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Pro-choice vs. Pro-life in The United States of America

MID-TERM SEMINAR HOUSE 44.2



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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the various aspects of the controversial debate about the pro-choice and pro-life movement about abortion in the United States. The paper sheds light upon the history of abortion, the various opinions present and ways of interpreting and analyzing said opinions. Different methods will be used to investigate the argumentation in order to create a better understanding of the parties' opinions. For example, we have used conceptual analysis, principled thinking and dogmatism amongst others. These methods have helped conclude that certain divergencies in the debate stem from different perceptions of words and personal values developed throughout life.

Introduction

Even though The United States of America is a liberal welfare system abortion is a very contemporary and discussed topic as there are large divergencies in the individuals' opinion. In the debate about induced abortion in The United States of America the two terms "Pro-choice" and "Pro-life" are imperative to understand the discussion, let alone the people discussing. Pro-choicers believe that any human being has the right to rule over their own reproductive system, whether you want an abortion or not, and they support the idea of keeping abortion accessible, safe and legal. Pro-lifers however, believe that abortion is morally wrong, religiously and/or generally, and should not be accessible to anyone in America for that same reason. It would also be morally wrong for them not to take action, when hundreds of thousands of unborn babies never live to see daylight. There are of course also people that simply keep their opinion to themselves or those who hold neutral opinions regarding the topic of reproductive rights, specifically induced abortion, and there are for example pro-lifers who do not wish to introduce their own beliefs nationwide.

There are two types of abortion; spontaneous abortion, which refers to a miscarriage, stillbirth or some other form of losing the baby unwillingly, and induced abortion, which concerns therapeutic (due to health condition of woman or fetus) and elective abortions (due to other reasons). Induced abortions can be performed by multiple methods and are ordinarily carried out legally in clinics or hospitals by professionals either surgically or medically, but there are also cases where they are carried out illegally. These cases cannot be accounted for statistically, for obvious reasons. Governments can be either restrictive or permissive in their legislation about abortion and in America the procedures are legal nationwide. However, in some states the majority of voters are pro-life resulting in a more limiting decree and laws that are clearly sympathetic to their cause.

History

Abortion is a term as old as time, that has caused outrage and horror, but also relief through the decades as it, as mentioned, comes in different forms and by various methods. In fact, the first mentions of induced abortion in history go all the way back to the ancient Egyptians, Romans, Persians, among others which tells us that the procedures might not have been frowned upon or perceived as completely unnatural. Abortions were solely performed medically using herbal

abortifacients such as the now extinct silphium plant and/or the mentha pulegium which work differently in function but are roughly similar in effect.

In ancient Greece around 350 BC, the famous philosopher Aristotle addressed the topic of abortion a few times both in his *Politics* and *De Historia Animalium*. In his *Politics* he mentions that “..when couples have children in excess, and the state of feeling is averse to the exposure of offspring, let abortion be procured before sense and life have begun; what may or may not be lawfully done in these cases depends on the question of life and sensation.”¹

Generally, in ancient times people did not care much for protecting the unborn unless the child was that of a man who felt entitled to having the baby himself. However, Aristotle examined miscarried babies at the same weeks of gestation and determined that girls develop slower in the womb than boys, thereby leading him to the conclusion that a male fetus had finished developing around 40 days and the female fetus had only finished developing at 90 days². For that reason, many physicians in ancient Greece simply did not perform abortions beyond those amounts of days.

In America, around the late 1700s when the Constitution was first implemented, an abortion was a non-stigmatized procedure that was commonly performed, legal and overtly advertised, as long as they took place before the “quickening” of the fetus. It was only around the mid/late 1800s that some states began passing restrictive laws about abortion for reasons that varied from state to state. One reason for the restrictive legislations was for the purpose of balancing out the birth-rates of newly arriving immigrants who tended to produce more children than the Anglo-Saxon women because the Anglo-Saxon women simply acquired abortions more often.

During this time of abortion regulation, many women had to turn to so called “back alley”-abortions which were illegal abortions often performed in poor environments by unlicensed physicians and under unsanitary conditions. These sorts of procedures took place all the way up to 1973 when The Supreme Court abolished the last restrictive legislations about abortion in its ruling in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, where Jane Roe defended the right to abortion and Henry Wade, Texas Attorney General at the time, fought to keep abortion illegal except to save the womans life.

¹ Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, vol. 7, section 1335b, Bibliotech Press, 2012.

² Aristotle, and Thompson, D’Arcy Wentworth, -. *Historia Animalium*. The Clarendon Press, 1829. Web. Thompson (2019). *Historia animalium* /. [online] Biodiversitylibrary.org. Available at: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/55740668> [Accessed 25 Nov. 2019].

The ruling of the court said that an American (woman) has a right to decide over their own body, whether they want children or not. The decision to have an abortion should be made by the woman herself with a licensed physician involved and without the interference of the state. Since this case, The Supreme Court has slowly but surely started picking away at the original ruling as the justices at that time have naturally been replaced by new ones and the original ruling might not coincide with these new justices' opinions.

Present

The most recent numbers on induced abortion recorded in America are those from 2016 in the reports by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) where 48 out of 52 reporting areas (the 50 states plus District of Columbia and New York City) provided information to summarize abortion data. The data provided from this report shows that 623,471 legally induced abortions were performed in the year of 2016 in America and the most common ages for women to have abortions were from 20-24⁴.

The report from 2016 is by far not the only collection of data that exists on abortion in America. In fact, the CDC has administrated abortion surveillance every year since 1969 to document the amount of women having induced abortions, the rate and ratio of said abortions and the characteristics (age, ethnicity, marital status, etc.) of these women.

Holding the most extensive collection of data on abortion in America, the CDC and their reports are often referred to under various circumstances in the debate about induced abortion. Both the pro-choice supporters and the pro-life supporters call attention to the numbers from the CDC but obviously with different intentions of use.

The whole topic of induced abortion is so comprehensive in its history, procedural information and controversial debate that it is difficult and problematic to come to any sort of agreement in today's America. Our motivation for choosing this topic, regardless of the extensive amount of information, was to clarify why pro-choice advocates and pro-life advocates cannot come to terms. This conflict

³ Abortion Surveillance — United States. (2016). [online] Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6811a1> [Accessed 25 Nov. 2019]

⁴ View appendix Figure 1

is also very interesting to us as women, as it is difficult for us to fathom why others should have a say in our bodily autonomy. Therefore, we wish to acquire a better understanding of that view. The basic disagreement lies in the question of when life begins, as pro-lifers often are more spiritually inclined and find that life begins at conception while pro-choicers usually lean towards the scientific knowledge we have about fetal life and gestation. Science suggests that a fertilized egg only develops from being an embryo to a fetus at around the 8th-9th week of gestation and most pro-choicers do not consider an embryo a viable human being.

The many advocates from both parties vary in their way of letting their views be known to the world; some protest and demonstrate, those with legal backgrounds may battle in court or places like the House Judiciary Subcommittee, some take to social media in order to let their voice be heard and others simply keep their opinions to themselves. It is hard to measure which way is best for getting their points across as social media has become such an immense part of our daily lives but in the end the judicial system does have the last say.

In order to cover the parts of the project that we find interesting and relevant, we have come up with a problem formulation that goes as follows:

Why are there such large divergencies in the debate about induced abortion in America and in what way do the two sides of the debate use their arguments to support their beliefs? Does the argumentation in the online community, under the pro-life #StandForLife and pro-choice #BansOffMyBody, support/contribute to the debate?

Terminology

“Quickening”

- The moment during a pregnancy when a woman first feels fetal movement in the uterus.

Religion

- The faith in- and worship of a divine controlling power, a personal god(s) you might say.

Autonomy

- The fundamental right to self-government and ruling over yourself.

Fallacy

- Fallacies are the use of vague and faulty reasoning and argumentation

Dogmatism

- Is in a way religious or spiritual principled thinking. Even though rational counterarguments are made, and science refutes one’s dogmatic principles, one will simply not abandon said principles.

Principled thinking

- Principled thinking is when one is fixed on a certain set of principles and will not be persuaded otherwise or stray from said principles. (The opposite of casuistic argumentation)

Casuistic

- The definition of casuistic argumentation is taking into account the specifics of only one certain case or situation and evaluating on that. (The opposite of principled thinking)

Internal and external argumentation

- Internal argumentation is pointing out the lack of argumentation in the opponent’s arguments whilst external argumentation coming up with external arguments as to why the opponent’s arguments are wrong

Methodology

In the process of researching the above-mentioned problem formulation, we have taken different measures into account to be completely certain that we find the best and most suitable conclusion for both movements and ourselves.

In order to answer our question, we have based our analysis on different cases, which consist of; four testimonies, made in *the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the constitution, civil rights, and civil liberties*, two videos found under the pro-choice hashtag #BansOffMyBody and two texts found under the pro-life hashtag #StandForLife. The cases are equally distributed to shed light on opinions from both sides.

For the study of pro-life vs. pro-choice in induced abortion, we have examined the arguments and how it differentiates between the two groups. As we have chosen to focus on two dimensions; *Text and Sign* and *Science and Philosophy* we have in the analysis made use of, for example **Toulmin's method** and **the moral theories**. In Toulmin's method we have examined their argumentation by looking at the claims, grounds, warrants and backings to see if their arguments are valid.

Contradicting yourself in an argument can be quite problematic if you want to state something rational. Therefore, we have chosen to use **the Principle of Non-Contradiction**, also called PNC. PNC is about the aspiration to not contradict oneself when presenting a claim, to make an argument as rational as possible, because a valid argument can never include a contradiction. By using this method, we can separate the invalid arguments from the valid ones.

Another analysis method we briefly touched upon is the **conceptual analysis**. We have used a conceptual analysis to gain a better understanding of the philosophical aspects lying within the debate. When utilizing a conceptual analysis, one examines how certain terms are perceived individually according to their personal perspective. It is used to break down different issues into basic parts and concepts to analyze, which underlying problems there could be in given statements.

⁵ [\[1\]](https://judiciary.house.gov/legislation/hearings/threats-reproductive-rights-america) Committee on the Judiciary - Democrats. (2019). *Threats to Reproductive Rights in America*. [online] Available at: <https://judiciary.house.gov/legislation/hearings/threats-reproductive-rights-america> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2019]

We have chosen to focus on three of the moral theories; *utilitarianism*, *deontology* and *virtue ethics*. Utilitarian's believe that when maximizing the good – or minimizing the bad – you will be doing the right thing.

Deontologists believe that in every one of your actions you should at all times respect other human beings as great sources of value and never simply regard them as instruments for your own purpose. In addition to this, you should only act for reasons that are societally acceptable.

The last moral theory is virtue ethics. Virtue ethics revolves around an intuition developed through a life where the individual has focused on becoming a virtuous being. This intuition allows the virtuous person to see what is morally right and wrong. It is about developing your character and sensing what is right and wrong and at the same time not having trouble performing virtuous acts. A virtuous being has an immediate motivation to do the right thing as opposed to the non-virtuous who cannot see what is right or does not have the strength to do the right thing.

We have chosen these different methods and worked with the theory to get a good grasp of how the two opposing sides, pro-choice and pro-life, argue their case.

Analysis

On the 4th of June 2019 the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the constitution, civil rights, and civil liberties convened for a hearing on threats to reproductive rights in America⁶ in light of the recent extreme abortion bans being passed in various states. These bans were clear oppositions to the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* which states that women have a constitutional right to access safe and legal abortion.

Both pro-life and pro-choice arguments were presented during the House Judiciary Committee Meeting and this analysis will focus on two of each.

Busy Philipps, an American talk show host and the founder of the pro-choice hashtag #youknowme, commences her argumentative speech⁷ by establishing a sense of familiarity. She does this by utilizing repetition; “I am a mother...I am a wife and a daughter...”. The aim is to create an understanding of the fact that she, despite being a celebrity, is just as normal as any other woman who has gone through or considering an abortion.

She paints a picture of a 15-year-old today going through the procedure, that she went through years prior, with the added restrictions that the abortion bans in mention would impose on the states, thus making the procedure nearly impossible to obtain.

Since she is establishing her speech on a personal experience, it makes the message significantly emotionally based with little to no factual backings.

On the 2nd last paragraph on the first page, Busy states that:

- “[...] my body belongs to me, not the state. Women and their doctors are in the best position to make informed decisions about what is best for them. No one else.”⁸

⁶ Committee on the Judiciary - Democrats. (2019). *Threats to Reproductive Rights in America*. [online] Available at: <https://judiciary.house.gov/legislation/hearings/threats-reproductive-rights-america> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

⁷ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-PhilippsB-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

⁸ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-PhilippsB-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P 1, 2nd last paragraph, l. 25-27

She is claiming that only you and a licensed physician knows what's best for your own body, because they are informed about your specific situation. Her ground for this claim is that not every woman's situation is the same and the state should not interfere with any human being's autonomy. It is simply a right that every human shall be able to make choices for themselves based on what is best for them. Whilst being a casuistic argument, where she aims to generate an understanding of how important it is to understand each individual case to be able to produce the best possible outcome for each woman, it is also a fallacious argument. It is not certain that only the woman and her physician know what's best in the given situation.

On the second page she refers to abortion as something that should be equal to any other form of treatment that belongs under *health care* because abortion and health care goes hand in hand⁹.

Philipps elaborates on that statement further into the speech;

- *“Because the WHY doesn't matter, it should not matter. I am a human being that deserves autonomy in this country that calls itself free. And choices that a human being makes about their own bodies should not be legislated by strangers who can't possibly know or understand each individual's circumstances or beliefs.”¹⁰*

The claim here being that the validness of one's reason for having an abortion never succeeds the right to have one if you wish because every human being deserves autonomy over one's own body. 'The strangers' she is referring to in this quote are the legislators trying to impose these abortion restrictions in certain states. Her warrant for everyone being deserving of autonomy stems from The United States of America building a foundation on the fact that it is supposedly a free country.

Busy Philipps is an outspoken celebrity with a big platform with what seems to be a very liberal world view. She aims to establish an understanding of why having a choice is important. Although, seen from a perspective of a pro-lifer, one could wonder why only the women and not the fetus/embryo has a voice in this matter, if every being is deserving of autonomy. Is it perhaps her definition of what life is that comes to play?

⁹ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-PhilippsB-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] PP. 2, 1. 21-22

¹⁰ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-PhilippsB-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 2, 1. 24-28

Embryos or fetuses are barely mentioned in Philipps' testimony, but the word 'human being' is mentioned several times in regards to the role of the woman in the debate, which points to a certain perception of an embryo or a fetus not being defined as a life to her, although she doesn't make it clear. If her perception of an embryo/fetus is something that is not viable, then her being in favor of the woman's rights as opposed to the rights of the fetus is not a contradiction.

The second pro-choice speech¹¹ is by Melissa Murray, a professor of law from New York University School of Law. She teaches in constitutional law, family law and reproductive rights and justice and former served as a Faculty Director of the Berkeley Center on Reproductive Rights and Justice.

Murray rather quickly establishes an authoritative and trustworthy feeling in her speech when she refers to the constitutional rights, making her message more factual bound than for example Busy Philipps'. In the beginning of her speech, she argues that;

- *"[...] the Fourteenth amendment's guarantee of liberty protects a woman's right to determine whether to bear or beget a child [...] the Supreme Court has consistently affirmed a woman's right to abortion as an essential aspect of the Constitution's guarantees of liberty and equality."*¹²,

hereby claiming that women do have the right to an abortion and she is backing this up with the ground for her claim being that the fourteenth amendment says so. It is simply the law that women have that right, and why should the law be defied when a woman's right to an abortion is an essential aspect of the Constitution's guarantees of liberty and equality? She is backing up her claims in a credible way, referring to the Constitution, making her argument rational.

Murray's role in this meeting, as a professor of law, is the factual and credible one. She mainly references to The Constitution and uses this as her predominant support for her claims throughout

¹¹ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

¹² Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. P. 1, l. 9-12

the testimony.

As a continuation of her focus on the right to liberty and equality, she argues that the guarantee of that, which The Fourteenth Amendment include, goes hand in hand with *'the recognition of the dignity afforded every member of society as an autonomous individual'*. Being an autonomous individual includes having the possibility to make personal decisions¹³.

This gains an understanding of her view on what liberty and equality mean. Liberty and equality mean having dignity. Murray clarifies in an argument on the second page what a woman's dignity entails;

- *"The Supreme Court has specifically recognized that a woman has the right to make her own decision about whether to have an abortion. [...] The exercise of this right without undue hindrance from the State is essential to a woman's dignity as an individual and her status as an equal citizen"*¹⁴.

Her claim in this argument is that the essential part of a woman's dignity is to be able to exercise her right to have an abortion. The Supreme Court has recognized the fact that everyone, including women, has the right to make their own decisions, which means that a potential abortion is also up to the individual. She justifies this by insinuating that one should undoubtedly follow the law and that this is not up to debate. This also presents itself as a fairly casuistic argument.

Murray argues that the abortion restrictions in question, that are being and has been imposed in some states especially affects already vulnerable individuals and communities; women of color, rural women, immigrant women, individuals in the LGBTQ community, parents who already have children, and young people¹⁵. Her ground for them being hit harder by the laws is among other things due to the economic issues they are already facing, meaning they cannot afford an abortion and maybe not even afford to take the time off to have an abortion. In addition to this she backs up

¹³ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. P. 2, l. 1-4

¹⁴ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. P. 2, l. 5-12

¹⁵ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. P. 6, l. 22-32

her claim by stating that an unwanted pregnancy, which a woman would be necessitated to go through if she cannot obtain an abortion, could threaten that person's well-being and job security.

On page 7 she mentions some of the many profound consequences caused by a lack of abortion rights, and how critical they can be;

- “[...] *the consequences of being denied an abortion can be dire. Those who are denied access to abortion care have been found to suffer adverse physical and mental health consequences. For example, women denied abortion care are more likely to experience serious medical complications during the end of pregnancy. [...] more likely to remain in relationships where interpersonal violence is present and are more likely to suffer anxiety. [...] studies show that a woman who wants to get an abortion but is denied is more likely to fall into poverty than one who is able to obtain an abortion.*”¹⁶.

There have been cases where women who have been unable to obtain an abortion due to being denied access have been found to suffer physical and mental health consequences therefore elucidating the impression that being denied an abortion can result in women ending up in even worse situations, mentally and physically, by going through unwanted pregnancies. She backs up her claims with various valid studies and sources on the matter; a study by Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH) - a study approved by the Committee for Human Research at UCSF¹⁷, National Women's Law Center¹⁸, and Latina Institute¹⁹.

¹⁶ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. P. 7, l. 34-40

¹⁷ Ansirh.org. (2019). *Turnaway Study | ANSIRH*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ansirh.org/research/turnaway-study> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

¹⁸ Anon, (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/nwlc_economicroadmap2015.pdf - [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

¹⁹ Anon, (2019). [online] Available at: https://latinainstitute.org/sites/default/files/NLIRH_Hyde%20Amendment18_Eng_R3.pdf - [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

As before mentioned, the barriers that abortion restrictions create can result in a range of negative consequences, and with these consequences in mind, Murray additionally outlines how this could impact already vulnerable population groups;

- *[...] the impact of these barriers results in a range of negative health outcomes. [...] Black women in the United States die from pregnancy-related complications at a rate more than 3 times greater than that for white women, and American Indian and Alaskan Native women die at a rate of 2.5 times greater than that for white women.”*²⁰.

Black women, American Indian women and Alaskan Native women die at a rate much greater than that of white women due to pregnancy related complications. This suggests that imposing these restrictions may bring lives in danger. Once again, her claim is backed up by a study done by Patti Neighmond, an award-winning journalist, called “*Why Racial Gaps in Maternal Mortality Persist*”²¹.

As she expressed all throughout her testimony, she believes that the right to choose what is right for you in situations, such as unwanted pregnancies, is a fundamental right and an ingrained part of the Constitution. You have the right over your own body and it is a right that should be treasured and fought for²².

Melissa Murray has a great deal of experience in terms of reproductive rights as a professor of law, a former Faculty Director of the Berkeley Center on Reproductive Rights and Justice and a teacher constitutional law, family law and reproductive rights and justice, which, contrary to Busy Philipps’ testimony that relies more on an emotional foundation, awakens an authoritative feeling and establishes a sense of logos. The sense that she is trustworthy. She supports each claim she proclaims with credible sources generating a rational argumentative testimony.

²⁰ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 7, l. 44-48

²¹ Npr.org. (2019). *NPR Choice page*. [online] Available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/05/10/722143121/why-racial-gaps-in-maternal-mortality-persist?t=1575316606302> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

²² Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-MurrayM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 16 Dec. 2019] P. 8, 3rd and 2nd last line

#BansOffMyBody arguments:

The abortion debate in the USA is not only something restricted to the house of officials. In a progressively digitalized world ‘regular people’ are given the platform to speak up on the matter and take part in the debate through social media.

It gives a more nuanced view on the debate to include fewer formal arguments. In addition to this, emotions are depicted clearer with more emotionally charged wording which makes for a bit different but nonetheless interesting analysis.

The hashtag campaign #BansOffMyBody was started by Planned Parenthood on the 17th of June 2019 and is ‘*a grassroots campaign to fight back against attacks on reproductive health care and boldly declare that our bodies, our lives, and our futures are our own*’²³.

We are basing our analysis on two videos from the campaign, one which is 31 seconds simply called “#BansOffMyBody” and the second one which is 2:46 minutes and is called “Sharing your abortion stories”²⁴.

#BansOffMyBody video

- *“This is my body, my life, my voice, my truth, my future, my decisions. When we own our bodies, we are powerful, we are free, when we have control, we thrive. We won’t go back, we won’t tolerate this assault on our health and our rights, and that means access to safe and legal abortion. Now is the time to unite. Get your bans off my body.”*

²³ Plannedparenthood.org. (2019). *Planned Parenthood Launches #BansOffMyBody Campaign in Response to Abortion Bans Sweeping the Country*. [online] Available at: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/planned-parenthood-launches-bansoffmybody-campaign-in-response-to-abortion-bans-sweeping-the-country> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

²⁴ “#BansOffMyBody”: Youtube.com. (2019). *YouTube*. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JOB9hN2PQg [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. “Sharing Your Abortion Stories”: Youtube.com. (2019). *YouTube*. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1pktQg_Fn8 [Accessed 16 Dec. 2019].

It's the woman's own choice what to do with her body. If she wants to keep a baby or terminate the pregnancy. Having the choice makes women powerful, free, in control and thrive, thus imposing restrictions will lead to retrogression in women's rights and is an attack on their health and constitutional rights.

"Sharing your abortion stories" video

- *"I was 19 years old when I found out I was pregnant by my boyfriend who was also my abuser, so I got an abortion. And that's right because I shouldn't have to let other people be in charge of what I'm wanting. It's my body, it's my decision"*

Autonomy is our right and other people should not be in charge of what you want to do with your body. It is her body which means it is her choice.

- *"Nobody's reason is better than anybody else's and everybody should be allowed to have it. It's ridiculous that they're banning it."*

Just as Philipps' argues in her testimony, the reason for having an abortion is not of importance. The possibility to have one is. Every reason should be acceptable, and everybody should have the choice. This argument simply states that banning it is 'ridiculous'.

- *"I had the choice, I had the right, and I had this in 2016 in the state of Alabama and now only 3 years later they're trying to take that away from other women that were me that are me, that have been in that situation and it's heartbreaking."*

This woman argues that everyone should have the choice and right, she argues this because having the choice saved her and she believes that trying to take away the option for women now, after it has been legalized, is heartbreaking.

- *“I was a 12-year-old girl who was pregnant with a rapist’s child. If I hadn’t been able to get that abortion, I would be walking around with a 7-year-old child and no girl can handle that.”*

This woman’s story is one of the more emotionally based anecdotes because it entails a situation that is every woman’s worst nightmare and is something that presumably everyone can agree on is tragic; being impregnated by a rapist. This could establish a sense of ethos depending on who the receiver is, which is a broad audience due to it being published online.

If free abortion was not an option in her case, she would be forced to give birth to her rapist’s child. She would be a child taking care of a child which no girl would have been able to handle. Being raped and falling pregnant due to this assault was never her choice but being able to terminate the pregnancy was and that is what saved her. She builds her argumentation on the shared opinion that nobody wants to go through a pregnancy that was caused by rape.

- *“I’m actually coming up on my twentieth anniversary of my abortion and for the first time in twenty years I plan to celebrate that day because it gave me the chance to continue to live a full life and I have three beautiful children that I love and adore. And I had them because I wanted them. We cannot go back because people will die without that access.”*

This story shows a more positive side of the debate and is trying to steer away from the stigma and feeling of shame which surrounds the abortion debate. She states that without the access to legal abortion people will die, perhaps meaning that being forced to carry out a full-term pregnancy may lead to suicide or fatal complications during birth. She is building her assumption on her own lived experience and adds that her abortion gave her the possibility to live a full life and wait to have kids until she wanted them, giving her the opportunity to live a happy life.

This campaign adds a clear value to the term ‘life’. Contrary to the pro-life texts in this analysis, the only being in this context with the value of life added to it, is the woman. Her rights, choice and voice are in focus, whereas the fertilized egg is never spoken about as anything else than an ‘abortion’.

These women's stories are testaments to the positive consequences of having a choice and not a way of forcing individuals to obtain abortions against their will. It is about analyzing and examining what brings most liberal joy and equality to such a gender-based issue. From a pro-choice perspective, the answer is clear, and that is *autonomy*.

Throughout the argumentation in both formal and informal settings, external argumentation is used. Though the essence of each pro-choice stance is quite similar, they manage to provide rational arguments without pointing out the lack of reason behind the opponent argumentation.

Pro-life

Christina Bennett is an author at Family Institute of Connecticut, a non-profit educational organization, according to their website²⁵, that takes on issues such as assisted suicide, religious liberty, marriage and abortion. Furthermore, she is a director of Communications and a pro-lifer. Bennett's testimony includes a high usage of pathos since she, by sharing her own story where her mother was nearly pressured into having an abortion when pregnant with her, is trying to establish that abortion is murder because a fetus is a viable creature, and that everyone has a right to life.

The first strong argument one runs into when reading her testimony is in a reflection she has whilst visiting the National Museum of African-American History;

- *"I was reminded of the ways Black Americans were denied the right to equal protection and due process, treated as property and dehumanized because of the color of our skin. The museum memorialized the many ways Black Americans have been unjustly targeted and killed for centuries. While they showcased examples of the progress Black Americans have made, an ache remains in my heart because of the denial of equal protection and due process to another class of people – the baby in the womb."*²⁶.

²⁵ Family Institute of Connecticut. (2019). *About FIC - Family Institute of Connecticut*. [online] Available at: <http://www.ctfamily.org/parent/fic/> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

²⁶ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-BennettC-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 2, l. 22 – p. 3 l. 3-5

Bennett compares the centuries-long unjust racial war towards African Americans to abortions, claiming that fetuses are now being treated just the same; with no respect nor equal rights as other human beings. Her ground for this claim is that when terminating a pregnancy, you do not consider the fetuses right to live. This is based on her assumption that a fetus' life is equal to a human and therefore they should have the same rights. From a pro-choice standpoint there is arguably a contradiction present in this argument; she stresses that the baby in the womb is being denied equal protection when the pregnancy is terminated, but if the rights of the fetus overrules the rights of the female carrying the child, this results in the woman being denied equal protection.

Further down on the 3rd page, Bennett criticizes Roe. V. Wade for being responsible for the deaths of unborn babies, more specifically of innocent black babies;

- *“The Roe v Wade decision rendered 60,000,000 lives unworthy of legal protection and has led to the deaths of over 20 million Black babies since 1973.”*²⁷

Her reason for this is that since the Roe v. Wade decision ratified that obtaining an abortion should be legal, it was made possible to kill unborn children. She backs up her claim with a report conducted by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on abortion consisting of data from various American states. This would normally help support a claim substantially, since the source itself is highly credible. However, the report does not explicitly mention the killing of babies, which leads one to the conclusion that Bennett only selected information that would benefit her stance. This leaves her interpretation of the data profoundly biased. It causes her argument to be invalid and irrational.

With Bennett's focus mainly lying on racial issues raised by the abortion debate, she turns her attention towards an alleged certain targeting executed by abortion facilities.

- *“Many of us are tired of the targeting. 78% of Planned Parenthood's surgical facilities are located in Black and Latino neighborhoods. Black women such as Cree Erwin, Lakisha Wilson, and Tonya Reaves have lost their lives at the hands of an abortion industry that*

²⁷ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-BennettC-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] p. 3, l. 7-9

offers substandard medical care as increasingly women are leaving abortion centers by ambulance. [...] Taking the lives of our children through abortion doesn't empower or strengthen our communities. Abortion has left behind countless wounded women and men as it silenced millions of children who otherwise would have had a voice and lived out the purpose for their life.”²⁸

A substantial percentage of Planned Parenthood's surgical facilities are supposedly located in mainly Black and Latino neighborhoods, which, according to Bennett, shows that abortion centers are targeting the weaker and more economically vulnerable communities. Her claim about the facilities being located in mainly Black and Latino neighborhoods is backed up by a national map over locations of Planned Parenthood's facilities²⁹, but it fails to demonstrate whether the locations are deliberately chosen for the cause of targeting a particular population group or not, hereby making parts of this argument fallacious.

Women are putting their lives in danger by being in the hands of these abortion centers due to low medical standards, whilst also taking fetuses lives before they have the possibility to defend themselves. This practice wounds more people and communities than they help. Her allegation and generalization of substandard medical care is backed up by the Susan B. Anthony's list³⁰ which is a nationwide network that stands to advance pro-life laws through direct lobbying and grassroots campaigns³¹.

Christina Bennett clearly states that a fetus in the womb deserves the same rights as a living human being, therefore stating that a fetus is a viable creature. This means that her perception of the term

²⁸ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-BennettC-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] p. 4, l. 3-10

²⁹ Protectingblacklife.org. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.protectingblacklife.org/pp_targets/index.html [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]

²³ Susan B. Anthony List. (2019). *Abortion Industry Negligence Nationwide: Highlighting the Most Egregious Offenses - Susan B. Anthony List*. [online] Available at: <https://www.sba-list.org/negligence> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

³¹ Susan B. Anthony List. (2019). *About Susan B. Anthony List*. [online] Available at: <https://www.sba-list.org/about-susan-b-anthony-list> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019].

life is somewhat different than that of Busy Philipps and Melissa Murray. With this belief of hers in mind, it goes without saying that her perception of the term abortion is also divergent. She comments on abortion as killing, for example by comparing it to racially motivated killings and by referring to abortions as ‘killings of over 20 million black babies’.

The second testimony on pro-life is by Melissa Ohden, a founder and director of The Abortion Survivors Network. She is, like in the previous pro-life speech, a self-labeled “survivor “of an abortion. Her mother was forced to undergo what is described as a very extreme abortion, in what seems to be far along in her pregnancy, because the abortion failed, and she gives birth to a baby (Ohden) 5 days later. Her story becomes relatable for others because it is about a personal experience and puts the fetus in a position where it becomes a living being with a voice and rights, due to her presence, just like every listener of this speech.

Melissa Ohden starts her speech by declaring that stories about abortions are the only stories people talk about, like it is the only right thing to, because women has the ultimate right to abortion.

- *“I’m here today to give a face and a voice to women whose rights are not just being threatened but have been under attack for the past forty-six years in our country. And, are clearly being even more heavily threatened as abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy, with no restriction, are being introduced and celebrated in states like New York, Illinois and now, Nevada.”³²*

Ohden is claiming that women’s rights are being and have been threatened and under attack for the past forty-six years in America, possibly because dangerous abortions are being forced upon them or the women in mention are the aborted fetuses. She does not clarify this. Her reason as to why women’s rights are being threatened is that abortions with no restrictions are being introduced and celebrated in many states nationwide.

In this section of argumentation Ohden argues that women's rights are being threatened by given

³² Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-OhdenM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 1, l. 6-10

access to abortion. Here a possible contradiction can be drawn due the non-validation of principle of the general rights women have.

Further down on the first page, Ohden states that *“every story is important. Every experience deserves to be heard.”* This gives the audience an understanding of her situation of being a pro-lifer, and now it her turn to talk about her opinions. These are the arguments Ohden illustrates throughout her speech;³³

- *“Is there space for stories like mine, women who are alive today after surviving failed abortion procedures; for stories like my biological mother’s, women who have been coerced or forced into an abortion? Do we ever create space for the stories of women who regret their abortions?”*³⁴

Stories like hers and her mothers are not as popular as the ones glorifying abortion. Women who regret their abortion, children that was about to be aborted who are alive today, women who are coerced or forced into having an abortion do exist. The pro-lifers find that they are being overruled by the pro-choicers and therefore feel the need to have the opportunity to tell their stories; women who regret their abortions.

Ohden uses next argument as a reference to herself. She was close to never existing due to abortion, and now she can put life and the right to live into a perspective. Here she states;

- *“The most important stories, though, are likely the ones that you’ll never hear. The stories of the little girls who will never live outside of the womb. [...] without the right to life, there are no other rights.”*³⁵

³³ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-OhdenM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P.1, l.13

³⁴ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-OhdenM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 1, l. 19-21

³⁵ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-OhdenM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 1, l. 22-24

When we get to decide on behalf of a fetus with no voice or say, we state that we do not really have the right to life and without the right to life, there are no other rights. All stories are important and needs to be told, especially the ones we never hear about.

When Ohden claims that the most important stories likely are the ones we are never going to hear she uses a fallacious argument. No one can prove that that is the case since it is not backed up by any studies or anything like it, which causes this argument to be irrational. Her only argumentation for this matter is her own experiences being the “most important”.

As an elaboration of the above-mentioned argumentation, Ohden is also in this matter using a contradiction since she claiming at the beginning of the speech that “every story is important”, and then shortly later in the testimony she claims that the most important stories are the ones we never hear. This in an example of the principle of noncontradiction due the irrational effects of contradiction.

- *“It’s easy to talk about women’s reproductive rights until you recognize that without first the right to life, there are no other rights. How do you reconcile my rights as a woman who survived a failed abortion with what’s being discussed here today?”*³⁶

Just as in her previous argument, she stresses that without the right to life there are no other rights and her rights as a woman does not reconcile with the debate, since she would have been an abortion. Once again, she uses a fallacious argument; “without the right to life there are no other rights”. Because who’s to say that the right to life is essential to every other right as well? She mentions her rights as a woman who has survived an abortion without considering the rights that a pregnant woman seeking an abortion has, this is a contradiction which equals non-valid argumentation.

Ohden further elaborates her before mentioned arguments about how she was a “survivor”, and use her own network as her backing, to illustrate the problem, and also that she is not the only one with the situation and experiences;

- *“I’m alive today because someone else’s “reproductive right” failed to end my life, as are the 287 abortion survivors I’ve connected with through my work with The Abortion*

³⁶ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-OhdenM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 2, l. 24-26

Survivors Network, 184 of whom are female. [...] There's something wrong when one person's right results in another person's death. There's something deeply disturbing about the reality in our world that I have a right to an abortion but I never had the simple right to live.”³⁷

Ohden is the founder of “The Abortion Survivors Network”. This is the platform where hundreds of self-labeled “abortion survivors” connect. Her network is here mentioned, to stress the argumentation. She argues that there is something wrong with people who have the rights to an abortion and there is something wrong when one person's rights result in another person's death and then elaborate the unfairness of the right to an abortion, but not right to live.

There is general focus on contradictions of the arguments in this speech when focusing on the fetus' rights vs. what about the female's rights.

Ohden gives a very strong speech about her beliefs of pro-life and therefore some examples of principled thinking “*There's something wrong when one person's right results in another person's death*”, “*There's something deeply disturbing about the reality in our world that I have a right to an abortion but I never had the simple right to live*”. These arguments are irrational, based on the fact that, who decides that it is wrong?

To draw attention to her claims further down in the text she backs up her argumentation by referring to the 14th Amendment, and end her speech by;

- “*The 14th Amendment says that "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."* But with states passing laws that state a “*fertilized egg, embryo or fetus does not have independent rights,*” aren't states participating in the deprivation of life? Are states providing equal protection to all children? I don't think so.”³⁸

³⁷ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-OhdenM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 2, l. 29-34

³⁸ Docs.house.gov. (2019). [online] Available at: <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU10/20190604/109601/HHRG-116-JU10-Wstate-OhdenM-20190604.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] P. 3, l. 1-5

Ohden argues as her claim that by allowing abortions to happen states participates in the deprivation of life. States are passing laws that define when human life is considered to have rights.

Christina Bennett and Melissa Ohden share the same background. They are both “survivors” of abortion. This is assuming why they both are strong supporters of the pro-life movement, due to the fact that they both are grateful to be alive this day. They both learned about later in life how they almost were aborted away from life.

#StandforLIFE arguments

The hashtag #StandforLife is a famous social media pro-life movement started by Jess Barfield in 2015 after she posted a picture of herself and her baby with the word “LIFE” over the posted picture. After this, people all around the world started posting “LIFE” pictures along with sharing their own stories of how and why they appreciate and value life using the #StandForLife.

The main purpose of this movement is to influence people through storytelling about the most important thing in the world, which is life, no matter risks or consequences you receive during pregnancy. The pro-lifers are sharing how grateful they are for keeping their child in difficult circumstances such as sexual abuse, down syndrome and infant diagnosis. These topics are exactly why some people chose to perform an abortion. The organization has over thirty-thousand followers on Instagram and over forty-thousand Facebook followers.³⁹

The #StandForLife organization also produced a website, where you can learn all about the movement, read some of the stories and how to be part of it. We chose two different stories, with two different topics, child loss and sexual assault.

Amanda's Story:

The first story is about Amanda’s experience. Amanda gave birth to her baby Moriah even though they knew the baby would not survive. When Amanda was 19 weeks pregnant, they discovered the

³⁹ Stand for Life. (2019). *About Us — Stand for Life*. Available at: <https://www.standforlife.org/about-us-1> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]

infant had a lethal genetic disorder called “Thanatophoric Dyslasia”, meaning that only the organs would grow and the rest of the baby’s body would not follow. Despite the sad news Amanda chose to listen to God instead of the doctors, meaning as long as she could hear that there was a heartbeat, she would consider the fetus a life and all the pain would be worth it. She would therefore not consider abortion, even though it was suggested by specialists.

Throughout the story it is clear to see that Amanda’s argumentation is very pointed toward religion. All her assumptions and her reasons are based on God, which makes it obvious what life means to her;

- *"Our whole journey with Moriah was covered in prayers and blessing. We hoped and prayed for a healing miracle from our God, but knew even if it didn't come in the way we wanted, Moriah was already a miracle. I remember crying one night to my husband, just days before she was born, wondering how we could possibly fit a life-time worth of love into a couple of minutes."*⁴⁰

In this section of the story Amanda's claim that even though God could not help them, they still see the fetus as a miracle. For Amanda, life is a miracle from God, that being the case for no matter how long the life might last. In his argumentation she uses the unconditional love a mother has to a child as a reference to life. Life equals love are the main themes in Amanda’s story.

- *"Our warrior princess, our shooting star. The ripple effect of her little life will never truly be known until seen through eternities eyes. In those moments, life boiled down to one thing: love. I stand for life and would walk this road again in a heartbeat."*⁴¹

Lauran's Story:

⁴⁰Stand for Life. (2019). *AMANDA'S STORY — Stand for Life*. [online] Available at: <https://www.standforlife.org/child-loss-stories/amandas-story> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. l. 15-18

⁴¹ Stand for Life. (2019). *AMANDA'S STORY — Stand for Life*. [online] Available at: <https://www.standforlife.org/child-loss-stories/amandas-story> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. l. 23.-25

Lauran's story is about being pregnant through rape when she was just a teenager in High School. She just started her life, but decided to keep the baby, despite the circumstances. She claims that life is the most important thing in the world, no matter the state of it. Throughout her story Lauran uses God as a reference, thus taking a dogmatic point of view;

- *“Abortion was never an option for me, but it was then that I truly realized why. Life is a precious, sacred gift and it is not ours to choose whether life should end because of inconvenience or because of the circumstance of conception. I learned something so valuable in those eight months. I was stronger than I ever knew possible.”⁴²*

Furthermore, she uses references to religion to seek comfort and understanding in her horrible situation.

- *“In spite of the circumstances of her conception, I began to realize that my daughter was not a creation of violence; she was a gift from God, the creator of LIFE. That realization changed my perspective completely.”⁴³*

She argues that after understanding the perspective of God, she knew that her daughter was a present from God and not a production of violence. Amanda and Lauran's point of view about life are very comparable and they both use God as an understanding of their view on life. Even though their stories are different, they still share the same grounds of argumentation, claiming that there is a bigger meaning of life no matter how terrible the circumstances might be. They state that God assigns this greater meaning by being the creator of life, thus arguing that you should not interfere with this by terminating a pregnancy.

With these two stories, theories can be made and discussed, due to the extreme arguments about religion and God as being the creator of life which is a dogmatic ground for both of the argumentations. The same for both of them is the bond to God, which gives an effect of a very narrow argumentation.

⁴² Stand for Life. (2019). *LAURAN'S STORY — Stand for Life*. [online] Available at: <https://www.standforlife.org/sexual-assault-stories/laurans-story> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019]. I. 9-12

⁴³ Stand for Life. (2019). *LAURAN'S STORY — Stand for Life*. [online] Available at: <https://www.standforlife.org/sexual-assault-stories/laurans-story> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2019] I. 13-15

Discussion

According to Merriam-Webster.com the definition of the term life goes as follows: "the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body, a principle or force that is considered to underlie the distinctive quality of animate beings"⁴⁴ and "an organismic state characterized by capacity for metabolism, growth, reaction to stimuli, and reproduction"⁴⁵. This can all be said to be up to interpretation and is a question of what kind of spectacles you look at the world through.

It is universal moral code that killing is considered to be an evil act amongst humans, besides a few exceptions such as war and capital punishment. But is it possible to classify something as a killing or murder if no life has existed in the first place? All this comes down to what our own perception of life is. Is it as soon as an embryonic heartbeat can be detected? Is it when the fetus develops more human-like traits that we consider it to be a life? Or is it when it is no longer dependent on the mother's womb or machines for survival and is able to live and breathe on its own? Depending on your opinion of when a life is a life, your perspective on if and when abortion is fair will differ. It is important to note that not every supporter of the pro-life movement has the same definition of what a life is, and same goes for the pro-choice movement. For example, one pro-choicer could believe that an abortion in the third trimester could be justified whereas person part of that same movement might draw the line earlier on in the pregnancy.

When looking at the debate through the eyes of a pro-lifer, keeping in mind that their opinion on when life begins differentiates considerably from that of a pro-choicer, it is possible to gain an understanding of why they perceive abortion as murder and an injustice to a defenseless being. However, they fail to consider every aspect in a debate with many facets. In the vast majority of their arguments they fail to consider the woman's rights to bodily autonomy caused by their principled thinking and blind focus on the fetus or embryo. Their subjectivity results in their argumentation being invalid, as an argument with no backing other than a personal opinion, such as one's own principles, can never be valid in a debate.

⁴⁴ Merriam-webster.com. (2019). Definition of LIFE. [online] Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/life> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2019].

⁴⁵ Merriam-webster.com. (2019). Definition of LIFE. [online] Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/life> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2019].

The pro-choice movement generally provides more backing in the form of credible sources to support their arguments but are at the same time somewhat inconsiderate of the embryo or fetus. What causes their argumentation to be more valid than the opponent side's is the fact that they account for why the rights of a fetus go unmentioned; simply because of their idea of when life begins.

What is preferred in a debate such as this is being able to rationally argue for one's beliefs and dogmatic argumentation can never be rational as it cannot be backed by credible sources.

In both Luran and Amanda's stories we see a clear use of dogmatical arguments, leading to a non-rational argumentative style, which is a classic way of approaching the topic of induced abortion for the pro-life movement. Many pro-lifers find comfort in this sort of religious argumentation which urges the opposite party of the debate to challenge them and their beliefs in this field.

For example, a passage from Exodus 21:22-25 in the Covenant Code provides an idea of how God might indirectly be defining the life of a woman as more valuable compared to the life of the fetus. The definition being indirect sparks a lot of controversy and opens up for different interpretations especially on the pro-life side as there is an assortment of translations of the bible. One translation form of the bible is KJV (King James' Version) which means it has been translated word-for-word and gives a precise image of what was originally written but might not give a very good contextual translation. Another translation form of the bible is NIV (New International Version) which is a more dynamic way of translating, meaning it translates idea-for-idea and interprets the intention of the writer.

Pro-lifers tend to lean towards the NIV translation form as it allows them to attribute added meaning to the holy scriptures. The before mentioned passage has, however, been used by pro-choicers to point out contradictions in religiously inclined pro-life argumentation.

- 22 "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely^[a] but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. 23 But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Bible Gateway. (2019). *Bible Gateway passage: Exodus 21:22-25 - New International Version*. [online] Available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+21%3A22-25&version=NIV> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2019].

a. Exodus 21:22 Or *she has a miscarriage*

This passage has been translated in the NIV translation form, meaning it is an interpretation of the original Hebrew scriptures with a more contemporary language. In this quote it is quite noticeable that a footnote has been strategically placed to alter the original meaning of the sentence. The aforementioned footnote refers to the possibility of a miscarriage in the event of a pregnant woman being struck. Leaving out this vital piece of information results in a somewhat distorted understanding of the passage, as part of the meaning is lost.

A way of approaching a potential analysis of the moral beliefs present in the debate and a way of understanding why people argue as they do, would be to examine the individual beliefs with the help of the three most prevalent moral theories; utilitarianism (a version of consequentialism), deontology and virtue ethics. Not one of these theories are without flaw but it can help display a clearer picture of why thoughts and opinions on a specific issue can vary so immensely from individual to individual.

Busy Philipps, Melissa Murray and the grassroots campaign #BansOffMyBody all demonstrate a mindset which leans towards a utilitarianistic attitude. They concentrate on what in their belief will bring most joy to the implicated and the situation as a whole. For example, we have Melissa Murray's casuistic reasoning where she emphasizes how important it is to consider what is best for you, and #BansOffMyBody which underlines just how essential it is to have an option.

Christina Bennett, Melissa Ohden and the two stories by Lauran and Amanda under the #StandForLife are attempting to present their side of the matter in an equally fair and thoughtful way but fail to do so when expressing their belief in taking away the right to have a choice. As stated earlier on, the pro-life movement display a lot of principled thinking and dogmatical arguments when compared to that of the opponent side. If we were to put that train of thought and belief system in a box within the moral theories, it could fit under the deontological way of thinking. They have some principles which they will never stray from, for example; a life is a life from conception, and a life must never be lost.

In virtue ethics pro-life could fit in since it is more about what your moral intuition tells you is right or wrong. It is also important to note that no consequences or further action after will be taken in count when using this moral theory. When this is the case it is hard to differentiate the two groups

in their way of creating an argument for their belief because either group would be acting out from their own belief of what is right or wrong.

Arguments

The majority of arguments that we have based our analysis on entails various aspects of personal views and experiences on both sides.

While our focus until now has been on the lack of rational argumentation from the pro-life side, it is important to note that the argumentation of the pro-choice movement is not without flaw. We must also note that different people have different backgrounds. This suggests that many of the arguments could be influenced by their cultural, religious and perhaps even their socioeconomic background. Due to our knowledge about the individuals being quite limited it is difficult for us to fully take their background into account. We have to our greatest extent attempted to do so, but we do not have the resources to perform an extensive and comprehensive background analysis.

However, the religious background of the pro-life movement is highly significant when analyzing their arguments against abortion. They frequently use dogmatic arguments, where God serves as the main driving force of the argumentation. This is explicitly portrayed in the hashtags from the pro-life movement. The dogmatic arguments are not used in the House Judiciary Subcommittee testimonies. The reason for this could be that this meeting was held for the purpose of determining whether the constitution is against or for abortion and dogmatic argumentation is irrational in such a formal setting.

In the section above, we have discussed what role religious backgrounds play in much of the pro-life argumentation. Pro-choicers generally oppose to the pro-life arguments relating to God as a higher power that has authority over human autonomy. In other words, they counter the pro-life movement arguments by stating that a woman has the right to decide over her own body, no matter what the pro-life movement claim is Gods will. Therefore, it can be argued that the pro-choice movement is somewhat less religious, resulting in a different view on the matter as opposed to the pro-life movement.

Conclusion

As the topic is so emotional, subjective and opinionated the debate about induced abortion is a highly controversial one, so no matter how you twist and turn it, you may never reach a conclusion

that fits all parties. The individual American holds opinions that are, as one would expect, often prejudiced and biased as personal beliefs depend on a number of aspects, such as one's moral intuition and values. Throughout this project we have examined these differences in opinion and tried to look at them from the various perspectives

In the digital cosmos of social media, a debate suddenly gains a much greater platform and allows different social classes to participate and share their stories and opinions/feelings.

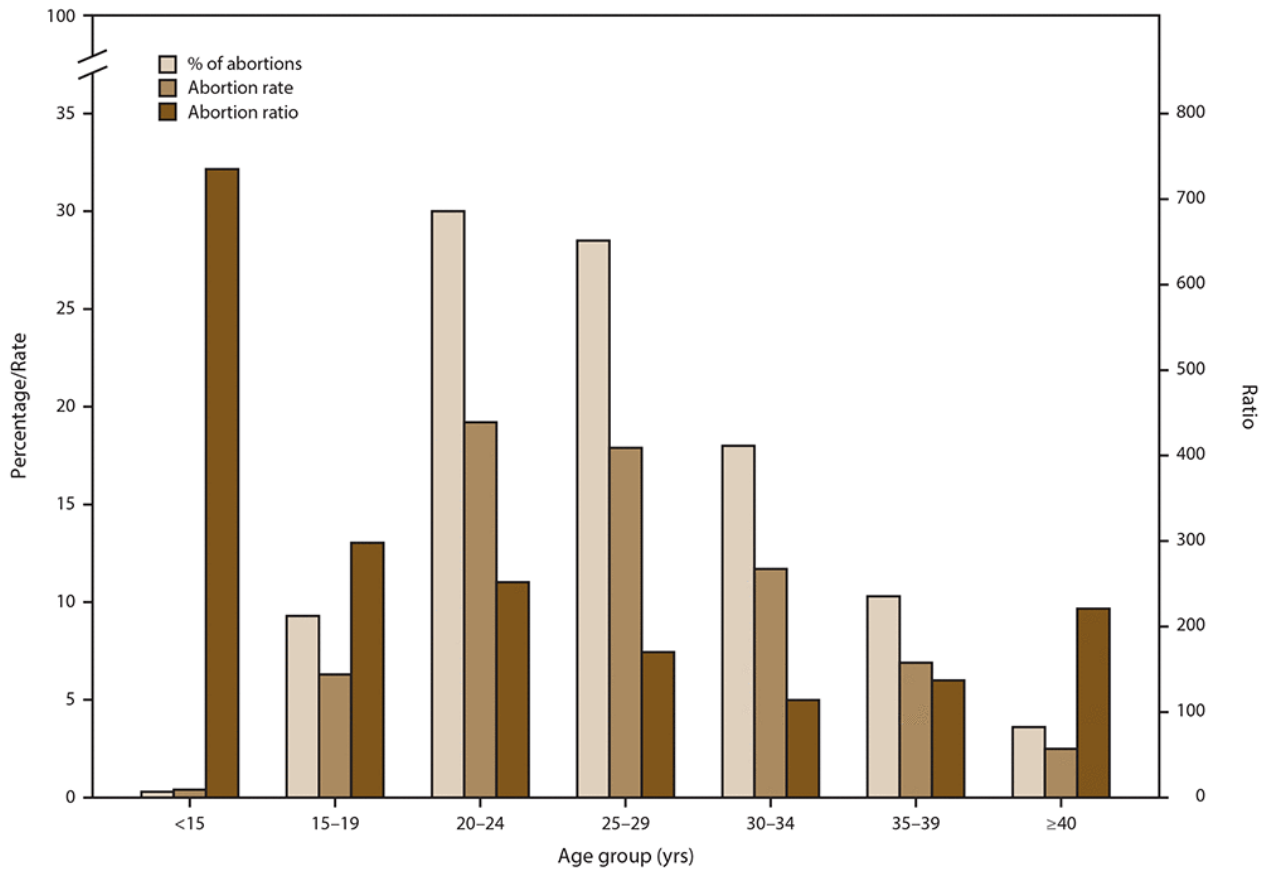
In a sense, broadening the recipient pool and allowing voices who might not be heard elsewhere to speak up, can be a positive contribution to discussions since it gains a deeper understanding of both sides' motives and reasons. Also, the social media debate has allowed for us to experience a less formal language without filter as opposed to the testimonies made in the House Judiciary Subcommittee, which are more composed and almost polished.

There is no definitive answer as to why there are such large divergencies in the debate, however, if you consider the angle of the upbringing of one specific individual you may be able to get a clear image of why and how they have developed their beliefs. This is our reason for taking the moral theories into consideration when discussing the divergencies present, as they can represent the impact one's background has had on one's values. By using both emotional and factual argumentation the opposing sides manage to get their point across in a way that resonates with the audience, depending on what they value. While the reasons for their disagreements may be many, this can in particular contribute to parts of the divergencies present in the debate.

Having an option to choose between either going through a pregnancy or terminating it, instead of no choice at all, means there is a much bigger possibility of finding a solution that suits everybody as those who oppose to the procedure, can simply decide not to have one. No matter the issue, there will always be a level of disagreement amongst people. However, a personal opinion shall never exceed the wish to accommodate a society in the most positive way through legislation.

Appendix

Figure 1



Source: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/ss/ss6811a1.htm#F2_down

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