

Expanding the Public Sphere
through Computer-Mediated Communication:
Political Discussion about Abortion in a Usenet Newsgroup

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a conversation about abortion that occurred within the Usenet newsgroup "talk.abortion" between April 1, 1994 and March 31, 1995. It tests the hypothesis that the form of discourse fostered by computer mediated discussion provides opportunities to expand the informal zone of the public sphere. Specific criteria by which a public sphere can be evaluated for its goodness of fit with the idealized public sphere described by Habermas are proposed and applied to the ongoing conversation.

The conversation analyzed consisted of nearly 46,000 messages written by almost three thousand authors in nearly 8,500 different threads. The public sphere created by the participants in the newsgroup was found to be diverse and reciprocal, but lacking in equality and quality. Equality, achieved with equal distribution of voice among the speakers, was not found in the newsgroup conversation, as participation was highly concentrated among a few participants. Quality, measured by the tendency of participants in the newsgroup to stay "on-topic," was also lacking in the group. On the other hand, the conversation was found to be highly diverse, as its size contracted and expanded considerably over time, and the participants included both a consistent, regular group as well as a subset of constantly changing contributors. Finally, the authors in the newsgroup were reciprocal with many others, and groups of participants were not systematically excluded from interaction by other groups.

Newsgroups are unquestionably a component of the informal zone of the public sphere. Thus, it is suggested that the definition of the public sphere be expanded to include all forms of "associational space," providing the opportunity for citizens to converse with each other. Even those forms of associational space with no clearly identified political activity resulting from the discussions contribute to the opinion- and will-formation exercise that is the function of the public sphere in a democratic society. Usenet newsgroups provide extensive opportunities for individuals to comment freely and autonomously on topics of public concern, and more importantly to engage in public discourse with other citizens about these issues.

Thesis Supervisor: Joshua Cohen

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Chapter 1

Computers, Conversation and Democracy

“Can we talk?”

Comedian Joan Rivers got a lot a laughs with this line in the 1980s. But the answer we get when applying this question to citizens in our democracy is no laughing matter. Increasingly, it seems, the answer is “no.” And therein lies a serious problem for democracy. For a society composed of individuals who lack the skills and opportunities to engage others in discussions about public issues cannot long sustain itself as a democracy. The will of the community in a democracy is always created through a running discussion between majority and minority, through free consideration of arguments for and against a policy or idea. This discussion takes place not only in the formal institutions of government, but also in the informal settings of public life: political meetings, newspapers, books and other vehicles of public opinion. A democracy without public opinion is a contradiction in terms (Kelsen 1961, 287). “Democracy begins in conversation,” wrote John Dewey (Post 1993, 171). “There can be no strong democratic legitimacy without ongoing talk,” argues Benjamin Barber (1984, 174) . Bruce Agre (1989, 6) agrees: “Dialogue as the first obligation of citizenship”. “Much of modern, democratic politics consists of talk” (Huspek & Kendall 1991, 1).

This thesis is an analysis of an emerging kind of political talk or discourse: that which takes place over a computer network. More specifically, it is a case study of the conversation about abortion that took place within a Usenet newsgroup over the course of one year. It tests the hypothesis that the newly emergent form of discourse fostered by computer mediated discussion provides an opportunity to revitalize the public sphere in a manner consistent with the goals of participatory democracy. The hypothesis is tested through an analysis of the Usenet newsgroup talk.abortion over the course of a one year period, with a focus on the conversational arena created by the discussion. The thesis is presented in seven chapters:

- This chapter provides a contextual introduction to the notion of a newsgroup and discusses the role of political conversation in democratic theory.
- Chapter 2 uses the concept of the public sphere concept to provide an organizing framework for the project.
- Chapter 3 explores the relationship between communication technology and the shape of the public sphere, with particular emphasis on technologies enabling computer-mediated discussion, and traces the emergence of Usenet, the largest system of computer-mediated discussion groups in the world.
- Chapter 4 reviews the political history of abortion in the United States, and examines trends in the public discussion of abortion.
- Chapter 5 proposes a method of assessing computer-mediated discussion in the context of the public sphere concept, and details procedures and methods of analysis.
- Chapter 6 analyzes the conversational arena created by the participants in the talk.abortion newsgroup during the study period.
- Chapter 7 draws conclusions about the nature of the public sphere created by the participants in talk.abortion.

The next section of this chapter provides a contextual introduction to the nature of computer-mediated discourse, while section 1.2 on page 11 examines the role of discussion in a democracy.

1.1 talk.abortion – August 9, 1994

Ten days ago, a radical anti-abortion protester shot and killed a doctor and his bodyguard outside a clinic in Pensacola, Florida where abortions were performed. You find the murder extremely troubling and have been unhappy with the level of discussion in the conventional media. The media treat the murderer as a “crazy” or “delusional” individual, without systematically examining and explaining the belief system underlying his action, or subjecting that belief system to what you would consider rigorous critique. You have heard about conversations taking place about politics and philosophy among people connected to the Internet, and decide to investigate. A friend helps you figure out that you are looking for Usenet “newsgroups” (see Section 3.3 on page 51 for a description of Usenet), and you find out that the system at your University carries a group called talk.abortion. You start up the “news” software, and with some help from your friend, are able to display a listing of the articles or postings available in the talk.abortion group on that day (see A.1 on page 107). Your friend points out that the list of topics includes all postings made to the group during the past seven days, the default set by your computing center. Had you been so inclined, a tally would have revealed that the newsgroup, as of that moment, consisted of nearly 1,000 different articles on over 300 different topics by 175 different authors.

Undaunted, you proceed, deciding to read some of the 95 articles on the subject Pro-life Gunman kills two in FL (Table A.3 on page 122 contains the first 50 articles). You read the first few articles matching the subject requested. The third article is written by someone with an email address of desteinberg@nmsuedu, identified at the bottom of the article as David Steinberg. In the article, Steinberg takes issue with the comments from a previous writer (Gary Frazier) suggesting that those who are pro-life seek to control human knowledge about sex, and questions the value of discussants demonizing those with whom they disagree. Other articles focus on the need to differentiate among people in the “pro-life movement,” arguing that not all people who are pro-life supported the actions of Paul Hill; present a list of conditions specified in the bible in which people are justified in killing each other; and plead with participants to adopt a more civil tone in their discussions. Reading the next 20 articles convinces you, in a way you don’t quite understand, that you’ve stumbled into a place fundamentally different from other places you’ve been before.

Further reading of the articles available that day in talk.abortion reveals a seemingly large number of different authors (see A.2 on page 117), writing articles on

a wide variety of topics. Some of the articles are related to the abortion issue, although it seems that many are not. Some of the articles related to abortion are concerned with the murders ten days ago, although many are not. Much of the discussion is very animated, and some of the authors make very good points, but many seem to make no point at all. You get the sense that you're in a very large room with many people talking at once. Some of the people are being listened to and responded to; others seem to be only talking to themselves. It's a conversation unlike any you've ever encountered before – somewhere in between the classic corner tavern, where regulars gather to talk amongst themselves with a language and style inaccessible to outsiders (Anderson 1976, Liebow 1967), and the "Special Orders" portion of the legislative day in the United States House of Representatives, in which Members of Congress speak on a succession of unrelated topics to a largely empty chamber and an anonymous television audience watching on C-SPAN. Throughout your exploration, you are struck repeatedly by the thought that the talk.abortion discussion represents a world unto itself. And the very existence of this world raises questions about its patterns, structure and nuances – and its impact or interaction with the other worlds of political discourse.

This world – the ongoing conversation created by the writers of messages in the Usenet newsgroup talk.abortion – is the subject of this thesis. The operating premise is that the interaction of various technological, economic and political forces that make Usenet possible have combined to make possible a political conversation with characteristics unlike any we've seen before. The challenge for political science is understanding the structure of this discussion, and fitting it within existing or new theoretical models which explain the nature and function of political conversation.

1.2 Democracy and Discussion

Political conversation can be thought of as the foundation of political life and political participation. "Participatory" theorists (Pateman 1970) of democracy, who see the state as an instrument to identify and promote the common interests of the public, and not merely as an entity to regulate the allocation of resources to meet the private interests of individuals, seek to energize individuals as citizens through conversation. Thus engaged, citizens will have the potential to see

themselves as members of a community, with an obligation to actively participate in its public affairs. They may be encouraged to discover that their own private interests are interdependent with others' interests, and will potentially be able to integrate their private goals into public policies. This vision of democracy is expressed in the classical works of Aristotle and Rousseau, and modern interpretations by theorists such as Pateman (1970), Barber (1984) and Mansbridge (1983). If, on the other hand, opportunities for and engagements in political conversation are absent, individuals will be restricted in their "deliberations" to considering only their own preferences and values in reaching conclusions on important issues, will be unable to consider the preferences and values of others, and will not recognize the interests they have in common with their fellow citizens (Mill 1859, Stanley 1983, Barber 1984, Stanley 1988).

Because participation in political discussion makes a crucial contribution to the development of a strong and positive democratic political identity, we should take seriously critical analyses reporting declines in the ability of and opportunities for citizens do so. Individuals who view themselves as having an important role to play in the political community; who take seriously the concept of self-government and believe that the social contract is not only necessary but beneficial; and who believe that their concerns are at the least given voice, and perhaps even satisfaction, have the capacity to become public-regarding citizens in a democracy. A necessary condition for the development of a strong and positive democratic political identity is the ability to talk about politics with others (Pitkin & Shumer 1982, Stanley 1983, Barber 1984, Stanley 1988, Gamson 1992). People who can talk with one another have the potential for understanding, for empathy and for the identification of interests common to all (Barber 1984). Political discussion, then, is a fundamental building-block upon which public-regarding citizenship in a democracy is constructed. If the critics are correct, the decline of opportunities for political discussion may provide a partial explanation for the apparent decay of democratic values, and an obvious prescription for their revival. If skills and opportunities for political discussion were increased, we would expect to see a corresponding increase in the presence of individuals with positive democratic values willing and able to participate as citizens in a democracy.

The primary opportunity to converse with citizens is found in those places called "associational space;" encompassing the "core settings of informal public life" (Oldenburg 1989). Oldenburg (1989) and Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton (1991) have identified the scarcity of associational space as one of the primary ills facing our polity. Create new settings for public interaction and pub-

lic life, they suggest, and we may revive our democratic spirit and renew our public consciousness. It may be that the changing structure of communication in the late 20th century offers this possibility. By shifting the focus from communication based on transactions with large, homogeneous, undifferentiated and anonymous audiences (Lasswell 1948, Wright 1975) to communication based on exchange among small, heterogeneous, distinct and identifiable participants (Stevens 1981, Rogers 1986, Abramson, Arterton & Orren 1988, Neuman 1991), it might be possible to recapture the skills and reclaim the resources necessary to support opportunities for effective political discussion. Among the recent developments in communication technology which offer this shift in focus is the rapidly emerging medium of computer-mediated discussion, in which individuals use computers and computer networks to engage in conversations which take place over time. An example of a conversation using computer-mediated technology was presented in Section 1.1 on page 10. This type of communication, when focused on politics, can be an important contributor to developing the skills necessary for political discussion, and can in fact serve as the platform for a meaningful forum of political discussion.

Chapter 2

The Public Sphere

“Strange as it may seem to an era governed by mass-market politics,” wrote William Greider in *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy*, “democracy begins in human conversation. The simplest, least threatening investment any citizen may make in democratic renewal is to begin talking with other people.” Opportunities for conversation are not, however, evenly and randomly distributed throughout society; they are, instead, manufactured and manipulated through the management of social, economic and technological resources. It is the contention of this thesis that the possibilities fostered by computer mediated discussion provides an opportunity to revitalize political conversation in a manner consistent with the goals of participatory democracy. This chapter uses the concept of the “public sphere” to frame the discussion about the role of political discourse in a democracy. Section 2.1 introduces the concept of the public sphere. Section 2.2 on page 17 examines the notion of the “idealized” public sphere, and discusses the conditions of its collapse, while section 2.3 on page 26 focuses on the transformation from the idealized to the “liberal” public sphere. Section 2.4 on page 31 suggests four dimensions in which public spheres can be examined. The characteristics of the deliberative or formal public sphere are compared to those of the non-deliberative or informal public sphere in Section 2.5 on page 40.

2.1 Discourse and the Public Sphere

The notion of the public sphere is today most closely associated with the work of Jurgen Habermas. Habermas defines and identifies the public sphere in a variety of ways. A “portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” he suggests (Habermas 1974, 49). Similarly, Keane (1984, 2) points out that “a public sphere is brought into being whenever two or more individuals, who previously acted singularly, assemble to interrogate both their own interactions and the wider relations of social and political power within which they are always and already embedded.” Habermas has variously described the public sphere as follows:

- The public sphere is “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (Habermas 1974, 49).
- The public sphere is populated by “private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state” (Habermas 1989, 176).
- The public sphere is “the sphere of private people come together as a public” (Habermas 1989, 27).
- The public sphere is “private persons making public use of their reason” (Habermas 1989, 27).

Two more specific definitions of the public sphere have also been offered:

- Kemp (1985, 182) has defined the public sphere as “that area of public life in which intersubjective agreement on values and standards can be reached in order to solve sociopolitical or practical questions.”
- Keane (1984, 2) suggests that the public sphere includes those arenas in which members “consider what they are doing, settle how they will live together, and determine, within the estimated limits of the means available to them, how they might collectively act within the foreseeable future.”

There are several common themes running through these definitions and explications. First, the public sphere is a zone or domain, set off from other areas or

arenas. As such, it is in some way analogous to a physical place. Second, the public sphere is created, or brought into being, by its members or participants; it is not a place created by others to which members go. And third, the public sphere requires interaction among the members, and this interaction requires members to make use of their discursive abilities.

At the same time, it should be made clear that not all discourse is to be considered part of the public sphere. This is not to say that all discourse is not political; it is clear that language use and construction reflects a social and political structure, and that all discourse thus has a political character (Corcoran 1990). Rather, the distinction to be made here is between discourse that contributes to the public sphere, and discourse which is confined to either the governmental (or state) sphere, on the one hand, or the market or intimate realms of the private sphere, on the other. Pitkin (1972, 204) distinguishes four regions of discourse: philosophical, moral, scientific and political:

Political discourse is surely not personal dialogue among two or a very few persons directly affected by an action one of them took. . . . [P]olitical questions [are] of larger scope and scale, addressed to a larger audience, cast in a more general and impersonal mode. Unlike moral dialogue, political discourse is characteristically public speech, both with respect to its participants and with respect to its subject matter . . . There is no such thing as private politics, intimate politics.

Using Pitkin's model, a discourse can be considered political if its content is addressed to questions of large scope and scale, if its participants address larger audiences than themselves, and if the participants cast their discussion in a general and impersonal mode. The defining characteristic of political discourse is its publicness:

Other regions of discourse do exist and have an impact upon individuals, collectively and publicly. But they are not characteristically and necessarily public; indeed the opposite is true. (Pitkin 1972, 72).

The importance of audience is underscored by Gamson (1992), who notes how the awareness of audience transforms sociable interaction into what he terms "sociable public discourse."

Scholarly debate on and discussion about the concept of the public sphere has been reinvigorated since the publication of Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989). First published in German in 1961, it was not translated into English until 1989 (a French translation was published in 1978), perhaps delaying by nearly 30 years the expansive use of this concept in studies of the American political and social context. It is not surprising that there is considerable ferment among scholars concerning the conceptualization of this notion. Habermas suggests that a useful distinction can be drawn between the "idealized" and the "degenerate" or liberal public sphere, a bifurcation which closely follows the divisions offered in democratic theory. The remainder of this chapter discusses the two visions of the public sphere:

The idealized vision views the public sphere as a means for private individuals to discover the interests they have in common, and to communicate these interests to the state.

The liberal vision suggests that the function of the public sphere is to provide legitimacy to both state and private market actions.

2.2 The Idealized Public Sphere

The idealized vision of the public sphere is one in which all members of a polity, as independent and private citizens, have an opportunity to participate in rational-critical debate of topics relevant to their public lives. These debates and deliberations result in consensus among the members of a public on those actions for which it is necessary for the state to engage, and produce a sense of democracy among the participants in the public discussion. Public authorities respond by enacting this consensus into law. This section examines the emergence of the public sphere (Section 2.2.1), its functions (Section 2.2.2 on page 20) and the factors leading to its collapse (Section 2.2.3 on page 24).

2.2.1 The Emergence of the Idealized Public Sphere

Habermas (1989) suggests that the idealized public sphere emerged in the late Enlightenment period as a result of four factors:

1. the shift in political and economic systems from an absolutist to a capitalist state;
2. the development of print as the dominant mode of communication;
3. the rise of institutions to allow individuals in the newly capitalist systems to meet and deliberate with each other; and
4. the transition of these deliberating individuals into a public.

To fully appreciate these developments, it is necessary to briefly recount the emergence of the earliest form of what could be called a public sphere in early absolutist states. The “representative public sphere” was the vehicle used by the monarch to “represent” his authority to the populace. There was no sense of representation in the modern sense, of delegates or members of an assembly representing others:

When the territorial ruler convened about him ecclesiastical and worldly lords, knights, prelates and cities, this was not a matter of an assembly of delegates that was someone else’s representative. As long as the prince and the estates of his realm “were” the country and not just its representatives, they could represent it in a specific sense. They represented the lord not for but “before” the people (Habermas 1989, 7-8).

The function, then, of the representative public sphere was to “provide an arena for the spectacle and display of authority” (Nathans 1990, 621). The “public sphere” Habermas (1989, 7) discusses here is not a social category but a “status attribute,” as “a public sphere in the sense of a separate realm distinguished from the private sphere cannot be shown to have existed in the feudal society” that characterized the early absolutist states.

The earliest elements of a public sphere as a social category, distinct from the private sphere, appear as a result of the simultaneous emergence of early capitalism and the development of techniques for regular information exchange between commercial centers. The transition of the economy from a system dominated by feudal agricultural production to first finance and trade capitalism and later mercantile capitalism required a system of taxation, and the bureaucracy to support it, in order to generate the capital necessary for expanded trade. For the first time, the personal holdings of the monarchy were separated from the revenues of the

state, and the “public authority” aspects of the state acquired meaning beyond that provided by the representational public sphere. The sphere that emerges to fill this void is “public” in the more modern and familiar sense of the term, that is, synonymous with state-related authority; the existence of this sphere is demonstrated by the presence of “continuous state activity” exemplified by a permanent bureaucracy and standing army (Habermas 1989).

Hand in hand with this emergence of continuous state activity was the development of “continuous trafficking in commodities and news” (Habermas 1989, 18), the second factor contributing to the emergence of the democratic public sphere. The techniques of communication, initially letters or newsletters and later commercially produced newspapers, first developed as a means of distributing information to a limited audience, namely merchants and state authorities. It was not until information became commodified – that is, until it became apparent that a fee could be collected from multiple persons for the same information – and the state authorities began to realize that instructions and regulations could be delivered to the people through the press, that a genuine “public” emerged as an audience. Even so, although official announcements were addressed to “the public,” meaning all subjects of the Crown, in reality the direct recipients of the printed materials included only the educated classes. Habermas suggests that the increased reliance on literate materials (first, written and later printed) gave rise to new stratum of bourgeois people which occupied a central position within the public. The officials of the rulers’ administrations were its core. Added to them were doctors, pastors, officers, professors, and scholars, who were at the top of a hierarchy reaching down through schoolteachers and scribes to the “people”(Habermas 1989).

The transition to a capitalist economic system and the emergence of regular sources of public information were not, by themselves, sufficient to stimulate the development of a democratic public sphere. The institutionalization of places for private persons to gather for critical discussion and debate, first about literature and art and later economics and politics, were necessary to complete the emergence. These places – coffee houses in Great Britain, salons in France, *tischgesellschaften* (table societies) in Germany – provided an opportunity for private persons to deliberate and discuss topics of public importance in a sphere outside that controlled by public authorities. As such, Habermas locates the idealized public sphere within the private realm, outside of and separate from the sphere of public authority. Included in the private realm, he writes, was the “authentic public sphere, for it was a public sphere constituted by private people (Habermas 1989, 30).

Through participation in these “institutions of sociability,” Habermas suggests a notion of the public emerges, and the idea of “public opinion” is transformed from “mere opinion” to “a reasoned form of access to truth.” In Habermas’ interpretation of Hobbes’ view in *Leviathan*, opinion is for the first time connected to conscience, and held to be separate from the public realm:

Because the subjects were excluded from the public sphere objectified in the state apparatus, the conflict between their convictions could not be settled politically and, indeed, was completely banned from the sphere of politics (Habermas 1989, 90).

The idealized public sphere emerged as part of the political realm positioned within a special place in the schema of social realms, between the completely private realm of commodity exchange (civil society), and the sphere of public authority (the state). The idealized public sphere, while composed of private persons, nevertheless embraces the notion of a public, of private persons acting together in their common interests. Thus, this is the beginning of a recognition of a private realm insulated from the state that includes reasoned convictions or opinions of individuals. This notion is extended, according to Habermas (1989), by Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in which the “Law of Opinion” provided the later foundation for Bayles’ distinction between opinion as “prejudice” and opinion as “critique.” Criticism, the product of “public discussion among critical minds,” clearly required interaction, while prejudice could be formed by individuals acting independently (Habermas 1989, 140). Rousseau identified the notion of the “general will” or the “common interest” as a “sort of public opinion, a consensus of hearts rather than arguments” (Calhoun 1992, 18). Rousseau, wrote Habermas (1989, 99), “wanted democracy without public debate.” Thus, while Rousseau saw the general will as produced by the public, it was not through the instrument of rational-critical debate. It was Kant, though, suggests Habermas (1989, 104), who made the leap from opinion and criticism to public opinion, and the public sphere.

2.2.2 The Function of the Idealized Public Sphere

From this discussion, it is clear that the function of the idealized public sphere, in Habermas’s conception, is to enable the citizens to discover the general will

or common interest. Consequently, a society which supports a democratic public sphere would require its citizens to participate in it, and would view the function of such participation as both contributing to the discovery of the general will, as well as educating citizens to recognize those interests that they have in common. This vision of democracy suggests that government is an instrument to identify and promote the common interests of the public, and not only to regulate the allocation of resources to meet the private interests of individuals. Democratic theory which supports such a vision seeks to energize individuals as citizens; to enable citizens to identify themselves as members of a community with an obligation to actively participate in its public affairs; to encourage them to discover that their own private interests are interdependent with others' interests; and to integrate their private goals into public policies. To achieve these goals, these theories argue that institutions such as the public sphere must be designed to help individuals discover the means of satisfying the "common wealth" without sacrificing the individual autonomy necessary to democracy.

This vision of democracy is expressed in the work of Aristotle, the theoretical writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and modern interpretations by "participatory democratic theorists" such as Carole Pateman, Benjamin Barber and Jane Mansbridge. The key concept in this vision is the promotion of direct and public participation in political life. This participation has both a psychological and instrumental component. Greek democracy, as an idealized portrait of political life, offers a clear statement of participatory principles. As Dahl (1989, 18) has summarized, for a democratic order to satisfy the idealized requirements of Greek democracy, several conditions need be met. Citizens must be able to develop and articulate a common interest, "a strong sense of the general good that is not in marked contradiction to their personal aims or interests." In order to meet the first condition, citizens would need to share a relatively homogeneous ethnic and social background, and enjoy a relatively equal distribution of income and other resources. The size of the democracy must be small enough to a) ensure the necessary cultural homogeneity, b) allow citizens to personally know most of their fellow citizens, and c) accommodate the entire polity in face-to-face assembly. The face-to-face assembly was essential in Greek thought; representative government forced citizens to abandon their autonomy and escape their responsibility for service and deliberation. In addition to participating in the Assembly, citizens were also required to staff the administrative offices of the polity; no professionalized class of bureaucrats was to be tolerated. Finally, the polity was to remain fully autonomous, avoiding treaties and associations with other democracies. Democracy based on

this kind of participation is, quoting John Dewey, “a way of life itself – not some set of cold procedures for serving the private lives we lead elsewhere” (Abramson, Arterton & Orren 1988, 22). Indeed, in Greek democracy, there was little outside of politics: “the citizen is a whole person for whom politics is a natural social activity not sharply separated from the rest of life” (Dahl 1989, 18). Participatory democrats, then, assign an important psychological component to political participation, over and above the instrumental impact on policies and administration of the polity.

This is most explicitly demonstrated by Pateman (1970) in her assessment of Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, in which she makes two arguments concerning the theory of participatory democracy: a) There is an interrelationship between the authority structures of institutions and psychological qualities and attitudes of individuals, and b) The major function of participation is an educative one. The inter relatedness of these two functions of participation becomes clear when the effect of institutional structure on attitudes and behavior is examined. Institutions which successfully encourage public participation serve two functions. First, they provide for the moral development of individuals by providing them with experience in participatory institutions. Second, they allow individuals to fulfill their moral responsibilities to take an active part in the civic affairs of their society. Institutions which fail to encourage participation achieve the opposite: they provide instructive experience to individuals about their inability to govern themselves, and they prohibit individuals from taking an active role in civic affairs. Participatory institutions are thus able to achieve the status of a self-fulfilling prophesy:

The very qualities that are required of the individual citizens if the system is to work successfully are those that the process of participation itself develops and fosters; the more the individual citizen participates the better able he is to do so. The human results that accrues through the participatory process provide an important justification for a participatory system (Pateman 1970, 25).

Political participation, in Rousseau’s world, is not only a means to the end of freedom, but an end in itself. It is through participation that individuals attain the necessary disposition to engage in democratic action. The three major psychological functions of political participation are independence, integration and interdependence. Independence is Rousseau’s notion of “being one’s own master,” of having the ability and information necessary to maintain control over one’s

own life, of being sure that one's own interests are properly attended to; independence provides the platform from which one's own interests can be considered in relation to others' interests. Integration provides a feeling of community and belongingness for the individual, enabling collective action. Finally, interdependence "enables collective decisions to be more easily accepted by the individual" because individuals, as masters of themselves and not any others, and as members of a community, are "equally dependent on each other and equally subject to the law" (Pateman 1970, 27). Rousseau's entire political theory hinges on the individual participation of each citizen in political decision making. That this is as unlikely in a modern industrial state as it was in ancient Athens does not diminish the ideal toward which participationists strive.

The presence of an idealized public sphere is a significant step toward a democracy which includes individuals who are engrossed as citizens and able to recognize that their private interests are identical to the common interests. However, an idealized public sphere is not possible absent citizens with the ability to participate in it. In order for citizens to participate in an idealized public sphere, they must have certain qualities. First, they must be capable of deciding for themselves their particular preferences. Second, they must be literate, or capable of articulating their preferences. Third, they must have access to information from a diverse group of sources; this information must be both affordable and available in appropriate form and level of complexity (Dahl 1989, 339). Fourth, citizens must have the opportunity both to articulate their preferences, and discover the preferences of their fellow citizens.

While these conditions are necessary for an idealized public sphere, they are not sufficient. Habermas (1989, 36) offers a set of qualities that are shared by institutions within a democratic public sphere. He suggests that while these institutions will differ in "the size and composition of their publics, the style of their proceedings, the climate of their debates, and their topical orientations," they will nevertheless share as their primary function the organization of ongoing discussion among private people. As such, Habermas suggests they ought to have three qualities in common:

1. The primary quality affecting judgment of any individual's offering to the discussion will be the quality of his argument; status and economic differences among participants ought to be ignored.
2. Topics will be discussed that include those previously thought of as beyond the realm of interpretation by private persons. Habermas is reaching here

for the process of “denaturalization” suggested by Stanley (1983), in which the political and social structure implied by the selection of topics and alternatives is revealed to participants, instead of remaining “hidden” or part of the “accepted” wisdom. In other words, there ought to be no boundaries on the possible alternatives considered in the public sphere.

3. Participants in the discussions should think of all private persons as potentially eligible to participate in deliberations.

These three qualities, adhered to in principle if not in practice, combine to create the concept of “the public” as an inclusive and equal body with the capacity and responsibility to discuss, deliberate and criticize all topics relevant to the public authorities.

2.2.3 The Collapse of the Idealized Public Sphere

Habermas suggests that the existence of a idealized public sphere which was part of the private realm was an indicator of institutional support for the process of individuation, certainly a key element of freedom and democracy. He links the emergence of an idealized public sphere, and the source of the freedom necessary to support it, to the model of individuation supported by the society. If individuals are to understand themselves as individuals through work, self-reliance and self-determination – the classic model of American “rugged individualism” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton 1985) – control over the intimate sphere is to be obtained by “genuine control of private property,” and freedom, in the family and home, from the forces of market domination. If, on the other hand, a more Russian ideal of self-actualization and realization is to be obtained through education and interaction (Pateman 1970) control over the intimate sphere is realized by state-guaranteed access to the public sphere in the political realm. Absent either of these conditions, which Habermas suggests has been the case in Western capitalist states, perhaps since the middle of the 19th century, the political public sphere, if it existed at all, collapses into the “degenerate” public sphere:

In the course of [the 20th] century, the bourgeois forms of sociability have found substitutes that have one tendency in common despite their regional and national diversity: abstinence from literary and political debate. On the

new model the convivial discussion among individuals gave way to more or less noncommittal group activities. These too assumed fixed forms of informal sociability, yet they lacked that specific institutional power that had once ensured the interconnectedness of sociable contacts as the substratum of public communication – no public was formed around group activities. The characteristic relationship of a privacy oriented toward an audience was no longer present when people went to the movies together, listened to the radio, or watched TV. The communication of the public that debated critically about culture remained dependent on reading pursued in the closed-off privacy of the home. The leisure activities of the culture-consuming public, on the contrary, themselves take place within a social climate, and they do not require any further discussions. The private form of appropriation removed the ground for a communication about what has been appropriated (163).

This is in marked contrast to the private realm of commodity exchange – which Habermas (1989) suggests replaces the idealized public sphere – in which individuals act on their own best interests as individuals, and not as a public. The idealized public sphere which had grown as a part of the private realm was replaced by what Habermas (1989, 160) calls the “pseudo-public or sham-private” sphere of culture consumption, or what others call the “liberal public sphere” (see, for example, Stanley (1988), Pateman (1970), and Calhoun (1992)). As the private realm increasingly became dominated by struggles over resources, increasingly regulated by the forces of economic competition, increasingly oriented to the “dictates of life’s necessities,” it ceased to support a public sphere with a political character, “in the Greek sense of being emancipated from the constraints” (Habermas 1989, 160) of everyday life. The idealized political public sphere had presupposed a separation inside the private realm between, on the one hand, affairs that private people pursued individually and, on the other hand, the sort of interaction that united private people into a public. But as soon as and to the degree that the public sphere in the world of letters spread into the realm of consumption, this threshold became leveled. So-called leisure behavior, once it had become part of the cycle of production and consumption, was already apolitical, if for no other reason than its incapacity to constitute a world emancipated from the immediate constraints of survival needs:

When leisure becomes nothing more than a complement to time spent on the job, it could be no more than a different arena for the pursuit of private business affairs that were not transformed into a public communication

between private people. To be sure, the individuated satisfaction of needs might be achieved in a public fashion, namely, in the company of many others; but a public sphere itself did not emerge from such a situation. When the laws of the market governing the sphere of commodity exchange and of social labor also pervaded the sphere reserved for private people as a public, rational-critical debated had a tendency to be replaced by consumption, and the web of public communication unraveled into acts of individuated reception, however uniform in mode (Habermas 1989, 160-161).

2.3 The Liberal Public Sphere

In contrast to the idealized public sphere, the liberal public sphere denies the existence of a public interest, and seeks not to enable citizens to discover what they have in common, but to regulate their conflicts in a fair and equitable manner. In addition, the liberal public sphere provides legitimacy to both state and private market actions which seek to allocate resources within society.

A liberal public sphere is consistent with a vision of democratic society that suggests the role of citizen participation is primarily to protect the citizen from actions by the government that would undermine the “universal interest.” To protect the people, universal suffrage, secret ballots and frequent elections are required. Citizen electors must assume the responsibility of choosing representatives to represent their interests in parliaments. Electors are responsible for making well-informed choices in elections; elections are intended to provide policy guidance to the representatives. Following Pateman’s (1970) discussion, this exploration of democratic theories which emphasize the protective function of political participation uses as a point of departure the concepts put forward by in the classical works of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, and the more modern works of Schumpeter (1942) and Dahl (1961).

Under this view, citizens are not expected to make decisions absent information from each other or even the government. Citizens ought to be interested in politics because it was in their best interest to be so (Pateman 1970). Citizens’ interest in politics ought to be maintained and satisfied through the exchange of information about each other’s views, as well as the opinions of representatives. Bentham laid great stress on public opinion and the need for the individual to take account of it and he pointed out one advantage of an elector in a democracy, that “into no

company can he enter without seeing those who . . . are ready to communicate to him whatever they know, have seen, or heard, or think. The annals of the year . . . the pictures of all public functionaries . . . find a place on his table in company with his daily bread” (Pateman 1970, 11). Wolin (1960, 346), however, questions the sincerity of Bentham’s commitment to the “public” aspects of public opinion, suggesting that it was merely a technique for advancing one’s private interests:

In his Deontology Bentham assumed the role of the Dale Carnegie of Utilitarianism, detailing the techniques whereby the individual could ingratiate himself with others, warning against the kind of behavior which others found offensive, with all of these counsels dedicated to the end of inducing others to assist in one’s campaign for wealth and social prestige.

Further, both Bentham and Mill postulate what modern theorists call a “two step flow” model (Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955) in which citizens less qualified to judge potential delegates seek the counsel of the “wise and virtuous” citizens and cast a responsible ballot. In addition, representatives are expected to influence their constituents through direct and indirect communication, as a means of furthering the universal interest. It is essential, though, to note that despite their interests in an informed citizenry, both Bentham and Mill suggest that the purpose of participation was merely to protect citizens from actions by the government that were not in the universal interest. The primary sanction available to citizens was to refuse to return a deputy to parliament. The bulk of their work focuses on the institutional arrangements of democracy (i.e. universal suffrage, frequent and competitive elections). What distinguishes the work of Bentham and Mill from others, such as Locke, who view participation as fulfilling a protective function, is their focus on universal participation.

The view of participation with a protective function has been extended in the more recent works of Schumpeter, Dahl, Eckstein and others under the guise of “polyarchy” and “pluralism.” Though there are important differences concerning the roles of citizens, information and representatives between the early theorists and the later ones, the constant is the protective function of participation. The differences lie in the amount of participation required of citizens to fulfill the protective function. Mill and Bentham required their citizens to maintain an interest in politics so that they might make intelligent choices in elections. They relied on the citizens to protect themselves from the government, and insisted upon institutional arrangements (i.e. frequent elections, universal suffrage) to ensure that citizens would be able to fulfill their responsibilities. More modern theorists, starting

with Schumpeter, suggested substantial revisions in what they called “classical” democratic theory. As Pateman (1970) discusses, however, modern theorists fail to distinguish between the “classical” theorists who emphasize a protective function of participation (Bentham, Mill), and those who emphasize an educative and integrative function of participation (Rousseau, J. S. Mill, as discussed above in Section 2.2 on page 17).

Pluralism is a related perspective, most closely associated with the work of Robert Dahl (1961). It requires participation by citizens to be group-formation and identification actions. The “end” desired, however, remains protection from government. In this configuration, decisions are to be made not by a small class of elites, but through the bargaining process among groups (each representing interests of its members). Citizens require information from government and groups, and must be able to exchange information within their groups. While it is unclear how pluralist groups ought to be run, pluralism assumes an equality of position among groups for access to the bargaining forum, and assumes an equality of access among self-interested citizens in terms of joining and supporting groups. Self-interested citizens identify with others in their groups, and the common good is represented by the compromises in the bargaining forum. Participation has a largely “protective” function, and is basically designed to protect the citizens from arbitrary actions by the government.

In either the classical or contemporary perspectives which emphasize protection as the function of participation, it is neither necessary nor possible for citizens to engage each other in meaningful and important political discussion. The public sphere does not support such action, as it no longer (if, indeed, it ever did) provides an autonomous place in which private persons can discuss issues of public importance free from the pressures imposed by the market or the state (see Evans & Boyte (1986) and McAdam (1988)). The idealized public sphere “degenerates,” in Habermas’s words, as simultaneous stress from both its “private” and “public” nature forces a change in its political function. As the press, the preeminent institution of the mature public sphere, becomes commercialized and emerges as a forum not for public conversation but advertising, the character of the public sphere in the political realm more closely resembles the completely private realm of commodity exchange. On the other side, as it became clear that the state needed to guarantee political freedoms to maintain the independence of the public sphere, the exclusively private nature of the public sphere in the political realm was eliminated (Habermas 1989).

Habermas links the changing function of the press in relationship to the liberal public sphere both to its emergence as a commercial force, and, somewhat paradoxically, to the establishment of the right to a press free to publish critical commentary of the state. The press replaced the system of private correspondence and institutions of sociability (the salon, the coffee house, etc.) as the preeminent institutions of the public sphere once it acquired an editorial function – inserted between the gathering and the publication of news – and once the political functions of newspapers became as important as their economic purposes. As Habermas (1989, 183) explains, however, newspaper publishers “procured for the press a commercial basis without commercializing it:”

A press that had evolved out of the public’s use of its reason and that had merely been an extension of its debate remained thoroughly an institution of this very public: effective in the mode of a transmitter and amplifier, no longer a mere vehicle for the transportation of information but not yet a medium for culture as an object of consumption.

As long as the state contested the mere existence of a press that critically examined its actions, the press itself was involved in the ongoing “struggle over the range of freedom to be granted to public opinion and over publicity as a principle” (Habermas 1989, 184). Once the battle was won – that is, once the political public sphere was legally protected by the very state that contested its existence – the press was able to eschew ideology and concentrate on profit making. The trend of the press away from the idealized public sphere was only exacerbated by technological developments which required ever larger bases of capital to support the growing enterprises.

Habermas (1989, 192) rejects, however, the notion that the introduction of advertising into the publications of the public sphere did, in and of itself, transform the public sphere, laying the blame, at it were, on “public relations:”

Just as the daily newspapers roughly since the second third of the last century began to differentiate a classified section from the editorial one, so too a separation of the publicist functions (into a public rational-critical debate of private people as a public and a public presentation of either individual or collective private interests) could have left the public realm essentially untouched.

However, such a public sphere as an element in the economic realm split off, as it were, from the political one – a public sphere independent in provenance of commercial advertising – never reached the point of crystallization.

Rather, the publicist presentation of privileged private interests [public relations] was fused from the very start with political interests.

“Opinion management” is distinguished from advertising by the fact that it expressly lays claim to the public sphere as one that plays a role in the political realm. Private advertisements are always directed to other private people insofar as they are consumers; the addressee of public relations is “public opinion,” or the private citizens as the public and not directly as consumers. The sender of the message hides his business intentions in the role of someone interested in the public welfare. The influencing of consumers borrows its connotations from the classic idea of a public of private people putting their reason to use and exploits its legitimations for its own ends. The accepted functions of the public sphere are integrated into the competition of organized private interests (Habermas 1989).

As consequence of the dominance of the “sham” public sphere, it is difficult if not impossible to formulate a general will. Private persons believe that their actions in the degenerate public sphere, which resemble but do not represent deliberation, discussion and choice, contribute to responsible public opinion formation, as public relations “bestows on its object the authority of an object of public interest about which – this is the illusion to be created – the public of critically reflecting private people freely forms its opinion” (Habermas 1989, 194). However, with the public aspects of the public sphere stripped away, citizens are transformed into consumers, opinions into prejudices, and preferences into purchases; only the former have public consequences for state authority. The ability to formulate a general will has disappeared

precisely to the extent that the publicist self-presentations of privileged private interests’ have adopted the consensus-formation behavior of creating a (false) general interest through the techniques of public relations: because publicity for specific products is generated indirectly via the detour of a feigned general interest, [public relations] creates and not only solidifies the profile of the brand and a clientele of consumers but mobilizes for the firm or brand or for an entire system a quasi-political credit, a respect of the kind one displays toward public authority (Habermas 1989, 194).

The difficulty in formulating a general will can be tied to the lack of criteria for rationality in the reconstituted degenerate public sphere. Essentially, Habermas argues that the public sphere has been “refeudalized,” featuring a return to the

publicity of representation. In a publicity of representation, the authority of the presenter, rather than the merits of the argument presented, carry the day, as a “mood of conformity with publicly presented persons or personifications” passes for political discussion, and overtakes “intelligent criticism of publicly discussed affairs” (Habermas 1989, 195). This mood infects both the private sphere and the state, as the state must increasingly compete with the realm of commodity trading for opportunities for publicity; as commodity exchange is presented to people as choices made by citizens (through public relations, presentations of the general interest), the state increasingly addresses its citizens as consumers. Consequently, the forging of what passes for consensus results increasingly from bargaining and decreasingly from deliberation; trust and reason ebb as negotiation flows; and exchange replaces conversation as the dominant mode of settling political conflict. In what Stanley (1988, 2-3) terms the “liberal” regime:

citizenship is more peripheral in people’s lives than it is supposed to be in a fully democratic one. Advocates of both claim the centrality of ‘participation,’ but the accents are different. Liberal politics emphasizes as its constitutive act not civically pedagogical talk but rational adaptation to the logic of market forces, including acquiescence to policies and administrative practices justified in its name. This may or may not require conversation. Liberal politics sometimes celebrates silence, or what others might call apathy, on the ground that extreme participation is chaotic.

Ratifying broad choices made by elites is considered “participation” in the liberal public sphere. Conversation is limited to the presentation of policy alternatives, and deliberation within the ranges presented. Consensus in the liberal sphere is reached by clarifying the tradeoffs among options, and by engaging in “choice work” (Stanley 1988) wherein the values inherent in the alternatives presented are essentially ratified.

2.4 Dimensions of the Public Sphere

This chapter has contrasted two dominant images of the public sphere’s implementation in democratic societies. The vision of the idealized public sphere requires institutions which support democratic political conversation. The function

of such an idealized public sphere is to allow citizens to formulate, understand and comment on the public interest. For the citizens, the value of participating in the public sphere is to provide meaning to political life, determine the public interest, and filter alternative conceptions of the public good. Thus, the goal of discourse in the idealized public sphere is understanding, and discussion in the public sphere must move beyond articulation of interests, bargaining and persuasion.

In contrast, the vision of the liberal public sphere requires institutions which support liberal political conversation, which is generally limited to discussion among previously selected alternatives, and expression of private interests. The function of a liberal public sphere is to allow citizens to ratify the range of alternatives selected, and to select from within that range the option which best satisfies their private interests. For the citizens, the value of participating in the public sphere is to provide legitimacy to political life. Thus, the goal of discourse in the liberal public sphere is decision, and discussion in the public sphere ought not move beyond articulation of interests, bargaining and persuasion.

We have not yet taken on the task of specifying dimensions of the public sphere that can be translated into measures allowing us to determine the goodness of fit between an existing part of the public sphere and either the liberal or idealized vision. This section proposes and explicates four such dimensions: equality, diversity, reciprocity and quality. These dimensions are derived from the literature cited above concerning the origins and definition of the public sphere.

In the public sphere, “no barriers to the participation of interested parties should exist” (Dryzek 1990, 41). In this sense, we can think of Habermas’s (1992) contention that the emerging public sphere represented a transformation in the mode of exclusion of individuals from participating in the formation of the general will. An essential aspect of the public sphere is the creation of opportunities for all persons to participate in discussion (Post 1993). For a public institution to emerge, it had to be dedicated to the principle (if not the practice) of “inclusivity,” of allowing all persons to be able to participate. In this way, despite the relatively narrow participation by ordinary people, Habermas (1989, 38) contends that the public sphere – a transformative social category – arose in the early 18th century:

In relation to the mass of the rural population and the common ‘people’ in the towns, of course, the public ‘at large’ that was being formed was still extremely small. Elementary education, where it existed, was inferior. The proportion of illiterates, at least in Great Britain, even exceeded that of

the preceding Elizabethan epoch. Here, at the start of the eighteenth century, more than half the population lived on the margins of subsistence. The masses were not only largely illiterate but also so pauperized that they could not even pay for literature. They did not have at their disposal the buying power needed for even the most modest participation in the market of cultural goods. Nevertheless, with the emergence of the diffuse public formed in the course of the commercialization of cultural production, a new social category arose.

This notion of equality is supported by the model of access to the media advanced by Barron (1967), who argues that the First Amendment to the American constitution ought to be interpreted to protect the rights of all persons to gain access to the means of distributing and receiving information. This view was explicitly rejected by the United States Supreme Court in the 1972 *Tornillo* case, in which it held that the rights of those owning the media were paramount to the rights of those using the media (Schmidt 1976). Though Habermas is suspect of protections afforded the public sphere by the state, the lack of opportunities to contribute to the public sphere is evidence of its degeneration in this century. To measure this aspect of equality, an analysis of the distribution of computers and Internet access at the time of the study, and the distribution of competencies to use the technology, could have been performed. This aspect of equality is beyond the scope of the present work.

Equality can also be assessed by examining the relative treatment of individuals within the public sphere and their ascribed status. One aspect of equality of individuals within the public sphere is related to status. Habermas emphasized the equality of status among participants, suggesting that the institutions of the emerging public sphere were based on a disregard of status among the participants – if not in practice, at least in theory. Public sphere institutions “preserved a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether. The tendency replaced the celebration of rank with firm rules of equality” (Habermas 1989, 131). In Habermas’s conception of the bourgeois public sphere, however:

interlocutors would set aside such characteristics as differences in birth and fortune and speak to one another as if they were social and economic peers. The operative phrase here is ‘as if.’ In fact, social inequalities among the interlocutors were not eliminated but only bracketed. (Fraser 1992, 119).

While Fraser's argument that social equality is a necessary condition for participatory equality in the public sphere is an important corrective to Habermas's notion, the more general point remains. This equality of status among participants must apply so "that no one speaker (or group of speakers) could rightly monopolize the powers and means of assertion, disputation, and persuasion" (Keane 1984, 160):

The parity on whose basis along the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of social hierarchy, and in the end can carry the day meant, in the thought of the day, the parity of 'common humanity.' Private gentlemen made up the public not just in the sense that power and prestige of public office were held in suspense; economic dependencies also in principle had no influence. Laws of the market were suspended as were laws of the state" (Habermas 1989, 36)

Similarly, Mansbridge (Mansbridge 1983) suggests that equality is concerned with an equality of respect among members, or perhaps through an equality of respect for the ideas and values of its members.

Equality can also be assessed by reference to communicative competencies. Meaningful participation in the public sphere requires communicative competence (Dryzek 1990). Although inequality in the distribution of communicative competencies among participants in the public sphere was recognized by Habermas (1989), at least as it applies to participation in the earliest public sphere, the ideal if not the realization was adhered to. Barber (1984, 197) too is concerned with the distribution among citizens of the ability to reformulate and reconceptualize political ideas. One function of discussion in the public sphere, he suggests, is to allow ordinary citizens access to the power of defining key terms and concepts. "Democracy means above all equal access to language, and strong democracy means widespread and ongoing participation in talk by the entire citizenry."

The dimension of diversity is reflected in Habermas's (Habermas 1989) requirement that a full range of topics be considered in the public sphere. This is also the process of "denaturalization" suggested by Stanley (Stanley 1983), in which the political and social structure implied by the selection of topics and alternatives is revealed to participants, instead of remaining "hidden" or part of the "accepted" wisdom. In other words, there ought to be no boundaries on the possible alternatives considered in the public sphere. Habermas (Habermas 1989) notes the evolutionary progression of this view: as the market economy gradually came to produce and distribute works of philosophy, literature and art, the capitalist

orientation required information and discussion and topics which had been the monopoly of the Church and of the State gradually came to be interpreted through the institutions of the emerging public sphere. The fact that these institutions existed indicated that the State and the Church has effectively lost control over certain domains which previously were not subject to question, and suggest that the public, as constituted through these institutions, was beginning to determine the meaning of literature, art, economics and politics on its own through vigorous discussion and criticism.

Similarly, MacKuen (1990, 84) emphasizes the importance of a diversity of political views in order to produce public dialogue in which “individuals engage in political discussions with others who hold different viewpoints.” Dahl (1989, 339) too, notes that citizens must have access to information from a diverse group of sources in order for a democratic vision to be realized. A part of the first aspect of diversity is the range of views actually discussed in a public sphere. Opportunities to discuss any topics are not synonymous with having a full range of topics actually discussed. The idealized public sphere overcomes the “spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neuman 1984) that develops when individuals do not feel their views are acceptable in public discourse, and choose to keep silent rather than express them in the face of obvious opposition.

Reciprocity refers to the opportunities to gain knowledge of the perspectives of others, and the degree to which these opportunities are realized. Rucinski (1991, 189) identifies conditions of full and partial reciprocity:

Full, or symmetric, reciprocity occurs when all members of a collectivity know and understand the breadth of perspectives and their underlying interests existing in that social system. Partial reciprocity occurs in two primary ways: when all perspectives and underlying interests regarding a social/political issue are not known by all members of a collectivity; or when the perspectives are known, but the interests are not.

The level of reciprocity within a system can be assessed by examining the direction and degree of association between the range of perspectives and the corresponding underlying interests within a collectivity and the extent to which members jointly understand the viewpoints of others and the interests underlying those perspectives. Operationally, then, reciprocity is the ratio of perspectives and underlying interests known to the perspectives and underlying interests available across members of a collectivity.

This conceptualization of reciprocity subsumes three views of discourse expected to be produced in the idealized public sphere: practical, complex and what can be termed “reflective.” Practical discourse is discussion among equals about the general interest that transcends private interests and values (McCarthy 1992, McCarthy 1978). McCarthy suggests that Habermas has come to rely on “the variegated multiplicity of spontaneously formed publics engaged in informal discussions of issues of public interest” to form the “core of the democratic public sphere,” (McCarthy 1992, McCarthy 1978, 78) given the unlikelihood of reforming state-sponsored institutions to reflect democratic values. An important challenge to Habermas’s conception of practical discourse is made by McCarthy, calling into question the necessity of a desire for rational consensus as a “presupposition of argumentative discourse.” Habermas suggests that “rationally motivated agreement” is possible only in the cases of “strategically motivated compromise of interests” and “argumentatively achieved consensus on validity.” McCarthy, however, sketches out two additional scenarios in which political debate might “provide an alternative to open or latent coercion as a means of social coordination.” The first scenario, in which individuals have disagreements about the common good, participants disagree on what is in the general interest, rather than the competing particular interests. McCarthy suggests this is the case “in the multitude of situations where the preservation of traditional values conflicts with economic expansion.” For example, in a discussion about the granting of a new liquor license to an applicant, the underlying discussion may be less about the qualifications of the specific applicant and more about the character of the neighborhood, the morality of alcohol consumption and other questions concerned with the common good. In such cases, while Habermas would maintain that participants in political discussion would have to suppose that, in principle, it would be possible to convince or be convinced by good reason, McCarthy proposes that participants would merely have to realize that, should the lack of consensus on the common good become clear, rational argument would nevertheless make a significant contribution to the ultimate conclusion reached:

Rationally motivated agreement as a moral-political alternative to coercion may well involve elements of conciliation, compromise, consent, accommodation, and the like. Argument, including argument about what is in the general interest, can play a role in shaping any and all of them. And thus the expectation that they will figure in the outcome of political debate, as well as consensus in Habermas’s strict sense, can itself give sense to participants’ argumentative practices. The only supposition that seems necessary for the

genuine give and take of rational discourse is that the force of the better argument can contribute to the final shape of whatever type of agreement is reached (McCarthy 1992, 67).

In the second type of dispute described by McCarthy, participants disagree on the morality of norms; that is, at least one party argues that a specific action or state is binding on all human beings [as opposed to the first case, in which the dispute centered on what was good for a particular and specific political community]. McCarthy cites as examples disputes concerning abortion, euthanasia, pornography and animal rights. “For example, what one party considers to be a moral issue, another party may regard as a pragmatic issue or as a question of values open to choice or as a moral issue of another sort, or the opposing parties may agree on the issue but disagree as to the morally correct answer.” McCarthy questions the likelihood of agreement in the democratic public sphere on these types of issues, claiming instead that disagreements are “likely to be a permanent feature” of discourses “not resolvable by strategic compromise, rational consensus or ethical self-clarification.” Under Habermas’s model, there is no discursive resolution possible, and another form of coercion is necessary. McCarthy “rescues” the possibility of rationally motivated agreements in the cases of moral disputes by suggesting that participants might, under conditions in which the disputatious party accepts the justness of the basic political arrangements, rationally enter into debate and ultimately agree to what they regard as an immoral solution in the hopes that they will, in the future, “be able to use the same [discursive] resources eventually to change them.”

Another aspect of reciprocity includes what Barber (1984) might have termed “reflective” political talk. Barber postulates a hierarchy of political talk functions, ranging from those associated with what he termed “thin” democracy to those more likely to be found in conversations supportive of “strong” democracies:

(T)alk is not mere speech. Talk has been at the root of the Western idea of politics since Aristotle identified logos as the peculiarly human and peculiarly social faculty that divided the human species from animals otherwise defined by similar needs and faculties. (Political talk) always involves listening as well as speaking, feeling as well as thinking, and acting as well as reflecting (Barber 1984, 178).

Barber’s functions of political talk include the notions of exploring mutuality, affection and affiliation, maintaining autonomy, witness and self-expression, reformulation and reconceptualization, and community building. Exploring mutuality

involves “(e)xplore the common context, traits, circumstances, or passions that make of two [or more] separate identities one single we” (Barber 1984, 184). Barber suggests that exploring mutuality allows individuals, constituted as citizens, to expand the possibilities of action. Quoting Michael Oakeshott (1962), Barber (1984, 183) discusses the “dialectical” and transformative characteristics of talk:

In conversation, 'facts' appear only to be resolved once more into the possibilities from which they were made: 'certainties' are shown to be combustible, not by being brought into contact with other 'certainties' or with doubts, but by being kindled by the presence of ideas of another order' approximations are revealed between notions normally remote from one another. Thoughts of different species take wing and play around one another, responding to each other's movements and provoking one another to fresh exertion.

Conversation, again quoting Oakeshott, is “not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit” nor a “context where a winner gets a prize,” but only “an unrehearsed intellectual adventure (Oakeshott 1962, 130).

In addition, political talk ought also to enable citizens to develop feelings of affection and affiliation with one another, to “express and reinforce the daily structures of common life” (Barber 1984, 184). Here, Barber is directing attention to the use of “emotive expression” through “tone, color, volume and inflection” in conversation that allows participants to express feelings and other sensory information. In addition, the function of affection and affiliation includes the use of conversation for ritual speech (“greetings and good-byes, prayers and incantations, exclamations and expletives, all of which in their banality and conventionality”). Barber (1984, 190) further identifies political talk as reciprocal by focusing on that which allows individuals to “reencounter, reevaluate, and repossess the beliefs, principles, and maxims on the basis of which we exert our will in the political realm [and thus to] retest and repossess our convictions.” Among all the functions of talk, Barber suggests that maintaining autonomy is the least amenable to representation. By engaging other citizens in discussion of political issues, Barber suggests, citizens can come to reinforce their own views as well as develop understanding of others' views. A function of political talk closely related to the maintenance of autonomy is what Barber terms “witness.”

“Here the function of talk is to allow people to vent their grievances or frustration or opposition, not in hopes of moving others but in order to give

public status to their strongly held personal convictions. The cry of 'In spite of all, I believe' is the hallmark of such usage" (Barber 1984, 192).

The expression of dissenting voices, even after a "decision" has been reached, allows issues considered important to at least some element of the public to be kept on the political agenda. Finally, Barber argues that all political talk ought to "converge toward a single, crucial end – the development of a citizenry capable of genuinely public thinking and political judgment and thus able to envision a common future in terms of genuinely common goods."

What links these various functions of political talk together is their reflectivity, or reciprocity. All are focused on providing participants in discourse with access to the positions of other citizens, and with providing participants the tools necessary to understand the positions of others.

An idealized public sphere must, in addition to satisfying the conditions of equality, diversity and reciprocity, be a certain quality as well. The quality of the discourse in the public sphere is an indicator of its closeness to the idealized vision put forth by Habermas (1989), who described the classical bourgeois public sphere of the 17th and 18th century as focused on rational-critical argument. The defining characteristics of rational-critical argument are that the merits of the argument, not the characteristics of the arguer, carry the day. For an argument to be evaluated on the basis of its merits, though, it must be of a certain quality. Political discourse – the reasoning that people do together in attempts to resolve questions of concern – requires some minimum levels of knowledge (Neuman 1990), deliberative abilities (Fishkin 1991) and cognitive skills (Tetlock 1985). Further, high quality political discourse requires that individuals with these talents make use of them in their public interactions with other citizens (Habermas 1996).

One of the factors that distinguishes political discourse from ordinary discourse is that in the former, a group of people is engaged in attempts to resolve a problem; their discussion is not the end in itself, but a means to an end. Yet, at the same time, the people involved are likely to have different visions of justice and the public good (Gutmann & Thompson 1996). Quality in public sphere discourse can also be measured by the degree to which participants manage to come together and find common ground in their deliberations and discussions.

Finally, the tension between high quality discourse and inclusivity should be realized. As Calhoun (1992, 3) emphasizes, the quality of discourse in the public sphere may actually be reduced by the degree to which a public sphere is open

to participation by all. In other words, a may to focus on quality may preclude entire classes of people from participation. The tension is reflected in Kant's notions of "subtle reasoners," and the actual inhabitants of the early bourgeois public spheres – mainly educated, propertied men – who "conducted a discourse not only exclusive of others but prejudicial to the interests of those excluded. Yet the transformations of the public sphere that Habermas describes turn largely on its continual expansion to include more and more participants (as well as on the development of large scale social organizations as mediators of individual participation)." Habermas claims that it was this "inclusivity" that ultimately leads to a degeneration in the quality of the discourse.

2.5 The Informal Public Sphere

In *Between Facts and Norms* (1996), Habermas differentiates between the deliberative or formal zone of the public sphere, and its nondeliberative or informal counterpart, a distinction he suggests (307) is lacking in other accounts of deliberative democracy.¹ Distinctions between the two zones can be made in terms of their functions and the criteria by which equality, diversity, reciprocity and quality can be determined. This section will examine the two zones of the public sphere, and suggest mechanisms for determining the degree to which both satisfy the demands of the idealized public sphere.

The deliberative, formal zone of the public sphere incorporates the legislatures and assemblies in which elected or appointed representatives serve. Formal procedures govern the conduct of citizen interaction within these arenas, and the product of their deliberations is usually legislation or some other formally structured method of implementing what is perceived to be the public will. The deliberative bodies are structured to generate cooperative solutions to political questions. The procedures are designed to facilitate "justifying the selection of a problem and the choice among competing proposals for solving it" (Habermas 1996, 307). In Barber's (1984) terms, the functions of political talk in deliberative zones are bargaining and persuasion.

¹For example, Habermas (1996, 307) argues that the view of deliberative democracy advanced by Cohen (1993) is "silent about the relation between decision-oriented deliberations, which are regulated by *democratic procedures*, and the informal processes of opinion-formation in the public sphere."

By contrast, the nondeliberative zones provide opportunities for exploring mutuality, agenda-setting and affiliation and community-building (Barber 1984). These informal ² zones include the associations and organizations which comprise what Fraser (1992) termed “weak publics.”³ , including organizations representing group interests, associations and cultural establishments, public interest groups, and churches and charitable organizations. These associations, which “specialize in issues and contributions and are generally designed to generate public influence, belong to the civil-social infrastructure of a public sphere dominated by the mass media.” Habermas does not include those “third places” (Oldenburg 1989) or “free spaces” (Evans & Boyte 1986) or “micromobilization contexts” (McAdam 1988) – autonomous place in which private persons can discuss issues of public importance free from the pressures imposed by the market or the state – which represent the primary opportunity for citizens to converse with other citizens. These places – the 20th century equivalent of the much-celebrated *salon society* – also belong to the informal zone of the public sphere.

Inside these informal zones, public opinion comes into being and first acquires its shape. Informal zones “develop more or less spontaneously,” suggests Habermas, and lack a formal structure. As such, the informal public sphere has certain advantages over its more formal counterparts:

Here new problem situations can be perceived more sensitively, discourses aimed at achieving self-understanding can be conducted more widely and expressively, collective identities and need interpretations can be articulated with fewer compulsions than is the case in procedurally regulated public spheres. (Habermas 1996, 307-308)

Here, Habermas is suggesting that the informal public sphere is more likely to provide opportunities for reflexive or reciprocal political talk (Barber 1984). As Barber (1984) suggests, a strong democracy requires political talk that fulfills these functions. Habermas supports this view:

²Habermas (1996, 314, 485) refers to the “general” public sphere in his text, but indexes the concept as the “informal” public sphere, a labelling that will be used here.

³A weak public is one “whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formation and does not also encompass decision making. . . . the bourgeois conception seems to imply that an expansion of such publics’ discursive authority to encompass decision making as well as opinion making would threaten the autonomy of public opinion, for then the public would effectively become the state, and the possibility of a critical discursive check on the state would be lost” (Fraser 1992, 134).

Democratically constituted opinion- and will-formation depends on the supply of informal public opinion that, ideally, develop in structures of an un-subverted political public sphere. The informal public sphere must, for its part, enjoy the support of a societal basis in which equal rights of citizenship have become socially effective. Only in an egalitarian public of citizens that has emerged from the confines of class and thrown off the millennia-old shackles of social stratification and exploitation can the potential of an unleashed cultural pluralism fully develop – a potential that no doubt abounds just as much in conflicts as in meaning-generating forms of life. (Habermas 1996, 307-308)

It is thus equally necessary that both the formal and informal zones of the public sphere be connected to the other systems of society. The informal zone connects to the formal zone by providing opportunities for citizens to engage each other in political discourse, to expand the boundaries of possible solutions to contentious issues, and to allow for opinion-formation to take place in a non-coercive environment free from the constraints of the market.

Contrasts between the formal and informal zones of the public sphere can also be drawn in terms of the requirements of equality, diversity, reciprocity and quality. Equality is achieved through a balance in representation and access to representatives in the formal zone. In the informal public sphere, equality is achieved with equal access to speaking opportunities. Diversity requires a fair and open presentation of competing viewpoints in the formal zone; in the informal zone, flexibility in presentation styles and modalities matching the varied skills and experiences of the participants (Dahl 1985) is necessary. In addition, diversity in the informal zone can be achieved through flexibility in the boundaries of the public sphere: contracting at times of low interest, expanding at times of high interest. Reciprocity in the formal zone is established by demonstrating an understanding of the views of others; in contrast, reciprocity in the informal zone is focused on acknowledging the legitimacy of the views of others. Finally, quality in the formal zone is based on the ability to reach a decision; while in the informal zone, quality is established by a focus of the discussion on the topic at hand.

Chapter 3

Technology & the Public Sphere

This chapter discusses the relationship between communication technology and the public sphere, with a particular emphasis on technologies enabling computer mediated discussion. Section 3.1 explores the relationship between communication technology and the shape of the public sphere. Section 3.2 on page 47 discusses the technology and practice of computer mediated communication. The origins and character of Usenet is examined in Section 3.3 on page 51. Section 3.4 on page 54 focuses on the the social and political structure of Usenet.

3.1 Technology and the Shape of the Public Sphere

Policies governing communication technologies have long given at least rhetorical support to the view that fostering the development of technologies providing open access and a diversity of voices would promote the emergence of a public sphere supporting democratic values. In the 19th century, discussions of postal policy justified the creation of a national infrastructure and below-cost rates to facilitate communication among citizens and between citizens and their government (U. S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment 1990). In the late 1830s and early 1840s, the initial foray of the government into telegraphy was in part justified by the view that democracy required citizen interaction (Schneider 1988).

Similar support for democratic communication is found through the first six decades of the 20th century. With respect to telephony, the United States government valued universal service to all citizens more than it valued competitive service. AT&T's emergence as a national monopoly was predicated at least in part in the belief in the democratic potential of the telephone network (U. S. Congress, House of Representatives 1939). In broadcasting, the presence of local voices in the spectrum was valued more highly than the number of voices; trade-offs were made in spectrum allocation that resulted in each home being able to receive fewer local channels rather than a greater number of national channels (Noll, Peck & McGowan 1973, McChesney 1993). Additionally, in policy decisions concerning cable television, the commitment to democratic communication was exhibited in requirements for local access and locally-originated programming (Pool 1983). This is especially noteworthy in the debate on proper levels of "media access", in which some argue that economic and political structure are responsible for the democratic character of the public sphere (Barron 1967, Caristi 1988).

More recently the utopian ideal of democratic communication has been present in the debates considering the "national information infrastructure" (United States, Office of the President 1993) and computer networks (Fisher, Margolis & Resnick 1994, Surman 1994*b*, Surman 1994*a*). Twenty-five years of discussion concerning the structure of computer networks, starting with Sackman & Nie (1970), has been infused with the ideal that, if properly constructed, a democratic public sphere will emerge; this is the common thread linking Kapor's (Kapor 1994) "Jeffersonian" information policy and Dyson, et al's (Dyson, Gilder, Keyworth & Toffler 1994) *Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age*.

Much of the policy debate adopts the model of "soft-technological determinism" advocated by Pool (1983), who suggests we pay attention to both the generic qualities of technologies, which influence the way they are used, as well as the institutional environment into which technologies are introduced. Echoing these sentiments, Neuman (1991, 18) writes:

The evolution and uses of some new technologies (and the failures of others) are not exclusively due to the nature of the technology or the nature of the economic or cultural system into which it is introduced, but rather reflect the interactions of these factors

The "new media" literature based on this model focuses on the features which differentiate the emerging participatory forms of communication from the traditional

mass media (see Ganley (1992), Neuman (1991), Rice (1984) and Abramson, Arterton & Orren (1988)), and implies that the structural characteristics of media are related to the democratic character of communication within them. Abramson, Arterton & Orren (1988) list six properties in their chapter, “What’s New About the New Media?” while Neuman (1991) identifies nine “Generic Properties of the New Media.”

Some of the characteristics suggest a maintenance of the existing structure of relationships among participants in communicative exchanges, albeit at a decreasing cost, increasing volume, increasing content diversity and increasing speed. Vast shifts in the volume of information, the rapidity with which it moves, or the financial resources which it requires are not the engine of change driving the most significant new uses of media technology. If the revolution in media use was to be described with one word, that word would have to be “control.” Beniger (1986) has it right when he locates the change mechanism during the past 150 years in the “control revolution.” Without major shifts in control over media and information, all of the developments discussed above would have resulted in mere extensions of the old media.

Neuman (1991) and Abramson, Arterton & Orren (1988) examine separately developments in “user” control and “producer” control. The most important development in the revolution of control in media is what Smith (1980, 21) has labeled as a shift in sovereignty: “In computer-controlled information systems the sovereignty over the text moves from the supplier of information to the controller of the technology.” With this sovereignty comes unprecedented control over receiving, collecting, storing, formatting, processing and distributing information (Schneider 1990).

It is in describing the use of media technology that the separate powers of consumer and producer control become obvious. When the technology being discussed is a distribution medium, the producer has access to vastly increased control mechanisms. The ability to target a specific audience is a form of producer control greatly expanded in the new media environment (Abramson, Arterton & Orren 1988, Neuman 1991). By transmitting a message to a preselected audience on the basis of facts or perceptions of specific individuals – in essence, creating an audience or a public for a specific message – the producer presumably is exercising a greater degree of control over the information than by transmitting the same message to an undifferentiated, heterogeneous mass audience. The audience begins to look less and less like the traditional audience for mass com-

munications (Wright 1975). Producers have an increased ability to specify the recipients of specific pieces of information, and to send messages to smaller and smaller groups of people (Abramson, Arterton & Orren 1988). In addition, feedback mechanisms built into much of the new media give communicators a better sense of the audiences' response (Neuman 1991). Of course, this feedback shares the characteristics of all information in the new environment: it is bigger, faster and cheaper than previously available feedback information.

When the technology being discussed is primarily used for the reception and processing of messages, it is the consumer who has access to vastly increased control mechanisms. Abramson, Arterton & Orren (1988) refer to the increased consumer control as "the democratization of information," suggesting perhaps that the consumer is now able to approach the communication transaction with power equal to the producer. Of course, as Abramson, Arterton & Orren (1988) themselves admit, the ultimate power in the communication relationship resides in the receiver's continued ability to reject or block incoming messages (that this does not necessarily need to be the case is amply demonstrated by Orwell in 1984). "Technology has not yet overcome the public's prerogative to receive or reject information" (Abramson, Arterton & Orren 1988, 50).

The emergence of the new "personal" media have profound implications for the public sphere. Consider Ganley's (1992, 2-3) lament about traditional media:

Until a few decades ago, the media were basically the mass media – the newspaper, magazine and book publishers, radio broadcasters, movie and record producers, and that post-World War II newcomer, television. Even in the most liberal democracies, *because of the lack of technical means and/or prohibitive costs*, individuals and small groups had few and quite laborious methods of expression, and the scope of these was sorely limited. . . . Such limitations were relative, and individuals have always used whatever means were available to conduct important political acts throughout history. . . . But with some power exceptions, personal opinions have generally found smallish audiences which, of necessity, have often been local. Technological and financial constraints have normally meant that only governments, large organizations, and the mass media have had access to the means to produce and distribute substantial amounts of idea-containing materials.

The advent of personal media has the potential to shift the balance between user and producer control, Among the many media she cites – citizen's band radios,

audio cassette recorders, video cassette recorders, direct-dial phones, personal fax machines, personal computers and laser printers, cellular telephones – there is one technology that has the most potential to significantly alter the nature of discourse in the public sphere: computer mediated discussion. This technology is discussed in the following section.

3.2 Computer mediated Discussion

Computer mediated discussion is a specific form of computer mediated communication (CMC). CMC can be defined as “the use of a computer to create, address, route, distribute, or receive messages sent from one individual to another, from a group to an individual, from an individual to a group, or from one group to another group”(Murphy 1994). CMC can be either synchronous or asynchronous (Walther 1992). These specifications of CMC blend a variety of communication modes by emphasizing the computer aspect of the communication; if we were to follow a similar strategy in defining, say, print communication as the use of paper and ink to exchange of messages between individuals or groups, we would be unable to distinguish between letter writing and newspaper publishing. To avoid these difficulties, it is essential to distinguish *computer mediated discussion* from other types of CMC. Rice (1984, 131) suggested the following as a definition of computer mediated discussion:

computer facilitated mechanism for recording and using a textual transcript of a group discussion over varying lengths of time, by group members who may be geographically dispersed and who may interact with the transcript either simultaneously or at times of their own choosing.

This definition highlights the dimensions of time, geography and asynchronicity, and does not impose the restraints suggested by a traditional definition of discussion (Shank 1993). It is instructive, however, to concentrate on the notion of *group* implied in this definition. In the first place, the discussion is said to be *group* discussion, and the participants in the discussion are said to be *group members*. Computer mediated discussion, especially in the variation distributed by Usenet (see 3.3 on page 51) and examined in this work, does not support the logic of group in the traditional sense of the word, and certainly rejects the notion

of group *membership*. A person becomes a participant in the discussion by, in Rice's words, interacting with the transcript. However, there is not necessarily a record of having done so, and neither entry to nor exit from the discussion is necessarily a public event of which others would be aware. Individuals can interact with the transcript by reading the words of others without leaving evidence of their actions.¹ Furthermore, the notion of membership suggests some level of commitment to the group as a whole.

The group, constituted as a structure that exists in the minds of its members, does not necessarily exist. Further, to the extent that such identification does exist, it is not necessary that there be any commitment on the part of the participants. This results in the following reworked definition of computer mediated discussion:

Computer mediated discussion is a computer-facilitated mechanism for recording and using a textual transcript of a series of messages written by more than one individual over varying lengths of time, with participation by individuals who may be geographically dispersed, and who may interact with the transcript either simultaneously or at times of their own choosing.

Computer mediated discussion is technologically simple (Krol 1992) and linguistically complex (Bolter 1989, Bolter 1991, Ferrara, Brunner & Whittemore 1991, Ess 1993, Shank 1993).² The most familiar analogy to the non-computer world is a physical bulletin board in a common area. An individual happening by the bulletin board might decide one day to "post" a message, addressed to no one in particular, about a specific subject. Another individual happening by might read the posting, and decide to post a reply to the original message, and/or to post a message of their own. A third individual happening by might read all the postings, and reply as desired. The first individual might happen by a few days later, and respond to the responders, and add a new posting on a different subject. And so

¹Technically speaking, this is not true, as most systems have the capacity to track the actions of their users. This violates the spirit of privacy that most users expect, however, and would at any rate generate a set of "footprints" that would be visible only to the local system administrator, and not necessarily to other "members" of the group. (Johnson & Snapper 1985, Krol 1992).

²See also Herring (1993), Kiesler, Seigel & McGuire (1984), McCormick & McCormick (1992), Smith & Balka (1991), and Rafaeli (1986). Early descriptions of computer mediated discussion (sometimes called computer conferencing) appear in Hiltz & Turoff (1978), Johansen, Vallee & Spangler (1979), Rice (1980), Kerr & Hiltz (1982), Rice (1984), Hiltz (1984), Kiesler, Seigel & McGuire (1984), Rafaeli (1986), Johansen (1988) Smith & Balka (1991), McCormick & McCormick (1992), and Herring (1993).

it goes: individuals can enter or leave the “discussion” at any time, responding to both recent and not-so-recent messages, starting new threads in the discussion. In this example, the size of the discussion would be limited by the physical dimensions of the bulletin board and the participants would be limited to those who physically happened by the board. The computerized version is very similar, with the “physical” location of the board replaced by one or many physical locations in a network of computers who are connected to each other, and the “physical” location of the participants replaced by their presence on a computer that can access the board. The size of the discussion is limited by the much-less constraining limitations of the network, and the participants are limited to the much-less constraining limitations of the number of network users.

Although the use of computers for discussion is a relatively recent phenomenon, scholars have begun systematic investigations of its characteristics. Some have examined the relationship between access to information and the distribution of power in society, suggesting that computer-mediated discussion could ease differential access, distribute power more broadly and thus lead to greater democratization (Stallabrass 1995, Jacobson 1993, Stallabrass 1995). Others, mostly concerned with educational applications, have noted the potential to foster creativity and cooperation among participants while recognizing the limitations of electronic space (Perrone, Repenning, Spencer & Ambach 1996, Acker 1995, McCormick & McCormick 1992, Kiesler, Seigel & McGuire 1984). The absence of social cues to status and gender have raised issues concerning the possibilities of creating more democratic communication (Savicki, Lingenfelter & Kelley 1996, Herring 1993). The relationship between engaging in computer mediated discussion and other forms of participation have been examined by (Fisher, Margolis & Resnick 1994).

Linguistic models of communication provide a framework for distinguishing various forms of computer mediated discussion. The fundamental model of linguistic communication, what Shank (1993) described as the “paragon of language-in-use” is the conversation (Fiske 1982, Saussure 1959, Schegloff 1972). A conversation is characterizable by its organization and activities (Levinson 1983, Murray 1991). Three general types of conversations have been identified: the monologue, the dialogue and the discussion (Shank 1993, Levinson 1983, Winograd & Flores 1986). A monologue involves one message sender and multiple, passive receivers. A dialogue involves two participants taking turns and exchanging roles as sender and receiver. A discussion involves a single person who starts as the sender and retains control of the conversation, with multiple receivers, some of whom rotate (with the initiator) the role of the sender. While computer mediated

communication can support any of these models (Murray 1991), none of them fully describe the activity in which the participants are engaged (Shank 1993).

In addition, semiotic models of communication, such as that offered by Derrida (1976), emphasize the usage of signs rather than speech as the primary communicative act, and thus account for written (textual) and other physical representations of meaning through symbolic exchange. However, computer mediated communication poses a challenge to linguistic and textual models, as it appears to combine the organizational and activities-based nature of the conversation with the written (rather than spoken) context of the text. Shank (1993) suggests a new model of sign communication:

We have the starter, or the initial sender, who starts the 'thread'. Once a thread has been started though, it is no longer under sender control. This is because the mechanics of Net response do not require turn taking. It is as if everyone who is interested in talking can all jump in at once, but still their individual voices can be clearly heard. It is as if someone had started writing a piece, but before he/she gets too far, people are there magically in print to add to, correct, challenge, or extend the piece. Therefore, what we have is a written quasi- discussion that has the potential to use the strengths of each form. I think it is best to call this form of communication 'multiloguing'(Shank 1993).

Computer mediated discussion may take on characteristics of a conversational discussion, in which a single person retains control of the conversation, or it may take on characteristics of Shank's (1993) 'multilogue'. Both kinds of discussions can currently be found on a variety of computer networks, including some moderated "newsgroups" on Usenet (see Section 3.3 on the next page), as well as a number of commercial services, such as America OnLine. The form of discussion referred to above as a "multilogue" is found within the "unmoderated" newsgroups on Usenet, as well as many independent bulletin boards.

3.3 Usenet: An Arena Of Computer Mediated Discussion

One of the most extensive collections of ongoing computer mediated discussions is Usenet (Nickerson 1992, Hauben 1995).³ Usenet links tens of thousands of computers and millions of users through a series of discussions called newsgroups. As of January, 1995, the best available measures estimated the total number of Usenet readers to be more than 11 million people worldwide (Reid 1994a). The average amount of traffic carried per day on Usenet totaled 127,446 messages, or 586.4 megabytes.

A brief explanation of what a newsgroup is may be helpful to some readers.⁴ This is best done by analogy to familiar media. One of the many features we use to differentiate some media messages from others is addressability. Addressability, as a feature of a specific message, concerns the specificity of the intended recipient. Some traditional media require specific addresses to be delivered: telephone calls are routed to specific telephone lines; personal letters are routed to specific mailboxes. Other traditional media do not require specific addresses: broadcast television and radio programs are accessible by tuning into a specific frequency. finally, some media are produced without a specific addressee in mind (books, newspapers, junk mail), but require specific addresses for delivery (i.e. many copies of identical messages are delivered to identifiable recipients). Computer mediated communication (see Section 3.2 on page 47) has the same types of messages. Fully addressed messages are called electronic mail. Individuals receive mail from others that is specifically addressed to them, or by virtue of being on a mailing list to which they have subscribed. Subscribing to a mailing list is analogous to subscribing to a magazine, while a newsgroup is analogous to broadcast television.

Unlike electronic mail, which requires a user to open her mailbox to retrieve, newsgroups require users to “turn on the set” and “tune into a specific channel.” The set is typically a computer system (as opposed to a personal computer) shared by many users. Though individuals might use a personal computer to connect to the system, they are unlikely to directly access newsgroups on these devices.

³Usenet is a shorthand reference to “Unix User Network,” and now generally refers to the collection of newsgroups distributed on a variety of computer networks (Hardy 1993).

⁴For a more detailed description, see Krol (1992).

Instead, users use a client-host architecture to access newsgroups. A user instructs her machine to connect to another computer, which has stored Usenet postings for a period of time (the amount of time varies from site to site, and even from newsgroup to newsgroup). Most users use newsreading software which organizes the postings by their “heading”, typically displaying the date and author of the post. The user then indicates that she would like to see the full text of a specific article, and the server then sends the file to the client. The user may then read, store, reply through electronic mail, post a follow-up article or start a new subject heading with a new posting.

The fundamental unit of a newsgroup is the “post” or “article.” Figure 3.1 on the next page annotates portions of article. Each article is written by a single, identifiable user. Every newsgroup article has a “From” field in its header containing the email address of the sender or author.⁵ The article is assigned a unique identification number (message ID), which can then be used by other authors as a point of reference. Every article also has a subject heading, which permits organization of the newsgroup by “thread” or subject. Articles contain both “included” text, taken from previous articles to maintain continuity, and “original text,” written by the author of the 2fpost.

Usenet is extraordinarily large and diverse; for example, during the month of January, 1995, an estimated 11 million individuals from more than 300,000 sites⁶ had access to an average of 125,000 new messages *per day*, distributed across about 7,500 different newsgroups. The range of topics addressed by Usenet newsgroups can be assessed by a brief look at the conventions for naming groups. Newsgroups always have a name that includes at least two words separated by a period. The first word indicates the classification, and the second and subsequent word further identifies the group. Currently, there are seven types of Usenet groups: (1) *comp* groups discuss computer science, software, hardware, systems and the computing profession; (2) *sci* groups include discussions of a technical nature related to a specific science or discipline; (3) *news* groups are concerned with Usenet news administrative issues; (4) *soc* groups are addressed to socializing and social issues; (5) *rec* groups are dedicated to recreational topics; (6) *talk* groups are, as their name implies, intended for people talk about various topics; and (7) *misc* groups include those which do not fit into other categories (Spafford 1994). In addition,

⁵At least in theory. There are accusations of forged posting frequently in Usenet.

⁶A “site” is a computer which is receiving a “newsfeed,” and could be a University, corporation, Internet Service Provider, Community v Computer Network or the like.

Figure 3.1: Structure of a Newsgroup Post

Portions from talk.abortion<1993Oct20.153735.18817@acd4.acd.com>

<p>Header information, telling us who the message is from, their email address, the subject as assigned by the author, a unique message identification number, the date of the message, and the number of lines of text (some header information has been deleted) The inclusion of a "Re:" in the subject line indicates that the author is responding to a previous message with the same subject.</p>	<p>From: wdo@TEFS1.acd.com (Bill Overpeck) Subject: Re: The inconsistency of "pro-life" Christians Message-ID: <1993Oct20.153735.18817@acd4.acd.com> Date: Wed, 20 Oct 1993 15:37:35 GMT Lines: 186</p>
<p>This text is usually generated by the newreader program. It sets up a series of "references" which the readers may choose to follow. From this material, we know that text beginning with a single } was written by "rocker" in the previous message (2a05jf\$ovq@usenet.rpi.edu); text which begins with two }} symbols was written by Bill Overpeck in message <1993Oct18.181625.28043@acd4.acd.com>; text which begins with }}} was written by Kevin Kelly in message <29rnm2\$p6v@hermes.acs.ryerson.ca>.</p>	<p>In (2a05jf\$ovq@usenet.rpi.edu) rocker@acm.rpi.edu (rocker) writes: } In <1993Oct18.181625.28043@acd4.acd.com> wdo@TEFS1.acd.com (Bill Overpeck) writes: }} In <29rnm2\$p6v@hermes.acs.ryerson.ca> kkelly@acs.ryerson.c (Kevin Kelly) writes: }}} Bill Overpeck (wdo@TEFS1.acd.com) wrote: }}}</p>
<p>From the material above, we know that this text was originally written by Bill Overpeck (the author of this message).</p>	<p>}}}} I think there are a great many sociological implications for a society }}}} that tacitly endorses abortion. My opinion.</p>
<p>In a previous message, Kevin Kelly has included the above text from Overpeck's original message, and added this comment.</p>	<p>}}}) I interested to know what these implications are.</p>
<p>This was Overpeck's response to Kelly's question in a previous message. So far, none of this text has been typed specifically for this message by the author Overpeck.</p>	<p>}}}) I believe (again, my opinion) that the legalization of }}) abortion represents a cultural and political endorsement }}) of the procedure.</p>
<p>"Rocker" joined the conversation in the previous message, seeking clarification of Overpeck's response to Kelly's question.</p>	<p>}Do you believe that the First Amendment represents a cultural and }political endoresment of Nazi marches?</p>
<p>This is the first original material in the message, written by Overpeck in response to Rocker's question. The "included" material is kept by the author for readability and context. In this study, only original material is analyzed.</p>	<p>No more than I believe the Second Amendment tacitly endorses shooting people.</p>

an “alternative” naming hierarchy exists to include the “unofficial” newsgroups, including the *alt* (alternative) groups.

3.4 The Social and Political Structure of Usenet

There is a small but growing literature focused on Usenet as an object of study. This literature addresses three broad themes.

1. The organizational structure of Usenet is examined by Durlack & O’Brien (1989), Hardy (1993) and Hauben (1995a). In these studies, Usenet is found to share characteristics of anarchies, cooperatives and a democracies.
2. The social structural characteristics of newsgroups and Usenet is explored in a number of studies. MacKinnon (1992) and (1995) examines the nature of censorship and control by participants within Usenet newsgroups. His findings and model are tested by Overby (1996). North (1994) assesses the degree to which Usenet can be thought of as a distinct society or culture. McLaughlin, Osborne & Smith (1995) examines codes of conduct within newsgroups.
3. The relationship between Usenet and political institutions like the “commons” and other public spaces is the focus of a series of essays by Hauben (1995, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d).

The various means of self-governance within the Internet are described by Hardy (1993). Social status in Internet culture is dependent on length of time or experience on the network, rather than age. Policies, as well as emotions, are communicated. While Net communication may appear to be random and uncontrolled, Hardy (1993) illustrates that the democratic nature of the Net allows many voices (and the reactions to such voices) to be heard without an mediating administrator. He argues that the social behaviors evident on the Internet makes Usenet culture a democratic means of communication. He states that, “Usenet traditionally has been a very open free-speech forum.” Argument is not only tolerated, but is in fact, a very important part of Usenet. Rather than the Usenet being an anarchy, Hardy (1993) argues that “flaming” is an “important means of social constraint.”

Further, Hardy (1993) demonstrates how Internet culture is both transformed by and is transforming software to facilitate using the Internet. New technology has created a mode of communication formerly unheard of and made it imitate real life social interaction (such as software allowing “threads” so that both participants and viewers can simultaneously follow ongoing conversations.) Usenet’s “free-form” speech allows for a variety of topics and opinions, while at the same time offering each individual in the community an opportunity to not only voice their opinion, but contribute to the administration and control of the conversation.

Similarly, Hauben (1995) notes that Usenet’s uncommercialized nature allows users a mode of communication and discussion unencumbered by the commercial exploitation evident in traditional modes of mass media. By comparison, Hauben (1995) notes that Usenet is an “uncensored forum for debate – where many sides of any issue come into view.” Usenet empowers people to bring to the world their observations and opinions. Hauben (1995) agrees with Hardy (1993) that Usenet allows people the ability to work together to create social restrictions and boundaries, rather than having these restrictions imposed by an outside authority.

Overby (1996) cites the ability of the individual to completely control his or her identity within the Usenet environment. People who use computer mediated forms of communication are not restricted by the many social cues apparent in face-to-face contact. These social cues in face-to-face contact often act as invisible boundaries that separate acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Without such restrictions, Overby (1996) finds that people behave in Usenet newsgroups and Internet chat sessions in ways which would not generally be acceptable in face-to-face encounters. As participants attempt to deal with such behaviors, they find “ideas of authority and freedom in opposition” when compared to how such behaviors would be dealt with in the real life. Users are dependent on the cycle of statement and response and “the community is maintained through rules of netiquette, which serve to reinforce self-control and self-consciousness.”

By evaluating various definitions of society and culture which make universal claims such as “every society” or “all cultures,” North (1994) concludes that the Internet cannot be viewed as an independent society, but rather as a superstructural society. However, North (1994) asserts that the Internet does “support a distinct culture of its own.” He writes that the Internet cannot exist as a subculture of one particular society, but rather exists in a symbiotic relationship with many mainstream societies. He illustrates that Internet culture shares many elements of mainstream cultures.

In his chapter titled, “The Computer as a Democratizer,” Michael Hauben (1995) cites John Stuart Mills’ principles of democratic government: active participation as a necessary principle of democracy, as well as the right of people to define their will and the subsequent need for accurate information for proper decision-making. He also notes that the citizens must prevent the government from censoring this information and that the citizens must have free use of the means of communication. Hauben (1995a) sees computers and computer networks as the solution to implementing Mill’s theory of the liberty of the press, and suggests that the very nature of Usenet communication facilitates this exchange of uncensored information in the democratic process.

Hauben (1995d) notes especially Usenet’s feature of being controlled by the very people who read and use the information. The people work together as a community to regulate the space and to utilize Usenet in the way that most benefits the community. Usenet discussion is uncensored and therefore many sides of an issue are presented. Information is gathered from a worldwide community of resources including the often less-heard, excluded voices. While communities form around similar interests and opinions, individuals are able to make their own contribution to a worldwide audience. Usenet communication, argues Hauben (1995) satisfies Christopher Lasch’s call for public debate while also overcoming two of the obstacles to participatory democracy cited by Mill. First, Usenet allows for each opinion to be voiced and discussed without having the participants physically sharing space and time. Mill argued that agreement would be difficult with many voices offering opinions. Secondly, Hauben (1995) writes Usenet overcomes the problem of immediacy: “Online discussions do not have the same characteristics as in-person meetings. As people connect to the discussion forum when they wish, and when they have time, they can be thoughtful in their responses to the discussion.”

Chapter 4

Abortion Discourse in the Public Sphere

The purpose of this chapter is to place the issue of abortion into the context of the thesis. The abortion issue is well suited to an analysis of structure of a democratic public sphere for three reasons. First, the abortion issue is an important ongoing public issue, which continues to have unresolved aspects featured in public discourse (Ferree & Gamson 1993). Second, there is a well-established literature on all aspects of the abortion issue, including the political and social history of abortion, the philosophical and legal challenges posed by the issue, and the nature of public discourse concerning abortion. Finally, the nature of the abortion issue requires a well-constructed public sphere in order for a democratic resolution to emerge: it is not neatly characterized by familiar ideological distinctions; there are direct links between personal beliefs, personal behavior, and public actions; and policy making process is widely distributed across a range of public and private institutions. Section 4.1 on the following page of this chapter introduces the issue of abortion by reviewing its political history in the United States. Section 4.2 on page 63 traces trends in the public discussion of abortion.

4.1 Historic Overview of Abortion Policy in the United States

The abortion issue in American political history can best be understood in three broad phases:

Pre-Criminalization Phase From the earliest days of the Republic, through the 1850s, abortion was essentially a “non-issue.” Most states and the federal government were silent on the legal issues concerning abortion.

Criminalization Phase Starting in the 1850s, and through 1973, abortion was illegal in most states, with some exceptions to save the life of the mother.

Constitutional Right Phase Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the right to an abortion during the early phases of pregnancy is considered to be protected by the U.S. Constitution.

Standard works on the history of abortion in the United States (c.f. Means 1970, Mohr 1978, Luker 1984, Tribe 1990) document that prior to 1850, most states – as well as the federal government – were silent on the legality of abortion, and that little if any public discussion concerning this issue occurred. Within each state, abortions were governed by common law, which by tradition permitted abortions until “quickening,” the first perception of fetal movement by the woman. The earliest abortion statute, passed in Connecticut in 1821, was designed to protect the health of the mother, and applied only to post-quickening abortion. Abortions appear to have been relatively common during the first half of the nineteenth century, even though the mortality rate from surgical abortion may have been as much as ten times greater than that for childbirth.

The second half of the nineteenth century marks the emergence of the “first ‘right-to-life’ movement” (Luker 1984, 11) in the United States. During the period from 1850 to 1890, every state passed legislation prohibiting abortion, with some states allowing exceptions to “save” the life of the mother. This legislation was primarily motivated by the desire of university-trained physicians to advance their professional status by making clear distinctions between themselves and the “irregular” and quack doctors. The “physicians’ campaign” sought to remove reproductive

medicine from the control of midwives and other “non-professional” practitioners, and place decisions about abortion within the domain controlled by doctors. The state laws, which typically made abortion illegal at any time during pregnancy unless necessitated by medical considerations, created a zone of discretion between “therapeutic” and “criminal” abortions, and left physicians with virtually no guidance about how to navigate the distinctions.

The physicians used advances in the biological sciences made during the first half of the century to publicize the process of fetal development. These advances called into question the traditional doctrine of quickening by viewing pregnancy as a continuous process from conception to birth. Although there is evidence that this knowledge was disseminated into the general public prior to the physicians’ campaign (Luker 1984), the physicians nevertheless argued that women who terminated their pregnancies did so out of ignorance of the biological processes underway.

Two additional factors appear to be associated with the criminalization of abortion during this period (Mohr 1978, Luker 1984, Tribe 1990, Sitaraman 1994). The transition of the United States from a largely agrarian to largely urban society brought with it corresponding shifts in the role of women, especially among middle-class women. Sitaraman (1994) describes the relationship between 19th century feminism and abortion, providing additional evidence supporting the emergence of a right-to-life movement:

In the late 19th century, marriage and motherhood became full time occupations for most middle and upper class women in America. Industrialization first attracted native single women, and later a greater proportion of immigrant women into the factories, while creating a spatial and ideological separation of the world of work and the world of family life. The ‘cult of true womanhood’ stressed moral qualities of piety, purity, domesticity and submissiveness that corresponded to the roles middle class women assumed in their lives: daughter, wife, and mother. In this context, 19th century feminists engaged in social causes that extended their moral superiority and responsibility from the home to the public arena. They campaigned for a right to vote and a right to education rather than a right to control their sexual and reproductive behavior.” (Sitaraman 1994, 6)(citations omitted).

Additionally, a sharp rise in non-Protestant immigration fueled nativist sentiments supporting an anti-abortion stance. “The perception that abortion was practiced by

native, Protestant women encouraged virulent anti-Catholic and nativist rhetoric in efforts to persuade American legislators to pass laws that would restrict legal abortions to life-threatening circumstances” (Sitaraman 1994, 5). Thus, the tendency toward strict prohibition of abortion was, in part, predicated on maintaining the population growth of the white and Protestant class.

In the second half of the criminalization period, abortion remained at most a peripheral concern to most policy makers. It was not until the 1960s that a sustained movement emerged supporting reform and/or repeal of abortion laws. The explanations for the emergence of the reform movement, and its timing, have been addressed by a number of analysts (c.f. Ginsburg 1989, Hershey 1986, Krason 1984, Luker 1984, Mohr 1989, Petchesky 1984, Rossi & Sitaraman 1988, Rubin 1987, Staggenborg 1991, Tatalovich 1988, Tribe 1990). One explanation, following a model first offered by Eisinger (1973), is that the “structure of political opportunities” present at the time enabled the simultaneous and independent creation of separate “micromobilization contexts” (McAdam 1988) of “insider” and “outsider” activists (Staggenborg 1991), mobilized in part by two “critical discourse moments” (Gamson & Modigliani 1989) in the early 1960s. The notion of the structure of political opportunities emphasizes the necessity of simultaneous system-level factors, such as elite opinion and elite interest, and micro-level factors, primarily ordinary citizens mobilized into social movement organizations, for political change to occur. “Micromobilization contexts” is the term associated with the informal groups into which individuals are drawn, and from which movement organizations emerge. These contexts involve either people who have been actively engaged in the issue (“insider” activists), or those who are newly engaged with the issue at a political or professional level (“outsider” activists). Often, some widely-publicized event – a “critical discourse moment” – serves as a catalyst, signalling both insider and outsider activists that the grievances they feel are not singular, and that there is some reason to be optimistic about political change.

The issue was debated with increasing frequency and urgency from the 1930s through the 1960s, first within narrow professional circles, and gradually within broader groups of activists. Out of this debate, a movement for abortion law reform slowly emerged. Tribe (1990), Krason (1984), and to a more limited extent Luker (1984) and Sitaraman (1994), focus on the leading role of powerful professional groups of doctors and lawyers in attempts to reform state abortion laws. In this view, the same medical profession that was largely responsible for creating the ambiguous atmosphere concerning the conditions under which abortion was con-

sidered appropriate now sought to extract itself from the ethical dilemmas created as a result of its actions in the previous century. Changes in medical science, particularly advances in the treatment of clearly medical indications for abortion, led many physicians and legal professionals to question the legality of the “therapeutic” abortions doctors were being asked to perform. One proposed solution was the Model Penal Code, issued by the American Law Institute (discussed above on page 66), which stimulated reform efforts in various states.

Staggenborg (1991) disputes the “insider explanation,” arguing that

... it fails to take into account the role of external events in pulling doctors and other professionals into the abortion controversy. Moreover, the support that established interest groups and organizations did provide, particularly in the early years of the movement, was quite limited. Dissatisfaction with the limited actions and policies of these groups forced those who wanted significant change in the abortion laws to build a movement outside the established power structure (page 18).

Instead, Staggenborg (1991) emphasizes the key role of social movement entrepreneurs organizing at a grass roots level in various locations around the country. These groups, which frequently were not even aware of each other’s efforts, were dissatisfied with the pace of change and the focus of debate within the established groups. An important component motivating the non-establishment groups was the contemporary position of the American society within the “cycles of protest:”

Although a few politically experienced individuals helped start the abortion movement, its success was very much dependent on the cycle of protest under way in the 1960s. Other social movements in the expanded social movement sector of the period aided the mobilization of the abortion rights movement in several ways. The civil rights movement was an important precursor that generated social activism among liberal churches and clergy and offered tactical models to numerous other movements, including the abortion movement. Women, college students and other young people who were activated by earlier movements of the 1960s became the grass-roots constituents of the movement to legalize abortion. The family-planning, population, and women’s movements directly aided mobilization by providing organizational bases and constituents for the abortion movement. (Staggenborg 1991, 18).

This argument expands those made by Evans (1978), McAdam (1988) and Evans & Boyte (1986), in emphasizing the importance of both micro-level and macro-level developments. For example, Evans & Boyte (1986) focus on the existence of “free spaces,” autonomous places where individuals were able to gather to discover that the grievances they felt were shared by others, and document the importance of such free spaces in various social movements throughout American history.

The abortion reform movement attracted the attention of various interest groups in the 1960s. In 1964, the New York Academy of Medicine endorsed the ALI approach (discussed above on page 66), suggesting that most of the medical profession and public did not support the restrictive abortion laws then on the books in the States. By the mid-sixties, womens organizations entered the abortion debate for the first time. The National Organization for Women (NOW) addressed abortion laws in 1967. The National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL, later renamed the National Abortion Rights Action League) (Sitaraman 1994) was organized the following year. As a result, the abortion debate was recast into an issue of women’s rights and civil rights, and had the effect of challenging physicians control over abortion decisions.

The high point of the reformist movement was the *Roe v. Wade* decision by the United States Supreme Court in 1973. This decision invalidated state laws prohibiting abortion during the early stages of pregnancy, and set conditions under which abortion could be regulated by the states during latter stages of pregnancy. This decision also served to permanently recast the abortion issue into one of the most contentious and divisive political issue in the 20th century, and thus marks the beginning of the third phase of abortion policy in American history.

The third and current phase of the abortion issue in American history is organized around the questions of constitutionally protected rights, and the balance to be struck between the rights of women and the rights of fetuses prior to birth. The *Roe* case established, for the first time, that the right to privacy (itself elucidated by the Supreme Court less than ten years earlier in the *Griswold* case) included the right of a woman to obtain an abortion during the early stages of pregnancy. Though the broad and sweeping rights established by *Roe* have been modified and limited in the ensuing years amid a wide variety of disputes – the essential holding of *Roe* remains.

Abortion has become an important part of most aspects of American politics, including elections, legislation, judicial appointments, interest groups and so-

cial movement organizations, and public opinion. In the years following *Roe*, a highly polarized era occurs, as large-scale “pro-choice” and “pro-life” movements emerge. This era is most succinctly marked by a succession of U.S. Supreme Court cases and repeated (unsuccessful) attempts to pass an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting abortion. These efforts transformed the abortion issue into one that has remained broad-based and fully engaged for nearly a quarter-century. Although the Supreme Court has steadily whittled away at the ability of women to exercise their right to an abortion established by *Roe*, no more than four justices in any single case have indicated a willingness to expressly overturn the decision. Those seeking such an outcome had anticipated success following the string of steadily restrictive Court opinions and the ascension to the Court of five Reagan and Bush appointees (Tribe 1990). They were bitterly disappointed when, in the *Casey* decision in 1992, O’Connor, Kennedy and Souter reaffirmed, rather than rejected, the central holding in *Roe*. This left the bloc of Rehnquist, Scalia, Thomas and White one vote shy of reversal.

The election of a pro-choice President in 1992, and the subsequent replacement of Justice White – who had dissented from the majority opinion in *Roe* and was willing to overturn that decision in *Casey* – it would appear that we may be on the cusp of a fourth phase in the abortion controversy in the United States. In this new phase, the *right* to an abortion, while still contested, is less the focus than the ability to obtain an abortion. Thus, the persuasive efforts of the pro-life movement are targeted to abortion service providers and consumers rather than policy makers. Given the unlikelihood of success in the Supreme Court, some pro-life advocates have essentially given up trying to change general attitudes through reasoned discourse, and are instead using or advocating (or at least not criticizing) the use of terror as a weapon against those providing abortion services (Donovan 1985, Forrest & Henshaw 1987, Terry 1988, Wills 1989, Grant 1991).

4.2 Abortion Discourse in the Public Sphere

Public discussion about abortion moves through similar phases as public policy. There is some dispute about the public perception of abortion during the precriminalization phase. According to Luker (1984), there is ample evidence that abortion was considered by some to be *morally* wrong. Popular home medical guides made clear that pregnancy was a biologically continuous process, with some opposing

abortion on moral grounds as early as 1797. Clear moral distinctions were made between the mother's life and the life of the fetus:

The public did not consider the embryo "not alive" in the biological sense Rather, public (and much medical opinion) seems to have been that embryos were, morally speaking simply not *as alive* as the mother, at least until quickening – and sometimes later than that, if the pregnancy threatened the life of the woman (Luker 1984, 26).

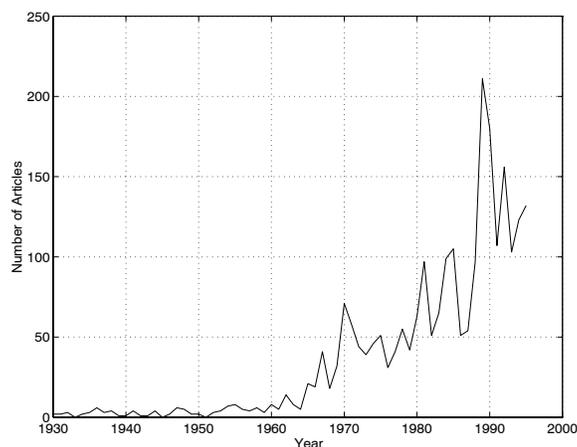
On the other hand, Sitaraman (1994, 4) contends that fetuses prior to quickening were "not considered a human being, and abortions were viewed as a point on the continuum including contraception," and suggests that ignorance of pregnancy and fetal development contributed to the lack of public discussion of abortion.

Public discourse during the criminalization period is dominated by the medical profession, and it is clear that the voices of women and ordinary citizens were largely excluded from the limited debate that did occur. One indication of the lack of public debate during this period is the complete absence of articles concerning abortion indexed in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* prior to 1890. In addition, neither the religious nor legal communities appear to have made significant contributions to the public discussion of the abortion issue. This is surprising, given the Catholic church's 1869 papal statement abandoning the distinction between early and late abortions (Tribe 1990, 31), and given the large number of new state laws enacted.

By contrast, the newly emergent American Medical Association regularly issued regular reports and papers urging that decisions about abortion be made by licensed physicians on the basis of their superior education, technical and moral standing. In an interesting rhetorical feat, simultaneously claimed "both an *absolute* right to life for the embryo (by claiming that abortion is always murder) and a *conditional* one (by claiming that doctors have a right to declare some abortions 'necessary')" (Luker 1984, 32).

During the fifty years following the criminalization period, discussion about abortion remained by and large confined to medical, legal and religious professionals. There are no articles indexed under "abortion" *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* until 1929, and the number of articles from 1929 to 1960 never reached more than twelve in any year (See Figure 4.1 on the following page). Once the pattern of criminalization was established, whatever public discourse about abortion

Figure 4.1: Articles in Popular Press Related to Abortion, 1930-1996



existed moved from the mainstream media to “alternative” media (Olasky 1988*b*). Luker (1984, 42) suggests that the control exercised by physicians from the end of the nineteenth century onward was the most significant factor preventing abortion from becoming a social or political issue. Condit (1990, 23) describes women as “largely absent from the professional and public realms” where abortion was being discussed. Similarly, Sitaraman (1994, 7) Sitaraman describes a “period of public silence” during the first half of the twentieth century, an era “remarkably free from debate about abortion” (Tribe 1990, 34).

Though there was considerable debate within the scholarly medical literature concerning the proper “indications” of acceptable abortions (Luker 1984, 40, 270 note 3), only “cautious” (Staggenborg 1991, 14) discussion of the philosophical or moral issues involved is evident. In 1933, *Abortion: Legal or Illegal?* (Rongy 1933) was published, arguing that the then-current abortion laws inappropriately invoked Christian values, and fostered contempt for the political system because they were frequently and freely violated by doctors. In 1942, the National Committee on Maternal Health – which had sponsored publication of the Rongy volume (Krason 1984) – convened a conference to discuss “the abortion problem” in the United States, examining both induced and spontaneous abortion. The conference came to the conclusion that more education about birth control, and shifts in public and medical opinion, were more likely to reduce abortions than changes in legislation (Howard C. Taylor 1944). In the following decade, several national conferences and published books advocated more

discretion on the part of doctors. All were squarely aimed at professional audiences in the legal, medical, educational and religious professions. In 1954, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America organized a conference focused only on induced abortion, concluding that revised laws that “recognize the mounting approval of psychiatric, humanitarian, and eugenic indications for the legal termination of pregnancy” (Calderone 1958, 182) were necessary. To that end, organizations such as the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, the American Law Institute, and the Council of State Governments, are called upon to develop model laws legalizing abortion, and to educate both citizens and professionals about the issue. The American Law Institute heeded the call in 1959, drafting a model abortion statute that legalized abortion in cases of rape, incest, danger to the health of the mother, and indications of fetal abnormality (Institute 1959). *Therapeutic Abortion*, edited by Harold Rosen and published in 1954, emerged from a panel at the 1952 meetings of the American Psychiatric Association. *The Sanctity of Life and the Criminal Law*, written by Glanville Williams and published in 1957, focused on the legal aspects of abortion; while Alfred Kinsley’s *Pregnancy, Birth and Abortion* (1958) examined medical issues (Krason 1984, Olasky 1988b, Staggenborg 1991).

Abortion discourse during the latter stages of the criminalization period moved from the protected and gentile confines of the professional associations onto the public stage. The impetus for this movement includes two “critical discourse moments” (Gamson & Modigliani 1989), the Finkbine case and the associated thalidomide scare in 1962, and the Rubella epidemic in California in 1964. The roots of the Finkbine case are in Europe in the early 1960s, when a sharp increase in the birth of babies with deformed or underdeveloped limbs was associated with exposure by the mother to the tranquilizer thalidomide during the early stages of pregnancy. In the summer of 1962, Sherri Finkbine, a Phoenix, Arizona woman in her fourth month of pregnancy, discovered that a tranquilizer she had taken contained high doses of thalidomide. When her dilemma was publicized in a local newspaper, her scheduled abortion at a local hospital was postponed, and then canceled, when the Courts in Arizona refused to clarify the legality of the procedure. Finkbine’s case became the subject of numerous magazine and newspaper stories, and for the first time, introduced discussion about the morality of abortion into the public sphere occupied by ordinary people (Luker 1984, Krason 1984). Two years after the Finkbine case, popular attention again focused on abortion during the Rubella epidemic in the United States. Newspaper and magazine articles explored the link between the disease and fetal deformity, and drew further

attention to the current legal status of abortion in most states (Krason 1984).

Following these events, two significant changes occur with regard to public discourse concerning abortion: First, women's voices become, for the first time, a significant part of the discourse. Activist women's voices are heard through organizations like NOW and NARAL (Staggenborg 1991, Luker 1984, Sitaraman 1994, Tribe 1990). Ordinary women began to participate in public sphere conversation as well. In the 1960s, most women, and especially those who were having illegal abortions, did not have the structural opportunities to speak out publicly on the abortion issue (Blake 1971, Cerullo 1990, Smith 1990).¹ However, the increased attention paid to the abortion issue in the mainstream media (see Figure 4.1 on page 65), combined with the emerging women's "liberation" movement, made the topic less of a taboo in everyday conversation than in the previous decades (Ginsburg 1989, Baehr 1992, Olasky 1988a). Secondly, abortion discourse began to focus on rights, contrasting the rights of women with the rights of embryos. Although discourse about the abortion issue in this era began in a narrative frame – focused on story telling and presenting sympathetic portrayals of women like Sherri Finkbine, and emphasizing the horrors of illegal, "back-alley" abortions – it was quickly fused with core political values of equality and choice, a transition necessary to create the substantial shift in public policy desired (Railsback 1984, Ginsburg 1989, Condit 1990).

Once the criminalization period gave way to the era in which abortion was consistently framed as an issue involving constitutional rights, the issue becomes, for the first time, one in which large portions of the public participate. Ordinary people interact with the abortion issue through their construction of public discourse across the entire domain of the public sphere – including both news and entertainment media (Ginsburg 1989, Condit 1990, Baehr 1992, Craig & O'Brien 1993, Krason 1984). Discourse about abortion is not only much more prevalent than previously, but much more polarized as well (Condit 1990, Railsback 1984, Vanderford 1989, Dillon 1993, Ferree & Gamson 1993). As a consequence, the "consensual" voices (Stanley 1983, Barber 1984, Stanley 1988, Oldenburg 1989, Bellah et al. 1991) who had dominated public discussion in the late criminalization period (Luker 1984, Krason 1984) lose their access to the public sphere. In the five years since the *Casey* decision, in which it became clear that a slim but stable majority of the Supreme Court was committed to upholding the principle

¹In McAdam's (1988) and Evans & Boyte's (1986) terms, the "micromobilization contexts" and "free spaces" had not yet been formed.

right guaranteed by *Roe*, a substantial shift in abortion discourse has occurred. This shift has moved conversation away from the “pro-life, pro-choice” dimension and toward the dimension of tactics and strategies of the pro-life movement. Thus, although discourse about abortion is no less widespread than during the years immediately following *Roe*, its focus and emphasis is rather different.

Chapter 5

Measuring the Public Sphere

This chapter is focused on the methods used in this study to measure the part of the public sphere created by the participants in the talk.abortion newsgroup, and assess the closeness of fit between the newsgroup and the idealized notion of the informal zone as discussed in Chapter 2. Section 5.1 describes the study design. Comments on operationalizing the four dimensions of equality, diversity, reciprocity and quality are presented in Section 5.2 on page 72.

5.1 Study Design

The structure of the informal public sphere plays an important role in the degree to which the public sphere as a whole resembles the idealized public sphere envisioned by Habermas and others. To the extent that a portion of the informal public sphere is found to be equal, diverse, reciprocal and of high quality, we can say it moves the public sphere closer to the idealized state desired by democratic theory. This project uses a case study design to assess the structure of one ongoing conversation, which takes place within a Usenet newsgroup. A single newsgroup – talk.abortion – was selected for analysis. Data, consisting of the messages posted to the newsgroup and information describing the messages, was collected over a

one year period. This section describes the criteria used to select the case study, and details the procedures used to collect and analyze the data.

Once a decision was reached to study the structure of Usenet newsgroups, there were essentially two methodological options available (assuming a limit to the amount of data that was to be processed). One option was to select a number of groups and examine the patterns of interaction across groups over a relatively short period of time. The advantage of this option is the increased generalizability that results from patterns observed in several groups. In addition, the multi-group analysis method allows the content area of the group to be a variable. The second option was to select a single group and examine patterns of interaction across a relatively long period of time. The advantages of this option is the increased ability to detect and understand subtle patterns of interaction. This study adopted the second option, and uses the case study method to examine structural patterns within a single newsgroup.

The talk.abortion newsgroup selected for analysis is focused on “all sorts of discussion about abortion and the abortion issue” This issue, as discussed in Chapter 4 on page 57, is an important ongoing public issue with unresolved aspects featured in public discourse (Ferree & Gamson 1993). The nature of the abortion issue requires a well-constructed public sphere in order for a democratic resolution to emerge, and it is particularly dependent on a strong and active informal public sphere, given the direct links between personal beliefs, personal behavior, and public actions. At the same time, the abortion issue may be particularly well suited to computer-mediated discussion; given the very personal nature of this issue, many people who may be reluctant to engage in discussion traditional settings (Noelle-Neuman 1984, Salmon & Neuwirth 1990, MacKuen 1990) may find an alternative in the computer-mediated setting. The benefit from an intensive, over-time examination of the patterns of behavior within a single group struggling to discuss a controversial, emotional and political issue outweighed whatever limitations are present as a result of the focus on just one group, and perhaps especially a group focused on this topic.

Before proceeding, it may be helpful to introduce and define several “terms of art” that are used throughout the remainder of the thesis:

Message A message or newsgroup article is a self-contained collection of words written by a single author and contributed to the newsgroup as a unique entity at a specific time. Each message can be identified by its day, author,

thread, included text and original text. See Figure 3.1 on page 53 for a description of a Usenet message.

Day A day is a 24-hour period beginning at midnight. Each message receives a time stamp containing the date current at the author's network host at the time of posting. In other words, the day is assigned by the author's host computer, which may or may not be in the same time zone as the author at the time of posting.

Authors An author is a unique individual posting at least one message to the newsgroup. The uniqueness of the author is identified by an electronic mail address associated with each message. Electronic mail addresses are in the form of *name@host.domain.type*. Authors were identified by unique *name@domain* strings.

Thread A thread is a collection of messages posted with a common subject heading.

Lines of Text A line of text is a collection of characters outside the message header ending with a "line feed" character. Lines whose first non-blank character is either a letter or a numeral are considered *original* text, written by the author. Lines whose first non-blank character is neither a letter nor numeral are identified as *included* lines, indicating that they contain text from a message previously contributed to the newsgroup.

Available Messages Newsgroups exist in various forms, depending on the machine which is hosting the group. The key variable to consider is message expiration. A newsgroup hosted by a machine that expires messages in a particular newsgroup after seven days would look very different – on the same day – to the same newsgroup hosted by a machine that expires messages after four days. The measure *available messages*, as used in this study, assumes a seven-day expiration period. That is, the number of available messages on any given day is calculated as the sum of all messages posted on that day, as well as the previous six days.

Data collection for this project was relatively straightforward. Every message received as part of the talk.abortion newsgroup by the news server¹ from April 1,

¹The server used for this study was located at the SUNY Institute of Technology in Utica, NY.

1994 to March 31, 1995 was stored and archived. As described in Section 3.3 on page 51 and shown in Figure 3.1 on page 53, each Usenet message contains a header identifying the author, thread, and date posted. In addition, most messages contain some text written by the author of the post,² and some text written by other authors but included for reference. The entire set of messages, representing more than 94 megabytes of data, was analyzed using programs written in Perl (Wall & Schwartz 1991), which generated data files for analysis by Matlab, numeric computation and visualization software produced by Math Works.

The focus of the study was on the behavior of the participants within the newsgroup. Generally, the interest was less on the content of the messages than on the fact that individuals were participating in political discussion. The focus on the structure of the newsgroup – at the expense of an extended analysis of the content – represented a commitment to understanding the patterns of participation. The amount of participation, the distribution of participatory acts across days and threads and among participants, and the interaction between participants, are the primary focus of this investigation. Together, these factors represent the “structure” of the newsgroup.

5.2 Dimensions of the Public Sphere

One of the difficulties in assessing the degree to which the public sphere satisfies the conditions of democratic theory is the lack of formal, operationalized measures. This study seeks to rectify that situation by developing specific measures, and applying these measures in the context of an ongoing conversation that is contributing to the informal zone of the public sphere. One method available is to use what critical theorists would call a “counter-factual ideal” (Dryzek, 1990). Habermas’s ideal speech situation, and its operationalization in the informal zone of the idealized public sphere, serves here as the model against which real-world experience can be criticized. As suggested in Section 2.4, four dimensions that embody the spirit of the idealized public sphere are equality, diversity, reciprocity and quality. Each of these dimensions is operationalized with a specific measure. This section discusses the issues concerned with developing these measures, and briefly introduces the operationalization procedures used. More extensive discussion of the measures, as well as the results, is provided in Sections 6.1, 6.2 and

²In rare instances, an empty or blank message will be posted, probably by mistake.

6.3, which apply these measures to the actions of participants in the talk.abortion newsgroup during the study period. It should be noted here that the selection of these four dimensions, as well as the selection of the specific newsgroup, are likely to have a significant impact on the conclusions reached. Other dimensions, and other issues, would likely produce alternative results. The value of this research is to begin to develop specific dimensions of the public sphere that can be analyzed and operationalized, and to begin to understand the nature of computer mediated discussion.

In the informal zone of the public sphere, structural equality is achieved with equal access to speaking opportunities and equal distribution of voice among the speakers. Only the latter dimension of equality will be measured here. The nature of a Usenet newsgroup provides an equality of access to speaking opportunities to anyone who wishes to join the conversation.³ Of more immediate concern here is the second dimension, equality of voice. Equality in the idealized state would suggest that all participants ought to contribute equally – that is, each author ought to contribute an equal number of messages. Rates of participation among participants, though only implicitly included in Habermas’s conception of the public sphere, is familiar in democratic theory. One indicator of equality is equal protection of interests of members. Equality of interests could be measured by the distribution of participation among participants. In plebiscites, equality is achieved when each participates equally, the “one person, one vote” maxim, universally recognized as a desirable end (Wolin 1960). Applying plebiscitary values to the informal zone of the public sphere would suggest that equality is obtained when each participates or contributes to the discussion in equal measure. Participation in a plebiscitary sense could be measured by both frequency of expression and average quantity of expression. Operationally, frequency of expression can be examined by the number of messages contributed. Average quantity of expression can be measured by the mean number of words contained in messages.

Diversity in the informal zone of the public sphere is focused on the presence of a range of conversational patterns by the participants. A set of highly diverse patterns of conversation would suggest a freedom of the participants to shape their own conversational patterns, free from the constraints imposed by others. On the other hand, a narrow range of conversational patterns would suggest the presence

³Provided, of course, that the individual has the access to the technology and skills required to participate in the medium. But no one is precluded from participation by rules governing the management of the newsgroup itself.

of constraints imposed on the participants. Diversity is assessed at two levels: the overall newsgroup, and within the newsgroup.

Tractability measures the degree to which the volume or size of a public sphere zone changes on a day to day basis. High tractability would suggest that participants contract and expand the size of their public sphere according to their own needs and desires. Low tractability would suggest either low needs or desires to alter the size of the group, or external forces preventing the size from being altered. Tractability measures the capability of a medium to expand and contract depending on information flows. For example, the network news hole is 30 minutes, news or no news. But television networks have tractability by being able to do special live broadcasts, or to break in to other programming with really important news. On the other hand, network news is not contractable, so the volume of news has a defined floor. Newsgroups, of course, expand and contract regularly over time, without being out of the ordinary. Tractability is measured by the number of days featuring messages outside the normal bounds of activity. High tractability would suggest a high level of diversity. The second aspect of diversity measures the presence of multiple conversational patterns within threads of messages. These patterns are measured by the number of messages within a thread, the spread of days associated with the thread's existence, the number of days on which messages were posted, and the number and type of authors posting messages. Diverse patterns would suggest that participants take advantage of their ability to shape the nature of their conversations; a lack of diversity would suggest either low desire, or external forces preventing participants from shaping their conversations.

Reciprocity refers to the notion that people are engaged in conversation with each other, and that their messages are reflected upon and discussed by others. A message is considered reciprocal to a previous message if it appears in the same thread within seven days of the previous message, or if it cites the message directly by message identification number. Authors are considered to have a reciprocal relationship if their messages are reciprocated. The primary indicators of reciprocity are based on authors, and measured in terms of messages and other authors. In the idealized public sphere, reciprocity would be maximized: that is, each author would establish a reciprocal relationship with every other author. Reciprocity is operationalized as the proportion of authors with whom a reciprocal relationship is established, and the number of authors which the average message reciprocates.

The final dimension concerns quality. Quality in the informal zone of the public

sphere requires that participants stay engaged with the topic at hand. This presents some difficulties in measurement, for it requires a subjective assessment or definition of what is “relevant” and what is “not relevant.” One of the functions of political talk, as discussed in Chapter 2, is to allow individuals to set their own agendas; that is, to decide for themselves what is relevant what should be talked about. By predetermining certain topics to represent high quality, and others to not represent high quality, removes some of the power of agenda setting from the participants. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that within some broad boundaries, an informal zone of the public sphere, formed in this case to discuss abortion, that does not feature conversation about abortion, cannot be said to meet the demands of a quality discourse. The ideal state of the informal public sphere would have all participants talking always about abortion related matters. To the extent that the actual practice of the participants deviates from this state, the public sphere does not fulfill this particular dimension of the quality function. Quality is operationalized as the proportion of messages that are concerned with the abortion issue.

Chapter 6

Analyzing the talk.abortion

Newsgroup

This chapter presents the analysis of the talk.abortion newsgroup. Section 6.1 focuses on the distribution of messages, types of authors and types of threads. Section 6.2 on page 90 describes the reciprocity levels of the participating authors, while Section 6.3 on page 95 assesses the threads and authors in terms of abortion density and metacommunication density.

6.1 Authors, Threads and Messages in talk.abortion

Talk.abortion is a busy newsgroup. Over the course of the year, as illustrated in Table 6.1 on the next page, nearly 46,000 messages were posted to the group by almost three thousand different authors in close to 8,500 different threads. Assuming a 7-day expiration period,¹ a reader of the newsgroup would have found about 800 messages by 150 authors in 225 different threads on an “average” day.

¹The length of time an message remains available on a news site is a local decision. It varies from site to site, and even within sites, from newsgroup to newsgroup. Here, a seven day expiration period is assumed. Many sites seem to use the seven day period as their default, shortening it for

Table 6.1: Summary of Activity in Usenet Newsgroup talk.abortion, April 1994 – March 1995

Measure	Total	Daily Mean Available	Daily Median Available
Messages	45,729	905	775
Authors Writing Messages	2,989	156	152
Threads with Messages	8,479	242	217

By comparison with other Usenet groups, talk.abortion is among the busiest: In January, 1995, for example, talk.abortion ranked 19th among the newsgroups in terms of number of messages posted per month (Reid 1994a); previous usage reports showed the group to be ranked within the top 25 newsgroups, in terms of messages posted per month, throughout the study period. A similar ranking (Reid 1994c, Reid 1994b).²

There are, to be sure, variations in the number of messages, authors and threads on a day-to-day basis. Figure 6.2 on page 79 illustrates the range of messages available and authors contributing during the study period. The activity in the newsgroup peaked on Day 10 of the study, with 411 messages posted in a single day. Including the six days preceding, there were 2,443 messages available that day. Other peaks in messaging behavior occurred periodically throughout the study.

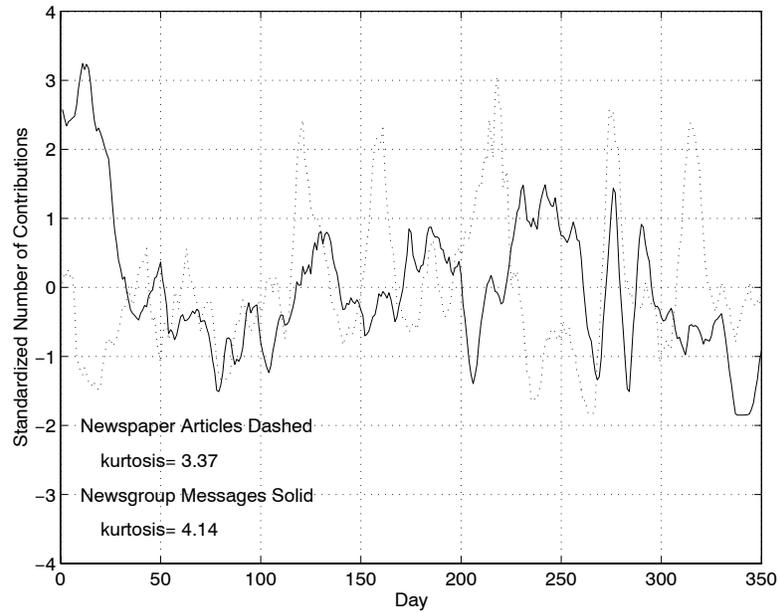
One possible explanation for the peaks and valleys of activity on the talk.abortion newsgroup would be an interaction with real-world events. To test this explanation, an index of the number of newspaper articles mentioning the word “abortion” was compiled for the year.³ A comparison of the number of messages available

particularly disk-intensive groups (for example, those transmitting binary files), and lengthening it for others.

²Comparative data on the number of authors and number of threads of other groups is not, to the best of my knowledge, available. In part, the analysis presented here is intended to demonstrate the value of such data.

³The index tallies the total number of articles with the word “abortion” appearing in the Washington Post, Detroit Free Press, Los Angeles Times, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Philadelphia Inquirer, San Francisco Chronicle, Miami Herald, USA Today, Atlanta Journal & Constitution, Christian Science Monitor and Cleveland Plain Dealer. A moving average of the previous seven days was calculated to match the measure of messages available in the newsgroup.

Figure 6.1: Comparison of Newspaper and Newsgroup Activity



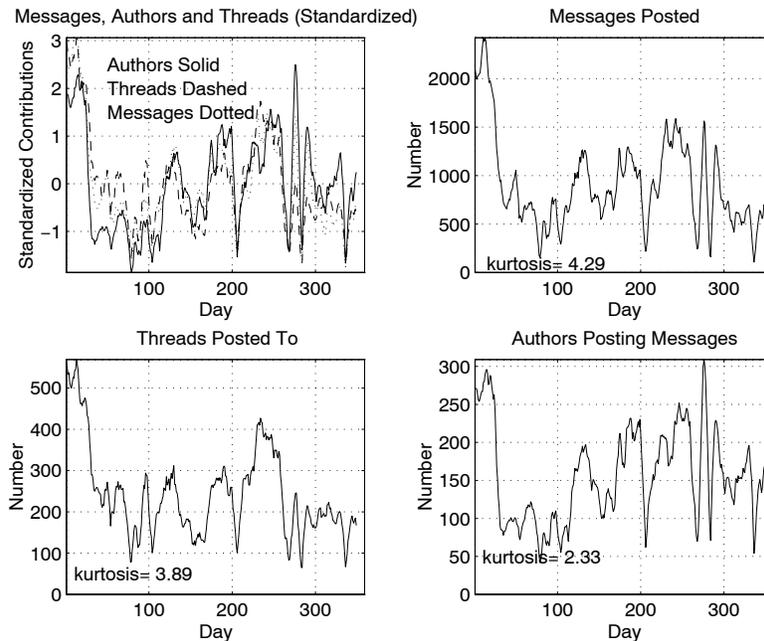
in the newsgroup, and the number of articles appearing in the newspaper index, is presented in Figure 6.1. If the real-world events were responsible for the peaks and valleys of activity in the newsgroup, the number of newspaper articles with the word “abortion” on any given day, and the number of messages available in the newsgroup would be correlated. This is not the case: in fact, the correlation coefficient between the two measures is $-.15$. Similarly, the correlation coefficient between a newspaper articles lagged by three days, and the number of messages in the newsgroup, is weakly and negatively correlated ($r = -.09$). Further, the trend in the two indices are only weakly correlated.⁴ It would appear that real-world events, as measured by frequency of newspaper articles, had little impact on the quantity of messages posted to the newsgroup.

The newsgroup is clearly more tractable than the newspaper, as indicated by the greater kurtosis value associated with the its distribution.⁵ Figure 6.1 indicates that while the number of newspaper articles mentioning “abortion” appearing each day

⁴The trend was calculated by subtracting the number of articles or messages appearing on Day t_2 from the number of articles appearing on Day t_1 . The correlation coefficient was $.14$.

⁵Kurtosis measures the degree to which a distribution is prone to outliers. The kurtosis of a normal distribution is 3; distributions with more outliers than normal distributions have kurtosis

Figure 6.2: Authors, Messages and Threads Available Day



is close to normally distributed, the distribution number of messages in the newsgroup available each day has many more outliers. Further, as shown in Figure 6.2, the distribution of threads indicate more outliers than would be present in a normal distribution.

The entry and exit of authors, and the beginning and ending of threads, are also relevant to the questions posted by this study. Patterns of contributing authors can be analyzed by examining the four types of authors who may be present on a given day. Single-day authors include those who make all of their contributions to the newsgroup on that day. Entering authors include those who make their first contributions to the newsgroup on that day, and who make subsequent contributions on another day. Exiting authors include those who made contributions to the newsgroup on previous days, and who make their last contribution to the newsgroup on that day. Continuing authors include those who made contributions to the newsgroup on previous days, who contributed on that day, and who make subsequent contributions on another day.

greater than 3.

Figure 6.3 on the following page illustrates the number of authors of each type participating in the newsgroup by day. The entry, continuity and exit of authors to the newsgroup can be summarized this way: on an average day in talk.abortion, nearly 30 authors post messages who have written before, and will write again. Additionally, about two authors join the conversation for the first time and make a subsequent contribution at some later date; about three authors who had previously contributed make their final contribution; and about four authors make their one and only appearance in the conversation. Figure 6.4 on page 82 illustrates the characteristics of threads using the same categories. On an average day in talk.abortion, nearly 60 threads are continued from previous days and will be continued on a subsequent day. In addition, about 11 new threads are started, to be continued on subsequent days; twelve previously existing threads are ended; and seventeen threads start and end. In short, talk.abortion is a dynamic conversational environment, featuring an expanding and contracting base of authors and threads, according to the needs and desires of its participants. It is clear that while the talk.abortion newsgroup has a committed set of contributors, at the same time a subset of constantly changing contributors is participating. To the extent that the introduction of new participants is an indicator of diversity, talk.abortion can be considered a diverse arena.

During the course of the study, nearly 3,000 different authors wrote at least one message to the newsgroup. Most of these authors wrote very few articles. Eighty percent of the authors wrote five or fewer articles, and more than 65 percent of the authors wrote only once or twice to the newsgroup. Concentration ratios provide a useful measure of participation. A graphic technique for summarizing concentration data is a Lorenz curve, which shows as a continuous function the percentage of total posts accounted for by an individual author, with the authors ranked in order of post frequency. Two summary measures of concentration examined here are the Gini coefficient and the entropy coefficient (Scherer 1980, Horowitz 1971). The Gini coefficient measures the departure between the Lorenz curve actually observed and the curve that would have appeared had all participants contributed equally (Scherer 1980, 57). A Gini coefficient of zero indicates equality. Figure 6.5 on page 83 displays the Lorenz curve and shows the frequency of messages posted by authors, illustrating the dramatic inequality of participation. One half of one percent of the authors account for more than 40 percent of the articles posted to the newsgroup during the study period; five percent of the authors account for nearly 80 percent of the articles posted. The Gini coefficient for this curve is calculated as .44, indicating a high level of concentration. The second

Figure 6.3: Authors Entering, Exiting and Continuing by Day

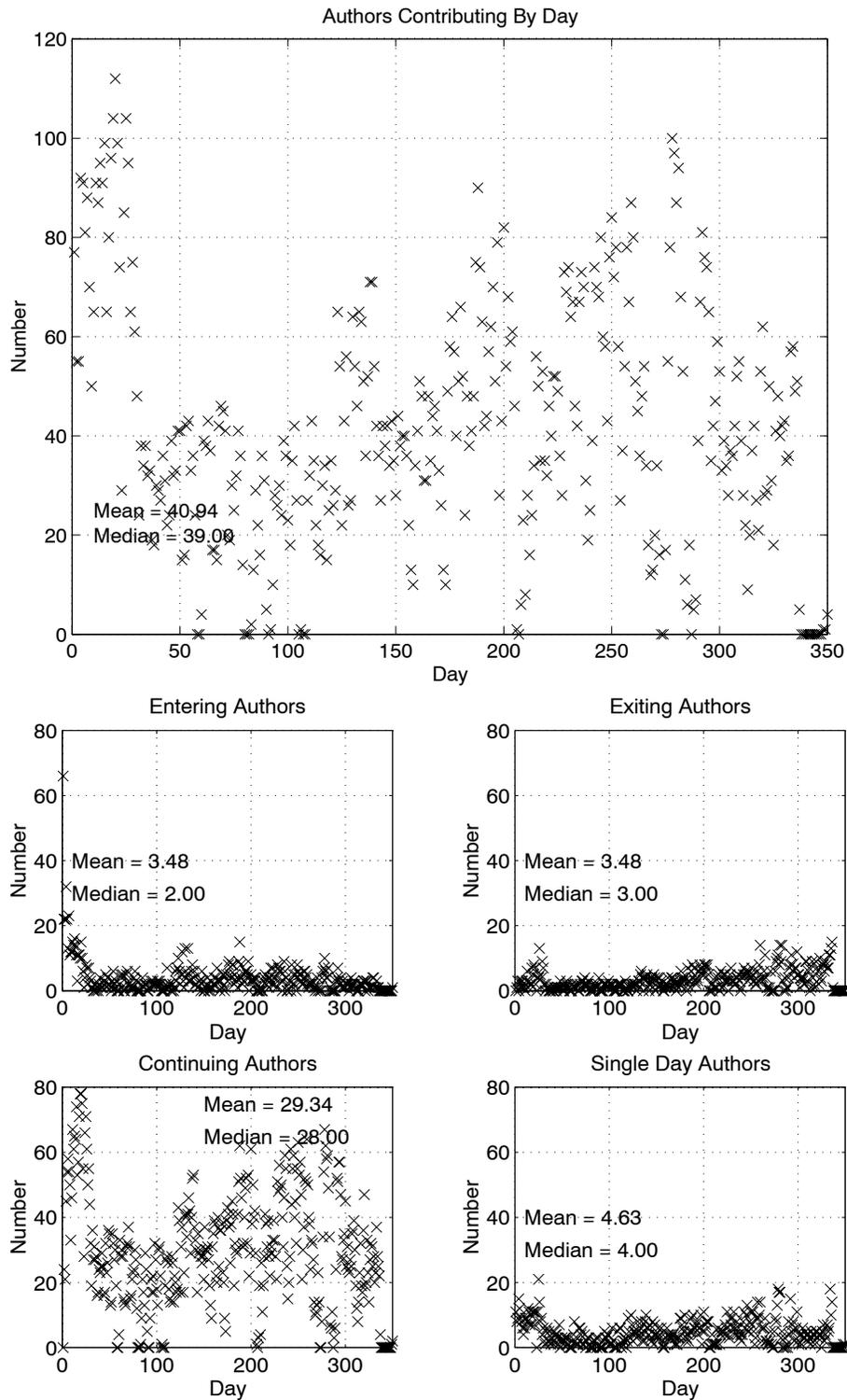
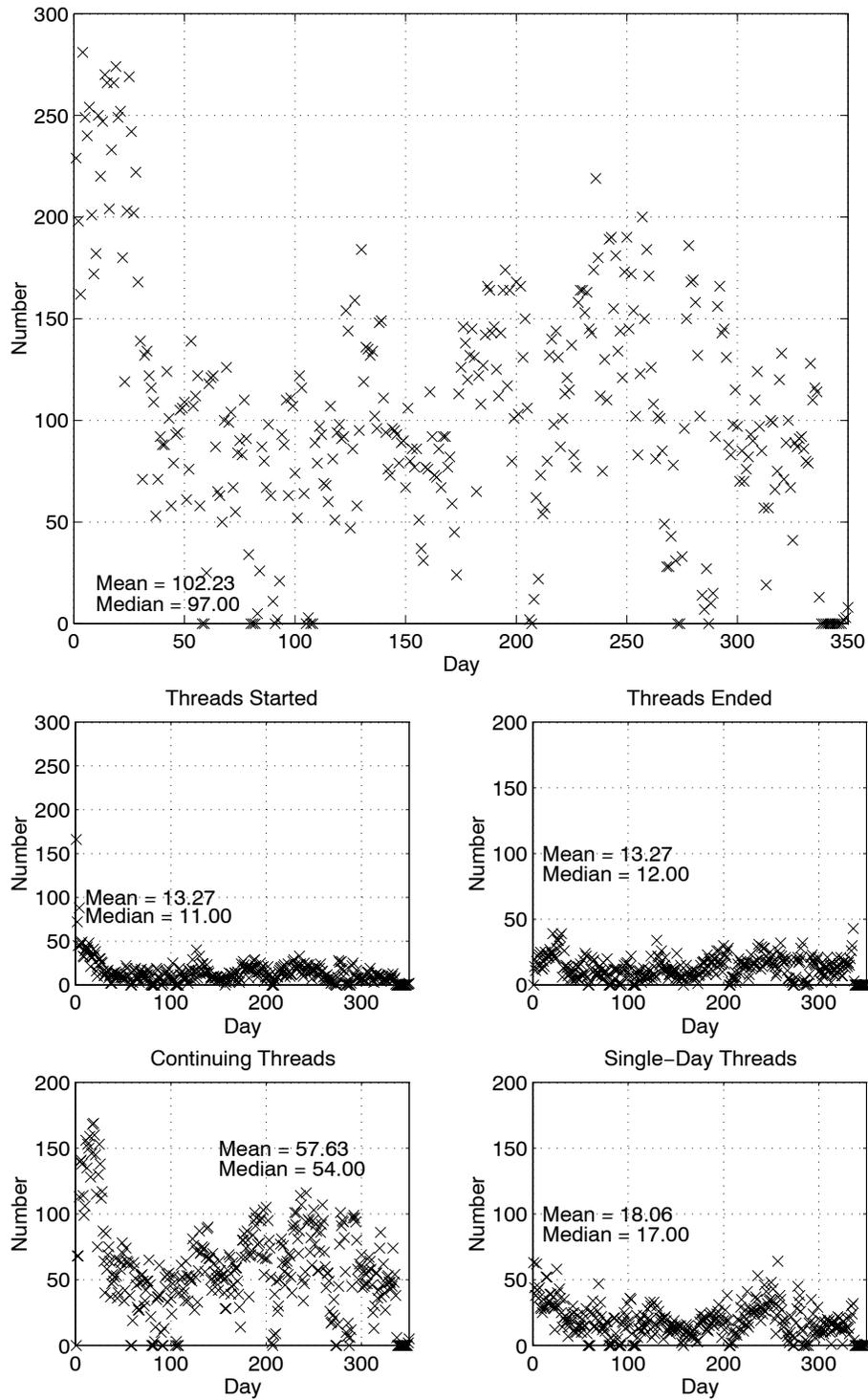
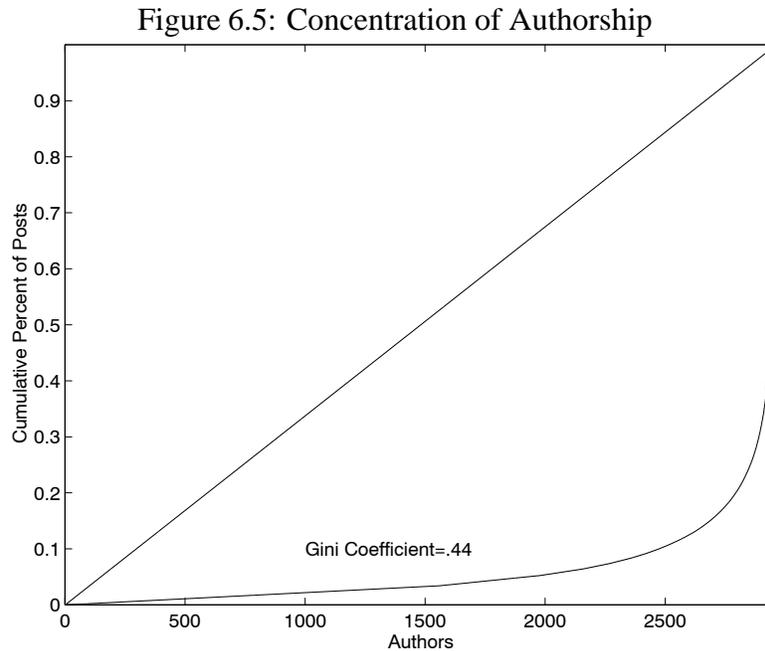


Figure 6.4: Threads Starting, Ending and Continuing by Day





measure of concentration is the entropy coefficient, useful when accurate data summarizing participation is available for all participants (Scherer 1980, 57).⁶ In this formulation, the value of \mathcal{E} if participation among all participants was equal would be $\log_2 N$, or 11.55. The entropy coefficient for the talk.abortion newsgroup is calculated as .67, also indicating a high level of concentration. Regardless of the measurement technique, it is clear that the level of concentration in the talk.abortion newsgroup is extraordinarily high. Neuman (1991) provides concentration curves summarizing the top 100 films ranked by box-office gross, the top television markets ranked by size of market, and the top 200 book publishers in order of percentage of shipments. In all three cases, the levels of concentration are considerably less than shown in the case of this newsgroup. The evidence of concentration makes clear that participation in talk.abortion is not equal. The newsgroup is clearly dominated by a small group of 15 authors, who combined account for about 45 of the messages written.

Participation is equal, however, when measured by length of message. The av-

⁶Entropy is calculated as $\mathcal{E} = \sum_{i=1}^N S_i \log_2(1/S_i)$ where S_i is the percentage of total participation of the i^{th} participant.

erage message contains 58.75 original words. Half of the messages contained between 17 and 66 words, while only 2.5 percent had more than 275 words. The correlation between number of messages and length of message was $-.07$, suggesting that frequency of authorship was only rather weakly related to length of message, and that more frequent authors posted shorter messages. In other words, the size of the participatory act was relatively equal within the newsgroup, while the quantity of participatory acts was not.

Additional analysis of authorship is based on seven categories of authors, developed from the rank ordering of authors by number of articles written, or, in two cases, by the specific number of articles written by an author:

Very Frequent authors includes the most prolific one-half of one percent of authors (15 authors, each of whom wrote at least 594 articles). This group accounts for 45 percent of all posts written to the newsgroup during the year of study. Included in this group is one author who wrote 5,476 messages, or 11 percent of the content being studied.

Frequent authors includes the next most prolific two percent of the authors (60 authors, each of whom wrote at least 81 articles). This group accounts for about 25 percent of all posts written.

Occasional authors includes the next most prolific two and one half percent of the authors (75 authors, each of whom wrote at least 34 articles). This group accounts for about eight percent of all posts written.

Infrequent authors includes the next most prolific five percent of authors (150 authors, each of whom wrote at least 15 articles, accounting for about seven percent of all posts).

Very Infrequent authors includes the authors who wrote between three and 14 articles (692 authors, 23 percent of all authors, nine percent of posts).

Two time authors wrote exactly two posts (423 authors, 14 percent of authors, two percent of posts)

One time authors wrote a single article to the newsgroup (1,575 authors, 53 percent of all authors, three percent of posts).

Table 6.2: Categorization of Authors by Number of Messages

Author Type	# of Authors	Cum. Authors	% of Authors	Cum. % of Authors	% of Total Posts	Cum. % of Total Posts	Min. # of Posts Per Author	Mean # of Posts Per Author
Very Frequent	15	15	0.5%	0.5%	45%	45%	594	1,392
Frequent	60	75	2.0%	2.5%	25%	70%	81	196
Occasional	75	150	2.5%	5%	9%	79%	34	51
Infrequent	149	299	5%	10%	7%	86%	15	22
Very Infrequent	692	991	23%	33%	9%	95%	3	6
Two-time	423	1,115	14%	47%	2%	97%	2	2
One-time	1,575	2,989	53%	100%	3%	100%	1	1

The complete categorization scheme based on frequency is provided in Table 6.2. Additional descriptive statistics summarizing key measures, are provided in Table 6.3 on the following page. This analysis is supplemented by Figures C.1, C.2, C.3 and C.4 in Appendix C on page 167. All measures are strongly correlated with the number of messages posted, but individually provide additional description of the nature of behavior associated with each author type.

The first measure to be examined is the number of threads contributed to. The number of threads contributed to (hereafter, simply threads) is an indicator of an author's breadth of discussion. A larger number of threads may indicate a wider range of engagement and discussion than a smaller number of threads. As shown in Table 6.3 on the following page, all authors contributed to an average of 8 threads; however, 75 percent of all authors contributed to only one or two threads. The median number of threads declines by nearly 85 percent as we move from very frequent authors to frequent authors, by 70 percent as we move from frequent to occasional authors, and by 50 percent as we move from occasional to infrequent authors. Nearly identical patterns are seen as we move down through the categories along the 75th percentile. The high correlation between threads and number of messages posted ($r=.98$, see Figure C.2 on page 169) indicates that posting behavior to threads may be similar for different types of authors. However, a contrasting pattern emerges when comparing the ratio of messages to threads across different author groups. This ratio is a measure of depth of discussion;

Table 6.3: Messages, Threads, Spread and Days of Author Groups

Measure	Group	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile	Mean
Messages	All	1	1	4	15
	Very Frequent	680	804	1740	1391
	Frequent	104	158	250	196
	Occassional	40	47	61	51
	Infrequent	17	20	26	21
	Very Infrequent	3	5	8	6
	Two-time	2	2	2	2
	One-Time	1	1	1	1
Threads	All	1	1	2	8
	Very Frequent	343	424	575	621
	Frequent	39	69	128	89
	Occassional	13	21	30	22
	Infrequent	6	10	14	10
	Very Infrequent	2	3	5	3
	Two-time	1	2	2	1
	One-Time	1	1	1	1
Spread	All	0	0	0	0
	Very Frequent	273	363	363	314
	Frequent	132	335	361	255
	Occassional	51	159	327	192
	Infrequent	52	129	285	162
	Very Infrequent	8	31	125	81
	Two-time	0	3	14	28
	One-Time	0	0	0	0
Days	All	1	1	1	1
	Very Frequent	142	160	218	177
	Frequent	30	52	75	56
	Occassional	17	22	28	22
	Infrequent	9	12	15	12
	Very Infrequent	3	4	6	4
	Two-time	1	2	2	1
	One-Time	1	1	1	1

Table 6.4: Comparison of Messages to Threads and Days by Author Groups

Author Group	Mean Messages Per Day	Mean Messages Per Thread
Very Frequent	7.64	2.59
Frequent	3.95	6.89
Occasional	2.65	3.64
Infrequent	1.99	3.34
Very Infrequent	1.54	2.16
Two-time	1.26	1.44
One-time	1.00	1.00

$F = 15.86$ $F = 14.82$
 $p = 0.00$ $p = 0.00$

a larger ratio of messages to threads may indicate a more intensive commitment to dialogue and engagement than a smaller ratio. As shown in Table 6.4, very frequent authors wrote an average of 2.59 messages per thread. The next three categories of authors – frequent, occasional and infrequent – are all more likely to write more intensively to threads than the frequent authors. The fact that frequent authors, on average, wrote more than twice as many messages per thread than the very frequent authors is especially noteworthy. This finding suggests that very frequent have less of a commitment to sustained dialogue and discussion than the other author types.

The second measure of author groups to be assessed is spread of days. Spread of days (spread) refers to the number of days elapsing between the author's first posted message and last posted message. For example, given that one-time authors by definition posted a single message, the spread associated with each of them is zero, the minimum value of spread. The maximum theoretical value of spread is the length of the study, 365 days. An author with a spread of 365 days would have posted a message on both the first and last day of the study. Notice that spread includes no assessment of the number of messages between the first and last day posted. Spread is another indicator of an author's breadth of commitment to sustained participation in the newsgroup. A higher spread value indicates a commitment to group participation over a longer range of time than

a lower spread value. As can be seen from Table 6.3, the median spread of the very frequent author is 363 days, essentially the entire year. It is only slightly less for the frequent authors, and drops considerably for the occasional and infrequent authors. However, even among the infrequent authors, the median spread is still greater than 120 days, or about 4 months time. This indicates a considerable breadth of participation, as measured by time, among all of the most frequently contributing authors.

Third, the number of different days on which authors contributed messages can be analyzed. With this measure, ten days spread over six months is not differentiated from ten days spread over two weeks. Thus, the number of days is an indicator of intensity of commitment. Days, by definition, is equal to or less than spread and messages (an author could not have contributed 10 messages on 11 different days). When examining days, much more dramatic differences between the very frequent authors and the other types of authors emerge. The median number of days on which very frequent authors wrote messages was more than three times greater than the median number of days for the frequent authors. The medians of the occasional and infrequent authors decline by about half as we move down the scale. This measure indicates that intensity of participation is strongly correlated with frequency of participation. This finding is further supported by examining the ratio of messages to days across different author groups. A larger ratio of messages to days indicates a more intensive commitment to the group than a smaller ratio. As shown in Table 6.4 on the page before, very frequent authors wrote an average of 7.64 messages on every day they participated. At the same time, we should note that down to the infrequent authors, participants averaged about two posts for each day of participating.

The distribution of messages by threads offers a second mode of assessing the behaviors of the participants. As discussed above, the nearly 46,000 messages posted to the group found their way into nearly 8,500 different threads. As discussed in Section 3.3 on page 51, every message contains a subject heading, which permits organization of the newsgroup by thread. Authors who are following up or replying to another message frequently will post a message in the same thread. This is to ease the reading of the newsgroup, as most newsreading software allows the user to select for reading only those articles matching indicating threads. In other words, threads serve as cues to other readers that a message is “related” to previous messages in the same thread. A thread can be viewed as miniature conversation among the participating authors, and the newsgroup can be considered to have as many simultaneous conversations as there are simultaneous threads.

Table 6.5: Categorization of Threads by Number of Messages

Thread Group	Cumulative Percent of Posts	Number of Threads in Decile	Cumulative Number of Threads	Percent of Total Threads	Cumulative Percent of Threads	Minimum Number of Posts Per Thread
1	10%	7	7	0.08%	0.08%	329
2	20%	21	28	0.25%	0.33%	162
3	30%	44	72	0.52%	0.85%	72
4	40%	89	161	1.05%	1.90%	41
5	50%	164	325	1.89%	3.79%	22
6	61%	321	646	3.83%	7.62%	12
7	71%	541	1187	6.38%	14.00%	7
8	81%	948	2135	11.18%	25.18%	4
9	90%	1855	3990	21.88%	47.06%	2
10	100%	4489	8479	52.94%	100.00%	1

A simple categorization of threads was created by sorting all messages posted to the newsgroup by the number of messages in the thread to which it was posted, and then grouping together threads by deciles of total posts. Thus, the first group of threads encompasses those threads associated with the ten percent of the messages posted to threads with the most posts. The tenth group of threads encompasses those threads associated with the ten percent of the messages posted to threads with the least posts. Table 6.5 and Table 6.6 on the next page provides descriptive statistics of the ten thread groups. This analysis is supplemented by Figures C.5, C.6, C.7 and C.8 in Appendix C on page 167. The top group, accounting for ten percent of the messages posted to the group, includes just seven threads, with a range of messages from 329 to 1,724. The bottom group – which by definition also includes ten percent of the messages – includes more than half the total threads, all of which have just a single message included. From this analysis, it is clear that most posts are concentrated in relatively few threads. Half of the messages posted to the group were associated with 325 threads.

More than half of the threads contributed to in the talk.abortion newsgroup during the study period contained a single message. If threads are viewed as a series of messages forming an ongoing discussion, these threads represent conversational dead-ends. The single-message threads constituted about ten percent of the total messages posted to the newsgroup during the study period. Of course, all of these

Table 6.6: Messages, Authors, Days and Spread of Threads by Decile

Thread Decile	Mean Messages	Mean Authors	Mean Days	Mean Spread
1	227.70	50.60	41.60	117.45
2	109.07	27.81	26.05	96.07
3	52.75	16.86	17.03	52.38
4	30.78	12.28	12.16	45.68
5	16.43	7.78	8.06	31.34
6	9.64	5.58	5.60	25.72
7	5.76	3.77	3.82	18.00
8	3.39	2.62	2.54	11.56
9	2.00	1.79	1.71	5.37
10	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00

threads feature a single author posting on a single day, with a spread of zero days. Focusing on the top five deciles, representing half of the messages posted to the newsgroup, there is a clear relationship among the number of messages and the number of authors, days and spread of a thread. In summary, the more messages in a thread, the more authors, number of days and spread of days. There does not appear to be any differentiation among the number of authors, days or spread associated with the number of messages in a thread.

6.2 Message and Author Reciprocity

This section examines the measure of reciprocity among authors in the newsgroup. As discussed in Section 2.4 on page 31, reciprocity refers to the opportunities to gain knowledge of the perspectives of others, and the degree to which these opportunities are realized. The aspect of reciprocity that is measured here is equally focused on both halves of the definition, that is, both the opportunity and the realization portion. The measure of reciprocity to be used here is drawn from the tradition of citation analysis or bibliometric studies (Rice, Borgman & Reeves 1988, So 1988, Garfield 1979), which suggests that journal citations are good indicators of communication within groups of scholars. Citation analyses measures the role and impact of a particular journal, article or author (the object)

on the scientific community by examining the set of articles *cited* by the object, and the set of articles *citing* the object. Similarities and disparities in the cited and citing lists suggest various roles and positions within the scientific community for different journals or sets of journals. For example, Rice, Borgman & Reeves (1988) used citation analysis to demonstrate that communication journals are heavily clustered and inbred within the sub disciplines of mass communication and interpersonal communication, and identified a few specific journals that provided cross-fertilization across the discipline.

Reciprocity is operationalized here in a similar fashion. Each message is analyzed to identify two lists of other messages with which it has a relationship. *Followed* messages are those that are cited by a specific post. *Led* messages are those that cite a specific post. There are two mechanisms by which a message can cite or be cited by another message. A direct citation occurs when a message is identified by the unique message identification number within the body of the text (See 3.1 on page 53. Most newsreading software automatically includes references to the cited post when the participants use the “reply” function of their software. Participants frequently leave in references and text of the cited posts as a tool to build conversational continuity. An indirect citation occurs when messages are posted to the same thread within some fixed (arbitrary) period of time. In this study, no distinction is made between direct and indirect citations. Cited or *followed* messages are defined as those posted to the same thread during the previous three days, and those cited directly in the message. Citing or *led* messages are defined as those posted to the same thread during the subsequent three days, and those citing the message directly. Each message was analyzed to identify those messages it followed, and those messages it led.

To illustrate, assume that message #1010 was added to the thread “Abortion is immoral” at 2:05 PM on September 10, 1995. Message #1010 directly cites two messages: #505 and #675. Message #1010 indirectly cited three messages: #500, #505 and #510. These three messages constitute the entire list of messages added to the thread “Abortion is immoral” between 12:01 AM on September 4th and 2:04 PM on September 10. Message #1010 has a total of four *unique* followed posts: #500, #505, #510, #610 (#505 appeared in both lists, and is counted only once). A similar procedure is used to calculate the list of led posts.

Lists of followed and led messages are then summed across authors to build measures of *message reciprocity*. For example, assume that author “George” contributed 100 messages to the newsgroup. George’s 100 messages followed a com-

Table 6.7: Message Reciprocity By Author Groups

Author Group	Mean Messages Followed	Mean Follow Ratio	Mean Messages Led	Mean Led Ratio	Mean Difference Ratio
Very Frequent	5831.93	4.86	5919.07	4.76	1.06
Frequent	1421.43	7.56	1377.23	7.41	1.06
Occasional	484.93	9.60	478.31	9.39	1.06
Infrequent	239.08	11.19	230.80	10.78	1.12
Very Infrequent	89.34	14.49	85.35	13.94	1.39
Two-time	32.21	16.12	29.27	14.66	2.02
One-time	14.92	14.92	14.39	14.39	2.19
All Authors	116.00	14.47	113.30	13.82	1.86

$F = 2.65$ $F = 2.06$ $F = 5.69$
 $p = 0.01$ $p = .05$ $p = 0.00$

bined total of 1,000 unique messages, and led a total of 1,200 unique messages. With this data, three additional measures can be calculated. The *follow ratio* is the ratio of followed messages to authored messages, in this case 1000 : 100 or 10.00. The *led ratio* is the ratio of led messages to authored messages, in this case 1200 : 100 or 12.00. Finally, the *difference ratio* is ratio of followed messages to led messages, in this case 1000 : 1200 or .83. Difference ratios less than one indicate that an individual author leads more messages than he follows. Difference ratios greater than one indicate the opposite effect.

Table 6.7 illustrates trends in message reciprocity. As would be expected, the mean messages followed and mean messages led are strongly correlated with number of messages contributed. The very frequent authors averaged 5,831 followed messages, and 5,919 led messages. The mean follow and mean led ratios are lower for the more frequent author groups; an analysis of variance of the two ratios indicate significant differences across the groups. More frequent authors follow and lead, on a per message basis, fewer messages than less frequent authors. Additionally, a comparison of the mean difference ratios indicates that more frequent authors, on average, are about equally likely to lead messages and to follow messages. Less frequent authors, on the other hand, are, on average, much more likely to follow messages than to lead messages.

Lists of followed and led messages also provide the basis for measures of *author reciprocity*. Author reciprocity is calculated on the basis of unique authors of followed and led messages. For example, continuing with the example from above, assume that the 1,000 followed messages were written by 400 different authors, and that the 1,200 led messages were written by 300 different authors. The author follow ratio would now be calculated as 400 : 100 or 4.00, the author led ratio as 300 : 100 or 3.00; and the author difference ratio is 4 : 3 or 1.33. In addition, the lists of followed and led authors can be combined and then sorted into three categories: *reciprocated* authors are those appearing on both the list of followed and led authors; *followed* authors are those appearing only on the list of followed authors, and *led* authors appear only on the list of led authors. The relationships between these three measures provides additional estimates of an individual author's reciprocity.

Author reciprocity scores for groups of authors are provided in Table 6.8 on the following page. Not surprisingly, those authors writing more messages tend, on average, to follow, reciprocate and lead more authors than those writing fewer messages. However, when the ratios of authors followed, reciprocated and led are examined, the same pattern emerges as was found with message reciprocity. Authors in the groups of more frequent authors tend to follow, reciprocate and lead fewer authors per message contributed than those in the groups of less frequent authors.

Message reciprocity and author reciprocity provide estimates of the amount of interaction between authors. Every message posted to the newsgroup may have followed other messages – either by citing the message ID number or adding to an existing thread. Every message posted to the newsgroup may have led other messages, indicated by having its message ID number cited in a subsequent message, or having subsequent messages added to the thread. Each author is then described in terms of message and author reciprocity. Message reciprocity measures the number of messages that that author's contributions followed, and the number of messages that that author's contributions led. The average message posted by very frequent, frequent and occasional authors – who account for almost 80% of the messages in the newsgroup (See Table 6.2 on page 85) – followed about six messages, and led about six messages. Authors in these groups tended to lead as many messages as they followed. The average message posted by infrequent, very infrequent, two-time and one-time authors, on the other hand, followed and led more than twice as many messages as those posted by the more frequent authors. These authors posted messages which were, on average, more likely to lead

Table 6.8: Author Reciprocity By Author Groups

Author Group	Mean Authors Followed	Mean Authors Reciprocated	Mean Authors Led	Mean Follow Ratio	Mean Reciprocated Ratio	Mean Led Ratio
Very Frequent	135.47	414.53	152.93	0.14	0.37	0.14
Frequent	64.25	152.17	67.37	0.35	0.86	0.37
Occasional	29.79	69.36	30.47	0.61	1.38	0.62
Infrequent	22.03	41.89	21.77	1.06	1.97	1.04
Very Infrequent	12.20	17.04	12.01	2.20	2.83	2.20
Two-time	6.93	5.91	6.74	3.46	2.95	3.37
One-time	4.38	2.40	4.21	4.38	2.40	4.21
All Authors	9.99	15.14	9.98	3.38	2.49	3.27

$F = 15.86$ $F = 14.48$ $F = 12.88$
 $p = 0.00$ $p = 0.00$ $p = 0.00$

other messages than to follow other messages.

A final measure of author reciprocity analyzes the type of authors with whom reciprocal relationships are established. A reciprocal relationship is considered present between two authors when at least one message written by the first author either cites or is cited by the other author. In other words, the authors previously labeled as followed, reciprocated and led are summed to form the group of authors with whom a reciprocal relationship exists. As shown in in Table 6.9 on the following page, the average author established a reciprocal relationship with about 35 other participants in the talk.abortion newsgroup during the study period. This represents about one percent of the possible 2,788 relationships that could have been established. The number of reciprocal relationships varies widely across author groups. Very frequent authors established reciprocal relationships with nearly a quarter of the participants, while frequent authors interacted with about ten percent of the other authors. The infrequent authors, who contributed an average of only 15 messages, interacted with an average of 85 authors. Even the one-time only contributors established reciprocal relationships with an average of 11 authors. Within group reciprocity is also shown in Table 6.9. The very frequent authors established reciprocal relationships with 92 percent of the other authors in

Table 6.9: Number and Percent of Reciprocated Authors By Author Groups

Author Group	Mean Number of Reciprocated Authors							Total
	VF	F	O	I	VI	TT	OT	
Very Frequent	13.73	52.20	55.40	86.00	240.20	78.07	177.33	702.93
Frequent	12.07	37.77	28.55	37.85	87.55	24.48	55.52	283.78
Occasional	10.27	23.44	14.04	16.12	35.23	9.63	20.89	129.61
Infrequent	8.04	15.76	8.11	11.34	23.10	6.24	13.09	85.68
Very Infrequent	4.93	7.85	3.83	4.98	10.95	2.94	5.77	41.24
Two-time	2.63	3.62	1.71	2.20	4.81	1.77	2.84	19.58
One-time	1.61	2.17	0.99	1.23	2.50	0.76	1.74	11.00
All Authors	3.35	5.91	3.28	4.31	9.61	2.79	5.88	35.11

Author Group	Mean Percent of Reciprocated Authors							Total
	VF	F	O	I	VI	TT	OT	
Very Frequent	92%	87%	74%	58%	35%	18%	11%	24%
Frequent	80%	63%	38%	25%	13%	6%	4%	10%
Occasional	68%	39%	19%	11%	5%	2%	1%	4%
Infrequent	54%	26%	11%	8%	3%	1%	1%	3%
Very Infrequent	33%	13%	5%	3%	2%	1%	<1%	1%
Two-time	18%	6%	2%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%
One-time	11%	4%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
All Authors	22%	10%	4%	3%	1%	1%	<1%	1%

their group, as well as 87 percent of the frequent and 74 percent of the occasional authors. At the other extreme, the one-time authors reciprocated an average of 2.17 very frequent authors, and 1.74 other one-time authors.

6.3 Abortion Density and Metacommunication Density

An important aspect of this project is to generate a measure of content quality. Two factors suggested a machine-generated content coding system: the size of the database, which made it impractical to read and code the entire corpus of mes-

sages; and the desire to avoid sampling content, given the distribution patterns among threads and authors (see Section 6.1 on page 76). The purpose of the quality measure, was to generate a score for each message reflecting the relative amounts of abortion-related and what is labeled “metacommunication” related content. Metacommunication content is defined as self-reflective communication: all discussion concerning the newsgroup or the conversation itself, as well as the participants and their behavior within the conversation. Abortion content is defined as any communication related to the issue or topic of abortion.⁷

One method to complete this assessment is to compare the words used in the message to words used in a sample of messages that have been coded using traditional content analysis protocols. A sample of 1,300 messages was selected, stratified by week of message and author frequency. Each of the sampled messages was coded for the presence or absence of both abortion and metacommunication content. Messages with abortion content present were identified as “abortion related messages.” Messages with abortion content absent *and* metacommunication content present were coded as “metacommunication messages.” Messages with neither abortion nor metacommunication content were coded as “missing.” A total of 582 messages were coded as abortion, 524 messages were as metacommunication, and 194 as missing.

Following Best (1996), a concordance and stemming procedure was designed to score messages for similarity to the coded messages. A stemmed word concordance was performed on all abortion messages and all metacommunication messages. A word concordance is simply a list of all full words appearing in a message or group of messages. A full word is a sequence of characters (letters and numerals) separated by “non-word” characters (white space, commas, dashes, punctuation, etc.) appearing on original lines of text. A total of 32,953 unique full words (among 2.7 million total words) were found across all messages in the newsgroup.

This list is first limited to words having more than three letters. Secondly, this list is compared against a list of the 120 most “common” English words; words appearing on the “stop” list are disregarded. Finally, words are stripped of their prefix and suffix, and reduced to “stemmed words. Stemmed words are those portions of full words remaining after suffixes and prefixes have been removed,

⁷This definition was interpreted very liberally in the content analysis. For example, while the material quoted from previous texts was not included in the density scores, it was considered when coding a message as related to abortion.

and represent those parts of full words that are morphologically similar. Passing words through a “stemming program” removes suffixes and prefixes, and normalizes tense. This results in far fewer unique words, and allows a comparison among words based on the “strong semantic links between the various forms of a root” (Best 1996) word. A total of 11,263 unique stemmed words were found across all messages. The resultant word lists were analyzed for unique words. A total of 7,570 words appeared in the coded messages. Of these, about one third (2,500) appeared in at least one abortion and one metacommunication post. Close to half (3,373) of the words appeared only in an abortion message, while the remainder (1,697) appeared only in a metacommunication message. Of these, nearly 90 percent of the words appeared in fewer than three messages.

Two separate word lists were then created. The abortion word list includes words appearing in at least three abortion messages, and for which the proportion of abortion messages in which it appeared was at least five percent greater than the proportion of metacommunication messages in which it appeared. An identical procedure was followed to create the metacommunication word list. This procedure results in an abortion list of 49 word stems, and a metacommunication list of 19 word stems. Each word stem, of course, represents more than one individual word. A total of 275 abortion words and 70 metacommunication words are reflected by the stemmed word list. The word stems and unstemmed words are included in Appendix B as Table B.1 on page 165 and Table B.2 on page 166.

Each message in the collection was then coded against these two lists. Following a procedure suggested by Best (1996), two components were added together to create the respective density scores. The first component was the proportion of word stems on each list matched by the message. The second component was the proportion of word stems in the message matching a word stem on the list. For example, Message *A* contains a total of 120 word stems, including 75 unique word stems, and 45 duplicated word stems. Of the 75 unique word stems, seven are found on the abortion word list. The first component of the abortion density score would thus be the proportion of unique words matching the abortion word list to words on the abortion word list, or $7/49 = .058$. Of the 120 word stems, a total of 11 match word stems found on the abortion list (two of the seven unique matches are used twice, and one is used three times). The second component of the abortion density score would thus be the proportion of words matching the abortion word list to total words in the post, or $11/120 = .09$. The abortion density score assigned to this post would be $.058 + .09 = .148$. Abortion and metacommunication density scores were calculated for each message in the newsgroup, and

Table 6.10: Correlation between Density Scores and Characteristics of Authors and Threads

Measure	Author Characteristics		Thread Characteristics	
	Abortion Density	Metacomm. Density	Abortion Density	Metacomm. Density
Number of Messages	-0.16	0.27	0.10	-0.14
Number of Threads	-0.12	0.25	0.10	-0.14
Number of Days	-0.09	0.19	0.15	-0.19
Spread of Days	-0.06	0.21	0.12	-0.14

reliability tests for the measure conducted (see Appendix B on page 163).

As indicated in Table 6.10, frequency of authorship is strongly and positively correlated with a higher average metacommunication density. Further, threads with fewer messages, occurring over fewer days and featuring fewer authors are more likely to have messages with higher metacommunication densities. More frequent authors are more likely to contribute messages talking about the newsgroup and the newsgroup's participants than less frequent authors, and to contribute these messages in shorter threads featuring fewer authors. Although the relationships are statically weaker, there is also evidence to indicate that frequent authors are less likely to contribute messages high in abortion content. The negative correlations shown in Table 6.10 indicate that it is the less frequent authors who are more likely to contribute messages high in abortion density.

Further evidence of these finding is shown in Table 6.11 on the following page and Table 6.12 on page 100. Very frequent authors have a lower mean abortion density than one time authors. The highest average abortion density is found in the frequent and occasional authors. Correspondingly, very frequent authors have a mean metacommunication density score more than twice that of any other author group. The threads most likely to attract abortion content are those with many messages. Short threads are highest in metacommunication density.

The findings concerning abortion and metacommunication density call into question the quality of the discussion in the talk.abortion newsgroup. If the most frequent contributors – who are responsible for the great bulk of the conversation – are the least likely to contribute messages related to the topic at hand, the quality of the entire conversation is most certainly reduced. At the same time, however, it is encouraging to see that the frequent and occasional authors contribute the high-

Table 6.11: Abortion Density and Metacommunication Density By Author Groups

Author Group	Mean Abortion Density	Mean Metacommunication Density
Very Frequent	0.27	0.11
Frequent	0.36	0.05
Occasional	0.32	0.03
Infrequent	0.29	0.02
Very Infrequent	0.30	0.06
Two-time	0.28	0.03
One-time	0.33	0.03
	$F = 2.82$	$F = 11.01$
	$p = 0.01$	$p = 0.00$

est quality (as measured by abortion density) messages. These authors, while not as fanatical in their devotion to the newsgroup, appear to be the ones carrying on the most serious and high quality conversations in the newsgroup.

Table 6.12: Abortion Density and Metacommunication Density By Thread Deciles

Thread Group	Mean Abortion Density	Mean Metacommunication Density
1	0.39	0.03
2	0.36	0.05
3	0.33	0.07
4	0.30	0.08
5	0.27	0.09
6	0.27	0.10
7	0.27	0.11
8	0.24	0.13
9	0.23	0.15
10	0.22	0.22

$F = 10.73$ $F = 36.78$
 $p = 0.00$ $p = 0.00$

Chapter 7

The Expanding Public Sphere

This thesis advances our understanding of the opportunities provided by Usenet, and by extension other forms of computer mediated communication, to expand the public sphere. As importantly, this thesis introduces a methodology for examining the patterns of communication within Usenet newsgroups, and provides some initial steps toward understanding the nature of this rapidly developing communications medium.

This thesis suggests that Usenet newsgroup might expand the public sphere by providing opportunities for individual citizens to engage each other in rational-critical debate about the abortion issue. More specifically, criteria by which a public sphere arena can be evaluated for its goodness of fit with the idealized public sphere defined by Habermas (1989) in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* are specified and measures for each of these criteria are developed and applied to an ongoing conversation about politics. The informal zone of the public sphere created by the participants in the talk.abortion newsgroup was found to be diverse and reciprocal, but lacking in equality and quality. This chapter summarizes the main arguments presented in the thesis and highlights the key findings. It must be noted that this work represents a beginning, not an end. Other dimensions with which to measure the public sphere could have been selected, and might have resulted in different conclusions. Additionally, alternative operationalizations of the dimensions may have resulted in alternative findings. It is important, however, that the scholarly community continue to expand our abilities to measure the nature of the public sphere, especially with reference to emerging communication technologies.

Usenet newsgroups are unquestionably a component of the informal zone of the public sphere. Although Habermas (1996) argues that the informal zone is comprised of organizations and associations dedicated to influencing public policy, a more inclusive definition of the informal public sphere is suggested here. The definition of the public sphere should be expanded to include all forms of “associational space,” which provide the primary opportunity for citizens to converse with each other. These “core settings of informal public life” (Oldenburg 1989) have been identified by several terms, including “free spaces” (Evans & Boyte 1986), “third places” (Oldenburg 1989) and “micromobilization contexts” (McAdam 1988).

Evans & Boyte (1986, 86) defined “free spaces” to include those autonomous places in which ordinary citizens “are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue.” Put simply, they continue, “free spaces are settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision.” In their work, Evans & Boyte (1986) identify churches and informal women’s groups as free spaces. Oldenburg (1989) used the term “third place” to differentiate a space that was neither work nor home, and in which people had the freedom and autonomy to engage each other in public discussion. Third places – *salons* in the 18th century, barber shops, diners and corner taverns in the 20th, and perhaps electronic newsgroups in the 21st – are those autonomous settings, frequently featuring “regular” conversants (Liebow 1967, Anderson 1976), in which participants are free to discuss a wide range of social and political issues. McAdam (1988) used the term “micromobilization context” to suggest that such places have the possibility of serving as mobilizing tools sparking social movement activity.

However, even without any clearly identified political activity resulting from the discussions, these associational spaces contribute to the opinion- and will-formation exercise that is the function of the public sphere in a democratic society. Usenet newsgroups provide extensive opportunities for individuals to comment on topics of public concern, and more importantly to engage in public discourse about issues of importance to society with other citizens. To the extent that these places are few and far between, democracy is threatened (Bellah et al. 1991, Barber 1984), as political discussion becomes formalized formulaic (Stanley 1983), losing the spontaneity necessary for full-fledged citizen discussion (Habermas 1996).

Newsgroups, perhaps more so than any other forms of associational space, provide

open access to anyone.¹ In a newsgroup, the force of the argument is more likely to be the sole source of discussion – rather than the social status attributes of the arguer – than in any other informal settings. Newsgroups provide unfettered access to the informal zone of the public sphere. There are no restrictions on entry or exit; individuals can and do move freely in and out of the conversation, both without sanction on themselves and without impact on others. There are no editorial forces limiting what topics may be brought up or discussed. In other words, there is a formal sense of equality of access inherent in the *technology* of the unmoderated group.

As such, the talk.abortion newsgroup is an important part of the informal zone of the public sphere dedicated to a democratic resolution of the abortion issue. The newsgroup provides an opportunity for ordinary citizens to discuss the issue outside of the boundaries of reality and respect imposed on the deliberative public spheres. In the deliberative public spheres, representatives are more or less limited to choosing among pre-selected alternatives, and required to restrain their emotions in the interest of resolving this and other issues. Participants in the newsgroup are under no such restriction.

The newsgroup provides opportunities for citizens to fulfill a number of functions of political talk, including agenda setting, exploring mutuality, affection and affiliation, and community building (Barber 1984). Participants are able to shape the agenda, and are not required to keep the topics under discussion to a pre-determined, pre-selected set of options. Habermas (1996) identified this capability as one of the structural advantages of the informal over the formal zone of the public sphere. In shaping the agenda, participants have the potential to explore the “passions that make two (or more) separate identities one single we,” (Barber 1984, 184); that is, to uncover common ground and shared expectations. In addition, participants in newsgroups develop a sense of affection and affiliation with one another through their exchanges. These actions contribute to a sense of community building, to the “the development of a citizenry capable of genuinely public thinking and political judgment and thus able to envision a common future in terms of genuinely common goods” (Barber 1984, 194).

The assessment of the talk.abortion newsgroup over the course of the year found

¹That is to say, to anyone who has access to a computer and the Internet, and who has the skills enabling them to read and to write. And although access is today clearly distributed by social class, all available data suggest that this bias has weakened during the past five years, and will continue to do so in the future, to the point that access to computer networks becomes as ubiquitous as access to the telephone network or the broadcast television system.

the group to be active: as illustrated in Table 6.1 on page 77, nearly 46,000 messages were posted to the group by almost three thousand different authors in close to 8,500 different threads. Assuming a 7-day expiration period, a reader of the newsgroup would have found about 800 messages by 150 authors in 225 different threads on an “average” day. The patterns of author contributions, threads, and messages per day were examined for evidence of equality, diversity, reciprocity and quality. As discussed in Chapter 6, the talk.abortion newsgroup was found to be diverse and reciprocal, but lacking in equality and quality. Thus, on two of the four dimensions, the newsgroup closely resembles what is demanded by the idealized vision of the public sphere. Those who seek to have a public sphere which highlights diversity and reciprocity over quality and equality may find these results encouraging. Of course, those who value equality and quality more highly may see these findings as discouraging. It is important to note both the tentativeness of these conclusions, and the necessity for further research.

In the informal zone of the public sphere, equality is achieved with equal access to speaking opportunities and equal distribution of voice among the speakers. Equality is an important feature of the informal public sphere because it signals participants that their voice matters, and that their voice matters in some equal proportion to other’s voices. This is a plebiscitary notion, supportive of the one person, one vote model familiar in democratic theory (Wolin 1960). There is, to be sure, a balancing involved with equality. One could certainly argue that equality in voice is unnecessarily restrictive of intensity – that perhaps it is desirable for those with the most intense feelings to speak the most frequently. At the same time, though, it is clear from the distribution of participation in the talk.abortion newsgroup that participation is not even remotely equally distributed. Remember: *one half of one percent of the authors account for more than 40 percent of the articles posted to the newsgroup during the study period; five percent of the authors account for nearly 80 percent of the articles posted.* Even if one wanted to argue for intensity over equality, this level of concentration cannot be called consistent with the idealized vision of the public sphere. A more equal representation of speakers in the newsgroup would have brought the newsgroup closer to this vision by ensuring a broader representation of the views of the participants.

On the dimension of quality, the talk.abortion newsgroup was also found to fall well short of the mark demanded by the idealized vision of the informal public sphere. Quality was measured by the tendency of participants in the newsgroup to stay “on-topic;” that is, by their tendency for their contributions to actually be about abortion. The idealized public sphere requires that the merits of the argu-

ment, not the characteristics of the arguer, carry the day. This, of course, implies that contributions to the public sphere be about what is ostensibly being talked about, that the contributions be “on topic.” The most frequent authors were found to be the least likely to contribute messages that were on topic, and the most likely to contribute messages that were off topic. This finding exacerbates the implications of inequality, discussed in the previous paragraph. Certainly, a greater commitment among all authors – and especially among the most frequent contributors – to discussing abortion within the newsgroup would also have brought the group closer to the idealized vision.

The other dimensions on which the newsgroup was evaluated suggest a public sphere closer to what is required by the idealized vision. Diversity in the informal zone of the public sphere focuses on the range of conversational patterns both across the newsgroup and by the participants within the newsgroup. Highly diverse patterns of conversation suggest that participants have the freedom to shape the arena; a narrow range of patterns indicate the presence of constraints imposed on the participants. The *talk.abortion* newsgroup was found to be highly tractable, as the size of the newsgroup contracted and expanded considerably over time. In comparison, the number of newspaper stories referencing the abortion issue during the same period were less tractable on a day to day basis. The second aspect of diversity examined the entry and exit of authors over time, to determine if the newsgroup featured a diverse set of contributors. The data clearly indicate that the newsgroup featured both a consistent, regular group of participants, as well as a subset of constantly changing contributors. Thus, on both measures, the *talk.abortion* newsgroup can be considered highly diverse.

The dimension of reciprocity is used to indicate the amount of interaction among authors, and to ensure that the some groups of participants in the newsgroup are not systematically excluded from interaction by other groups of participants. Reciprocity is an important consideration in assessing the public sphere because it indicates the degree to which participants are actually interacting with each other, and working on identifying their own interests with those of the group, as opposed to talking past each other or engaging in simple bargaining or persuasion. In the idealized public sphere, it is essential that participants move beyond the lower levels of political talk, and are able to engage in reflective discussion (Barber 1984). It is clear from the data presented that authors in the *talk.abortion* newsgroup were reciprocal with many other authors. Even one-time authors, on average, interacted with 11 other authors. The fact reciprocity increases with contributions suggests a lack of author cliques. A participants chances of interacting with any other author

are a function of the number of contributions made to the newsgroup. This finding suggests that reciprocity is not only high, but a function of participation rather than social attributes.

The fact that the newsgroup was found to be diverse and reciprocal, but neither equal nor of quality, poses a challenge for those wishing to understand the public sphere. It could be that the particular topic at hand – abortion – is likely to result in a public sphere with this particular configuration. On the other hand, it could be that the communications technology employed – computer mediated discussion – yields these results. Additional research in which the topic and the technology are systematically varied is necessary to understand the relationship between these two factors and the dimensions of the public sphere.

Computer mediated technologies, including those deployed today as Usenet newsgroups, have great potential to strengthen the crucial informal zone. Even though the group was found to be inequal and of less-than-hoped for quality, the possible “solutions” to these problems would cause more harm than good. For example, having an individual moderate the newsgroup – deciding which messages to allow, and which messages to exclude – would have the effect of introducing editorial control into the public sphere. Once the power to manage the group is removed from each individual participant, and transferred to a “representative” of the participants, the democratic character of the arena is compromised. The impact of such a solution would be to reduce the conversation to reflect those topics the editor deemed appropriate, and prevent it from being the open-ended and wide-ranging forum that it is. These are precisely the qualities that Habermas (1996) suggests ought to be part of the construction of the informal zone of the public sphere. Alternatively, individual participants ought to develop the skills to self-manage their conversations. In the newsgroup environment, these skills can be as simple as ignoring messages by specific authors and as complex as writing programs to automatically exclude such messages.

Opportunities to engage other citizens in conversation always have a net benefit to democracy. The quality of the informal zone of the public sphere is improved every time citizens discuss political issues in a public setting that is equal, diverse, reciprocal and of high quality. Such opportunities to expand the informal zone of the public sphere ought to be encouraged whenever and wherever possible.

Appendix A

The talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

This Appendix describes the talk.abortion newsgroup as a reader would have found it on August 9, 1994. It assumes that the the news server expires articles after seven days. Table A.1 lists the threads to which articles were posted, and the number of articles available within each thread. Table A.2 on page 117 identifies the names of authors contributing articles, and the number of articles contributed by each. Table A.3 on page 122 contains the first 50 articles from the *Pro-life Gunman kills two in FL* thread. Material in this appendix is discussed in Chapter 1.

Table A.1: Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

#	Title of Thread
95	Re: Pro-life Gunman kills two in FL
50	Re: Another "pro-life" murderer shows the true nature of a "cause"
41	Re: treating woman as containers
36	Re: Rights
24	Re: kotm nomination: mark o. wilson
23	Re: Go on...
22	Re: "Abortion doctor's killing is Pro-Choice dogma's inevitability"

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
20	Re: countering terrorism
16	Re: What do Opponents of Abortion Think about Alternative Sex Acts?
16	Re: MEET GEORGE TILLER, LATE-TERM ABORTIONIST
16	Re: Abortion clinic poised to seize a church's assets
15	Re: return to: imposition of beliefs
14	Re: THE SUNDERED ARGUMENT AGAINST ABORTION (old and unimproved)
14	Re: Clinton Nazis Will Be on Warpath
13	Re: a repost of my position
12	Re: Standard pro-"life" lie #11043D (a.k.a. The Timex Assertion)
12	Re: Prolifers and Jesus can go FUCK Themselves
10	Re: An Honest Question
9	Re: The Illuminati Are Back!
9	Re: Patrick Humphrey's twisted sense of values
9	Re: He's definitely masturbating.
8	Re: Post on Exodus 21 for Safier
8	Re: PHoney, did you see this post? (repost of response to "M. Price
8	Re: MURDER! NNNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!
7	Re: Take me down to Mexico...
7	Re: Simple truth about Abortion
7	Re: Not! [was Re: Another "pro-life" murderer ...
7	Re: American Collegians for Life SPECIAL NOTICE
6	Re: THE ISSUE
6	Re: Master! A storm approaches!
6	Re: Liberal Vermin have found a new martyr !!!!
6	Re: Indian parliament passes bill outlawing sex-determination shops
6	Re: Florida again?
6	Re: Another "pro-life" murderer ...
5	Re: what is a pro-choice extremist?
5	Re: the "lying bitch" quartet
5	Re: some details about the "good doctor" and his background
5	Re: Jupiter Radios Earth For Help!
5	Re: Down ... and ... out.
5	Re: Assasins on the Lose
5	Re: A little ditty...
4	Re: please help mark wilson with some sex facts
4	Re: even a bulletproof vest did not help!

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
4	Re: abortion as murder
4	Re: Which abortions do you support?
4	Re: Serious. So serious.
4	Re: Questions
4	Re: Poor Darcy; sex upsets him so ...
4	Re: PHoney and rape
4	Re: More of keegan's confusion
4	Re: Another Try
4	Re: Adrienne ignores the obvious (was Re:
4	More of keegan's excuses
3	liar ray is too cowardly to apologize for flaming kelly's wedding announcement
3	another liar ray thread
3	Re: why linking killing & abortion
3	Re: Why RU486 will be so useful
3	Re: Who is obsessed with masturbation?
3	Re: What the devil's going on?
3	Re: Viewing sexual activity as gambling (was kotm nomination...)
3	Re: Today's lie from Kevin Darcy: 7/21/94.01
3	Re: The World According to Osmo
3	Re: Solution to abortion!
3	Re: Roe v. Wade is abortion on demand throughout pregnancy
3	Re: Republicans for Choice?
3	Re: RU 486
3	Re: Proof that Ray did post a flame after the wedding announcement
3	Re: Pro-Life Condemns Shootings
3	Re: Paul Hill (re: shooting in Florida)
3	Re: Operation Rescue: Hill's Accomplice
3	Re: Male Domination
3	Re: Koffer's .sig file isn't in accordance with his views. Hee hee.
3	Re: Birth control & abortion
3	Re: Bill on separation of church and state
3	Re: Ben, you're always running here and there
3	Re: A clue!
3	Re: "Pro-life" activists shoot and kill more clinic employees in Florida
3	RE: Bill on separation of church and state
2	why does liar ray keep lying about kelly's wedding flame
2	tweaking liar ray

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
2	squirm liar ray, squirm
2	liar ray packs a bunch of lies into a single post
2	liar ray can't stop evading
2	Re: there can be only
2	Re: liar ray lies about his lies
2	Re: liar keegan is too cowardly to apologize for flaming kelly's wedding announcement
2	Re: another liar keegan thread
2	Re: Why not Kill for divorce, Adultery, pre-marital sex ?
2	Re: Wealth Distribution (was Re: The unimportance of basic medical care)
2	Re: Today's DarcySpew.
2	Re: The world according to Osmo
2	Re: Ronald Reagan's abortion speech, 1988
2	Re: PLEASE EXPLAIN: what is all this garbage? What happened?
2	Re: PHoney hallucinations about my position.
2	Re: Ottawa anti-abortionists
2	Re: One note.
2	Re: New DOOM versions (was Re: id games and Nazis?)
2	Re: Mike Steiner
2	Re: Jesus should work at my bank
2	Re: In-vitro fertilization: the paradox for anti-choicers
2	Re: If abortion is health care ...
2	Re: Flash! - Keebler asks a relevant question!
2	Re: Darling...
2	Re: DODie's gender-specific flames
2	Re: Clinic access
2	Re: Carrots == Fetuses?
2	Re: Biology once again escapes the pro-"life" forces (Was: Re: Standard pro-"life" lie #11043D (a.k.a. The Timex Assertion))
2	Re: Another clueless fool (was: A new .signature for Ray Fischer!)
2	Re: American Collegians for Life SPECIAL NOTICE
2	Re: "Too much liar ray shit"
2	More of keegan's squirming
2	Is *Mezias* the most dishonest poster to t.a.?
1	whoops! Re: kotm nomination: mark o. wilson
1	what is a pro-choice extremist?
1	well now, what have we here ...

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
1	watch liar ray run from one of his lies
1	there can be only
1	the ugly control freak mentality
1	the "lying bitch" quartet
1	something surely must be wrong.
1	safety (was: treating woman as containers)
1	republican/anti-choice standards for murder
1	ray shrugs off his flame of kelly's wedding too
1	ray keeps lying about having flamed kelly's wedding announcement
1	more of liar ray's squirming
1	liar ray seems to have forgotten his "restrictions"
1	liar ray muxes up his lies
1	liar ray lies about his lies
1	liar ray lies about article id's
1	liar ray has no shame
1	liar ray fumbles his lies about article id's
1	liar ray fimbles his lies about article id's
1	liar ray demands evidence that "most people don't want to legislate against abortion"
1	liar ray deletes proof of his lies
1	liar ray continues to lie about flaming kelly's wedding announcement
1	liar ray calls women "breeding animal"'s
1	liar ray and gambino's proof of liar ray's lies
1	is this the end to ray's kelly-wedding-flame thread?
1	in PHoney's absence
1	fetal personhood and rVw numbers
1	even a bulletproof vest did not help!
1	but maybe it's the only way.
1	as usual, liar ray can't back up what he posts
1	as predicted, PHoney was not telling the truth
1	an alternative to abortion ;+)
1	alt.abortion.inequity, soc.women, soc.men, alt.femism
1	a reminder for liar ray : 08
1	a reminder for liar ray : 05
1	Will CBS balance critic of feminism
1	Why should a woman have any rights to the fetus's body?"
1	Why Keegan is a BabyKiller

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
1	Which abortions do you support?
1	What do Opponents of Abortion Think about Alternative Sex Acts?
1	Wealth Distribution (was Re: The unimportance of basic medical care)
1	Viewing sexual activity as gambling (was kotm nomination...)
1	Traditional American Values
1	Top 10 reasons Santa Claus is cooler than Paul Hill's "God"
1	Too much liar ray shit"
1	Today's stupidity from Darcy, 8/5/94.01
1	Today's DarcySpew: On dictionaries again.
1	The truth about the bible and abortion
1	The fundamental reason for pro-life
1	The Reverend's inability to be truthful.
1	The Reverend Douglas Holstinger in broadcast propaganda mode.
1	Taking responsibility
1	Susan Garvin continues to rewrite USENET history
1	Some pro-"life"rs views on murder
1	Solution to abortion!
1	Simple Medical Procedure, Stupid (was Re: Male Domination)
1	She likes Andy.
1	Serious. So serious.
1	Rights of the Fetus
1	Revamping the pro-"life" argument
1	Request for electronic copy of literature
1	Re: why does liar keegan keep lying about kelly's wedding flame
1	Re: tweaking liar keegan
1	Re: these people make me sick
1	Re: the debate of the root
1	Re: squirm liar keegan, squirm
1	Re: republican/anti-choice standards for murder
1	Re: more of liar keegan's squirming
1	Re: liar ray can't even underline
1	Re: liar keegan's extremist position
1	Re: liar keegan packs a bunch of lies into a single post
1	Re: liar keegan fimbles his lies about article id's
1	Re: liar keegan can't stop evading
1	Re: liar keegan begins to consider "evidence"
1	Re: keegan keeps lying about having flamed kelly's wedding announcement

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
1	Re: how captivated is paul phillips?
1	Re: anyone with personal experience who has emotional feelings about
1	Re: an alternative to abortion
1	Re: You are all idiots (both sides)
1	Re: With ... without.
1	Re: Why not Kill for divorce, Adultery, pre-m
1	Re: Why Keegan is a BabyKiller
1	Re: Where is the outrage?
1	Re: Today's DarcySpew: On dictionaries again.
1	Re: They said Jesus was the answer...
1	Re: The people who post to talk.abortion
1	Re: The fundamental reason for pro-life
1	Re: The Reverend's inability to be truthful.
1	Re: The Next Gambino Argument (or, What To Do When You Get Caught In Your Lies)
1	Re: Superficial arguments against abortion
1	Re: Rights of the Fetus
1	Re: Revamping the pro-"life" argument
1	Re: Question for Don Porter.
1	Re: ProLifers Supporting Rape, again
1	Re: Pro-Choice Filth getting arrested?! (6pm 7/16/94 KXTV News)
1	Re: Price on "donate" (Was: Abortion compared to service at a fast food restaurant)
1	Re: Plausible Deniability
1	Re: Paul Hill & Abortion on Nightline
1	Re: Patrick Humphrey's twisted sense of values - not.
1	Re: Patrick Humphrey is at it again
1	Re: Operation Rescue spokesperson on CBS This Morning
1	Re: Muslims and Human Rights
1	Re: More of koward keegan's evasions
1	Re: Mind is Clearer
1	Re: Meet Henry Jakala, this week's fetus fanatic.
1	Re: Media Coverage of Violence
1	Re: Mandatory CPR?!?
1	Re: Lions & Tigers & "BibleBurningGodHatingAtheists!"
	O My/was Re: Why not Kill for divorce, Adultery, pre-m
1	Re: Keegan's extremist position
1	Re: Imminent absence

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
1	Re: I am the Eye in the Sky, looking at you...
1	Re: HELP SAVE MISSISSIPPI'S ONLY ABORTION CLINIC
1	Re: Fetus rights
1	Re: Don't worry about what you don't know.
1	Re: DEATH PENALTY....RETROACTIVE ABORTION?
1	Re: Biology once again escapes the pro-"life" forces (Was: Re:
1	Re: Belief Systems Was: treating woman as containers
1	Re: Anti-rightists
1	Re: Anti Fascist or Mere Murderer?
1	Re: Another pro-"life" fanatic?
1	Re: Another "pro-life" justification for murder
1	Re: Another "pro-choicer" shows the true nature of the "cause"
1	Re: Adrienne ignores the obvious (was Re: Mezas and Humphrey rated "lowest")
1	Re: A quick question...
1	Re: A pro-"life"r on why the murders in Florida were bad
1	Re: "Pro-Lifers" Attack a Pregnant Woman (was Re: even a bulletproof vest did not help!)
1	Re: Another "pro-life" murderer shows the true nature of a "cause"
1	Questions for William December Starr.
1	Question for Don Porter.
1	Propaganda
1	Proof that Darcy is a pro-"life"r
1	Proof of Gambino's prejudices
1	Pro-Life Gays & Lesbians
1	Pro-"life"rs on responsibility
1	Pottawatomie and Pensacola
1	Paul Hill & Abortion on Nightline
1	PatricKKK defies ban on email AGAIN.
1	Pacifist Pro-Lifers
1	PHoney cries "Liar," then proves the accusation false.
1	PHoney continues to make errors
1	PHoney blames me for mistakes by him and Darcy, # 2.
1	PHoney blames me for his mistakes and Darcy's dishonesty.
1	PHoney asks how to respond without pompous self-revelation.
1	Operation Rescue: Hill's Accomplice
1	Operation Rescue spokesperson on CBS This Morning
1	Once More Unto the "Dictionary" Breach...

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
1	On Kevin Darcy's amazing control complex...
1	New DOOM versions (was Re: id games and Nazis?)
1	My apologies to joe
1	More of keegan's misrepresentations
1	More of keegan's evasions
1	More of keegan's confusion
1	Missing Proof that Ray did post a flame after the wedding announcement
1	Meet Matt Kruse, this week's fetus fanatic.
1	Male Domination
1	MEET GEORGE TILLER, LATE-TERM ABORTIONIST
1	M. Price, village atheist?
1	M. Price Waffles on "Commitment" (was Re: Flash! - Keebler asks a relevant question!)
1	Love, you only come alive when you're losing me.
1	Liberal Vermin have found a new martyr !!!!
1	Keegan's hypocrisy
1	Just dropped by to weigh in
1	Jupiter Radios Earth For Help!
1	Joe?
1	Jesus should work at my bank
1	Jakala the Rat-boy says "Liberal Vermin have found a new martyr !!!!"
1	In-vitro fertilization: the paradox for anti-choicers
1	Imminent absence
1	Idiotic equivalencies from anti-choice: D. Stewart.
1	I take my chances...
1	I had a vision of a 3-headed Antichrist!!!
1	Hypocrisy: Frivolous Late-term Abortions vs. Creating False Impressions
1	How Mezas wastes our time
1	His PHoneyNess has a hallucination about Darcy.
1	HELP SAVE MISSISSIPPI'S ONLY ABORTION CLINIC
1	HELP KEEP MISSISSIPPI'S ONLY ABORTION CLINIC OPEN
1	Florida again?
1	Down ... and ... out.
1	Darcy's continuing obsession with PHoney's masturbation.
1	Darcy does not read very well.
1	Carrots and Fetuses
1	Carrots == Fetuses?

Articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

#	Title of Thread
1	CHOICE-NET 7/30/94
1	Bill on separation of church and state
1	Bill Clinton – Too Tough on Crime? (was Re: Clinton Nazis Will Be on Warpath)
1	Anti-rightists
1	Anti Fascist or Mere Murderer?
1	Another pro-"life" fanatic?
1	Another murderer shows the true nature of a "cause"
1	Another keegan fabrication
1	Another keegan evasion
1	Another clueless fool (was: A new .signature for Ray Fischer!)
1	Another "pro-life" murderer shows the true nature of a "cause"
1	And I wonder where she goes to...
1	An Honest Question
1	A typically dishonest Darcy post.
1	A true statement from his PHoneyNess:
1	A quick question...
1	A pro-"life"r on why the murders in Florida were bad
1	A new pro-"life" tactic: the implied consent argument
1	A new .signature for Ray Fischer! (was something else)
1	A message from his PHoneyNess.
1	A little ditty...
1	A fine example of a pro-"life"r justifying murder
1	99.9% by BACKSIDE (Re: American Collegians for Life SPECIAL NOTICE)

Table A.2: Authors Posting articles available on talk.abortion
newsgroup, August 9, 1994

#	Name of Author
152	keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu
94	ray@netcom.com
43	ronkanen@cc.Helsinki.FI
43	nyikos@math.scarolina.edu
28	unknown@nosubdomain.nodomain
28	n-peal@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu
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24	mcdaniel@u.washington.edu
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23	mwilson@ncratl.AtlantaGA.NCR.COM
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21	mprc@troi.cc.rochester.edu
18	steiner@netcom.com
18	gjh@galen.med.Virginia.EDU
17	kevin@rotag.mi.org
14	keegan@nyx10.cs.du.edu
13	jason@ugr3.ucsd.edu
12	wdstarr@crl.com
12	William_Mosco@vos.stratus.com
11	prc@physics.physics.wm.edu
11	abbas@cobra.uni.edu
10	waynet@indirect.com
9	shows@athena.mit.edu
9	gunhed@netcom.com
8	patrick@brazos.is.rice.edu
8	ml3e+@andrew.cmu.edu;
8	jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com
8	garvin+@pitt.edu
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7	rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu
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Authors Posting articles available on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

(continued from previous page)

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4	cwall@swri.edu
4	corwin+@cmu.edu
4	alan@delphi.oes.amdahl.com
3	tudor@onramp.net;
3	smezias@bear.STERN.NYU.EDU
3	s9101519@mella.ee.up.ac.za
3	laskoka2@juncol.juniata.edu
3	gfrazier@efn.org
3	garvin+@cs.cmu.edu
3	etc@po.CWRU.Edu
3	dgp@atlas.wustl.edu
3	ckalina@gwis.circ.gwu.edu
3	bmc@mayo.edu
2	zeus@aero.org
2	sobleski@sol4.cse.psu.edu
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Table A.3: Pro-life gunman kills two in FL: First 50 Articles from Sample Thread on talk.abortion newsgroup, August 9, 1994

Article 1

Reference 161341
 From ray@netcom.com
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 1:08 AM

keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu (james g. keegan jr.) writes ...
 >John Walkup <walkup@phyast.nhn.uoknor.edu> wrote:
 >: Criminy. For the last time: Pro-life supporters are NOT attempting
 >: to legislate against anyone's RIGHTS.
 >
 >prove that persons do not have the right to their
 >bodies and the contents of their bodies.

Easy. If you steal a 4 carat sapphire and swallow it, you gain no
 rights over it merely because it is now a content of your body. The
 rightful owner retains all rights to it.

--
 Ray Fischer "The ultimate test of where a person stands is not where he
 ray@netcom.com or she stands in moments of convenience, but where he or she
 stands in moments of controversy." -- Martin Luther King

Article 2

Reference 161273
 From shows@athena.mit.edu
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 1:06 AM

In article <3lhd12\$6q9@nova.umd.edu>, collins@nova.umd.edu (Jim C) writes:
 |> In <1994Jul31.152824.14074@cs.wm.edu> prc@physics.physics.wm.edu
 |> (Patrick Crotty) writes:
 |>
 |> >The recent murders were the work of a militant fringe, who do not at
 |> >all represent the majority of abortion opponents.
 |>
 |> I fully disagree. Catholicism has a 1000 year history of killing and torturing
 |> those who do not agree with it and submit to its claim of absolute truth, and
 |> people like Randall Terry have repeatedly asserted that they are in full
 |> agreement with this policy and would like to see a return to the Middle Ages.
 |> RT has stated that he believes the Enlightenment was a low point in history.
 |> I have yet to see a low point that the anti-abortion fringe will not sink to,
 |> including setting up fake abortion clinics where women are accused of killing
 |> their "babies" , told that they are murderers, shown films of abortions, and
 |> held against their will. They are fanatics that have ignored the rule of law
 |> and a democratic society, believing that they have an absolute claim on the
 |> truth.

In your ignorance, this country was founded on murder, fanatics, and absolute claim on truth.

These individuals are free to express their opinion, but if my
 |> girlfriend goes to her health clinic for whatever reason, and I feel that she
 |> or I am threated by one of these fascist bastards, I will take whatever steps
 |> I deem necessary to see that I am not threatened, and my lawyer can handle the
 |> details. As far as Im concerned, clinic blockers are handled by the law
 |> already, as put in a sign thats very common down South where Im from.
 |> Trespassers will be shot. Im tired of these loons killing doctors and trying
 |> to tell women what to do. Let them express their opinons within their rights,
 |> and if they are so concerned with children let them adopt some or work to
 |> prevent child abuse or work with disabled children or something. No one
 |> enjoys having a abortion, and Id rather see it legal than have women and
 |> girls dying or having children they hate.

If they don't want children, why kill them?
 Why not give them up for adoption, so that they can be adopted.
 Guess that's too easy for you, Jim.
 (also, keeping the door closed would also be a solution)
 |> Im sorry to go off like this, I just hate to see my country get taken over by
 |> gun-owning bible-waving loons trying to shove their opinion down my throat.

But if I guy in a white hood does it, it's patriotism, right?
 |>
 |> Jim Collins

--

Marlon Shows

Article 3

Reference 161303
 From dsteinbe@nmsu.edu
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 1:18 AM

In article <31jshe\$jfu@usenet.rpi.edu> keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu
 (james g. keegan jr.) writes:
 >Gary Frazier <gfrazier@efn.org> wrote:
 (snip)
 >: The fact that some "prolifers" are willing to kill to
 >: impose their beliefs on others indicates that "life" is not what this is
 >: really about. The agenda is about the control of the greatest pleasure
 >: humans can know...sex.
 >.....or maybe just control.

Or maybe, and I realize that this is just a stretch, maybe the pro-life
 movement really believes abortion is murder. Personally I am
 pro-choice. However I know a lot of intelligent pro-lifers, many
 of whom are not religious, have sex, and don't have a hidden agenda of
 controlling all women. They just happen to believe that abortion is

muder.

I don't understand this need to demonize your opposition (and here I'm speaking to both sides of the abortion debate). Believe it or not, different people can come to different opinions about an issue without one side being evil or mislead. Not all pro-lifers are book burning anti-sex Inquisitioners. Not all pro-choicers are amoral baby killers. The sooner both sides realise this, the sooner we can see if there is any sort of compromise on this issue to be found.

-David "ZZYZX" Steinberg (dsteinbe@emmy.nmsu.edu) "Time for Timer"

 *"It made most people nervous *"I can't believe I'm a junior and a *
 * They just didn't want to know * film major, when all I really *
 * What I was seeing * wanted in this life was to marry a *
 * In the refuge of the roads." * lobsterman and cook fish." *
 *-Joni Mitchell * -a letter from Christie Searing *

Article 4

Reference 161346
 From lneff@copper.ucs.indiana.edu
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 1:24 AM

In article <31bbi6\$6mi@nova.umd.edu>, Jim C <collins@nova.umd.edu> wrote:

>Hill apparently believed that the Bible says its OK to kill people under
 >certain circumstances.

>

One does not have to "believe" that the bible says so; it is indeed a fact that the bible specifies certain conditions and provides narratives and other statements which demonstrate that people may be killed. Here are a few (from the old testament):

Killing of warriors and certain civilians in war;

Stoning of adulterers;

Killing of practicing male (not female) homosexuals;

Killing of those who desecrate the sabbath;

Killing of pregnant women and of children who are part of a nation or tribe characterized as god's enemies (see Hosea);

Killing of a newborn for the sin of his adulterous parents (David and Bathsheba);

Killing of entire extended families for the sins of the patriarch (see the history of the northern kingdom of Israel -- even though children are not to be punished for the sins of the parents...

Just think of the many people we'd lose (born, unborn, and newly born) if the bible were practiced according to what it says -- that is, when it says something consistently...

Yet for some reason god did not live up to his promise that Adam would die on the day that he might eat of the tree of knowledge.

Article 5

Reference 161352
 From waynet@indirect.com
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 2:43 AM

Mike Steiner (steiner@netcom.com) wrote:
 : In Article <rayCts0Cl.9su@netcom.com>, ray@netcom.com (Ray Fischer) wrote:
 : >camfield@olympus.net (Tom Camfield) writes ...
 : >>> "A woman's rights to her body should stop where
 : >>> the fetus's body begins."
 : >>> Ray Fischer <rayCtMJ6A.CHp@netcom.com>
 : >>
 : >>Let's carry denial of a woman's right to her body back to further absurdity
 : >>and make loss of same the point of insemination.
 : >
 : >Thinking isn't your strong point, is it? This is the classic
 : >slippery-slope fallacy carried to a ridiculous extreme.
 : >
 : >Or do you think that a fetus should have no more rights than
 : >the average steak?

 : A fetus *has* no more rights than the average steak.
 And certainly less rights than an *excellent* steak...

 Wayne (waynet@indirect.com) "My ancestors were Puritans from England. They
 arrived here in 1648 in the hope of finding
 greater restrictions than were permissible
 under English law at that time."
 - Garrison Keillor

Article 6

Reference 161368
 From kevin@rotag.mi.org
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 7:46 AM

In article <steiner.1126108905C@192.100.81.105> steiner@netcom.com
 (Mike Steiner) writes:
 >In Article <1994Jul31.213052.15407@rotag.mi.org>, kevin@rotag.mi.org (Kevin
 >Darcy) wrote:
 >>In article <steiner.1126071416A@192.100.81.105> steiner@netcom.com (Mike
 >Steiner) writes:
 >>>
 >>>What is in dispute is whether a fetus has the right to trespass inside a
 >>>woman's body, leeching nutrients from her, against her will. Apparently,

>>>anti-choicers say that it has that right.
 >>
 >>Incorrect. The fetus is not a "trespasser", since it lacks the capacity to
 >>have a criminal intent -- a 5-year-old is likewise incapable of being a
 >>"trespasser". The fetus is at least as much a victim of circumstance as the
 >>woman is. The onset and continuation of pregnancy creates no "aggressor" and
 >>no "victim", in a criminal-justice sense.
 >
 >If the fetus is inside the woman's body and she doesn't want it in there,
 >she has the right to have it evicted,

You said "trespass" before, now you're switching to "eviction"? Very well then...

Under what statute may "eviction" proceedings be brought against a minor who is not legally competent to enter into a leasehold in the first place?

Or are you using the word in a strange way?

- Kevin

Article 7

Reference 161432
 From regard@hpsdde.sdd.hp.com
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 9:24 AM

In article <31k6t2\$sum@dns1.NMSU.Edu> dsteinbe@nmsu.edu (ZZYZX) writes:

>Or maybe, and I realize that this is just a stretch, maybe the pro-life
 >movement really believes abortion is murder. Personally I am
 >pro-choice. However I know a lot of intelligent pro-lifers, many
 >of whom are not religious, have sex, and don't have a hidden agenda of
 >controlling all women. They just happen to believe that abortion is
 >murder.

Do they happen to believe that self-defense is murder, too? Do they happen to believe that organ seizure is "ok"? Do they happen to support the connection of dying violinists to people who protest, as well? They may well think it's murder, but did they stop thinking there? What do they think about forcing the woman to undertake a risk she has no willingness to undertake? About forcing women to support a fetus against their will? Do they think about that part? At all? Or do they figure "too bad"? Do you suppose they have the same attitude about other technological failures?

>Believe it or not,
 >different people can come to different opinions about an issue without
 >one side being evil or mislead.

Perhaps. But are the pro-lifers willing to acknowledge that people of good faith might have an opinion different from them, and *not* act to impose their opinion upon others? After all, pro-choicers aren't forcing pro-lifers to have abortions. They aren't forcing pro-lifers to do much of anything. Pro-choicers do, however, fully expect to be able to govern their own lives according to their own beliefs, and are running into roadblocks erected by these non-evil non-mislead persons who have different opinions.

The difference of opinion isn't the problem. The IMPOSITION of that opinion is.

Adrienne Regard

Article 8

Reference 161385
From weverka@spot.Colorado.EDU
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 10:26 AM

In article <matt-0108941730340001@matt.hip.cam.org>,
Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
>publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
>they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.

In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.
The blood is on their hands.

Article 9

Reference 161408
From ckalina@gwis.circ.gwu.edu
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 11:42 AM

In article <CtwKzu.ErJ@cnsnews.Colorado.EDU>,
Robert T. Weverka <weverka@spot.Colorado.EDU> wrote:
>In article <matt-0108941730340001@matt.hip.cam.org>,
>Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
>>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
>>publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
>>they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.

>In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.
>The blood is on their hands.

Who's "they"? Aren't we generalizing just a tad here? I'm probably one of those you consider "they" and I never gave them a cent. Nor was I ever asked.

When mainstream environmental groups condemn eco-terrorism, I'll grant your point.

--

Charles P. Kalina, Lizard King of the Universe
"If women ran the world, there would be no wars. Instead, nations would tease each other until they developed eating disorders."
My opinions are my own, but they should be everyone's... :-)

Article 10

Reference 161390
From n-peal@uxl.cso.uiuc.edu
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 12:24 PM

rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu (HUCK ROBERT O) writes:

>james g. keegan jr. (keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu) wrote:

[deletions]

>: : Do you get my point?

>: is it that you, like most anti-choicers, need to shriek
>: emotionally laden words like "kill defenseless
>: children" in the hope of intimidating teh few who might
>: believe you?

>Readers please note - Mr. Keegan offered no proof to support his claim,
>he merely threw around charges of intimidation. If you cannot address
>the issues I discussed, save the bandwidth.

And readers...while you're at it, please note that Mr. Huck has
been ignoring questions I asked of him. For example, when he earlier
stated that granting a fetus full rights from the moment of conception
was the safest alternative I asked

"Safest for whom?"

no reply

As when I also asked him if he has the right to be inside my body
against my will

Oh...he must be saving bandwidth :-)

>: : Furthermore, I refuse to defend myself or any other pro-lifer I know
>: : against charges of sexism.

>: that makes sense. it wouldn't work anyway.

>Once again, you conveniently deleted what came next. For those who did
>not read my previous article, I went on to say that any woman I know (even
>those who are pro-choice) know that I am not a sexist. Fortunately,

Ah...and you can't be a bigot because your best friend is a (whatever).
Sorry...but your stated stance concerning abortion speaks for you,
Robert. If your views discriminate specifically against a gender (women),
that's sexist...no matter what your friends think.

>my friends are open-minded. Mr. Keegan obviously is not. He seems to

I do not see Mr. Keegan discriminating against women here. I do
see you doing such...who is "open-minded"?

>have a litmus test to determine a person's level of mysogyny. Sexism
>is never that simple.

As you'll someday (hopefully) find out.

Nora

I suppose you also support Ray Fischer's statement below? Would you say it is a common pro-life stance?

```
>: --
>: "A woman's rights to her body should stop where
>: the fetus's body begins."
>: Ray Fischer <rayCtMJ6A.CHp@netcom.com>
>:--
```

Article 11

Reference 161392
From keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 12:45 PM

Robert T. Weverka <weverka@spot.Colorado.EDU> wrote:
: Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
: >I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
: >publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
: >they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.
:
: In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.

i'll bet they do something similar this time.

and the next time.

```
--
  "A woman's rights to her body should stop where
  the fetus's body begins."
  Ray Fischer <rayCtMJ6A.CHp@netcom.com>
```

Article 12

Reference 161848
From ronkanen@cc.Helsinki.FI
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 12:55 PM

followups to talk.abortion

In article <1994Aug1.183927.35651@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu>,
HUCK ROBERT O <rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu> wrote:
>Bruce Cameron (bmc@mayo.edu) wrote:
>: In article 78948@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu, rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu
(HUCK ROBERT O) writes:
>
>No. But you are forgetting something. Abortion is legal in most states
>throughout the entire 9 months of pregnancy. Pro-choicers have never
>addressed the issue of when a person becomes a human being. If it is not
>at conception, when is it? Why? To illustrate the point, I offer the
>following hypothetical situation:
>
>Two women become pregnant on the same day. Let us a assume a standard
>9-month pregnancy. The first woman delivers her child 2 months early
>(after only 7 months). The child survives. The second woman aborts
>her baby the day after the first woman delivered her child. If the

>first woman kills her baby, she will be charged with murder. The
 >second woman walks away.
 >
 >How can you justify this from a medical standpoint? What is the difference
 >between the first and second baby? Place of residence? I admit that
 >3rd trimester abortions are rare, but they are legal. In most states,
 >abortion is legal up to the moment of birth. How can this be justified
 >medically? No one on your side of the issue has addressed these perfectly
 >legitimate medical questions. They just say that the unborn child is
 >not human, offer nothing to prove it, and then go on to talk about
 >reproductive choice and mysogyny. This may wash with some people, but
 >I never bought it. These issues have never been fully explored. If,
 >it can be proven that unborn children are human, we have not choice but
 >to make abortion illegal. We simply cannot tell people that it is OK
 >to kill children.
 >

You are using words "person" "child" and "human being" quite
 confusingly. Your question "when does a person become human being" does
 not make a sense to me. You should ask "when does a human being become
 a person". One can say that a fetus is a human being, at east in some
 meaning of the word, from quite early. However, it does not become a
 person, an entity that is self-conscious, until after the birth. For
 legal purposes the birth is a good line though.

Lets consider these two babies. Lets assume that the second woman did
 not abort but had her child in time. They babies grow up and after 18
 years there comes an election. For some reason the one who was born
 pre-maturely can vote, but the one who was born in time cannot. Our
 society simply uses the birth as the starting point where the ages are
 counted.

Your last statement:" it can be proven that unborn children are human,
 we have not choice but to make abortion illegal. We simply cannot
 tell people that it is OK to kill children." does not make any sense.

If the fetuses are "unborn children", as you state, then they are
 "children" no matter if they are human. Why is being human relevant. How
 can just being a member of one species be important, in itself.

Also What you can tell people is not the issue here. You can tell them
 that abortion is wrong if you wish. The problems become when you think
 you should be able to tell them what they should do.

You conveniently completely ignore the woman. It is really easy to
 support banning abortions when one thinks the woman is a "place of
 residence". When you consider if the fetus is a person, remember that
 the woman surely is one.

>
 >
 >
 >--
 >=====
 >Robert Huck rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu
 >"That's 6-4-3 if you're scoring at home and even if you're by yourself."
 > Keith Olbermann

Osmo

Article 13

Reference 161393

From keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu

Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 12:58 PM

HUCK ROBERT O <rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu> wrote:

: james g. keegan jr. (keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu) wrote:

: : : It is very easy to portray pro-lifers in the worst manner possible.

:

: : of course it is! the foundation of anti-choice efforts

: : is to take rights from a class of person, women. it's

: : pretty easy to portray something that evil in the

: : "worst manner."

:

: You conveniently deleted what I said next.

yes i did. leaving it in would have made you look

dishonest as well as callous.

: I said it is easy to portray

: pro-lifers in the worst possible manner *if you ignore the facts*.

like i said, "the foundation of anti-choice efforts

is to take rights from a class of person, women. it's

pretty easy to portray something that evil in the

"worst manner."

: : : You say that "there are no 'defenseless

: : : children' killed in an abortion".

:

: : in response to your frenzied claim "They are saying

: : that people should not be allowed to kill defenseless

: : children." see it still included above?

:

: : : Prove it.

:

: : [...]

: : : Do you get my point?

:

: : is it that you, like most anti-choicers, need to shriek

: : emotionally laden words like "kill defenseless

: : children" in the hope of intimidating teh few who might

: : believe you?

:

: Readers please note - Mr. Keegan offered no proof to support his claim,

: he merely threw around charges of intimidation.

threw around charges? you foolishly left the text

included to prove what i charged.

: : : Furthermore, I refuse to defend myself or any other pro-lifer I know

: : : against charges of sexism.

:

: : that makes sense. it wouldn't work anyway.
:
: Once again, you conveniently deleted what came next. For those who did
: not read my previous article, I went on to say that any woman I know (even
: those who are pro-choice) know that I am not a sexist. Fortunately,
: my friends are open-minded. Mr. Keegan obviously is not. He seems to
: have a litmus test to determine a person's level of mysogyny.

what level of misogyny do you assign someone who wishes
to control women?

: Sexism is never that simple.

i imagine you've developed some good excuses for yours.

--

"A woman's rights to her body should stop where
the fetus's body begins."

Ray Fischer <rayCtMJ6A.CHp@netcom.com>

Article 14

Reference 161849

From ronkanen@cc.Helsinki.FI

Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 1:01 PM

Follow-ups to talk.abortion

In article <3lk6t2\$sum@dns1.nmsu.edu>, ZYZX <dsteinbe@nmsu.edu> wrote:
>In article <3ljshe\$jfu@usenet.rpi.edu> keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu
>(james g. keegan jr.) writes:
>>Gary Frazier <gfrazier@efn.org> wrote:
>(snip)
>>: The fact that some "prolifers" are willing to kill to
>>: impose their beliefs on others indicates that "life" is not what this is
>>: really about. The agenda is about the control of the greatest pleasure
>>: humans can know...sex.
>
>>.....or maybe just control.
>
>
>
>Or maybe, and I realize that this is just a stretch, maybe the pro-life
>movement really believes abortion is murder. Personally I am
>pro-choice. However I know a lot of intelligent pro-lifers, many
>of whom are not religious, have sex, and don't have a hidden agenda of
>controlling all women. They just happen to believe that abortion is
>muder.

Do they want to punish women who have abortions just like murderers? If
not, then they are just playing with words.

>

>I don't understand this need to demonize your opposition (and here I'm
>speaking to both sides of the abortion debate). Believe it or not,

>different people can come to different opinions about an issue without
>one side being evil or mislead.

Sure they can, the evil starts only when one side starts to force their
views on the other side.

> Not all pro-lifers are book burning
>anti-sex Inquisitioners. Not all pro-choicers are amoral baby
>killers. The sooner both sides realise this, the sooner we can see if
>there is any sort of compromise on this issue to be found.

And just how should women's rights be compromised away?

>
>-David "ZZYZX" Steinberg (dsteinbe@emmy.nmsu.edu) "Time for Timer"
>*****
>* "It made most people nervous * "I can't believe I'm a junior and a *
>* They just didn't want to know * film major, when all I really *
>* What I was seeing * wanted in this life was to marry a *
>* In the refuge of the roads." * lobsterman and cook fish." *
>*-Joni Mitchell * -a letter from Christie Searing *
>*****

Osmo

Article 15

Reference 161459

From <ml3e+@andrew.cmu.edu>

Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 1:17 PM

On 02-Aug-94 in Re: Pro-life Gunman kills t..

user ZZYXZ@nmsu.edu writes:

>I don't understand this need to demonize your opposition (and here I'm
>speaking to both sides of the abortion debate). Believe it or not,
>different people can come to different opinions about an issue without
>one side being evil or mislead. Not all pro-lifers are book burning
>anti-sex Inquisitioners. Not all pro-choicers are amoral baby
>killers. The sooner both sides realise this, the sooner we can see if
>there is any sort of compromise on this issue to be found.

I would suggest to Mr. ZZYXZ to actually go out and bother to read
what pro-lifers write, to listen to what pro-lifers say to each other in
pro-life meetings, and to hear some pro-life speeches. Then, he may
have standing to talk about what the pro-lifers are up to. Taking the
words of a small sample of pro-lifers putting the best side of their
argument forward in informal conversation, as Mr. ZZYXZ has, is not a
sound sociological method.

If you follow my suggestions about the pro-life movement, you will
find that pro-choicers do not enough begin to explain how much the
pro-life movement is based on being "anti-sex Inquisitioners".

Faux-liberal pro-choicers who believe that "any sort of compromise"
is possible with the pro-lifers are simply deluded. One may as well
attempt compromise with the Iranian government on the subject of women's

clothing.

MichaeLoomis

Article 16

Reference 161459

From <ml3e+@andrew.cmu.edu>

Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 1:17 PM

On 02-Aug-94 in Re: Pro-life Gunman kills t..

user ZZYX@nmsu.edu writes:

>I don't understand this need to demonize your opposition (and here I'm
>speaking to both sides of the abortion debate). Believe it or not,
>different people can come to different opinions about an issue without
>one side being evil or mislead. Not all pro-lifers are book burning
>anti-sex Inquisitioners. Not all pro-choicers are amoral baby
>killers. The sooner both sides realise this, the sooner we can see if
>there is any sort of compromise on this issue to be found.

I would suggest to Mr. ZZYX to actually go out and bother to read what pro-lifers write, to listen to what pro-lifers say to each other in pro-life meetings, and to hear some pro-life speeches. Then, he may have standing to talk about what the pro-lifers are up to. Taking the words of a small sample of pro-lifers putting the best side of their argument forward in informal conversation, as Mr. ZZYX has, is not a sound sociological method.

If you follow my suggestions about the pro-life movement, you will find that pro-choicers do not enough begin to explain how much the pro-life movement is based on being "anti-sex Inquisitioners".

Faux-liberal pro-choicers who believe that "any sort of compromise" is possible with the pro-lifers are simply deluded. One may as well attempt compromise with the Iranian government on the subject of women's clothing.

MichaeLoomis

Article 17

Reference 161516

From roger_e_barth@ccm.fm.intel.com

Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 3:58 PM

In article <1994Aug2.182836.20524@cs.wm.edu>, <prc@physics.physics.wm.edu>

writes:

> I am an abortion opponent, and I agree with you 100%. We *must* take a stand
> against the deliberate taking of life - *all* life.

Well you best stop eating, walking or taking antibiotics, because you are killing lots of "life" in terms of living cells. Or is your definition of

"life" different from mine. Perhaps everyone has a different perception of
 "life".....

Article 18

Reference 161438
 From steiner@netcom.com
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 4:01 PM

In Article <1994Aug2.074617.21109@rotag.mi.org>, kevin@rotag.mi.org (Kevin Darcy) wrote:

>In article <steiner.1126108905C@192.100.81.105> steiner@netcom.com (Mike Steiner) writes:

>>In Article <1994Jul31.213052.15407@rotag.mi.org>, kevin@rotag.mi.org (Kevin Darcy) wrote:

>>>In article <steiner.1126071416A@192.100.81.105> steiner@netcom.com (Mike Steiner) writes:

>>>>

>>>>What is in dispute is whether a fetus has the right to trespass inside a
 >>>>woman's body, leeching nutrients from her, against her will. Apparently,
 >>>>anti-choicers say that it has that right.

>>>>

>>>>Incorrect. The fetus is not a "trespasser", since it lacks the capacity to
 >>>>have a criminal intent -- a 5-year-old is likewise incapable of being a
 >>>>"trespasser". The fetus is at least as much a victim of circumstance as the
 >>>>woman is. The onset and continuation of pregnancy creates no "aggressor" and
 >>>>no "victim", in a criminal-justice sense.

>>>>

>>>>If the fetus is inside the woman's body and she doesn't want it in there,
 >>>>she has the right to have it evicted,

>>>>

>>>>You said "trespass" before, now you're switching to "eviction"? Very well
 >>>>then...

The fetus trespasses, and the women has it evicted.

>Under what statute may "eviction" proceedings be brought against a minor who
 >is not legally competent to enter into a leasehold in the first place?

What does that have to do with it?

>Or are you using the word in a strange way?

No, but you seem to be.

```

=====
| M. Steiner           |      In memory of Drs. John Britton & David Gunn, and |
| steiner@netcom.com  | James Barrett who gave their lives for women's rights|
=====

```

Article 19

Reference 161446
 From bmc@mayo.edu
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 4:24 PM

In article 35651@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu, rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu (HUCK ROBERT O) writes:
 >Bruce Cameron (bmc@mayo.edu) wrote:
 >: In article 78948@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu, rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu
 >: (HUCK ROBERT O) writes:
 >
 >: >1) It is impossible for one person to have two blood types. When a woman
 >: >is pregnant, she has her blood type and the unborn child has her or his
 >: >blood type. In the case of fraternal twins, there can be three different
 >: >blood types.
 >: >
 >
 >: There may only be one blood type. It is possible for a mother and
 >: child to share the same blood type. Often family members are the
 >: best donors for each other, as the possibility for a match is higher
 >: than that between complete strangers.
 >
 >But there are often two. I realize a parent and child can have the same
 >blood type. My mother and I are both O+. My twin brother is O-. He was
 >O- before he was born. Your point is true, but irrelevant. My point
 >was that a pregnant woman and her child *can* have two different blood
 >types. I did not say they *always will* have two different blood types.
 >Please read exactly what I say.
 >

You are trying to find evidence that there are two individuals present.
 If there is only one blood type present, how do you know that there are
 two individuals?

>: >2) It is impossible for one person to have 46 pairs of chromosomes. When
 >: >a woman is pregnant, she has the 23 pairs of chromosomes she received
 >: >from her parents at conception and the unborn child has his or her 23
 >: >pairs (24 in the case of children with Down's Syndrome) of
 >: >chromosomes.
 >: >
 >
 >: This only says that members of a species have a fixed number of chromosomes.
 >
 >Exactly! Human beings have 23 pairs of chromosomes, not 46. Once again,
 >please read what I said. I said it is impossible for one person to have
 >46 pairs of chromosomes.
 >
 >: It says nothing about the uniqueness of the chromosomes of two individuals
 >: nor does it say that chromosome number alone is the qualification
 >: for inclusion
 >: as a member of a specific species. Again, the question comes up: given two
 >: sets of chromosomes, how different do they have to be before you say that
 >: they are from two different individuals?
 >
 >Actually they don't have to be different at all. Identical twins share
 >the same chromosomes, but they are two different individuals. In this
 >case, difference is unimportant. The only important issue is number.
 >
 >: BTW the 23 chromosomes you have in the mitochondria in your cells is
 >: identical (barring radiation or chemically induced mutations) to that
 >: of your mother.
 >

>I know. Again this is true, but irrelevant. Humans have 23 *pairs* of
>chromosomes. 23 chromosomes come from the mother. Where do you think the
>other 23 come from? That's right, the father.
>

There are 23 pairs of chromosomes in the mitochondria (forgive my poor
phrasing above). All 23 pairs are identical to those of the mother.
Mitochondrial DNA is frequently used as a means of tracking environmentally
induced mutations since it is possible to compare it to an identical
source that can be kept in a different environment.

If I understand you correctly, any creature with 23 pairs of chromosomes
(46 total chromosomes). Do you consider any of the following numbers to be
human also:

47 chromosomes
45 chromosomes
21 pairs
22 pairs
24 pairs

It seems to me that simply relying on a count is a poor way to separate
things esp. when the deviation from normal is great enough to include
the mean from other groups.

>: >3) It is impossible for one person to have two hearts beating at different
>: >rates.
>: >
>
>: It is also impossible for a person to survive for long with a resting heart
>: rate of 160-200 (typical fetal heart rate). It is impossible for a person
>: to survive with the uncoordinated contractions of the fetal heart. It is
>: impossible for a person to survive should the shunts present in the
>: fetal circulatory system were to be present in the adult (there are shunts
>: between the left and right sides of the fetal heart, between the pulmonary
>: artery and pulmonary vein [reroute most of the blood away from the lungs]).
>
>I'm curious, when do these shunts disappear? Are they present for the
>entire duration of the pregnancy or do they disappear after birth?
>

The shunts close after delivery, then fuse shut (barring abnormalities)
over the next few days. It is thought that the closure of the shunts
is due to a drop in blood pressure in the umbilicus.

>: >4) It is impossible for one person to have two different sets of finger-
>: >prints.
>: >
>: >5) It is impossible for one person to have two brains.
>: >
>: >6) It is impossible for one person to have four eyes (six if the woman
>: >is pregnant with twins, eight with triplets, and so on).
>: >
>
>: 4, 5, and 6 are not present through out gestation. Does this mean
>: that the fetus must develop into a person?
>

>No. But you are forgetting something. Abortion is legal in most states
>throughout the entire 9 months of pregnancy. Pro-choicers have never
>addressed the issue of when a person becomes a human being. If it is not
>at conception, when is it? Why? To illustrate the point, I offer the
>following hypothetical situation:
>
>Two women become pregnant on the same day. Let us assume a standard
>9-month pregnancy. The first woman delivers her child 2 months early
>(after only 7 months). The child survives. The second woman aborts
>her baby the day after the first woman delivered her child. If the
>first woman kills her baby, she will be charged with murder. The
>second woman walks away.
>
>How can you justify this from a medical standpoint? What is the difference
>between the first and second baby? Place of residence? I admit that
>3rd trimester abortions are rare, but they are legal. In most states,
>abortion is legal up to the moment of birth. How can this be justified
>medically? No one on your side of the issue has addressed these perfectly
>legitimate medical questions. They just say that the unborn child is
>not human, offer nothing to prove it, and then go on to talk about
>reproductive choice and mysogyny. This may wash with some people, but
>I never bought it. These issues have never been fully explored. If,
>it can be proven that unborn children are human, we have not choice but
>to make abortion illegal. We simply cannot tell people that it is OK
>to kill children.
>

You bring up an interesting point. However, 3rd trimester abortions
are heavily regulated in most if not all states and require
hospitalization and must pose a legitimate health risk to the
woman (RvW allows the states to decide what a legitimate health
risk is and who determines it).

Within these parameters, the state has an interest in protecting the
welfare of its citizens (child and mother). Since the child is not
posing a risk to the mother's health, and since society has decided
to extend certain protections to its citizens, the state may act against
the first mother. In the case of the second mother, the state must
again act to protect the welfare of its citizen (the mother).

If you ignore the fact that there are restrictions and limitations
on late abortions (actually on all abortion procedures), it is still
possible to note fundamental physiological differences between a fetus
in utero and the newborn, even a premature newborn.

I feel that a medical procedure can be justified if the risks associated
with the procedure outweigh the risks associated with condition the
procedure may treat. Once you determine if a procedure is justifiable,
it is up to the health provider and the patient to determine if the
procedure is ethical, and that is something that cannot be determined
scientifically, but rather is based on such abstractions as faith,
moral belief and the ever-changing approval of society.

--Bruce

Bruce M. Cameron

bmc@mayo.edu

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Article 20

Reference 161375
From jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 4:43 PM

Henry Tudor writes:

> Which side of the abortion debate has a monopoly on the
> shooting of unarmed doctors? Which side has a known
> penchant for firebombs and chaining themselves to
> clinic doors? Which side selectively "targets" various
> cities for demonstrations and blockades that cost
> millions in taxpayer money to police and control?

Which side runs clinics that promote and perform medical procedures that first destroy fetuses, then removes them from women? Which side demands funding for these practices in effect forcing their opinions on everyone else? Which side fights the PA law that requires these clinics to provide information on alternatives to abortion and full disclosure of the procedure and the risks involved? Which side supports mandatory abortion funding for all participants in the new Health Care Reform Act, forcing private hospitals to provide abortions? Certainly not the pro-CHOICE side, the pendulum has swung, now the pro-abortion side has given up its value of choice, making the issue an entitlement that must be paid for by those whose values may not agree.

Funny how the Catholic Church in Philadelphia announced that its position on Health Care is that it supports universal coverage but opposes mandatory abortion coverage. Just who is pro-CHOICE these days?

Joe Moore

Article 21

Reference 161407
From waynet@indirect.com
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 5:29 PM

HUCK ROBERT O (rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu) wrote:
: Henry Tudor (tudor@onramp.net) wrote:

: : >
: : > The recent murders were the work of a militant fringe, who do not at
: : > all represent the majority of abortion opponents. What they did was
: : despicable
: : > and undermines their claim to be "pro-life," and I personally would rather
: : > have a woman get an abortion than have her or her doctor killed. You can't
: : > generalize from these isolated instances to the entire pro-life movement.
: : --

: : > Patrick Crotty

: : -----

: : I used to think that too, but we have now had THREE clinic
 : : shootings in the last two years - and a pattern is starting
 : : to emerge. How many MORE clinic shootings are we supposed to
 : : write off as "isolated incidents"?

: : The groups that preach a holy war against clinic doctors and invite
 : : scream about how it is God's will that they be put out of
 : : business cannot escape blame for what is by now a predictable
 : : result.

: : Henry Tudor

: If this is so predictable, please tell me when and where it will happen
 : again. I will go there personally and do my best to prevent it.

The predictable part is the "what", not the "when" and "where". Does this
 make sense to you now?

What you can do to prevent it is tell fellow pro-lifers that what others
 do with their lives and bodies is not their business, and that the
 efforts of the pro-life folks would be better spent on improving the
 lives of those children already in this world.

 Wayne (waynet@indirect.com) "My ancestors were Puritans from England. They
 arrived here in 1648 in the hope of finding
 greater restrictions than were permissible
 under English law at that time."
 - Garrison Keillor

Article 22

Reference 161470
 From prc@physics.physics.wm.edu
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 6:12 PM

In article <31jjl4\$gnk@news.onramp.net> Henry Tudor <tudor@onramp.net> writes:

>
 >
 >> From: rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu (HUCK ROBERT O)
 >
 >>
 >> It is very easy to portray pro-lifers in the worst manner possible.
 >
 > And whose fault is THAT?
 >
 > Which side of the abortion debate has a monopoly on the
 > shooting of unarmed doctors? Which side has a known
 > penchant for firebombs and chaining themselves to
 > clinic doors? Which side selectively "targets" various

> cities for demonstrations and blockades that cost
> millions in taxpayer money to police and control?
>
> Which side stages noisy demonstrations outside people's
> houses at 3:AM, complete with bullhorns and claims
> they are merely "exercising their right of free speech"?
>
>
> Funny how the media can create such a negative image out
> of such innocent behavior.....

This kind of thinking, in my opinion, tends to respect only groups and stereotypes, and gives no value to the individual. Shall we blame innocent African-Americans for the fact that their race is often portrayed as being delinquent and violent, or assume that they are all like Willie Horton? Of course not! Then why should we blame innocent pro-lifers for the fact that *their* group is portrayed as intolerant and fascist, and assume that they are all Randall Terry wannabes?

--
Patrick Crotty prc@physics.physics.wm.edu

Article 23

Reference 161401
From jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 6:19 PM

Ray Fischer writes:
>Easy. If you steal a 4 carat sapphire and swallow it, you gain _no_
>rights over it merely because it is now a content of your body. The
>rightful owner retains all rights to it.

Since the owner has rights to the sapphire, I suppose he is allowed to destroy the human tissue surrounding it to retrieve his property, or does he have to wait until the thief passes the sapphire or until a doctor can surgically remove it without killing the thief?

The thief certainly has the right to remove the object from his body, but he doesn't have the right to destroy it, say by having a laser cut it into tiny little pieces before removing it.

Joe Moore

Article 24

Reference 161471
From prc@physics.physics.wm.edu
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 6:20 PM

In article <31j553\$det@dns1.NMSU.Edu> ethomps@nmsu.edu
(Erik T. Thompson) writes:
>Patrick Crotty (prc@physics.physics.wm.edu) wrote:

>
 >: The recent murders were the work of a militant fringe, who do not at
 >: all represent the majority of abortion opponents.
 >: What they did was despicable
 >: and undermines their claim to be "pro-life," and I personally would rather
 >: have a woman get an abortion than have her or her doctor killed. You can't
 >: generalize from these isolated instances to the entire pro-life movement.
 >: --
 >: Patrick Crotty prc@physics.physics.wm.edu
 >This is a false statement. The pro-life movement from it's inception has
 >been based on fear and violence.
 >
 >Exhibit one: Firebombings at womens clinics nation wide. Operation rescue
 >has never come out against the firebombings of clinics. They figure that
 >since the bombings take place at night when the clinic is empty, it's not
 >violence. All I have to say is that's what a group of anti-war activists
 >thought in the 60's when they bombed an ROTC building and killed a man.
 >
 >Exhibit 2: The stalking of clinic Doctors and their families. If you
 >don't think stalking is a form of passive aggression, let me have the
 >address of someone you care about and I'll prove it to you.
 >
 >Exhibit 3: The vicitimization of clients that go to womens clinics for
 >reasons beyond abortion. ie. The couple who went to an obstetrician that
 >worked at a clinic, had their licence plate number taken down by an
 >Operation Rescue member and then were harrassed about having an abortion,
 >just days after the woman lost her child in miscarriage.
 >
 >Exhibit 4: The victimization of anyone that attempts to enter a clinic.
 >Thankfully this type of harrassment is at an end. However, prior to FACE
 >anti-choice activists would scream at, pull at, spit at people who
 >attempted to gain access to the clinics. They figured make the place scary
 >enough and people will stop coming.

The fallacy in your reasoning: "Operation Rescue=The Pro-life Movement"

>Admittedly these people are not the IRA but many of their tactics would
 >qualify them as a terrorist-like movement. Many will argue that many
 >anti-choicers are stricktly mainstream politically active. I would remind
 >you that the IRA also has it's legitimate political arm. As a side note,
 >lat night on CNBS I saw Paul Hill, not only did he advocate the killing of
 >doctors, he advocated the killing of women that have abortions.

There are radical feminists who advocate breeding out men from the human
 race, and reproducing via artificial insemination. Shall we assume that
 all feminists believe this? I doubt *most* do. Likewise, shall we
 assume that all abortion opponents believe what Randall Terry and
 Paul Hill do?

--
 Patrick Crotty prc@physics.physics.wm.edu

Reference 161474
 From prc@physics.physics.wm.edu
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 6:28 PM

In article <matt-0108941730340001@matt.hip.cam.org> matt@CAM.ORG (Matt Friedman) writes:

>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
 >publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
 >they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.
 >If they want to fight abortion by legislation, etc, that's their
 >privilege, even if I don't agree with them personally; they have the right
 >to make their views known. But they have passively condoned these kooks by
 >not taking an active stand against violence. I agree; it was the
 >inevitable progression, and intentionally or not, they have created a
 >climate over the past years for this type of activity. They stand by and
 >condone jerks like Randall Terry and operation rescue, and other groups
 >who harass, insult and intimidate doctors and medical staff. It seems that
 >their goals are becoming less to improve life, than to prove they are
 >right.The les-violent arms of the prolife movement have made it easy for
 >the violent ones to carry out their aims by passively condoning them with
 >silence.

I am an abortion opponent, and I agree with you 100%. We **must** take a stand against the deliberate taking of life - **all** life. I think that a lot of pro-lifers are intimidated into silence by Randall Terry and his cult, and it's time for them to speak up. He is a disgrace to himself and makes a mockery of the "pro-life" label.

--
 Patrick Crotty prc@physics.physics.wm.edu

Article 26

Reference 161465
 From lunatic@asylum.hq.af.mil
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 6:37 PM

HUCK ROBERT O (rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu) wrote:

: It is very easy to portray pro-lifers in the worst manner possible. That is
 : it is easy if you ignore facts. I mentioned this in a posting on another
 : thread, but it bears repeating here. You say that "there are no 'defenseless
 : children' killed in an abortion". Prove it. Offer concrete medical
 : evidence to support your claim. I will not engage in name calling or
 : sloganeering. I wish to discuss only facts that can be proved by
 : scientific methods. In this spirit, I offer the following incontrovertable
 : scientific/medical evidence.

: 1) It is impossible for one person to have two blood types. When a woman
 : is pregnant, she has her blood type and the unborn child has her or his
 : blood type. In the case of fraternal twins, there can be three different
 : blood types.

: 2) It is impossible for one person to have 46 pairs of chromosomes. When
 : a woman is pregnant, she has the 23 pairs of chromosomes she received

: from her parents at conception and the unborn child has his or her 23
 : pairs (24 in the case of children with Down's Syndrome) of
 : chromosomes.

: 3) It is impossible for one person to have two hearts beating at different
 : rates.

: 4) It is impossible for one person to have two different sets of finger-
 : prints.

: 5) It is impossible for one person to have two brains.

: 6) It is impossible for one person to have four eyes (six if the woman
 : is pregnant with twins, eight with triplets, and so on).

: Considering all of the above, we have no choice but to conclude that
 : abortion kills a person.

Prove that a >=3 month fetus is a sentient human being and not simply
 a bag of tissues with the potential to become a human being.
 --

Jeff Kirvin | Proud member of Team OS/2! | lunatic@asylum.hq.af.mil
 "One person's lunatic is another's true seer." Commander Sinclair
 Disclaimer: I do not speak for the United States Air Force...

Article 27

Reference 161402
 From jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 6:38 PM

Robert T. Weverka writes:
 >Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
 >>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
 >>publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
 >>they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.
 >
 >In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.
 >The blood is on their hands.
 >

The pro-life movement didn't believe the answer to the holocaust was
 the murder of all soldiers at the death camps. They of course would
 support the families of those who were imprisoned for trying to end
 the holocaust, even if they were using deadly force. Nazi's really
 believed that Jews and other life forms were not worthy of respect
 as humans. Men called the executed masses 'figerums' to hide the
 fact that they were killing human life. Was it wrong to impose our
 beliefs on the Nazi's. The Jewish community rightfully reminds us
 we didn't enter the war to end the holocaust, but to protect ourselves.

Are we supposed to be proud of our pro-choice stance on the holocaust?
 I personally am opposed to killing Jews, but I respect your right to
 destroy them as long as they are in your country.

Joe Moore

Article 28

Reference 161480

From rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu

Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 6:59 PM

james g. keegan jr. (keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu) wrote:
 : HUCK ROBERT O <rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu> wrote:
 : : james g. keegan jr. (keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu) wrote:
 : : : It is very easy to portray pro-lifers in the worst manner possible.
 : :
 : : : of course it is! the foundation of anti-choice efforts
 : : : is to take rights from a class of person, women. it's
 : : : pretty easy to portray something that evil in the
 : : : "worst manner."
 : :
 : : You conveniently deleted what I said next.

: yes i did. leaving it in would have made you look
 : dishonest as well as callous.

Since when do you care if I look dishonest or callous?

: : I said it is easy to portray
 : : pro-lifers in the worst possible manner *if you ignore the facts*.

: like i said, "the foundation of anti-choice efforts
 : is to take rights from a class of person, women. it's
 : pretty easy to portray something that evil in the
 : "worst manner."

No. The foundation is to protect human life.

: : : You say that "there are no 'defenseless
 : : : children' killed in an abortion".
 : :
 : : : in response to your frenzied claim "They are saying
 : : : that people should not be allowed to kill defenseless
 : : : children." see it still included above?
 : :
 : : : Prove it.
 : :
 : : : [...]
 : : : Do you get my point?
 : :
 : : : is it that you, like most anti-choicers, need to shriek
 : : : emotionally laden words like "kill defenseless
 : : : children" in the hope of intimidating teh few who might
 : : : believe you?
 : :
 : : Readers please note - Mr. Keegan offered no proof to support his claim,
 : : he merely threw around charges of intimidation.

: threw around charges? you foolishly left the text
 : included to prove what i charged.

This what not intended as intimidation. I was simply being direct and

honest.

```

: : : : Furthermore, I refuse to defend myself or any other pro-lifer I know
: : : : against charges of sexism.
: :
: : : that makes sense. it wouldn't work anyway.
: :
: : : Once again, you conveniently deleted what came next. For those who did
: : : not read my previous article, I went on to say that any woman I know (even
: : : those who are pro-choice) know that I am not a sexist. Fortunately,
: : : my friends are open-minded. Mr. Keegan obviously is not. He seems to
: : : have a litmus test to determine a person's level of mysogyny.

: : what level of misogyny do you assign someone who wishes
: : to control women?

```

Throughout this thread, I have never claimed that Mr. Keegan wants to kill babies. I have tried to remain civil and stick to the facts. Mr. Keegan, on the other hand, simply resorts to name-calling. I *truly* do not believe that Mr. Keegan wants to kill babies. I would never stoop that low. Some others, like Randall Terry, make these charges. RT makes me ill. He is the worst possible thing that could happen to the pro-life movement. What I don't understand is why Mr. Keegan insists on using one issue to determine if a person is sexist. There are many women whose lives are in no way affected by their right to an abortion. What about them? Am I a sexist if I defend their rights in the workplace? Am I a sexist if I supported the Equal Rights Amendment? Am I a sexist if I support family leave and increased access to child care? Am I a sexist if I help a friend who is in a battered women's shelter? Does all of this indicate wanting to control women? Why do you insist on making everything black and white. Life is never that simple.

```

: : Sexism is never that simple.

```

```

: i imagine you've developed some good excuses for yours.

```

See above paragraph. I will no longer defend myself against these ludicrous charges made by people who would rather demonize the opposition than admit that those who disagree may have good reasons for their beliefs.

```

: --
: "A woman's rights to her body should stop where
: the fetus's body begins."
: Ray Fischer <rayCtMJ6A.CHp@netcom.com>
--

```

```

=====
Robert Huck                                rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu
"That's 6-4-3 if you're scoring at home and even if you're by yourself."
Keith Olbermann

```

Article 29

Reference 161478
 From BGibbins@harris.com
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 7:02 PM

In article <rayCtvv6n.Fxv@netcom.com>, ray@netcom.com (Ray Fischer) wrote:
>
>Easy. If you steal a 4 carat sapphire and swallow it, you gain _no_
>rights over it merely because it is now a content of your body. The
>rightful owner retains all rights to it.
>

Yes, but did you (or you and partner) actually conceive that sapphire?
No! The sapphire belonged to somebody else, you stole it and swallowed
it.

I don't see that you can compare these two things. If you are an oyster
and the object in question was a pearl you could, but that not what was
stated was it?

--
Brian

Article 30

Reference 161404
From jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 7:40 PM

Jeff Kirvin writes:
>Prove that a >=3 month fetus is a sentient human being and not simply
>a bag of tissues with the potential to _become_ a human being.

Prove that a full grown Jewish descended figerum is a human being and
not simply a bag of tissues that would like to be a human being.

Prove that a full grown negro slave is a human being and not a possession
of a landowner, an animal, a beast of burden.

To what extent are we allowed to impose our values and opinions on
those who do not consider Jews or blacks to be real human beings.

Joe Moore

Article 31

Reference 161488
From frkorze@srv.PacBell.COM
Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 7:54 PM

In article <rayCtvv6n.Fxv@netcom.com> ray@netcom.com (Ray Fischer) writes:
#keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu (james g. keegan jr.) writes ...
#>John Walkup <walkup@phyast.nhn.uoknor.edu> wrote:
#>: Criminy. For the last time: Pro-life supporters are NOT attempting
#>: to legislate against anyone's RIGHTS.
#>
#>prove that persons do not ahve the right to their
#>bodies and the contents of their bodies.

#Easy. If you steal a 4 carat sapphire and swallow it, you gain _no_

#rights over it merely because it is now a content of your body. The
 #rightful owner retains all rights to it.
 #

Topologically speaking, swallowing something is the same as holding
 it in your hand. Now if you have it surgically implanted, i doubt
 if the sherrif's office would try to reposses it.

frank

Article 32

Reference 161500

From n-peal@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu

Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 9:04 PM

rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu (HUCK ROBERT O) writes:

>james g. keegan jr. (keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu) wrote:
 >: HUCK ROBERT O <rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu> wrote:
 >: : james g. keegan jr. (keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu) wrote:

[...]

>: like i said, "the foundation of anti-choice efforts
 >: is to take rights from a class of person, women. it's
 >: pretty easy to portray something that evil in the
 >: "worst manner."

>No. The foundation is to protect human life.

Why is the life of a fetus more important than the
 life of a woman?

[...]

>There are many women whose lives are in no way affected
 >by their right to an abortion. What about them?

I'd say they are very fortunate. I'd also say
 they should be thankful to currently have the
 freedom to make that extremely personal choice for
 themselves.

>Am I a sexist if I defend their rights in the workplace? Am I a sexist
 >if I supported the Equal Rights Amendment? Am I a sexist if I support
 >family leave and increased access to child care? Am I a sexist if I
 >help a friend who is in a battered women's shelter? Does all of this
 >indicate wanting to control women? Why do you insist on making everything
 >black and white. Life is never that simple.

I can see how those acts would help women. How would banning
 abortion help women?

[...]

>: --

>: "A woman's rights to her body should stop where

>: the fetus's body begins."
 >: Ray Fischer <rayCtMJ6A.CHp@netcom.com>
 >--

Article 33

Reference 161525
 From steiner@netcom.com
 Date Tue, Aug 2, 1994 10:43 PM

In Article <31lphu\$ag0@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>, ckalina@gwis.circ.gwu.edu
 (Charles Kalina) wrote:
 >In article <CtwKzu.ErJ@cnsnews.Colorado.EDU>,
 >Robert T. Weverka <weverka@spot.Colorado.EDU> wrote:
 >>In article <matt-0108941730340001@matt.hip.cam.org>,
 >>Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
 >>>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
 >>>publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
 >>>they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.
 >
 >>In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.
 >>The blood is on their hands.
 >
 > Who's "they"? Aren't we generalizing just a tad here? I'm
 >probably one of those you consider "they" and I never gave them a cent.
 >Nor was I ever asked.

"they" are Operation Rescue, Rescue America, and Defensive Action, to name
 three that I know of for sure. Unless you consider yourself to be part of
 the "pro-live movement," the fact that you didn't give and wasn't asked is
 immaterial to what you're rebutting.

```
=====
| M. Steiner          | In memory of Drs. John Britton & David Gunn, and |
| steiner@netcom.com | James Barrett who gave their lives for women's rights|
=====
```

Article 34

Reference 161817
 From <tudor@onramp.net>
 Date Wed, Aug 3, 1994 11:33 AM

> It would make them realize that there are alternatives. I have spoken
 > to several women who have had abortions. They all said they had no
 > choice. Pretty ironic, eh? They did have choices, but because abortion
 > is legal, their parents, boyfriends, and abortion counsellors convinced
 > them this was the only alternative.

> Robert Huck

Compulsory abortion? The curse of too many options?

Rather sounds like "1984" and the "freedom" from having to
 make choices.

Please describe the physical restraints used on these unwilling abortion patients, how many of the "parents and boyfriends" were in the were in the examining room while the abortion was being performed.

Oh, and then there is the matter of the waiver and release papers that the patient signed in their absence, stating that

this was HER decision and that the procedure is one that SHE was requesting.....

Article 35

Reference 161891

From kkelly@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu

Date Wed, Aug 3, 1994 1:06 PM

ray@netcom.com (Ray Fischer) writes:

->steiner@netcom.com (Mike Steiner) writes ...

->> ray@netcom.com (Ray Fischer) wrote:

->>>keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu (james g. keegan jr.) writes ...

->>>>prove that persons do not have the right to their

->>>>bodies and the contents of their bodies.

->>>>

->>>>Easy. If you steal a 4 carat sapphire and swallow it, you gain no

->>>>rights over it merely because it is now a content of your body. The

->>>>rightful owner retains all rights to it.

Wrong. If it threatens the life of the thief, then if it needs to be destroyed then it can be.

->>

[..]

->> From whom is a fetus

->>>stolen?

->Non sequitur. Person do not have total rights over anything that may

->happens to be within their body that is not part of their body.

Let us know when the sapphire starts using bodily resources of the woman Ray. Chuckle.

[...]

Article 36

Reference 161827

From ckalina@gwis.circ.gwu.edu

Date Wed, Aug 3, 1994 1:10 PM

In article <31m3p7\$sr4@hq.hq.af.mil>,

Jeff Kirvin <lunatic@asylum.hq.af.mil> wrote:

>Prove that a >=3 month fetus is a sentient human being and not simply
>a bag of tissues with the potential to become a human being.

Prove to me that you are a sentient human being and not just a bag
of tissues with a somewhat complex system of organization (or for that
matter a computer program cleverly trained to mimic a human pro-choicer).
We are all just bags of tissues, friend.

BTW, are you endorsing restrictions on post-first-trimester abortions?

--

Charles P. Kalina, Lizard King of the Universe

"If women ran the world, there would be no wars. Instead, nations would
tease each other until they developed eating disorders."

My opinions are my own, but they should be everyone's... :-)

Article 37

Reference 161510

From jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com

Date Wed, Aug 3, 1994 1:44 PM

Lisa Ann Kazmier writes:

>Simply put, this group wishes by government action to compel
>any woman to take her pregnancy to term. Even when the law did
>so, many women sought ways around this, for their own reasons,
>which were numerous and cannot be classified as typically
>convenience or economics or anything else. It seems the message
>is "we'll leave you alone -- after you have the child." But by
>then that woman's life is undeniably altered, whether or not
>she raises the baby.

Simply put, this group wishes by government action to compel
doctors to preserve human life. When the law did so, doctors
and quacks illegally performed procedures that undeniably
eliminated human lives for convenience or economics or something
else. This group doesn't wish to compel women to breed. By
her own actions, the woman's life is undeniably altered whether
or not she aborts or brings the child to term.

Joe Moore

Article 38

Article161522

From jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com

Date Wed, Aug 3, 1994 2:02 PM

Jim C writes:

>I'm also well aware that in Puritan
>New England it was perfectly legal to kill your children until they were 16,

Well we certainly don't want to intrude into people's lives, I suggest we
return to the pro-choice stand and allow parents to raise (or kill)
their children as they choose. No one choice is right for all people.
What if they are poor and can't afford the child? What if the child is
retarded? What if the child gets D's in school? Not only should we
repeal all the child abuse laws and child murder laws, because children

are only potential human beings, not full term adults, we should also get doctors to perform the procedures. By the way, adoption is too traumatic for some, and you can't force your values on others.

>oh, you're volunteering to support the mother in the late stages of her >pregnancy and pay her hospital bill? How kind of you.

Not only that, also in early stages, and help for the mother in getting diapers, child furniture, clothes. In my area, many abortion counseling services listed in the yellow pages have had the pro-abortion circles requesting that they be disbanded because they counsel women but do not provide abortion services (hmmmm. sort of the same thing Planned Parenthood does, but does not deal in the adoption services.) Bad guy Pat Robertson boasts of a large facility for crisis pregnancies. The pro-abortion set claims to be pro-choice, but only provides one available choice...you think you really want the baby do you, it will be a lot of trouble, adoption is traumatic, you're too young, you can't handle it, you don't really want to do that, you have the right to choose abortion, and you don't even have to wait a day to sleep on it...oh what's that, you want an abortion, oh I'm glad you made the right choice. Step in this room and wait. Next!

Joe Moore

Article 39

Reference 161819

From prc@physics.physics.wm.edu

Date Wed, Aug 3, 1994 3:07 PM

In article <3lgsfk\$jl0@news.onramp.net> Henry Tudor <tudor@onramp.net> writes:

```
>>
>> The recent murders were the work of a militant fringe, who do not at
>> all represent the majority of abortion opponents. What they did was
>> despicable
>> and undermines their claim to be "pro-life," and I personally would rather
>> have a woman get an abortion than have her or her doctor killed. You can't
>> generalize from these isolated instances to the entire pro-life movement.
> --
>> Patrick Crotty
> [snip]
> I used to think that too, but we have now had THREE clinic
> shootings in the last two years - and a pattern is starting
> to emerge. How many MORE clinic shootings are we supposed to
> write off as "isolated incidents"?
```

Three in two years? This barely incriminates Operation Rescue, let alone the entire pro-life movement. Of course, it's three too many, but I don't see how three murders taint all abortion opponents.

```
> The groups that preach a holy war against clinic doctors and invite
> scream about how it is God's will that they be put out of
> business cannot escape blame for what is by now a predictable
> result.
```

And, once again, the point that I have been trying to make: what PROPORTION of proliferators DO this kind of thing?

--
Patrick Crotty prc@physics.physics.wm.edu

Article 40

Reference 161908
From s9101519@mella.ee.up.ac.za
Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 7:10 AM

In article <CtwKzu.ErJ@cnsnews.Colorado.EDU> (Robert T. Weverka) writes:
>From: weverka@spot.Colorado.EDU (Robert T. Weverka)
>Subject: Re: Pro-life Gunman kills two in FL
>Date: Tue, 2 Aug 1994 10:26:18 GMT

>In article <matt-0108941730340001@matt.hip.cam.org>,
>Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
>>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
>>publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
>>they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.

>In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.
>The blood is on their hands.

On whose hands? I don't condone that kind of action. If some one in the pro-life camp does that then they to have demonstrated contempt for human life (how ever disgusting that life may be) and are thus not truely pro-life anymore. They're in the pro-choice camp now. They were free to choose thier course of action and they made that choice. The only difference is that they will be punished for thier crime and the surgions who perform abortions will not be punished for thier crime. Both however have taken a human life and both will have to answer for that eventually.

The taking of human life is wrong in all circumstances. He who takes a human life before or after birth is a murderer and I can only pray that they will ask forgiveness in time.

Russel.

Article 41

Reference 161908
From s9101519@mella.ee.up.ac.za
Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 7:10 AM

In article <CtwKzu.ErJ@cnsnews.Colorado.EDU> weverka@spot.Colorado.EDU (Robert T. Weverka) writes:
>From: weverka@spot.Colorado.EDU (Robert T. Weverka)
>Subject: Re: Pro-life Gunman kills two in FL
>Date: Tue, 2 Aug 1994 10:26:18 GMT

>In article <matt-0108941730340001@matt.hip.cam.org>,
>Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
>>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
>>publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
>>they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.

>In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.
>The blood is on their hands.

On whose hands? I don't condone that kind of action. If some one in the pro-life camp does that then they to have demonstrated contempt for human life (how ever disgusting that life may be) and are thus not truly pro-life anymore. They're in the pro-choice camp now. They were free to choose thier course of action and they made that choice. The only difference is that they will be punished for thier crime and the surgions who perform abortions will not be punished for thier crime. Both however have taken a human life and both will have to answer for that eventually.

The taking of human life is wrong in all circumstances. He who takes a human life before or after birth is a murderer and I can only pray that they will ask forgiveness in time.

Russel.

Article 42

Reference 161812
From keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu
Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 12:02 PM

<pcrotty@UWYO.EDU> wrote to liar ray:
: Is there some reason why you seem to have completely reversed your
: position on this issue? Jeez, I hate to say it.....maybe Keegan was
: right about you.....

what do you mean "maybe?" i've documented every claim i made about ray with full reposts. most times this has been done dozens of times as lair ray deletes them and denies their presence.

--

"A woman's rights to her body should stop where
the fetus's body begins."
Ray Fischer <rayCtMJ6A.CHp@netcom.com>

Article 43

Reference 161828
From BGibbins@harris.com
Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 1:12 PM

>In article <1994Aug3.031505.65602@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu>
rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu (HUCK ROBERT O) writes:

>>Do you think it's any accident that illegitimacy rates have skyrocketed

>>since 1973?

In article <1994Aug4.074333.27324@rotag.mi.org>, kevin@rotag.mi.org (Kevin Darcy) wrote:

>Illegitimacy rates were starting to skyrocket long before 1973 -- we're just
>seeing the continuation of a long-term trend.

Could the two of you please define what "illegitimacy" means? When watching the 6pm news the other night I found a newscaster in error (and I called the station). She said that "children born to unwed mothers have gone up (something like) 75% in the past 10 (or so) years". Then she made a comment that it was "sad that so many children lived with only one parent". Those two only have limited connection. Not all women who are single are NOT living with the father. It just means that they are unmarried. The woman is forced to list her marital status on the hospital admission papers, then this information becomes a part of the "public" record where it is then misinterpreted.

BTW, not a flame. I'm just pointing out that those figures are not entirely accurate.

Bright Blessings

--

Brian

Article 44

Reference 161829

From reddeg@VAX309.NHRC.NAVY.MIL

Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 1:31 PM

You said:

>It is very easy to portray pro-lifers in the worst manner possible. That is
>it is easy if you ignore facts. I mentioned this in a posting on another
>thread, but it bears repeating here. You say that "there are no 'defenseless
>children' killed in an abortion". Prove it. Offer concrete medical
>evidence to support your claim. I will not engage in name calling or
>sloganeering. I wish to discuss only facts that can be proved by
>scientific methods. In this spirit, I offer the following incontrovertable
>scientific/medical evidence.

>

>1) It is impossible for one person to have two blood types. When a woman
>is pregnant, she has her blood type and the unborn child has her or his
>blood type. In the case of fraternal twins, there can be three different
>blood types.

>

>2) It is impossible for one person to have 46 pairs of chromosomes. When
>a woman is pregnant, she has the 23 pairs of chromosomes she received
>from her parents at conception and the unborn child has his or her 23
>pairs (24 in the case of children with Down's Syndrome) of
>chromosomes.

>

>3) It is impossible for one person to have two hearts beating at different

>rates.
 >
 >4) It is impossible for one person to have two different sets of finger-
 >prints.
 >
 >5) It is impossible for one person to have two brains.
 >
 >6) It is impossible for one person to have four eyes (six if the woman
 >is pregnant with twins, eight with triplets, and so on).
 >
 >Considering all of the above, we have no choice but to conclude that
 >abortion kills a person.
 >
 >Do you get my point? Please address these specific, provable medical
 >facts. If you do not wish to discuss these issues, then do not bother
 >to respond. I refuse to throw labels and insults. Stick to the facts.
 >Furthermore, I refuse to defend myself or any other pro-lifer I know
 >against charges of sexism. If you wish to believe I am a sexist, so
 >be it. Any of the women I know will disagree with you on this (even
 >the women I know who are pro-choice). Their opinion is much more
 >important to me than yours is. If you do respond,
 >respond to the issues I have addressed. You may disagree with me, but
 >if you do, have the courtesy to offer concrete evidence to support
 >your assertion that the unborn child is not human. If not, why not?
 >My family is from Missouri - show me.
 >
 I say:

I have been involved in pro-choice activities for years, and I have YET
 to have an answer to what I feel is the real question:

WHAT GIVES ANY ONE THE RIGHT TO TELL ME WHAT TO DO WITH MY LIFE, MY BODY,
 AND MY DECISIONS?

Article 45

Reference 161833
 From waynet@indirect.com
 Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 2:25 PM

Joe Moore (jrmo@prpix2.pr.att.com) wrote:

: Lisa Ann Kazmier writes:
 : >Simply put, this group wishes by government action to compell
 : >any woman to take her pregnancy to term. Even when the law did
 : >so, many women sought ways around this, for their own reasons,
 : >which were numerous and cannot be classified as typically
 : >convenience or economics or anything else. It seems the message
 : >is "we'll leave you alone -- after you have the child." But by
 : >then that woman's life is undeniably altered, whether or not
 : >she raises the baby.

: Simply put, this group wishes by government action to compel
 : doctors to preserve human life. When the law did so, doctors
 : and quacks illegally performed procedures that undeniably
 : eliminated human lives for convenience or economics or something
 : else. This group doesn't wish to compel women to breed. By

: her own actions, the woman's life is undeniably altered whether
: or not she aborts or brings the child to term.

But why do you think YOU should be the one to decide HOW her life is altered?

Wayne (waynet@indirect.com) "My ancestors were Puritans from England. They
arrived here in 1648 in the hope of finding
greater restrictions than were permissible
under English law at that time."
- Garrison Keillor

Article 46

Reference 161844

From n-peal@uxl.cso.uiuc.edu

Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 3:39 PM

pcrotty@UWYO.EDU writes:

>In article <rayCtz5xu.EGr@netcom.com>, ray@netcom.com (Ray Fischer) writes:
>>prc@physics.physics.wm.edu (Patrick Crotty) writes ...
>>> n-peal@uxl.cso.uiuc.edu (peal nora c) writes:

>>

>>>>Why is the life of a fetus more important than the
>>>>life of a woman?

>>>

>>>>It's not. It's not any *less* important, either. Women generally do not
>>>>die during childbirth, so having a baby is usually not a threat to the
>>>>woman's life.

>>

>>>>Having a baby is always a threat to a woman's life, and always causes
>>>>some injury. Why should a fetus have more rights to a woman's body
>>>>than does the woman herself?

>Umm....I am, to say the *least*, confused. Did you yourself not say
>something along the lines of "A woman's right to her body should end
>where the fetus begins", or something to that effect?

Yup. You're right...he did. You're not alone in your confusion,
however...people on t.a. have been trying to get Ray to explain
his abortion restriction views for months and months.

>>>>I'd say they are very fortunate. I'd also say
>>>>they should be thankful to currently have the
>>>>freedom to make that extremely personal choice for
>>>>themselves.

>>>

>>>>Too bad their unborn child doesn't have any say in the matter....

>>

>>>>Just as poor people, even those dying, have no say in what you may do
>>>>with your property.

>>

>>>>I can see how those acts would help women. How would banning
>>>>abortion help women?

>>>

>>>The point is, it helps *children* - it protects their lives.
>>
>>I can save lots of lives with your money. Why don't you hand it
>>over?
>>

>Is there some reason why you seem to have completely reversed your
>position on this issue?

Ah...you're learning quickly about Mr. Fischer.

>Jeez, I hate to say it.....maybe Keegan was right about you.....

Yup :-)

Article 47

Reference 161997
From ronkanen@cc.Helsinki.FI
Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 6:27 PM

In article <Ctx7rK.5uJ@nntpa.cb.att.com>,
Joe Moore <jrmo@volta.pr.att.com> wrote:
> Robert T. Weverka writes:
>>Matt Friedman <matt@CAM.ORG> wrote:
>>>I think that the pro-life movement should have taken an acative stand,
>>>publicly, against that type of terrorism and violence. Since the shootings
>>>they have condemned the violence, but that's just locking the barn door.
>>
>>In the last shooting they took up a fund to support the murderer's family.
>>The blood is on their hands.
>>
>
>The pro-life movement didn't believe the answer to the holocaust was
>the murder of all soldiers at the death camps.

In general comparing abortion with holocaust only shows your
stupidity. What do you think allied forced did to the death camp guards.
POW status or firing squad? They were lucky to survive for a trial.

>They of course would
>support the families of those who were imprisoned for trying to end
>the holocaust, even if they were using deadly force.

Why? Only reason I can see is that they condone the act. Why would they
otherwise pick those families out of so many families whose "head" is in
the jail.

> Nazi's really
>believed that Jews and other life forms were not worthy of respect
>as humans. Men called the executed masses 'figerums' to hide the
>fact that they were killing human life. Was it wrong to impose our
>beliefs on the Nazi's. The Jewish community rightfully reminds us
>we didn't enter the war to end the holocaust, but to protect ourselves.

What does the fatal community say about abortion? Nothing, as there is no such community. Yet there is a Jewish community. Well maybe there are differences between Jews and fetuses.

Jews are and were persons with rights. This is not because I say so, neither is it because you say so. The personhood of Jews is not in any way dependent on our views. They are persons because they themselves say so. That means each individual Jew says that he is a person with rights and he is. Others have no choice but to respect the rights.

Fetuses on the other hand are like animals, they are not self-conscious and do not know they are persons with rights. The fact that they have human DNA does not magically make them persons. Membership in a species cannot per se be a deciding fact in person hood any more than membership in a race.

>
>Are we supposed to be proud of our pro-choice stance on the holocaust?

If there had been anything pro-choice in Holocaust, then the Jews should have had the choice.

>I personally am opposed to killing Jews, but I respect your right to
>destroy them as long as they are in your country.

This sentence is among the worst kind of anti-Semitism I have heard. I do not mean the content of it as I know it was written as a parody. I mean the thing that you so willingly ignore the fact that Jews are persons with their own rights, wishes and feelings.

I simply cannot not understand how someone can reduce our personhood to something as trivial as a DNA-molecule.

>
>Joe Moore

Osmo

Article 48

Reference 161856

From ronkanen@cc.Helsinki.FI

Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 6:52 PM

Follow-ups to talk.abortion

In article <1994Aug3.031505.65602@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu>,
HUCK ROBERT O <rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu> wrote:
>peal nora c (n-peal@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu) wrote:
>: rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu (HUCK ROBERT O) writes:
>
>: >james g. keegan jr. (keegan@helios.acm.rpi.edu) wrote:
>
>: I can see how those acts would help women. How would banning
>: abortion help women?
>

>It would make them realize that there are alternatives.

How cannot they realize it now? Are you implying that women are stupid.

> I have spoken
>to several women who have had abortions. They all said they had no
>choice. Pretty ironic, eh?

So if you ban abortion, they do not have even that choice.

> They did have choices, but because abortion
>is legal, their parents, boyfriends, and abortion counsellors convinced
>them this was the only alternative.

So we must ban the abortion to protect the women from these kind of things. What should we ban next. Working outside of home because even working women could have to take care of the home work. (Don't laugh, here it is illegal for women to work at night. They are protected from this because it was viewed that that could not have enough rest during the day as they had to take care of children.)

>
>It might encourage the fathers of their
>children to live up to their obligations.

Why should there be any encouraging, when the child support laws can be enforced with force. I do not see why all women should give their rights just so that men would be more kind to some women. Women are not pets.

> Legal abortions make it easy
>for men to abrogate their responsibilities. All they have to say is
>that they tried to convince the mother of their children to have
>an abortion. If she doesn't, the man can say he tried to make her
>see reason. He feels he has done his duty and can now walk away. Do
>you think it's any accident that illegitimacy rates have skyrocketed
>since 1973?

No necessarily. Currently it is much more acceptable to just live together without marriage. At least here most of so called illegitimate children are born to such couples. The division between legitimate and illegitimate is simply obsolete.

Also as illegitimacy is not so great stigma today, some women may choose to have a child when they are not married.

>
>
>--
>=====
>Robert Huck rohuck@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu
>"That's 6-4-3 if you're scoring at home and even if you're by yourself."
> Keith Olbermann

Osmo

Article 49

Reference 161955

From collins@nova.umd.edu

Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 8:53 PM

In <31p59j\$skvt@senator-bedfellow.MIT.EDU> shows@athena.mit.edu (Marlon Shows) writes:

>Didn't know mothers became Gods.

>Beggars can't be chosers.

>You know the pregnancy game.

>Can't blame the baby for her father's actions.

>If she didn't want it, shouldn't have opened those legs.

>Yeah, and maybe her boyfriend didn't either.

>You have a better chance of trying to prove that a baby is a tumor than
>getting me to believe that.

>Funny how heathens blasphemy so often.

Thats "blaspheme"

>Not necessarily.

>It would also increase the sexual activeness.

>Abstinence and Family planning are better alternatives.

"The" sexual activeness, or just sexual activeness in general? Youre not a
native english speaker, are you?

If your're getting to the point of writing anti-choice haiku, maybe you should
take two valium and rest for a while. Or maybe thorazine. You've probably
<had> Thorazine, haven't you, Marlon? The distortion of affect in your post
is a giveaway. If anyone doesn't see what Im talking about, mail me and I'll
try to explain.

How on earth you got an account at MIT, I can't imagine. You certainly dont
<go> there. Are you really a person, or just a program that spews out
half-baked schizoid phrases? I'll bet that you hear voices on a regular basis,
and/or believe your actions and thoughts are being observed. Interesting.
Weird, but interesting. Should have kept that mouth away from that LSD.

Jim collins

Article 50

Reference 161874

From ronkanen@cc.Helsinki.FI

Date Thu, Aug 4, 1994 8:55 PM

In article <3lp59j\$kvt@senator-bedfellow.mit.edu>,
Marlon Shows <shows@athena.mit.edu> wrote:
>In article <3lmttp\$3l8@nova.umd.edu>, collins@nova.umd.edu (Jim C) writes:
>|>
>|> Maybe the child is malformed,
>
>Didn't know mothers became Gods.
>
>Beggars can't be chosers.

Women are not beggars.

>
>Marlon Shows

Osmo

Appendix B

Density Scores

Table B.1: Words Used to Calculate Abortion Density Scores

against	against	againsts		
allow	allow	allowance	allowe	allowing
	allowable	allowances	allowed	allows
argum	argum	argumants	argumentative	
	argumant	argument	arguments	
babi	babi	babies	baby	babys
believ	believ	believeable	believer	believing
	believable	believed	believers	believs
	believe	believeing	believes	
birth	birth	birthing	births	
	birthed	birthings		
bodi	bodied	bodies	body	body's
born	born	borne	borns	
case	case	casee	casing	
	cased	cases		
child	child	childes	childs	
children	children	childrens		
choic	choice	choices		
control	control	controlers	controllable	controllers
	controlable	controlling	controlled	controlling
	controled	controll	controller	controls

Table B.1: Words Used to Calculate Abortion Density Scores

death	death	deathe	deaths	
decid	decid	decideds	decider	deciding
	decide	decideing	deciders	
	decided	decidely	decides	
decision	decision	decisional	decisions	
differ	differ	difference	differently	
	differance	difference	differing	
	differed	differences	differs	
fetus	fetuse	fetuses		
forc	force	forceful	forces	forcs
	forced	forcefulness	forcing	
give	give	gives	giving	
human	human	humanism	humanization	humanness
	humane	humanities	humanize	humans
	humanely	humanity	humanized	
	humaneness	humanitys	humanizing	
kill	kill	killing	kills	
	killed	killings		
law	lawed	lawful	laws	
legal	legal	legalisms	legalization	legalizes
	legalise	legalities	legalize	legalizing
	legalised	legality	legalized	legally
live	live	lively	living	
	lived	lives	livings	
mean	mean	meanings	means	
	meaning	meanness		
medic	medic	medicalized	medication	
	medical	medically	medications	
moral	moral	moralties	moralizes	morally
	morale	morality	moralizing	morals
	morales	moralizations	morallity	
mother	mother	mothered	mothering	mothers
murder	murder	murderers	murderings	murders
	murdered	murderes	murderous	
	murderer	murdering	murderously	

Table B.1: Words Used to Calculate Abortion Density Scores

number	number	numbered	numbering	numbers
part	part	partes	partings	parts
	parted	parting	partness	
point	point	pointed	pointing	points
position	position	positioned	positions	
	positional	positioning		
pregnanc	pregnance	pregnanci	pregnancy	
	pregnances	pregnancies	pregnancys	
pregnant				
problem	problem	problems		
prolif	prolif	prolifeic	prolifers	
	prolife	prolifeous	prolifes	
	prolifeers	prolifer	prolific	
protect	protect	protected	protection	protective
	protectable	protecting	protections	protects
question	question	questionable	questioned	questioning
	questionability	questionably	questioner	questions
reason	reason	reasonably	reasoning	
	reasonable	reasoned	reasonings	
	reasonableness	reasonable	reasons	
societi	societial	societies	society	societys
state	state	stately	stating	
	stated	states		
support	support	supported	supporters	supportively
	supportable	supporteers	supporting	supports
	supporte	supporter	supportive	supported
term	term	termed	termining	terms
wish	wish	wishes	wishing	
	wished	wishful	wishes	
year	year	years		

Table B.2: Words Used to Calculate Metacommunication Density Scores

apolog	apologise apologised	apologising apologize	apologized apologizes	apologizing
articl	article	articled	articles	
claim	claim claime	claimed claimes	claiming claims	
copi	copied	copies	copy	copying
date	date	dated	dates	dating
dishonest				
forg	forge	forged	forges	forging
forgeri	forgeried forgeries	forgeris forgery	forgerys	
keegan	keegan keeganism	keeganitis keeganize	keeganized keegans	
larri	larry	larrys		
li	lied	lies		
liar	liar	liars		
ly	lyed	lying		
newsgroup	newsgroup	newsgroups		
nyiko	nyiko	nyikos		
quot	quot quote	quoted quotes	quoting	
reader	reader	readeres	readers	
repost	repost reposte	reposted reposter	reposting repostings	reposts
thread	thread	threaded	threading	threads

Appendix C

Supplemental Analysis

Figure C.1: Number of Messages Posted by Authors

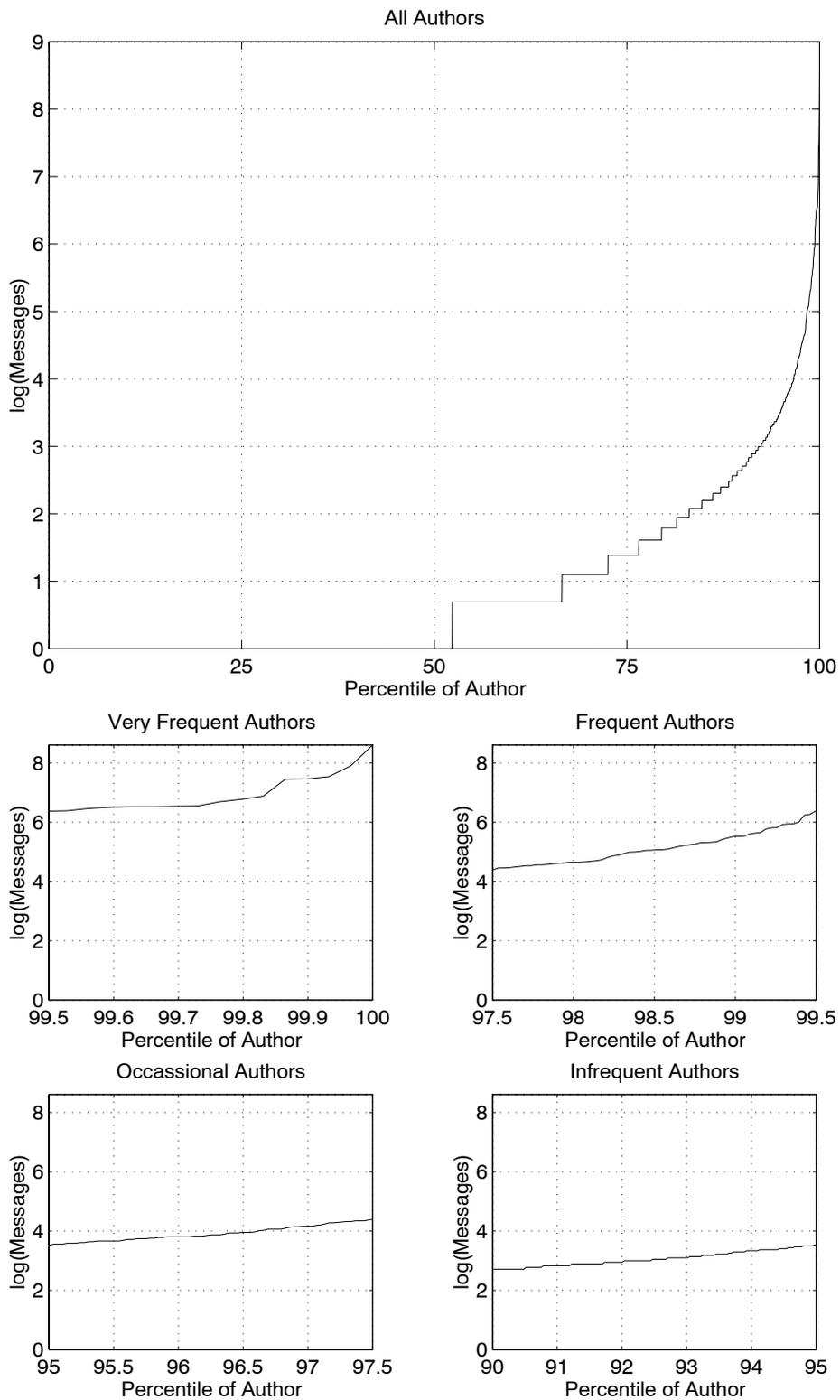


Figure C.2: Number of Threads Posted To by Authors

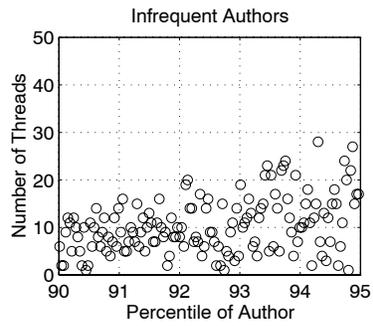
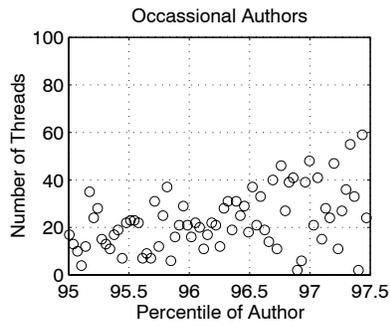
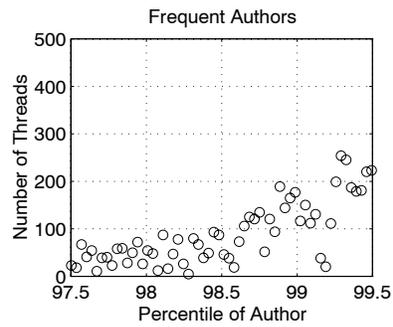
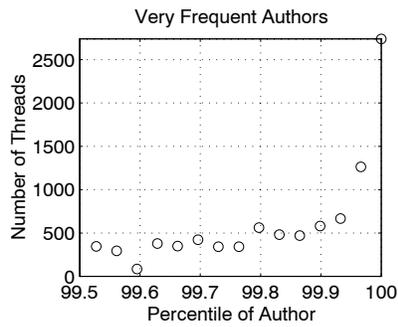
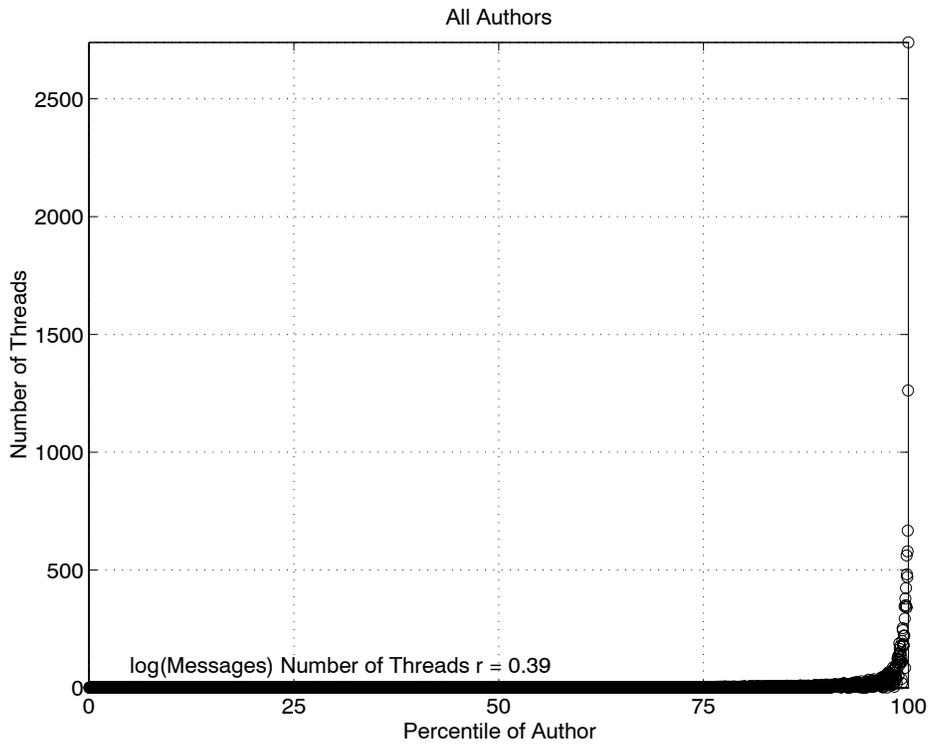


Figure C.3: Spread of Days Between First and Last Message Posted by Authors

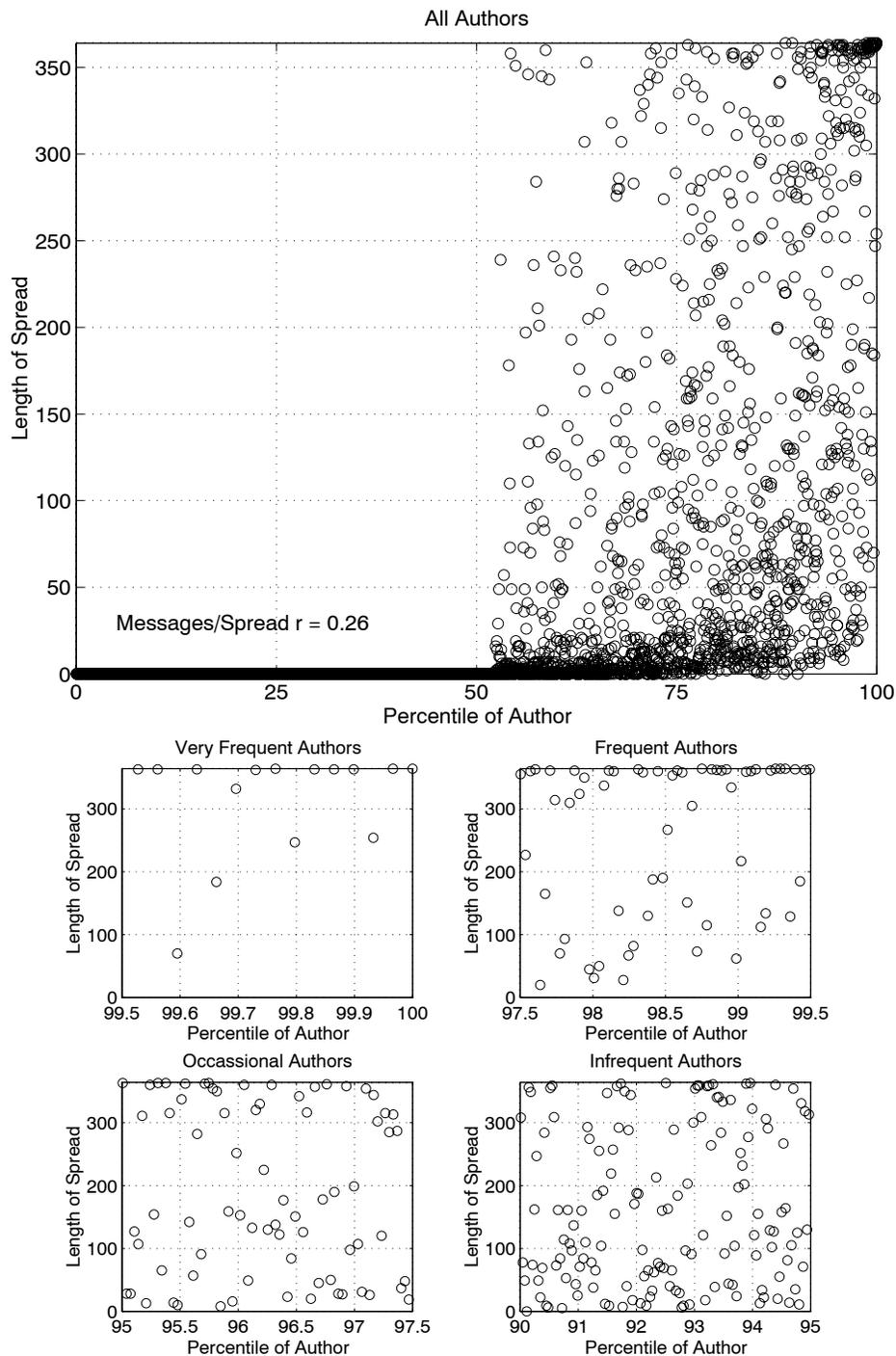


Figure C.4: Number of Days with Messages Posted by Authors

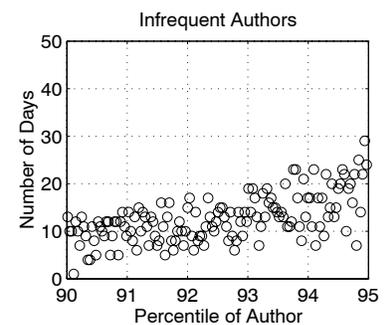
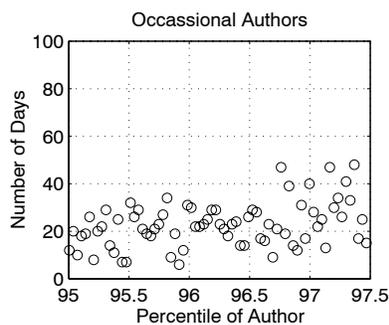
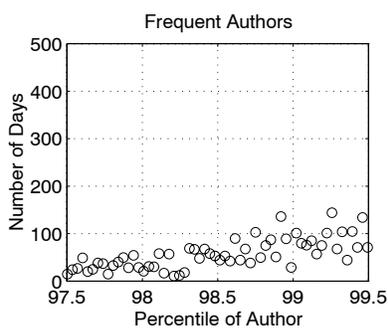
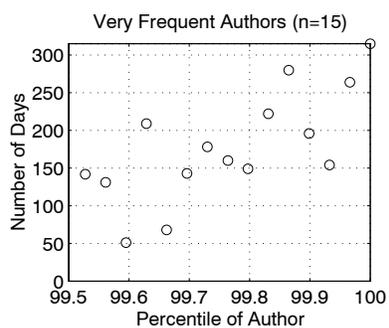
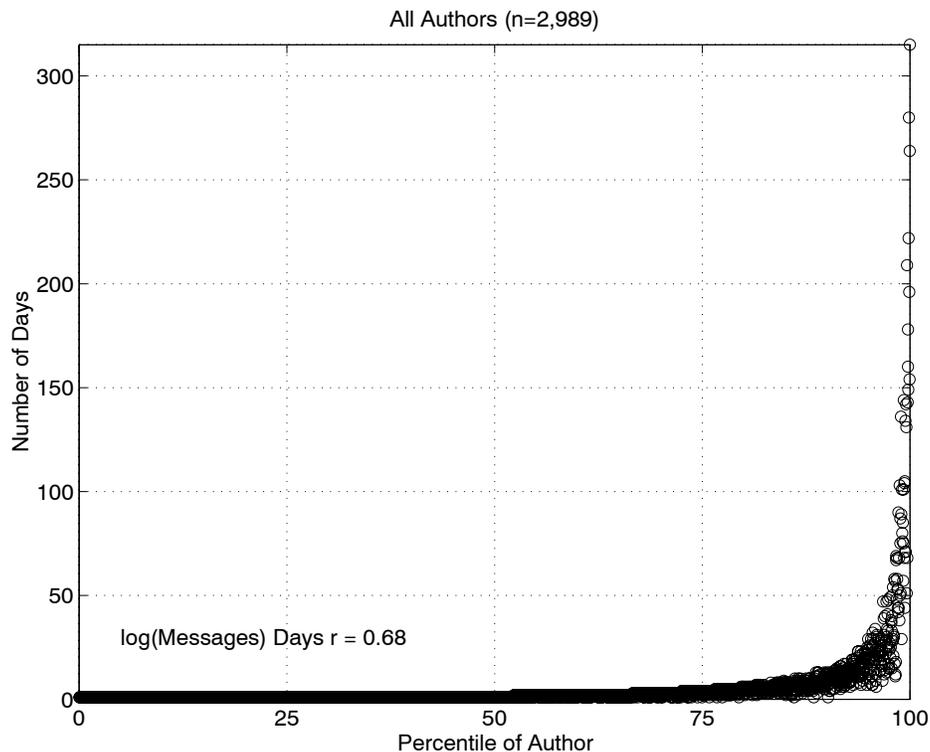


Figure C.5: Number of Messages Posted To Thread

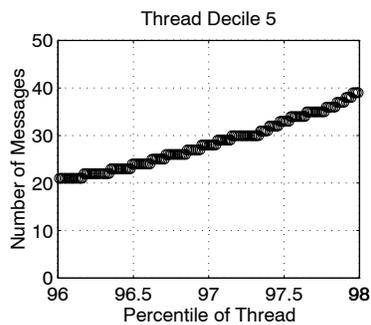
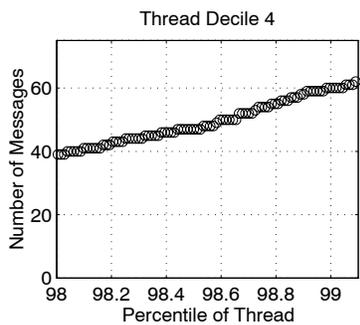
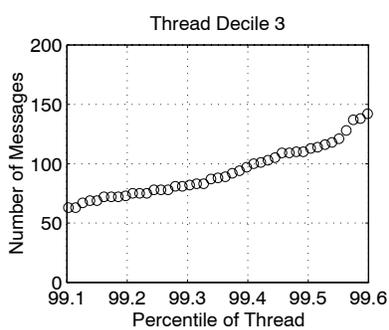
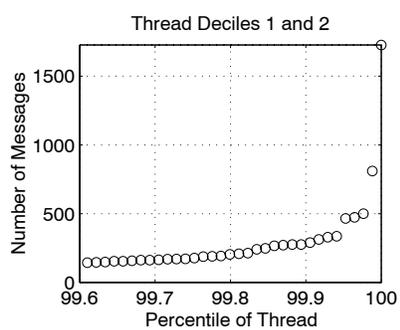
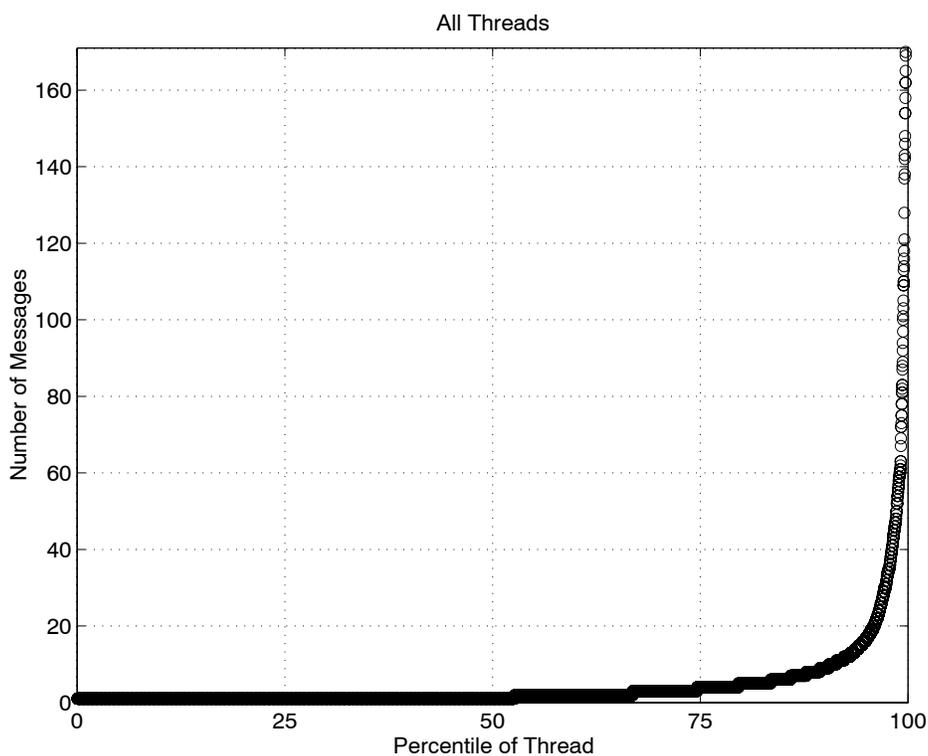


Figure C.6: Number of Authors Posting To Thread

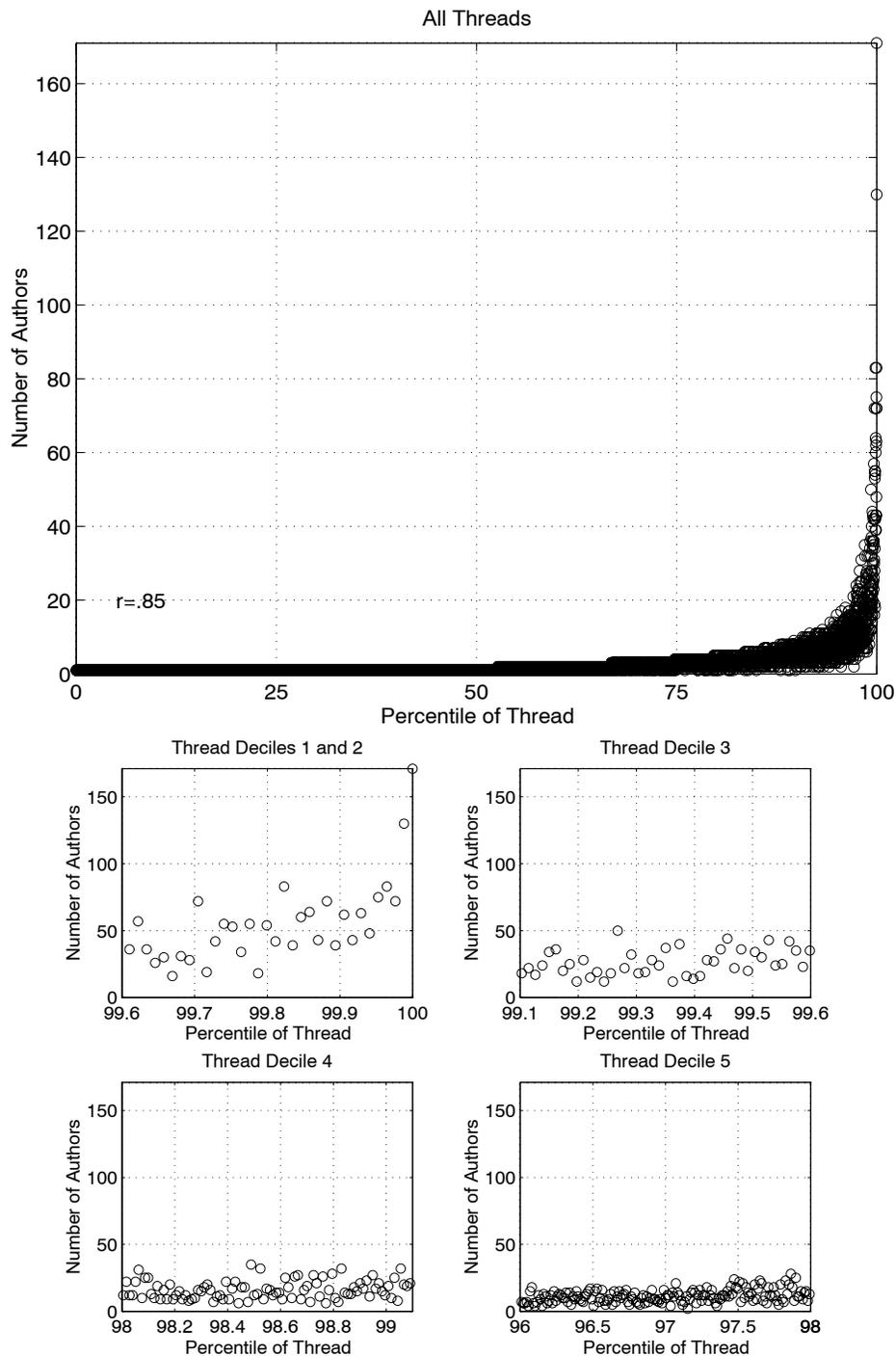


Figure C.7: Spread of Days Between First and Last Message Posted To Thread

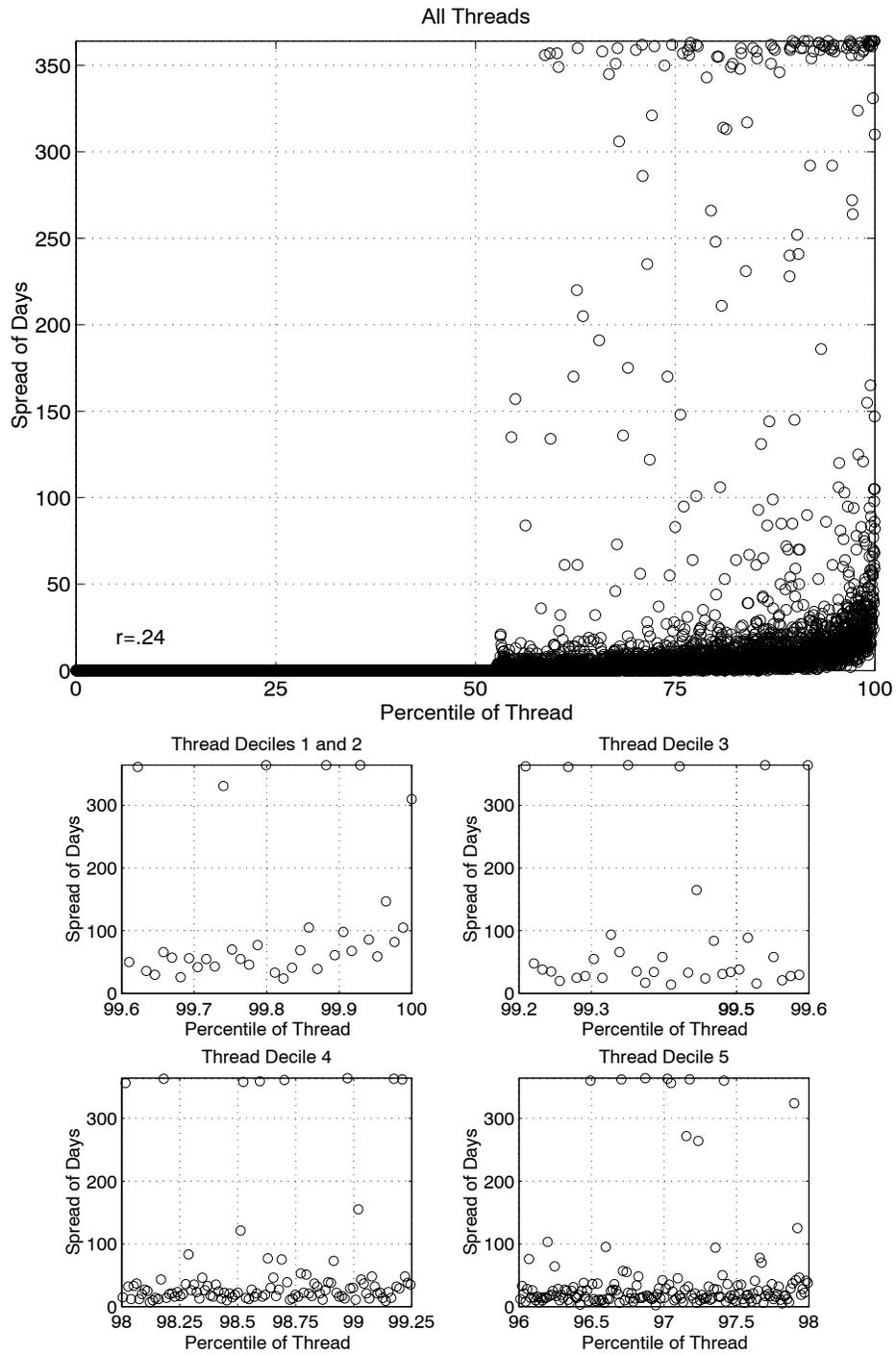
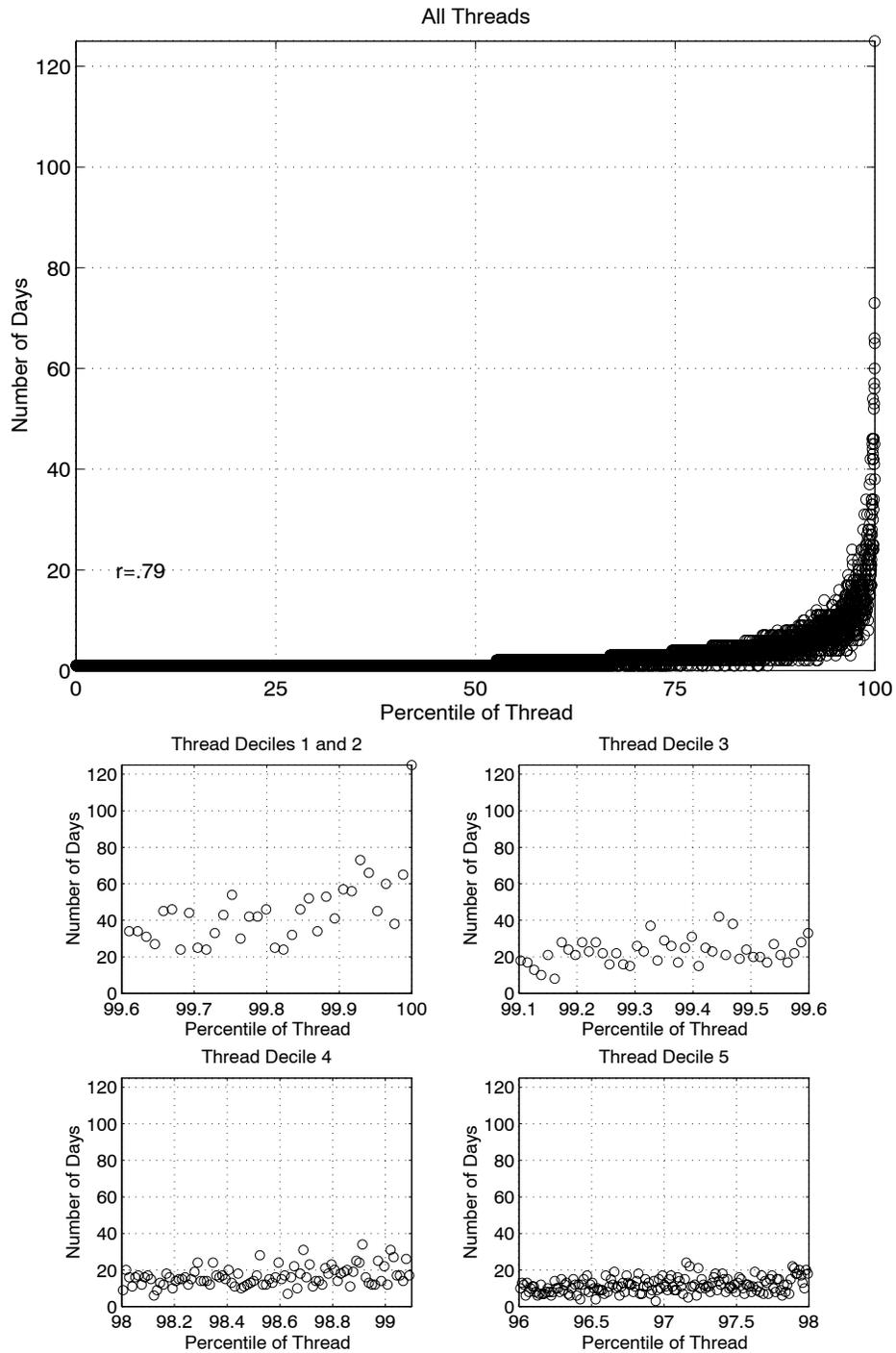


Figure C.8: Number of Days With Messages Posted To Thread



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