**Abortion and Gender Politics**

While the debate surrounding abortion is generally focused on ethical concerns, it has also sparked discussions about how much control the government should have over a woman's body. A major portion of the debate regarding abortion stems from a disagreement on the exact time that human life begins. Opinions on this time vary, ranging from the moment of conception to the moment of birth.

While religious and moral convictions play an important role in shaping individuals' attitudes toward abortion, the abortion debate can also be discussed in terms of gender politics. Many individuals, both men and women, see laws severely restricting or banning abortion as institutionalized government control of women's bodies. They argue that the decision to have an abortion is a personal issue and that the government should not have the authority to dictate what a woman can and cannot do in this matter.

Some view government restrictions on the female body and reproductive freedom as an extension of patriarchy and its view of women as male property. This is not to say that those in favor of making abortion legal necessarily approve of the practice; they simply feel that the government should not make such a personal choice for a woman. Thus, these individuals have been appropriately named the pro-choice group (rather than the pro-abortion group).

Other people view the current abortion debate in the United States as dividing the political sphere between the sexes. They argue that using the term "women's issues" (which includes political topics relating to the body, the home, reproduction, and the family) implies that women should not be concerned with other issues, like the national economy or military actions.

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