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There is a widespread belief that child abuse and abortion are connected. Advocates for abortion insist that one positive aspect of abortion is that it reduces the chances of child abuse by preventing the birth of an unwanted child to parents who are not capable of providing proper care. They argue that bringing an unwanted child into the world is cruel, for there is a high probability that an undesired child could become subjected to abuse and neglect. Many pro-life supporters, however, identify a different association between child abuse and abortion; they assert that abortion will lead to a rise in the number of children who suffer from maltreatment at the hands of their parents. The pro-life position is that abortion may lead to emotional and psychological harm for the mother and father of the child and may disrupt the maternal-infant bonding process. Pro-life advocates also argue that the nation’s abortion laws put an emphasis on the development of the child, as well as whether or not the child is “wanted.” Pro-life supporters assert that all of these problems can lead to violence against children. This paper will explore the numerous aspects of child abuse and abortion, including their causes, consequences, and impact on society. After investigating these subject areas, this paper will then establish the relationship between the legalization of abortion and the increasing number of innocent children who are victimized by child abuse.

**Child Abuse**

One commonality between advocates for and against abortion is the recognition that child abuse is a major crisis that must be addressed. A survey that
was performed by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) from 2005 to 2009 found that in 2009, 763,000 children were reported as repeat victims of maltreatment. In addition, 702,000 new cases of children were found to be suffering from mistreatment.\textsuperscript{2} Out of this alarming number, 80 percent of the new victims were neglected, 17.8 percent suffered from physical abuse, 9.5 percent were sexually abused, 7.6 percent were psychologically mistreated, and 2.4 percent were medically neglected.\textsuperscript{3} Many of these children endured more than one type of offense. Although statistics are cold numbers, they do convey the magnitude of the child abuse issue in America.

In order to fully address the problem of child abuse, it is necessary to develop an understanding of every aspect of the issue. Therefore, the study took an in-depth look at the many factors involved in child abuse cases. It was discovered that children are often at greatest risk of becoming victims of child abuse if they have a physical or mental handicap, a visual or auditory impairment, a behavior or health condition, and/or are emotionally unstable.\textsuperscript{4} The type of mistreatment was also statistically quantified in the study by NCANDS. It was found that 66.7 percent suffered from neglect either exclusively or in some combination with another form of abuse. Another 44.8 percent suffered primarily from physical abuse but some of these were also in combination with other types of maltreatment.\textsuperscript{5}

The paper indicated that although the number of child abuse victims decreased during the 2005 to 2009 time span, the cases of child fatalities increased.
A total of 1,676 fatalities were reported from 49 states, the greatest percentage of which were Caucasian (39.2 percent), African American (29.1 percent), and Hispanic (17 percent). Of these fatalities, 80.8 percent were of children under the age of four; 46.2 percent were younger than one years old, 17.8 percent were one years old, 10.3 percent were two years old, and 6.5 percent were three years of age. The study noted that the youngest children are the most at risk to suffer death as a result of ill-treatment. In addition, 27.3 percent of all child fatalities were caused by the mother alone and 22.5 percent resulted from the father acting alone.\(^6\) The study also stated that approximately 40 percent of all child abuse and neglect cases were initiated solely by the mother and another 20 percent exclusively by the father. Another 18 percent of cases were found to be the result of both parents acting together. The final 22 percent of inspected child abuse cases indicated non-parental perpetrators.\(^7\)

In the hope of identifying and preventing the mistreatment of children, an extensive amount of research has been done to determine what characteristics classify most perpetrators of child abuse. The Giovannoni and Billingsley study conducted in 1970 revealed that neglectful mothers are often without husbands or have marital conflicts and typically have low incomes that are insufficient to provide for the child. The researchers concluded from the study that child abuse is rooted in the current circumstances of the abuser, not his or her past.\(^8\)
A more recent study indicated that child abuse is often associated with serious psychological pathology, as well as societal pressure and cultural norms. Contradictory to the conclusion of the Giovannoni and Billingsley study, this study also found that the “most common element is a history of abuse in their own [the child abusers] lives.”9 One site stated that 30 percent of children who are abused “will continue the cycle” by exploiting their own offspring in the same manner that their parents hurt them.10 Finally, a third report was made stating that children perceive marriage problems and alcohol abuse as being two significant contributors to child abuse.11

Since most abuse and fatalities are carried out by mothers, women have been the main focus of many studies in which the various elements of child abuse are assessed. It has been hypothesized that the tendency of a mother to physically, emotionally, or verbally neglect or abuse her child at a greater rate than the father may be “closely related to emotional disturbances in the mother associated with pregnancy or a postpartum psychosis.”12 Dr. Margaret Lynch, a woman who has dedicated her life to defending children on the political level, organized a study in which the objective was to identify what factors increase the likelihood of a child becoming a victim to maltreatment. She determined that several factors were overwhelmingly present in the history of abused children, including irregular pregnancy, labor or delivery, neonatal separation, other separations within the first six months, and any sickness of the mother or child. The results of her study led her to conclude that “treatment of parents during the pregnancy, perinatal period,
and early infancy may well be fruitful in the prevention of child abuse.” Ultimately, studies show that both the physical and psychological health of the mother throughout her pregnancy may play an important role in preventing child abuse. If the mother is treated well and offered the support that she is in need of, she will be at a relatively low risk of becoming an abusive or neglectful parent. If, however, the woman is subjected to stress and she experiences anxiety during her pregnancy, she may develop a tendency to become neglectful of her child.

Mothers play a crucial role in the prevention of child abuse. This role is partly a result of the maternal-infant bond, a bond that has been studied to a great extent but is still not entirely understood. There is no doubt that pregnancy can be a very challenging time for a woman. The woman will experience physical and emotional changes as her biological processes prepare her for the child in her womb. It is said that there are two chief adaptations that the woman will undergo during her pregnancy, the first being her realization that her baby is an “integral part of herself,” and the second being her understanding that her baby is a unique and “separate individual”. Quickening typically occurs around the fourth month of a woman’s pregnancy and is identified as the point in which the mother can physically feel her baby moving. Quickening is also marked as a time in which women will begin to fantasize about their unborn children and to imagine what their babies will be like after they are born.
The bond between mother and child, whether it is a result of biological or psychological changes in the mother, is established long before the child is actually delivered. As the pregnancy progresses, the bond between the mother and her child will drastically increase. After delivery, the mother-infant bond has the opportunity to become even stronger. Studies indicate that the baby should be given to the mother and father as close to post-delivery as possible, for the timing of this event can be very important in establishing a strong parent-infant bond. It has also been found that women who breastfeed exhibit more caring and affectionate behavior towards their infants than woman who do not breastfeed their young.\textsuperscript{16}

The evidence supporting the importance of early, positive interactions between mother and infant has led researchers to study what affects negative interactions may have on the mother and child, as well as what factors may lead to unfavorable behavior between the two. As was previously stated, any physical or mental stress placed on the mother during her prenatal period may negatively impact her overall outlook on her pregnancy. That negative attitude may in turn be deflected onto the newly born child.

**Child Abuse and Abortion**

It has been argued that an unwanted pregnancy may be one such factor that has the potential to result in poor interaction between a mother and her infant. It is believed that the troubled mother will develop negative feelings for her child before and after birth. An online pro-choice forum recently expanded upon this idea in an
article entitled “When Pregnancies are Unwanted.” In the article, the authors, Nancy Felipe Russo, Ph.D., and Henry P. David, Ph.D., defend the use of abortion for unplanned pregnancies. The article states, “Unintended and unwanted child bearing can have negative health, social, and psychological consequences. Health problems include greater chances of illness and death for the mother and child. In addition, such childbearing has been linked to a variety of social problems, including divorce, poverty, child abuse, and juvenile delinquency.”\textsuperscript{17}

The article cites a research project that was conducted by Henry P. David of the Transnational Family Research Institute. His results can be found in his research article, “Born Unwanted: Long-Term Developmental Effects of Denied Abortion”, which was published in the \textit{Journal of Social Issues} in 1992. David conducted his study by selecting a large number of Prague children whose mothers had twice been denied access to an abortion for their pregnancy. He also chose a control group of children who were vastly similar to the sample group except that the mothers desired to keep them. The research involved following up with the children when they reached the ages of nine, 14-16, 21-23, and 30, and assessing the children for factors such as physical, mental, and emotional health. Although the time for the last assessment had not yet passed, the research article that was published had found that “the differences between the two groups of children widened over time, always to the disadvantage of the unwanted children.”\textsuperscript{18} This study is used as evidence to support the concluding statement of the forum post, “Every Child a Wanted Child has particular meaning for health professionals.”\textsuperscript{19}
This phrase is commonly used by pro-choice activists to defend their stance on the “necessity” of legalized abortion.

Pro-life supporters, however, find fault with this claim and refute the idea that abortion leads to a decrease in the cases of child abuse. They argue that the belief that abortion reduces the frequency of violence towards “unwanted” children lacks scientific and statistical evidence. Pro-life supporters suggest abortion has led to an increase in the number of abused and neglected children.\textsuperscript{20}

One undeniable fact is that after \textit{Roe v. Wade}, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy, there was a significant increase in the number of child abuse cases. Throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, the rate of physical and sexual assaults on children rose drastically and it wasn’t until the 1990’s that numbers began to level out and finally decline.\textsuperscript{21} One statistic stated that between 1976 and 1987, child abuse rose by 330 percent.\textsuperscript{22} One significant finding with respect to the abortion and child abuse issue was that there was no significant decrease in the number of murders of children under the age of one year after the legalization of abortion. It is noted that this statistic is an “important omission since many homicides of young children seem to be motivated specifically by a desire to dispose of an unwanted child.”\textsuperscript{23}

Other noteworthy figures include the records of abortion. The Guttmacher Institute, one of the leading databases for abortion and reproductive health statistics, reports that 36 percent of abortions are obtained by Caucasian women,
thirty percent are attained by African American women, and 25 percent are acquired by Hispanic women. Research also shows that between 1973 and 1981, the number of abortions per 1,000 women between the ages of fifteen and 44 had dramatically increased from 16.3 to 29.3. Throughout the mid 1980’s and 90’s, abortion rates slowly began to decline. By 2008, it was determined that the number of women who received abortions had decreased to 19.6 for every 1,000 women in the given population.24

These numbers indicate a remarkable parallel between child abuse and abortion in the United States. After the legalization of abortion in 1973, statistics indicate that both abortion and child abuse rates soared. Similarly, the numbers of abortions and child abuse cases have been on the decline since the 1990’s. Another striking parallelism is that the ethnicities of women who are recorded as having the greatest number of abortions are the same as those who are reported for perpetrating the most occurrences of child fatalities. Caucasian women were noted for causing 39.2 percent of all child fatalities and they are also documented as having 36 percent of all abortions performed each year.25,26 African American and Hispanic women were found to be the second and third highest populations responsible for child fatalities. Correspondingly, research shows that these two ethnicities have the second and third highest rates of abortion.

Depending upon the study, abortion has been found to result in severe guilt in two to 22 percent of women who have had an abortion. All women confessed to
feeling as though they “had lost an important part of themselves” and to having “guilt and profound regret.” Post-abortion counseling services have become a saving necessity for many women suffering from the overwhelming grief, loss, guilt, and humiliation that so many women experience after having an abortion. In addition to the internal tension within the mother, other consequences of abortion have been shown to include conflicts in relationships, and the weakening the support system that the woman should be relying upon to cope with her grief.

Numerous studies have indicated other difficulties that women endure after an abortion. A 1980 study led by J. Ashton revealed in his final paper, “The Psychological Outcome of Induced Abortion,” that eight weeks after having an abortion 44 percent of study subjects “complained of nervous disorders, 36 percent had sleep disorders, and 31 percent had regrets.” Another paper published seven years later by Speckhard, titled Psycho-Social Stress Following Abortion, determined that of the women surveyed, “81 percent [felt] low self-worth, 69 percent sexual dysfunction, and 89 percent preoccupation with the aborted child.” A paper written by Vaughan, Canonical Variates of Post Abortion Syndrome, was published in 1991 and found that of the sampled women who had undergone an abortion, “94 percent of the unmarried relationships failed, 36 percent had suicidal ideation, and 45 percent had negative feelings regarding subsequent pregnancies, problems bonding, and/or obsessive thoughts of having a replacement child.” Other research projects yielded results that indicated that a great percentage of women who have had abortions did so because they felt pressured to, and that an
even greater percentage went through with the abortion lacking information about
the development of their unborn baby and the process and risks associated with the
procedure. Other tests cited complications with the abortion, including “32 percent
drug/alcohol abuse, 38 percent lowered self-esteem, 46 percent inability to forgive
self, and 27 percent to 46 percent despair/hopelessness.” The above descriptions
are just a few among many studies that point to the destructive consequences of
abortion.

A study that focused on the link between abortion and substance abuse was
published in 2000 in The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. The
analysis consisted of interviewing 30 post-abortive women. The outcome of the
study determined that 60 percent of the women increased alcohol consumption after
their abortion. Also, the majority of the 30 percent of women who reported
attempting suicide used drugs and alcohol to do so. After assessing the results and
applying the lowest relative risk limit, the article concluded that substance abuse
among women with a past abortion is at least 21.7 percent, which is 10.1 percent
above the standard figure. Applying this percentage to the approximately 1.5
million women who have an abortion every year, it can be reasonably suggested
that “150,000 women per year may be at risk of abusing drugs and/or alcohol as a
means of dealing with stress related to abortion.” The article included other
studies that had been completed in the past to support the resulting data. The
authors of the article discuss a 1981 investigation that found that women with a
history of abortion were twice as likely to become heavy drinkers. This same survey
found that out of nearly 700 women in Boston enrolled in prenatal care, those who had a history of abortion were over 2.3 times more likely to be using cocaine at the time of the subsequent pregnancy than those who had never had an abortion.\cite{33}

Another research project reviewed the mental health of women after having one or more abortions. The article mentions a 2003 survey carried out by the National Longitudinal Study of Youth, in which “analysis found that women who reported induced abortion were 65 percent more likely to score in the high-risk range for clinical depression than women whose pregnancies resulted in birth.”\cite{34}

The results from this particular assessment discovered that there was a “significant association between pregnancy history and rates of disorder...in all cases, the abortion group had significantly higher rates of disorder rather than the pregnant no abortion group.” The problem behaviors were depression, suicidal ideation, illicit drug dependence, and total mental health issues.\cite{35}

Some research has taken a more in-depth look at the psychological aspects of abortion in light of its potential connection to abusive behavior. One correlation was a concept referred to as “reenacting trauma,” in which the person who was subjected to the traumatic experience will subconsciously call attention to that event. It is believed that women who attempt to suppress the memory of their abortion and conceal it from loved ones may experience this. Cases in which the father of the child suffers from the incident and turns to reenactment trauma to deal with it have also been recorded. It has been said that “the tension between the
need to hide a trauma and the need to expose it is at the heart of many of the psychological symptoms of post-abortion trauma.” Reenactment has been found to “satisfy both of these needs: the need to expose it and the need to hide it.”

Theresa Burke, Ph.D., is the founder of Rachel’s Vineyard, one of the first ministries started for women in need of post-abortion counseling. Burke has also contributed significantly to the knowledge and literature available on post-abortion syndrome. In her book, *Forbidden Grief*, Theresa Burke describes how reenacting trauma temporarily satisfies the brokenness caused by abortion in the mother, father, and siblings of the unborn, aborted child. For some, reenactment may be carried out through a variety of destructive behaviors, including self-mutilation, addiction to pornography, or criminal activity. Through her work, Burke has directly and indirectly helped countless women find healing after abortion.

Burke discovered that a common symptom of post-abortion distress is having intrusive thoughts of harming children. Her book tells of women who have struggled with seemingly unexplainable urges to treat children with aggression and violence. Women who had started daycares as a means of dealing with their regretted abortions confessed to having quick tempers when watching the children under their care. These tempers sometimes escalated and resulted in “hitting and shaking them in a rage of fury and frustration.” Another woman expressed that she would have “disturbing intrusive thoughts about pulling the babies’ arms out of their sockets.” She said that she sometimes “felt a compelling desire to grab the
infants’ little arms and disconnect their limbs.” Anxious mothers who had obtained an abortion prior to having born children admitted to having terrifying thoughts about poisoning, stabbing, and suffocating their children.

Unfortunately, some mothers who did not seek help for their intrusive memories did succeed in killing their children. Burke conveys the stories of Renee Nicely and Donna Fleming, two women suffering from post abortion trauma. Renee Nicely, after beating her three year old son to death, stated directly to the psychiatrist on the court case “I should be punished for the abortion.” After assessing her, the psychiatrist conveyed to the court that Nicely’s murder of her son was undoubtedly related to her psychological instability provoked by her abortion. Burke also relays the story of Donna Fleming, who jumped off of a bridge with her two sons, ages two and five. After she and her five-year-old were rescued, Donna claimed that her suicidal attempt that resulted in the death of her two-year old was done “in order to reunite her family.”

Burke expands on the fact that women handle the guilt from their abortion differently. Some women develop a fear and hatred for pregnant women and others tend to feel undeserving of ever becoming pregnant again. Women have also expressed feelings of extreme discomfort and anxiety around babies and small children. There are also those women who suddenly become obsessed with having a baby, and once they do, the need to pamper and protect him or her becomes the primary goal of the mother.
After speaking with and treating numerous women, Theresa Burke has added to the ongoing research into the relationship between abortion and child abuse. Burke focuses primarily on women and their desire and ability to mother after having an abortion. She has found that many women suffering from unresolved grief over the death of their unborn child become withdrawn from the children that they do have. As a result of their pent up anxiety over their approaching motherhood, their lack of confidence in their ability to be a good mother, and the fear they have that something bad will happen to their unborn child, pregnancies sometimes become emotionally and psychologically burdensome to mothers. As a result, these mothers find themselves incapable of bonding with their child during and after their birth.\textsuperscript{42}

At times, Burke has found that the failure to bond and the intensified guilt the new life may cause the mother to feel, creates a situation in which the child is at a high risk of becoming subject to neglect or abuse. Burke states that “Numerous studies have identified an association between abortion and subsequent rejection and abuse of later planned and ‘wanted’ children”.\textsuperscript{43} It is evident that Burke’s research on this topic is unique. Unlike most other studies that are conducted on this subject matter, Burke works directly with women who have experienced abortions, rather than with anonymous surveys and interviews. Her work is vital to gaining an accurate representation of how men, women, and children, are affected by abortion.
Another remarkable contributor to the link between abortion and child abuse is Dr. Philip G. Ney, M.D. Dr. Ney has identified significant factors that support the view that abortion plays a role in the elevated cases of child abuse. A large number of his published works focus on the psychological consequences of abortion, and how such consequences can influence the interactions between parents and their children.

One of the first pieces of evidence that Ney uses to point to the relationship between abortion and maltreatment of children is the inclination of post-abortive men and women for uncontrollable rage. Ney notes that generally, people are inclined to want to help and protect the weak and vulnerable. Rather than responding to the helpless with compassion, abortion encourages a response of violence. Ney draws a connection between the violence of the action and the guilt felt by those involved and suggests that those who have been involved in any way with an abortion may experience quickness of temper and resentment of the weak.

After evaluating some of the psychological implications that abortion has for mothers and fathers, it becomes evident that abortion may burden the mother and act a stressor that could negatively affect her feelings for her infant. After this assessment, the comment that “women who have had an abortion are not as able to bond to their next child, are more likely to respond with fear and anxiety to the child, are unable to touch the child as often, and cannot breastfeed them as well” will be more fully understood (Ney, 73).
Ney also proposes that abortion leads to a “diminished taboo against aggressing defenseless young.”\(^{45}\) Ney calls to mind that most cultures value protecting the powerless. He points out that even in time of war, torturing or bringing any harm to POWs is considered disgraceful, as are crimes against women and children living in invaded territories. Ney presents the idea that abortion has led to an increase in the desensitization of not only the abortionist and his or her staff, but society as a whole. Ney notes that there is “nothing more helpless than the unborn baby.”\(^{46}\) He further expands his point by describing a saline solution surgical abortion procedure. The process is typically used for second trimester abortions and involves injecting saline solution into the amniotic sac. The chemical solution burns the fetus and initiates contractions until the mother delivers a dead, badly burned baby. It is clear from this brief description of the procedure that the baby must experience excruciating pain before he or she is killed by the chemicals. Ney suggests that if the image of a burned baby does not initiate intense feelings that something is morally wrong with the practice, then indifference towards injuring the helpless has undoubtedly occurred. The apathy towards abortions and recurrent cases of passivity to child abuse indicates that there is a vicious cycle in progress.\(^{47}\)

The third point that Ney makes is that abortion leads to a diminished value of children. Ney points to the fact that there has been a drastic increase in the number of people who no longer want to have children, and he poses the question if this suggests that society now deems children to be worth less now that they are not
as wanted. “If society adheres to the ethic that the unborn child only has value when he is wanted, that ethic can easily be applied to small children. Logically, when people stop wanting a child, he has lost value. If the unborn has no value and it is right to kill him, then it is defensible to kill children who have lost value. People do not harm what they highly value.”

Ney also adds to the recurring theme that abortion disrupts the maternal-infant bond. He states that “evidence indicates that any phenomenon which may intervene in the early attachment of the mother to child may contribute to the pathogenesis of child abuse.” Ney discusses how during pregnancy, “it appears that hormones create an attitude of determined protection and self-sacrificing nurturing,” and that ending a pregnancy not only upsets that natural bond, but may inhibit it from developing during any subsequent pregnancies. If a woman is forced to repress her natural instinct to protect her young, then it increases the likelihood that her ability to even form that bond will be hindered the next time she is pregnant. Perhaps, women who are suffering from guilt, or even from fear of losing their child again, attempt to relieve the pain of experiencing another broken bond by fighting its formation and development.

**Impact on Society**

In order to more fully develop the connection between abortion and child abuse, it must be shown how the two have impacted the general public. On the surface, it would appear as though the two are very different. Abortion, a legal
procedure since 1973, is deemed by the courts and much of society to be a private right of a woman. There is no debate over the fact that a woman has every right to autonomy. The controversy over abortion is that when a woman chooses to have an abortion, her right to make decisions about her body and reproductive health infringes on the right of another human being, her unborn child. Since the child is within the womb of his mother, the courts decided that under the Fourteenth amendment, the Constitution protects the rights of born citizens, and could not be assumed to also safeguard any rights of the unborn. The U.S. Supreme Court opinion regarding the Roe v. Wade decision was that the Constitution “has application only postnatally.” It also stated “that the word ‘person’ as used in the Fourteenth Amendment does not include the unborn and that it is not the duty of the judiciary to “resolve the difficult question of when life begins.”\textsuperscript{51} In other words, the view shared by the Supreme Court and much of humanity is that the unborn child is a part of the woman, her belonging, and holds no dignity or value apart from her.

Those who have followed child abuse or neglect court cases would admit that there are “insurmountable obstacles often presented by parents and by the legal system when attempts are made to intervene in a family’s destructive style of child rearing”. A review of court cases involving the safety and welfare of children shows a persistent history of rulings in which there was a legal concept of children as the “property of parents”.\textsuperscript{52}
Pro-life supporters point to the danger of this perception. One expressed this concern saying “Abortion, instead [of the instinct to protect], leads women and society to a sense that the child is theirs to possess.” The author of the statement goes on to say that this notion “results in a view of unborn children as property – a view that is difficult to revise after a child is born.” The line summarizes the belief that abortion may negatively impact society’s view of the helplessness of children.

Tracy L. Dodds, editor of the Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy, wrote an article entitled “Defending America’s Children: How the Current System Gets it Wrong.” In the article, Dodds argues that it is almost impossible to look after youths if they are not protected throughout their lifetimes, including their development in the womb. She states that the maltreatment of children is closely related to the perspective that personhood is only applicable to born individuals. Her article expands on the court cases that have continuously failed to give children a voice, and reasonably demonstrates that society has been affected by abortion more than anyone could have imagined.

Dodds makes an important point when she asserts that the unborn child is dehumanized by the courts, and therefore by society. The Supreme Court statement concerning *Roe v Wade* was that the judiciary was established to uphold the Constitution, not to debate over ethical principles. As a result, the courts declared that it was not their duty to establish when a human life begins, and consequently, much of the public has also not concerned themselves with this
question. The rising numbers of abortions and victims of child abuse, however, indicates that the courts and society have unintentionally made a huge statement about the concept of personhood and when it begins. The notion that individuality requires time and development has begun to pervade the nation. As a result, greater value has been placed on those people who are biologically and intellectually developed, are independent, and are contributing members of society. Failing to recognize the value of a human life from the moment of conception and throughout his or her nine months of development within the womb is a failure to protect the most innocent and vulnerable human beings in society. The legalization of abortion posed a tremendous threat to the lives of all children, not just the unborn, for it inferred that maturity and autonomy were necessary for one’s life to be deemed valuable and worthy of basic human rights.

There is an imminent danger that comes with not recognizing the dignity of the unborn, for it creates a mentality that young lives are worth less than others. Clearly, this mentality puts the lives of infants and adolescents in harms way. It should be recognized that independence and physiological and intellectual development are mere processes that humans go through. All human lives are equal in dignity and worthy of respect. Human dignity begins when that person comes into existence, the moment of conception, and can not be quantified by developments that occur throughout a lifetime.
A brief history of the court cases involving abortion would reveal the plight by pro-life politicians and activists to establish the dignity of the unborn human life. Since Roe v. Wade, the courts have made alterations in the rights that States have to regulate abortion. Ultimately, most success has come in the form of making access to late-term abortions more difficult to obtain. The fight over partial birth abortion illustrated the gravity of this lack of respect for unborn lives. The legality of partial-birth abortion, the appalling abortion procedure that violently kills an almost fully delivered baby, spoke volumes on just how degraded the life of the unborn child had become. Laws protecting criminals and animals from acts of brutality have been in existence for decades, but protecting the right to life of the unborn child, the most innocent of all human beings, was still deemed unconstitutional. This demonstrated that the unborn child was seen as lower in dignity than animals. The long struggle to ban this procedure and to protect the life of an almost fully born human being, showed just how far the nation had strayed from valuing the lives of children.55

The connection between the failure to recognize the rights of the unborn child and the inability of the courts to protect the rights of born children have become evident in several past court cases. Judicial rulings on cases involving children continuously disregard the individual interests of the child and instead base their decisions on the rights of the parents or states. For example, the statements made regarding the rulings in the cases Meyer v. Nebraska, Pierce v. Society of Sisters, and Prince v. Massachusetts, all defend their rulings by making statements that
assert the right that parents have to raise and educate their children as they see fit, the right that teachers have to create their own curriculum, and the right that states have to interfere with families if it is on the child’s behalf. It is important to note that these statements never defend the civil rights or wishes of the child. Dodds notes that even after the courts began to recognize that parents do not always have the safety and well-being of their children in mind, the framework in which the court stated the ruling was that “only when the state claims an injury from the mistreatment of children may parental determinations be disputed; children have no individual rights to challenge harmful parental determinations should the state not decide to intervene and legislate on their behalf.”

Numerous other court cases have overlooked the individual freedoms of children, and in doing so, “have reaffirmed the perception that children are property, not unique entities to be factored into judicial balancing tests.” Despite the court’s recognition that child protection laws and regulations must be established, the root cause of their endangerment has been constantly overlooked. By not acknowledging the equal rights that children have to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’, the courts add to the conception that children are less entitled to these constitutional promises. In failing to protect the most basic rights of children, and their inherent value as individual human beings, the courts have unintentionally placed children at greater risk of being dehumanized by their parents and society.
Child custody hearings continue to place the desires of parents above the needs of their offspring. In addition, it is very difficult for child protection services to remove children from potentially dangerous situations, even when there is significant evidence for alarm. The control that parents have over their own children is ruled as more important than the control that children should have over the safety of their own lives. Past cases show that even in situations of physical abuse, the autonomy of the parent has been defended over the right of the child to live in a safe and secure household. When a parent is found to be abusive, they are often warned to cease their destructive activity, yet their children remain within their care. Despite the high probability that these children will again be subjected to abuse or neglect, the courts place a greater emphasis on not infringing on parental rights, rather than the protection of the innocent victims.58

When children are removed from abusive situations, they sometimes end up living in a cycle of foster homes. Even when foster parents desire to adopt their foster child, which would offer the child a stable home with adoptive parents who would properly provide love and care, they cannot do so without the permission of the biological parents. Although the parents should have forfeited their rights as parents after they allowed their children to live in abusive or neglected circumstances, the courts continue to assert that parents have a greater right to determine their child’s future than the child does.59
Another example of how it is dangerous to assess value in terms of development can be seen in the concealment of infanticides and the number of advocates for decreased charges for mothers who have committed the crime. Although these advocates, from the psychological standpoint of the mother, may have a case that reduced charges should be considered, they build their defense on the idea that “something other than a full life was taken.” Many fail to recognize that the murder was of a human being, and although that life was still fully dependent on the mother, the life was equal in dignity and value to that of the most fully developed human person. The reasoning behind the Supreme Court decision on *Roe v Wade*, in some respects, has justified infanticide on the grounds that development is an important part of personhood.\(^6^0\)

Additionally, the *Roe v Wade* decision judged that a woman’s right to reproductive and bodily autonomy has more protection under the Constitution than that of the life of the unborn child. The emphasis on a woman’s right to choose whether or not to terminate her pregnancy by having an abortion has surpassed whatever liberty the unborn child has to live. Supporters of *Roe v Wade* assert that the law is necessary because the child is, after all, inside of his mother. The idea that dependence on the mother devalues the life of the fetus is an opinion shared by the majority of “pro-choice” advocates. This logic, however, does force one to consider the value of the lives of all children, for children depend upon the care of their mother and father for years after their birth.
The weight of this fact was demonstrated by the *Planned Parenthood of Central New Jersey v Farmer* case that appeared before the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The argument was that the “child’s legal right to life does not depend solely on the baby’s location in relation to the mother, but instead on the mother’s intentions.” This case was in reference to the gruesome partial birth abortion procedure. At the time, the court ruled that ‘a woman seeking an abortion is plainly not seeking to give birth’, therefore the intentions of the mother are more important than the actual results of her pregnancy.\(^{61}\) In 2005, former President George W. Bush signed the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban, making the procedure illegal throughout the nation. Still, the controversy over the issue and the effort it took for a pro-life legislature to pass the ban indicated the multitude of people who do not respect that even partially delivered children have a right to life.

Another example of the degradation of human life is the abortion clinic in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was closed after it was discovered that the abortionist and his untrained wife were practicing abortions in atrociously unsanitary and unsafe conditions. It was also found out that at least seven different times the abortionist resorted to killing infants with scissors after failing to kill them before birth.\(^{62}\) Although some may consider the incident in Philadelphia to be an extreme case, it does highlight some of the major implications that abortion has had on society. If society does not value the life of the child moments before his or her birth, and government fails to legally protect that human
life, then disposing of it immediately or shortly after birth does not seem to be such a terrible crime.

Since 1973, the year in which abortion on demand became legalized, cases of child abuse and neglect have sky-rocketed. *Roe v Wade* asserted the right to autonomy to women and numerous other court cases have affirmed the right that parents have to raise and discipline their children as they choose. With every law presented in a framework that defends the rights of parents, and undermines or blatantly ignores the rights of children, it is no wonder that the number of children who suffer either abuse or neglect at the hands of their care-takers has increased so dramatically.

Not only is abortion a private right of women, it is also an industry that has helped abortionists gain great wealth. As Senator of New Jersey Chris Smith stated in his address to the House in 2006, “violence against children pays.” He points out that Planned Parenthood, the nation’s leading abortion provider, makes millions of dollars annually from the high cost abortion procedures that the “pro-choice” organization urges women to have.\(^{63}\)

Recently, a group called Live Action went undercover to expose the lies and hypocrisy of Planned Parenthood. Young people in several states across the country went into Planned Parenthood clinics disguised as sex traffickers. Employees of Planned Parenthood assured the men posing as the sex traffickers that the alleged victims, underage girls who were as young as thirteen years old, that the clinic
would have no problems providing abortions to the adolescent girls. The videotapes offer concrete evidence that despite the illegality and the shocking horror of young girls being slaves to sex trafficking, employees of the organization graciously offered to participate in another crime to cover up the first, performing abortions on underage girls. It appears that Planned Parenthood is more than willing to overlook the well-being of the sexually exploited child and offer any option that would financially benefit the organization.

The Live Action group found similar results across the nation, providing evidence that abortion not only increases the likelihood of child abuse occurring, but that abortion facilities and their employees offers a means of covering up child abuse incidents. Although the cases caught on videotape were of hypothetical situations, as Senator Smith points out in his address to the Chairman of the House of Representatives in February of 2011, the number of young American girls that are forced into prostitution each year has been indicated to be as high as 100,000.64 How often these young girls, real victims of sexual abuse, are taken to a Planned Parenthood for an illegal abortion may never be known. Rather than “protecting” children by ending their lives before they can be born into potentially abusive or neglectful households, abortion facilities are now more than willing to assist in covering up the sexual exploitation and abuse of young girls. At one time, abortion only silenced unborn children. Today, abortion also silences children who have been born.
There is a clear discrepancy in how society values the protection of the helpless. On one side of the dichotomy, there are numerous laws prohibiting the mistreatment of the elderly, the poor, and even animals. Abortion, however, has slowly eroded away at the judicial concept of safeguarding the defenseless by exploiting the more vulnerable members of society, women and children. Legalized abortion has created this effect by suggesting that the unborn child is unworthy of the right to life. In addition, women who seek abortions are often young, frightened, and typically unaware of the consequences of abortion as well as their alternatives to the procedure.

It has been estimated that approximately 26.2 percent of all abortions are executed on women who are under the age of twenty. A study that was performed to test the impact that abortion has on adolescent women found that a high percentage of young females having abortions are “more likely to feel forced by circumstances to have the abortion and were more likely to report being misinformed at the time of the abortion.” The study concluded that in comparison to older women, adolescent females who have had an abortion reported having many more difficulties, including lower self-esteem and psychological distress, than women who were older. The study indicated that the promotion of abortion to young females as an “easy way out”, as well as the failure to educate these women about fetal development, the abortion procedure, and any possible physical and psychological complications, can help create a potentially irreversibly damaging situation. Once again, abortion is seen as threatening the welfare of adolescents.
Abortion has also been shown to disrupt family life, reducing the familial unit from the strong support system that it should be to a fragile and complicated entity. Abortion can bring harm to a family on multiple levels. The impact that abortion has on the males involved, particularly the father, is most often overlooked. The minimal number of studies that have investigated how abortion affects the father revealed that men suppress their feelings about the decision to abort because of the stress society has placed on abortion being a woman’s issue. Men who were interviewed after escorting their girlfriends and wives into clinics to terminate their pregnancies confessed to feeling “isolated, angry at themselves and their partners, and fearful of the emotional damage to their partners...” They also acknowledged feeling helpless, a reasonable emotion since “women may choose motherhood, in the case of abortion, men may not choose fatherhood.” Studies also show that men may privately grieve the loss of their unborn child just as much, if not more than women.66

As a result of legislative failing to recognize any right of the father in the abortion conflict, his plea for help in dealing with his post-abortion distress often goes unheard. It is perfectly conceivable that the suppression of grief, anger, and guilt will eventually be expressed in the culturally accepted “masculine” emotions of anger and aggression. Undoubtedly, these emotions, which the woman may also be experiencing in a different form, place a tremendous amount of strain on the man and woman’s relationship. Their relationship may either end permanently, or they
may remain together, despite the strain, for the sake of the connection they now share, that connection being the loss of their unborn child.\textsuperscript{67}

Abortion has been shown to have an effect on many other family members, including grandparents and children who are the product of subsequent pregnancies. If the abortion is made known, all family members have the potential to feel the loss of the child. Grandparents may grieve the destruction of their grandchild. They also may witness their son or daughter distance themselves out of shame and in an attempt to handle the death of their child. If parents coerced the woman into getting an abortion or pressured the man into providing for the procedure, the pregnant woman and her partner may become resentful and distrustful of their parents, or anyone for that matter, who encouraged them to end the life of their unborn child. Subsequent children have also been known to be severely impacted by the abortion of a sibling. It has been said that for a young child, abortion may be a “proof of the parents’ capacity to be dangerous.” Children often show a keener understanding to the violence of abortion. They comprehend that abortion causes the death of their brother or sister. They also understand that the death of their unborn, innocent sibling was carried out by the consent of their mother and by the actions of a doctor. Some children with aborted siblings have been shown to have severe “survivor guilt”, which may hinder healthy development.\textsuperscript{68}
In families where the abortion is kept secret, there is still an enormous potential that all family members will be influenced. In cases where the woman or man is burdened by the secret and regrets the decision, relationships with family and friends will undoubtedly become stressed. In addition, there would be no support system to offer comfort and counsel. As a result, post-abortion symptoms could fester and become increasingly difficult to manage. It would be very difficult for the unfortunate woman or man to go about daily life and tasks without suffering immensely. Children who are brought up with mothers and fathers suffering from this sense of loss, grief, and shame, may become the targets of their parents anxiety and depression. Mothers and fathers who are mourning the loss of their unborn children also may inadvertently fail to provide proper care for the children they do have.69

When looking at children who survived abortion procedures and those who have survived abusive households, their lives have startling parallels. First, these children suffered at the hands of adults who failed to recognize their dignity as human beings. Secondly, these children suffered at the hands of adults who are supposed to love and care for them, their own parents. In cases of abortion, the mother, and sometimes the father, chose to end the life of their child. In instances of child abuse, the parents chose to endanger, and in some of the worst cases, end the life of their child. Children who are subjected to maltreatment may or may not carry visible scars, but all victims of abuse and neglect must endure the pain of emotional scarring. The little bodies of aborted fetuses, whether burned or torn
apart, prove the brutality of the violence they endured. Incredibly, there are the cases of babies who survived abortion and came forward with their stories. Children who have survived an abortion procedure, though rare, also have physical and emotional scars.

One example of such a child is Ana Rosa Rodriguez, who lived through an abortion procedure. She was born with a missing arm that had been torn off by the abortionist, but was otherwise, a healthy little girl. Another abortion survivor, Gianna Jessen, was to be disposed of by a saline solution surgical procedure. Instead of being delivered dead, however, Gianna was born earlier than anticipated, alive but with many physical complications including cerebral palsy. Another little girl, Ximena Renaerts was born in a hospital after her mother attempted to have her aborted. The nurses placed the live infant in a room where deceased infants were, thinking that she would inevitably die soon. An hour after her birth, the still struggling infant was finally transported to a proper unit that could care for her, and to this day suffers irreversible brain damage from heat loss. Children who are aborted are typically undervalued and unwanted; children who are abused are often undervalued and no longer wanted.

Yet another example of how child abuse and abortion are related is found in research done on women who abort. In 2005, a study was conducted on women who had obtained multiple abortions. The purpose of the study was to identify what factors are typical of women who have repeat abortions. It was found that in
addition to the characteristics that had already been discovered of women undergoing repeat abortions, the results of the study went “well beyond existing literature in identifying unique associations of a history of relationship violence or of sexual abuse or coercion with repeat abortion.” The study reported that “women presenting for a third or subsequent abortion were more than 2.5 times more likely as those seeking a first abortion to report a history of physical abuse by a male partner or a history of sexual abuse or violence.” The outcome of the study suggests that women who have suffered from some form of abuse may have a decreased desire to give birth to their children because of some psychological injury that resulted from their abusive pasts.71

It has been demonstrated throughout the paper that abortion can lead to child abuse, and it can now be seen how child abuse can lead to abortion. Perhaps women who were subjected to abuse when they were younger fear that their own child will grow up in a similarly damaging situation, or maybe they fear that bringing a child into the world will put their lives at a greater risk by upsetting their abusive partners or family members. Whatever the circumstance may be, the link between abortion and child abuse has become more clear.

The lack of concern for the mother on the behalf of the abortion facilities and their staff is also made apparent by this research. Abortion clinics offer quick fixes for deep and painful wounds, such as a history of physical and sexual abuse. Most have no counseling services for before or after an abortion. Therefore, women whose
abusive pasts have put them into unstable situations never deal with the factors that make them seek abortion. Consequently, women get caught in a cycle of abuse and repeat abortions. These women are typically suffering from low self-esteem and confusion about the incredible value of their lives and the gift that their sexuality is meant to be. Rather than taking the opportunity to help women break free from this vicious cycle, abortion facilities care for the women just long enough to strip them once more of their self-respect, their sexuality, and the precious life of their unborn child. Again, while advocates for legalized abortion stress the importance of maintaining the well-being of the women and children, the abortion industry has created a vicious cycle of exploiting both mother and child.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the pro-choice slogan ‘every child a wanted child’ promotes an ideal that is used to defend the necessity of legalized abortion. The argument that abortion prevents the birth of unwanted children and therefore decreases the number of children who are victims of abuse and neglect is faulty. In fact, research has proven otherwise. Since 1973, the year that *Roe v Wade* was passed by the Supreme Court and abortion at any stage of pregnancy was deemed legal, the number of children who suffer at the will of one or both parents has increased at an alarming rate. Abortion has been known to cause severe problems in a great number of men and women that can actually lead to child abuse. In an attempt to deal with their grief and shame, these men and women have been shown to have a
greater chance of turning to substance abuse, are more quickly angered and aggressive, have increased anxiety around pregnant women and young children, have difficulties in bonding with subsequent children, and have broken relationships with close friends and family members.

In a society that has legalized abortion, the death of an unborn life so that another may live as he or she pleases, it becomes difficult to defend the young lives of born children. Personhood either begins at conception, the moment of life, or it begins after a certain point of development. If the first is true, then abortion and child abuse are inherently wrong. If the latter is the case, however, then abortion has zero ethical implications and infanticide and child abuse are less immoral than they were once thought to be.

Although the public is quick to recognize the maliciousness of child abuse and neglect, it fails to identify how intimately abortion and child abuse are connected. When a woman who rid herself of an “unwanted child” in the past is finally ready to have a wanted child, the scars from the loss of her aborted child often become much more evident in her negative interactions with her born child.

The acceptance of abortion in society has led to a mentality has emerged that personhood and a right to life requires time and development. Not only does this mindset put the lives of all unborn babies in danger, it also puts infants and young people at risk of being exploited by adults. There has been a tremendous emphasis placed on the idea of being “wanted.” Society has developed an attitude that if
something is not wanted, it can be disposed of, even if that unwanted entity is a human life. It is apparent that this outlook could influence assisted suicide and euthanasia, two other important life issues.

We need to build a culture that provides its most vulnerable members of the human race, the unborn and children, safety and protection. To do this, we need to uphold the absolute value and dignity of all human life. The moment that human life comes into existence, the moment of conception, that life has value and is deserving of protection. Society must emphasize that children are not the property of parents; rather they are precious individuals who look to their parents for love and support.

The Constitution of the United States affirms that “all men are created equal” and that they have a right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” In 1973, the Supreme Court violated the rights of the unborn, and in doing so unintentionally placed the most helpless members of society at the mercy of their parents. It is clear that the atrocities of child abuse will end when legislatures reclaim their duty to protect the life of all human beings, especially the unborn.
Endnotes


5 “Child Maltreatment 2009: Chapter 3,” 56.


12 Helfer, Kempe 12.

13 Helfer, Kempe 29.

14 Helfer, Kempe 29.

15 Helfer, Kempe 28,29.

16 Helfer, Kempe 32.


19 Russo 2.


22 Burke, Theresa K., and David C. Reardon 1.

23 Finkelhor 696.


25 “Child Maltreatment 2009: Chapter 3,” 57


27 Ney, Phillip 29.

28 Rue, Vincent 15-17.

29 Rue, Vincent 15-17.

30 Rue, Vincent 15-17.

31 Rue, Vincent 15-17.


33 Reardon, Ney 63.


36 Burke, Theresa K., and David C. Reardon 2.


38 Burke 182-183.

39 Burke 182-183.

40 Burke 184.

41 Burke 70-79.
42 Burke 76-77

43 Burke 80.

44 Ney, Phillip 73.

45 Ney, Phillip 27.

46 Ney, Phillip 26.

47 Ney, Phillip 27.

48 Ney, Phillip 27.

49 Ney, Phillip 30.

50 Ney, Phillip 30.


52 Helfer, Kempe 17.

53 Rue, Vincent 91.


55 Dodds 5.

56 Dodds 6.

57 Dodds 7.

58 Dodds 7.

59 Dodds 8.

60 Dodds 8.

61 Dodds 9.


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