Abortion and its Multiple Contexts

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Reproduction highlights fundamental questions of human experience

- Biological reproduction
- Social reproduction
- Economic inequalities
- Role of government
- Cultural values
- Gender relations and sexuality
Abortion and its many frameworks

- Social Movements Reproductive Rights
- Judicial and Legislative Control
- Economic Inequalities
- Cultural and moral values
- Social Movements Reproductive Justice
- Health Disparities
- Public Health
- Clinical Care
- Social Movements Anti-abortion
- Racial Dynamics
- Politics of Gender and Sexuality

*Not an exhaustive list
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Clinical Care

• Technical aspects of abortion procedure
  – Safety, efficacy, efficiency, pain control
• Comprehensive care by multi-disciplinary team
  – Emotional needs of the patient
Public Health

• Prevalence and demographics of abortion
  – Who gets abortions?

• Abortion safety
  – Mortality rates, compared to childbirth
  – Consequences of unsafe abortion
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Public Health

Clinical Care
Cultural and Moral Frameworks

• Shared values- family, society, community
• Personal experiences
• Religious identity
• Scientific knowledge as a cultural value
• Ethical norms
Cultural and Moral Frameworks

“When does life begin?”

Conception? Heartbeat? Viable outside the womb? Quality of life

Cultural History of the “threshold of life”

1900s 1950s

High rates of still birth “Risk factor” Ultrasound

Birth Perinatal

1. Duden 1990. *The Woman Beneath the Skin*
2. Weir 1996. *Pregnancy, Risk, and Biopolitics*
Judicial and Legislative Control

Key judicial precedents:
• Roe v. Wade (1973)
• Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992)
Legal ≠ Accessible

• 89% of counties have no abortion provider

• Laws governing minutiae of abortion care:
  – Mandatory wait periods
  – Parental consent
  – Clinic architecture rules
  – Admitting privileges
  – Gestational age limits

In 2013:
22 states
70 laws
Illegal ≠ Non-existent
Illegal = Unsafe

Deaths from Abortion Decreased after Legalization

Laws liberalized in 15 states
Roe v. Wade

www.guttmacher.org
Social Movements: Reproductive Rights

- Second wave feminism
  - Repressive norms of domestic gender stereotypes
- Deaths from unsafe abortions
- Civil rights framing
  - Individual autonomy
  - Freedom from control
Social Movements: Anti-Abortion

- Moral emphasis
- “Pro-Life”
- “Abortion hurts women”
- Some movements with violent tactics
  - Clinic blockade and bombings
  - Murder of abortion providers
Social Movements: Reproductive Justice

- Narrow focus of “rights” movement
  - Minimized race and class dynamics
- Emphasizes individuals and communities
- All should have resources and power to make decisions about their lives and reproduction
  - Structural inequalities
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