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“AMERICAN VS. CANADIAN HEALTHCARE: THE ANTI-ABORTION MOVEMENT(S)”

The purpose of my study is to investigate to what degree the anti-abortion movement in USA and Canada is driven by politics or religion or both. Comparative analysis and semi-structured interviewing were used as main methodological tools and “Utilitarianism” as theoretical framework for this research.

Key words: anti-abortion, politics, religion.

Цель исследования - изучение движения против аборт в США и Канаде и как это управляется политикой или религией. Сравнительный анализ и полуструктурированное интервью были использованы в качестве основных методологических инструментов, а "утилитаризм" был взят в качестве теоретической основы для этого исследования.

Ключевые слова: против-абортное направление, политика, религия.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate to what degree the anti-abortion movements in the USA and Canada are driven by politics or religion or both. Comparative analysis and semi-structured interviews were the main methodological tools and social and political history were the main theoretical frameworks for this research.

In the United States, where church and state are separate, the anti-abortion movement is stronger than in Canada--where church and state are not separate and healthcare (including abortion) are funded by the state. Canadians do not appear to care enough to enact legislation either for or against abortion. The resistance to abortion in Canada is largely a moral and religious question. For Americans, it is couched in religious language, but is largely a political issue, which the Republican Party has used to great advantage--bringing Catholics from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. The moral or religious debate over abortion in the United States is political, whereas in Canada it is moral or religious. Based on the findings of my own survey, Americans as a people are very concerned about religious organizations that attempt to influence their government. Canadians, on the other hand, seem more concerned about finding better ways to protect women in relation to accessibility to abortions. American politicians have done little better than engage in endless debates on the issue, which appear to be politically motivated and thus not really concerned with questions of morality or the belief in the

sanctity of life and rights of the unborn. Needless to say, the safety of the mother does not appear to be of much concern, either. The anti-abortion debate in these two countries shows how different the two countries are, despite a common heritage and shared geography.

The findings of this study suggest that politicians in America, especially those in the Republican Party, see abortion not as a human right and thus essential to the wellbeing of society, but as a tool to garner votes and cling to power.

Report of Survey

I made a survey, conducting ten interviews with American and Canadian women and men. I decided to analyze them separately: firstly, men's position, then women's. Interviews varied from twenty to twenty-four questions depending on the answers and lasted from ten to twenty minutes.

Position of Men

First of all, four out of six men were married; two of married and two of single had no children. They have different religions: atheism, Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism and one man don't practice any religion at the time. All of them agree that abortion should be legal and that a woman has a right to choice, privacy and control over her own body. Regardless of the fact that whether they have children or not, four of married men consider that it is bad that abortion is illegal. One of the reasons was because it is dangerous to their psychological and physical health, other was that the government doesn't have right to impose their views on individual. The rest two men said that decision of abortion is extreme and it depends

from case to case and that it is not sane to say that abortion should be legal or illegal. Two men think that abortion is not a sin, and the others have no strict opinion about this, saying, for example: “there many things that you can believe are sins, but still believe they should be legal” or “I am not a God, I can’t judge”. Concerning trimester system, everybody approve abortion in the 1st trimester and I expected this thing, but the problematic issue was viability of the fetus and this issue bothered my respondents. In addition, two people had strong opinion, saying that it shouldn’t be done after 1st trimester unless it is a threat to woman’s health.

All interviewees are unanimous on the point of view that federal law *Roe v. Wade* shouldn’t be violated by the states and there were three opinions that generally *Roe v. Wade* is also not so progressive because: 1. the law is too restrictive, even if it is not government’s business in the 1st trimester, it might have an interest in the fetus in the 2nd and 3rd trimester; 2. some restrictions in some states that were recently passed are tricky ways to shut down abortion clinics by denying doctors privileges, and requiring them to have facilities that are expensive and putting other restrictions; 3. Republican party and anti-abortion people want to bring the decision back to the state level and have abortion as a criminal act. One interviewee said the problem in the United States is whether the child can survive outside of the womb – this is the dividing line in America. Each of men supported Canada for not having any laws (restrictions) on abortion and one of them mentioned another problem in Canada: whether the government should or shouldn’t pay for the abortion, if it is not medical concern. For instance, he said that the state shouldn’t fund it if “it is inconvenient for them to have a child or they want to wait for older...” Everybody agreed on “Obama Care” as well, that if Catholic Church or other religious organizations do not provide birth control coverage, its insurance company should pay for this, but two of my respondents were very liberal and believe that “Obama Care” doesn’t go far enough and they prefer single-payer system.

When I asked about Republican’s and Democrat’s position on abortion four of male respondents said that it cannot be easily divided between them, but of course, Republicans are pretty much conservative and anti-abortion, and Democrats are more progressive and pro-choice. The other two liberal men said that Republicans’

logic confuses him and they do not care about moral question and concerned only politically, especially Republican Tea Party. Two of men would certainly vote for pro-choice candidate and three of them said that, besides abortion, other issues would also influence their votes, but they would lean toward pro-choice candidate, the last person just refused to answer this question. Besides these things every person differently defined pro-life and pro-choice people: two men said that anti-abortion people are Christians, Catholics and those people, who value life; next one said that he is primarily with pro-life people, fourth man said he is pro-choice person. Other two people have strict opinion that pro-life people are anti-choice and they want to take control over woman’s body and also one of these men disagreed with anti-abortion people on the point of when life begins and he think that pro-choice people care about life, and it means that they are also pro-life.

Half of male respondents would not support the legislation that bans abortion after twenty weeks. Another half of them said they would support the legislation if it would consider exceptions like threat to woman’s psychological and physical health, rape or incest. Everyone disagreed with the statement: “Using artificial means of birth control is wrong” and one of the reasons was that artificial and natural are not good moral categories, second reason was that using them it is individual or family choice and it is not about promiscuity; the last two reasons were that it is even smart to use them. Everybody think that it is important and interesting debate, one said that it is important question that “...when does this collection of cells (fetus) begin to have rights. What should be given to be protected by the state?” And also an interesting thing he said that it is better as a moral debate, like people should be allowed to make their own choices and that we should stop talking about laws and start talking about choices of people. Concerning debate, another person said “putting restrictions on abortion are wrong” and that abortion is fundamental right to woman, but still it is always good to debate things. The last interesting viewpoint is that the problem is that sometimes fight for abortion seen as fight for more rights and freedom for the women, but it is not a point, because “abortion has a lot of consequences for woman, and giving solution to women is good, but not to be prepared to this solution is bad.”

Although they all have their religion, they don't like the religious position on abortion and think that, of course, people have right to have their own views, but religious views have no place in laws. One consider it as so disturbing and say that it is not about abortion, but about votes, giving an example of Catholics, who firstly were on the side of Democrats, but when Republicans started to support anti-abortion position, they switched to the other side.

I was waiting these kind of answers, but there were unexpected and interesting things that I did not know before, and these interviews answer to my research question: I can see now more details and facts of how the anti-abortion movement is driven by politics or religion or both and what people think about morality, religion's and politics' role in issues of abortion.

Position of Women

Secondly, there were two married and two unmarried female respondents, and only one of them, who was married, have children. Another married woman, who has no children, even if she is in her late forties and her husband, whom I interviewed as well, in his late fifties, they practically have similar viewpoints. Two of the people were raised Catholic, but not, actually, practice religion. Another woman did not say to me her religion, but said she is not a Christian, not Muslim and not Jewish. The most surprising for me was opinion of 20-years-old Christian Protestant lady, because differently from the others she was absolutely against abortion even in the cases of rape, claiming that by aborting a child, woman kills him and she doesn't have a right to do it and that is not her body, but it someone else's body. Next woman, who is complete antipode of previous lady, and who is married and has no children, is a real fighter for the rights and freedom of the women. She asserts that abortion is woman's right to choose, and that it should be free and legal for everyone, and it should never be restricted by law, because woman can do whatever she wants with her body. Other two female interviewees also consider abortion as a woman's choice and that it benefits society when it is allowed, but they are not in favor of late-term abortions and say that there is no reason to wait until third trimester and, moreover, there adoption options exist.

About countries, where abortion is illegal, two people think that even though it is illegal it is still going to happen. For example, in Philippines,

abortion is unlawful, but still there are abortion practices, and if doctor is caught, he would be deprived of license. Another woman considers the places, where abortion is illegal, as being dangerous and that it doesn't benefit public health, society and morality. She told about horrible example happened in Ireland, where it is unconstitutional to have abortion, and it killed woman. Very contradicting opinions were about pro-life and pro-choice people, for example, the woman, who would always vote for pro-choice candidate, call opponents as "anti-choice, anti-women's right to choose", "misogynistic, controlling, non-conservative, pro-fascists", because she believes they have fascistic tendencies and that they can't call themselves "pro-life", because they are also pro-death penalties. Similar argument was that pro-life and pro-choice is almost the same, because caring about the life of mother is the same as being pro-life. Completely different point of view was that people, who are pro-choice and mothers, who abort baby, are selfish and that mother could give her child for adoption, because parents waiting for five years at least to adopt child.

Women as well as men agree on that Roe v. Wade is landmark case and that states should not violate the federal law. One of interviewed American women finds it is disappointing that religious fanatics dictate national policy in her country..

Everyone thinks that it is good debate on abortion and this Protestant girl from Canada said that people should think about it more, because, as I mentioned before, it is becoming easier to have abortion. This girl likes the ultimate idea of religious position, but she sees problems: instead of protesting and caring signs with aborted child they should help woman. Two of my female respondents don't like religious position to abortion at all. Another woman personally understands them, but from legislative and policy-making point of view she thinks it is bad for society. All of interviewees used birth control pills, but the youngest girl, before mentioned one, used it not for this reason. It was for hormones, and, by the way, here she does not consider using birth control pills as a sin, because she said it is natural to have sex and it is fine. Two of the women believe that birth control pills give chance to decide. Another respondent consider them as a historically massive huge development that controls sexuality. Despite this, the last woman

said that this discovery doesn't change the women's behavior, even though she uses these pills.

Concerning Republicans and Democrats, all women are notified that the first are anti-abortion and the second are pro-choice, generally. One of them said that it is not the government's business what happens in my bedroom. Another woman's point of view was more interesting for me, so, she said that it is just a political tool: it is less about personal opinion and what is good for country's legislation, it is more about issue voting and what will help candidates in polls. Two women would vote for pro-choice candidate, one – for anti-abortion and the last woman said that not only one issue would influence her vote, and that single-issue voters are dangerous. The only question to which they answered "disagree" is about this statement: "Using artificial means of birth control is wrong". The last question was whether or not they would support the legislation that bans abortion after twenty weeks of pregnancy. One person definitely does not support this kind of legislation and another person definitely supports it; the next woman also does not support, but if everything is going to be safe, she would support. The last lady said that it depends, and should be examined case by case. She also claimed that it is not about law, it is about personal decision, and that money and time should be spent on family planning, education and helping people to not be in this situation.

It was more interesting to hear opinions of the women, because there were more contradictions between their opinions, and, generally, my findings answer to my research questions in pretty much unilateral way and even exceed my expectations.

How do your findings answer your research question?

To what degree is the anti-abortion movement driven by politics or religion or both? What is the politics' role in both countries? What is the religion's role in both countries? Why abortion issues are much more politicized in America and religious and moral question in Canada?

Based on my survey, I find out that religion plays important role in United States and following from this fact, anti-abortion movement has influential strength there, because almost all my respondents were really so much concerned that Church or other religious organization dictate what government should do and impose their

views on people, who do not share their believes. Another important thing that I revealed is that politicians in America see the issue of abortion not as a woman's rights, health or society's wellbeing, but as a tool to gain more votes. Politicians, especially Republican Party, do not care about moral question. Besides this, people, who are pro-choice, also divide on the point of whether the fetus is viable or not. This is true that as I predicted, I would not find much about Canada, because anti-abortion movement there is much weaker that in America. According to my survey, most of the people are pro-choice, but they call themselves pro-life as well, and almost all of them are supporters of publicly funded health care provider. Still here are some exceptions: like, there are people, who think that abortion should be funded, if it is medical reason, not just because parents do not want to have a baby. Even if some of my interviewees were raised religious, for instance, Catholics, their religion has nothing to do with their viewpoints, which means that religion differently influences on people. Only one lady, who was quite religious, had really strict distinguished opinion. Another significant thing I find out is that, in order to not being in this terrible situation that no one wants, we should promote sexual and reproductive health education, assistance to women and access to birth control pills.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the USA and Canada liberalized their abortion laws in the late 1960s and the anti-abortion movement emerged. Even if these two countries are located closely to each other geographically and have many political and cultural similarities, they still have different policies connected to abortion. National funding of abortions in America is almost absent and so women must pay for clinical abortions themselves. But in Canada, abortion services in hospitals are funded by the state. Despite the case in Canada, there is a current dilemma: women cannot access abortions, especially those who are from poorer conservative provinces, but only from larger and wealthier urban centers. The Canadian abortion rights movement started to grow rapidly with the work of Dr. Henry Morgentaler and despite opposition. Several attempts by anti-abortion groups did not succeed in criminalizing abortion. Compared to Canada where there have been no abortion laws of any kind since 1988, various states in the US have passed laws

restricting abortion and in contravention of the spirit of federal law.

Another reason for the success of the anti-abortion movement in America is that it is combined with conservative political institutions. Such influential social movements act collaboratively with the US Supreme Court, weak party leaders, and a decentralized federal system, whereas the Canadian parliamentary system and its strong centralist nature of governance. In addition, there are less anti-abortion organizations in Canada than in America and which claim that expectant mothers should chose adoption over abortion, that unwanted children should be raised in loving and adoptive families. Consequently, the pro-life position is thought to be best for society in the long term.

According to some interviewees, the church should not tell the government what to do, but, in my opinion, the Republican Party (in the case of the US) is doing this very thing. For instance, those crisis pregnancy centers that discourage American women from having abortions are operated by Christians and supported by federal funding. It means that even if they are mostly unlicensed and often provide false information, they are still funded by the Republican Party. Of course, in both countries the movement is influenced by religion—Catholic and Protestant—which consider abortion to be morally evil, that medicine should not be used to kill innocent

children. Abortion, in their view, contradicts the individual's right to life and the equality of everyone before the law. Many on the conservative right have taken a pro-life position because of their political self-interests, seeing religion as a tool to continue to rule, rather than out of concern for the unborn and/or the wellbeing of women. Based on the survey data collected, a both the US and Canada would be wise to employ preventative programs and offer sex and reproductive health education to young men and women.

The aforementioned suggests that abortion is at the center of American politics, whereas in Canada it does not have the same appeal or political intensity. The debate in Canada falls squarely on the side of the morality of the issue. Canadians, in general, are far more concerned with the practical reality, that women will continue to require the services of a good abortionist, and so accessibility is the important issue. Americans have allowed the discussion to become completely politicized and to the detriment of woman and the society at large. The debate seems more about money and power, having little to do with women or children and the wellbeing of society.

My research intends to offer a new basis of discussion for the moral and politics of abortion in USA and Canada, but of value to other countries in the world where women's health is an issue.

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