

LEGITIMIZING AND DELEGITIMIZING STRATEGIES OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD, CARE NET AND THEIR SUPPORTERS

Stephanie J. Thomason, University of Tampa

Michael Weeks, The Citadel

Hemant Rustogi, University of Tampa

ABSTRACT

Organizations establish legitimacy by adhering to socially-constructed norms (Pfeffer, 1981; Suchman, 1995). Most of the organizational legitimacy literature focuses on the organization's strategies to establish legitimacy rather than delegitimizing strategies by competitors or competitors' supporters (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Du & Vieira, 2012; Long & Driscoll, 2008; Suchman, 1995). Delegitimizing strategies have become pronounced in the internet age, particularly in visible and controversial industries that need external social and political support. We have examined strategies that United States-based abortion provider Planned Parenthood and the Care Net pregnancy resource centers (PRCs) have used to maintain legitimacy and positive reputations. We have selected these two organizations due to significant attention that both have received in the wake of the 2022 Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade in the United States. We find evidence of attempts by both organizations to delegitimize their competitors through marketing and communications strategies that undermine public perceptions of the moral standing of the opposing position. We further find that while both appeal to prevalent norms and values, PRC appeals are grounded in static Biblical authority. At the same time, abortion providers are based on more dynamic societal norms and values. We next examine their rankings as charities from a third-party perspective, finding that both organizations have achieved relatively high rankings. These findings suggest organizational legitimacy in the eyes of some external stakeholders. Theoretical and practical implications are offered.

INTRODUCTION

Given the easy access to information in this internet age, organizations must be timely and diligent in establishing and maintaining stakeholder perceptions of legitimacy, especially when the public is paying close attention to the industry. One highly visible industry under consistent public scrutiny is the ecosystem of firms that provide resources and services for pregnant women. This scrutiny was heightened in the United States when Supreme Court justices overturned Roe v. Wade in June of 2022.

Two players in this industry are Planned Parenthood and Care Net. Planned Parenthood provides a variety of services for pregnant women, including abortion. Care Net provides

counseling and other resources for pregnant women, but does not provide abortion services and actively discourages women from seeking abortion. Their competing interests in a climate of political hostility have led to various self-legitimizing strategies and others-delegitimizing strategies, which come from the organizations themselves and those who either support or reject their causes. Given the importance of legitimacy to the very survival of these organizations (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975), strategies they employ to establish and maintain legitimacy are paramount.

The battles between pregnancy resource centers (PRCs), abortion providers, and opponents on both sides have been highly visible, ethically questionable, and strategically hostile. Since the 1960s, thousands of pregnancy resource centers (known initially as crisis pregnancy centers) have emerged throughout the United States (Gaul, 2021). PRC opponents have referred to these centers as “pseudo-clinics” that attempt to convince pregnant women not to choose abortions (Gilbert, 2013) and have argued that PRCs provide false or misleading information about abortions to women (Bryant et al., 2014). On the other hand, Planned Parenthood opponents have released undercover videos that have detailed its process of extracting fetal organs for donation (Woodruff, 2015) and have claimed Planned Parenthood has been facilitating sex trafficking of minors (Dwyer, 2011). Such actions likely impact public perceptions of the organizational legitimacy of PRCs such as Care Net and abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood. The present study examines ways these organizations have used to establish and maintain their moral legitimacy. We also examine external perceptions of these organizations through a third party: Charity Navigator. Given the political tensions towards both sides following the *Roe v. Wade* decision, we believe our study can add a relevant and rational perspective on how both sides have navigated raging seas to maintain their presence. We have not found other studies that have examined these highly visible and controversial organizations in these ways, so we believe our contribution is helpful to business strategists, practitioners, and academics.

LEGITIMIZING AND DELEGITIMIZING STRATEGIES

Organizations use various legitimizing approaches to build their reputations as ethical firms with the moral high ground (cf. Long & Driscoll, 2008). Pfeffer (1981, p. 4) defined organizations as “systems of patterned or structured activity in which the participants attempt to develop causal explanations and rationalizations for these patterns of activity, with the explanations being constrained to be legitimate and acceptable in the social context and with the further preference for explanations that provide a feeling of control over events.” Legitimacy is further defined by Suchman (1995, p. 574) as “a generalized perception that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.” Legitimization comes when an organization’s value system aligns with the normative values of the superordinate system in which it operates (Parsons, 1956). This system includes consistency with norms, social rules, and laws (Tang, 2017). “Legitimacy is a constraint, therefore, on organizational behavior, but it is a dynamic constraint which changes as

organizations adapt, and as the social values which define legitimacy change and are changed” (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975, p. 126).

Prior research in organizational legitimacy has focused on strategies that organizations have used to gain or maintain legitimacy, which is necessary for the firm survival (e.g., Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). The present research focuses not only on the legitimization strategies employed by Planned Parenthood and Care Net but also on the delegitimization strategies employed by their competitors and the supporters of those competitors. In industries in which strong political views fuel opposing players, these attempts have the potential to wreak havoc on the long-term sustainability of the organizations involved. As proffered decades ago by Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), organizations that are more visible and those that need social and political support have a much greater need for legitimacy than others with opposing characteristics. Achieving the moral high ground by establishing and maintaining legitimacy may be particularly important in such industries to survive.

Moral legitimacy refers to conformance with social values and obligations (Long & Driscoll, 2008). Moral legitimacy may be achieved by examining the consequences of actions to maximize the greatest good for the greatest number of people (utilitarianism) or by determining whether acts are in conformance with our moral obligations to do what is right (deontology) (Suchman, 1995).

Planned Parenthood is in a controversial (but legal) industry sector. Research into legitimacy-seeking strategies of organizations in controversial industries is relatively rare (Reast et al., 2013). To establish legitimacy in such a sector, the organization may apply utilitarian justifications by proposing that ethically correct actions minimize harm and maximize good (Lindorff et al., 2012). “Therefore, any action that creates social good by a legally operating firm, whether in a controversial or noncontroversial sector, should be seen as preferable to the absence of any such actions by that firm” (Lindorff et al., 2012, p. 464). This framework also corresponds to “the ends justify the means.” Utilitarian ethical frameworks *minimize* harm rather than *do no harm*. Doing no harm falls under the deontological ethical framework in which people have a moral duty to do what is right. Since some consider induced abortions morally wrong in all situations, utilitarian ethical frameworks may be more appropriate for Planned Parenthood’s organizational legitimacy strategies than deontological ethical applications. PRCs do not provide abortions, which may make them seem less controversial to some people. PRCs may apply a deontological framework in establishing organizational legitimacy so long as they tell the truth in their messaging, as truth is a moral obligation under the deontological framework. Given these moral constraints, the question of whether abortion providers and PRCs use either approach is valid.

To flesh out these issues, we have organized our analysis as follows: we begin with a discussion of the current political climate in the U.S. concerning abortions. We next discuss two organizations with a vested interest in pregnant women: Care Net and Planned Parenthood. We present some of the criticisms of both organizations, along with the organizations’ responses. We examine the ethical frameworks used and whether their strategies have been effective through the evaluations of a nonpartisan third party. We then offer theoretical and practical implications.

ABORTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

In the wake of the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decision to overturn the landmark abortion rulings in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* and return decisions about abortions to the states, pro-choice and pro-life activists have renewed interests in this half-century-long battle. The right to abortion now varies by the laws within state governments. Following this decision, “trigger” laws in some states led to an immediate ban of abortions in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Utah (Kimball, 2022). Abortions can still be obtained in states such as Alaska, California, Illinois, Maine, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Washington (Ewall-Wice & Quinn, 2022).

Since *Roe v. Wade* passed in 1973, advocates for “pro-choice” and “pro-life” positions have grown. Those who advocate the pro-choice position believe abortions are among women’s reproductive rights and should be private decisions between them and their doctors. They believe they have a constitutional right to privacy. They further side with the *Roe v. Wade* decision by Justice Harry Blackmun that the unborn are not persons. If they are persons, they would be entitled to a right to life via the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. The 14th Amendment says that “no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Those on this side further embrace the ideas of choice and female empowerment. Those who advocate the pro-life position consider the unborn to be persons within the meaning and language of the 5th and 14th Amendments with unalienable rights that should be protected through the jurisdiction of the states (Roden, 2010). A person can be defined as “a human being who has rights that are enforceable in a court of law” (Roden, 2010, p. 188). This definition of a person differs from another definition of personhood, which is a standing or status bestowed upon someone based on the others’ perceptions (Hunter et al., 2013; Kitwood, 1997; Newton et al., 2021). These types of varying views on abortion occur between generations. In a study of 2,596 United States (U.S.) respondents to the World Values Surveys, Thomason, Weeks, and Galperin (2022) found that younger generations Y and Z (born after 1981) are significantly more likely than their older counterparts to consider abortions justifiable.

Abortions are moral issues that require moral judgments. “And the person who says that abortion is always wrong is saying something about abortion that contradicts what is said by someone who says that abortion is sometimes morally permissible. As such, and unlike the situation in which different people simply and solely express their feelings or preferences, moral judgments do need to be defended, do need to be justified, do need to be validated” (Regan, 1997, p. 104).

Women with unwanted pregnancies face the difficult choices of inducing abortions or carrying their babies to term. Their families are often involved in helping them make their decisions. They need wisdom in deciding between sometimes winless situations with either better or worse wrongs (Nayak, 2016). To make these ethical decisions, they may use a deontological approach by focusing on their moral duties to do what is right. They may also

consider a consequential framework by maximizing good and minimizing harm. They may glean some wisdom from the healthcare centers that attend to pregnant women.

PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTERS AND PLANNED PARENTHOOD

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America (or Planned Parenthood) is one of the largest nonprofit healthcare and sex education providers in the United States. Pregnancy resource centers (PRCs) are faith-based and/or community-based nonprofit pregnancy services providers. Both are funded by government and private donations. PRCs often serve minority populations of lower socioeconomic status (Rice et al., 2021) by providing free or low-cost confidential counseling, food, housing, maternity supplies, and other pregnancy-related information (Tushnet, 2003). They provide products and services such as ultrasounds, pregnancy testing, sexually transmitted disease testing, counseling, abortion pill reversal, education, cribs, diapers, baby car seats, baby clothing, and other maternity products (Gaul, 2021). In 2019, they served nearly 2 million people with assistance valued over \$266 million (Gaul, 2021). PRCs may or may not be licensed and may or may not include professional medical doctors, nurses, or nurse practitioners. Twenty-five percent of PRCs' 14,977 staff members in 2019 were licensed medical professionals (Gaul, 2021). Client satisfaction exit surveys from Care Net and Heartbeat International (around 2,100 centers) have indicated that over 99 percent of women have positive experiences in PRCs (Gaul, 2021). Unlike Planned Parenthood, PRCs do not provide abortions, though some women may not realize that when they enter the PRCs, which often include words such as "choice" in their names. Instead, they attempt to dissuade women from having abortions (Bryant et al., 2014; Campbell, 2017). Currently, there are over 3,000 PRCs in the United States (Gaul, 2021) and over 600 Planned Parenthood facilities (Anonymous, 2022d). Planned Parenthood conducts pregnancy testing, sexually transmitted disease testing, HIV testing, cancer breast exams, pap smears, abortions, contraception, sex education, and hormones for transgender patients (Anonymous, 2022d). In 2019, Planned Parenthood performed 354,871 abortions (Anonymous, 2020). Over the long term, Planned Parenthood has had an inflationary impact on the number of abortions in the U.S. (Studnicki & Fisher, 2018).

CRITICISMS OF PRCs AND PRC RESPONSES

Criticisms of PRCs have labeled them "pseudo-clinics" (Gilbert, 2013), fake clinics (Thomsen & Morrison, 2020), unethical (Bryant & Swartz, 2018), and providers of misleading or false information (Bryant et al., 2014). Because PRCs do not charge for their services and are not medical practices, they are exempt from the regulatory laws and statutes that apply to medical providers (Bryant & Swartz, 2018). At a Planned Parenthood website, bold pink and blue messaging states, "pregnancy resource centers are anti-choice, anti-abortion, faith-based, fake clinics with no oversight...no honesty...no choices...no privacy... and no separation...of church and state" (Anonymous, 2022c, p. 1). "Their goal is not to educate and inform, but to stall, deceive, evade, lecture, and manipulate -- everything but share honest information and

care” (Anonymous, 2022c, p. 2). At the University of California in Santa Barbara, a queer reproductive justice student club called “End Fake Clinics” paired with their student government to ban PRCs from falsely advertising on their campus (Thomsen & Morrison, 2020). Opposition against them has spiked following the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, which has fueled some activists to set fires at numerous PRCs across the United States. For example, on June 7th, 2022, CompassCare in Buffalo, New York was “fire-bombed” (Anonymous, 2022b). In Longmont, Colorado, arsonists set fire to a Christian-based PRC and spray-painted the message, “if abortions aren’t safe, neither are you” (O’Neill, 2022). This message has appeared at dozens of PRCs since the SCOTUS opinion on *Roe v. Wade* was leaked in May 2022 (O’Neill, 2022).

Some have called for additional regulations on PRCs. For example, the California Reproductive Freedom and Transparency Act (FACT Act) required licensed PRCs to notify women that California provides free or low-cost services such as abortions and provides women with the phone numbers of such providers. Unlicensed clinics were told to notify women that they had yet to be licensed in California. In 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court adjudicated a case between the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates, DBA NIFLA et al., v. Becerra, Attorney General of California, et al. The Court determined these requirements were “wildly underinclusive” in that California singled out the PRCs for the messaging and ignored numerous other community clinics and health centers. The Court determined these requirements violated the free speech clause of the 1st Amendment (“National Institute of Family and Life Advocates, DBA NIFLA, et al., Petitioners v. Xavier Becera, Attorney General of California, et al.,” 2018).

Other PRC practices have been called into question, which may impact public perceptions of their legitimacy. For example, Bryant and colleagues (2014) analyzed 254 websites of 348 PRCs, determining that 80 percent provided at least one false or misleading statement about abortions. The most common of these statements were related to links between abortion and preterm birth, breast cancer, infertility, post-abortion stress, and mental health risks. Bryant and colleagues (2014) suggested these PRCs should not be included in state directories as resources for pregnant women. They state that “scientific evidence does not support the notion that abortion is harmful to women or has multiple long-term health consequences,” so “states should not include agencies that provide inaccurate information on abortion in their resource directories for pregnant women” (p. 604). Organizations such as Care Net have countered the above claims by providing links to academic medical studies on their website, suggesting links between various adverse health outcomes and induced abortions (Anonymous, 2022a). The Care Net president has also spoken out against similar adverse PRC claims by television personalities such as John Oliver (Warren, 2018). To counter John Oliver’s calling “BS” on PRCs who state that induced abortions relate to breast cancer, Warren cited 108 global studies on induced abortions and breast cancer. He stated that 79 found an increased risk between induced abortions and the later development of breast cancer. He further included a meta-analysis of 36 studies by Huang, Zhang, Li, and colleagues (2014), which found that induced abortions were significantly associated with breast cancer and the chances of breast cancer increased with the number of abortions. His video also included a link to a web page that cited those studies.

One freelance reporter, Eve Tushnet (2003), described her experience working in a PRC in North Carolina, where she worked directly with many women: “What would have to change in

your life to make you feel good about this baby? Public officials' tweaking a regulation here or funding an initiative there will not untangle the emotional roots of out-of-wedlock pregnancy. What is needed more than anything is a realistic hope. Men and women need models of chastity, marriage, and fatherhood. They need to be able to imagine themselves as abstinent singles or married parents and know how to make realistic plans toward those goals" (Tushnet, 2003, p. 111). PRCs provide women with this type of confidential counseling, which may be beneficial in light of recent spikes in mental health issues. The percentage of women reporting serious mental health issues in the United States has skyrocketed between 2008 and 2019. In 2019, the percentages were as follows by ages: 18-25: 11.4 percent; 26-49: 8.6 percent; and 50+: 3.5 percent (MCCance-Katz, 2019).

CRITICS OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD AND PLANNED PARENTHOOD RESPONSES

Due to the ethically questionable aspects of their abortion services, Planned Parenthood is not without its vocal critics. Anti-abortion protesters often march outside Planned Parenthood facilities, trying to stop pregnant women from seeking abortions (Skinner, 2022). Numerous protesters have bombed abortion clinics (Anonymous, 2022e). Organizations led by pro-life activists, such as Lila Rose's Live Action have gone undercover into numerous Planned Parenthood clinics with hidden video cameras to expose their facilitation of the sex trafficking of minors (Dwyer, 2011). Planned Parenthood condemned the video as a "dirty tricks campaign" and stated that the video "may be a hoax" (Dwyer, 2011). Planned Parenthood also fired the worker and claimed to have notified law enforcement of an alleged sex trafficking ring weeks earlier (Dwyer, 2011). Anti-abortion activists released another video in which two persons posed as medical researchers to purchase fetal tissue with Dr. Deborah Nucatola, the national medical director for Planned Parenthood (Woodruff, 2015). When asked about specific body parts, Nucatola responded, "It makes a huge difference. I'd say a lot of people want liver. Exactly. So then you're just kind of cognizant of where you put your graspers, you try to intentionally go above and below the thorax, so that, you know, we've been very good at getting heart, lung, liver, because we know that, so I'm not going to crush that part, I'm going to basically crush below, I'm going to crush above, and I'm going to see if I can get it all intact" (Woodruff, 2015). Selling fetal tissue is illegal, but recovering costs from donating fetal tissue for research and charging administrative fees for storage or shipping is legal (Watts, 2015; Woodruff, 2015). Planned Parenthood has denied making any profits from the donated tissue (Woodruff, 2015). Former Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards also released a video denying the allegation that Planned Parenthood makes any profit from donated fetal tissue (Richards, 2015). She stated that Planned Parenthood's donation programs follow all legal and ethical guidelines, and she apologized for the staff member's tone and statements. Furthermore, she said the donated fetal tissue was used with the family's permission and can help study diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

STRATEGIES FOR THE LEGITIMACY OF PRCs AND PLANNED PARENTHOOD

As noted at the outset, Planned Parenthood and PRCs have a vested interest in achieving moral legitimacy among the public. Planned Parenthood tends to minimize or discount the risks, while PRCs may focus too much on them. In addition to citing risks, Planned Parenthood and PRCs use a variety of other approaches to establish legitimacy. Integrating the framework established in the legitimacy strategies to boost perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) of firms in another controversial industry (Du & Vieira, 2012), we next present a content analysis of themes from the websites of Planned Parenthood (<https://plannedparenthood.org>) and Care Net (<http://care-net.org>).

Approach	Illustrative Examples
CSR in mission	Care Net: "Acknowledging that every human life begins at conception and is worthy of protection, Care Net offers compassion, hope, and help to anyone considering abortion by presenting them with realistic alternatives and Christ-centered support through our life-affirming network of pregnancy centers, churches, organizations, and individuals." Planned Parenthood: "Advocate for public policies that protect and expand reproductive rights and access to a full range of sexual and reproductive health care services, including abortion; Provide medically accurate education that advances the understanding of human sexuality, healthy relationships, and body autonomy; Promote research and technology that enhances reproductive health care and access.
Education	Care Net: "Pro-life 101" free online course Planned Parenthood: "Ask the experts" frequently asked questions.
Positive and negative information	Care Net: "There is a father absence crisis in America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 19.7 million children, more than 1 in 4, live without a father in the home. Consequently, there is a father factor in nearly all social ills facing America today." "Positive interaction with either parent contributes to a child's well-being. Yet research consistently shows that children who have positive experiences with only their mothers lack the nurturing and life skills that come when both parents are involved in their lives." Planned Parenthood: "The emotional effects of induced abortion." "Any association between multiple abortion and mental health problems may be due to cooccurring

	factors — circumstances, conditions, and behaviors — that may predispose a woman to both multiple unwanted pregnancies and mental health problems (TFMHA).”
Industry-wide association membership	Care Net: “a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability; a Charity Navigator Four Star Charity; a Guide Star Silver Participant; an Accredited Member of Christian Services Charities; an Accredited Charity with the BBB Wise Giving Alliance; a member of National Religious Broadcasters; and has been on the Best Christian Workplaces list for the last five years.” Planned Parenthood: “Planned Parenthood is proud to stand in solidarity with immigrant families and our partners at We Belong Together, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, MomsRising, MamasConPoder, ACLU, United We Dream, MoveOn, and many others.”
Community engagement events	Care Net: Called and Missioned Pro-Life Men’s Conference; Come Alive at the Care Net National Conference Planned Parenthood: Safe, Healthy, Strong Conference
Awards providers	Care Net: “Rural, suburban, and urban centers with the most clients at the highest risk for abortion received the Critical Client Award.” Planned Parenthood: “ Our highest honor, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America Margaret Sanger Award, is presented annually to recognize leadership, excellence, and outstanding contributions to the reproductive health and rights movement.”
Social justice and care:	Care Net: “The Bible encourages us to speak up for the voiceless and do justice, even when it disrupts the peace of the status quo. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.” Planned Parenthood: “At Planned Parenthood, we know there’s no reproductive freedom without racial justice, and we take seriously our responsibility to create belonging and respect for the millions of patients and partners we serve. We have the fundamental goal to defend health care for the people most harmed by racist and discriminatory systems.”
Use of social media to combat attacks	Care Net on YouTube: “Life Chat: The Truth about Crisis Pregnancy Centers” with Care Net President Roland Warren. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUVsG2sf3Rk Care Net on X(Twitter): Combats claims of bad faith by using the #badfaithmedicine (nope) hashtag in numerous tweets with stories of Care Net acting in

	<p>good faith. Planned Parenthood on X(Twitter): Responds to Roe v. Wade by using the #BansOffOurBodies to call others to action. Planned Parenthood on YouTube: “Planned Parenthood president slams ‘unethical’ and ‘discriminatory’ gag rule on abortion providers” with former President Leana Wen. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zO8-_dvEc2U</p>
<p>Use of social media to share its cause</p>	<p>Care Net’s X(Twitter) @inspirelifeflow description: “We envision a culture where those faced with pregnancy decisions are empowered to choose life for their children & abundant life for their families.” Its YouTube channel says, “Care Net Centers have saved 886,690 lives since 2008.” Its Facebook page says, “Care Net offers compassion, help, and hope to women and men facing pregnancy decisions.” Planned Parenthood’s X(Twitter) @PPFA and its YouTube channel description: “Hi! We’re America’s most trusted provider of sexual and reproductive health care, and we think we look pretty good for over 100 years old.” Its Facebook page describes it as “a trusted health care provider, an informed educator, a passionate advocate, and a global partner.”</p>
<p>Diversity in Board composition</p>	<p>Care Net: Male President and CEO; male chairman of the board; 7/11 of the rest of the board members are male; 4 are female. Planned Parenthood: Female president; female chairman of the board; 10/13 of the rest of the board members are female; 3 are male.</p>
<p>Ethos</p>	<p>Care Net (2019): “As evidenced by Care Net’s Commitment of Care and Competence (which is similar to documents used by other pregnancy center networks) and its Standards of Affiliation, it is clear that pregnancy centers, as a whole, operate under standards and rules that result in consistent, professional services.” Planned Parenthood (2022): “Science-backed Education and Resources: As a respected leader in sex education, Planned Parenthood delivers programs, resources, and tools in classrooms, communities, and online that help people make informed choices about their sexuality and relationships, so they can lead full and healthy lives.”</p>
<p>Pathos</p>	<p>Care Net (2019). Multiple personal testimonies with images of happy families, women, men, children, and babies. Planned Parenthood (2022). Share your story. Multiple personal testimonies with images of happy women.</p>

Logos	<p>Care Net (2019). Impact statement, which includes statistics such as “in the past 11 years, 748,784 lives saved!”</p> <p>Planned Parenthood (2022). “Nearly one in four women* in America will have an abortion by age 45. Every day, people across the country make their own decisions about their pregnancies for reasons that are deeply personal. Politics has no place in these decisions.”</p>
-------	--

While many of the approaches used by Planned Parenthood and Care Net are similar, their emotional appeals vary. Both appealed more to our moral duties to do what is right (deontological ethical framework) rather than using a utilitarian framework, despite the potential effectiveness of utilitarian frameworks for Planned Parenthood, as noted earlier. Care Net included numerous appeals to religion and the authority of the Bible, while Planned Parenthood used more secular approaches and appealed to commonly held American values. Religious bonding is a way nonprofits use to earn trust among the religious (Tremblay-Boire & Prakash, 2015), which helps build legitimacy. Both appealed to social justice and care for the marginalized, impoverished, or poor, yet Planned Parenthood focused more on racial injustice, while Care Net appealed to those without voices (the unborn). The gender composition of the boards of both companies varied: Male representation is much higher at Care Net than at Planned Parenthood, which is dominated by females. Leaders of each organization have a significant presence on social media, where they respond to attacks on their legitimacy and establish their credibility. To be persuasive, they both use Aristotle’s techniques of establishing credibility (ethos), offering emotional appeals through personal stories and testimonies (pathos), and sharing factual information about themselves or their products and services (logos).

EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD AND PRC LEGITIMACY

What have external evaluations of these two organizations as charities determined about their legitimacy? Table 2 presents proxies for legitimacy by Charity Navigator (2023). Charity Navigator (2023) is “the world’s largest and most trusted nonprofit evaluator,” with over 11 million annual visitors. It examines IRS Form 990 tax filings and websites to evaluate over 195,000 charities’ financial health, accountability, and transparency. The latter criteria include best practices in governance and ethics. To be included in Charity Navigator’s star ratings, nonprofit organizations must meet all of the following requirements: 501c(3) tax status; at least a million dollar revenue for at least two years; at least seven years old; at least \$500,000 in public support; at least one percent of expenses for fundraising for at least three years; and at least one percent of expenses for administrative expenses for at least three years. A 4-star rating indicates exceptional ratings, which exceed industry standards and outperform most charities. A 3-star rating indicates good ratings, which exceed or meet industry standards and perform as well as or better than most charities. In 2018 through 2020, Charity Navigator awarded Care Net 4-star ratings, but in 2021, the Care Net slipped down to a 3-star rating. Planned Parenthood

(Federation) maintained 4-star ratings in all of those years. The CEO and president of Planned Parenthood earned over four times what the CEO and president of Care Net earned, which is likely a function of revenue differences. See Table 2 for other indicators from Charity Navigator.

Ratings Source	Examples
Charity Navigator ratings	Care Net: Leadership and adaptability 100/100; financial 81.77/100; accountability and transparency 100/100; 3 out of 4-star charity rating of 87.10/100, so donors can “give with confidence” to this charity. The president and CEO Roland Warren earned \$242,441 in 2020, which is 4.63% of total expenses. The former president and CEO Cecile Richards earned \$907,919 in 2020, which is .30 percent of total expenses. Planned Parenthood (Federation of America): Leadership and adaptability 100/100; financial 86.51/100; accountability and transparency 96/100; 4 out of 4-star charity rating of 90.04/100, so donors can “give with confidence” to this charity.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our findings have implications for organizational legitimacy theory (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975) and, more specifically, moral legitimacy (Long & Driscoll, 2008). Moral legitimacy is achieved with conformance to prevailing moral norms in societies. However, these norms change, so organizations lacking an unchanging moral authority (such as Planned Parenthood) must continually adapt to conform. Organizations that claim adherence to an unchanging moral authority, such as well-established religious principles (such as Care Net), may not need as much conformance with societal norms to establish and retain their legitimacy.

Moreover, these two case studies challenge some underlying assumptions in the organizational legitimacy literature. Previous work in this area is predicated on homeostasis in the cultural and organizational environments (Leonard, 2009). The frameworks assume that the moral environment is relatively stable and homogenous. We now know that there are wide discrepancies in moral justifications made throughout society (Thomason et al., 2022). This can be seen in the various aspects of the abortion rights movements and other areas such as fossil fuels production and pharmaceutical patents. We also know that the moral environment is changing quickly. Younger generations bring adapted moral frameworks emphasizing personal rights, environmental protection, and social justice (Thomason et al., 2022). The organizational legitimacy literature can no longer assume that the moral underpinnings of society are homogenous or stable.

The organizational legitimacy literature also assumes that an organization’s legitimacy is evaluated primarily through the firm's actions. Observers note the firm's behavior and make

legitimacy judgments using their internal moral frameworks. The literature does not extensively evaluate cases where competitors or activists are actively campaigning to undermine the legitimacy of established players in the industry. In the past, religious organizations or other established moral arbiters may have challenged this legitimacy. However, the lack of environmental homeostasis noted above seems to have increased the communications from rival firms and organizations attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the competition.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Given the role of legitimacy on the survivability of organizations (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975), Planned Parenthood and Care Net have good reasons to engage in multiple strategies that showcase their legitimacy by appealing to society's core values. Their strategies included securing memberships in industry-related organizations, promoting care for people in need, engaging in actions that help to achieve social justice and care, and awarding stakeholders for actions consistent with their missions. Care Net's approaches incorporated Christian values and beliefs, while Planned Parenthood's approaches were more secular. Both appealed to care, justice, and help for people in need, which align with the moral obligations prevalent in the United States. However, PRCs distinguished themselves by grounding their appeals in an unchanging Biblical authority, while Planned Parenthood's appeals were subject to more dynamic societal values. When the values are the same, both approaches are effective. However, if societal values shift in ways inconsistent with Biblical values, Planned Parenthood could more easily follow the shift, while PRCs could be at a disadvantage.

Based on the evaluations of Charity Navigator, both have maintained 4-star ratings on average between 2018 and 2021. Legitimacy among external stakeholders and the resultant positive image it entails is important to workers' identity as it helps them preserve the continuity of their self-concepts, build self-esteem, and add distinctiveness (Dutton et al., 1994).

To ensure legitimacy in the future and (possibly unintended) appeals to moral deontology, both organizations need to be ethical and truthful in the information they share on their websites and within their organizations. Care Net makes many promises in its donor bill of rights, which include respect, truthfulness, honor, and obedience to God. Planned Parenthood has standards of conduct that promise to avoid conflicts of interest, ensure equal opportunity, and conduct all business with honesty and integrity. Developing, training, rewarding, retaining, and compensating employees who align with established codes of ethics may help cement such codes into the organizations. These codes may further help with the organizations' promotions and marketing efforts. Future studies may want to examine employee alignment with the particular codes employed by these organizations and whether employees are aware of and have been trained and rewarded based on compliance. Future studies may also examine ways employees within these organizations identify themselves within the framework of identity theory (Dutton et al., 1994).

REFERENCES

- Anonymous. (2020). Planned Parenthood Annual Report, 2019-2020. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public/67/30/67305ea1-8da2-4cee-9191-19228c1d6f70/210219-annual-report-2019-2020-web-final.pdf
- Anonymous. (2022a). *Abortion Risks and Side Effects*. Care Net. Retrieved August 10, 2022 from <https://carenetaq.com/abortion/abortion-risks-and-side-effects/>
- Anonymous. (2022b). CompassCare Services Back Up and Running after It Was Firebombed on Monday. <https://www.wgrz.com/article/news/crime/fire-at-compasscare-amherst-being-investigated-as-arson-buffalo/71-2199c13e-545b-4bc1-b9c9-38258a5b964a>
- Anonymous. (2022c). Crisis Pregnancy Centers. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public/81/a3/81a30c3d-c40f-4bd9-aa28-be52e2180b1b/ppnc-cpc-fact-sheet.pdf
- Anonymous. (2022d). *Planned Parenthood: Our History*. Planned Parenthood. Retrieved August 11, 2022 from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/our-history>
- Anonymous. (2022e). *Recent Cases on Violence against Reproductive Healthcare Providers*. United States Department of Justice. Retrieved August 10, 2022 from <https://www.justice.gov/crt/recent-cases-violence-against-reproductive-health-care-providers>
- Anonymous. (2023). *Charity Navigator Home Page*. Retrieved September 15, 2023 from <http://www.charitynavigator.org>
- Bryant, A. G., Narasimhan, S., Bryant-Comstock, K., & Levi, E. E. (2014). Crisis pregnancy center websites: Information, misinformation and disinformation [Article]. *Contraception*, 90(6), 601-605. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2014.07.003>
- Bryant, A. G., & Swartz, J. J. (2018). POLICY FORUM: Why Crisis Pregnancy Centers Are Legal but Unethical [Article]. *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 20(3), 269-277. <https://doi.org/10.1001/journalofethics.2018.20.3.pfor1-1803>
- Campbell, B. A. (2017). The crisis inside crisis pregnancy centers: How to stop these facilities from depriving women of their reproductive freedom. *Boston College Journal of Law & Social Justice*, 37(1), 73-105. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.shib&db=a9h&AN=123102458&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s9006889>
- Dowling, J., & Pfeffer, J. (1975). Organizational Legitimacy: Social Values and Organizational Behavior. *The Pacific Sociological Review*, 18(1), 122-136. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1388226>
- Du, S., & Vieira, E. T. (2012). Striving for Legitimacy Through Corporate Social Responsibility: Insights from Oil Companies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110(4), 413-427. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41684044>
- Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational Images and Member Identification [Article]. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39(2), 239-263. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393235>
- Dwyer, D. (2011). *Abortion activists attempt to discredit Planned Parenthood with second video. Latest 'Live Action' bombshell lacks bombshell quality of earlier release*. ABC News. Retrieved August 25, 2022 from <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/activists-targeting-planned-parenthood-release-undercover-video/story?id=12831614>
- Ewall-Wice, S., & Quinn, M. (2022). *With Roe v. Wade overturned, which states would restrict or protect abortion rights?* CBS News. Retrieved September 5, 2022 from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/roe-v-wade-overturn-trigger-laws-supreme-court-abortion-states-rights/>
- Gaul, M. (2021). *Fact sheet: Pregnancy centers – serving women and saving lives*. Charlotte Lozier Institute. Retrieved August 25, 2022 from <https://lozierinstitute.org/fact-sheet-pregnancy-centers-serving-women-and-saving-lives-2020/>
- Gilbert, K. E. (2013). Commercial speech in crisis: Crisis pregnancy center regulations and definitions of commercial speech. *Michigan Law Review*, 111(4), 591-616. <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol111/iss4/3>

- Huang, Y., Zhang, X., Li, W., Song, F., Dai, H., Wang, J., Gao, Y., Liu, X., Chen, C., Yan, Y., Wang, Y., & Chen, K. (2014). A meta-analysis of the association between induced abortion and breast cancer risk among Chinese females. *Cancer Causes & Control*, 25(2), 227-236. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24717020>
- Hunter, P. V., Hadjistavropoulos, T., Smythe, W. E., Malloy, D. C., Kaasalainen, S., & Williams, J. (2013). The Personhood in Dementia Questionnaire (PDQ): Establishing an association between beliefs about personhood and health providers' approaches to person-centred care. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 27(3), 276-287. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2013.05.003>
- Kimball, S. (2022). *Several U.S. states immediately ban abortion after Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade*. CNBC. Retrieved August 25, 2022 from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/24/us-states-immediately-institute-abortion-bans-following-roe-ruling.html>
- Kitwood, T. (1997). *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First*. Open University Press.
- Leonard, A. (2009). The Viable System Model and Its Application to Complex Organizations. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 22(4), 223-233. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-009-9126-z>
- Lindorff, M., Jonson, E. P., & McGuire, L. (2012). Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility in Controversial Industry Sectors: The Social Value of Harm Minimisation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110(4), 457-467. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41684047>
- Long, B., & Driscoll, C. (2008). Codes of Ethics and the Pursuit of Organizational Legitimacy: Theoretical and Empirical Contributions [Article]. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 77(2), 173-189. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9307-y>
- MCCance-Katz, E. F. (2019). *The National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Women. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt31102/2019NSDUH-Women/Women%202019%20NSDUH.pdf>
- National Institute of Family and Life Advocates, DBA NIFLA, et al., Petitioners v. Xavier Becera, Attorney General of California, et al., United States Reports (Supreme Court of the United States 2018). https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/17pdf/16-1140_5368.pdf
- Nayak, A. (2016). Wisdom and the Tragic Question: Moral Learning and Emotional Perception in Leadership and Organisations [Article]. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 137(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2540-5>
- Newton, C., Hadjistavropoulos, T., Gallant, N. L., & MacNab, Y. C. (2021). Age differences in attitudes about older adults with dementia. *Ageing and Society*, 41(1), 121-136. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X19000965>
- O'Neill, J. (2022, June 25, 2022). Christian pregnancy center in Colorado vandalized and burned following Roe v. Wade reversal. *New York Post*. <https://nypost.com/2022/06/25/christian-pregnancy-center-in-colorado-vandalized-burned-after-roe-v-wade-reversal/>
- Parsons, T. (1956). Suggestions for a Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organizations--I [Article]. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1(1), 63-85. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2390840>
- Pfeffer, J. (1981). Management as symbolic action: The creation and maintenance of organizational paradigms. In L. L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior, Volume 3* (pp. 1-52). JAI Press.
- Reast, J., Maon, F., Lindgreen, A., & Vanhamme, J. (2013). Legitimacy-Seeking Organizational Strategies in Controversial Industries: A Case Study Analysis and a Bidimensional Model. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 118(1), 139-153. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42921218>
- Regan, T. (1997). The Rights of Humans and Other Animals [Article]. *Ethics & Behavior*, 7(2), 103. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327019eb0702_2
- Rice, R., Chakraborty, P., Keder, L., Turner, A. N., & Gallo, M. F. (2021). Who attends a crisis pregnancy center in Ohio? *Contraception*, 104(4), 383-387. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.contraception.2021.05.011>
- Richards, C. (2015). *Planned Parenthood: Cecile Richards' Official Video Response*, Planned Parenthood of America. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZUjU4e4fUI>
- Roden, G. J. (2010). Unborn children as constitutional persons. *Issues in law & medicine*, 25(3), 185-273. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.shib&db=mnh&AN=20443281&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s9006889>

- Skinner, J. S. (2022, July 1, 2022). I escorted women into an abortion clinic. Protesters were relentless. . *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/07/01/planned-parenthood-clinic-escort/>
- Studnicki, J., & Fisher, J. W. (2018). Planned Parenthood: Supply Induced Demand for Abortion in the US. *Open Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 8(4), 142-145. <https://doi.org/doi: 10.4236/ojpm.2018.84014>
- Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 571-610. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1995.9508080331>
- Tang, Y. (2017). A Summary of Studies on Organizational Legitimacy. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 5(3), 487-500. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2017.53042>
- Thomason, S. J., Weeks, M. R., & Galperin, B. (2022). An exploratory analysis of generational differences in the World Values Surveys and their application to business leaders. *Ethics & Behavior*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2022.2086872>
- Thomsen, C., & Morrison, G. T. (2020). Abortion as Gender Transgression: Reproductive Justice, Queer Theory, and Anti-Crisis Pregnancy Center Activism. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 45(3), 703-730. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=lfh&AN=142045751&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s9006889>
- Tushnet, E. (2003). Inside a Crisis Pregnancy Center. *Human Life Review*, 29(1), 109. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=aph&AN=9991923&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s9006889>
- Warren, R. (2018). *HBO'S John Oliver gets it wrong about pregnancy centers*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p27Ij0ETs98&t=2s>
- Watts, L. (2015). *Anti-abortion group released fifth undercover video of Planned Parenthood*. Denver 7 - The Denver Channel. Retrieved August 26, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZTtvKQ_Ulk
- Woodruff, J. (2015). *Undercover Planned Parenthood video stokes abortion debate*. PBS Newshour. Retrieved August 26, 2022 from <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/planned-parenthood#transcript>