

RESOLUTION OF A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE IN THE WRITING CLASS: DAEDALUS SOFTWARE, DISCUSSION, AND COLLABORATIVE WRITING ON ABORTION

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INTRODUCTION

Question: How is a classroom like a shelter for battered people?

Answer: It is, essentially, a safe place for the student struggling with controversial issues in his or her life. It is a specific area of architecture where the student who may not have been introduced to opinions which challenge his or her beliefs can come to see that ideas can be debated—if not pleasantly, then at least somewhat civilly, without resorting to machine guns. This is not meant to be facetious or humorous: it is what I have come to believe as an instructor in the community colleges and the university, where lively debate has accompanied discussion of the logical fallacies embedded in essays on various controversial articles my students have read. It seems appropriate, moreover, that I come from Kent State University, the site where the principle of the classroom as a safe place seems to have been proven wrong in 1970 when four of our students were killed. Anyone can disagree with the political opinions expressed by the student demonstrators of the time, but no one agrees that our young people should not have had their first civil right to life protected.

But I digress (not really). Not only is the classroom a shelter for the battered student; it is also a shelter for the battered instructor. Anti-life politically-correct thinking continues to hemorrhage forth, especially from scholarly articles devoted to showing how certain faculty can inculcate anti-life ideas and themes into their students. The same strategies which anti-life faculty have used for the indoctrination of students to an anti-life thinking can be implemented by pro-life academics for the promotion of life-affirming principles.

I here present research on some of the pedagogic techniques used in

student writing involving abortion, based on my work with students in English at Kent State University. I want to build on the literature which addresses the presentation of this controversial issue in the classroom from a pro-life perspective. Specifically, I will demonstrate how students in the writing class can transform their positions on abortion from an anti-life stance to one that is pro-life.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While the literature discussing controversial issues in the classroom is growing, the focus of such research seems to be merely the statistical summarization of small samples.ⁱ For example, Ross and Kaplan, surveying 117 college students who completed the Life Ownership Orientation Questionnaire, merely came to the conclusion that those “participants classified as individual-oriented were found to be more accepting of abortion, suicide, and doctor-assisted suicide than were participants classified as God-oriented.”ⁱⁱ Werner develops four categories of positions on abortion based on 119 responses.ⁱⁱⁱ Bryan and Freed surveyed 150 day students from a community college in the Boston area, 70% of whom “were raised Catholic,” 95% of whom were white, and 86% of whom were described as “sexually active.”^{iv} Although their research supports the common knowledge that abortion for “the hard reasons” (rape, danger to the mother’s life, and handicap in the unborn child) received much higher support than “the soft reasons” (that the family cannot afford more children, that the mother feels she has enough children, and that the mother is unmarried and does not want to marry the man),^v their research paints either a dismal or a biased picture of the mental, physical, and social well being of pro-life students:

When just the anti-abortion females (N = 30) were compared, using chi-square analyses, with the pro-abortion females (N = 50), they reported significantly (p < .01) more hospitalizations, and a tendency (p < .10) toward a greater number of physical handicaps and more shyness. When the anti-abortion males (N = 20) were compared with the pro-abortion males (N = 50), they reported significantly (p < .05) more problems with [being] overweight (over 40 pounds) and agoraphobia, and a tendency (p < .10) toward more convictions for a crime.^{vi}

A relatively large survey by Wright and Rogers (involving 840 students

“enrolled in introductory psychology classes at a university in central Texas the week before the presidential election in 1984”), derived summary statements essentially from responses to only four questions (whether an unmarried mother should be allowed to have an abortion; a mother of five who can’t afford another child; abortion of a child conceived by rape; and the life of the mother exception).^{vii}

In some disciplines instructors have approached the abortion issue quite extensively in their courses. In a discussion of her ethics course at Utah Valley Community College, Elaine Englehardt mentioned that literary sources such as Ernest Hemingway’s short story, “Hills Like White Elephants” is very effective when covering the ethics of abortion, as is A.J. Cronin’s story, “Doctor, I Can’t, I Won’t Have a Baby.”^{viii} In fact, it is a more historical approach through study of the development of ethical attitudes to abortion in Western thought, instead of its literary development, that is achieved, for she states that the “historical perspective is enhanced by readings from Linda Gordon’s book, *A Social History of Birth Control*. Michael J. Gorman’s book, *Abortion and the Early Church*, is also helpful.”^{ix}

Dunn and Brown use the “Forced-Choice Ladder” in health education to assist “individuals make choices from among competing alternatives and weigh the consequences of these choices.”^x Moreover, they state that “This activity is intended to help students be aware of their own feelings regarding various reasons for abortion, to create lively student discussion, and to enable students to recognize the various reasons individuals might choose an abortion.”^{xi} Marjorie Jones reports on her work using a mock trial to enable chemistry students to understand the function and ethical issues of the abortifacient RU-486. The abstract of her article states specifically that

The concept of a jury trial can be used to enhance students’ perception of the everyday relevance of science. This concept was used as part of an activity undertaken in the honors section of general chemistry at Illinois State University in which students were asked to probe a current controversial drug, mifepristone, that is used in some parts of the world as an abortion-inducing agent. The students were told that a pregnant women [sic] returning from abroad had obtained the drug legally in a foreign country. On returning to the

U.S., she claimed the drug was for her own use and that she should have control over her own body and, therefore, possession of the drug was not a legal issue. The students were required to determine whether it is legal for her to have brought the drug into the U.S. The students were given roles and told to gather data from the literature to support their viewpoints on the situation.^{xii}

Graduate students working with the Dual Language Middle School in New York used collaborative techniques to discuss some controversial issues with the younger students in “clubs.”^{xiii} One such club headed by Lourdes “India” Ivory discussed “Teen Pregnancy and Sexuality—Rethinking Assumptions.” Ivory expressed her ambivalence about her role in the club:

At first, I wondered what role I would play in assisting the students with this project. After some deliberation, I decided to (a) maintain a balance between leading them and allowing them to lead themselves, (b) monitor their progress and maintain a sense of structure and clear guidelines as to what was expected, and (c) allow them to make a major contribution in terms of how the group functioned. They played a major role in establishing the agenda and a schedule of events, and they took responsibility and pride in handing in excellent work by the due dates. Most importantly, the girls learned the importance of trying to understand others as opposed to judging them.^{xiv}

BASIS OF COMPOSITE PAPER WORK ON ABORTION

Greene’s work with abortion, although designed as an undergraduate course in psychology, comes closest to what I did at Kent in terms of pedagogy. Her abstract approximates the pedagogy described in *Negotiating Difference*, the basis for my own work. After introductory lectures, she says that “in the second phase, students read and discussed historical and legal writings on abortion. In the third phase, students wrote analytical papers and gave group presentations.”^{xv}

I first used Patricia Bizzell’s and Bruce Herzberg’s wonderful text, *Negotiating Differences: Cultural Case Studies for Composition*, for students in an introductory college writing course at Kent during the fall 1996 semester. By the fall 1997 semester, when I taught three sections of the course, I realized that something else needed to be added to the text; otherwise the complaint of several students—that the text was more a history than an English textbook—could be true. In fact, the editors

themselves suggest that, although they “have not been able to explore every significant rhetorical moment in American history or to represent every group that has played a significant role in the development of American rhetoric, and further that “many readers may find that the social group to which they feel the closest allegiance is not represented,” they insist that “every case study in *Negotiating Difference* concerns a cultural problem with relevance today.”^{xvi} Given that their text had a substantial gap with regard to issues affecting the United States after the Vietnam War, I decided to determine if principles learned about the oppression of Native Americans by Puritans, or of black slaves by whites, or of Japanese Americans by white racists could be applied to the oppression of the unborn by some of the born.

Towards the end of the 1997 semester, therefore, I decided to supplement the text’s brilliant collection of essays with contemporary issues. I reserved the last two weeks of the classes for group work on what I called a “composite paper.” Unlike their essay writing during the balance of the course, the students would now be called upon to work together in groups to formulate a position statement on an issue of contemporary concern. Their group’s statement would be the composite paper, a paper of consensus advocating one position on a current controversial issue.

We began our discussion of contemporary controversial topics simply by listing them on the board. I put all the letters of the alphabet on the board and asked students to mention issues about which they could write a composite paper. It was easy to fill the board within five minutes with issues. I then asked students to identify which three issues they would like to work on, stating that I would try to place them in a working group which they selected as number one. Many students found the abortion topic interesting (the numbers before the names indicate the ranking which the student gave the issue). From these rankings it was relatively easy to assign students to various working groups.^{xvii} While I tried to have no more than five students in any working group on any particular issue (to assure that a diversity of issues was being considered), sometimes that was not possible.



9:55 class	1:10 class	2:15 class
con: 1. Amy 1. Stacy 2. Alison 3. Marc pro: 1. Scott Bo. 2. Jim 3. Jana 3. Jay undecided: 1. Michelle 2. Ryan	con: 1. Misty 2. Jenn H. 2. Trey 3. Scott	con: 1. Andy 1. Anthony 1. Heather M. 1. Jenni P. 1. Jenny M. 1. Nicole 2. Jessica pro: 1. Todd 3. Ryan undecided: 2. Amanda

I was able to assign four working groups for each of the 9:55 and 2:15 classes, while the 1:10 class had three working groups; there was at least one abortion group per class. These are how I eventually distributed students in the abortion groups.

9:55 class ^{xviii}	1:10 class ^{xix}	2:15 class ^{xx}
1. Amy (con) 1. Stacy (con) 2. Alison (con)	1. Misty (con) 2. Jenn H. (con) 2. Trey (con)	1. Andy (con) 1. Anthony (con) 1. Jenny M. (con) 1. Jenni P. (con) 1. Nicole (con) 2. Jessica (con)

After looking at the final placement of students, one would think that there would have been no problem for the three working groups to formulate a pro-life position statement on abortion.^{xxi} After all, the students assigned for the working groups all specified the position that they would like to take as against abortion and either listed it as an issue of highest or second-highest interest for them. Should I have worried that my own biologically-correct position would have influenced my students unduly? Should I have kept my morals and religious positions outside the classroom door? I doubt that students, if they were anti-life, could have been so petrified of offending me and risking getting a low grade in the course as to think that I would retaliate against them, that as a result they would switch their own deeply-held beliefs on abortion just to satisfy the desires of their teacher. Moreover, any student who felt so compelled to switch his or her deeply-held beliefs to accommodate an instructor's position could have complained—even anonymously—to the administration. I received no such complaints either from students or administration. Finally, end-of-semester student evaluations recorded no such fear.

Once the working groups were assembled, the next step in the writing process was to have the members of the groups submit rough drafts of their positions on abortion not only to me (to count toward the grade) but also to their fellow committee members. Here are some excerpts from the first drafts of the position papers.^{xxii} I encourage you to take a few moments, as some current literary theorists suggest, to interrogate these first drafts:

EXCERPTS FROM STUDENTS' FIRST DRAFTS

•In today's society where sex is highly popularized women do not recognize the consequences of it. Women of the 1990's often find scapegoats and excuses for their irresponsible actions. Abortion clinics are a place where women can terminate a human being because they feel that they cannot handle the responsibilities of motherhood. Yet, if women are jumping into bed and having sex in the first place then they should be mature enough to take the responsibility of birth control. Women often use the sick method of abortion as birth control. Women are taking for granted the miracle of life.

There are other options besides abortion such as birth control, and adoption.

Many women a year cannot get pregnant and are willing to be a loving mother to an unwanted child. – Alison

- Another main reason why you should not have an abortion is because most of the women who have them regret and remorse they ever did. Many of the educational shows that I have seen about abortion show that women deal with abortions very difficultly, because they did not realize what they have done until they have seen the dead baby that they killed lying in the trash can next to them. I have known a few girls that have had abortions and they have a very hard time talking about the incident. They usually break down in tears when the subject is brought up. – Anthony

- Abortion is wrong!!!! Abortion is the killing of an unborn child, who deserves the chance to live and have a life. Abortion should be illegal because it is murder. There are other options to think about besides abortion. One other option is adoption. If a mother is unable to care for her child or if the mother just does not want her child, then she can put her baby up for adoption. There are many people out there who are unable to have children of their own. These people are willing to adopt children, give them love, and care for that child just as if that child was his or her own.

In my opinion, there are some exceptions to abortion. One exception is rape. I feel that abortion is an option for a woman who has been raped. If a woman gets pregnant by rape, she has had her rights violated and it was under a circumstance that she had no control over.

Many people may ask the question, “Why should a child have to suffer because of his or her father?” Well, “Why should a mother have to suffer because of the child’s father?” Rape is a very dramatic situation that causes many women to have emotional problems that may affect them for the rest of their lives. Victims of rape will always have that neverending tragedy in the back of their minds that they cannot take back.

One other exception is Mental Retardation. Some women know ahead of time if their child will be born with any mental birth defects. If they know for sure that their baby is mentally retarded, then they may choose abortion because they may feel it is the best option to take for both her and the child. They know that their child would be unhappy in life and would probably only suffer. Mental retardation is somewhat like rape because it is a tragedy that happens to women and they have no control at all over it.

Overall, abortion is still wrong and is nothing but murder. – Misty

- An abortion should not be an easy way out for a girl who had a few minutes of pleasure. I think a law should be passed that bans abortions. From what I’ve seen the majority of women having abortions done are young teenage girls. I

truly believe that teenagers should not be having sex. They are not ready for what it could bring upon them. People shouldn't be fooling around with sex until they are ready, both financially and mentally. But there are exceptions to the rule. If a woman was raped and got pregnant because of it, I think she should have the choice of keeping or aborting the child. Also if the impregnated mother found out that her child was severely mentally/physically handicapped she could choose to abort it. She might not be about to care for the child that right way or she might not want her child going through all the troubles of being that severely mentally/physically handicapped. I know I'm contradicting myself when I'm saying there should be exceptions but that's just how I feel. I think most people would agree with those suggestions. – Trey

PEDAGOGIC RESPONSE TO THE FIRST DRAFTS

After handing back the first drafts with grammatical and punctuation corrections only, I reconvened the various groups to discuss the various positions. I tried to be as vociferous as possible to the groups when criticizing their draft papers, using every means I could reasonably and professionally employ to make students feel uncomfortable in adopting an anti- or pro-life viewpoint.

Oxymoronically, I feel empowered to make students feel “safely uncomfortable” for two reasons. First, the classroom is indeed a safe place, a site where emotional issues can be debated and argued sanely. Secondly, I view the ethos of the instructor differently than many of my fellow faculty. I state to my students that their moral positions, religious influences, and beliefs do not stop once they enter the classroom. They are the same moral and religious, or immoral and irreligious, persons they were before entering the classroom. I believe, though, that there is something ethically stifling about being in a classroom, especially the college classroom. Many students with profound beliefs may feel as though they need to temper their beliefs lest they be perceived as on the radical right; after all, they are in college now, and college is the place to go to expand one's mind, learn new things. Unfortunately, many students think that learning a new thing means that one must adopt that new thing as equally valid as the belief which they have held. For example, learning that there are people who are strong in their anti-life beliefs may function in and of itself to persuade the student to think that anti-life opinions are as morally correct as pro-life views. The danger

with broadening one's intellectual horizons through college study is especially hampered if the instructor is strident in his or her own anti-life beliefs.

To this end, when the classes met either in the classroom or in the pc lab, I moved from one committee to another, trying to interrogate the group within the time constraints. If a committee argued for an exception to a ban on abortion, I countered with an argument supporting the humanity of the child conceived by rape. If a group argued for no exception, I tried to frustrate the group by asking how they could be so callous as to force a "woman" to carry "it" for nine months, as though she should be punished for the rapist's crime. In the previous weeks, especially when discussing other aspects of American rhetoric used to dehumanize various other groups of people, I made it clear what my personal positions were on contemporary political and biological questions. My bantering first for an anti-life position and then for a pro-life position may have utterly confused some students. This, I think, is entirely acceptable, for it is good to have a student so confused that he or she is not so much concerned with what to write to satisfy "the teacher" but will write instead something which will satisfy him- or herself, especially when it concerns ethical positions.

I disagree with the hesitancy of some in academia who seem to advocate a more passive approach regarding abortion discussion and writing. One such author is Samuel W. Calhoun, whose article made me think about my own pedagogic practice; he states that he was a pro-life law professor at Washington and Lee. His article presents some excellent points to prepare the pro-life professor in guiding, if not leading, classroom discussion on abortion. For example, he relates that a student "said that student participation would increase if I gave the students more control over each session. He said to let them decide what they wanted to talk about."^{xiii} I implemented such a mechanism at the outset. While I had privately hoped that there would be at least one abortion working group in each class, I let the students decide what issues were to be discussed in groups. Also, after an initial written response to a packet of information, Calhoun's students had to exchange papers and discuss their writings face-to-face; often this meant an anti-life student was paired with one

who was pro-life. These conversations, Calhoun believes, “were invaluable in combatting student-to-student hostility. It is not so easy to view as the enemy someone with whom you have talked face to face.”^{xxiv}

I approximated this when the various working groups debated fine points of their abortion positions, particularly on the matter of exceptions for rape. Finally, in one of his better points, Calhoun declares that “I had a very hard time keeping quiet whenever [pro-life students] were unable to come up with a response to a pro-choice argument. I often would jump in to bail out the pro-lifers. My pro-choice student monitor encouraged me to be silent on these occasions. If pro-life students couldn’t come up with an answer, I should be willing to let them go away troubled. Doing so would force them to struggle with the issues rather than rely on me.”^{xxv}

As will be seen towards the end of this paper, I too believe that feeling uncomfortable may be most beneficial for the pro-life student, even in the safety of the classroom.

However, several points of Calhoun’s article conflict with my own philosophy of classroom management. First, before his course began, he attempted “to allay any fears that [he] would be presenting only the pro-life position” and “prepared a memorandum to our student body.”^{xxvi} Such an effort strikes me more as “apologizing” for his pro-life views than as making an effort to have students think he will be impartial.^{xxvii} Also, Calhoun contends that “I realize that it is the meat and potatoes of a professor’s job to stimulate thought by pressing students on virtually every point, even if doing so requires teachers to challenge a position with which they agree or defend a position with which they disagree. I’m quite comfortable with this as a general proposition. But it’s one thing to play devil’s advocate on a question, say, of statutory interpretation and quite a different thing when it is a life-and-death issue like abortion on which my feelings run so deep.”^{xxviii} I disagree with this because discussion in a classroom is merely an academic exercise. While what is learned in the classroom about abortion (or what’s not learned in the classroom) will affect not only the students’ lives, but may also affect the lives of their unborn children, classroom discussion remains and should remain liberated from its connection with the world outside the classroom. If the classroom were a counseling office for a pregnancy-

support group, then Calhoun's anxiety would be more justified.^{xxix}

Although some students who submitted first drafts may not have submitted second drafts, Calhoun's concerns did not prevent my students from writing extensively on abortion a second time. After a few more days of ruminating on some qualifying statements from fellow committee members and from me, they presented the following second drafts.

EXCERPTS FROM STUDENTS' SECOND DRAFTS

- I agree with all the views of the group. We all have good arguments as to why we are against abortion. Everyone has a unique way of expressing their reasons. We all agree that every child born or unborn has a right to life, and that it is against God's laws for if a child is not meant to be then the women will miscarry. We all seem to agree that the fetus should be considered a child, or unborn child. A very good point was made that any child born or unborn relies on their mother to meet their needs; one of those needs is the need to be safe, and abortion is murder against a helpless being. I believe that anything God creates is a being in one form or another. Nature does not have a heart beat but yet plants, trees, and etc. are considered to be alive so just because this being developing into an infant does not have a heart beat society considers it not to be alive? The cells and tissue are, so I wonder what society considers to be alive. Is the definition they would give be one to please their own conscience? – Amy

- Abortion is morally and sinfully wrong in all cases. Young people are very unaware of the consequences that sex may bring. If a couple is not planning on having a child, then they may want to reconsider having sex. If the woman does happen to get pregnant for whatever reasons, she should then take the responsibility for the child. She then may have the choice of putting the child up for adoption. She should not be able to have the choice of an abortion. The child has a right to live.

There should be no exceptions to abortion. Many people think rape is an exception. The child should not have to suffer for the mistakes of his or her father. If the woman decides not to keep the child after the pregnancy she then should be able to put the child up for adoption, which is completely understandable. The woman should not have to be reminded of the man who had raped her, but the child still does have the right to live.

Overall, I think that abortion is totally wrong. I think the innocent child has all rights and should be able to live. He or she should not have to suffer for the mistakes of their parents. – Jenn H.

- Lastly, many people will consider rape an exception. Even some people who regard themselves to be pro-life will make an exception with rape cases and say it is okay. However, it is not. Although rape is an awful act of violence, a child was still conceived. A child with a heart beat. A child that deserves a chance at life. I realize it would not be easy for a mother to carry this baby, for it would be a constant reminder of what happened. However, killing the child is not going to make her forget what happened; it may even complicate things more. For a woman to carry a child, who was conceived by a rapist, may be the hardest thing she has to go through in her life. However, when the baby is born she can give it up for adoption. Then, she can live the rest of her life knowing, although she had a horrible experience, she did the right thing by giving a person a chance at life. – Jenni P.

- Abortion is not a woman's choice of what to do with her body; it is a choice to kill a human being. Many people say that the fetus is not a baby. The word "baby" is a word that pro-lifers get shot down for using, but baby has three definitions. The first is "small in comparison to others of the same kind." "Human being" is "member of the genus Homo and especially of the species Homo sapiens," which is true of embryos, fetuses, teenagers, adults, etc. Fetuses and embryos are small in comparison to other humans, so fetuses by this definition are babies. The other definition of a baby is "a very young child." "Child" can be defined as "an unborn infant: a fetus." The third definition of a baby is "the youngest member of a family or group OR a very young animal." "Fetus," a Latin word meaning "young one," fits these two definitions almost exactly. So, by all three of these definitions of a baby, a fetus is a baby. So now it is not killing a fetus it is killing a baby. The argument that babies inside the womb are not human beings because they are not entitled to rights as a citizen in this country under the Constitution is not a fair argument. Just because a person is not a citizen of this country does not mean that if someone kills them then it is okay, so why is it okay to carelessly murder a helpless child? If a woman is willing to make the choice to have sex in the first place she should take responsibility for her actions and not be allowed to have murder as an option. – Jessica

- My opinions have recently changed since my last response on abortion. I don't believe in abortion and I still think it should be illegal because it is murder. In my last response, I was against abortion, but I had a couple of exceptions. I said that there should be exceptions for women who get pregnant by rape and for women who know ahead of time that their child is going to be born with birth defects.

In class Friday, my group and I discussed the topic of abortion in more detail

and came up with some more opinions and ideas on con-abortion. As we discussed the topic more, I began to think more about my opinions toward abortion. I now feel differently than I did in my last response. My last response was more on the pro side than on the con side. I realized that if I am against abortion, then I should be against all abortions and have no exceptions toward it.

I now feel that if a woman gets pregnant by rape, that she should keep the baby anyway and not consider abortion. Everything happens for a reason and if God feels that it was meant for a woman to get pregnant (no matter how) then she should still have the baby because it must be something that was meant to be for a reason. After the woman has the baby and she still does not want her child, then she should consider adoption.

My other exception was mental retardation. Now I feel that even if a woman knows ahead of time that her baby will have mental problems, she should still have the child. If we have abortions for every child that is going to be born with birth defects, look how many less people we would have in the world today. It is not fair to keep the good and kill the bad. All human beings are equal no matter what physical or mental defect he or she may have.

We would not even have the Special Olympics for the mentally retarded today if we didn't have the handicapped to make it possible. – Misty

- The rights to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness, some do not have the choice. Those with no choice are the unborn children. No one should have a right to make a choice that involves killing another living creature, when there are so many other ways of coping with the situation. – Stacy

- I still think abortion is wrong and should be banned but I've changed my stance on it. On Friday we had our discussions which brought out a few good points. "Why should a baby caused by a rape die?" "Why punish the baby for the actions of the father?" Those questions made some sense to me, well just enough to change my mind about having exceptions with abortions. "Why should the baby suffer?" I thought to myself. So now I feel that abortion should be banned while having no exceptions. If a woman is raped then she should have the baby then give the child up for adoption if she wants to. If a teenage girl gets pregnant then she should still have the baby and then decide to keep it or not. There should not be any exceptions with abortion. How can you be against abortion and still have exceptions to it? You should be all for it or all against it; there shouldn't be any exceptions. – Trey

UTILITY OF DAEDALUS SOFTWARE

Since two of the three writing courses met in the pc lab only on Wednesdays, I determined to make at least one of the discussion days

coincide with the use of one of the more practical features of the Daedalus Integrated Writing Environment, the InterChange feature.^{xxx} This feature allows the students in the writing class to send and receive messages from fellow students within a “conference.” For example, only the abortion working group members would be able to refine their positions among each other. Unless the instructor opens a session for all students, then only those who connect with the particular abortion group would communicate with their fellows. Although it has been my experience that students (when they first use InterChange) tend to use it more as a toy for sending the proverbial one-liner to elicit the loudest laughs from fellow students, the feature does have the benefit of forcing students to realize that even position papers are produced one line at a time. One student may throw out a general query to fellow students in his or her conference—for example, about the need for a rape exception. This student will have the immediate benefit of several responses more immediately and better organized than spoken discourse. The student will be able to review fellow student responses by scrolling within the transcript being produced.^{xxxi}

Of course, as in spoken speech, there are dangers even with such a new software toy in the writing class. Just as students may argue vociferously in front of each other within a committee when the five or so chairs are gathered in a circle, students using InterChange will argue also. In fact, the arguing on the InterChange may be more “flaming” than polite discourse. Not being able to look a fellow student in the face to say that one disagrees with what is being said may convince a student to be more brutal with a message sent in computer format.^{xxxii}

After less than two weeks of personal dialogue, InterChange communication, a first and second draft (and in some groups, meetings beyond the classroom at some local watering holes), students perfected their position papers on abortion. By the end of the third class, students were sufficiently ready to “publish” their statements to the “world”—admittedly, the small world of their fellow students, but a decisive gesture showing that they could be as affirmative and unequivocal as writers on other controversial issues of previous generations.

Students then elected one of their committee members to read their

policy statements to the entire class and answer any questions which fellow students may have had. This was perhaps the most frightening part—not so much the mere reading (the student with the best speaking voice was usually selected), but the broadcasting of a position which may have been mutually agreed upon and strongly supported within the group now being broadcast to the larger society (a society, the classroom, whose other members may not have shared the same pro-life position). The following are the three final position papers.

STUDENTS' FINAL POSITION PAPERS

- The rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are given to the people of the United States of America within the Constitution.^{xxxiii} Abortion: the spontaneous or induced expulsion of a nonviable human fetus unjustifiably takes those rights away. The issue of abortion has been controversial in this country for many years, beginning with the Supreme Court case of *Roe v. Wade*. With the Supreme Court ruling making abortion legal, women gained the right to mutilate and destroy a precious gift within their bodies. The great victory for all women of all ages was a great loss for those unborn children without a say or voice whether to live or to die. Abortion, to many people, tests such standards as religion and morals, responsibility, birth control, adoption, and the right to life.

The rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are denied to many. Not everyone is granted these rights. Those who are denied those rights would be unborn children. When a mother gains the right to terminate her unborn child, she also takes away the rights of a precious gift within her, a child. Everyone has a right to life, born or unborn. Those words are stated within our very own Constitution. Yet, there are laws we have created: to allow the destruction of life. No one should have to make the choice that involved killing another human being, especially when there are so many other ways of preventing and coping with the situation of childbirth.

In today's society where sex is highly popularized, women do not recognize the major consequences of it. Women of the 1990's often find scapegoats and excuses for their irresponsible actions. Abortion clinics are a place where women can terminate a human being because they feel that they cannot handle the pressures of motherhood. Yet, if women are jumping into bed and having sex in the first place, then they should also be mature enough to take on that pressure of responsibility by using birth control. The first way to prevent pregnancy and to avoid any means of abortion is by birth control. There are many forms of birth control such as the birth control pill, condoms, and

abstinence. All of these suggestions can be easily obtained at an inexpensive price. Not to mention they can prevent the death of an unwanted child and the spread of infectious diseases.

Since many women cannot accept responsibility for her actions, mistakes, or plain irresponsibility then there is another option that would save a life of that precious being that God gifted her with. Adoption. Adoption is a way to prevent the death of a helpless baby screaming to be loved. Thousands of women daily are unable to conceive a child. Most of these women would be more than willing to love and care for that baby. Adoption is a life saving option opposed to the murderous action of abortion. By giving up an unplanned child for adoption, the mother can save her own child and bless another woman with the gift of life. Conception is part of that miracle and there is a purpose for everything and everyone: born or unborn. But there are women who are unable to participate in this miracle. Adoption allows these women to experience the life of a child and fully appreciate the miracle God has created.

Religion plays a large role in many people's decisions on the subject of sex and abortion. A majority of religions in today's society believes that the extermination of any life, born or unborn, is murder. Therefore, religion justifies abortion as murder. God has given women the miracle of life. That miracle is often destroyed out of selfish behaviors. God specifically stated in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shall not kill." People believe that God has a purpose for everything He has created. By killing an unborn child there is an interruption and interference with God's plan. The interference is with the future life of a helpless child who God has created. If God had known that helpless little children's brains would be sucked out of their head by a needle, He probably would not have created them in the first place.

Certain stages of abortion can be quite painful for the unborn child. It said that the unborn baby is silently screaming in pain inside their mother's womb. Many women are unaware of the procedures during an abortion. One of them commonly known as D&C (dilation and curettage) is done by inserting a loop steel knife in the uterus and cutting the baby and placenta into pieces then scraping them into a basin. A totally inhumane procedure. Other procedures include D&E. Dilation and evacuation. This procedure is done only after twelve weeks. A plier-like instrument is needed to calcify^{xxxiv} the baby's bones and skull. The abortionist places the instrument into the uterus then seizes a leg or other part of the body. With a twisting motion the leg is torn off from the rest of the body. After these procedures are completed the lifeless body of the child is thrown away in the trash.

Many people try to rationalize this immoral conduct of abortion by making excuses for their behaviors. From a religious aspect abortion simply is murder. Women do not realize what damage they are doing to themselves and to their undelivered child. For years people have tried to convince abortion doctors to

stop these procedures and to save babies' lives. Women should open their eyes and face up to their irresponsibility. Another human life could be saved with a small amount of love and education. Abortion is an unjustifiable act and should not be accepted by anyone. – Alison, Danielle, Rachel, and Stacy (the 9:55 class)

- Having an abortion is morally and sinfully wrong. Abortions should be illegal because it is the killing of an unborn innocent child. There shouldn't be any exceptions when it comes to abortions, including rape, birth defects, and teenage sex.

Most women who are getting abortions done are teenage girls. Young women are having unprotected sex and are unaware of the consequences it may bring. If a teenage girl thinks she is ready to have sex, then she should be on birth control; besides it is much cheaper to pay birth control every month than to pay to have an abortion done. If a woman gets pregnant, then she should be forced to have the baby and then have the choice to give the baby up for adoption.

Many people think that rape is an exception. The child should not have to suffer for the mistakes of his or her father. If the woman decides not to keep the child after the pregnancy, she then should be able to put the child up for adoption which is completely understandable. "Why should a baby caused by a rape die?" "Why punish the baby for the actions of the father?" "Why should the baby suffer?" The child still has the right to live. There are plenty of couples who are unable to have children and would be blessed at the opportunity to take in a baby from a young woman and care for the child as if the baby were their own. Everything happens for a reason and if God feels that it was meant for a woman to get pregnant (no matter how) then she should still have the baby because it must be something that was meant to be.

People also think that mental retardation is an excuse for abortion. Even if a woman knows ahead of time that her baby will have mental problems, she should still have the child. If we have abortions for every child that is going to be born with birth defects, look how many less people we would have in the world today. It is not fair to keep the good and kill the bad. All human beings are equal no matter what physical or mental defect he or she may have. We wouldn't even have the Special Olympics for the mentally retarded today if we didn't have the handicapped to make it possible.

The United States is behind on abortion laws compared to other countries. Getting an abortion in El Salvador, as in most Latin American countries, has never been easy; until recently, it was illegal unless a woman's life was at risk or in cases of rape or serious fetal anomaly. A new law that will soon go into effect eliminates even those exceptions and makes abortion for any reason a crime.

Overall, abortion is a touchy subject. Innocent children have rights also and should be able to live. Abortion is morally and sinfully wrong and should be

illegal in every case. – Emily, Jenn H., Misty, Tracy, and Trey (the 1:10 class)

- Abortion is one of the most controversial issues in today's society. "Freedom of choice" has become the slogan for the pro-abortion activists. However, abortion is not a woman's choice. The woman has no right to kill a fetus. A mistake is being made, that a fetus is not a baby. The word "baby" is a word that pro-lifers get shot down for using, but baby has three definitions. The first is "small in comparison to others of the same kind." "Human being" is "a member of the genus *Homo* and especially of the species *Homo sapiens*," which is true of embryos, fetuses, teenagers, adults, etc. Fetuses and embryos are small in comparison to other humans, so fetuses by this definition are babies. The other definition of a baby is "very young child." "Child" can be defined as "an unborn infant: a fetus." The third definition of a baby is "the youngest member of a family or group." "Fetus," a Latin word meaning "young one," fits these two definitions almost exactly. By examining all three definitions, a baby and fetus are equivalent. When a fetus is aborted, a human life is being murdered.

The individual most affected by an abortion is the unborn child. When the unborn child is in the mother's womb, he or she is in continuous growth. Two weeks after the egg is fertilized, the embryo has a developing brain and rudimentary heart. Around the twenty-fifth day, the heart then begins to beat. The baby's developed systems are already separate from the mother's, so it is no longer a part of her. Brain waves are recorded at an average of forty days after conception. By the eighth week, the embryo has ears, fingers, toes, and all the key body parts are developed or developing. Then by two months, the baby can feel pain. In the fifth month, the baby's brain is able to think, dream, and learn.

However, even when the baby is fully developed, they are not protected under the Constitution. After delivery is completed, babies are for the first time granted legal protection from murder. Therefore, that is why the pro-life activists must fight for the baby's right to life.

An abortion not only hurts the unborn child, it also puts the mother in danger. After the abortion has been performed, she can experience severe physical pain.

There have been situations where women are not able to have children after they have had an abortion. In addition, many times a woman becomes emotionally scarred after having an abortion. She often questions whether what she did was right, and usually ends up in therapy to help her deal with what she has done. It is apparent that when the unborn child and mother are taken into consideration, that the right to life should be guaranteed to every human conceived.

Aborting an unborn child is not the only solution. When a mother is not able to raise her child, she has the option of giving her baby up for adoption. There are numerous families on waiting lists to adopt unwanted children. The mother

can carry the baby to term, then give the child to a family that wants to raise and care for the baby as their own. Adoption not only saves the life of the baby, but also saves the health of the mother.

There are some instances where carrying the child to term would require a great deal of strength given by the mother. One of these cases is rape. Given that the child was conceived out of violence, some pro-lifers will give exceptions in this case. A child is still a child, even if he or she was conceived out of violence. However, aborting the baby would not solve the mother's problems. In some cases, it would complicate things more. For a woman to carry a child to term that was conceived out of violence may be the hardest thing for her to do. However, when the baby is born, she can give him or her up for adoption. By choosing this option, the mother will not live with the guilt of killing an innocent child. Although the mother had a horrible experience, she can live the rest of her life knowing she made the right choice by giving the child a chance at life.

In order to save the lives of innocent children, it is crucial that the pro-life movement continue. Until our country stands up for the life of an unborn child, the murdering will not cease. Every human, including an unborn child, has the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." – Andy, Anthony, Jenn M., Jenni P., Jessica, and Nicole (the 2:15 class)

SUMMARY COMMENTS ABOUT THE COMPOSITE PAPERS

Some summary comments should be made about these final statements.

1. Concern for Unborn Child Preeminent. Students from all classes give unquestioned support for the unborn child's rights, ranging from the declaration of the 9:55 class that the baby is "the miracle God has created" to the statement of the 1:10 class that abortion involves "the killing of an unborn innocent child" to the urgency of the 2:15 class as it provided fetological evidence of the unborn child's humanity.

2. Adoption as a Solution. There is a strong reliance on adoption as a better course of action than abortion in all three groups. For the 1:10 class adoption is "completely understandable" as a solution for the child conceived by rape.

3. Choice Applies to Unborn Child. All three groups comment on the idea of "choice," sometimes rendering subtle verbal differences to the slogan word from what anti-lifers assert. It is clear for the 9:55 class that "choice" does not involve "killing another human being." For the 1:10 class, choice becomes effective only after an anterior right is satisfied: the mother "should be forced to have the baby and then have the choice to

give the baby up for adoption.” The 2:15 class comments on “freedom of choice” as “the slogan for the pro-abortion activists.” Also for this group, giving up for adoption a child conceived by rape is “the right choice.”

4. *Birth Control as a Solution.* Two of the three groups highlighted birth control as a satisfactory way to prevent unplanned pregnancies, even to the point of listing various devices and methods available (as the 9:55 class did).

5. *Ambivalent Views on Mothers Who Abort.* While some students were quick to condemn the mother for getting abortions, saying, as the 9:55 class did, that such mothers use “scapegoats and excuses for their irresponsible actions” (this class committee was entirely composed of young women), a complementary trend was to have sympathy for the mother. While admitting that a woman who becomes a mother by rape “had a horrible experience,” the 2:15 class trusts that she would make the “right choice by giving the child a chance at life.”

Some other ideas which can be culled from these extracts would involve a closer reading and better correlation with the previous drafts than what I have done here.

RESULT OF COMPOSITE PAPER: REGRESSION OR AMBIGUITY?

Finally, I asked students at the end of the course to send me e-mails giving reactions to the position papers on abortion produced by the four groups, to the presentation of those position papers, or reactions to any other aspect of the process.^{xxxv} While they cannot be an accurate barometer measuring the qualitative adherence to the exception-free abortion position, such personal emails could either reinforce a previous opinion or at least give the student the last word. Some comments were staunchly pro-life and supportive:

- For the final group paper...we said that under no circumstances should a woman have an abortion. Even if she found out that the child has a birth defect such as Down Syndrome. Also we thought that it was wrong if the woman was raped because the child should not have to suffer because of the father’s wrath. In my true opinion of abortion I agree whole-heartedly with all of the statements that my group made in our paper. I agree with it because even when the fetus is

one day old, I still think of it as a child. That child should not have to suffer from the mistakes that their mother and father made. If the parents do not want it they can always give it up for adoption to parents who will love it. (Emily)^{xxxvi}

- I respect your teaching skills when you approach different views. You always tried to make us think about the other side's argument. In regards to the composite paper, I enjoyed working on it. I learned a lot more on the murdering of innocent children. The only negative part about the paper was I don't think everyone worked equally. It seemed as though more of us worked on it than others. I felt as if they were relying on me for the grade. Take care and God bless. (Jenni P.)^{xxxvii}

However, various e-mails showed that, while they may not have been permanently persuaded against exceptions, some students are deeply ambiguous about the morality of the standard exceptions proposed for abortion:

- For the most part, I still do believe that abortion is morally and sinfully wrong. I am a Catholic and believe that abortion is the killing of a young, innocent child. Although, unlike what was said in our composite paper, I do have a few exceptions. One exception is rape. I believe that if a woman is raped she should not be forced to have the child. Rape is a very traumatizing thing for a woman and I don't think she should have to see the child and always be reminded of the man who had raped her. Another exception I have on the topic of abortion is death of the mother during labor. If the mother is having problems during labor, and she or the baby is about to die, I believe they should then save the mother instead of her baby.

I think all of the composites were interesting to discuss and talk about. I learned a great deal from talking about them during class. (Jenn H.)^{xxxviii}

- My overall outlook on the group papers is very good. I wish we would have done them soon just so I could have gotten the chance to meet more people in our class. I like working in groups because you get to see what everyone else has to say on your topic. I personally liked my group; we got along very well and worked good as a team. I thought our paper was pretty good although I didn't agree with some of the comments.

To refresh your memory, my topic was con-abortion. I think abortion is wrong, except in certain situations. Rape for one; if a woman is raped then she should not have to be reminded for 9 months about the attack. I basically think it is up to the woman; I mean if I were to get pregnant right now I am not 100% sure

what I would do, I mean there are so many factors that go into making a decision as big as that. I didn't really know how to defend our paper because I agreed with my classmates' views. I think a person should do what makes them happy as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else along the way....

I liked how we had open conversation, that was great for everyone to express our thoughts on a topic. I personally don't like to talk much in a class where I really don't know anyone. That's why I said I would have liked to have done our group papers earlier. (Tracy)^{xxxix}

•Abortion, what an easy topic, so I thought. You made it so much harder than it sounded! Thank you so much. You made me think about things I had never thought of. Even though I helped write our paper I disagreed with some of the material we put in it. We said there should not be any exceptions at all. Well, I think that not having exceptions is cruel and wrong. How could you make a woman carry the child of her rapist? Personally I think that would be a terrible thing to do to someone. On the other hand if they want to keep the child or give the baby up for adoption then they should by all means be able to. I don't understand how someone could have the child of their rapist though.

Our class presentation was horrible! I could not believe how many comments we had from our classmates. The worst part was that I could not respond to the questions and ridicule that we were getting because I believed everything that was said. I did not expect that to happen to us at all. I guess I learned first hand about how touchy of a subject abortion is.

As for our class: I had fun listening to everyone express themselves. Looking back now I wish I would have said more in our discussions. I'm just too darn shy. Although I did not put forth 100% into your class, I wish I would have. I started having more fun as the semester wore down. (Trey)^{xl}

CONCLUSION

I hope that the student writing contained in this paper will help you understand which aspects of the first right-to-life issue students identify with and how they formulate their positions on abortion. Hopefully, also, the student writing contained herein will challenge you to incorporate some newer developments in pedagogic practice to influence students to either alter or affirm their abortion positions. If the student writing which you may generate in your own classrooms shows that ambiguity or a questioning of the legal status quo has developed, then you will have accomplished a significant task to which we in the academy are called. To question the distortion of rights called abortion is a mammoth effort.

We can demonstrate the cognitive dissonance which abortion has created in the United States, the world's leading anti-life nation, quite easily. Students are shocked to read that the founding document of the United States reads that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights; that among these are...life." Finally, since the first civil right to life was taken away in the United States by words in legal briefs and court opinions which led to two extremely tragic Supreme Court decisions, I am hopeful that the war of words over abortion will be waged by legal briefs, court opinions—and student writing.

NOTES

i. The following quotes from abstracts of ERIC documents may also be of interest to the scholar who has both the financial resources and the time to investigate the matter of college writing on abortion. Marcia Baghban, "The Personal Past as Inspiration: Authors Honor Their Life Experiences in Their Stories" (ERIC, Online, Worldcat., 22 May 1998: ED401546), argues that Alice Walker's "pregnancy and a subsequent abortion...were inspiration for *Once*, her first published book of poetry." Teresa Henning, "Resisting Ethical Paralysis: A Postmodern Critique of Ethics" (ERIC ED384038), attempts to prove that "in *After Virtue* Alasdair MacIntyre shows how arguments about abortion are constructed in such a way as to preclude any discussion; the speaker either forces her audience to accept her premises or labels that audience immoral." In "What Do We Teach and How Do We Teach It?" (ERIC, Online, Worldcat., 22 May 1998: ED348689) Marilyn Shapiro shows that "Students in a freshman composition course at Lawrence Technological University were asked to write responses to Ernest Hemingway's story, 'Hills Like White Elephants'.... [M]ale students did not 'dominate' the text any more than females.... Midterm essay responses show that student response, both male and female, draws strongly on the teacher's explication. Researchers should focus on how students read both with and without the teacher's help."

ii. Lisa Thomson Ross and Kalman J. Kaplan, "Life Ownership Orientation and Attitudes toward Abortion, Suicide, Doctor-Assisted Suicide, and Capital Punishment" in *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* 28/1 (1993-94) 17-30 at

27.

iii. Paul D. Werner, "A Q-Sort Measure of Beliefs about Abortion" in *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 53/2 (1993) 513-21 at 518.

iv. Janice Westlund Bryan and Florence Wallach Freed, "Abortion Research: Attitudes, Sexual Behavior, and Problems in a Community College Population" in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 22/1 (1993) 1-22 at 1-6.

v. Bryan and Freed 6.

vi. Bryan and Freed 11-12.

vii. Lloyd S. Wright and Robyn R. Rogers, "Variables Related to Pro-Choice Attitudes among Undergraduates" in *Adolescence* 22.87 (1987) 517-24 at 519.

viii. Elaine Eliason Englehardt, "A Core Approach to Teaching Ethics" in *Community, Technical, and Junior College Journal* 62/3 (1991/92) 30-34 at 34.

ix. *Ibid.* Having read Gorman's text for dissertation work, I find nothing objectionable about his scholarly presentation. However, if the 1976 edition of Linda Gordon's book (full title: *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: a Social History of Birth Control in America*, New York: Grossman) is what Englehardt uses, I question how the "historical perspective is enhanced" in a 462-page book which reduces the entire right-to-life movement to the following, pp. 415-16: "In the United States in the 1970's two alternative views of reproductive control have emerged to challenge the liberating emphasis of birth control. One is the opposition to abortion, the 'right to life' movement. The attribution of human rights to the fetus is not a new idea but repeats nineteenth-century anti-birth-control views which, revealingly, fused abortion with contraception. Perhaps sperm and ova have rights too. This is not to deny the existence of real moral issues about life or to deny the reasonableness of a position that fetuses ought not to be destroyed. But right-to-life advocates do not usually fight for 'life' in any systematic way. As a social force the movement represents not Catholics in general but the threatened Church hierarchy and its right-wing supporters. Right-to-life forces have generally opposed the kinds of social programs that would make abortion less frequent: child care, sex education, contraception, and so forth. Right-to-lifers are not usually pacifists, though pacifism is the only over-all philosophy that could make their position on abortion honorable and consistent. They oppose the specific forms of 'killing' that amount to women's self-defense. They are reacting not merely to a 'loosening of morals' but to the whole feminist struggle of the last century; they are fighting for male supremacy.

Often they support it because it is the only system they know which can provide family and social stability, and many right-to-life supporters do not fully understand the implications of their views. Yet many do understand, too, and even among Catholics many women have rejected the right-to-life position. Opponents of abortion have been repeatedly defeated at the polls—in fact they have won no elections as of this writing. Catholic women preponderantly support legalized abortion—that is, they support women’s right to choose for themselves. The right-to-life movement is not a mass movement and it cannot mobilize women in large numbers, particularly not working-class women who need and practice abortion in higher proportion than other women. Although the anti-abortion movement often appears strong in working-class neighborhoods, its leadership is always part of the top-down leadership structure administered through the Church and the political-party machines. Furthermore, right-to-life groups nearly always line up behind other right-wing causes: support for the Vietnam war, for racist anti-school busing protests, for example. The right to life is not the issue of abortion; the issue is women’s rights.”

The reader will have read this huge quote with patience and hopefully will approach today’s students with sympathy (after all, they are the ones who are exposed to such distortions of reality presented as evidence in an academic environment).

x. Patricia C. Dunn and Kathy Brown, “Abortion Forced-Choice Ladder Activity” in *Journal of Health Education* 28/3 (1997) 178-79 at 178.

xi. *Ibid.*

xii. Marjorie A. Jones, “Use of a Classroom Jury Trial to Enhance Students’ Perception of Science as Part of Their Lives” in *Journal of Chemical Education* 74 (1997) 537.

xiii. Maria E. Torres-Guzman, with Lourdes I. Ivory, Marta Lugo, Keming Liu, Victoria Rodriguez, James Rosado, and Elizabeth Willaum, “Stories about Differences in a Collaborative with Middle School Students” in *Theory into Practice* 35/3 (1996) 196-204.

xiv. Torres-Guzman *et al.* 199. There is a resentment against religious institutions and principles that can be detected in this article. The subtle resentment can be found in this summary of the group discussing teenage pregnancy and sexuality: “They held assumptions that young girls who got pregnant were ‘wild’ and ‘morally loose.’ They found out differently. Their discussions were evidence of their traditional Catholic upbringing. They held on to the ideas about being a virgin, not having sex before marriage, and wearing a white dress on their wedding day.” (p.199)

A similar negativity to religious principles can be found in research by Frank Biasco and Chris Piotrowski in "College Students' Attitudes toward Abortion" in *College Student Journal* 23/3 (1989) 194-97. Working with 538 college students at the University of West Florida (which they identify as a "deep South" university), the researchers reiterate several times how surprising it is that students could support certain pro-abortion positions when the South is such a "Bible belt" area (pp. 194-97). These same researchers take no notice of certain more important statistical contradictions, such as that 70.63% disagree with the statement that "abortion is an acceptable form of population control" and that 84.76% agree that "aborting a fetus simply because it is not the desired gender is wrong" (p. 196).

xv. Edith Greene, "Teaching about Psychological Perspectives on Abortion" in *Teaching of Psychology* 22/3 (1995) 202-04 at 202.

xvi. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, eds., *Negotiating Difference: Cultural Case Studies for Composition* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996) vii-viii.

xvii. The other issues on which the students aligned themselves on that class day (1 December 1997) were: Affirmative action, Animal rights, Birth control, Capital punishment, Censorship, Ebonics, Environment, Euthanasia, Foreign relations, Gay rights, Gun control, Immigration, Ku Klux Klan, Legalizing marijuana, Marilyn Manson, North American Free Trade Agreement, Pornography, Promiscuity, Prostitution, Racism, Sex discrimination, Sweatshops, Welfare, and Women in the military.

xviii. This group also obtained three other students who were not present on the original day of expressing their preferences: Anne Marie, Danielle, and Rachel.

xix. As with the 9:55 class, this group also obtained three other students who were not present on the original day of expressing their preferences: Emily, Patrick, and Tracy.

xx. Readers may be curious to know what other issues interested students. The following other working groups were constituted. For the 9:55 class, the other groups were: Capital punishment (pro) with seven members; Environmental issues (pro), five members; and Marijuana (pro), five members. For the 1:10 class, the other groups were: Marijuana (pro), eight members; and Prostitution (pro), six members. For the 2:15 class, the other groups were: Capital punishment (con), five members; Censorship (con), three members; and Marijuana (pro), four members.

xxi. It should be stated explicitly that I encouraged students who designated an interest in abortion to further consider taking a viewpoint opposite their own not only for the sake of argument, but also for the purpose of adding further diversity to the position paper which would emerge from the group by playing devil's advocate. Not many students took advantage of this opportunity. Moreover, some students who wanted to adopt an anti-life position listed abortion as a second or third choice and were better "fitted" with another issue. For example, in the 1:10 class, all four of the students who originally selected abortion adopted a pro-life position which I later confirmed was their own personal position as well. A similar situation controlled the 2:15 class; in fact, the most vociferous pro-life students of all three classes were those women in this class who selected abortion as their first priority and who themselves were strongly pro-life.

xxii. In this paper I have only included those excerpts which were discussed before the audience at the University of Toronto; the full text of the paper would consume fifty-five pages if it were published. DOS-rendered versions of all student drafts may be obtained by requesting them from the author at ic647@cleveland.freenet.edu. Finally, although spelling errors and minor punctuation and diction errors have been cleaned up in all student drafts and e-mails, I have otherwise simply transcribed all student work from the original documents.

xxiii. Samuel W. Calhoun, "A Personal Account of a Struggle to be Evenhanded in Teaching about Abortion," *Advocacy in the Classroom: Problems and Possibilities*, ed. Patricia Meyer Spacks (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) 365-71 at 369.

xxiv. Calhoun 367.

xxv. Calhoun 370.

xxvi. Calhoun 368.

xxvii. It is interesting, though, that his written statement "I do not consider the course as a soapbox for me to proselytize about abortion" (368) almost verbatim repeats my own verbal statement to students that "My aim is not to proselytize you to my view on abortion."

xxviii. Calhoun 369-70.

xxix. As I wrote this complex sentence, I reflected on several occasions where students confided matters to me beyond the classroom. Sometimes I feel as though I am playing the role of father confessor for my students. While I can, as

a fellow human being, urge students to seek help for their assorted troubles, I make it clear that my role in the classroom is to be an instructor in English grammar, rhetoric, literature, or business writing.

xxx. Writing faculty may also find, as I have, that the prompts for the Invent and Respond features may assist students in developing topics for writing, especially by helping them understand the needs of the “audiences” for whom they are writing (themselves, the instructor, and their fellow students).

xxxii. An “official” transcript can be printed by the instructor or student after all members in the conference have logged off, thereby enabling students to see suitable language which can be incorporated in final texts their groups would produce.

xxxiii. The *Daedalus Integrated Writing Environment for Windows Computers Version 5.3x Instructor’s Guide* recognizes (Austin: Daedalus Group, 1997) the possibility of negative criticism easily turning into flaming when it suggests (p. 37) that “Group critique can be very valuable, especially in clarifying which responses are idiosyncratic and which are more widely shared, but it can also present some hard lessons: it’s rough on the ego when a whole group responds negatively to a draft. There is considerable risk of ego-damage attendant upon using InterChange as a forum for critique, so it is vital both that students understand the necessity of commenting on the draft while respecting their classmates’ feelings and that they monitor their own discourse carefully.” This caution for “netiquette,” especially if a draft may concern what to some is a volatile issue, should be verbally reinforced by the instructor before any work in the feature is accomplished.

xxxiv. Since the composite papers are solely the production of the students, I did not correct the factual error that this language is found in Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence.

xxxv. Although this word is used, the students may have wanted to say “crushed.”

xxxvi. Since most students did not specify that they would not object to having portions of their e-mails published in this paper, I will safeguard their anonymity and cite them by their abbreviated name as identified at the end of the email.

One student, Amy, submitted a hard-copy statement, perhaps the most touching portion reading: “It is very hard for me to imagine myself or anyone else having an abortion. My experience with the loss of my pregnancy though a miscarriage showed me how important life is, born or unborn; this is a painful experience mentally and physically. I have a hard time understanding why someone would

deliberately do this to their body.”

xxxvi. Emily, e-mail to the author, 14 Dec. 1997.

xxxvii. Jenni P., e-mail to the author, 17 Dec. 1997.

xxxviii. Jenn H., e-mail to the author, 17 Dec. 1997.

xxxix. Tracy, e-mail to the author, 15 Dec. 1997.

xl. Trey, e-mail to the author, 14 Dec. 1997.