaning in modern society raise questions about the manner in which particular authoritative meanings permeate popular culture. In Chapter Three, some of the same theoretical insights are applied to the mass media and the construction of ideas about reproduction, pregnancy, motherhood, and the fetus.

CHAPTER THREE
APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MASS MEDIA:
THEORY AND METHOD

There have been many approaches to the study of mass media. Since the 1970s, the dominant theoretical perspectives developed have been in opposition to the idea that the media simply mirror social reality. Communication is no longer viewed as a simple process of stimulus-response in which the media message is received without modification by a homogeneous audience. In varying degrees, more recent research has been based on the premise that messages produced by mass media are distortions which benefit some individual, group or class. Although research may rest on diverse theoretical foundations, for example, liberal-pluralism, classical Marxism and variations, or radical feminism, these perspectives ultimately share common assumptions about the role and effect of mass media in society. A closer examination of these assumptions reveals that they overemphasize the role of the mass media in constructing meaning at the expense of the individual or human agency and other important sites of discourse production in society. In the first part of this chapter, a theoretical framework for analyzing mass media is arrived at through a critical discussion of the some of the underlying assumptions of recent mass media research. In the second part of the chapter the research design for the thesis is outlined.

ASSUMPTIONS DERIVED FROM RECENT RESEARCH ON THE MASS MEDIA

Despite the clear differences between various theoretical approaches such as liberal-pluralism, radical feminism, and structural Marxism, there are some shared assumptions about the power and effect of the media in society. To begin, the assumption that the mass media represent a **tool of social control** used by a powerful group or class to distort underlying 'truth' is present in many theoretical accounts. For instance, in the liberal-

pluralist account media messages are viewed as supporting the status quo (i.e. democracy) (Tuchman 1978); in the political economy account media messages are viewed as maintaining the capitalist economic structure and the 'owning' class (Murdock 1982; Golding and Murdock 1977, 1991); in the radical feminist account media messages are viewed as upholding the dominant patriarchal structure (Mattelart 1986; Finn 1989); and in the 'dominant ideology' (or culturalist) account media messages are viewed as supporting cultural hegemony (Hall *et al.* 1978; Van Zoonen 1991). The notion that the media are used to maintain a distorted version of the 'truth' is a consistent element in these theoretical approaches. Thus, Mattelart (1986) has argued from the radical feminist perspective that the mass media distort women's experiences which if expressed in their true form would destroy the patriarchal system. Similarly, Geraldine Finn (1989) has argued that the media in Canada, and other Western societies, have colluded with the state to conceal the reality behind domestic violence. By individualizing male violence and abuse, Finn claims that the media (in cooperation with the state) deny the real social relations of inequality between men and women which encourage and condone violence directed at women (*Ibid.*, 381).

In a like manner, proponents of the political economy approach have viewed media as a distorting mirror that works to support the capitalist system and the ruling class. Economic relations of capitalist society are viewed as ultimately shaping cultural production. Consequently, the power of the media is based on the economic processes and structures of media ownership and control. The mass media are assumed to legitimate the capitalist structure by producing false consciousness in the interest of the controlling capitalist class. Ultimately, in this view the media message is deemed to be a misrepresentation of reality which results in the further subjugation of the oppressed and maintenance of the powerful (Golding and Murdock 1977). The same ideas are presented in a less subtle form in Herman and Chomsky's (1988) "propaganda model". They claim that in the United States, in particular, "...the powerful are able to fix the premises of discourse to decide what the general public is allowed to see, hear and think about, and to 'manage' public opinion by

regular propaganda campaigns” (*Ibid.*, xi). In this account the media are the quintessential instruments of power and control.

A common theme in research based on the political economy approach is that monopolies exist in media ownership, and in many instances the information produced uniformly reflects the interests of the owners (*Ibid.*). It is possible to demonstrate that monopolies exist among news organizations (RCN 1981b, 9), and that owners of news organizations are dependent on advertising dollars and therefore may tailor information presented to the lowest common denominator or “least objectionable” format (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 44; Smith 1979, 193). However, it is more difficult to make the connection between ownership, information produced and audience reception. Thus, the argument that individuals, groups or an entire class purposefully use the mass media to control public knowledge is problematic since it is based on a number of other dubious assumptions about the operation of mass media in society.

One such assumption is that the mass **media are the primary source of an individual’s understanding of events**. Ang and Hermes (1991, 309) have identified this assumption in feminist analyses of the mass media. They have made the claim that many feminist responses to the media have been based on the assumption that women (and men) formulate their understanding of gender and related issues from media discourse alone (e.g., Spender 1980; Tuchman 1978; Finn 1989). Similarly, Ericson (1991) has pointed out that much of the research concerned with the effects of crime coverage in the media has been based on the assumption that media are the primary source of understanding about crime and legal control (*Ibid.*, 219). This assumption ignores research which has demonstrated that people formulate ideas about such issues from a variety of competing sources. For example, Graber (1980; 1984) has reported that individuals gain an understanding of crime through a variety of sources other than media, such as informal networks of family and friends. Similarly, as it was argued in the previous chapter, discourses that form part of an individual’s understanding about issues such as reproduction, or more specifically fetal

personhood, emanate from a variety of possible sites (e.g. medical, legal, or political professional practice).

A related assumption is that **individuals are inclined to accept the ‘distorted’ information presented to them in the media passively and without thought or interpretation.** For example, many researchers have claimed that there is a direct link between the media message and the actions of individuals. Finn (1989) proposed that ‘distorted’ information about sexual violence is accepted by the individual through a gradual process which leads to a direct relationship between a man watching television news and advertisements, and committing a rape. The stimulus-response model has been prevalent in other research on the effect of the representation of crime in the media. Ericson (1991) points out that many researchers subscribe to the ‘hypodermic model’ in which “... a simple injection of media messages is said to result in a quick fix that affects attitudes and actions (for example, Berkowitz 1970; Liebert and Baron 1972; Tannenbaum and Zillman 1975; Park *et al.* 1977). However, there is considerable competing research which suggests that there is no direct correlation between television viewing and crime rates (Jensen 1990; Ericson 1991).

Often, research on the way women receive media messages has been based on the assumption that individuals are inclined to accept information uncritically and homogeneously. Feminist scholars such as Van Zoonen (1991), Ang and Hermes (1991), and Young (1990) have argued against the idea that women are passive victims of the media, alternatively arguing that women themselves can play an active role in receiving media messages through the choices they make and the interpretations they use. In this account, the media text should not be viewed as an agency of patriarchy, but as one possible site of negotiation between conflicting definitions of gender. Thus, Ang and Hermes (1991) maintain that the assumptions made frequently about women, namely that media messages contain transparent and unquestionable images of women, and that women passively absorb

these messages, are too essentialist (*Ibid.*, 309). Women receive media messages, along with a myriad of other information, within their own set of individual circumstances.

Moreover, Ang and Hermes argue that since much of the research in this area is based on socio-economic class, the erroneous conclusion is that all women of a particular class will receive messages in a similar way. Class becomes *the* determining factor of audience reception. In opposition, Ang and Hermes propose that:

... we cannot afford to take 'women' as a straightforward, natural collectivity with a constant identity, its meaning inherent in the (biological) category of the female sex. In social and cultural terms, 'women' as much as 'class', is not an immutable fact, but an inescapably indeterminate, ever shifting category (*Ibid.*, 315).

Thus, Ang and Hermes' contention is that homogeneity in reception of media messages among women does not exist because 'woman' and 'class' are not immutable truths and therefore are not stable identifiers of women's behaviour. They are constructed terms.

In the preceding discussion some of the assumptions underlying recent media research have been outlined. An image of what the mass media are *not* has begun to emerge. Thus, the media are not solely instruments of social control used by a dominant group to maintain power over others. The media do not distort an underlying 'truth' for the purposes of maintaining the status quo, the capitalist economic structure, or patriarchy. The media are not the primary source of an individual's understanding of the world. And finally, media messages are not accepted passively by a homogeneous audience. Some media analysts have claimed that the mass media should be viewed within a broader social context as *one* source rather than the *only* source of knowledge. Media messages are neither an accurate reflection of social reality nor a distortion of it; rather they provide *one* discourse among others. Or as Ericson (1991) maintains,

... an institutional mode of classifying and interpreting reality—that helps people to construct their own organizational realities. *Mass media stories are therefore not accepted by people directly and uncritically, but rather*

are part of people's strategies, struggles, and pleasures in the production of meaning in various contexts. Exposure to mass media is therefore not a source of distorted thoughts and bad behavior as the 'evil causes evil' fallacy has it, but a means of constituting and articulating attitudes to and versions of crime, law, and justice [emphasis added] (*Ibid.*, 242).

In poststructuralist or postmodernist accounts of mass media communications (Young 1990; Fiske 1991; Sreberny-Mohammadi 199; Ang and Hermes 1991) the media text has been viewed as a site of struggle over meaning rather than a transparent cultural prescription for meaning. Thus, any knowledge or reality that is produced in media texts is a product of ongoing negotiation at the level of media-institutions, other societal institutions, the audience and the text. The text itself is 'polysemic' or contains multiple potential meanings. So, for example, Fiske (1991) argues that within the media text diverging or conflicting articulations of femininity can exist. Individuals will receive different meanings of femininity, motherhood, pregnancy, or any other socially constructed concept, depending on their own social and historical contingencies. Despite the fact that it is quite clear which articulations or meanings are preferred¹ by the media producers within any given text, (Hall *et al.* 1978; Ericson *et al.* 1991; Lake, Scrimger and Riley 1991), the notion of the 'polysemic' media text undermines the possibilities of 1) powerful groups or individuals maintaining absolute control over the production of meaning; and 2) audiences receiving messages in a predictable and passive manner.

¹ In 'Encoding/decoding' Stuart Hall (1980) attempts to come to terms with the inherent contradiction between the idea that individuals receive or 'encode' messages in a multitude of ways (or the 'polysemy' of the media text) and the idea that the media present 'preferred' meanings which fit into the scheme of dominant meanings or hegemony. He argues that media texts have a 'preferred reading' which, given the economic and ideological location of most media, will tend to reconstruct dominant values of society. However, Hall claims that the 'preferred' reading is "*dominant* not 'determined' because it is possible [for individuals who come in contact with media texts] to order, classify, assign and decode an event within more than one 'mapping'" (*Ibid.*, 134). Nonetheless, Hall argues that meanings are 'dominant' or 'preferred' by virtue of the fact that they reflect the social order or hegemony. Thus, he claims that certain readings of media texts are 'preferred' because they "...have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of 'how things work for all practical purposes in this culture', the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimation, limits and sanctions" (*Ibid.*, 134).

The theoretical framework for the study of media that will be used in this thesis reflects the work of a variety of theorists. First, Ericson's (1991) "institutional approach", in which the media are viewed as direct participants in the processes by which events are constituted and exist in the world. Though they may not be the main knowledge source (in Ericson's research, about crime) the media nevertheless provide a discourse which people use to "construct their own organizational realities" (*Ibid.*, 242). In this account the media are significant because of the way in which they interact with other social institutions to form part of people's understanding of social organization and concepts such as law, justice and crime. Methodologically, Ericson's approach involves examining media within a broader institutional context. In his various studies of crime news in print and broadcast mediums, Ericson has been concerned with the way journalists and sources interact (Ericson *et al.* 1987, 1989); and the way that organizational aspects of media and source organizations interact in the construction of media content.

Second, the theoretical framework in this study also includes aspects of what might be called a deconstructionist perspective on mass media which falls under the rubric of postmodernism. Primarily, this involves the notion that meaning is not fixed in media messages, but is constructed through the interaction of texts and socially situated discourses (Young 1990; Lyotard 1984; Rorty 1967). Methodologically, this approach involves *deconstructing* media texts in order to determine which meanings are preferred and which are marginalized. The previous discussion of the postmodern analytical approach (Chapter Two) indicated that one of the underlying premises of that theoretical perspective is that there is a hierarchy of knowledge/discourse such that the discourses of the presumed experts in 20th century society (for example, medical experts) prevail over alternative discourses (for example, women's personal experiences). The mass media represent *one* site at which the negotiation of meaning takes place. The objective of examining media texts is to identify the prevailing discourses (what Lyotard refers to as the *grand recits* or the "master narratives of the modern period"), and the competing or marginalized discourses.

Finally, the theoretical framework attempts to incorporate aspects of feminist theory. Most importantly, studies that have examined the way that issues of gender are represented in the media (Van Zoonen 1991; Ang and Hermes 1991; Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991; Young 1990). Thus, despite the doubt that has been cast on the idea that people receive media messages in a predictable and uniform manner, some feminist researchers have demonstrated that media texts themselves typically portray women as having characteristics that cut across class, race, and ethnicity. For example, Ang and Hermes (*Ibid.*, 314) point out that women are typically represented as being emotional, caring, nurturing and/or preoccupied with romance and relationships. Preferred definitions of motherhood typically include the idea that 'good' mothers are nurturing and 'bad' mothers are incompetent and negligent. The goal of such feminist research has been to begin to deconstruct the monolithic discourse about women that appears in the mass media.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The primary aim of this study is to examine the representation of the fetus in the print media. Generally, it is necessary to determine what language the media use to describe the fetus, and what, if any, consistent themes about reproductive issues, particularly those which focus on the fetus and the pregnant woman, appear in media coverage. The remainder of this chapter explains the strategy used to answer these questions.

The research design makes use of some of the theoretical considerations discussed above. The intention of this study is not to make the argument that the press is a uniquely biased institution, or that news is the product of a conspiratorial relationship between controlling groups in society. Rather, the aim is to draw attention to the importance of discourse in the social construction of meaning, and to examine the media as only one of many possible institutions in which meaning is negotiated. The following explanation of the research strategy employed in this thesis includes: 1) a brief discussion of qualitative

methodology, specifically, the distinction between classical content analysis and discourse analysis (or the deconstructive method); 2) a general description of the sample of news coverage; 3) an outline of the data analysis; and 4) an outline of some limitations of the research design.

The qualitative approach versus classical content analysis

Content analysis has been defined by Krippendorff (1980) as a research technique which can be useful for making replicable and valid inferences from data. Similarly, Kerlinger (1973) has defined content analysis as a method of examining communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. Content is selected according to explicit and consistently applied rules; therefore, this type of analysis is deemed to be objective. There is an assumption that the results of this research will be an accurate representation of a body of messages in a standardized and simplified form (Krippendorff 1980).

Classical content analysis has frequently been criticized, however, for its oversimplification and inability to take into account anything beyond the explicit text (Young 1990; Ericson *et al.* 1987, 1990; Johnson 1988; van Dijk 1991; Fowler 1991; Hall 1982; Woollacott 1982). Characterizing the news media as an institution that constructs rather than merely reproduces an existing 'reality', necessitates a reevaluation of the method used to analyze media content. Relying solely on rates of repetition of the manifest content of media messages becomes problematic for a number of reasons. First, content analysis is limited to the manifest attributes of the news text. Holsti (1968) notes that "the requirement of objectivity stipulates that only those symbols and combinations of symbols actually appearing in the message be recorded ... the coding process cannot be one of reading between the lines" (*Ibid.*, 600). This approach eliminates the possibility of focusing on discursive aspects of a text which may have a greater significance than what is immediately visible. In liberal positivist content analyses, methodological considerations such as validity,

reliability and statistical significance are promoted to the exclusion of considerations about the theoretical significance of the messages being counted (Ericson *et al.* 1990, 51). However, there is no reason to assume messages that occur most frequently are the most important. Instead, the news text must be looked at as a structured whole in which all elements together construct meaning, and even more broadly than this, meaning must be read between different news texts. So, for example, the juxtaposition of a single photograph on a page or within a certain section may have great significance that would be overlooked if the goal was merely to count the number of photographs in a sample.

A second limitation of classical content analyses is the difficulty in achieving coding reliability, and consequently the difficulty in achieving validity. Content analysis *intercoder reliability* is measured by the degree of agreement between independent coders (see for example, Johnson 1988; Hachey and Grenier 1992; Ericson *et al.* 1990; Voumvakis and Ericson 1984). Unfortunately, deriving meaning from text is a subjective process based on the individual and his/her circumstances. Ericson *et al.* note that “coders are trained to seek and to see things in common” (*Ibid.*, 52). The outliers or exceptional cases are discarded until there is a consensus amongst coders. However, the end result of this process may bear little resemblance either to what the reading audience interprets or to what is theoretically significant. The fact that high degrees of intercoder reliability are difficult, if not impossible to achieve (Molotch and Lester 1975), means that the role of the coder or researcher in deciphering meaning must be acknowledged. It is not possible to arrive at a more ‘truthful’ reading of a news text by achieving agreement between social scientists. Rather it is only possible to provide a reading which is based on a particular interpretive framework.

A third and related limitation of classical content analysis is the presumption that assessing the manifest content of news will reveal an underlying truth. In this account the news media simply distort ‘reality’. Content analysis serves as a reality check in which the portrayal of a certain group or phenomenon can be compared to the ‘real’ situation. For example, Davis (1951) found that crime coverage in Colorado newspapers bore no

relationship to actual changes in state crime rates, and Tuchman (1978) found that women's actual lives were misrepresented and distorted in the news media. The predominant assumption in studies like these is that 'reality' may be uncovered by identifying the distorting effect that news media have on information. However, if the starting theoretical premise is that media are involved in the active work of constructing reality rather than merely misrepresenting an existing reality, the value of counting manifest content and comparing it to underlying reality is diminished. This strategy can only amount to the replacement of one construction with another, and this is acceptable since the goal of any analysis should be to provide alternative accounts, or "a reading against the grain" (Young 1990, 163). The problem arises when the researcher attempts to unveil the 'true' and 'only valid' reading.

Discourse analysis is a systematic and qualitative alternative to classical content analysis which suggests ways of examining the social and discursive aspects of meaning production (Ericson *et al.* 1990; Fowler 1991; Young 1990; van Dijk 1991). The approach is a result of the linguistic turn beginning in philosophy (Rorty 1967) and spreading to social scientific research in which *language* is viewed as the "primary medium of interchange between humans and reality, and accordingly verbal texts become the vehicles of knowledge and truth" (Jensen 1991). News as discourse is a cultural practice in which issues of power, knowledge, identity and social structure are negotiated (*Ibid.*, 18). The role of the discourse analyst is to "construct a reading of the text. The text itself is a sequence of symbols—speech, writing, gesture—that contain interpretations. Our task, like that of the literary critic, is to interpret the interpretations" (Carey 1979 in Ericson *et al.* 1990, 54).

Unlike content analysis, there is a deliberate acknowledgment of the connection between the perspective of the researcher and his/her interpretation of the discourse. The researcher cannot be divorced from theoretical perspective; any deconstruction of language is, as a matter of course, also a 'construction'. Thus, the process of deconstructing news as discourse involves the researcher in 'constructive interpretation'. The goal of discourse

analysis must be to suggest alternative meanings or to “*disturb* the existing logic” (Irigaray 1977, 75-76), rather than to unveil the truth lying behind biased news.

It is particularly the language that media use as taken-for-granted which is targeted by the discourse analyst because this is the language that articulates and maintains social order. “By unsettling the stories with which we have surrounded ourselves, deconstruction serves to indicate that our account of the world could be different, although it cannot and would not tell us or prescribe what that difference might be” (Young 1990, 162).

The sample

The following discussion outlines the method used to collect the sample of news items from the *Vancouver Sun* from 1969 to 1989. A number of decisions were made with respect to the selection of the final sample including: 1) the primary source or newspaper, 2) the period of time examined, 3) the criteria for selecting news-items, 4) the basic unit of analysis, and 5) the method of sampling.

The source of news coverage was limited to the *Vancouver Sun* for three reasons. First, a particular aim of the study was to demonstrate the extent to which the idea of fetal personhood had permeated news discourse in British Columbia. Although a number of Canadian media studies have targeted coverage in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and the *Toronto Sun* (Lake, Scrimger and Riley 1991; Ericson *et al.* 1991; Voumvakis and Ericson 1984; Johnson 1988; Grenier 1992), studies of newspapers from British Columbia are relatively infrequent.

Second, a preliminary examination of the coverage of reproduction in the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Province* and the *Times-Colonist* (previously the *Victoria Times* and the *Colonist*) revealed a marked similarity of content. The preliminary sample in this study included 100 articles from each news organization randomly selected from 1969 to 1989. The three papers covered the same events, often used the same wire articles, had similar inclinations in editorial comments on abortion, and contained ‘women’s sections’ which tended to feature

more articles on reproductive issues. Differences were most evident in the latter half of the 1980s when the *Province* adopted a tabloid format and decreased the analysis and article size (see *Appendix B* for a list of the articles sampled from the *Victoria Times Colonist* and the *Province*, and *Appendix A* for the articles sampled from the *Vancouver Sun*).

And finally, the study was limited to the *Vancouver Sun* because it may be considered to be a mass appeal newspaper, falling in the middle of a range of approaches within the print media. The *Royal Commission on Newspapers* (1981c, 70-1), Voumvakis and Ericson (1984) and Ericson *et al.* (1987, 1989, 1991) have claimed that newspapers tend to be oriented toward specific markets. At one end of the spectrum, are 'popular' newspapers such as the *Toronto Sun* and the *Province*. These papers are characterized by, "... iconic elements including pictures, brief items on simple themes, strongly opinionated columns on simple themes, colloquial expressions, and parochial interests. Playing on the heart, and on the lower regions of the anatomy" (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 35). At the other end of the spectrum are 'quality' newspapers, such as the *Globe and Mail* which are presumed to target a significantly different portion of the market. These newspapers "...seek acceptance through more 'literary' and symbolic means. ... formats include longer items, features, and continuing stories on complex matters affecting business and political elites..." (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 35). In the middle of the spectrum are papers such as the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Victoria Times-Colonist* and the *Toronto Star* that attempt to capture both ends of the market, "... to be all things to all people...". For the purposes of this study, the *Vancouver Sun* was selected because it is British Columbia's largest circulation mass appeal paper,² and more importantly, because the paper in theory is not limited to any particular market niche which would limit the range of discussion about issues surrounding reproduction.

The period of time from 1969 to 1989 was selected because it coincided with a number of developments effecting reproductive issues, such as medical-scientific findings in

² The *Vancouver Sun* had the highest circulation in the 1980s according to the Canadian Newspaper Circulation Factbook.

the areas of reproductive technology, prenatal care, and techniques for visualizing and treating the fetus in the womb. For example, ultra-sound technology first appeared in the early 1960s, and gradually became a necessary and expected part of a woman's pregnancy. 'Test-tube' baby technology was first introduced as a possibility in the early 1970s, and Louise Brown, the first 'tube baby', was born on 25 July 1978 in England.

The period is also significant because it reflected changes in the Canadian abortion law from the 1969 amendment to the Criminal Code which effectively made abortion a medical matter, to the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in 1988 which declared that the abortion law was unconstitutional. In the year following this ruling there was a great deal of legal and political wrangling over the issue of abortion, including the *Dodd* and *Daigle* injunction cases and an attempt by the federal Conservative government to introduce Bill C-43.³

Since the aim of the study was to determine how the fetus was represented in news discourse, the search of news coverage was extended to all items that discussed some aspect of reproduction as well as any item outside of the broad category of reproduction in which the fetus was represented. It should be noted that the latter category included a small number of items such as an article discussing the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* which featured the fetal image. Items which fell under the general heading of reproduction, including topics such as prenatal care, reproductive technology, contraception and abortion among others, were selected for the sample. The broad selection criteria ensured that it could be determined how important the fetus was overall in the *Vancouver Sun's* news coverage. Moreover, the relative importance of reproduction issues in general from 1969 to 1989 could be roughly

³ Bill C-43, An Act Respecting Abortion (1989), was an attempt at compromise by the Conservative government under Brian Mulroney. The proposed law would have reintroduced a prohibition on abortion in the Criminal Code, and would have given doctors expansive authority to make the decision to perform the abortion without seeking a second opinion. A woman would have been permitted to seek abortion upon any "physical, mental, or psychological" threat to her health. In effect, the bill would have re-criminalized and re-medicalized abortion. The bill was defeated in a tie vote in the senate on 31 January 1991.

determined through a comparison to data from other studies, particularly Ericson *et al* (1991), and Lake, Scrimger and Riley (1991).

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual news-item which includes primary or hard news articles; secondary articles such as editorials, opinion columns and features; and in a few cases, relevant pictures which were not attached to an article but were accompanied by an explanatory caption.

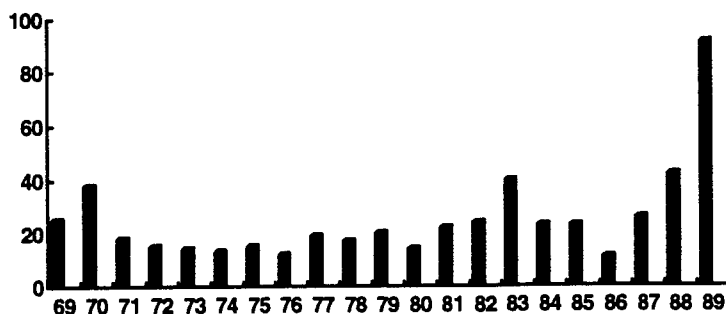
Two months of coverage were randomly selected from each year from 1969 up to and including 1989. A cover-to-cover search of the daily newspapers (Monday through Saturday) for each month resulted in a sample of 522 articles which was derived from a thorough search of just over 1,100 newspapers editions. The decision to conduct a search of one month blocks of coverage rather than using newspaper indexes was made to avoid limiting the sample to the news-items selected by the two available indexing services. Both the Canadian News Index and the British Columbia Index of Newspapers offered only a general indication of the total amount of available discourse on reproduction. In general newspaper indexes make selections based on indeterminable criteria, and therefore may be less reliable than a hands-on search.

Table 3.1 shows the distribution and number of news-items found in the *Vancouver Sun* by month and by year from 1969 to 1989. Chart 3.1 depicts the number of news-items found in each year of the sample. The most notable increase can be found in 1989 and can be attributed to the extensive coverage by the *Vancouver Sun* of the *Murphy, Dodd* and *Daigle* injunction cases, and the activity of anti-abortion protesters outside of Vancouver abortion clinics in the summer of 1989; combined with the coverage of other reproductive issues which appeared consistently throughout the entire sample, such as medical developments relating to pregnancy and the fetus .

Table 3.1 Distribution and number of news-items by month and year, Vancouver Sun 1969 to 1989

<i>Year</i>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1969					16						9	
1970	22								16			
1971				13								5
1972	11					4						
1973		9									5	
1974						8		5				
1975		9								6		
1976					6			6				
1977				14							5	
1978		7				10						
1979									9	11		
1980			6								8	
1981							9	13				
1982	17			7								
1983					30				10			
1984		6										17
1985							13			10		
1986		4									7	
1987				15					11			
1988								24		18		
1989			36				55					

Chart 3.1 Number of articles per year, 1969-1989



The data analysis

The method for data analysis adopted in this thesis is based in part on a study by Ericson *et al.* (1991) of news accounts of crime and deviance in Canadian radio, television and newspaper outlets. Ericson *et al.* (1987; 1989; 1991) attempt to show that the aggregate result of the process of news production is the “representation of order” or, in other words, maintenance of the status quo. News organizations work under the assumption of neutrality and objectivity (Ericson *et al.* 1989), which leads to an emphasis on presenting both sides of an issue. The effect is that complex events tend to be reported as though they fit into a bipolar framework, one side versus another. However, ideas that fall outside of the status quo, are typically labelled as extreme or fringe arguments. Consequently, the media tend to construct and reconstruct the moderate centre. Thus, Ericson *et al.* (1991) claim that crime news is part of an active discourse which continually serves to reinforce notions of social order, morality and hierarchy. Although their research focuses explicitly on news of crime and deviance, and consequently does not deal specifically with issues of gender in the media, some of their categories of analysis proved useful for this study. In particular, Ericson *et al.* are concerned with variations in news and source formats, topics, and types of knowledge across broadcast and print news media and how these issues affect the final news product. The analysis of sampled news-items in this study is divided into two sections. Chapter Four provides a broad overview of the sample in the form of some summary statistics. Chapter Five elaborates on some of the primary themes in discourse about the fetus and the mother which emerged from the observations in Chapter Four. The categories of inquiry used in Chapter Four are as follows:

Summary statistics: a quantitative analysis of the sample

News Formats

Television, radio and newspaper have different format considerations based in part on the type of medium (i.e. whether it is audio, visual, or a combination), and the audience

targeted by the medium. These considerations result in different time, space, organizational and technological constraints that all have an impact on the news content. For example, newspapers constitute a visual and permanent news medium traditionally aimed at a narrower range of population than broadcast media which have aimed at the lowest common denominator or the widest range of viewing/listening audience (Ericson *et al.* 1989).

News formats are “devices by which journalists are able to categorize, choose, organize and represent knowledge as news” (Ericson *et al.* 1990, 149). Since the ultimate task of any news organization is to communicate meaning or to “produce something visible from something invisible” (Altheide 1985, 39), format considerations must be examined as an integral part of that process. In Chapter Four the effect of format requirements on the *Vancouver Sun's* coverage of reproductive issues is considered, including, news-item type, news-item source, event location, and newspaper section. The analysis of the category ‘news-item type’ is a documentation of the extent to which the *Sun* uses editorials, opinion columns, features and hard news items. Hard news refers to reports which describe events as they happen without providing in-depth analysis about their cause. In contrast, editorial, opinion columns, and features provide the reader with explicit opinions or theories about events (Hall *et al.* 1978). The analysis of news-items types is designed to determine whether reproduction elicits explicit opinion in newspaper discourse, and whether this changes over time.

The category of ‘news-item origin’ represents the proportion of items originating from wire services and those from non-wire sources. The purpose of this breakdown is to determine the extent to which reproductive issues are presented in a uniform, standardized format. Wire services provide a consistent effortless source of reliable news (Smith 1980), that is generally regarded by journalists to be the most ‘straightforward’ and ‘factual’ news available (Ericson *et al.* 1990, 159). Technical developments in the capacity of newspaper outlets to receive information rapidly over the wire has increased in recent years which means that information can be displayed almost instantaneously before the eyes of the reader

(Smith 1980). The result is that increasingly the control and mediation of the newspaper and editorial board is decreased, and “wire services are able to play a more direct role in the construction of the newspaper” (*Ibid.*, 205). Large national wires services such as CP and American services such as UPI and AP produce news that reaches across international boundaries; consequently the news takes on a standardized character. It becomes “news from nowhere” (Epstein 1974), originating from nowhere in particular, but of interest everywhere that the wire service reaches.

The category ‘event location’ indicates the proportion of items originating locally, nationally and internationally. The purpose is to determine how much of the news about reproductive issues in the *Vancouver Sun* is derived from outside of British Columbia, and outside of Canada. Related to the ‘news from nowhere’ character of news originating from wire services, a large proportion of items originating from outside of Canada would be indicative of the degree to which ideas are passed across borders. A particular concern is the ideas about reproduction, abortion and the fetus emanating from the United States. To what extent is representation of the fetus in Canadian news influenced by U.S. news?

The final consideration is section of the newspaper in which items appear. The aim of this analysis is to determine how news about reproductive issues is classified by the *Sun*. Material appearing in special feature sections of the newspaper such as sports, lifestyle, entertainment may contain more explicit opinion than is contained in hard news sections. Lifestyle-type sections frequently appeal to what are deemed to be women’s interests, although the targeting of a specific gender seems to be less clear in the 1980s than in the 1960s. Thus, from 1969 to 1970 a lifestyle section appearing in the *Vancouver Sun* was called ‘The Women’s Pages’, by the 1980s the name was changed to ‘You’ although many of the articles—aimed at women’s interests—remained. These sections generally have a ‘lighter’ or more frivolous tone than do hard news sections.

Source Formats

An important part of the construction of news is the interaction between journalists and sources. A reciprocal relationship between news and source organizations is particularly strong in areas such as the law, crime and justice (Ericson *et al.* 1989). These sources play the role of producing knowledge which shapes and gives legitimacy to the environments from which they come. This effect is reciprocal: sources not only give definition to the environments such as policing, law or medicine, but they also have a hand in determining what becomes news. Thus, Ericson *et al.* point out that the designated spokespersons of source organizations “also become the ‘authors’ of the news” (1990, 182).

They work hard to produce knowledge, and to police it, so that they can sustain their preferred versions of events and visions of what should be done about them. As producers of social discourse, actors in the news participate in every part of the social drama. They write scripts, perform, and do critical reviews, each one seeking to implant his or her own vision of a happy ending (*Ibid.* 1990, 182).

Some sources and source organizations will be assigned a greater value by news organizations than others. The hierarchy of authority among sources is addressed in Chapter Four. The analysis documents both the type and gender of the first five sources cited in each item. The decision to limit the analysis to the first five sources was based on the knowledge that very few items had more than five, and that they were typically cited in order of diminishing importance. On this basis, a separate analysis documents which sources were cited first in each news-item.

Visuals

Visuals are not as important to the print medium as they are to television, in fact only a small proportion of items appearing in newspapers are accompanied by pictures of any sort (Ericson *et al.* 1990, 219; Dussuyer 1979). However, the encroaching power and reach of television has influenced the visual quality of newspapers (RCN). The still photographs and

other images that do appear in newspapers can have a powerful effect on the construction of meaning. The analysis in Chapter Four is a categorization of the types of images.

Headlines

Newspaper headlines are also an important part of the construction of meaning in the news production both because they are designed to attract the readers attention, and because frequently they are the only part news-items that are read (van Dijk 1990). Since news-makers are limited by the space available for presenting headlines, they frequently form incomplete sentences which can lead to an emphasis on some words at the expense of others (van Dijk 1991, 50). Therefore the words that the journalist (or editor) decides to emphasize in the headline (which do not necessarily reflect the content of the news-item itself), can direct the reader toward a preferred meaning or version of an event. In the analysis of headlines in Chapter Four the frequency of key words in the sample of 522 headlines is documented. The breakdown of headlines also provides a descriptive overview of the sample which is continued in the analysis of topics.

Topics

Completing the descriptive analysis of the sample, Chapter Four ends with a breakdown of primary topics. A news topic has been defined as a “macro-proposition” which “represents what the news-makers construe to be the most important information about a news event” (van Dijk 1991, 71). A news-item may contain more than one topic, and in a sample of 522 items the possibilities are innumerable. Consequently, only the primary topics were counted. ‘Primary’ refers to those topics which appeared in at least 20 articles. The examination of topics is designed to determine which broad categories of news are reported most frequently, and consequently become part of the social discourse about reproduction. Chapter Five extends the descriptive analysis of the sample of coverage provided in this chapter and draws out overarching themes.

Qualitative study of the news sample

Chapter Five examines the overall image of moderation and extremes that characterizes the sample as a whole through a focus on themes that relate specifically to the issue of fetal personhood and to the adversarial relationship between the mother and the fetus. Informed by the theory discussed previously in this study the purpose of the qualitative analysis is to present *one* possible reading of the of news texts, rather than to reveal the 'truth' underlying them. In other words, the goal is not to discover a gap between what is presented about reproductive issues, particularly the fetus, and the *real* situation as experienced by women. Instead, the intention is to begin to dismantle common sense assumptions about reproduction as presented in the press. Meaning is neither constant nor forever present; rather it is continually constructed and reconstructed through language. The tasks are to deconstruct the discourses contained in press reports, to identify the multiplicity of competing meanings surrounding reproductive issues, and to determine which discourses are 'dominant' or present 'preferred' ways of understanding the maternal-fetal relationship in particular, and which are marginalized. Ultimately, the deconstructive approach raises questions about the foundation of dominant ideas which are frequently taken-for-granted.

The themes presented in Chapter Five are a result of an in-depth reading of all items in the sample. From detailed notes taken to summarize the content in each item, and from the descriptive findings of Chapter Four, a number of themes emerged. To an extent qualitative analyses are always imprinted with the subjective interpretations and evaluations of the analyst (Jensen and Jankowski 1991; Ericson *et al.* 1990, 55). Thus, it has been argued that no research escapes the subjectivity of the researcher. For example, Howard Becker has stated that it is not possible to "...do research uncontaminated by personal and political sympathies and that the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side we are on" (Becker 1977, 239). This thesis is based on the recognition that the interpretations of the researcher are a part of the analysis, and the only thing that can be provided is *an* alternative interpretation rather than *the* interpretation

of press discourse. Nonetheless, there is an attempt to approach the material systematically so that at the very least this study can be replicated by other researchers. What results from the analysis in Chapter Five is the discovery of consistent patterns of coverage which raise important questions about the relationship between the mother and the fetus, dominant meanings, and power in Western society.

The limitations of the research design

Since this study is restricted to the print medium, broader conclusions cannot be drawn about news coverage of reproductive issues in broadcast media. Other studies have demonstrated that radio, and particularly television have a significant effect on the social construction of knowledge (Altheide 1976; Crisell 1986; Ericson *et al.* 1987, 1989, 1990). Moreover, the analysis is limited to the *Vancouver Sun* which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about other newspapers in Canada. The relatively narrow scope of this one-person research project did not allow such an expansive overview. The study is exploratory and attempts only to determine whether there are any discernible patterns in the sample of news coverage. More research needs to be carried out in the future in order to demonstrate whether similar patterns appear in other newspapers and news media, or perhaps more interestingly, whether they appear in forms of popular culture.

The approach taken in this thesis was to view newspaper discourse as an end product that could indicate the way that reproductive issues, and particularly the notion of fetal personhood, have been constructed in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Any analysis which focuses on newspaper content alone cannot serve as the basis for an understanding of the effect of that content on the reader. Much recent work which has addressed mass media communication from a postmodernist/deconstructionist perspective has focused on the reception of media messages by individuals in order to deflate the argument that the audience receives messages passively and homogeneously (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991; Ang and Hermes 1991; Fiske 1991). Jensen (1991, 137) also takes individual reception into account

when he argues that “...at each point in the communicative process there is a scope of determination which allows for several potential meanings.” The reader’s reception is an act that is based on the individual’s context as well as the broader social context, and there is a significant difference between potential meaning determined by the researcher and the actualized meaning received by the reader (*Ibid.*, 137). Although, time and space constraints in this project did not allow for an analysis of reader reception, future research should involve this aspect of the construction of meaning.

Finally, the study does not encompass the techniques, procedures and maneuvers that are involved in producing the news. Ericson’s ‘institutional approach’ to the study of mass media involves examination of the practices of both news and source organizations. Although the journalistic work that goes into selecting and constructing news items has considerable relevance in terms of the final content of the media text, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this study. More importantly, since the theoretical framework in this study is postmodernist, the primary concern is the *language* in the media discourse on reproduction that is presented in the newspaper. Thus, the concern is the *tangible* media text.

CHAPTER FOUR
PRESS COVERAGE OF REPRODUCTION IN THE
VANCOUVER SUN, 1969-1989:
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF NEWS AND SOURCE FORMATS

In the process of constructing news, journalists and their sources must work within certain organizational, technological and economic constraints. Television, radio and print news organizations each have different format requirements which are as important to the shaping of news discourse as the social contingencies. Ericson *et al.* (1989) among others have argued that ultimately news can only be what will fit into a column or a ten minute news bulletin. This chapter demonstrates that the social construction of news occurs within the context of format requirements which influence the stories that are selected for coverage and the manner in which they are presented. Summary statistics are used to provide an overall description of various aspects of the sample of news coverage in the *Vancouver Sun* from 1969 to 1989. The examination of: 1) news formats; 2) source formats; 3) visual representation; and 4) primary topics reveals that there are a number of consistent themes regarding the fetus and its relationship to the pregnant woman. These themes are explored further in the following chapter.

The findings in this chapter also demonstrate that an over-riding tendency in the *Vancouver Sun* is to achieve 'balance' by presenting issues in a bipolar fashion. Even when it is contrived, equal coverage of apparently opposing sides gives the appearance of journalistic objectivity and neutrality. At the same time, there is a tendency to favour moderation, or ideas that presumably reflect 'commonsense'. The *Sun* does present opposing points of view, but ideas which lie outside of an acceptable middle ground are portrayed as extreme and downplayed. Thus, particular meanings of reproduction may be constructed by the press in the name of moderation.

NEWS FORMATS

In the daily act of producing the news, journalists must work within certain format requirements. Ericson *et al.* (1991) have demonstrated that the formats will be dictated by the medium; for example, television, radio and newspaper have different “devices by which journalists are able to choose organize, and represent knowledge” (*Ibid.*, 149). And formats are also dictated by the market or audience targeted by the news organization because in the final analysis news must be profitable. Newspapers in particular have traditionally targeted different types of markets. In contrast to television and radio which tend to target the “lowest common denominator” or mass audience, a newspaper can “build its readership by appealing to an aggregate of minorities, each of whom will select and read only particular sections and items from the total volume available” (*Ibid.*, 37). Thus, the content of a newspaper will be affected by both the markets it attempts to target and the format requirements of the print medium.

In their study of crime news across all three types of news media, Ericson *et al.* (1991) found that television, radio and newspapers varied in the way that they were affected by format requirements (and consequently the content of the crime news varied). For example, media varied with respect to the amount of explicit opinion that was acceptable as editorial comment or opinion columns/pieces, in the degree of reliance upon wire services as a source of stories as opposed to journalists or citizens, and in the extent to which stories were derived from local, national or international events. The following analysis of the sample of news-items illustrates how these news formats affected the *Vancouver Sun's* coverage of reproductive issues from 1969 to 1989. In addition, the placement of news-items by section within the *Vancouver Sun* is discussed. Although this news format was not considered by Ericson *et al.* it is significant as a reflection of the way in which journalists of the *Sun* chose to represent and categorize news about reproduction.

News-item type

'News-item type' refers to the form of presentation of individual items, and includes, editorials, opinion columns, features and hard news items. There are both implicit and explicit expressions of opinion within the different item types. As explained in the previous chapter, hard news items specify those first order news reports that ostensibly describe events 'as they happen' without explicit opinions, theories or in-depth analysis as to their cause (Hall *et al.* 1978). These reports are intended to maintain the appearance of objectivity and neutrality. Without at least the appearance of these two principles of journalism the news medium lacks credibility and authority (Hartley 1982, 55). However, as will become evident in the remainder of this study, implicit opinion exists in reports which appear to be merely factual accounts of events. Moreover, dominant meanings are constructed and maintained in news coverage through the blending together of opinion and fact. Explicit opinion, which is acknowledged as such by both the audience and the journalist, is an accepted part of editorials, opinion columns, and frequently, feature articles. Ericson *et al.*, found that newspapers tended to rely more heavily on explicit opinion than did radio and television news organizations in their coverage of crime and deviance (1991, 152).

Table 4.1 reveals that in the sample of 522 articles from the *Vancouver Sun*, 81% were hard news items, 6.5% were features, 2.5% were editorials, and 10% were opinion columns. These percentages are comparable to the findings of Ericson *et al.* (*Ibid.*, 151) where the *Toronto Sun* had 78.8% news and feature items, 13.7% editorial/column, and 7.5% citizens' opinion columns; and the *Globe and Mail* had a slightly lower percentage of news and feature items (73.6%), 12% editorial/column, and 14.5% citizens' opinion columns. It should be noted that categories of news-item types used in this study are not identical to those in the Ericson study. For example, features are separated out in Table 4.1 because they frequently contained secondary analysis and explicit opinions of the journalists and sources. However, a rough comparison may be made between the two studies in terms of the proportions of items containing implicit or explicit opinion.

Table 4.1 News-item types, Vancouver Sun, 1969-1989

Type	N	%
News	424	81.0%
Feature	34	6.5%
Editorial	13	2.5%
Opinion Column	51	10.0%
Total news-items	522	100.0%

As noted above, the majority (81%) of items were classified as hard news or primary news-items. However, while the lack of explicit opinion in hard news items may give the appearance of objectivity, no piece of journalism can be devoid of the implicit opinions and assumptions of the journalist, sources, news organization or the broader society. Frequently, implicit assumptions may support dominant societal discourse. For example, a hard news item appearing in the *Vancouver Sun* on 29 May 1969, page 73, demonstrated how implicit opinion may be incorporated within an 'impartial' report. The potential effect of the newly introduced amniocentesis procedure on a woman's choice to abort is discussed in the item which read:

WOMEN PUT ON THE SPOT: ABORT OR NOT?¹

One of the most agonizing concerns of an expectant mother is the possibility that her *unborn child* may be *hopelessly deformed or retarded*. With the relaxation of the abortion laws in several areas the problem is, if anything, exaggerated because the mother now has a legal option.

She must make a *Solomon like judgment* about her own flesh and blood: Shall she abort the fetus and perhaps learn too late that it was *really a normal child*, or shall she let nature take its course and perhaps bring a *grossly handicapped* child into the world?

¹ Note: WOMEN PUT ON THE SPOT: ABORT OR NOT? is the headline of the article. All original headlines reprinted from the *Vancouver Sun* appear in small capital letters in this thesis.

The *U.S. Public Health Service* has devised a way to detect such genetic abnormalities before birth. This is done by taking a sample of the amniotic fluid which surrounds the unborn baby in the mothers' womb [emphasis added] (*Ibid.*).

In this case the journalist's choice of words serves to rationalize abortion on eugenic grounds. The implicit suggestion is that abortion is acceptable, or morally necessary in cases where the "unborn child may be hopelessly deformed or retarded" or "grossly handicapped". This type of argument supports the idea that abortion is about the fetus or the "unborn" rather than about women's choice. Indeed, abortion is justifiable if the child is deformed. Thus, hard news-items designed to present objective and neutral facts about reproductive issues may contain opinion which supports a particular meaning, perhaps even the dominant or preferred meaning. The event, which in this case is the discovery of amniocentesis by the U.S. Public Health Service, is presented in terms of the implicit opinion of the journalist that abortion is primarily about the health of the fetus.

The remainder of the coverage in the *Sun* sample presents varying degrees of explicit opinion. Table 4.1 documents that 34 of the 522 items (6.5%) were feature items of some length which focused on a specific theme. Many of these items appeared in special feature sections in the *Sun* including 'Women Today', 'Living', 'Today', 'You', 'Science', 'Health' and 'Travel'. Within these sections there appeared to be more room for clearly stated opinions of the journalist or feature writer. For example a feature appearing in the 'Living' section on 2 April 1971 (29), with the headline ABORTION AND A WOMAN'S SOUL, highlights the activities and opinions of one group called Vancouver Birthright. The mandate of the group is to "find other ways than abortion for unwanted pregnancies" (*Ibid.*).

The following extract demonstrates how the feature writer uses the example of a Washington nurse's experience to support the anti-abortion ideas of Vancouver Birthright. The leading paragraphs read:

A nurse at a Washington hospital reported for duty in the labor and delivery rooms. They are on the hospital's first floor, where some 300 babies are born each month.

After signing in the nurse went about her business, checking fetal heart-beats, injecting pain-killing drugs, comforting mothers.

Then she went into the hall way to roll in a stretcher carrying a mother ready for a premature birth. She saw two women lying there, both about the same abdominal size under the sheets.

For an emotionally painful moment, the usually composed nurse was numbly still. She realized that one woman had been prepared for the delivery room the other for the abortion room.

'I should not have been shocked,' recalls the nurse, 'but seeing the two women so close together physically, but so far apart in attitude struck me hard. I'm a nurse concerned with preserving life. What am I supposed to do turn away and say life isn't that important?' [emphasis added] (*Ibid.*).

The story of the nurse's distress over an unidentified woman's choice to abort, serves as an introduction to the notion that alternatives to abortion should be exercised. By presenting the ideas of particular groups, in this case Vancouver Birthright, feature articles can have the effect of lending support to a particular meaning. This is not to suggest that prevention of unwanted pregnancies before they occur is not a preferred solution; however, in the article cited above the tack is to suggest that women should never opt for abortion regardless of their circumstances.

Table 4.1 also reveals that editorials made up 2.5% of the sample, or 13 of 522 news-items. This percentage is lower than that found in the Ericson *et al.* study of crime news (1991, 151). In that study the editorials in the *Globe and Mail* made up 12% and in the *Toronto Sun* 13.7%. The difference could be a result of sampling or differences between newspaper editorial policies; however, it may reflect a greater interest in crime as a newsworthy topic than in reproductive issues which may be considered to be of concern to women only. Eleven of the 13 editorials in this sample dealt specifically with abortion. A consistent theme in the *Vancouver Sun's* editorials, but particularly those concerned with abortion, was a call for moderation. Extreme positions were criticized; for example, an editorial of 16 March 1989 decried the 'extremism' of anti-abortion protester Joe Borowski:

Joe Borowski is entitled to fight for recognition of the legal rights of the human fetus. ... he may be frustrated by the failures of his 20 years of political and legal opposition to abortion. *But nothing can excuse his boorish and threatening remarks after the Supreme Court of Canada rejected his appeal to have the fetus declared a legal person. ... He brings the cause he champions into disrepute* [emphasis added] (A14).

This editorial is consistent with Lake, Scrimger and Riley's (1991) study of *Globe and Mail* editorials in which they found that moderation with respect to the abortion issue was explicitly extolled in 25% of cases. The goal of the "Borowski" editorial seems to be to "remind protesters that abortion is a matter for the legal system to wrestle with and that 'extremism' cannot be tolerated in Canadian society" (Lake, Scrimger and Riley 1991, 23).

Continuing the moderation theme, editorials included in this study frequently called for legal or political action to quell the commotion over abortion (16 May 1969, 5; 17 April 1971, 4; 26 August 1988, B2; 24 October 1988, B2; 22 July 1989, B2). For example, the typical sentiment appeared on 27 October 1979, A4: abortion is "not a pleasant subject, no matter which side of the debate you're on...", but "... abortions will be performed whether they are sanctioned or not", and women are dying as a result of lack of hospital access, therefore "... government must take a stand on the issue." In general, the *Vancouver Sun* appears to work within a liberal consensus framework in which anti-abortion and 'pro-abortion' extremes are seen as equal and opposite, and there is a call for 'cooler' heads to prevail. The liberal and moderate centre in which the political/legal realm assumes its proper responsibility is viewed as the most logical and rational option.

Finally, Table 4.1 documents that there were 51 opinion columns (approximately 10% of the sample). Included in the total number of opinion columns are 22 syndicated health columns, all of which were written by male medical professionals. The remainder of opinion columns in the sample deal with the ethical and moral issues surrounding topics such as abortion, reproductive technology and overpopulation. Again, extreme opinions on both

sides of these issues are presented. For example, staff journalist Trevor Lautens consistently writes anti-feminist and anti-abortion columns. In his column appearing 1 September 1970, he writes,

... now, you can say what you want about Women's Lib—and certainly its excesses threaten to choke you somewhere between a yawn and a guffaw. Its fatuous mumbo-jumbo wing is using the familiar cheap psychological tricks and demagoguery to create a feminism 'ethos' of its own imagining.

In 1989 Lautens claims that women often have a cavalier attitude toward abortion, and that it is a "cruel" procedure. He writes that nurses have, "... heard patients complain that their abortion conflicts with their hairdressing appointments" (10 July 1989, A7).

... On one memorable occasion the teenage non-mother used an ordinary toilet [following a prostaglandin induction to expel the fetus] and strolled over to the desk to tell the nurse: 'the kid is in the john'. The fetus, a cigarette butt floating near it, was retrieved.

There are other details. But they aren't unique to this hospital—the aborted fetus that emerges breathing, and is rushed by an anguished nurse to intensive care where such moral dilemmas are resolved; the obstetrician, confronted by a fetus stuck in the vagina who resorted to grasping the head with his forceps and ah but, when destruction is the goal, presumably the precise means becomes irrelevant (10 July 1989, A7).

At first glance, staff journalists such as Marjorie Nichols and Nicole Parton represent what might appear to be the other end of the spectrum. Both claimed to write in defense of "feminist ideals" and "reproductive rights" in their regular opinion columns, although not necessarily consistently. For example, Nichols applauds the findings of the Badgley Commission in 1977, condemning the abortion law (11 February 1977, 4); and in July 1989 Parton discusses the "subversion of reproductive rights" in Canada, claiming that "women should have an unqualified right to abortion in the first three months of pregnancy, a conditional right in the second trimester and a limited right in the final trimester, in fair

consideration of the *competing rights of the mother and the fetus*” [emphasis added] (5 July 1989, A2; see also 23 March 1989, A2; 6 July 1989, A2).

It is noteworthy that Parton frames her discussion in terms of the “competing rights of the mother and the fetus” in the final trimester of pregnancy which effectively would deny women access to late term abortions. Parton’s comments reflect the particular way that the abortion issue is framed in the *Sun*. Abortion is constructed as an issue with equal and opposing sides, such as life vs. choice and/or fetus vs. mother. In her attempt to argue for the woman’s choice, Parton remains within the newspaper’s constructed framework. Rather than viewing mother and fetus as a unified whole, she defines pregnancy as a time of competing rights, and in the final stages of pregnancy the rights of the fetus “rival” the mother’s. The adversarial relationship to which Parton alludes is a recurring theme in the *Sun*’s coverage.

News-item source

In this section the source of news-items in the sample is documented. The proportion of items originating from non-wire sources such as journalists or citizens is compared to those items originating from wire services which feed news to a wide variety of newspapers throughout Canada, and in some cases throughout the world. News originating from wire services tends to have a standardized quality that allows the information to be relevant in a variety of places, and “inevitably bears the ideological imprint of the wire service’s format, personnel, and preferred places” (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 161). There is also some evidence that wire service material is frequently by and about residents of the United States (*Ibid.*; RCN 1981a, 36). The purpose of this analysis is to determine the extent to which coverage of reproduction in the *Vancouver Sun* originated from wire services, and therefore was standardized according to the format of the particular service.

Table 4.2 shows that 49% of items in the sample originated from various wire services. It is important to note that the frequencies in Table 4.2 are only an approximate

measure of the extent to which wire service stories shape the news because reporters may use wire materials without citing the source (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 155; 1987). However, the fact that just under one half of items sampled originate from wire services indicates that an extensive amount of coverage on reproduction originates from the wire. Other studies have demonstrated similarly high percentages of wire service use in other Canadian newspapers. For instance Dussuyer (1979, 41) found that in 37 Ontario newspapers 63% of items originated from wire services and Ericson *et al.* (1991, 158) found that the *Globe and Mail* cited wire services 40% of the time and the *Toronto Sun* 35%. The *Globe and Mail* tended to have a more national and international focus than did the *Toronto Sun* and as a result it utilized more wire material. The *Vancouver Sun* appears to be closer to the *Globe* in this respect.

Table 4.2 News-item origin, *Vancouver Sun*, 1969-1989

<i>Source</i>	1969-1989	
	<i>Total N</i>	<i>%</i>
Wire Services		
CP	128	25%
AP	66	13%
UPI	17	3%
Reuters	9	2%
Southam News	18	3%
Other *	19	4%
Non-wire	265	51%
Total	522	100%

* 'Other' refers to a variety of less frequently cited wire-services including: Sun News Dispatches (5), TPS (4), CDN (2), Agence France Press (1), New York Times News Services (3), Newhouse News Services (1), Field News Services (3).

The *Vancouver Sun* drew on wire services both inside and outside of Canada. Among the 257 stories that originated from wire services, the most frequently cited sources

included Canadian Press (128), American Press (66), Southam News (18), United Press International (17) and Reuters (9). Other less frequently cited wire-services accounted for 4% of news stories. The total number of stories originating from Canadian wire-services (CP, Southam News, and Sun News Dispatches) was 151. Those originating from U.S. sources (AP, UPI, New York Times News Services, Newhouse News Services and Field News Services) totaled 90. International wire-services such as Agence France Press, Reuters, TPS, and CDN totaled 16. The relative frequency of reproductive coverage that originated from foreign news services, and in particular American services, raises the issue of 'media imperialism' or the extent to which Canadian readers are inundated with ideas, events and issues from other nations (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 162).

News event locations

Table 4.3 shows the frequency of event locations in the sample. While the greatest proportion of stories in the *Vancouver Sun* originate from locations within Canada, significant attention is given to foreign events, particularly those from the United States: British Columbia 155 or 30% of the total sample, Toronto 62 (12%), Ottawa 66 (13%), Canada, excluding Ontario and British Columbia, 46 (9%), the United States 99 (19%) and the United Kingdom 14 (3%). 'Other' refers to foreign story locations other than the U.S. and the U.K., including, France, Germany, Belgium, Greece, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, Thailand, Japan and Australia. The total number of event locations in the 'other' category is 23 (4%). Finally, 'not applicable' refers to news-items in which no particular location is apparent; for instance, there are many syndicated health columns which are intentionally locationless, but originate in the United States (Dr. Alvarez, Dr. Neil Solomon and Dr. William Welch). Fifty-seven items in the sample (11%) did not cite any location.

Table 4.3 Story Locations, *Vancouver Sun*, 1969-1989

<i>Story Location</i>	1969-1989 <i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
B.C.	155	30%
Toronto	62	12%
Ottawa	66	13%
Canada	46	9%
U.S.	99	19%
U.K.	14	3%
Other	23	4%
Not applicable	57	11%
Total	522	100%

The data demonstrate that the *Vancouver Sun* constructs reproductive issues through the coverage of events largely outside of British Columbia. A significant proportion of these stories are generated in Ottawa and Toronto, and many deal with legal issues, primarily trials such as *Daigle v. Tremblay*, *R v. Morgentaler*, *R v. Borowski*, and reports of federal government actions. The main foreign location for reproductive news is the United States. Some of this news deals with legal and political events related to abortion; for example, NIXON VETOES EASIER MILITARY ABORTION (5 April 1971, 54); STATES CAN BAR SOME ABORTIONS TOP U.S. COURT RULES (3 July 1989, A1); and ROLLING BACK THE ROE RULE: DECISION MAKES TROUBLE FOR BUSH (5 July 1989, A9). More often, items originating in the U.S. discuss the results of medical studies or advancements in medical technology; for example, CHILD TREATED BEFORE BIRTH: NEW MEDICAL STUDY SAVES APRIL'S LIFE (15 August 1974, 46); NEW SURGERY USED TO RESTORE FERTILITY (8 October 1975, 23); U.S. SCIENTIST RECORDS SOUNDS OF WOMB (11 October 1979, A17); DONATED EMBRYO GROWS TO BIRTH (3 February 1984, A9); FETUSES HEAL WITHOUT SCARS, DOCTORS DISCOVER (20 August 1988, B6) and NEW TEST FINDS BIRTH DEFECT (11 March 1989, B12). It is notable that these items originating from the United States emphasize medical knowledge indicating

that in the *Vancouver Sun* international stories that shed medical scientific light on reproduction are considered to be newsworthy.

News-item placement

Another news format consideration is the section of the newspaper in which items appear. Different standards of objectivity may be allowed for different sections. For instance, special feature sections such as lifestyle, travel, sports, leisure, and entertainment often include articles that highlight strong opinions about particular organizations or products that would not be permissible in news sections. Regular columns, feature articles and advertisements appearing in these sections may also be aimed at a specific audience; for example, women were clearly the target of a section appearing in the *Sun* from 1969 and 1970 called 'The Women's Pages'. Along with articles on reproductive issues this section typically featured 'lighter' articles about wedding anniversaries (12 May 1969, 34) and fashion (25 November 1969, 40); regular columns such as 'Anne Landers'; and advertisements for diets (9 May 1969, 34) and "unwanted hair removal" (12 May 1969, 34). Similarly, it is difficult to deny that Sports sections are generally aimed at what are commonly thought to be men's interests.

Table 4.4 documents the number of news-items on reproduction that appeared in various sections. The predominant section was 'news' which included local, provincial, national and international sections. Three hundred and eighty five news-items appeared in these sections. Items found in news sections of the newspaper are less likely to target a specific audience, and therefore, are likely to be skimmed or read by more readers. Moreover, as was previously mentioned hard news items are presumed to be factual and objective accounts of events. Consequently, they are viewed as more believable than items containing explicit opinion. The combination of the larger target audience and the high degree of legitimacy means that hard news items have a significant potential for maintaining, or changing the understanding of the reader. Thus, items appearing in hard news sections

such as, ALCOHOL DANGER TO FETUS (18 October 1975, 7) send particular messages about 'acceptable' standards of prenatal care based on scientific knowledge.

A total of 42 items appeared in the editorial and op/ed sections which is 8% of the total sample. The relatively low proportion of editorials could be indicative of a general reluctance on the part of the *Vancouver Sun* editorial board to offer opinions on reproductive issues other than some aspects of abortion. Alternatively, the number of editorials could simply reflect sampling. Finally, 95 news-items, (18%) were located in 'lifestyle' sections which at different times from 1969 to 1989 were called: 'Women Today', 'Living', 'Living Today', 'Today', 'Science', 'Health', 'You', 'Food', 'Leisure', 'Travel', 'Life', and 'Entertainment'. The item types that appear in these sections include, medical advice for pregnant women, advice about contraception, opinions of women on both sides of the abortion issue, and other testimonials of women's experiences in reproduction. Although the content of items will be discussed more systematically in the following chapter, at this point it is important to note that items appearing in 'lifestyle' sections are primarily directed at the woman reader and consequently construct or reinforce a 'commonsense' understanding of reproduction.

Table 4.4 Newspaper section, *Vancouver Sun*, 1969-1989

<i>Section</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
News	385	74%
Editorial	16	3%
Op/ed	26	5%
Lifestyle	95	18%
Total news-items	522	100%

SOURCE FORMATS

Newspapers use a variety of sources in the process of constructing the news. Sociological research concerning journalists' use of sources demonstrates that although there

may be a wide variety of sources able to provide information, journalists consistently rely on a small number of sources who typically represent authoritative organizations (Hall *et al.*, 1978; Ericson *et al.* 1989, 1991; Sigal 1973; Molotch and Lester 1980; Gitlin 1980; Fishman 1980; Randles 1991). The various format constraints that affect news organizations and the general desire amongst news professionals to present information that appears legitimate ensure that the primary sources used are medical professionals, legal professionals, and/or government officials.² For instance, journalists reporting crime news develop an ongoing relationship with government source organizations including police, corrections, political representatives etc. (Hall *et al.* 1978; Ericson *et al.* 1989, 1991). Randles (1991) has demonstrated that British news media tend to rely on government sources as well as medical sources of knowledge in coverage of the abortion issue. Counting and categorizing the sources used in this sample of news-items will indicate the type of sources that the *Vancouver Sun* uses to legitimate stories on reproductive issues, and the type of knowledge that is provided most frequently. For example, a high frequency of medical sources could be indicative of the relative importance of medial discourse in framing reproductive issues.

Thus, the purpose of this section is to examine which voices are heard and which are marginalized or excluded in the *Vancouver Sun's* coverage, and consequently which meanings are given a preferred reading in the paper. Aggregate data on the sources are analyzed in three tables: 1) the gender of the source, Table 4.5; 2) the type or professional affiliation of the source, Table 4.6; and 3) gender and type of the first source cited, Table 4.7.

Because items in the sample frequently cited more than one source, Tables 4.5 and 4.6 include the first five sources cited in each article. A potential problem with limiting the search in this way is that sources who may be more peripheral to the story, or those who

² Government is used as a comprehensive term covering elected officials and bureaucrats (or those indebted to politics), and those employed by the state but with their own mandate such as law enforcement, corrections and social services representatives.

carry less 'authority' and therefore provide less legitimacy to the facts reported, may be cited last. For instance, private citizens, or 'vox populi' opinion may appear near the end of a story, following the 'official' comment. In news concerning reproductive issues this *could* mean that women's voices appear last. Thus, limiting the search to the first five citations would present an inaccurate account of women's input.

However, the decision to limit sources examined to the first five is justified in this study because there were few articles containing more than that number. In fact, only 21 of 522, or 4% of items in the sample contained four or more sources. This is a significantly lower percentage than the finding of Ericson *et al.* (1991) that 32% of the *Toronto Sun* and 34% of the *Globe and Mail* items sampled cited four or more sources (*Ibid.*, 184). Similarly, since readers are most likely to read the leading paragraphs (van Dijk 1991), Table 4.7 documents the type and gender of the first source cited in news-items.

Gender of source

Table 4.5 Gender of source, *Vancouver Sun*, 1969-1989.

Year	Male		Female		Unknown		N/A		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
1969-74	118	80	21	14	7	5	2	<1	148
1975-79	83	69	30	25	7	6	0	0	120
1980-84	130	67	49	25	14	7	1	<1	194
1985-89	187	59	110	34	21	7	1	<1	319
Total	518		210		49		4		781

Note: Table 4.5 shows gender of first five sources cited in each item. The 'unknown' category refers to those cases in which the gender of the source could not be determined from the name. The 'N/A' category refers to all of those cases in which the source was an institution such as *Statistics Canada*.

Some research has indicated that women's voices are poorly represented in the media on issues relating to reproduction and particularly abortion, despite the presumption that these are women's issues. For instance, Lake, Scrimger, and Riley (1991) found in their

study of 10 years (1977 to 1986) of editorial coverage of abortion in the *Globe and Mail* that men were 8 times more likely than women to be used as sources. Table 4.5 demonstrates a similar pattern in the *Vancouver Sun* sample, although not to the extent found in Lake, Scrimger and Riley. The data in Table 4.5 indicate that from 1969 to 1974 of 148 citations 80% were male and 14% were female; from 1975 to 1979 of 120 citations 69% were male and 25% female; from 1980 to 1984 of 194 citations 67% were male and 25% were female; and from 1985 to 1989 of 319 citations 59% were male and 34% were female. Thus, females are consistently cited less often than males. Although the data show that there is a change in the relative positions of men and women over time such that males are cited less frequently in 1989 than in 1969, and females more frequently; males continue to be the primary sources. Moreover, the higher number of female sources is not due solely to the increase in 'feminist' comment, i.e. there is a proportionate rise in the numbers of women cited who claim to be either pro-choice or pro-life.

Type of source

With respect to the type of source, the data in Table 4.6 indicate that there is a tendency in the *Vancouver Sun* to legitimize news about reproduction with certain authoritative voices. In particular, the table shows that medical sources were consistently cited most frequently. In a total of 781 citations, 248 were attributed to medical-scientific sources which included general practitioners, obstetricians, gynecologists, psychologists, nurses and other specialists, as well as spokespersons from the scientific community such as geneticists, embryologists, and those who are identified simply as "scientists." The second most frequently cited type of source was the governmental representative. The table reports that 125 of the total 781 citations were attributed to people identified as political representatives. More specifically, this category included federal, provincial or municipal government spokespersons and, in a few cases, political representatives from outside of Canada. Sources who were identified as legal professionals made up the third largest source-

type: 92 of 781 citations were attributed to either judges, lawyers or para-legals. The fourth most frequent source type in the sample was 'media'. Journalists were the sources for 76 of the 781 citations. Generally this source-type was found in opinion columns written by journalists (from the *Vancouver Sun* or from other news organizations), and news-items which contain statements that were not attributed to any other source. Ericson *et al.* found that journalists frequently included their own comments as a source of knowledge (*Ibid.*, 188). This is indicative of the authoritative voice and legitimacy that journalists attribute to themselves.

Table 4.6 Type of source, Vancouver Sun, 1969-1989

<i>Source-type</i>	1969- 1974 <i>N</i>	1975- 1979 <i>N</i>	1980- 1984 <i>N</i>	1985- 1989 <i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>
medical	64	48	81	55	248
government	35	14	23	53	125
legal	7	12	29	44	92
media	15	10	10	41	76
pro-choice	7	5	12	32	56
pro-life	1	5	11	36	53
mother	1	7	4	15	27
father	0	2	2	11	15
academic	4	0	1	8	13
religious	3	5	2	4	14
other*	11	12	19	20	62
<i>Total</i>	148	120	194	319	781

Note: Table 4.6 shows the source-types for the first five sources cited in each item.

* 'Other' refers to source-types that did not fall into any of the 10 categories, for example, union representatives, fitness instructors, parole officers, Statistics Canada among others.

Table 4.6 also shows that sources identified as "pro-choice" were cited 56 times in the sample, and those identified as "pro-life" (also referred to by the *Sun* as "anti-abortion") were cited 53 times. This finding is consistent with other research which demonstrates that

news organizations have an institutional requirement to maintain the appearance of impartiality, balance and objectivity in order to appear legitimate (Hall *et al.* 1978, 57-58; Epstein 1974; Tuchman 1978; Ericson *et al.* 1991, 39). One technique for maintaining the appearance of objectivity is to present issues and events as though there were two equal sides. By giving equal coverage to two sides, either within one news-item or across several news-items, the news organization can engender a 'sense of fairness' or objectivity (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 168).

However, as discussed previously, often the division of issues into distinct sides is artificial and an oversimplification of complex issues. This is indicative of the mass media's tendency to work within the parameters of liberal pluralism, which assumes that equal coverage of divergent groups and ideas will ensure equality. The *Vancouver Sun* maintains the appearance of balance by citing "pro-choice" and "pro-life" sources at similar rates. For example, in 1988 and 1989 the *Sun* promoted the idea that there were two "extreme" points of view in the abortion debate by frequently citing the president of Vancouver Right to Life, Betty Green, and a spokesperson for the B.C. Coalition for Abortion Clinics, Hilda Thomas, within the same article. The ideas of these two women are characterized as a reflection of the extremities of the range of ideas in the abortion debate.

The following news-item in which both women provide comment on the Quebec appeal court's ruling in *Daigle* is illustrative:

Betty Green, president of the Vancouver Right to Life Society termed [the court's decision] 'a monumental judgment' that will have 'ramifications across the country. This decision obviously means our government has to do their duty to provide protection equally for all human life.'

Hilda Thomas, president of Vancouver's Everywoman's Health Centre Society, called the Quebec ruling barbaric and ill-founded (27 July 1989, A7).

The juxtaposition of the comments of Green and Thomas within items or over a series of items serves to legitimate the idea that abortion is primarily an issue concerning the competing rights of the mother and the fetus, but that it is 'extreme' to promote the absolute rights of either mother or fetus. Thus, Betty Green's argument that the fetus deserves equal if not greater protection and rights than the pregnant woman is questioned because it is fanatical, but at the same time, Thomas's claim that the fetus is not equal to the pregnant woman is also presented as questionable.

Mothers, who do not represent any official position but are cited *because* they are mothers, appear infrequently in the sample: 27 of 781 citations. This finding coincides with an overall lack of female sources (Table 4.5). Fathers, or men who are referred to because of their paternal role, are cited 13 times in the sample, and it is notable that the majority of these citations are attributed to Jean-Guy Tremblay who sought an injunction in 1989 to prevent Chantal Daigle from "aborting his child". The infrequent reliance on mothers and fathers as sources is also indicative of the tendency in the *Vancouver Sun* to use more authoritative medical, legal and political sources in stories on reproductive issues. There are few personal testimonies of women or men in the sample, although some may have been contained in letters to the editor which were not included in the sample.

Gender and type of first source cited

Table 4.7 documents the gender and type of the source cited first in each item. The purpose of the table is to provide an indication of sources deemed most important to the story by the journalist, and possibly by the reader. Ericson *et al.* (1991) suggest that information given early in a news-item may be considered more important, at least by the journalist, because there is a general perception that readers scan the headline and lead. For instance, Swope (1958) expressed a typically held belief among journalists when he said, "the only two things people read in a story are the first and the last sentences. Give them blood in the eye on the first one" (cited in Ericson *et al. Ibid.*, 266) In a review of audience

reception studies, Jensen (1991) claims that readers will frequently form opinions based on the headline and lead. Thus, sources cited in or near the lead may carry more weight in terms of constructing a particular meaning in a news-story.

Table 4.7 shows the same patterns of gender and source-type distribution as those found in Tables 4.5 and 4.6. In particular, a considerable number of first citations are attributed to male medical professionals, 135 of 379 or 36%. Conversely, only 4% of first citations are female medical professionals. Government and legal professionals make up the second and third largest groups of first citations, 14% and 11% respectively. Together medical, legal and political representatives account for 65% of first citations. Pro-life representatives are cited first in a few more items than pro-choice representatives; however, at 5% and 7% respectively, neither group makes a significant appearance as the first source. Similarly, mothers appear first in 17 items or 5% of the time (fathers appear less frequently, 2%). A clear majority of the sources cited first were male, 77% versus 23% female. Thus, in Table 4.7 it is indicated that the sources cited first or those whose comments may set the tone of the news-items on reproductive issues are primarily male medical, legal and political professionals.

Table 4.7 First source cited in each item by gender and type, Vancouver Sun, 1969-1989

	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
medical	135	36%	16	4%	151	40%
gov't	49	13%	5	1%	54	14%
legal	40	11%	3	<1%	43	11%
media	17	5%	8	2%	25	7%
pro-choice	0	0%	19	5%	19	5%
pro-life	12	3%	14	4%	26	7%
mother	0	0%	17	5%	17	5%
father	7	2%	0	0%	7	2%
academic	10	3%	2	0%	12	3%
religious	9	2%	0	0%	9	2%
other*	7	2%	9	2%	16	4%
Total	286	77%	93	23%	379	100%

Note: Table 4.7 includes first source cited where the gender of the source was known.

* 'Other' refers to source-types that did not fall in to any of the 10 categories, for example, union representatives, fitness instructors, parole officers, Statistics Canada among others.

VISUALS

The following discussion of visual representation in the sample encompasses photographs, illustrations, diagrams and cartoon sketches, in addition to headlines. In comparison to radio and television, newspapers are limited in the extent to which visual representations can be used to communicate meaning, in comparison to radio and television (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 218). Nonetheless, where images, color, size and juxtaposition are utilized in print media there is greater potential for constructing particular meanings. For example, a banner headline accompanying a large color photograph on the front page of a newspaper may strongly project a particular perspective. Repeated presentation of certain types of visuals can also be indicative of a newspaper organization's attempt to reach a

particular audience. For example, Ericson *et al.* (1991, 219) demonstrated that the *Toronto Sun* was more likely than the *Globe and Mail* to use pictures of citizens, massive headlines with dramatic wording, and color photographs. These tendencies were indicative of the *Toronto Sun's* “vox pop” orientation. Popular newspapers in particular have been influenced by the visual power of television. Thus, newspapers such as the *Toronto Sun*, *USA Today*, and the *Province* have been particularly influenced by television formats, tending toward briefer stories and more visual presentation. However, all newspapers have succumbed to the visual power of television to some degree (RCN 1981 *Final Report*). In the discussion below, Table 4.8 describes the type of images, Table 4.9 describes the most frequently appearing words used in headlines, and Table 4.10 reports the size of headlines appearing in the sample.

Visual Images

Table 4.8 portrays the content of visual images used in the *Vancouver Sun* from 1969 to 1989. The most frequently occurring type of image, the head and shoulders portrait of political, legal, medical sources, and journalists totaled 52, or 40% of all images in the sample. This coincides with a tendency in the press to represent reproductive issues, but specifically abortion, in terms of medical, legal, and political discourse. The portrait of a doctor, judge or political official could also represent what Hall *et al.* refer to as “over accessing by the media to those in powerful privileged institutional positions” (1978, 58).

Table 4.8 Content of visual images, *Vancouver Sun*, 1969-1989

<i>Image Content</i>	1969- 1974 <i>N</i>	1975- 1979 <i>N</i>	1980- 1984 <i>N</i>	1985- 1989 <i>N</i>	1969- 1989 <i>Total</i>
legal source	0	0	0	11	11
medical source	7	4	0	3	14
political source	1	0	4	8	13
journalist as source	1	0	2	11	14
Borowski	0	0	3	1	4
Morgentaler	1	0	4	6	11
Dodd	0	0	0	3	3
Daigle	0	0	0	4	4
anti-abortion	0	2	1	9	12
pro-choice	1	0	1	4	6
abortion protest	0	0	1	2	3
women holding baby	2	1	3	4	10
mother and father	0	1	0	4	5
pregnant woman	1	0	1	2	4
premature baby	1	2	2	1	6
fetus	1	2	7	2	12
<i>Total</i>	16	11	29	75	131

Note: In Table 4.8, 'abortion protest' refers to images of confrontation in which either 'pro-life', 'pro-choice' or both groups were involved.

Dr. Henry Morgentaler appears in 11 visuals from 1969 to 1989. In the 1980s he was recognized by the media as the primary spokesperson for the pro-choice side of the abortion issue. This was a result of his fight to open several abortion clinics, and his role in removing the 1969 abortion reform from the Criminal Code (see Gavigan 1992; Morton 1992). The prominence of Morgentaler ensured his place as a *primary definer* of the pro-choice side of the abortion debate. Others who advocated this position (all women) appear only 6 times in the sample.

Further examination of visual images in the categories 'anti-abortion', 'pro-choice' and 'abortion protest' in Table 4.8 reveals that the abortion debate was depicted as a clash between two equal and opposing sides in the same way that was evident in source formats

referred to previously. Images of both extremes in the abortion debate reflect emotionally charged protest. Thus, anti-abortionists appeared in 12 pictures, 9 of which depict some form of protest or demonstration. For example, on 12 November 1977 (A6) an anti-abortion demonstrator (male) is pictured wearing doctor's operating clothes and carrying a sign reading "Abortion doctor killing for cash"; on 3 March 1989 (D5) limp protesters are depicted being carried away by police officers; and on 10 July 1989 (A5) there is a particularly vivid picture of a woman lying with her head locked under a pipe. The pipe is connected to Everywoman's Health Clinic (a Vancouver abortion clinic).

Pro-choice advocates also appeared in demonstrations (9 May 1983, A12; 2 March 1989, C1), or violent protests as was the case in the picture appearing on 6 March 1989, A3, in which women carrying signs reading, "It's a woman's choice", can be seen shoving a CBC cameraman. In addition to the images which deal solely with one side of the abortion issue, there are 3 that depict both sides clashing in the same image (Table 4.8 'abortion protest' category). For example, a pro-choice demonstrator is depicted "burying his fist in the stomach" of another demonstrator (5 July 1989, A3). The type of images used in the *Vancouver Sun* frame abortion as a bipolar issue. By narrowing the options for abortion to one side or the other, the press may be contributing to the notion that the issue must be framed in terms of *either* the rights of the fetus, *or* the right of the woman to choose. As was suggested earlier in this thesis, a focus on rights is not necessarily the best solution to the abortion issue for women (Smart 1989), yet this becomes the preferred meaning in the *Vancouver Sun*.

A particular perception of motherhood is also maintained in many of the images presented in the *Vancouver Sun*. The ten images of women holding babies place a visual emphasis on the bond between mother and child. When read as part of the overall discourse on reproduction, the motherhood images take on a significant role. For example, juxtaposing images of mother and child with stories about abortion presents a seemingly contradictory message; valuing the mother's role while at the same time valuing a woman's right to

abortion. An archetypal example of this appears in the *Sun* on 8 August 1988, F8. The caption reading, “Serina Hinde with son: considered abortion...”, is below the photograph of a smiling mother holding her baby. In this instance the image of a particular mother, who was “convinced by Premier Vander Zalm’s strong beliefs” not to abort, and her child, obscures the broader issues surrounding abortion.

There are six pictures of premature babies in the sample. What is most striking about these images is the similarity between “preemies” and the image of the fetus. Premature babies represent a mid-way point between the fetus and the baby. In many cases the extremely premature babies are shown in incubators with adult hands in view to demonstrate scale (4 June 1974, 45; 22 September 1970, 1; 2 April 1977, 3). The reader is provided with visual evidence that the fetus can be saved by medical intervention, and is, therefore, viable at an increasingly early stage of development.

The image of the fetus appears 12 times in the sample, nine of these in the 1980s (see *Appendix C*). There are only three images that are attached to articles which discuss the anti-abortion position (26 October 1985, A6; 29 July 1989, A5; 19 November 1977, A6). Six images of the fetus are used to illustrate articles that discuss medical/scientific advancements in the study of the fetus. These include *in vitro* fertilization techniques, the amniocentesis procedure, and the “remarkable” technology that allows doctors to photograph the fetus within the womb using “... a tiny telescope inserted through mother’s uterine wall” (24 September 1979, A1). The remaining images of the fetus are used to illustrate the movie *2010*. In a full page article discussing upcoming movies for the 1984 Christmas season there is an unmistakable image of a fetus suspended in space, peering down at Earth. In this case the fetus becomes literally what Petchesky (1987) has described as “the mini-space hero.” The use of the fetal image in Hollywood movies may be a testament both to the familiarity

of the visual image of the fetus that has only been a part of mass culture since the 1960s,³ and to what Donna Haraway describes as blurring of the lines between science and science fiction (1989).

It is not the case that the fetal image in this sample is used to illustrate articles dealing with the anti-abortion cause, despite claims by some feminist writers that "...the strategy of anti-abortionists [is to] make fetal personhood a self-fulfilling prophecy by making the fetus a *public presence*" (Petchesky 1987, 58). However, the presence of the image of the fetus has the effect of adding force to anti-abortion discourse. Moreover, representation of the fetus in contexts other than the abortion debate, but specifically within medical-scientific discourse, serves to insert the image into public view in a legitimate and authoritative way. The fetus itself can be detached from any extremist religious or moral arguments against abortion, and can be viewed as human, an object of science, or as a patient.

Headlines

Headlines play an important function in press discourse for a number of reasons. At an obvious level headlines are conspicuous to the extent that they are large and bold, they are brief, and they are designed to summarize what the writer (or as is often the case, the editor) perceives to be the primary issue in the article. More importantly, headlines are designed to attract readers' attention, and consequently they may contain language that is particularly provocative or dramatic. Since headlines are limited by space, they are often formed by incomplete sentences and may be missing auxiliary verbs which provides an opportunity for the journalist to emphasize some words or terms at the expense of others, or to create deliberate vagueness that leads the reader to make certain assumptions (van Dijk 1991, 50). Also, the fact that headlines are designed to grab the reader's attention (and to

³ A book called *The First Nine Months of Life* was first published in 1962. At that time *Look Magazine* brought the images of the fetus to mass-circulation as it published a spread on the book. Lennart Nilsson, a photo-journalist, published another series of photographs of the fetus in *Life* magazine, 1965.

sell newspapers), combined with their necessary brevity, means that frequently the headline is not an accurate reflection of the news-item. As was often the case in this sample, peripheral but more dramatic points may be highlighted in the headline resulting in the emphasis of a particular meaning.

There were a total of 522 headlines in the sample, all dealing with some aspect of reproduction. The following is a breakdown of some of the key words used in the headlines. The reason for identifying individual words is to determine how the *Vancouver Sun* framed the issues of reproduction over the 20 year period. Specifically, the task was to determine the extent to which the fetus was mentioned explicitly, the extent to which abortion in particular was framed as a medical, legal or political issue, and finally the extent to which either anti-abortion or pro-choice stories were represented in the headlines. Table 4.9 represents a breakdown of word categories. Each category consists of a number of related words.

Table 4.9 Frequently used words in headlines, *Vancouver Sun*, 1969-1989

<i>Headline word categories</i>	<i>Number of word appearances</i>
fetus	72
medical-scientific	85
legal	82
political	65
women	56
contraception	37
anti-abortion	36
pro-choice	4
abortion	240

Note: Headlines often contained more than one word category.

The 'fetus' category in Table 4.9 includes related words such as "unborn", "embryo"; and "child" or "baby" in headlines where there was a clear reference to the fetus. For

example, in the headlines BABY BOY GETS OPERATION TWO WEEKS BEFORE BIRTH (27 July 1981, A19) and CHILD TREATED BEFORE BIRTH (15 August 1974, 46), NO CHILD EVER UNWANTED: BERNICE GERARD IS AGAINST ABORTION (8 August 1974, 41) the words “baby” and “child” refer to the fetus. The majority, 47 of 72, of headlines in this category refer to the fetus as a “child”, “baby”, or “unborn” child or baby. Thus, when the *Vancouver Sun* does refer to the fetus there is a tendency to use words that emphasize its child-like qualities.

Many of the headlines attribute the ability to act in various ways to the fetus. For example, UNBORN MAY SOON GIVE A MEDICAL MESSAGE (18 November 1980, C8), THE FETUS DECIDES: LABOUR BEGINS WITH A SIGNAL FROM THE BABY (20 February 1975, 25), FETUS KNOWS THE TIME: BIOLOGICAL CLOCK TICKS (20 May 1983, D17), FETUS SURVIVES DEATH LEAP BY GRIEF-STRICKEN MOTHER (4 November 1986, A6), FETUSES HEAL WITHOUT SCARS, DOCTORS DISCOVER (20 August 1988, B6). In headlines such as these there is an implicit assumption that the fetus acts independently, separate from the mother, as an individual in its own right.

Words that fall into the category of ‘medical-scientific’ in Table 4.9 include “doctor”, “science”, “medical”, “obstetrician”, “gynecologist”, and “psychologist”. As shown in the table these words appeared in 85 of the 522 headlines in the sample. The ‘legal’ category in Table 4.9 includes words such as “law”, “lawyer”, “judge”, “trial”, “court” and “legal”. Eighty-two headlines included these words. The ‘political’ category in Table 4.9 included “parliament”, “legislature”, “M.P.”, “M.L.A.”, “Liberal”, “Tory”, “cabinet”, etc. These words appeared in 65 headlines.

The category of ‘women’ includes words such as “woman”, “mother”, “girl”, “mom”, “pregnant teen”. These words appeared in 56 headlines. Specific names of women were not used in headlines with the exception of Chantal Daigle (7), Barbara Dodd (1), and Bernice Gerard, Vancouver Right to Life committee director (cited above). Considering that reproduction primarily concerns women, it is worth noting that words in this category do not

appear as frequently in the headlines as political, legal, medical-scientific words and, most importantly, they do not appear as frequently as words representing the fetus.

The category of 'contraception' includes words such as "birth control", "contraceptive", "pill". The total number of headlines in this category is 37. Notably, the largest category is 'abortion' which includes the words "abort", "aborted", "abortion". Of the sample of 522 headlines 240 contained these words.

Table 4.10 Size of headline, Vancouver Sun, 1969-1989

<i>Headline Size</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Banner	32	6%
Spread	175	34%
Two-Column	170	33%
Major One-Column	62	12%
Minor One-Column	75	14%
No Headline	8	2%
Total	522	

Note: In Table 4.10 'banner' refers to headlines with large bold lettering spanning the width of the page; 'spread' refers to headlines extending more than 2 column-widths (in most cases three or four); 'two-column' refers to headlines which were two columns wide; 'major one-column' refers to headlines which were one column wide but used large bold lettering; and; 'minor one-column' refers to headlines that were one column wide with small and/or unbolded lettering.

In Table 4.10 the distribution of headline size in the sample is documented. Banner headlines were used in 32 items, 6% of the sample. These headlines provide a greater visual appeal. The majority of them appear in the sample in the 1980s, (25 of 32), which reflects the tendency in print medium to become more visually oriented in recent years. It is noteworthy that many of the headlines which alluded to the fetus were banners, for example: OBSTETRICIAN GROWS HUMAN EMBRYO IN LAB (2 April 1971); ABORTION: FETAL ABATTOIR OR SOCIAL SERVICE? (12 April 1977); UNBORN BABY VULNERABLE AS A CANARY IN A COAL MINE (2 November 1977); SCIENTIST GROWS UNFERTILIZED HUMAN EMBRYO (27 May 1983); SEIZURE OF UNBORN CHILD RULED LEGAL (4 September 1987); HOW TO BE A GOOD PARENT

BEFORE THE CHILD IS BORN (27 August 1988); SUPREME COURT REFUSES TO SAY WHETHER FETUSES HAVE RIGHTS (9 March 1989). These headlines are visually conspicuous, and in some cases employ captivating language that implies fetal personhood.

TOPICS

In this section the primary topics in *Vancouver Sun's* coverage of reproduction from 1969 to 1989 are examined in order to provide a general introduction to the content of news-items which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Five. Topics “represent what news-makers construe to be the most important information about a news event...” and are typically found in lead paragraphs (van Dijk 1991, 71). Since the lead may be the only part of a news-item that is read, it plays an important function for the journalist in providing the essence or the angle of the story that she/he wishes to present. Given the vast number of topics in a sample of 522 articles, the following summary documents only the most frequently appearing ones. News-items were categorized by topic areas if at least one paragraph, in most cases the first paragraph, fell within the topic area as described below. In many cases news-items contained more than one topic.

A primary finding in the analysis of topics was that coverage of reproduction in the *Sun* could be broken down roughly into two broad categories: first, medical aspects of reproduction; and second, issues related to abortion. However, these categories were not mutually exclusive. For example, it was possible for news-items to incorporate a discussion of abortion from a medical perspective. Significantly, the ‘fetus’ as a topic area overlapped both of the broad topic categories. This finding indicates that the fetus is *not* solely an aspect of abortion coverage; rather, it is also a major part of the coverage of medical developments in reproduction generally. Table 4.11 shows a breakdown of the most frequently appearing topics in the *Sun* from 1969 to 1989.

Table 4.11 Topic frequencies and percentages in total sample, Vancouver Sun, 1969-1989

<i>Topic</i>	1969- 1974 <i>N</i>	1975- 1979 <i>N</i>	1980- 1984 <i>N</i>	1985- 1989 <i>N</i>	1969- 1989 <i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Medical aspects of reproduction						
Medical-scientific	60	40	51	15	166	32%
Medical research	15	9	28	10	62	12%
Reproductive technologies	8	6	15	4	33	6%
Population Control & Eugenics	20	3	3	3	29	11%
Contraception	32	5	5	7	49	9%
Issues related to abortion						
Hospital Board Disputes	0	3	11	9	23	4%
Legal action - trials	16	12	22	79	129	25%
Government	11	9	3	15	38	7%
Pro-choice issues	7	1	17	22	47	9%
Morgentaler	4	0	22	14	40	8%
Anti-abortion	4	9	18	41	71	14%
Borowski	0	0	18	11	29	6%
Abortion Clinics	6	4	18	32	60	11%
Fetus and Embryo	25	44	57	99	225	43%

Note: Topic categories in Table 4.11 are not mutually exclusive.

MEDICAL ASPECTS OF REPRODUCTION

Medical-scientific

The category of 'medical-scientific' includes news-items in which reproduction is represented as a medical or scientific issue. This is a very large category which encompasses many sub-categories of topics such as medical studies, reproductive technologies, contraception, abortion, teen pregnancy, and the fetus. However, the defining characteristic of items in this category is the dominance of medical or scientific opinions, actions, or definitions of reproductive issues. Table 4.11 shows that a relatively high percentage (32%)

of the 522 news-items in the sample contain 'medical-scientific' topics. Thus, reproductive issues in the sample are frequently framed in medical terms.

Medical research

Medical research findings were a topic in 12% of the items in the sample. This topic area indicates the press's reliance on medical knowledge to describe reproductive issues. It also demonstrates the perceived importance of current medical research to be passed on to the public.

Reproductive Technology

Reproductive technology was a topic in approximately 6% of the items. A large part of this coverage concerned the race to develop the "test-tube" baby or *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) technology. There were several prominent aspects of the *Vancouver Sun's* representation of IVF. First, it was presented as a technology that broke the boundaries between science fiction and science. Although the first IVF baby was not born until 1978, excitement and speculation began to appear in the *Sun* in 1971. At this time a New York obstetrician had "successfully grown a human embryo in the laboratory to the point at which it is ready for the womb" which was hailed as "the essential step in creating test-tube life" (2 April 1971, 29). In a news-item in the following year it was announced that the coming "test-tube baby era ... would emphasize to the world the developing genetic and biological revolution, with scientists working to bring man closer to new controls over human life" (12 January 1972, 70). In 1973 a feature writer speculated that cloning humans was imminent. The sub-headline for this item read "Life created in a test-tube. A thousand identical humans born from a single body cell, Fiction? No, Say scientists. It's fact" (22 February 1973, 6).

Second the coverage of IVF technology is represented in terms of international competition. British scientists led the way with the birth of Louise Brown, the first test tube baby, in 1978. Subsequent news-items reflect the international quest to successfully carry out IVF births which occur in Australia (15 July 1981, D12); Greece (21 January 1982, A2); and the United States (2 April 1982, A14). Also, it was reported in 1982 that B.C. scientists

were verging on success: "...the University of B.C. team of physicians and technicians which hopes to fertilize human eggs in test tubes is the better part of a year away from beginning work with humans" (2 April 1982, A11).

Third, the suggested positive aspects of IVF are emphasized. There was some attention (usually from the anti-abortion perspective) given to the ethical considerations of a technology that could create and destroy human life. However, the primary emphasis was on the great potential of IVF to overcome the problem of infertility, and to eliminate genetic diseases. For instance, one geneticist claimed that the technology would be extremely beneficial for "couples unable to have children because *the wife* cannot, for medical reasons, produce a healthy child" [emphasis added] (15 January 1972, 3). Another doctor offered his opinion in 1982 suggesting that IVF was a worthy scientific endeavor that saved couples from infertility:

I think I would be playing God if I was doing it with anybody's egg and sperm and giving the result to anyone who wanted it. But we're talking about married couples who cannot have children, and using the egg and sperm of the couple to produce their child (5 January 1982, B1).

Thus, infertility is the medical condition that makes IVF appealing. By focusing on infertility as a distressing disease that can be 'cured' through IVF, the *Sun* usually avoids other more complex discussions of shortcomings of reproductive technologies. In her book *Beyond Conception*, Patricia Spallone (1989, 69) identifies infertility as the excuse offered by the medical establishment for conducting reproductive experimentation on women's bodies.

Finally, a result of the *Sun's* coverage of IVF is a new emphasis on the earliest stages of life or the embryo. Anti-abortionists claimed that the ability to create and destroy embryos places a new risk on the "unborn child". For example, Betty Green of the B.C. Pro-life Society was quoted as saying:

It is an unborn child, and this technology involved the destruction of some human life. The individual is contained in a fertilized egg, but it seems they are trying to redefine conception as implantation in the womb. They're not fooling anybody. We feel it is unacceptable to expose another human being to possible destruction (5 January 1982, B1).

Perhaps more importantly, the news coverage of the advent of reproductive technologies is accompanied by a medical definition of the embryo. It is described by medical experts as a viable entity that can be implanted in the womb to grow to full maturity. This discourse brings the reader's attention to the status of the embryo as distinct from the pregnant woman, a theme that will be developed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Population Control and Eugenics

The related topics of population control and eugenics appear in 11% of items. These items target "uncontrolled population growth", particularly in the "third world," for example, BIRTH CURB URGED OR 'WAR INEVITABLE' (10 November 1969, 27) and IN POOR LANDS: CONTROL OF BIRTH ACCEPTED (13 November 1969, 27). These items reflect fear of population growth. In one feature article the claim is made that,

... from a global view point the fantastically accelerating growth rate of the world's population is probably the most serious problem facing us in the immediate future.

... the foregoing leads to the conclusion that abortion is likely to be one of the most effective methods of fertility control in countries—or in certain population sectors within a given country—which are at a lower or intermediate stage of development [emphasis added] (9 June 1972, 5).

The emphasis on population control particularly in the "third world" also has eugenic implications. Eugenics is the 'science of improving the human race' which involves selective breeding for "purifying the human stock" (Spallone 1989, 15).

Some form of a 'eugenic argument' appeared as a topic in 17 items (3% of the total sample). This argument is most commonly presented by medical sources in an effort to justify the need for liberalization of the 1969 abortion reform. The concern of these doctors

is that abortion should be an available option to women because of the possibility of fetal deformity, or disability that may be detected later on in the pregnancy. Some tests are not available until after 18 weeks of pregnancy. The following excerpts from sampled news-items represent the “pro-abortion” eugenics argument:

There are times when abortions should be carried out because of a high risk of fetal damage there should be no question in the case when there is a good chance the newborn will be born physically or mentally defective (20 May 1969, 6)

The statistics show that after 40, her chances of bearing a mongoloid child become considerably higher than are those of a younger women. If the tests indicate that she is going to have a retarded child she may choose not to bring the handicapped child into the world...If it is a boy she must worry and she may choose not to carry the fetus to term, but to have an abortion (16 September 1970, 27).

Speaking as a scientist, Dr. Lewis said, an older woman who doesn't take advantage of amniocentesis is guilty of a form of human pollution. We aren't dealing with genetic pollution and we should be (19 January 1972, 40).

The question of aborting defective fetuses does not present an ethical problem to me... Severely handicapping disorders in children cause so much suffering, unhappiness and pain that they are negative in terms of quality of life (24 June 1972, 81)

As Deborah Steinberg has contended, such eugenic arguments “reconstitute the original feminist meaning of a woman's right to choose.” However, in so doing the legitimacy of abortion is based on the eugenic argument rather than the “woman-centered” argument (1991, 187). Abortion could only be justified as a ‘legitimate’ option if the objective was to end “human pollution”, not merely as a woman's right to control her own body.

As Steinberg points out there are disturbing implications for women in the medical argument supporting abortion for eugenic purposes. First, according to the eugenic view, a

woman's right to abortion can only be based on the social 'desire' or 'expectation' to eliminate genetic 'disease' or deformity. Thus, reasons behind a woman's decision to abort other than 'not wanting to bring a handicapped child into the world' are not valid. And second, this is a "fetal-centered" argument that reinforces the idea that abortion should be about the fetus rather than about the choices or concerns of the mother (1991, 187).

To a large degree the eugenic argument is based on the legitimacy and status of medical discourse. Particularly with the advent of prenatal diagnosis techniques such as amniocentesis. 'Choice' is effectively defined in terms of medical knowledge.

ISSUES RELATED TO ABORTION

Hospital Board Disputes

Reports of hospital board disputes in British Columbia occur most prominently in the 1980s. The *Sun* reports a series of disputes in which anti-abortionists attempted, in some cases successfully, to overtake hospital boards in Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Kelowna, Vernon, Kamloops and Prince George hospitals. Annual board election meetings were flooded with anti-abortion supporters. Board disputes present a particularly newsworthy issue for the news media in that they combine protest and discord with issues of health and abortion. Frequently, reports portrayed the issue as a battle of two sides: the anti-abortion board members and the doctors, who in these cases represented the 'pro-choice' side.

Legal action

The 'legal action' category includes reports of court cases, injunctions and any other event involving the law. Table 4.11 shows that legal action appeared as a topic in 25% of items. It should be pointed out that 28 items (5.3% of items in the sample) dealt specifically with abortion injunction trials such as *Daigle v. Tremblay* and *Murphy v. Dodd*. Other court cases reported included Borowski's attempts to "defend the rights of the fetus", Morgentaler's numerous collisions with the legal system, legal action taken against anti-abortion protesters outside of B.C. abortion clinics, and apprehension cases such as *Re Baby R*.

Government

This topic category includes reports of government action on abortion such as the 1969 reform and the attempts by the Conservative government to introduce Bill C-43 in 1989. News-items which featured the comments of politicians also fell within this topic area; for example: DUECK CALLS CAMPAIGN A FLOP (4 October 1988, A6), and MP WARNS ABORTION STEP TO INFANTICIDE (22 November 1986, A6). Table 4.11 documents that 'government action' was a topic in seven percent of items in the sample.

Pro-choice

Pro-choice issues appear as a primary topic in 47 items. Many of these reports overlap with anti-abortion activities. For instance, there are descriptions of protests involving both sides (e.g. ABORTION ORDINANCE CAUSES FUROR 14 February 1978; ABORTION CLINIC DRAWS SPLIT CROWD 7 May 1983), and when events related to abortion are reported there are typically comments from both pro-choice and anti-abortion representatives. In this respect, Hilda Thomas of B.C. Coalition of Abortion Clinics and Betty Green of the B.C. Pro-life Society become the primary local spokespersons during the dispute over the abortion clinic in Vancouver, as well as Morgentaler's trials and the injunction cases.

Pro-choice comments are most frequently framed in terms of legal discourse or the individual rights of the mother to choose abortion. For example, speaking about the court's decision in *Re Baby R*, Gwen Brodsky of National Action Committee on the Status of Women claims, "Baby R is a case of a woman being cut open in the interests of protecting an unborn child—if that kind of limit on a woman's autonomy is permissible, then it's very hard to know what the limits are on women's rights" (10 August 1988,). An item reporting a rally held in Vancouver on International Women's Day also demonstrates the pro-choice connection to legal rights discourse. At the rally speakers "demand equality and the woman's right to control her own body" (6 March 1989, A3). One spokesperson claims: "We will no longer tolerate the hypocrisy of governments and institutions who say to us,

‘We support someone’s equality’—and yet deny us funding and contemplate criminalization of abortion” (*Ibid.*).

A large part of the discourse on the pro-choice movement concerns the actions of Henry Morgentaler. In fact, the doctor is the primary spokesperson for the pro-choice side. While Morgentaler presents ideas within the framework of legal discourse, he also lends medical credence to pro-choice arguments because of his status as a doctor and his repeated claim that “... it is absolutely unscientific to claim that a developing embryo is a baby” (22 April 1971).

Morgentaler

Dr. Henry Morgentaler is a topic in 40 news-items in the sample. Beginning in the early 1970s he is identified as a preeminent spokesman for the pro-choice movement. For instance in a 1974 feature article Morgentaler is referred to as JOAN OF ARC OF THE ABORTIONISTS, “crucified by the Catholic hierarchy opposed to abortion” (28 August 1974, 5). He is consistently presented as a feisty brawler willing to take on the anti-abortionists. Consider the following leads:

Dr. Henry Morgentaler has been acquitted three times of performing illegal abortions in Quebec and he’s confident a Winnipeg jury would acquit him. If he’s wrong, he could face life imprisonment... (5 May 1983, A13).

Dr. Henry Morgentaler says he will resume abortions at his Toronto clinic within two weeks although he risks a second police raid. [He] says the risk of the raid is less important than stopping what he called the deteriorating availability of abortions in Ontario (16 September 1983, A8).

Dr. Henry Morgentaler, scrappy as ever at the prospect of a court challenge, vowed Wednesday to continue to fight “the monumental injustice” of Canada’s abortion law... (3 October 1985, B3).

Dr. Henry Morgentaler has characterized Premier Bill Vander Zalm's views on abortion as those of a 'dinosaur' who 'belongs in the Middle Ages'... (6 April 1987, B2).

Both the amount of coverage of Morgentaler in news-items and photographs, and the way in which he is covered suggests that he represents a newsworthy character to the *Sun*. Particularly in the 1980s, Dr. Morgentaler's name becomes very closely related to what the *Sun* identifies as the pro-choice side. Much of the coverage focuses on Morgentaler's numerous legal battles to open abortion clinics in Quebec, Manitoba and the Maritimes. Thus, there is a tendency for abortion to be framed as a legal, bipolar issue. Joe Borowski is frequently represented as Morgentaler's opponent.

Anti-abortion

Anti-abortion actions or perspectives appear as a primary topic in 71 items. In many cases the item reported the views of particular pro-life groups or individuals, for example, VOICE OF THE UNBORN SAYS 'NO' ON ABORTION (3 April 1971, 12), BISHOPS CITE LIVE BIRTHS (7 April 1971, 56), NO CHILD IS EVER UNWANTED: BERNICE GERARD IS AGAINST ABORTION (8 August 1974, 41), ANTI-ABORTION TRIBUNAL URGES RIGHTS FOR THE UNBORN (27 October 1975, 60), ORGANIZED ANTI-ABORTIONISTS TAKE THE LEAD IN DESPERATE 'FIGHT FOR LIFE' (24 June 1978), ANTI-ABORTIONISTS FORM PARTY (27 April 1982, D4). In many cases anti-abortion discourse is framed in medical language. Thus, on 27 October 1975 (60) a Vancouver doctor speaking at a meeting of the B.C. Pro-life Society discusses the adverse effects of abortion on the mother. The doctor claims, "...if the abortion is not properly performed, infection and bleeding might result. Instruments may perforate the womb and pieces of gastro-intestinal tract can be sucked into the vacuum used in abortion...". Also, on several occasions anti-abortionists cite medical evidence of the development and viability of the fetus (7 April 1971, 56; 17 May 1983, A15; 26 October 1985; A5).

Coverage of anti-abortion actions is at times negative, emphasizing the irresponsibility of protesters and/or their religious zealotry. In many cases actions of anti-abortionists are presented as extremist or beyond acceptable behaviour. Examples

include the extensive coverage of anti-abortion protesters outside of abortion clinics and doctors homes in March 1989, as well as some of the actions of the Vander Zalm government, particularly ABORTION SPYING POOR JUDGMENT (24 August 1988, A1).

Borowski

Joe Borowski appears as a topic in 29 items in the sample all of which are in the 1980s. The most common focus in these items is Borowski's ongoing attempts to overturn the abortion law on the grounds that it violates the section 7 rights of the fetus. Generally, Borowski is presented in the items as an individual who is acting within his rights as a citizen in a democratic society, although his tactics are questionable. For instance, Borowski is criticized for bringing "fetuses bobbing in a glass jar" into the court room (5 October 1988, A11), and for his "boorish and threatening remarks" in the Supreme Court of Canada (16 March 1989, A14). The *Vancouver Sun's* coverage of Borowski fits within the pattern of moderation similar to that found in Lake, Scrimger and Riley's study of the *Globe and Mail*. In that study it was found that the *Globe* staff disliked those perceived as ideologues, called for moderation, and gave preferred coverage to professionals, while virtually ignoring the ethics of abortion (1991, 20). Borowski's behaviour was discounted in the *Vancouver Sun* as unnecessarily extreme, and beyond the moderate consensus.

General comments on pro-choice and pro-life representation

The *Sun* tends to portray abortion as an issue of rights where there is a clear demarcation between the rights of the woman on one side and the rights of the fetus on the other. When spokespersons for either side use, what the media perceive as rational discourse of law and/or medicine to support their views they are presented as reasonable. Conversely, 'fundamentalism'—religious or feminist—is represented as extremist. However, there is no evidence in this analysis to suggest that there is a strategic maneuver on the part of these 'interest groups' to manipulate ideas in the press by couching their arguments in medical and

legal terminology. Rather it appears that abortion is slotted into an already existing framework in which rational discourses of science and law are preeminent.

The findings to this point in the thesis also indicate that the construction of the fetus in the *Vancouver Sun* is not primarily the result of an overt (or covert) campaign by anti-abortionists to construct fetal personhood using medical and legal discourse. The reasons for this are first that there are a relatively infrequent number of articles in which anti-abortionists constitute a primary topic, and second, as it will be demonstrated in Chapter Five, the fetus is a topic in news items covering issues far beyond the abortion issue alone.

FETUS AND EMBRYO

Table 4.11 shows that the fetus and/or embryo was discussed in 225 (43%) of 522 items. The table also indicates that there was an increase in the number of items in which the fetus is a topic from 1969 to 1989. Although this parallels the general increase in the amount of coverage on reproduction in the sample over time, it may also reflect an increasing interest in the fetus. As mentioned above, discussion of the fetus in the *Sun* overlapped both of the broad topic categories, i.e., medical aspects of reproduction and the abortion issue. This finding is significant in light of feminist arguments claiming the anti-abortion movement has played the primary role in constructing the notion of 'fetal personhood' (Petchesky 1987 among others). It would seem instead that the fetus is part of a much broader spectrum of discourse. This point will be clarified in Chapter Five which demonstrates that the fetus appears in a range of news coverage of reproductive issues in general, and which analyzes consistent themes relating to the fetus in the sample.

In Chapter Four the general characteristics of the sample have been discussed. The majority of coverage consisted of hard news-items. Although the professional ideology of objectivity within journalism requires that hard news-items be devoid of the journalist's explicit opinions, it was demonstrated that these items contained implicit opinions which supported a particular meaning. Explicit opinion in editorials, features, and opinion columns

(including medical advice columns) appeared less frequently. While features and opinion columns contained extreme opinions on either end of the spectrum of issues like abortion and reproductive technology, the editorials maintained a moderate position.

It was also revealed that the *Sun* relied heavily on wire service material. Approximately one half of the items in the sample originated from wire services, many of which were foreign services. Stories originating from the wire are generally regarded as more straightforward and factual, and may be the standard against which the journalist's account of an event is judged (Ericson *et al.* 1991, 159). The large proportion of wire material suggests that the *Vancouver Sun's* news on reproduction appears to be an objective, standardized account of events which should be accepted at face value by the reader. In a related analysis it was reported that stories were more likely to emanate from locations outside British Columbia. Within Canada, stories from Toronto and Ottawa dominated, whereas the U.S. made up the single largest proportion of stories located outside of Canada. Thus, to a large extent the public discourse on reproductive issues in B.C. is shaped from ideas and events originating from other provinces and, more importantly, from other countries.

It was also demonstrated that reproductive coverage appeared most frequently in the news section of the *Vancouver Sun* (which speaks to the fact that much of the coverage was hard news). The second most common section in which items appeared was the lifestyle section. News in different sections may be aimed at particular audiences. For instance, women tended to be the target of items in lifestyle sections. For the most part, however, reproductive issues were treated as hard news that would be of interest to both men and women.

Consideration of source formats revealed that a majority of citations were attributed to male medical professionals, followed by legal, political and media professionals. Although the number of women sources increased in the latter 1980s, they were less likely to be cited than men were from 1969 to 1989.

The *Vancouver Sun* made relatively frequent use of visual representations. A majority of visuals are portrait photographs of (male professional) sources which coincides with findings about the large number of male professional sources cited within the text of items. The analysis of headlines demonstrated that prominent headlines with dramatic wording frequently supported the idea of fetal personhood. For instance, some banner headlines contained terms such as “unborn baby”, or claimed that fetuses had rights.

Chapter Four also revealed that in the *Vancouver Sun* reproductive issues were consistently presented in terms of two competing sides, typically extreme perspectives. Abortion, for example, was framed as a two-sided battle ground. The sides were symbolized by familiar characters such as Borowski and Morgentaler on a national level or Betty Green (pro-life) and Hilda Thomas (pro-choice) on a local level. Points of view were generally presented in terms of extreme positions. However, frequently the editorial position in the newspaper was presented as the voice of moderation which criticized the erratic views of the two opposing sides. Thus, the *Sun* tended to present a liberal pluralist framework in which a presumed consensus of values was upheld and extreme positions were rejected.

This chapter has indicated that the *Sun's* discussion of the fetus appeared in a broad range of coverage relating to reproductive issues. This would seem to indicate that ‘fetal personhood’ is not solely a construction of anti-abortion rhetoric, as some feminists have suggested. Chapter Five focuses more specifically on the type of coverage that the fetus appeared in, as it examines the consistent themes regarding the fetus from 1969 to 1989 in the *Sun*.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAJOR THEMES IN THE PRESS COVERAGE OF REPRODUCTION, 1969-1989: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In the previous chapter it was demonstrated that the *Vancouver Sun* presented reproductive issues in terms of extremes and moderation. The moderate position is presented favorably whereas extremes are disputed, and consequently, preference is indicated for certain meanings. With respect to the relationship between the mother and the fetus in particular, the moderate position is based on particular assumptions, conveyed primarily through medical-scientific discourses, about the role of the 'good' mother and about the viability and independence of the fetus. More specifically, a dominant image which emerges from the *Sun's* coverage of reproductive issues from 1969 and 1989 is that of an adversarial relationship between the fetus and the pregnant woman. In this chapter several recurrent themes and sub-themes in the sample that construct this image are examined: 1) the autonomy and viability of the fetus; 2) the pregnant woman as a threat; 3) the need to protect the fetus from the mother.

THE AUTONOMY AND VIABILITY OF THE FETUS

The idea that the fetus is separate from the pregnant woman is supported most clearly in the medical-scientific discourse that appears in the sample. The fetus is often presented as an object of medical attention, or a patient in its own right with its own biological abilities. This message appears most frequently in news-items on other aspects of reproduction, for example, *in vitro* fertilization, prenatal care, or genetic engineering, rather than, as might be expected, in the *Sun's* explicit coverage of the abortion issue.

In the broader coverage of reproductive issues the idea of fetal separateness is constructed through three related sub-themes including: medical treatment of the fetus; observation of the fetus in the womb; and the increasing saliency of the notion of fetal

viability. Much of this discourse is aimed at debunking some of the mystery that has been associated with the intrauterine environment. As technology develops from the 1960s to the 1980s there are increasing reports concerning the treatment and observation of the fetus. The reader is informed about the “miracles” of medical intervention on behalf of the fetus, and the bizarre and “wonderful” characteristics of the fetus inside the womb. The emphasis on the fetus contributes to its status as an isolated and fully functioning individual, and consequently, to the idea that the mother and fetus are two separate beings.

The fetus as patient

In the initial years of the sample, 1969 to 1973, news-items emphasize the potential of fetal medicine for detecting abnormality in the fetus. This theme coincides with a general emphasis on the eugenic argument used to support a woman’s right to abortion (discussed in Chapter Four) which also appears during these years. For example, in some items it was suggested that abortion was morally acceptable, and perhaps even desirable in cases where a woman knew that the fetus was deformed (13 May 1969, 35; 10 November 1969, 27; 16 September 1970, 27; 15 January 1972, 3; 19 January 1972, 40; 24 June 1972, 81; 9 November 1977, D12; 7 November 1980, 31). In a regular health column appearing on 16 September 1970, 27, Dr. Alvarez claims that the “new science of fetal medicine”, in this case the amniocentesis procedure, will help to detect potential disease or damage in the fetus before birth. He writes;

... a woman pregnant after the age of 40 may want to know whether or not she is going to have a markedly feeble-minded mongoloid child. ... If the tests show she is going to have a mentally retarded child, she may choose not to bring the handicapped child into the world. ... As new methods of studying and treating fetuses develop, there will be less chance of families having to go through the grief and heartbreak of having defective children (16 September 1970, 27).

It is noteworthy that the initial medical attention paid to the fetus in news-items did not indicate that the fetus was necessarily to be considered as equal to the mother. However, fetal medicine did draw attention to the condition of the fetus as a separate entity. Moreover, even prior to the early 1970s, coverage of medical attention to the interior of the womb began to reach beyond simply detecting disease or abnormality in the fetus. Both regular health columns and hard news-items reveal a fascination with new methods for actually healing the fetus within the womb, or in some cases removing the fetus to perform a life-saving operation and then returning it to the womb.¹ For instance, in the same health column quoted above Dr. Alvarez states that "... transfusions can avert blood danger to the fetus...", and he discusses a procedure that can save fetuses which have different blood types from their mothers that previously would have died:

... a marked Rh tendency, in which the mother, during pregnancy, develops a change in her blood that is likely to kill her infant before birth or soon after birth, can have the severity of her disease estimated early in the pregnancy by measuring the amount of bilirubin in the amniotic fluid, the fluid that surrounds the fetus in the womb.

With this measurement, the physician can find out if the infant is in great danger, if so, a large amount of the harmful type of blood is then removed from the mother and helpful transfusions are given to the infant in the womb (16 September 1970, 27).

There is a clear sense in Alvarez's column that medical intervention to save the fetus is possible, and consequently the fetus itself may be thought of as a patient. The same type of fetus saving procedure is discussed in a 1978 news-item with the headline, LIFE ODDS FOR THE FETUS IMPROVE FOLLOWING RARE TRANSFUSION. In this case the fetus is described as a completely separate entity from the mother, struggling against the odds to survive. Dr. Queenan, the chief of obstetrics at a children's hospital in Louisville Kentucky, comments

¹ In Canadian law, removing the fetus from the womb would make it a "human being". The example discussed in the Alvarez column is American.

that “the fetus cooperated 100 percent” (22 June 1978, B10). The implication is that the fetus is a very good patient in its own right, and may be considered to be an object of medical attention separate from the mother.

The expectation that intrauterine treatment of the fetus would become standard procedure is emphasized in several news-items. For instance, in an item headlined CHILD TREATED BEFORE BIRTH: NEW MEDICAL TECHNIQUE SAVED APRIL’S LIFE (15 August 1974, 46) the journalist speculated that there is a bright future for “helping the *unborn child* suffering from a genetic disorder” (emphasis added). In this case amniocentesis was used to detect the disorder and then “massive doses of vitamins” were injected into the mother, crossing her placental wall and reaching the fetus. The journalist reports that this “intrauterine treatment has set a precedent that will serve as a model for therapy not only in this disorder but in other hereditary problems that may be diagnosed before birth”. It is interesting that the doctor’s technique of injecting massive quantities of vitamins is not questioned in the report, possibly indicating the authority invested in medical practices and practitioners.

In 1988 a headline reading FETUSES HEAL WITHOUT SCARS, DOCTORS DISCOVER (20 August 1988, B6) reflects the newly found potential of intrauterine treatment of the fetus. The “curious” discovery resulted from the “growing ability to operate on fetuses”. The non-scarring characteristic of fetuses is touted as opening up possibilities for “fetal plastic surgery” which is described in the item by Dr. Cohen as a field of medicine that is burgeoning and “getting hot, very hot” (*Ibid.*). Again, the implicit message is that the fetus can be treated as a separate entity with separate medical needs. Moreover, the idea of performing plastic surgery on fetuses, although far-fetched, adds to the image of the fetus as a developed human form, and conjures up images of Hollywood in the womb.

In 1981 a new procedure for operating on the fetus in the womb is reported. The headline, BABY BOY IS OPERATED ON TWO WEEKS BEFORE BIRTH, has a science fiction quality which at first glance makes a connection between the fetus in the womb and a baby boy who is a patient even before he is born. The lead adds to the drama of the headline reporting that

“A two-month-old boy was operated on two weeks before he was born as his twin sister lay beside him in the womb...” (27 July 1981, A10). In this particular operation doctors removed a blockage in the urinary tract of the fetus. The article provides a detailed description of the procedure, in which the fetus is referred to as “Michael”, and also discusses similar operations that were performed in Colorado and Boston.

They implanted a tube in Michael’s bladder to drain fluids—a catheter that remained until the day after the boy and his twin were born ... A catheter was inserted April 29 on a fetus at the University of Colorado Medical School. It suffered buildup of fluid on the brain. That child had not yet been born. In the Boston case, doctors used a hypodermic needle to drain fluid from the brain cavity of a 25-week-old fetus ...(*Ibid.*).

The *Sun* coverage anticipates positive results in the science of fetal medicine which will allow more fetuses to be saved. By focusing on the fetus as a new object of medical attention, journalists and their sources construct (or reinforce) the idea that the fetus is an individual in its own right.

Observing the womb

Along with the ability to treat the fetus came the ability simply to observe the actions and characteristics of the fetus. The previously uncharted womb presented an ideal subject for both the medical community to conquer and the mass media to report (Franklin 1991; Randles 1991). Observations of the fetus reported in the *Sun* sample build on the notion of separateness by highlighting various aspects of fetal development that parallel characteristics of children already born. Descriptions of the fetus are, with almost no exceptions, from a medical perspective or the result of medical knowledge which affords them the same authority as medical discourse. Thus, observations of the fetus in the womb reported in the newspaper present a particularly powerful medical definition of a functioning individual.

Scientific forays into the fetal environment are often reported dramatically indicating both a fascination with charting the uncharted and a flare and a melding together of science and science fiction.² The excitement or fascination that surrounds the medical forays into the womb is evident in a news-item appearing on 10 November 1979 (A17). The dramatic headline reads U.S. SCIENTIST RECORDS SOUNDS OF THE WOMB. It is reported that a Colorado scientist has developed the “first accurate way of measuring” what the fetus hears in the womb.

The key to the experiment is a tape recording that to the untrained ear might sound like the wind rushing through trees. But the sounds really are the noises a new human being should hear before birth. ... the noise of blood rushing through the placenta, a sac that contains the fetus and brings nourishment to the developing child (*Ibid.*).

With scientific evidence such as this, an image of what it is like in the womb begins to emerge. The ability to hear becomes an additional attribute to justify special status for the fetus.

Visual representations of the fetus appearing in the sample also place emphasis on the notion of fetal separateness (see *Appendix C*). The now familiar image of the fetus suspended in blackness, apparently separate from the mother, appears on several different days (22 February 1973, 6; 24 September 1979, A1; 1 March 1980, A1; 7 November 1980, B1; 5 January 1982, B1; 19 May 1983, A11; 27 May 1983, A6; 8 December 1984, A6; 26 October 1985, A6; 29 July 1989, A5). Some of these images are purportedly real-life photographs; for instance a close up of the face and hands of a fetus (19 May 1983, A11), a half page photograph of a fetus suspended in space that accompanies an article on upcoming science fiction movies (8 December 1984, A6), a face and hands photograph of a fetus with the caption “a four-and-a-half-month fetus in the womb: whose property?” (October 1985,

² See for example Donna Haraway’s (1987) explanation of the blurred line between science and science fiction in discourse on the human immune system.

A6). Also, an illustration of a seven-week-old fetus which is based on “photographs taken through a tiny telescope” appears on the front page of the 25 September 1979 edition of the *Sun*. Each of these photo-realistic representations emphasizes the child-like qualities of the fetus. Enlarged photos of well-formed hands, feet and faces allow the reader to draw a connection between the fetus and the newborn infant. This connection is also made in the several drawings of the fetus that appear in the sample. In particular a graphic image of a fetus in a test-tube, used several times throughout the sample (22 February 1973, 24; 5 January 1982, B1; 27 May 1983, A6), makes the fetus appear very developed.

Autonomy or separateness is manifest in these visual representations because in each case the fetus appears suspended alone with no visual reference to the mother. Randles (1991) makes this point about the series of photographs of fetal development which first appeared in Nilsson’s (1965) photo series, *The first nine days of life*, which has been used widely by anti-abortion groups. She argues the fetus is represented as autonomous and at peace as it floats against a black back-drop, and this is in direct contrast to an alternative portrayal of the fetus in the woman’s body as vulnerable and at risk (Randles 1991).

Medical discussion of the characteristics of the fetus in the womb dominates the press sample, and at times this discourse is enlisted by anti-abortion columnists and feature writers to make the case against abortion. For example, in one opinion column a Vancouver lawyer defends the “right of the unborn child to live” by enlisting “scientific evidence”. Lawyer Calvin Sandborn writes that,

... like good Germans in Nazi Germany, we turn away from the evidence. We shun the color photographs that reveal the early fetus as an easily recognizable human being. We shrug at the facts—that the unborn has a heartbeat at four weeks after conception; displays measurable brain waves at eight weeks; by 10 weeks looks like a baby, with ears, nose, eyes, and perfectly formed toes and fingers; by 12 weeks sucks its thumb, kicks its legs turns its head, squints, and frowns (26 October 1985, A5).

The description offered by Sandborn in the column which is accompanied by the hands and face close up of a fetus, uses presumably scientific evidence to construct an image of the fetus as an autonomous being. It is also notable that the mother is absent from Sandborn's discussion. Although in this case, the writer presents an extreme view in order to support the pro-life agenda, the use of scientific proof lends a degree of legitimacy to the argument.

In sum, scientific observations of the fetus in the womb which are presented in the *Sun* by medical sources and less often by anti-abortion sources, form part of a visual and verbal discourse of fetal separateness. The fetus is separated from the mother in a way that appears to be entirely natural, or based on biological fact which can be verified through scientific method. There is also the related socially constructed idea which narrows the focus of pregnancy to the autonomous fetus. The viability of the fetus has often been raised as an argument against late-term abortions in pro-life discourse and in law (Randles 1991; Petchesky 1990). In the following section the fetal viability sub-theme which appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* is discussed.

Fetal viability

The concept of 'viability' is a recent medical construct which has replaced the notion of 'quickening', a term used by women to denote the feeling of the first internal movements of the fetus.³ The term 'viability' has been used specifically to refer to the point at which the fetus can survive *independently* of the mother. Its appearance reflects the increasing role of medical science in defining a preferred understanding of reproduction. Scientific discoveries about the intrauterine environment have made the fetus more knowable. The establishment of the scientific distinction between a fetus that was able to survive outside the womb, and one that was not, gave the viable fetus the status of having actual rather than just potential

³ The term quickening was also used by midwives. In England there was an unsuccessful attempt to have the term removed from law as early as 1803 by medical doctors who were attempting to undermine the power of the midwifery practice (McLaren 1984, 129 in Fyfe 1991 164).

human life. The distinction was defined explicitly in terms of individuality. Thus, the concept of viability is dependent on the evidence that the fetus is biologically separate from the mother. The notion of viability is most evident in the press sample in news-items dealing with the survival of increasingly younger premature babies (22 September 1970; 4 June 1974; 24 September 1979; 19 January 1982; 28 January 1982; 24 September 1987; 21 July 1989).

Success stories about the survival of premature fetuses are consistently reported in celebratory terms. In each case the achievement is attributed to the miracle of modern medicine. For example, a news-item of 4 June 1974 reports that with medical attention a baby born three months prematurely will live. A picture of the baby being attended to in an incubator accompanies the article which is headlined, TINY BABY HEALTHY. Attention is given to the “incredibly” small size of the baby which weighs 24 ounces and at “12 inches long is so small that her cry sounds like a kitten’s meow” (*Ibid.*, 45). Information is provided solely by medical sources at the Los Angeles hospital where the baby was born. In the opinion of one doctor the infant’s “chances of survival are good because she was healthy”; he thus implies that fetuses born three months early are viable (with the proper medical care). The reader also receives a glimpse of the stage of development that the fetus has reached by six months of gestation. The implication is that the fetus resembles the baby, and therefore, the fetus should receive the same rights and protection as does the baby.

The story of the premature baby is often reported in the *Vancouver Sun* with a dramatic flare or an element of fascination. For example, a headline of 24 September 1979 exclaims, ONE-POUND BABY AMAZING DOCTORS AFTER 12 DAYS OF LIFE. The article reads,

Against all odds, [a baby] born weighing only one pound, has clung to life for 12 days ... If [this baby] and four other unusually small premature newborns at King’s Daughters [hospital] survive to lead normal lives, it could trigger changes in U.S. medical guidelines ... Under the current guidelines the five babies would have been considered too small or too

premature to try to save. ...New York doctors have reported the survival of a baby even smaller than [this baby].... (*Ibid.*, A10).

The same theme is reported again on 19 January 1982 (B1). Notably, the survival of increasingly younger “preemies” is attributed to “advances in technology” and “changing attitudes of the medical profession”.

AT THREE MONTHS, LITTLE CRYSTAL IS HOME AND THRIVING

When Crystal Aelbers was born, 15 weeks before her due date, she weighed 890 grams, about as much as three medium-sized grapefruits. But the tiny infant’s weight has more than doubled since her proud parents brought her home from her incubator in Vancouver General Hospital’s intensive care nursery. ... Crystal is one of the miracle babies, premature infants whose survival is due both to technical advances such as the ventilator that helps premature babies’ tiny lungs to pump, and to the changed attitude of the medical profession. A decade ago, most pediatricians thought few attempts should be made to save newborns weighing less than 1,500 grams. Today, babies of half that weight are surviving (*Ibid.*).

Another survival is reported on 24 September 1987 (A10). In the headline it is proclaimed: MIRACLE BABY GOES HOME. This article is a celebration of “James Gill, probably Canada’s youngest world record holder” who was born 145 days after conception. This is “barely half the time most babies spend in the womb, and his chances of survival were slim.” However, constant medical attention allowed James to pull through.

In each success story there is an element of science fiction. Again as in stories about the uncharted womb, the implication is that the boundary of viability is being pushed backward by medical science. Could it be that the tiny fetus which was once thought to be dependent on the mother/host, can survive independently? The anti-abortionist doctor Bernard Nathanson, predicts that one day the mother will be immaterial to the development of a fetus. As the bold headline appearing on 17 May 1983, (A15), declares, MD PREDICTS

LIFE AFTER ABORTION. The news-item, which is based on Nathanson's testimony as an expert witness at the Borowski trial in Regina, reports that:

In the future, abortions may consist of surgically removing an unborn child and implanting it intact in a new environment ... Doctor Bernard Nathanson said that the fetus—at three to six weeks of age—could be placed in another woman's uterus or into a life-support system in which it would grow and mature. There will be births, but there will also be those babies kept alive with life support systems who will never undergo a process of birth (*Ibid.*).

Nathanson's bizarre speculation is clearly intended to support Borowski's anti-abortion cause.⁴ However, despite the unabashedly pro-life slant of Nathanson's comments, press reports of advances in medical technology make his ideas imaginable.

Another aspect of the discourse of viability that appears periodically in the *Sun* sample is found in several sensational reports of fetuses surviving despite the death of their mothers. In each case the women are kept alive on life support long enough to deliver babies. Examples of this phenomenon include:

DEAD MOTHER BEARS CHILD

A 26 year old Japanese woman gave birth to a baby girl by natural delivery about six hours after she was pronounced brain dead. ... The prematurely born baby weighed 3 pounds at birth (7 May 1983, A2).

TV WATCHER SAVES UNBORN BABY'S LIFE

[Los Angeles]—Kenneth Von was the only one who tried to help. The pregnant woman died, succumbing a half hour later to the massive head injuries she had suffered in the traffic accident. But her unborn child—despite the taunts and jeers of 50 to 60 bystanders who refused to assist Von in his untrained efforts at C.P.R.—was saved (9 September 1983, B4).

⁴ In 1983 Joe Borowski attempted to have the abortion law declared unconstitutional on the grounds that it violated the "rights of the unborn." For an in-depth account of Borowski's legal action see Morton (1992).

FATALLY INJURED WOMAN, 22 KEPT ALIVE TO DELIVER BABY

[Quebec]—A 22 year old fatally injured woman was kept alive long enough to deliver a baby boy the next day. ... [The woman] was declared brain dead Sunday morning, but was kept alive artificially until Sunday afternoon when the baby boy—three months premature—was delivered ... (29 September 1985, A16).

FETUS SURVIVES DEATH LEAP BY GRIEF-STRICKEN MOTHER

[Chicago]—A newborn girl was in fair condition Monday after being delivered by two firefighters after her mother jumped to her death from a tower because she thought the fetus had died, officials said (4 November 1986, A6).

Thus, even when the natural processes of fetal development and child birth fail, medical intervention can save the fetus. These articles evoke images of the mother as an incubator, or host, and of the fetus as a resilient individual.

The idea of fetal viability, which initially gained legitimacy through medical practice and discourse, was later incorporated into legal and political discourse. For instance, in the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in *R. v. Morgentaler*⁵ which declared the abortion law unconstitutional, Chief Justice Dickson referred explicitly to the increased viability of the fetus in later stages of pregnancy. In the *Vancouver Sun* sample, a news-item reporting the federal Law Reform Commission recommendations (following the Supreme Court's decision in *Morgentaler*) stated that a majority of the commission members supported a two-phase approach to abortion in which:

Women should have relatively open access to abortion in the first 22 weeks of pregnancy, but after that women should only be allowed to get abortions if their life or health is seriously affected (8 August 1988, F8).

⁵ *R. v. Morgentaler* [1988], 1 S.C.R. 30 (S.C.C.)

In the item the reason given by commissioner Justice Allen Linden for the 22 week cut-off for legal abortion is that beyond this point “the fetus is viable outside of the womb” (*Ibid.*). It is noteworthy that a story of a B.C. mother who decided to forgo abortion because of the “strong pro-life message” she heard from Premier Vander Zalm appears on the same page. The article explains that the woman is requesting that Vander Zalm be the godfather of her then one-month-old son. The woman is quoted as saying: “If abortion had been more easily accessible I may have just gone ahead with it because the father wanted me to” (*Ibid.*). At the very least, the juxtaposition of the two articles provides an emotional argument against late term abortions.

The notion of viability is also evident in part through the *Sun's* coverage of the U.S. struggle over abortion. For instance, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1972) limited abortions in the third trimester when the fetus was medically viable and therefore required state protection. As specified in one news-item, “in the 1989 *Webster* decision the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Missouri's provision that a doctor must check a fetus for viability if a woman seeking an abortion appears to be 20 or more weeks pregnant” (3 July 1989, A1). In sum, ‘fetal viability’ is a term that has been used in medical discourse to demarcate the critical stage of pregnancy when the fetus has the potential to survive outside of the womb. This scientific term has also been incorporated into anti-abortion arguments replacing moral or religious arguments about the beginning of life. As well, viability has been a part of the legal and political discussions about abortion. Legal decisions such as *Morgentaler* in Canada and *Roe* in the U.S. as well as the surrounding political discussions reflected to some degree the knowledge that medical-scientists could begin to pinpoint the time at which the fetus could survive apart from the mother. In fact, it seemed reasonable that this moment of independence was being pushed backward as scientific technology increased. The dramatic potential of medical science in this regard was a particularly newsworthy issue in the *Vancouver Sun* from 1969 to 1989.

THE PREGNANT WOMAN AS A SOURCE OF HARM TO THE FETUS

The idea of fetal vulnerability is another recurrent theme in the *Vancouver Sun* that contributes to the image of the adversarial relationship between the fetus and the pregnant woman. At first glance this theme appears to contradict the theme of fetal autonomy and viability discussed above; however, both themes result from increased medical attention directed at the fetus, and both present an image of the fetus as isolated from the mother. Industrialized Western society has witnessed a progressive expansion and elaboration both of medico-scientific interest in the health of children and of maternal responsibilities (McNeil 1991, 15; see also Chapter One). As the intrauterine environment was targeted as an object of science, child care was extended backward before the time of birth. Part of the emphasis on the developing fetus is the identification of potential hazards. Thus, with the aid of science a whole new set of risks to the fetus has been identified. Pregnancy has been redefined in medical terms as a time of potential danger to the vulnerable fetus. Consequently, the responsibility of the mother has been pushed back not only to the period of fetal development but also to the period *before* conception. In the press sample the fetus is frequently represented as threatened or vulnerable, and irresponsible actions of the mother are targeted as a primary source of danger to the fetus. The remainder of this section is a discussion of two sub-themes appearing in the *Sun*: 1) the medical depiction of the fetus that underpins the idea of fetal vulnerability; 2) the pregnant woman as the greatest potential source of harm to the fetus through use of drugs, alcohol and other lifestyle choices, as well as through her decision to resort to abortion (the greatest threat to the fetus).

Vulnerability of the fetus

The idea of 'fetal vulnerability' appeared most frequently in news-items which featured recent medical findings, in regular health columns, and in opinion columns written by anti-abortion supporters. Vulnerability is typically presented or supported by the language of medical expertise. Thus, as medical knowledge about the fetus within the womb increases, the awareness of potential hazards also increases. Discussion of medical

developments in the area of fetal medicine in the sample were often accompanied by the comments about the discovery of risks to the fetus. For instance, Dr. Alvarez (1970) asserts that the “new medical skill” of fetal medicine is necessary for keeping fetuses alive, and “... without the help of new treatments they [the fetuses] probably would not survive” (16 September 1970, 27). In another regular medical column appearing in 1975 Dr. William Welch describes the early months of pregnancy as a “time of special precariousness... a dangerous time” for the fetus. The doctor declares that “... the wonder is not that something goes wrong sometimes; the wonder is that so often everything goes right...” (VS 31 October 1975, 13). The implication here and elsewhere in the sample is that without medical science the fetus is vulnerable; indeed, the viability of the fetus depends on medical expertise.

It is interesting to note that the medical practices themselves are never identified as potential risks to the fetus in the *Sun's* coverage. Criticism of the medical community is reserved for consideration of the ethics of genetic engineering, (HOW SCIENCE IS STRIVING FOR CARBON COPY BABIES, 22 February 1973, 6) and for the intrusiveness of C-sections (MOTHER JUST SORRY SHE MISSED THE ACTION: C-SECTION SAVING MORE BABIES, 4 February 1978, B4). However, there are many more positive reviews of practices such as genetic engineering than negative ones (for example, 24 May 1969, 1; 12 January 1972, 70; 15 January 1972, 3; 24 June 1972, 81, 15 August 1974, 46; 7 November 1980, 31; 4 April 1987, B6); and although the practice of performing C-sections (unnecessarily in many cases) is critiqued in the February 1978 article cited above, it is also venerated as a procedure that “saves babies lives.” The vulnerability of the fetus is not discussed in terms of possible negative effects of medical practices; for example prescribing harmful drugs to the pregnant woman, such as Thalidomide. On the contrary, the advice to pregnant women that is typically offered in the regular health columns is that drugs “should only be taken when they are prescribed” (Dr. Welch: 31 October 1975, 13). Instead, many items attribute fetal vulnerability to the intentional or unintentional actions of the mother.

Vulnerability is also constructed by the press's frequent use of words such as 'danger', 'risk', 'threat', 'harm' and 'hazardous' to describe the conditions in the womb. For example, some headlines contributed directly to the idea that the fetus was at risk: UNBORN BABY VULNERABLE AS A CANARY IN A COAL MINE (2 November 1977, D5), DRUGS CAN HARM THE FETUS (5 February, 1975, 73), ALCOHOL DANGER TO FETUS (12 February 1973, 3), WELL WATER THREAT TO PREGNANCY (5 November 1980, B7). The representation of the fetus as particularly vulnerable and the womb as a particularly dangerous place to be shifts the focal point of pregnancy (or reproduction) toward the fetus and away from the mother and fetus as a unit. Thus, the unborn baby alone is harmed by drugs or alcohol, rather than the baby *and* the mother. This perspective overlooks social or economic conditions that may effect each individual pregnant woman, and instead emphasizes the adversarial relationship between mother and fetus.

The pregnant woman as a potential source of harm

Lifestyle Choices

In the sample pregnant women are identified as the greatest source of harm to the fetus. In most cases women who are not aware, or are somehow living an incompetent lifestyle, are presented as potential threats to the health of the fetus. For example, women can abuse legal or illegal substances, they can eat too much or too little, they can avoid exercise, or they can exercise excessively, they can be unnecessarily exposed to pollutants, pesticides, radiation, etc., or they can risk the health of the fetus by travelling in early or late stages of pregnancy. Over time, there are contradictory messages in the sample about what makes a woman dangerous; for instance, weight gain during pregnancy is described as both harmful and necessary.

The shifting information which targets different dangers to the fetus parallels reports of medical-scientific discoveries. Pregnant women are consistently marked as the root cause of harm or as the potential abusers of the fetus. The hazards of legal drugs such as cigarettes

(nicotine), alcohol, aspirin or caffeine are presented most frequently in the sample. The potential harm of these substances is represented in the sample in authoritative medical discourse. As noted previously, however, there is a clear distinction between legal drugs prescribed by the doctor and deemed to be acceptable (for example, Thalidomide), and those carelessly and neglectfully taken by the woman. Moreover, in the sample of news-items there is no discussion of drugs which may have been consumed by the father of the fetus prior to conception. The medical column cited below demonstrates how women were typically targeted:

... the vulnerability of the fetus of a smoking mother to a caged canary that miners took underground with them because small creatures were far more sensitive than the human nose to presence of deadly, invisible gas... [The result is] ... alterations in the mental ability in children of smoking mothers... One study has shown that mothers of hyperactive children smoked two to three times as many cigarettes during pregnancy as did mothers of normal control children (2 November 1977, D5).

The pregnant woman's actions are presented as the cause of the future problems in the infant, child and adult.

In another regular health column Dr. Neil Solomon confirms the fears of a pregnant woman about being exposed to second hand smoke, and backs up his claim with medical authority. He writes,

Your concern for your unborn child is both commendable and accurate. Although the danger rises in proportion to the number of cigarettes smoked, even moderate smoking during pregnancy can seriously jeopardize the health of the fetus. ... The risks can be life threatening for fetuses.... The [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists] has issued a technical bulletin for doctors recommending that pregnant women be urged to stop smoking (3 March 1980, B2).

In this case the pregnant woman's common sense about smoking is confirmed by both Doctor Solomon and by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The message is that women need to be told not to smoke. In 1982, an item describes fetuses of women who smoke as 'addicts'. A spokesman from the B.C. Lung association, who is cited, suggests that "the child of a smoking mother is born a nicotine addict. And he isn't weaned—he has to go cold turkey. An unborn child can't exactly leave the room when the smoke gets to him and it does get to him" (4 January 1982, A2). Three years later in 1985, doctors claim that "a consistent pattern of birth defects comparable to fetal-alcohol syndrome produced by heavy alcohol use during pregnancy has been shown in new research on cigarette smoking by pregnant women" (12 October 1985, A14). Thus, the risks to the fetus are great and the pregnant woman should be counseled not to smoke.

Women who drink coffee are also depicted as bringing potential harm to their fetuses. For example, in one item the American Food and Drug Administration warns that "while data is insufficient to call caffeine a cause of birth defects, pregnant women would be wise to eliminate—or at least moderate—consumption of coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate and medications containing caffeine ... The problem is extremely serious" (5 November 1980, E13).

Reports on the dangers of alcohol begin to appear in the sample in 1975 (18 October 1975, 7; 10 September 1979, B2; 17 December 1984, A6; 15 April 1987, A3; among others). Alcohol consumption during pregnancy, more than any other type of legal substance, engenders moral indignation. Typically, the adverse affects of drinking are presented in terms of the risks to the fetus, rather than fetus and mother. For instance, on 10 September 1979 (B3) a regular health column by Dr. Neil Solomon contained a letter which reflected this type of response to alcohol. The letter from two doctors at the University of Washington addresses the "important problem of drinking during pregnancy" (*Ibid.*). The doctors write:

... We heartily agree with you that excessive drinking is fraught with risk [for the fetus]. We would, take strong exception to the idea that 'moderate drinking does not harm the fetus,' for we are aware of no studies whatsoever which document this. ...Physicians generally caution their pregnant patients not to ingest any amount of a drug which has not been proven safe. Why then with alcohol should the converse advice given. ... We hope that your pregnant readers will think twice before they have the glass of wine with their husbands (*Ibid.*).

In addition to caffeine, alcohol and nicotine, it is also indicated in the sample that pregnant women risk endangering their fetuses through what they eat and how they exercise. A poignant example of the concern for diet and nutrition appeared on 7 August 1974 (47). The headline reads: MOM MADE YOU FLABBY: YOU MAY HAVE BECOME FAT IN THE WOMB. The leading paragraph targets mothers:

If you're among the one-quarter of all Canadians who suffer from overweight, don't try to bear the entire burden yourself—blame most of it on yourself... Your weight problem can begin even before you are born (*Ibid.*).

A recurrent message in the sample is that *all* women risk abusing their fetuses if they do not exercise due caution. In fact, there are relatively few items which deal solely with the 'abuses' of women who are represented as being on the fringes of society. Examples of reports in which women are portrayed as social outcasts include: a series of reports on the *Baby R* trial (4 September 1987, A3; 5 September 1987, B1; 5 September 1987, B6; 10 August 1988, A1; 11 August 1988, D14; 15 August 1988, B2; 25 August 1988, B7); as well as reports on "low-income women who abuse heroin" (1 April 1971, 77; 14 April 1982, B3). The far greater emphasis is placed on the 'average' or typical pregnant woman who may be misinformed or unaware. Thus, in one item, it was stated that women in "the middle class socio-economic population", cause the most concern through their lifestyle choices, and their lack of knowledge about the effects of their choices (5 February 1975, 73). The finding that advice and information in the *Sun* appears to be directed at women in general rather than at a

specific group of particularly neglectful women, is interesting in light of the audience that the mainstream newspaper attempts to reach. The message that the average mother should be more careful is most likely to reach precisely that woman.

In many instances women are portrayed as obstinate and uncontrollable if they refuse to accept medical advice. For example, one article reports that "... in spite of the warnings, drugs continue to be taken in large quantities by pregnant women" (5 February 1975, 73). Again in 1975, the *Sun* reports that "despite warnings from their doctors",

... alcoholic mothers are damning their newborns to mental retardation physical deformity or death, according to Dr. James Hanson. ... women don't realize how easily the alcohol from their own blood stream flows through the placenta in the child they carry (*VS* 18 October 1975, 7).

An article written in 1985 alleges that pregnant women have not only ignored the advice of their doctors, but they have also intentionally deceived their doctors. The article reports that although the acne drug Accutane has "always carried a warning that pregnant women should not take it",

.... several women did take it *after denying to their doctors* that they were pregnant or likely to become pregnant [emphasis added] (3 October 1985, A15).

In other cases the pregnant woman's actions are not represented as intentional. Rather she is simply negligent due to a lack of knowledge. For example, in 1987 the *Sun* reported that "medical experts told B.C.'s liquor-policy review committee that warning labels should be put on alcoholic-beverage containers telling women that drinking during pregnancy effects the fetus" because women are not aware that they are "engaging in a devastating form of child abuse known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome" (source: Dr. Geoffrey Robinson, 15 April 1987, A3). In another article a general profile of pregnant women who harm their fetuses by

overeating during pregnancy is excerpted from a study at Sick Children's hospital in Toronto,

... she is less knowledgeable than others about nutrition. She didn't enjoy cooking as much as the mother of 'lean' children. She was more likely to be unmarried, divorced or separated. She was less likely to withhold a dessert if her child did not finish his meal. The profile of a mother of the fat baby indicates a woman who is less sure of herself and less accepting of her baby as he is [she] conducts a household that is less regulated (7 August 1974, 47).

The fetus as a victim of abortion

Abortion represents the greatest maternal threat to the fetus. The fetus is frequently represented in news-items as a "victim" of abortion i.e. a victim of the woman's decision to abort. This theme generally appears as part of unabashedly anti-abortion opinion columns; nonetheless it forms part of the discourse on the fetus. The victim theme is consistent with, and possibly a result of the general trend to portray the fetus as being vulnerable, or at the mercy of the mother.

One of the most poignant examples of the victimization theme appears in an opinion column on 19 November 1977, A6 (op/ed page). This column is written by a B.C. member of the board of directors of the national *Alliance for Life*, Ross Labrie. The bold headline for the column is explicit: PRO-LIFE REPLY: 'KILLING IS EASY WHEN THE VICTIM IS INVISIBLE'. He claims that pictures of the fetus are important because they "offset the condition which makes us most vulnerable at that early age—our invisibility. We know it is easier to kill when the victim is unseen" (*Ibid.*). Provocative imagery is presented in a photograph attached to the article (see *Appendix C*). A caption under the picture presents the emotionally charged testimony of an American doctor:

Eleven years ago, while giving an anesthetic for a ruptured tubal pregnancy (about two months), I was handed what I believed to be the *smallest human being* ever seen (photo). The embryo sac was intact and transparent. Within the sac was a *tiny human male* swimming extremely vigorously in the amniotic fluid, while attached to the wall by the

umbilical cord. This *tiny human* was perfectly developed with long, tapering fingers, feet and toes. It was almost transparent as regards the skin, and the delicate arteries and veins were prominent to the ends of the fingers. The *baby* was extremely alive and swam about in the sac approximately one time with a natural swimmer's stroke. This *tiny human* did not look at all like the photos and drawings of embryos I have seen, nor did it look like the embryos I have been able to observe since then, obviously because this one was alive. [emphasis added]
Ascribed to Dr. Paul Rockwell, Director of Anesthesiology, Leonard Hospital, Troy, NY. (Ibid.).

In pro-life columns the fetus is constructed as a victim on the basis of the argument that it is morally, biologically and legally a person. This argument is frequently based on scientific evidence of the biological capabilities of the fetus at various stages of development. For example, in the same op/ed commentary discussed directly above, it is suggested that at 20 weeks,

..the child, which will weigh close to a pound, has a modest chance of surviving outside the womb. After 12 weeks of age, all of the essential organs are in place. From six weeks, the brain has been functioning, and the heart has been beating from 18 days. The fact is that a fertilized ovum does not stay a fertilized ovum form more than a few instants. It develops rapidly into a complex human life (*Ibid.*).

The connection is frequently made between viability and a fetus' right not to be aborted, in reports which are explicitly pro-life and those which are not. For instance, the language used to describe an American court case in which a doctor was found guilty of performing a legal late term abortion is indicative of the idea that the more developed fetus is particularly victimized by abortion. The item stated that the doctor was found "guilty of manslaughter for deliberately killing a fetus" (15 February 1975, 1). The implication in the item is that the late term fetus, in particular, has the legal right to be born alive, even if, as in this case, the original intention was to abort. The doctor was found guilty of manslaughter

because he was alleged to have “held the fetus without air inside its mother’s womb for three minutes” (*Ibid.*).

The “death of a fetus” is also reported in several items dealing with legal prosecution of midwives. For example, RULING TO COME ON BABY DEATH (12 October 1979, E5).

A county court judge will rule on a defense motion to dismiss charges against a 52-year-old midwife charged with criminal negligence in the *delivery of a dead baby boy*. The ruling will be based on the novel legal point in Canada of determining when a fetus becomes a person. [emphasis added].

Reports of the trial involving the midwives, Sullivan and Lemay (1985) use similar language. On 27 July 1985 (A3) the headline read, TWO MIDWIVES FACE TRIAL: DEATH OF A BABY.

One of the most vivid descriptions of the fetus as a victim of abortion appears in a description of the American pro-life film, *The Silent Scream*. The writer of the column describes the provocative film and makes a comparison between the victimized fetus and other oppressed groups such as “southern blacks”, “Vietnamese children”, and even women as the following excerpt demonstrates:

The [*Silent Scream*] begins with the fetus sucking his thumb and gently rocking in the womb. When the abortion instrument invades the womb, the baby shrinks from it, his heart rate doubles, and he withdraws the thumb to grimace. *The ultrasound ends with the body of the fetus being sucked away leaving the baby’s disembodied head floating in the womb, later to be crushed by a nutcracker-type instrument.*

Historically, justice has been extended to the oppressed only when the public could actually see the oppression from the perspective of the victim Harriet Beecher-Stow portrayed the indignity of slave life in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and an awakened nation banned slavery. Television showed southern blacks poked with electric prods and attacked by police dogs, and the civil rights movement was ensured of victory. We saw naked, fleeing Vietnamese children burning with napalm and the Vietnam War

was halted. The media published personalized accounts of women who have been exploited and repressed by men, and feminists began to win political victories.

The Silent Scream is the Uncle Tom's Cabin of the 1980s. we can no longer claim ignorance of the fact that the typical abortion attacks a gently rocking child, sucking his thumb, and rips off his legs, arms and torso, and crushes his head [emphasis added] (26 October 1985, A6).

This section contained a discussion of the various ways in which the pregnant woman has been described as a source of harm to the fetus. The primary theme that arises from an examination of the press material is that the fetus is vulnerable in particular to the lifestyle choices made by pregnant women. These choices include the taking of illicit drugs against the advice of medical experts; however, they are equally as likely to include everyday activities such as diet, travel and exercise. Finally, anti-abortion campaigners who merge medical-scientific language and moralistic arguments in the name of their cause, describe abortion as the greatest threat to the fetus.

PROTECTING THE FETUS FROM THE PREGNANT WOMAN

A third and related theme recurring throughout the sample focuses on the need to protect the fetus from the pregnant woman. Strategies for protecting the fetus which were identified in the *Vancouver Sun* include non-coercive types such as education and advice, and coercive types such as legal intervention to force women to comply with expert advice during pregnancy, and the complete or partial prohibition of abortion.

Non-coercive means

The language of medical expertise is frequently presented in the form of explicit advice to the pregnant woman. This medical information appears most frequently in lifestyle feature sections of the newspaper which have been called at various times: 'Women Today'

(1969-70), 'Living' (1970-74), 'Today' (1976-77), 'You' (1978-1989). Other sections appearing more continuously throughout the sample in which some form of advice is presented include 'Travel', 'Food' and 'Leisure', 'Health', and 'Science'. Although not all of these sections are explicitly aimed at women, discourse contained in them tended to be of a lighter nature, dealing less with hard news items but frequently providing 'how to' type information. For instance, regular columns on cooking, nutrition, sewing, relationships, religion and particularly health provided the reader with what amounted to a guide for living in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, delineating what was important to know. As a result these regular columns and features delineated the terms by which concepts such as pregnancy were to be understood. Most noticeably, medical scientific terminology was used to explain and define reproductive issues to the reader (woman) in the 21 years of sampled coverage.

In many items medical language bestowed a new legitimacy on old common sense ideas about pregnancy. For example, in a feature article on prenatal care with the headline HOW TO BE A GOOD PARENT BEFORE THE CHILD IS BORN it is declared in the lead paragraph:

In 1981, when Dr. Thomas Verny published his book, *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*, some of us hailed it as a guide that finally *put into black and white what we had always known as common sense* [emphasis added]. Verny told us that the fetus can hear, learn and feel in utero and that it has strong likes and dislikes. He told us that the way we care for our unborn children—the music we play to them, the stories we tell them—can affect their emotional and physical well-being after birth and even shape their egos (27 August 1988, E11—'You' section).

The feature writer, in this case a woman, celebrates the publication of what she refers to as Dr. Verny's "how-to book that spells out, in considerable detail, the steps parents should take throughout pregnancy to give their baby the best possible chance at a happy, well-adjusted life" (*Ibid.*). Beyond the manifest suggestion that motherhood responsibilities should begin at the prenatal (and perhaps pre-conception) stage, the article also implied that common sense mothering skills can now be confirmed or legitimized through medical knowledge, and

that there is *a* right way to care for the fetus which is discernible through medical knowledge. Thus, one of Dr. Verny's contentions cited in the article is that "... a woman will damage the emotional and physical health of her fetus if she is unhappy or ambivalent about the pregnancy" (*Ibid.*). This suggests that there are *real* risks if women do not follow medically proven methods of prenatal care.

Despite contradictions over time, medical advice is frequently presented as definitive. For example, over time there are many inconsistencies in the discourse on nutritional requirements for pregnant women. In an item appearing on 7 August 1974 (47) the claim is made that women who overeat will harm their fetuses. The language used in the article is flagrantly damning toward pregnant women, suggesting that 'overweight' women are less competent, and in need of advice. "What emerges from the Sick Children's overweight studies is that the prevention of obesity must begin with the education of mothers" (*Ibid.*). Reference to the medical studies from the Hospital for Sick Children (Toronto) and the University of California give the information provided about "over nutrition" an air of credibility.

A subsequent article of 27 April 1977 (76) in the 'Today' section of the newspaper raises questions about single-minded concern over excessive weight gain during pregnancy. The claim made in this article is that "studies show" that pregnant women must be concerned not only about gaining too much weight, but also about gaining too little weight. Consequently, it is claimed in the article that "women are left in a dilemma. Too much weight means higher risk for the mother; too little weight, higher risk for the baby" (*Ibid.*). However, the article also offers very precise medical advice from an American obstetrician who suggests that women need "10 extra calories a day in the first trimester, 85 extra calories per day in the second trimester and 220 extra calories daily in the third trimester" (*Ibid.*).

The emphasis on nutritional advice to the pregnant woman offered in the newspaper shifts again in 1978. For example two items in this year suggest that women should no

longer be concerned with keeping their weight down during pregnancy. In his regular column, Dr. Neil Solomon advises a pregnant woman to eat well. He writes:

It is terribly important that the pregnant mother have good nutrition for the physical and also the mental health of the baby. An infant that has been poorly nourished during this critical period and is very underweight at birth has a greater risk of birth defects and mental retardation (9 June 1978, C5)—‘You’ section.

The headline of a subsequent article in the ‘Food’ section on September 5, 1978 (B6) reads UNBORN BABY DIETS TOO, DOCTORS WARN. It is declared in this feature article that,

The era of slim styles for pregnant women is gone. ‘Eat for two’ is again the fashion. Pregnancy is not a time to diet. The Committee on Nutrition of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists states: ‘Weight gain during pregnancy should not be restricted unduly, nor should weight reduction be attempted’.

Doctors and mothers to be need to realize the importance of the pattern. If a woman comes to the doctor 10 weeks pregnant, with a 20 pound weight gain, that doesn’t mean she should diet for the next 26 weeks or so to control her weight gain. To limit her to only a few pounds more could result in serious nutritional deprivation to the fetus.

... Pregnant mothers shouldn’t diet because they won’t get enough essential nutrients, including protein, and because dieting sets up a condition in the body known as ketosis, which can harm the brain of the developing fetus. Recent studies have shown, that women on diets “have children who score less well on IQ tests at age four.”

Every woman who is pregnant or plans to be should get a copy of What Every Woman Should Know, by the husband and wife team of Gail Sforza Brewer and Dr. Tom Brewer....

One of the truisms the Brewers drive home is that when mother-to-be diets, so does baby-to-be. And babies who weigh less than normal at birth have a harder start at life than babies of normal weight. They quote a study which pointed out that ‘the baby who weighs under 5.5 pounds at

birth is more apt to be afflicted with such defects as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, hyperactivity, learning disabilities, respiratory distress syndrome and sudden infant death syndrome' [emphasis added] (*Ibid.*).

Again the advice offered in this article is presented as definitive medical knowledge despite the contradiction of earlier articles. Along with the advice, the definition of what constitutes a 'good' mother also changed. Thus, at one time a good mother was described as one who could "control her eating" or "withhold dessert from her child" (1 August 1974, 47), and at another time she was defined as one who "maintains a sufficient daily caloric intake" (9 June 1978, C5; 5 September 1978, B6). Although the definition may change over time, it is consistently forged from within medical scientific discourse.

Defining the good mother is also part of other types of advice to pregnant women. In the 1980s an article appeared in the *Sun* which discussed the proper amount of exercise for a responsible pregnant woman. The prevailing medical opinion represented in this sample is that the woman must be sensible and use moderation. For example the following headlines and excerpts reveal what doctors suggest is allowable behaviour for the pregnant woman. Notably, in the first article below, intuitive knowledge passed between women about exercising during pregnancy is identified as a problem implying that the boundaries of acceptable exercise for pregnant women must be defined in medical terms in order to be valid.

RUNNING FOR YOUR BABY'S LIFE?

... *The whole subject [of exercise during pregnancy] is beginning to generate considerable controversy, mainly because present knowledge is largely based on intuitive notions or the experience of one woman told to another.* ... The two most prevalent concerns about pregnancy and exercise are the jarring effect of activity on the fetus and the possible reduction in blood supply to the uterus. During the first trimester the fetus is well protected by the pelvis and surrounding muscles. Afterward it floats in a bag of amniotic fluid. Even on an eight-kilometer run the fetus is likely to be more comfortable than the mother.

...The second concern is addressed by Dr. Rudolph Dressendorfer of the University of California. He found that the fetuses of pregnant women running 32 kilometers a week did not suffer from a decreased blood supply. However, there is little agreement on this issue and many doctors are still concerned about sufficient blood to the placenta.

... Unfortunately, there are few guidelines for the pregnant woman who exercises. But there is enough evidence to suggest that for the average pregnancy a sensible and cautious program will provide many benefits in mental and physical health for both the mother and child. (28 March 1980, B1) [emphasis added].

Another item on the physical limitations of the pregnant woman appears on 3 February 1986 (C1). This article discusses a controversy about what type of aerobic exercise is allowable for pregnant women. The controversy is between a local doctor, who advises patients against certain exercises, and local aerobics instructors, who advocate the exercises in moderation. Underlying the dialogue between doctor and exercise instructor is the message that pregnant women have a responsibility to be aware of the potential risks of exercise as well as other activities. The priority is the health and safety of the fetus. The same message is presented in an article of 28 March 1989 (B2). The headline reads MIXED REACTIONS TO 'MAXING OUT' EXERCISE BY EXPECTANT MOTHERS. This article appearing in the 'You' section discusses American research findings that "pregnant women should not exercise so hard that their heart rate exceeds 150" (*Ibid.*).

Coercive means

Women who do not comply with the suggested standards of behaviour, who, for example, continue to use non-prescribed illegal drugs or drink alcohol, may be subjected to more coercive means of control. On several occasions, support for state sanctioned intervention on behalf of the fetus is implicit in the *Vancouver Sun's* coverage of reproductive issues. First, there are several references to the implementation of control mechanisms in order to stop pregnant women from abusing substances, notably alcohol. For

example, on 15 April 1987, A3 a headline read LIQUOR WARNING URGED FOR PREGNANT WOMEN. The item reads,

Warning labels should be put on alcoholic-beverage containers telling women that drinking during pregnancy increases the risk of mental retardation and birth defects in infants, medical experts told B.C.'s liquor-policy review committee Tuesday.

Dr. Geoffrey Robinson, a professor at UBC told the panel that mothers who drink while pregnant are engaging in a devastating form of child abuse known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Drinking mothers pass on alcohol to the fetus they are carrying meaning an unborn infant can actually be impaired while still in the womb.

Dr. Christine Lock, also from UBC, said that in northwestern B.C. about one in every 40 live births result in an infant having either serious or minor birth defects due to a drinking mother.

In one community, which was not named, a study showed that one in five live births resulted in an infant suffering because of contact with alcohol while still in the womb.

A second way in which the notion of coercive control emerged in the sample was the explicit lack of support for late term abortions. Frequently, the argument against late abortions was based on an assumption that women who seek them are acting irresponsibly, and that the procedure was unnecessary because women could have sought earlier abortions. It was also argued that the fetus is more viable in the third trimester and therefore more in need of state intervention on its behalf.

Third, the issues of fetal alcohol syndrome, and syphilis babies which came to light during the trial of *Re Baby R*,⁶ caused a controversy regarding allowable state intervention in a woman's pregnancy when she was deemed unfit or negligent. For example, in one editorial titled, IN A PATHETIC CASE A TINY WINNER, the editor pronounced that state intervention on behalf of the fetus was justified by the mother's actions (5 September 1987, B6).

⁶ *Re Baby R* (1988), 15 F.L.R. (3d) 225 (B.C.S.C.).

And finally, the possibility of coercive action by the legal system was made apparent in news-items about paternal rights cases, most notably *Daigle*⁷ and *Dodd*.⁸ For instance, a front-page item cited a Quebec court's decision to uphold a father's request for an injunction to stop Chantal Daigle from seeking an abortion (18 July 1989, A1). The judge cited the Quebec Charter of Rights in his decision that "the right to life of all human beings includes the fetus" and despite that fact that it would be "painful and difficult for the woman, he had to rule in favour of the 20 week fetus" (*Ibid.*).

The broad spectrum of advice that appears in the *Sun* covers many aspects of pregnancy, including acceptable weight gain, exercise, and even travel (5 September 1987, H1). In addition, pregnant women are frequently advised of the risks of cigarettes, caffeine, alcohol and other drugs (5 February 1975; 3 March 1980 etc.). The advice demonstrates the extent to which medical expertise is deemed as essential in matters of pregnancy. Common sense notions are replaced by a more legitimate and credible medical language. The advice which appears in this sample is significant not only in terms of the medical tone that it sets, but also because it justifies limitations on the behaviour of pregnant women. Through the delineation of acceptable behaviour, the notion of the good mother is constructed in the press. She is one who acts reasonably, but perhaps more importantly, the good mother is one who follows medical advice.

This chapter has discussed the primary themes regarding the fetus which appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* from 1969 to 1989. The coverage demonstrated the newspaper's tendency to construct preferred meanings in terms of an assumed middle ground position or consensus. Ultimately, the idea which emerged in the coverage and which was constructed primarily through authoritative medical-scientific discourse was that of an adversarial relationship between the mother and the fetus, particularly where the woman did not follow expert

⁷ *Daigle v. Tremblay* [1989] 2 S.C.R. 530 (S.C.C.).

⁸ *Murphy v. Dodd* (1990), 63 D.L.R. (4th) 515 (Ont. H. Ct.).

prescriptions for motherhood. Themes which supported that idea included the notion of fetal autonomy and viability; the notion that the pregnant woman represented the primary source of harm to the fetus; and the notion that the fetus needed to be protected from the mother either through educating women who were merely incompetent or actually using coercive force to control women who fell outside the norms governing acceptable behaviour. In the concluding chapter the general findings in this thesis are discussed in terms of the theoretical framework outlined earlier.

CHAPTER SIX
THE CONSTRUCTION OF FETAL PERSONHOOD IN THE PRESS:
CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis it has been argued that the press plays an important role in constructing particular definitions of reproduction by consistently favoring a moderate or presumably common sense view at the expense of immoderate or extreme views; and by presenting preferred definitions in terms of authoritative discourses which can make a claim to truth based on science. Specifically, the findings in this study indicated that the notion of fetal personhood was constructed in the *Vancouver Sun* primarily through a medical-scientific emphasis on particular assumptions about the role and expectation of motherhood, medical breakthroughs in fetal medicine, and a consistent theme perpetuating the idea of an adversarial relationship between the mother and the fetus. Overall, the analysis revealed that the construction of fetal personhood in the *Sun* was not a clear case of certain groups, specifically anti-abortionists, controlling the production of meaning at the expense of women. Rather, it was part of a more complex process involving the discursive construction of meaning, in which ideas surrounding motherhood and the fetus are manifested in a number of powerful discourses which are presumed to produce 'truth'.

The following discussion provides a summary of the main arguments in the thesis, as well as some concluding remarks on the effectiveness of postmodern theory which was proposed as an alternative to standpoint feminism and structuralist or instrumentalist approaches to the mass media. Finally, some limitations of this study are outlined with respect to possible future directions in research.

As a point of departure, it was demonstrated that much recent feminist literature has pointed to the emergence of the notion of fetal personhood since the 1960s. The links were made in the literature between the increase in public presence of the fetus and the

culmination of a long trend of expert intervention in the definition of the responsibilities of motherhood and the care of children; advances in obstetrical technology, particularly the ability to visualize the interior of the womb using ultrasound; legal decisions in which the fetus has been deemed worthy of state protection; and the shift in anti-abortionists' strategy from a religious-moral argument against abortion to a scientific-technical one. Much of the feminist research concerning the proliferation of fetal-centered definitions of reproduction has tended to focus on legal and medical practice. However, there has been little research undertaken on the extent to which these definitions have actually become part of the public domain. Therefore, this thesis attempted to fill the void by studying the mass media as another site of the production of meaning and as a possible indicator of the extent to which the concept of fetal personhood has permeated public culture.

Moreover, much of the feminist research tended to be based on a common set of theoretical assumptions that proved to be problematic in determining how ideas are constructed. Specifically, these analyses frequently assumed that the existing definitions of issues such as motherhood roles and the maternal-fetal relationship are perpetuated by, and in turn maintain, a dominant group, class or structure. Further, they assumed that underlying those dominant definitions is a reality based on women's experience. The argument put forward in the thesis is that this standpoint feminist approach is problematic because it replaces one form of essentialism with another by assuming that woman's experience transcends other social constructions.

As an alternative it was proposed that a theoretical framework informed by postmodernism and poststructuralism could be used to address how and why the notion of fetal personhood as well as definitions of motherhood and reproduction are constituted. The discussion of Foucault's analytical framework, as well as the work of some feminist postmodern theorists such as Carol Smart, Donna Haraway and Chris Weedon, made the case for the argument that language is primary in the construction of meaning and 'truth'. These theorists have argued that, despite modernist claims, a foundational truth discoverable

through scientific or social scientific methods does not exist. Moreover, in the postmodern account, power is not primarily repressive; rather it is also productive of knowledge. This conception is contrary to many feminist accounts in which power is viewed as repressive of knowledge, and as a tool that is wielded by the powerful (men) over the powerless (women). However, postmodernists do not conceive of power as operating in a 'top-down' fashion; rather it percolates up and is a part of the practice of language. Power and knowledge (meaning) exist in a reciprocal relationship. And postmodernists have made the claim that the modern period is marked by a 'will to truth' which is based on the preeminence of science. Discourses which can make a claim to truth have greater perceived legitimacy and therefore greater opportunity to deploy power.

Application of the postmodern framework to the relatively recent emergence of the fetus as an individual demonstrates that 'fetal personhood' is constituted by a proliferation of authoritative discourses emanating from such fields as law and medicine. This is contrary to the claim of feminists that 'fetal personhood' is directly and consciously perpetuated by various groups such as neo-conservatives, fundamentalist Christians and the anti-abortion movement, or by those interested in perpetuating the patriarchal structure of power relations (male professionals). In the postmodern account the discourses which construct fetal personhood are powerful not because they are wielded by individuals or groups to maintain a current power structure; rather their power accrues from the ability to produce knowledge or 'truth'.

In this thesis the mass media were examined from a postmodernist perspective. It was argued in Chapter Three that the media ought not to be thought of as an instrument of social control, used by powerful groups to maintain dominant ideas or ideology. It was also suggested that individuals should not be viewed as passive homogeneous receivers of media messages; rather, any particular media text could be received or interpreted in a number of different ways depending on the individual's circumstances. Since this study deals only with the end product of the production of media messages, i.e. the individual news report, it was

not possible to speculate about the variety of ways that individuals may perceive meaning in the mass media. However, it was also argued in Chapter Three that there is a tendency for the media to consistently emphasize certain meanings (moderate views) and marginalize others (extreme views). Therefore, within a sample of media coverage over a given period of time the media can be seen to present a 'preferred' meaning of events and issues. The meaning that is produced in media coverage is effected by dominant discourses (the discursive construction of meaning) but it is also effected by a number of format constraints to which media organizations are subject. Thus, Ericson *et al.* (1991) claimed that the various types of news media would be subject to different constraints which would be a primary factor in determining what actually became news.

This reasoning was applied, in part, to the analysis of the sample in Chapter Four which summarized aggregate data from 522 *Vancouver Sun* articles. In that analysis coverage of reproductive issues tended to appear primarily in hard news items; to be derived largely from wire services; and to originate from a variety of places other than British Columbia, particularly the United States. The findings also demonstrated that the sources cited were overwhelmingly male medical professionals which is indicative of the *Sun's* general reliance on medical information to define reproductive issues. Thus, medical issues surrounding reproduction appeared frequently as the primary topic in news items.

The general findings from the analysis in Chapter Four were, first, that reproduction was a newsworthy issue in the *Sun* and became more so near the end of the 1980s. Second, expert knowledge about reproduction played a greater role than other types of knowledge (the mother's for example). Consequently, where non-experts such as anti-abortionists and feminists did have a voice, they frequently used the terminology of the experts, i.e., scientific and legal discourse, to talk about reproduction. Finally, the *Sun* typically reported events as though there were two equal and opposing sides. The abortion issue was the primary example where anti-abortionists were consistently pitted against pro-choice advocates. The effect of this type of representation is that the issue of abortion is reduced to being a conflict

between the mother's right to individual freedom and the fetus's right to be born alive and to be protected from harm. In its reporting of these conflicting views it was clear that the *Sun* tended to favour a 'moderate' viewpoint.

In the description of the news sample provided in Chapter Four a number of themes became evident and were explored further in Chapter Five. The overarching theme was the adversarial relationship between the mother and the fetus which was manifested in the consistent focus on the fetus as a 'viable' entity, an object of medical attention, and consequently as distinct and separate from the mother. In addition, news-items consistently portrayed mothers as potential sources of harm to their fetuses, particularly when they did not follow the medical prescription for responsible motherhood. Many items offered women medical advice on how to care for the fetus which was typically directed at those who may have been viewed as incompetent. For mothers who were recalcitrant there were reports in the *Sun's* coverage of more coercive legal measures. The broad conclusion drawn from the qualitative analysis in Chapter Five is that the notion of fetal personhood does emerge in the news coverage from 1969 to 1989 and it is supported by presumably objective and neutral medical knowledge, assumptions about motherhood, and assumptions about the law, legal rights, and liberal individualism.

It is argued that as an alternative to standpoint feminist analyses, the approach taken in this thesis extends the possible explanations of the emergence of fetal personhood. The mass media constitute one specific site among many where the construction of meaning takes place. A systematic analysis of news content provides an opportunity to deconstruct what on face value is presented as factual, objective and neutral news, and to begin the process of deconstructing other dominant assumptions about pregnancy, reproduction and the relationship between the mother and the fetus. However, the process of dismantling these definitions does not lead to an underlying 'reality' based on a more fair or equitable understanding of women, or indeed, based on women's own experiences of pregnancy.

Ultimately, analysis of media content based on insights from postmodernism and poststructuralism can only disturb the existing logic without replacing it.

The findings in this study of the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper demonstrate a need for further research on the representation of the maternal-fetal relationship in other media sources, and other sites of the production of meaning. For instance, it would be valuable to conduct a comparative study of newspapers across British Columbia or Canada, as well as of other types of mass media. The persuasiveness and visual power of television, in particular, would seem to indicate that it is an important vehicle for the communication of ideas about the fetus. Also, given the large representation of coverage emanating from the United States it would be worthwhile to undertake an actual comparison of news media in the United States and Canada. The extensive reach and impact of American mass media has been studied extensively for instance, with regard to the entertainment media (RCN 1981). However, it would be interesting to extend this study into the cross-border exchange of scientific discourse, gender-related ideas, and particularly, reproductive issues.

In addition, other sites of cultural production such as fiction and science fiction could form an important part of the construction and perpetuation of particular discourses surrounding the fetus. Others have studied the extent to which science and science fiction produce and support each other. For example, Donna Haraway has contended that there is a blurred line between the two discursive fields such that science both directs and is directed by science fiction. Petchesky (1987) was the first to point out that, on the one hand, the fetus is frequently presented as a fictional mini-space hero, and that the image of the fetus has appeared in 'sci-fi' space movies such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* ; and, on the other hand, forays into the womb are represented as the last frontier of science in medical discourse, and the whole area of fetal medicine is described with a fictional zeal. So, it would be valuable to undertake a more systematic study of links between these two forms of cultural production.

The findings in this study are based entirely on an examination of the media text. Consequently, claims about the processes involved in the journalistic production of news content cannot be made. However, it has been acknowledged that those theorists who have taken a social constructionist approach to the media, such as Ericson *et al.*, have been concerned with the actual decisions that go into news production. Consequently, they have observed and conducted interviews with media professionals. The value of this type of research where gender issues are concerned would be to determine the extent to which journalists begin with assumptions about women which are translated into the news text.

Finally, as mentioned previously, this study cannot make claims about the reception of the various representations found in the *Vancouver Sun*. The findings in this study suggest which meanings related to reproduction are most prevalent or preferred, at least by the journalists. However, an important focus of recent postmodernist studies of the mass media has been the heterogeneity of reception among audience members. Individuals will receive information according to a distinct set of contingencies. Thus, research in this area has claimed that women will not *necessarily* receive the same repressive messages from the mass media (Fiske 1991; Van Zoonen 1991; Ang and Hermes 1991). On the contrary, audience members may accept, reject or modify the “preferred” meaning in the media text. Future research may well determine how those texts are received.

APPENDIX A
VANCOUVER SUN SAMPLE: DATE, HEADLINE AND PAGE NUMBER

01/05/69 Births Up, Deaths Down 75
02/05/69 Once-a-Year Pill Being Developed 9
02/05/69 Mother Role Rejected: Child Bearing Banned? 31
06/05/69 Creditistes Keep Heat on Abortion Law 17
07/05/69 Abortion Debate Delays Gov't Bills 28
09/05/69 Abortion Medical Not Legal Matter: Jewish Women Claim 34
12/05/69 Sex Drive Related to Pill 34
13/05/69 Criminal Code Bill Survives Attacks—final attempts to amend it ruled out of order in House 8
13/05/69 'Sterilize Retarded' 35
16/05/69 Breaking the Bunkum Record 5
20/05/69 Abortion Bill Inadequate 6
20/05/69 Abortion ban seen 37
20/05/69 Women Convicted Of Abortion Bid 62
24/05/69 Scientist Hatching Life: Gene two-thirds built, says Khorana 1
29/05/69 Women Put On The Spot: Abort or Not? 73
30/05/69 Get Pill Release, Doctors Told 15
10/11/69 Birth Curb Urged 'or War Inevitable' 27
13/11/69 In poor lands: control of birth accepted 27
13/11/69 Legal abortions 52
13/11/69 Infertility eventually 'normal' 58
17/11/69 Teacher Urges Birth Control Sex Lessons in Schools 10
18/11/69 Help given outside law by family plan clinic: Contraception Advice 29
18/11/69 British Back Abortion 56
25/11/69 Abortion law inadequate 40
27/11/69 Abortions 'Safer than pill' 53
02/01/70 Pill sweeps away 'too tired' pleas: Now He's Over-Loved 34
09/01/70 Strokes result of the pill? 30
14/01/70 Doctor Links Pill to Cancer: Great Mistake for 18 Million Women? 12
14/01/70 Mother of 4 Seeks New Abortion Law 16
15/01/70 Women in 'Race' with Dogs on Pill 29
15/01/70 THE PILL TO BLAME? 43
16/01/70 Years Needed to Assess Relation of Pill to Cancer 58
20/01/70 Lawyer Raps Abortion Law 12
20/01/70 Mini-Pill Tests Halted on 300 Canadian Women 1
21/01/70 Birth Pill Scare Hits Stock Prices 6
21/01/70 Family planning promoted by New Westminster clinic 34
23/01/70 Abortion Flight In: \$1,250 each. 2
23/01/70 Canadian Doctors Deplore Scare Over Birth Pills 26
23/01/70 New Contraceptive Found 26
23/01/70 Birth Control Pill Hearing Broken Up 67
26/01/70 Doctors Face Dilemma Over The Pill: US Probe Reveals No New Evidence 3
26/01/70 'Undue Criticism' Of Pill Scored 3
28/01/70 Pill Benefits Top Risks, Says Contraceptives Prober 8
29/01/70 Liberal MLA Raps Denial Of Abortion Information 14
29/01/70 Figures Show Birth Rate Still Low 22
31/01/70 ABORTION OK'D 8
31/01/70 Abortion Flights Bring Summonses 8
01/09/70 Trevor Lautens 17
08/09/70 Pregnant women paid to sleep out 11

09/09/70 Warnings put in pill packages 10
 09/09/70 Canada aid likely for birth control 45
 11/09/70 DR. ALVAREZ: birth control devices date back to 1850 B.C. 12
 11/09/70 Abortion reform failing 31
 16/09/70 Dr. Alvarez: Transfusions can avert blood danger to fetus 27
 17/09/70 Thalidomide—the exception 48
 18/09/70 Gov't makes twin approach in field of birth control 3
 18/09/70 Pastor admits abortion aid: Doctor Made \$300,000 In Year 21
 19/09/70 New birth control agent disclosed 11
 21/09/70 'Abortion changes not yet'—Turner 8
 21/09/70 Dr. Alvarez: Pill unlikely to cause cancer among women 11
 22/09/70 picture only 1
 25/09/70 Dr. Makaroff fined, jailed for abortions: Suggestion of change ruled not court role 17
 26/09/70 B.C. suicide, illegitimate birth rates increase 76
 01/04/71 Abortion: In or out of the code? 45
 01/04/71 Heroin withdrawal sickness puts two babies into VGH 77
 02/04/71 Obstetrician grows a human embryo in the lab 29
 02/04/71 Abortion and woman's soul 29
 02/04/71 VANCOUVER BIRTHRIGHT GROUP OFFERS HELP 29
 03/04/71 VOICE OF THE UNBORN SAYS 'NO' ON ABORTION 12
 05/04/71 Abortion demanded 54
 05/04/71 Nixon vetoes easier military abortions 54
 07/04/71 10 ABORTIONS EVERY HOUR 56
 07/04/71 Bishops cite live births 56
 17/04/71 Abortion figures soar to 11,200 1
 17/04/71 The case for the clinics 4
 22/04/71 Abortion opponents 'prefer embryo to people,' meet told 74
 06/12/71 Dr. Alvarez: New 'morning after' pill tested successfully 36
 09/12/71 No birth worries? Something's wrong 48
 14/12/71 Court rules baby can sue: injured before birth 51
 17/12/71 Babies bought and sold—best prices: Good Old Free Enterprise 5
 23/12/71 Abortion Rate Jumps 10
 06/01/72 Baby implant plan readied 17
 12/01/72 'Test tube babies' era appears close 70
 14/01/72 'May not harm fetus': smoking's effects 14
 15/01/72 Rent-a-womb plan coming: Inevitable, claims geneticist 3
 19/01/72 Mongolism: a tip-off 40
 26/01/72 Safe abortion topic of talk 8
 26/01/72 Doctor fined for abortions 13
 27/01/72 ABORTION FORBIDDEN 63
 28/01/72 Smoking and pregnancy 33
 29/01/72 Doctor warns of danger to teenage girls: conspiracy of silence on abortion risks 8
 31/01/72 Safer mid-term abortions tested: City Gynecologist 12
 07/06/72 She's 23, single, Protestant, white: Abortion Profile 30
 07/06/72 That unbaby pill is one baby pill 67
 09/06/72 Birth control fight slows down: What the world needs now is abortion 5
 24/06/72 Genetic counselling helps weigh chances of deformity 81
 01/02/73 Population up again: B.C. figure revealed 18
 01/02/73 U.S. abortion fight over—rematch to come 39
 05/02/73 Abortion speaker to join panel 10
 10/02/73 'Mother's milk may raise cholesterol level'—specialist 32
 10/02/73 Legalized abortion backed in survey 35

12/02/73 Abortion bill introduced: In Italy 3
14/02/73 First abortion bill reading stalled by divided Tories 17
22/02/73 How science is striving for carbon-copy babies 6
23/02/73 Abortion law lags—like the Liberals 5
01/11/73 Woman has 38th child 35
02/11/73 Thalidomide Victims get \$200,000 14
07/11/73 Woman 'tricked' by birth pill 77
14/11/73 Abortionist acquittal called a 'legal first' 44
14/11/73 Safer abortion method studied by hospital 91
03/06/74 ABORTIONS BEAT BIRTHS 3
04/06/74 Tiny baby healthy 45
05/06/74 Abortions legal in W. Germany 3
10/06/74 'What shall the human species make of itself?' 4
17/06/74 'Make issue of abortion' 3
19/06/74 Abortion law passed 21
26/06/74 5 favor legalized abortion 15
28/06/74 DOCTOR ASKS CHANGE IN ABORTION LAW 22
03/08/74 Vote upholds abortion right 69
07/08/74 Mom made you flabby: You may have become fat in the womb 47
08/08/74 'No child is ever unwanted': Bernice Gerard is against abortion, even after a rape 41
15/08/74 Child treated before birth: New medical technique saved April's life 46
15/08/74 Joan of Arc of the abortionists 5
05/02/75 Drugs can harm the fetus 73
15/02/75 Doctor found guilty in abortion death 1
17/02/75 Trial 'a witchhunt,' says doctor guilty of fetus manslaughter 13
18/02/75 Single fathers are fighting for their rights 24
19/02/75 Abortionist back at job bitter about conviction 18
19/02/75 Italy's highest court rules abortion legal 18
19/02/75 'I was fearful for baby's life' 21
20/02/75 The fetus decides: Labor begins with a signal from a baby 25
22/02/75 In favor of life 'no matter what' 44
08/10/75 New surgery used to restore fertility 23
16/10/75 Abortion study group given a broad mandate 18
18/10/75 Alcohol danger to fetus 7
20/10/75 60,000 protest abortions in U.K. 3
27/10/75 Anti-abortion tribunal urges rights for unborn 60
31/10/75 Dr. William WELCH 13
01/05/76 A brainy child from day one 50
03/05/76 Maternity facility sought 17
12/05/76 Home delivery fad for today's babies: Is the hospital a must for giving birth? 85
13/05/76 Wallace wants inquiry on abortion violations 20
25/05/76 Women support abortion 72
28/05/76 Having an abortion: It made sense...but now there's this ghost 4
03/08/76 Birth defects blamed on environment 13
04/08/76 Unexplained jump in total of deformed babies reported 17
05/08/76 'No-baby' warning issued 62
24/08/76 Doctors warned by college to discourage births at home 24
27/08/76 Amnesty, abortion and semantics 4
27/08/76 'Women will keep having babies at home' 33
02/04/77 Baby with heart outside chest saved 3
04/04/77 Abortion: Listen to the patient 5
10/04/77 Gov't to 'end unfairness' in abortion law usage 12

11/04/77 Abortion: a bad law lingers 4
 12/04/77 Abortion: fetal abattoir or social service? 6
 14/04/77 The fetus is also a family member 5
 18/04/77 Vasectomy, abortion fail: couple sues doctors 13
 20/04/77 Caffeine linked to birth defects 44
 21/04/77 Anti-abortionists lose VGH election battle 1
 23/04/77 Pontiff calls on doctors to refute abortion 'error' 8
 25/04/77 Anti-abortionists hit: 'Wrong Tack' 15
 26/04/77 The dilemma of abortion repeaters 4
 27/04/77 Anti-abortion lessons 74
 27/04/77 Calories count for expectant mothers 76
 02/11/77 Unborn baby vulnerable as a canary in a coal mine D5
 09/11/77 Doctors claim prebirth diagnosis of dystrophy D12
 12/11/77 'Scare stories and downright lies': Opponents of legal abortion told to search consciences A6
 14/11/77 Reasons for infertility outweigh the treatment B5
 19/11/77 Pro-life reply: 'Killing is easy when the victim is invisible' A6
 03/02/78 Makers of birth control pills to include warning brochure A10
 04/02/78 Mother just sorry she missed the action: C section saving more babies B4
 04/02/78 Fetus poster prompts women's protest B6
 07/02/78 Mother bears second set of twins A7
 08/02/78 Some teenage girls make bad mothers D2
 13/02/78 PQ government heading for clash with opponents of 'abortion clinics' A14
 14/02/78 Abortion ordinance causes furor D2
 01/06/78 Cloning of human baby 'impossible' A17
 01/06/78 Woman on hormones has sextuplets B2
 07/06/78 Pope warns abortion doctors A7
 07/06/78 How to cope with the baby blues D2
 09/06/78 Abortion law to stay PM says A17
 09/06/78 Supplemented diet important in pregnancy C5
 10/06/78 'Sterile' mother gives birth to 5 A3
 20/06/78 Abortion referral rule goes B8
 22/06/78 Life odds for fetus improve following rare transfusion B10
 24/06/78 Organized anti-abortionists take the lead in desperate 'fight for life' A19
 05/09/79 Unborn baby diets too, doctors warn B6
 08/09/79 Test-tube parents would do it all again B2
 10/09/79 Abortion at the pop of a pill B2
 10/09/79 Dr. Neil Solomon B3
 11/09/79 U.S. men still on long slide to infertility, study shows A9
 20/09/79 5 anti-abortionists to serve hospital B11
 24/09/79 Picture only A1
 24/09/79 One-pound baby amazing doctors after 12 days of life. A10
 28/09/79 Sex-selection abortion is queasily consistent A6
 06/10/79 Safety of pregnancy drug examined A2
 09/10/79 B.C. doctor suspicious of drug: Birth defect evidence growing A3
 11/10/79 Fetus' status issue in negligence trial A9
 11/10/79 U.S. scientist records sounds of womb A17
 12/10/79 Female fetuses rejected: abortions A7
 12/10/79 Birth defects remain puzzle B6
 12/10/79 Ruling to come on move: Baby death E5
 16/10/79 Doctors need clear abortion guideline physician testifies at infant's inquest A8
 19/10/79 Spanish abortion trial set: 11 women face 6-month sentence A18
 20/10/79 Early abortion no concern of Criminal Code, jury says C20

27/10/79 **Morals and humanity A4**
 01/03/80 **Lure of teen motherhood is having someone to love A1**
 03/03/80 **Pregnancy, smoking don't mix B2**
 12/03/80 **Abortion drive stepped up: Rally planned A10**
 21/03/80 **Lawyer defends unborn baby adoption ads A3**
 24/03/80 **Pro-abortionists meet to further cooperation A14**
 28/03/80 **Running for your baby's life? B1**
 03/11/80 **Pill protectiveness grows with length of use—study C3**
 05/11/80 **Doctors threatening to quit committees over abortion B7**
 05/11/80 **Give baby a coffee break E13**
 07/11/80 **Genetic Defect: and early warning 31**
 14/11/80 **MDs stand firm in abortion crisis A9**
 18/11/80 **Unborn may soon give a medical message C8**
 24/11/80 **New hope for pregnancy C3**
 28/11/80 **Dignified, safe abortions still elusive A5**
 21/07/81 **Dueck spurns doctors in abortion dispute A10**
 03/07/81 **Pickets assail abortion stand A12**
 07/07/81 **Geneticist suspects pesticide: Strawberry pickers warned A10**
 15/07/81 **Surrey doctors quit posts in hospital abortion fight A3**
 15/07/81 **Australia has 10th tube baby D12**
 16/07/81 **Chairman raps abortion charge A13**
 18/07/81 **Borowski 'very weak': Anti-abortion fast continues A7**
 20/07/81 **Anti-abortionist calls off fast A16**
 27/07/81 **Baby boy gets operation two weeks before birth A19**
 08/08/81 **If abortion is outlawed here's what will happen B7**
 10/08/81 **Episiotomy done too often, researchers say B2**
 12/08/81 **Well water threat to pregnancy A7**
 13/08/81 **Surgery during pregnancy best deferred C7**
 14/08/81 **Little is known... B3**
 14/08/81 **Miscarriage: guilt is common B3**
 14/08/81 **Scientists exploring ways of inducing 'virgin births' C8**
 15/08/81 **Abortion row expected A11**
 19/08/81 **Nurse saves life of baby born with syphilis B7**
 25/08/81 **Spermicide warning B2**
 25/08/81 **Abortion issue boiling A12**
 26/08/81 **Doctors Vote To Review Stand On Abortion Issue B12**
 27/08/81 **'Status' hurts babies A14**
 02/01/82 **Eagles talons tear apart feminism B8**
 04/01/82 **Smoking mom's baby born nicotine addict A2**
 05/01/82 **Test Tube Tots: miracle or moral dilemma? B1**
 09/01/82 **Pope attacks low birth rate: family collapse A11**
 09/01/82 **Study shoots down 'painless' childbirth C5**
 12/01/82 **Safer than the pill B4**
 19/01/82 **At three months, little Crystal is home—and thriving B1**
 19/01/82 **Better off never born, suit claim B8**
 20/01/82 **Booze baby protected B10**
 21/01/82 **'Test-tube' baby born in Greece A2**
 22/01/82 **Anti-abortionists march E8**
 23/01/82 **Pro-life mayor rapped D8**
 26/01/82 **Not of Women Born B1**
 26/01/82 **Health Digest B2**
 28/01/82 **Cesareans reduce infant death rate E7**

29/01/82 MD jailed for killing baby A2
 29/01/82 Doctors hope to save extra frozen embryos A18
 02/04/82 Doctor at UBC bares test-tube baby work A11
 02/04/82 Second 'tube baby' born in US A14
 05/04/82 More midwives advised 'to lower mortality rate' A12
 14/04/82 Baby born an addict 'in need of protection' B3
 14/04/82 Problems of pregnancy E17
 27/04/82 Anti-abortionists form party D4
 30/04/82 Test-tube twins born in Britain A2
 02/05/83 Frozen embryo growing normally A2
 02/05/83 Smiling Thai males line up for vasectomies A10
 04/05/83 Pregnant mom of 14 probed as fit parent A20
 05/05/83 Abortion doctor set for battle (refers to Morgentaler) A13
 06/05/83 Little fuss as Morgentaler clinic opens A11
 07/05/83 Dead mother bears child A2
 07/05/83 Arguments of abortion divide public, politicians A6
 07/05/83 Abortion clinic draws split crowd A7
 07/05/83 Single mothers increase A7
 07/05/83 Advocate for the unborn accused of trying women A7
 09/05/83 Mothers protest cruise tests, abortion and commercialism A12
 09/05/83 Abortion rights favored by CIC A14
 10/05/83 Protests hit abortion-law trial A13
 11/05/83 Abortion clinic at work A11
 12/05/83 Abortion punished, court told A13
 12/05/83 Court told birth defects traced to Agent Orange A23
 13/05/83 Abortions carried out in Morgentaler clinic A9
 14/05/83 MacGuigan mum on abortion issue A18
 14/05/83 Dr. Jory urges abortion review A18
 16/05/83 Dream clue to the unborn child C4
 17/05/83 MD predicts life after abortion A15
 17/05/83 Anti-abortionists' suit fails: ex-directors hit lions gate A15
 18/05/83 Abortion judge hears heart beat of fetus A11
 19/05/83 The essence of life: Should we store it for the future? A11
 20/05/83 Fetus knows the time: biological clock ticks D17
 26/05/83 Abortion foes say law unfair A11
 27/05/83 Scientists grow unfertilized human embryo A6
 28/05/83 Fall ruling, expected in abortion law trial A11
 31/05/83 Abortion clinic idle, foes say A12
 31/05/83 Pro-abortion group raps justice minister A12
 08/09/83 My 16-year-old son is doing abortions' C8
 09/09/83 Lions Gate vote favors abortions A3
 09/09/83 Morgentaler staffer to address rally A18
 09/09/83 TV watcher saves unborn baby's life: While being jeered by onlookers B4
 12/09/83 Shutdown faced by Morgentaler A10
 14/09/83 Anti-abortionists plan protest A20
 16/09/83 Abortionist won't wait A8
 16/09/83 Pregnant user to stay VDT A8
 22/09/83 Abortion foes win hospital election victory: choice group loses Kelowna board races B5
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APPENDIX C
IMAGES OF THE FETUS: VANCOUVER SUN, 1969-1989

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22 February 1973, 6

Headline: HOW SCIENCE IS STRIVING FOR CARBON-COPY BABIES



The Vancouver Sun

Pro-life reply: 'Killing is easy when the victim is invisible'

By Ross Labrie

... B.C. member of the board of directors of the national Alliance for Life.

MARY BISHOP'S diatribe against the pro-life movement (Page Six, Nov. 17) calls for a reply. Shooting from the spleen, Ms. Bishop has made some extraordinary statements about the abortion issue in Canada.

She claims that pro-lifers want to have a person legally declared a human being from the moment of conception, and in this she is fundamentally correct.

That staunch pro-abortionist, Dr. Alan Guttmacher, has written in his book, *Planning Your Family*, that once fertilization has taken place, "a baby has been conceived."

Langman's Medical Embryology, typical of such texts, states succinctly that the "development of a human being begins with fertilization."

It is naive to assume that most abortions occur anywhere near the time of conception.

Of the 49,000 abortions performed in Canada in 1976, only 10,000 were performed on infants under nine weeks of age. There were 28,000 performed on infants between nine and 12 weeks and more than 9,000 on infants over 12 weeks, 100 of these involving babies over 20 weeks.

At this age the child, which will weigh close to a pound, has a modest chance of surviving outside the womb.

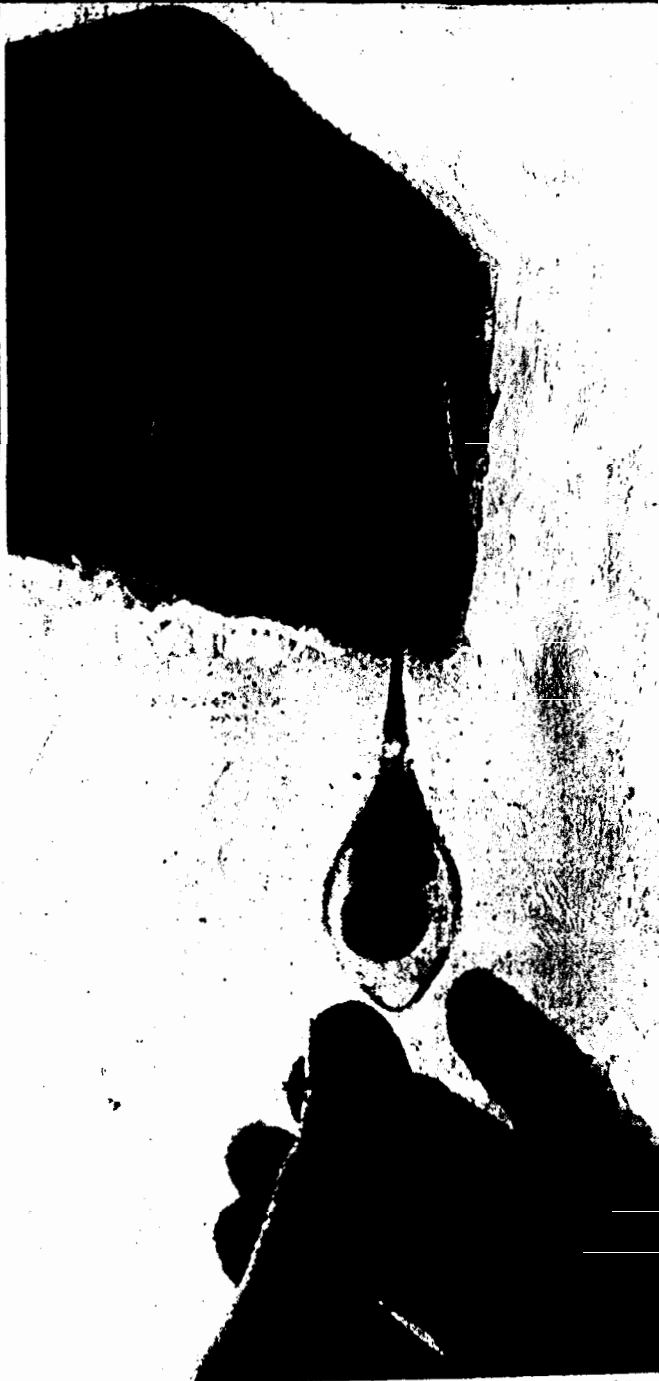
After 12 weeks of age, all of the essential organs are in place.

From six weeks, the brain has been functioning, and the heart has been beating from 18 days.

The fact is that a fertilized ovum does not stay a fertilized ovum for more than a few instants. It develops rapidly into a

"Eleven years ago, while giving an anesthetic for a ruptured tubal pregnancy (about two months), I was handed what I believed to be the smallest human being ever seen (photo). The embryo sac was intact and transparent. Within the sac was a tiny human male swimming extremely vigorously in the amniotic fluid, while attached to the wall by the umbilical cord. This tiny human was perfectly developed with long, tapering fingers, feet and toes. It was almost transparent as regards the skin, and the delicate arteries and veins were prominent to the ends of the fingers. The baby was extremely alive and swam about in the sac approximately one time per second with a natural swimmer's stroke. This tiny human did not look at all like the photos and drawings of embryos I have seen, nor did it look like the embryos I have been able to observe since then, obviously because this one was alive."

Ascribed to Dr. Paul Rockwell,
Director of Anesthesiology
Leonard Hospital, Troy, N.Y.



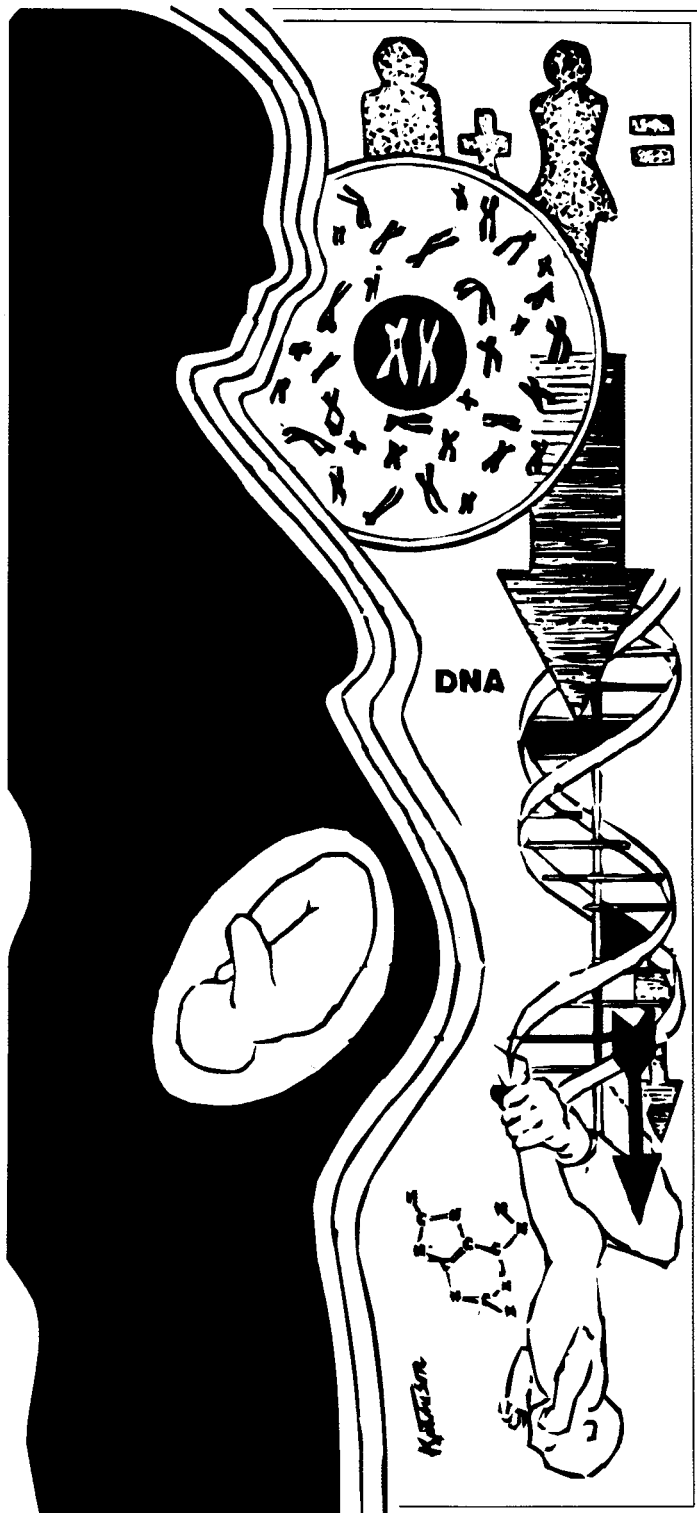
Ascribed to Ball Museum of Pathology, University of Missouri

24 September 1979, AI
No headline



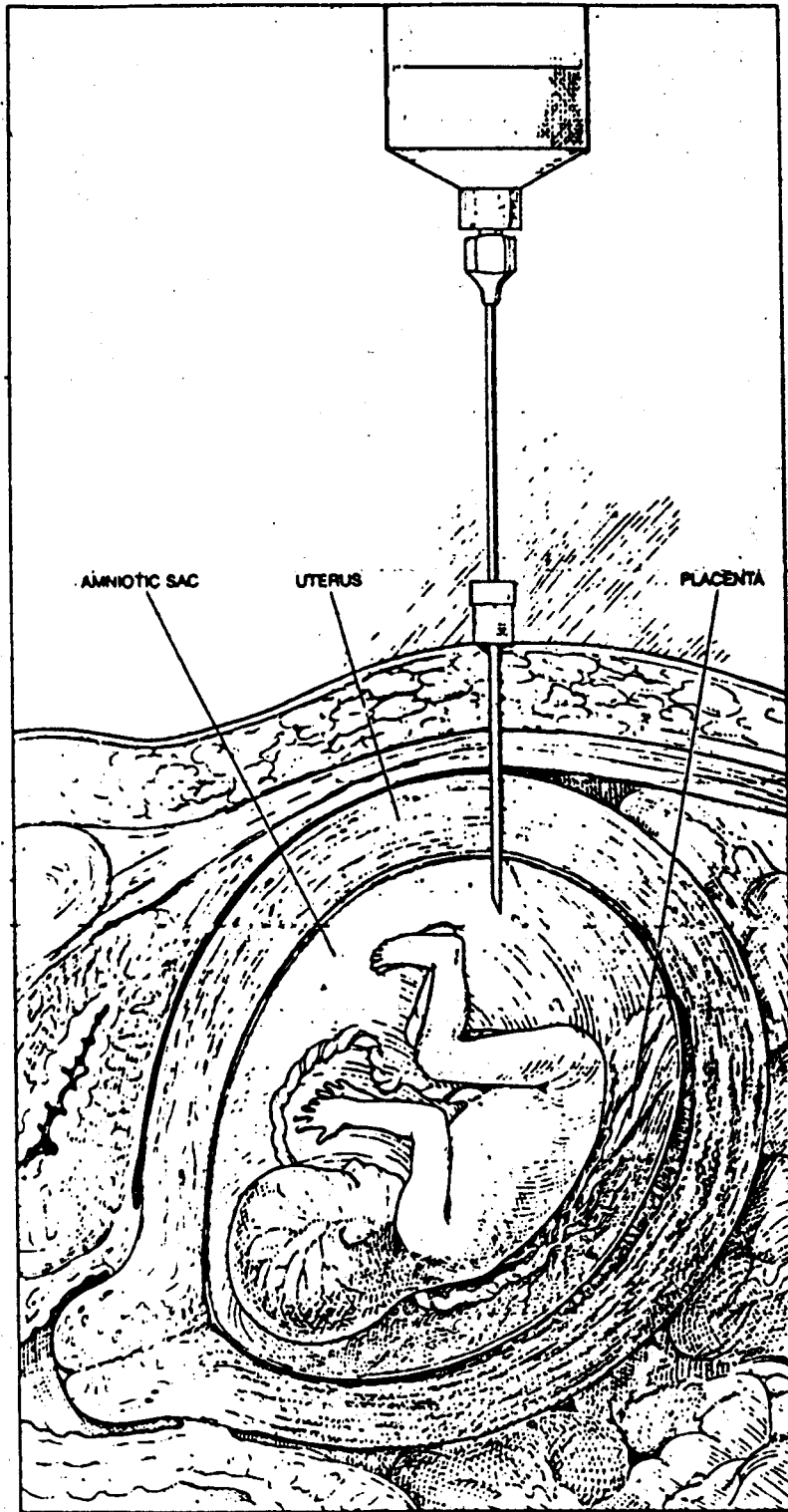
1 March 1980, A12

Headline: LURE OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY IS HAVING SOMEONE TO LOVE



7 November 1980, B1

Headline: GENETIC DEFECT: AN EARLY WARNING



found in only 28 fetuses. All of these pregnancies were terminated but, in each case, the diagnosis was confirmed by examining the fetus after abortion.

preselection is justifiable under existing U.S. law which does not require a woman to state a reason for early abortion.

Besides opposition on moral and religious

5 January 1982, B1

Headline: TEST-TUBE TOTS: MIRACLE OR MORAL DILEMMA?

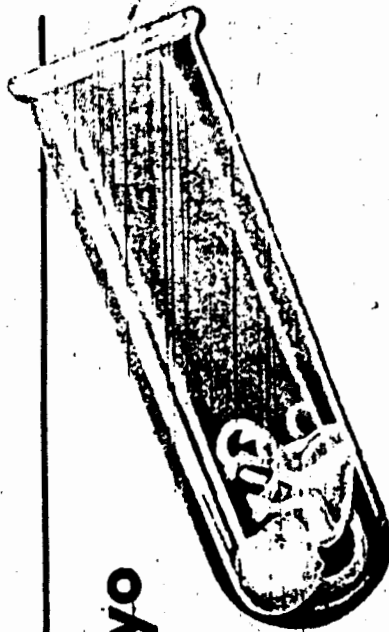


19 May 1983, A11

Headline: THE ESSENCE OF LIFE: SHOULD WE STORE IT FOR THE FUTURE?

**The essence
of life: Should
we store it
for the future?**





unfertilized human embryo

male chromosomes
zation. The experi-
July 25 female and
ven, said Dr. Roslyn
Edinburgh team.
in, director of the
reproductive bio-
n interview that it
lentists had seen an
embryo grow
had already been

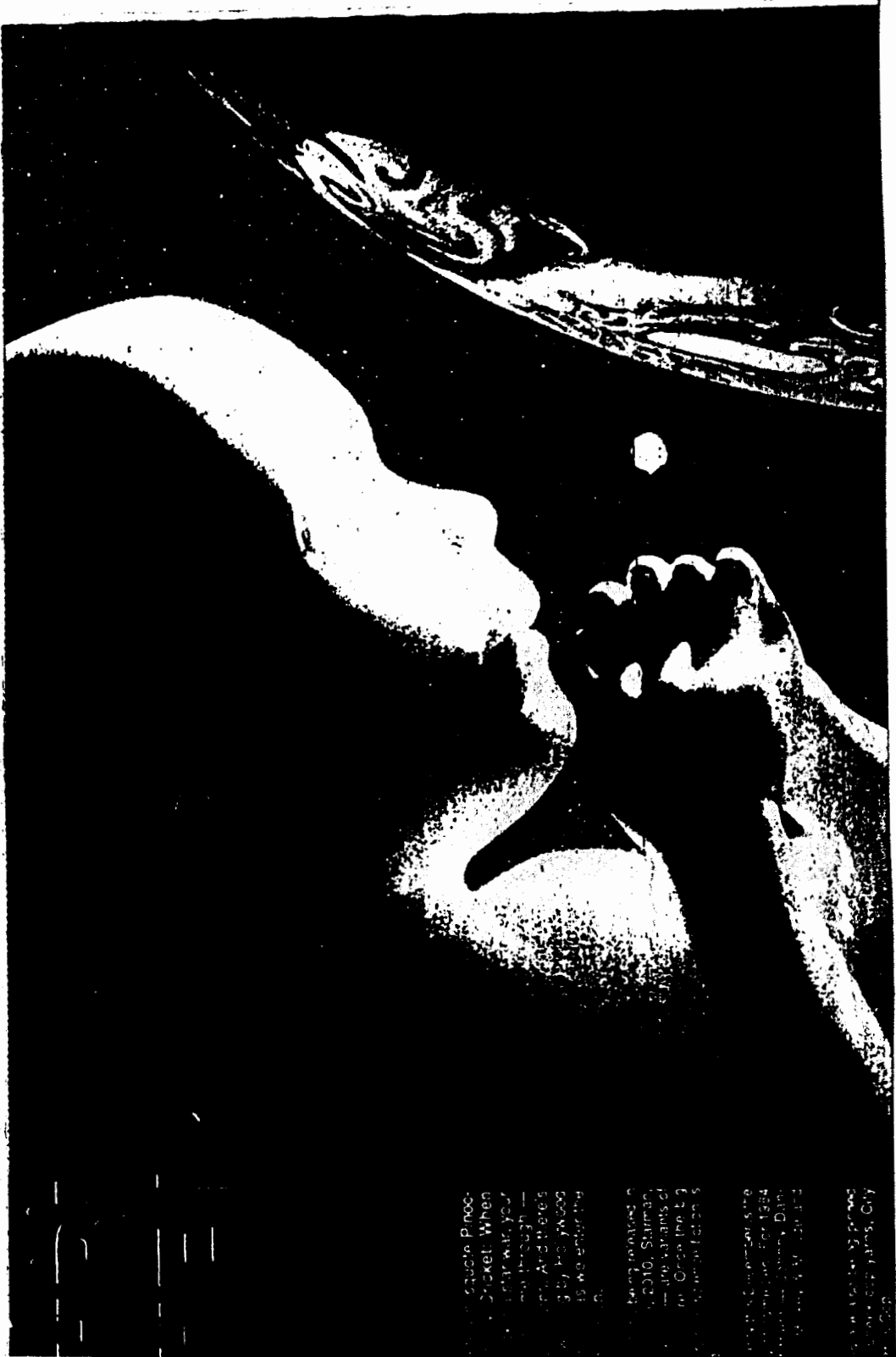
observed in other mammals, like rab-
bits.
The scientists said they destroyed
the embryo partly because they wanted
to study only the early stages of growth
and partly because they had to follow
medical guidelines which forbade them
to continue the experiment.
Some scientists believe it would be
impossible for an embryo containing
only half the normal complement of

chromosomes to develop into a human
being.
However, other scientific research
has suggested one day human beings
might be produced without any male
role at all. Work on mice has shown
that two sets of female chromosomes
can produce an embryo.
Lincoln said: "It is just plausible
that some time in the distant future we
could add together two female eggs to
make one human embryo."

8 December 1984, A1

8 December 1984, D1

Headline: CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES



...squeak Pinoc-
...cket. When
...it's war, you
...through —
...t. And there's
...y the yoked
...is we enter the

...being raised in
...2010. Stairman,
...are variants of
...Orca (the L 2
...Kawakita's

...the Commission's
...the 1984
...the University of
...the 1984

...the 1984
...the 1984

26 October 1985, A6

Headline: ABORTION: 'LOOK PAST THE SLOGANS' — 'LIKE GOOD NAZI GERMANY, WE TURN AWAY FROM THE EVIDENCE'



A four-and-a-half-month fetus in the womb: whose 'property'?

29 July 1989, A5

Headline: 200 ANTI-ABORTIONISTS MARCH



NICK DIDUCK

SILENT PROTEST: anti-abortionists march outside clinic

200 anti-abortionists march

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