Performing Maternity:

Limiting the Role of the Individual Woman in Abortion Discourses
The Importance of Health Care Reform

- 2009: The year of healthcare reform
  - Affordable, accessible solutions needed
- Women and health care reform
  - Disparities?
  - Implications of Discourse
Proper Gender Performance

- Media discourses and gender
  - Reification of normative gender performance
- Implications of Dominant Moralism
  - Shame and Stigma for non-normative groups
Why Health Insurance Matters to Women

“Barack’s plan is about ensuring that everyone in this country can care for their families, and follow their dreams, and have the chance to make of their lives what they wish...That’s what health care is all about, particularly for women who are raising kids, taking care of families”

– Michelle Obama
Child Before Mother

- Fetal Personhood
  - Fetus needs to be protected from mother’s will
- Mother’s rights become subjugated to those of the child
- Proper femininity = maternity
Protecting the Unborn

- Bray V. Alexandra Women’s Health Clinic (1993)
  - Do pro-life protestors intrude on rights of women?
- Court Ruled: No infringement
Pence and the Stupak Amendment

“Ending an innocent human life is morally wrong...In the Congress of the United States, we have a responsibility to respect the moral beliefs of the majority of Americans. I urge my colleagues to prevent federal dollars from funding abortions, take a stand for life, support the Stupak-Pitts Amendment...”

- Congressman Mike Pence
Room for Pro-Choice Discourse

- A pro-choice discourse is possible
  - Must frame abortion as a difficult choice

- Dominant morality is not denied
  - Moralism is briefly suspended
Implications for Women, Abortion, and Health Care Reform

- Field of discursive options are limited for pro-choice arguments
- Allows policy makers to promote the status quo or deny the relevancy of abortion to health care reform
President Obama on Health Care Reform and Abortion

“...I want to make sure that the provision that emerges meets that test...That we’re not in, some way, sneaking in funding for abortions, but on the other hand, that we are not restricting women’s insurance choices.”

- President Barack Obama