

Feminism and Abortion in the United States' Party Politics

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Abstract: The feminist movement in the United States like other countries has tried to establish equality for women. From the first attempts to gain constitutional right for vote, up to the current radical demands, feminists have struggled to make changes in the U.S. party politics and obtain their rights within the parties. One of the important issues in which women played a key role in party politics is the issue of abortion. In this article, U.S. party politics on abortion, the role of the feminist movement in the process of legalization and the controversies regarding it are studied. Through two major social movements known as "pro-choice" and "pro-life", feminists mainly follow their goals and attitudes on abortion. In political realm, Democrats, due to their liberal approaches, are commonly known to be pro-choice, while Republicans are known as pro-life supporters. Being pro-choice or pro-life for these two political parties has created debates and controversies which are examined in this article. U.S. feminists from the beginning have tried their best to elect women to send to the Congress and political parties; since they believe that if they want to get things done in U.S., they have to enter the parties and work for change inside them.

Therefore, as indicated in this paper, U.S. party politics have been remarkably influenced by the feminist movements about abortion. This paper, arguing abortion from the lens of the two major US party institutions, focuses on the political and social domains and feminist movements' arguments.

Keywords: Abortion. US party politics. Republicans. Democrats. Feminists. Pro-life. Pro-choice.

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Introduction

Abortion, as a cultural issue, has had a controversial life in the United States. "The abortion conflict involves a clash of values or even of "absolutes" that counterposes an individual woman's self-determination and the protection of unborn human life" (Minkenberg, 2002, p. 227). In the political realm, because of the insistence on women's absolute freedom of choice, or on the other hand, giving priority to the human life and being pro-life supporters, governments, states and political parties have had different authoritative responses. Due to Fuller and Muller theories, the two major socio-political groups called Democrats and Republications are distinguishable in the United States and each have their own rules, values and policies related to their interests. One of such issues is abortion. Although at first, abortion was not so controversial, the legalization process of abortion, and conflicts of the two major social groups known as "pro-choice" and "pro-life", brought it up in social and political debates, including in party politics. In fact, over the past three decades, Democrats gradually became pro-choice while Republicans become increasingly pro-life. Feminist movements in the past years have played a major role in accelerating this gradual shift. "The contemporary women's movement has transformed North American society. Change has been greatest in the realm of everyday life, but the insistence by feminists that (the personal is political) has challenged the substance and practice of politics" (Young, 2000, p. 3). Besides party politics on abortion, party identification is also important. While most Americans are Democrats or Republicans, their party identification would also follow these two party politics; but a controversial issue like abortion sometimes leads people to switch political parties. In fact that is when value conflict emerges, and a social problem out of its social context turns into a political issue.

Background

In the United States, abortion laws began to appear in the 1820s, which forbade abortion after the forth month of pregnancy. During the 19th century, abortion was completely immoral and was allowed just in cases where the mother's life was in danger. Therefore, until 1960, abortion had not yet become a controversial issue. In the 1960s, after the Civil Rights movements and also the feminist movements, abortion began to emerge as an important cultural issue. An event in 1962, which

was not so important at first, drew much attention to abortion in the United States. A young lady called Sherry Fink Bin in California requested an abortion from doctors but was refused. So she went to Sweden and had an abortion there. This news coincided with the spread of rubella in the United States. While some doctors alerted that pregnant women suffering from rubella would probably have a deformed child, most doctors still refused to abort. These two events inspired feminist groups in California to protest the former laws. Consequently, in April 25, 1967, Colorado was the first state to legalize abortion in cases of emergency, such as saving the life of the mother, cases of rape or incest, or if the fetus was deformed (Lewis, n.d.). Later on April 11, 1970, Nelson A. Rockefeller, the governor of Colorado, legalized abortion before the 25th week of pregnancy. Other states such as Alaska, Hawaii and Washington ratified this law as well. In 1971, the Supreme Court's interpretation of "mother's health" made abortion easier. Up until 1972, only 13 states had legalized abortion, while in Mississippi it was legal just in cases of rape and in the other 32 states only if the mother's life was in danger.

Ultimately in January 22, 1973, the US Supreme Court ratified the law called "Roe V. Wade" in which women received the right of abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy for whatever reason, in the second trimester for medical reasons, and in the third trimester the states were allowed to regulate or outlaw abortion. In fact, the Court concluded that the right of abortion falls under the right of privacy. By the 'Supreme Court' verdict under the English and American common law, the unborn have not been recognized as a human being and hence the fetal child is not entitled to the right to life. In March 10, 1975, the first amendment to this ruling was brought to the Senate by Republican Senators James Buckley from New York and Jesse Helms from North Carolina to support pro-life demands but it failed in voting.

In March 23, 1981, the Supreme Court legalized Utah's law requiring parents' permission if the girl is under the parents' custody. In 1984, Regan ratified the law called "Mexico City policy" which prohibited financial support to Americans who sought abortion in developing and underdeveloped countries. A later law forbade any cooperation with international organizations or NGOs that promoted and supported abortion. These two laws were nullified during Clinton's presidency, were ratified again during 'George W. Bush' period and later again rescinded on the first

days of Obama in office.

Since 1995, congressional Republicans of both House and Senate tried several times to pass measures to limit abortion. On October 2003, the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act was again approved by the House, emphasizing that doctors could face civil law suits for performing abortion (Bomarito, J. & Hunter, 2006). In recent years, the main question on abortion has been that when is the fetus viable outside the womb? As Roe Rule (1973) argues 24 weeks for viability, some point out that less than 24 weeks is necessary for the fetus to survive outside the mother's womb. Due to the Hyde Amendment, many states health programs don't include abortion coverage. Currently, only 17 states (including California, Illinois and New York) offer or require such coverage. "The Unborn Victims of Violence Act", commonly known as "Laci and Conner's law", was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bush in 2004. It imposed two charges to be filed against someone who kills a pregnant mother; one for the mother and one for the fetus. This created many discussions among pro-choicer, because they believe that these acts can gradually ban abortion.

Institutional Sources of Influence on Abortion

Media plays an important role in shaping public opinions about abortion. Commonly, in the U.S., most of the media supports pro-choicer and has more inclination to the liberal side. On the other hand, churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, and religious organizations in the United States have confronted media on this issue through lobbies which they have supported. Lobby groups in the United States work for both pro-choice and pro-life groups. NGOs are also another source of influence on abortion in the Country. Usually, traditional and religious NGOs are pro-lifers, and NGOs which are generally involved with environmental issues and those formed by immigrants are mostly pro-choicer.

Feminist Movement and Abortion in the USA

The Feminist movement in the United States and abroad was a social and political movement that sought to establish equality for women. The movement transformed the lives of many individual women, and exerted a profound effect upon American society throughout the twentieth century. During the first two

decades of the century, women's groups in the United States worked together to win women's suffrage, culminating in the ratification of a constitutional amendment in 1920 that guaranteed women the right the vote. During the later decades in the twentieth century, women's groups would again group together, this time to formulate and advocate for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Though this proposed constitutional amendment ultimately failed to gain approval in the late 1970s, it became a rallying point for women's groups and drew national attention to the feminist cause (Bomarito, J. & Hunter, 2006).

During the two world wars, many American women were brought into the workplace, initially for providing labor during the war, but then they became increasingly aware of the unequal economic situation. In the 1960s, after Betty Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique" was published and Sherry Fink bin's story unfolded, the face of the women's struggle changed. The new feminists started to pressure the politicians on women's concerns and to improve the quality of women's lives (Bomarito & Hunter, 2006).

In 1977, feminists organized a National Women's Conference in Houston, where they drafted an action plan that included twenty-six resolutions; the plan was subsequently distributed to government officials to remind them of their responsibility to female constituents. NOW² and the newly organized National Women's Political Caucus worked to influence politicians and legislators while continuing their effort to keep women's issues prominent in the media (Bomarito & Hunter, 2006).

According to some critics, feminism was represented as a white upper-class movement that did not represent others, such as African-American, and Hispanic women. Therefore, feminism got closer to the liberal approach and focused on the rights of women as individuals. Radical feminists also followed their goals through revolutionary groups to achieve their rights (Mousavi et al., 2010).

Feminists pressed on, maintaining pressure on legislators to address women's issues such as reproductive rights, pay equity, affirmative action, sexual harassment, and the handling of rape victims in the courts. In retrospect, the early 1960s has been termed the "first wave" of the feminist movement, and the activities of the 1970s and 1980s have been called the "second wave". In the 1990s, emerged a

2- National Organization for Women

"third wave" of feminists, still concerned with many of the same problems as their predecessors, but now wishing to work from within the political and legal establishments, rather than criticizing them from the outside. This mostly younger generation of feminists would also stress the need to broaden the scope of feminism, emphasizing global networking, human rights, worldwide economic justice, and issues pertaining to race, gender, and class (Bomarito & Hunter, 2006).

Mary Wollstonecraft, 200 years ago in her writing called *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, declared that like sexual exploitation of women, destroying the embryo should be condemned. Shortly after, abortion became illegal in Great Britain. Feminists of the 19th century were also strongly opposed to abortion because of their belief in the worth of all humans. They opposed abortion, while they were aware of the damage done to women through constant child-bearing, knowing that half of the children born, died before the age of five. They also knew that they did not have equal rights within the family or the political sphere (Foster, 2004), but they did not believe that abortion would be a good answer to such problems. In addition, some feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton called abortion "the horrible crime of child murder", "infanticide" and "feticide". These two feminists believed that the only way to end the need for abortion was women's equality and freedom. In fact, they found prevention more important than punishment, and usually blamed laws, men, and circumstances which drove women to abortion. Even modern feminists initially stayed away from promoting abortion (Foster, 2004). Betty Friedan, credited with reawakening feminism with her landmark book *The Feminine Mystique*, did not even mention abortion in its first edition in 1963. The "statement of purpose" for the National Organization for Women (NOW), written by Friedan and other feminists was just about the demands on equality of women in the workplace, schools and colleges, and in the government, and also seeking the "re-examination of laws and mores governing marriage and divorce", but nothing was mentioned about abortion. In fact, it was two men called Lawrence Lader and Bernard Nathanson who later pushed the reluctant Friedan to make abortion one of her organization's planks. Shortly after Lader and Nathanson published a book called 'Abortion', Lader promised Friedan that if she puts an abortion plank in the next convention platform (1967), they would instead work the media to dramatize the plight of desperate women who had to resort to dangerous back

alley abortions (McKenna, 2006). True to their word, they made articles in two mainstream magazines such as Newsweek and Saturday Evening Post. Since that event, the NOW literature repeatedly states that access to abortion is the most fundamental right of women (McKenna, 2006). Besides pro-choice feminists, there are also Feminists for Life of America who believe that "abortion is a symptom of and not a solution to" the problem (Foster, 2004). In essence, they emphasize on addressing root causes, and subsequently, promoting 'prevention', and if necessary, 'abortion'. (Beckwith, 2007).

The first feminists who brought up abortion as their demand had medical reasons for banning abortion. With new third waves of feminism, they became radical and emphasized on new theories which claimed that forbidden abortion is a kind of males' control over women's body and said that the personal is political. It meant that nothing about women is personal but political and should be treated like other political issues. Today, feminists are mostly members of two social groups known as pro-choice and pro-life which are struggling with each other on the controversial issue of abortion. However, there are also some independent feminists who believe that although abortion stands as one of the few issues claiming women's right, still platforms and speeches devote little attention to gender issues.

Feminism and Party Politics in USA

As Young (2000) argues, a defining characteristic of the contemporary American women's movement is the high priority it places on electoral and partisan politics. From the beginning, the first wave of feminism tried to open the electoral process of their participation at least as voters. After gaining the right to vote in 1920, many of the feminists like Carrie Chapman Catt from the American Suffragists declared that the only way to achieve something substantial in the US is through political parties and work for change inside the parties (Young, 2000). Since the 1970s, the major activity of feminists was focused on electoral and partisan politics, especially electing women for the Congress. Through this activity, the dominant and hegemonic ideology of liberal feminists played a significant role. The basic goal in this ideology was to create institutions, including political parties, to gain an equal opportunity for women in politics. Feminists did not make a new path in the internal politics of Democrats but followed the trail of some civil right organizations

and anti-war protesters who had been active inside the Democratic Party.

In addition, because of the shift in the Republican's policy during the 1970s to a social conservatism approach, espoused by Evangelical Christians and pro-life supporters, the moderate liberal feminists found Republicans inhospitable and were driven to the arms of Democrats. Although in 1963 and by the statement of Freidan from National Organization for Women, these feminists could not make a connection with political parties, in the late 1960s, the Democratic Party had become a major party for any movements engaged in a cycle of protest. In the 1980s, when the feminist movement united the campaign for Equal Right Amendment (ERA), and also by Freidan's emphasis on women's participation in party politics, women became more involved in the political system. The new reforms that the Democratic Party designed to enhance internal democracy and divisions within the Democrats, paved the way for feminists to enter political parties. The first measure the feminists took was the foundation of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) in 1971, which brought together Republican and Democrat women with feminists who were involved in gaining equal rights for women in politics and supporting women candidates across party lines (Young, 2000).

Betty Freidan and Bella Abzug were two activists for the caucus whose vision was different from each other. Freidan wanted to unite women within or across the political lines to elect women and emphasize women's issue, whereas Abzug intended to make coalitions with the poor, black, youth, women and gays, to draw minority's attention to the caucus. This difference resulted in creating a compromise between them to help elect women, and also men, who were ready to fight for women and underrepresented groups. They also pledged to "oppose sexism, racism, institutional violence, and give women an equal voice in political decision making" (Young, 2000, p. 34). In spite of the compromise, Freidan and Abzug's ideology had basic differences. Freidan wanted to place women in positions of power regardless of their political belief (whether feminist or not), but Abzug believed that being feminist and part of a leftist-populist movement was crucial. The political tendency and having a Democratic approach in Abzug's view should also not be ignored (Young, 2000, p. 34).

Republican women were mostly involved in a moderate stream of early

feminism, and by forming NWPC, many of the liberal Republican women joined the movement. Therefore, the NWPC's success in changing political rules inside the two parties created the opportunity to form women's Political Action Committees (PACs), which was a great achievement (Young, 2000). In fact, the most important activity which women had during the 1980s was the increasing number of PACs that could finance women candidates and also male candidates whose goals included women's issues. The Women's movement in the 1980s tried to focus on the legislative branch mostly to elect pro-choice women to the Congress, because when Reagan became president in 1980, he promised the anti-feminist Republicans to use all the means available to restrict women's access to abortion. The distribution of the women's PAC money illustrates the ties of the women's movement with the Democrats. For example, in 1989-90, 85% of the women's PAC money went to the Democrats (Makinson, 1992). Another reason for Democrats and the women's movement to become closer to each other was Reagan and Bush's anti-feminist policies.

By the election of Bill Clinton as a Democratic president, women could have a faint glimmer of hope for their movement, as they thought they could break the twelve year Republican monopoly on the White House. Furthermore, in 1992 and by calling that year as "the year of women", the number of women who entered the House and Senate increased remarkably. The media attention and financial resources allocated to women also augmented (Makinson, 1992). Clinton tried to pass legislation establishing family leaves, tackling violence against women, vetoing the Republican bill on banning the late-term abortions, and further appointing women in high public positions. These measures resulted in more female support for Democrats. Even by the Clinton's moral scandal, NOW and National Council of Negro Women lobbied members of the House of Representatives to vote against impeachment. Because of the polarization of the two political parties around feminist issues, these groups believed they had no choice but to support Clinton, no matter how offensive they considered his behavior. Hence, women's options through the two-party system in the US are too limited and they have to follow their political goals through the Democratic Party which is more supportive of women. Moreover, in recent years, they have tried to gain their rights through pro-life and pro-choice movements which have been polarized within Democrats and Republicans as well.

Contradictory Arguments on Abortion

The supporters of abortion in the United States (called mainly pro-choicer) argue as follows:

Fetus is no human: It is uncertain when human life begins. As some of the world's prominent scientists have testified, human life begins at "conception", and at the "fetus" level there is no conception yet. Hence, the fetus may be alive but it is a potential human being not an actual one. So it is not a human being.

Body rights: Even if the unborn are human beings, they have fewer rights than women; therefore, no one can expect mothers to devote their body for someone else as a life support system. Every woman wants to have control over her body.

Right to choose: Every person has the right to choose, and nearly all violations of human rights were on the grounds of the right to choose. Women are part of the people who should have such a choice (Page, 2006).

Privacy: Abortion is a decision made between a woman and her doctor and everyone has a constitutional right of privacy.

Early pregnancy: It is unfair for an unmarried woman to be obliged to face the embarrassment of pregnancy. Thus, society should help and support unmarried women in these cases. Furthermore, restricting abortion would be unfair to the poor and minorities, because they have to abort their child in an unsafe way.

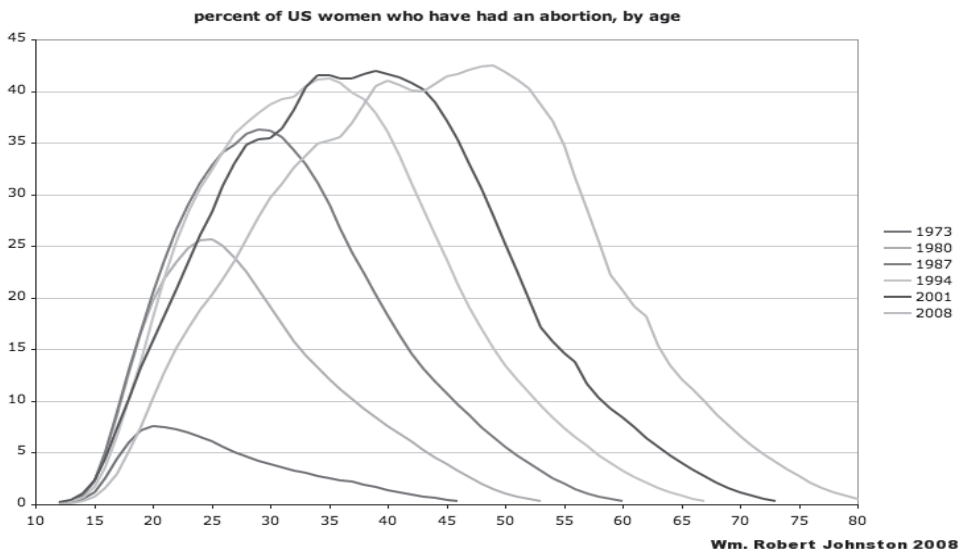


Figure 1. Percentage of U.S. women who have had an abortion, by age. (cited by Johnston, 2010)

As it can be seen in Figure 1, the percentage of women who have had an abortion at the age of 50 in 2008 is at its highest level, while during 1980, the age of women who have had an abortion is very low (i.e. 25% at the age of 25 years). Figure 1 shows that over time, although the rate of abortion has increased continuously, the age of women who have had abortions has raised up as well.

Table 1: Percentage of Women Having Abortion by Age (1973-2008) (Adopted from Johnston, 2010)

Year	12-20	15-24	12-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79
1973	2.3	2.8	2.7	6.2	2.7	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
1980	9.0	11.1	6.1	23.3	13.5	4.4	0.3	0.0	0.0
1987	15.2	18.6	6.2	30.6	29.6	12.2	2.6	0.1	0.0
1994	19.8	24.4	4.6	30.4	39.8	25.8	8.6	1.3	0.0
2001	22.3	27.0	4.8	26.6	40.0	36.9	16.6	4.8	0.3
2008	24.3	28.6	2.3	19.3	35.0	41.2	34.6	14.3	3.4

Oppositions to abortion (namely the pro-Life camp) contradict the pro-choicer by arguing:

1) Cost of abortions: "The Ministry of Health claimed that the 45,000 women treated in public hospitals for incomplete abortions each year is costing the state \$19 million. They state that this is a lot more than it would cost to perform early and safe abortions" (Cain, 2003). A recent study shows that abortion will be an economic disaster as it is believed to undermine future growth. Hence, the cost of aborted babies in America is well over \$41 trillion whereas American's entire deficit is \$4 trillion (Cain, 2003; Alcorn, 2000).

2) Backstreet abortions to front office: Although the major goals of legalizing abortion and liberalization of abortion laws were to reduce illegal abortions, various surveys show that 40-85% of women said they would not aborted their babies if it had been illegal. So, as Senator James Buckley stated: "Legalized abortion moves the back alley abortionists into the front office where their trade can be practiced

without fear of criminal prosecution" (93rd Congress of the U.S) (Alcorn, 2000).

3) Parallels between abortion and slavery: For pro-lifers, slavery and abortion have been defended by the same arguments over time. In 1857, in the "Dred Scott case", "Supreme Court decided by a 7 to 2 majority that according to the U.S constitution Black people were not legal and were the property of the owner" (Alcorn, 2000). In spite of objections to this rule, the supporters of slavery said that no one forces opponents to own slaves. They have the right to choose. Abortion also has had a similar process. In 1973 and by Roe V. Wade rule, the Supreme Court by the same 7 to 2 majority decided that unborn people were not legal persons and they were the mother's property. Pro-life people objected to the rule and said it was immoral and discriminated. On the other hand, pro-abortionists claimed that pro-lifers are not forced to have an abortion but they shouldn't take this freedom and "right to choose" from the mothers who want abortions.

4) Unborn baby a human being: Pro-life advocates argue that medical evidence show that the first single cell contains the entire genetic blue print in all its complexity. For example, the heart starts beating between 18 and 25 days, or after 8 weeks the baby will sleep and wake up, and also the brain and all body systems are present and functioning a month later. In fact, the baby is fully developed before mother's delivery (Alcorn, 2000). Hence, no one has the right to murder another human being, and as the Bible quotes, God hates someone that shed innocent blood (Proverbs 6:16-17; Beckwith, 2007).

5) Legal abortions are unsafe: Abortion can cause many medical problems including breast cancer, ectopic pregnancies, pelvic inflammatory disease, subsequent infertility, future premature births, and small-for-dates babies which is 7-15 times more common among women who have had abortion (Alcorn, 2000).

6) The overpopulation argument: Pro-abortionists believe that the world is now over-populated which has caused poverty and oppression. But as Jim Peron in his book Exploding Population Myths has mentioned, the world-wide basic problem today is not overpopulation but lack of production. African countries, specifically Zimbabwe, are not overpopulated but suffer a shortage in food production. Therefore, abortion cannot be helpful for eradicating poverty, while overpopulation is not the main cause of food shortage in the world.

Party Debates on Abortion: Democrats and Republicans

Democrat and Republican are the two major political parties in the United States which have different approaches on abortion. Going through their speeches, party platforms, presidential campaigns and candidates' slogans through elections, one can easily find important debates on abortion.

The main question is that which of the two major political parties have supported abortion and why, and what are the contents of the debates? To answer these questions, it should be mentioned that these questions fit pretty well into the Republicans' private-property philosophy (McKenna, 2006). They believe that women's personal property should be kept out of the government. The Republicans draw heavily on the upper/middle class who are mostly White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP), and hence, are not very concerned about other social classes' demands. Republicans usually emphasize on the need for law and order, and also have a conservative approach to welfare. Democrats like to boast that they protect the weak and the vulnerable. So contemporary feminists believe that the Democratic Party will be more helpful in struggling for civil rights and freedom of choice.

It is interesting to know that the Republicans were the first party to support a gender-based equal rights amendment to the Constitution in 1940. It seems that feminism was an upper-middle class phenomenon, one of the many civic movements, interestingly championed by Republican women. This is while the Democrats were more involved in the party's working-class agenda, such as measures to minimize wage laws and the protection of unions. Even Ted Kennedy, a Democrat, three years after *Roe V. Wade* insisted that abortion is morally wrong and is not an acceptable response to any problem in the society. This is while Richard Nixon, the Republican President, was very keen on "population control" in 1970. He appointed John D. Rockefeller (a Republican) to head up a commission, and later another commission headed by Henry Kissinger, that decided to induce less developed countries to limit population through contraception sterilization and abortion (McKenna, 2006).

By the end of the 1980 conventions, everything had changed: Republicans had become the pro-life party, and the Democrats were fully committed to abortion. Although there have always been plenty of Protestants in the Democratic party, especially in the South and in rural areas of the lower Midwest, over the last century the Democratic party was run largely by Catholics in the high income areas.

The Democratic Party and the Catholic Church have always been on the same page regarding the social and economic rights of the poor and weak members of society. But gradually, the Catholic support for Democrats declined, specifically on the abortion issue. It was by the end of World War II that a new crack was opening in the Democratic coalition the Segregationist Southern Democrats were squaring off against Northern Liberal Democrat (McKenna, 2006).

Ultimately by 1975, the Democratic Party became the party of social welfare and business regulation, environmentalism, consumer protection, affirmative action, gun control, arms control multilateralism and the Equal Rights Amendment; but Democrats had not yet become the party of abortion. By the 1973 Supreme Court's decision and ratifying Roe rule, many Catholics switched somehow to the Republicans. In fact, they agreed with the Republican Party on abortion and with the Democratic Party on virtually everything else. As a Democratic candidate, Jimmy Carter, at first declared his personal opposition to abortion, but once he got nominated, he reassured the pro-choicer in his own party that he would not support the constitutional amendment on anti-abortion activities, which was painful for Catholic Democrats who were anti-abortionist. By 1980, the Democrat Party became the abortion party (Killian, 2008).

Since the time of the New Deal, the Democrats have consisted of four major groups: African Americans, Southern Whites, liberal intellectuals, and Catholics. Of the four groups, two were conservative: the Southerners and the Catholics. The Southerners were conservative on race which translated into political conservatism and the Catholics were culturally conservative in some issues such as abortion. During Reagan's presidency, a Republican himself, many of the Democrat Catholics joined the Republic party which was a pro-life party. However, other Republican policies such as tax policy, employment generation, welfare policy, nutrition and feeding programs and health care were undesired by the Catholics. Bernardin argues that "although defending the right to life of unborn children is important, other defenseless people need our help as well. Like the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the undocumented immigrants and the unemployed workers" (Joseph Bernardin, the chairman of the bishop's Committee on War and Peace, March 1984, in Killian, 2008). By this speech, the Republicans declared that it is not fair to allocate governmental budget for abortion (to prevent more taxes

which were going to be spent on abortion as health care plans. When George W. Bush was in office (2003), the majority of the Republicans in the Congress were opposing the funding of abortion, while the Democratic support was overwhelming.

Although Republicans are known as pro-lifers and Democrats as pro-choicer today, this is not an absolute rule. In recent years, there are many in both Republican and Democrat parties who have different approaches on abortion regardless of their party identification. In the early 1970s, Ted Kennedy, younger Democrats like Bill Clinton (later President in the 1990s), Jesse Jackson (Democrat candidate), and Al Gore (Vice President of Clinton) were all on the side of life, while the parties finally shifted in 1980. The Democrats decided to join the party of pro-abortion; Al Gore and Clinton became pro-choice supporters, and Clinton nullified the "Mexico city" rule during his presidency. Now in 2010, there are several pro-life Democrats in the Congress, such as "Bart Stupak" from Michigan, "James Oberstar" from Minnesota, "James Langevin" from Rhode Island and Senator "Ben Nelson" from Nebraska. There are 43 Democrats which claim they will vote against the Health Care Bill, unless tax payer-funded abortion is removed (Hunter-Omar, 2009). They want to pass a Stupak's amendment which is consistent with long-standing public policy for over 30 years that no Federal funding was used for abortion. Stupak's stance against tax payer-funded abortion in the Health Care Bill has prompted NARAL pro-choice America. However, abortion debates continue, specifically in the health care plan. Recently, there have been amendments on abortion which are added to the health care plan. Arguments still exist between Republicans and Democrats, and also between pro-abortion Republicans or anti-abortion Democrats.

Abortion and the Force for Party Switching

The notion that "issues" and "ideology" can move partisanship is controversial. Several election studies show that pro-life Democrats were more likely than other Democrats to become Republicans, while pro-choice Republicans were not likely to become Democrats. As Campbell et al (1960) argue, partisanship is the unmovable object, a suitable orientation inherited through socialization and reinforced through social identity networks, yet some issues are also deeply rooted in central moral and religious values and reinforced by social identities, and are used by political elites to mobilize support. So the question is how these central moral and religious

values encounter with the unmovable partisanship? The relationship between partisanship and political attitudes has been the subject of debates for nearly 50 years. Studies in the 1980s and 1990s suggest that partisanship might be switched based on campaign events, economic conditions, evolutions of the president, ideology, parent's political activity and age (Killian, 2008). Those whose positions on abortion are the most salient, are likely to adjust their partisanship to fit with their views on abortion; on the other hand, those with less salient abortion attitudes are likely to be persuaded by their party's position on the issue.

Conclusion

In this paper the abortion and anti-abortion trends in the U.S. party politics are discussed. In the historical development of the abortion legalization process, the role of political parties and feminist movements are very important. The two major parties in the United States, known as Republicans and Democrats, due to their philosophy of existence and contemporary policies, have had different approaches to abortion.

Although today, Democrats are known as pro-choice supporters and Republicans as pro-lifers, as mentioned in details in the article, it is surprising to know that these two party's positions on abortion have been different in the course of time. Additionally, Republicans were the first party to support a gender-based Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution in 1940. Feminism was also an upper-middle class phenomenon which was led by Republican women, while the Democratic Party was involved with the working class. Although the Roman Catholic Church supported Democrats because of their peaceful policies towards the poor, immigrants and colored people, it was initially a strong opponent of abortion; however, from 1980, the bishops became gradually conservative and in order to avoid other Republican policies, they began to justify their new flexible attitude on abortion.

The Republican feminists not only did not mention abortion in their convention platform till 1967, but also their demands on abortion were only based on medical reasons till 1980, and by the appearance of a new wave of radical feminists). On the other hand, in 1980 Democrats called abortion a fundamental human right and insisted that any funding for reproductive services must not exclude funding for abortion. In fact, liberal attitudes of Democrats didn't allow them to remain as pro-lifers. Although Republicans were the ones who first brought up the issue of equal rights, abortion in their view meant taking human life. Gradually Democrats

were more involved in the abortion issue and the pro-choice movement with new feminists who believed in the freedom of choice.

Feminists, who could not gain their demands on abortion in the conservative Republican Party, switched to the Democrats and attached themselves to liberal Democrats. Other than party politics, feminist movements, through two major social groupings known as pro-choice and pro-life, began their activities. Pro-choicer was mostly supported by liberal Democrats and in recent years, by radical feminists who are more concerned with the freedom of choice and the mother's decision as a female. On the other side, pro-lifers are mostly Republicans and conservative feminists who believe in females' right but not by any means, such as taking the fetus's life (a human being). These two social groups have had continuous arguments and reasoning for their positions. In recent years, the rising importance of the health care issue, and allocating budget and financial aid to abortion, their differences and arguments have increased.

Another issue which is related to abortion is the change in party identification. Short-term studies in the United States show that some issues like abortion which are deeply rooted in moral and religious values can cause people to switch political parties. Studies have also shown that pro-life Democrats were significantly more likely than other Democrats to become Republicans, but pro-choice Republicans were not likely to become Democrats. It is perhaps because of the traditional attachment of the White Anglo-Saxon Republicans whose party identification is rooted in more than solely ideological belief. For them, party identification itself is an ideology as well. This is while Democrats nowadays are mainly from a broad group of immigrants and working class, which liberal values give them more freedom even in switching their parties. Hence, because of the controversies surrounding abortion and its ideological dimensions, both parties have left their representatives in the Congress to act partially free from their party political affiliations.

Finally, abortion has had a historical and controversial process. At first, it was a biological issue, then it became cultural and now it is a political phenomenon. Although pro-choice and pro-life movements and political parties have different policies on abortion, it should not be forgotten that it is not absolutely about two frontiers of rights and wrongs. There are also political issues behind it. For example, there are pro-lifers whose concerns are not directly about human life, but sometimes it relates with their racial approach or their hostility towards immigrants. Also, there are radical feminist pro-choicer who are taking advantage of the abortion issue to achieve their own goals by hiding their demands under the cover of abortion.

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