

Planned Parenthood has been a non-profit organization since 1916 founded on the primary motive to conduct research and provide advice regarding contraception, family planning, and reproductive health both internally in the United States and abroad. Planned Parenthood is the largest single federation that provides reproductive services, including the controversial service of abortion. This organization prides itself on its services that deliver vital reproductive health care, sex education, and the distribution of information to millions of women, men, and young adults worldwide. Today, the work of Planned Parenthood is carried forward by 38,000 staff members and volunteers. In 2012, Planned Parenthood provided nearly 4.7 million people worldwide with the means to make responsible decisions on account of their sexual and reproductive health. [i] But still the ethical dilemma remains: is it right to provide such services at the expense of the taxpayer's dollar? Are such services deemed righteous and progressive enough by society to remain in the U.S.? To attempt to understand this ethical conundrum this paper will examine Planned Parenthood from a deontological and teleological perspective and explore the underlying foundations that formulate both the opposition and support towards Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood (PP) was founded on October 16, 1916 by Margaret Sanger. Together with her sisters, Ethel Byrne and Fania Mindell, she opened a birth control clinic in Brownsville, Brooklyn. [ii]The sisters' goal was to provide birth control information and advice to women of all types. Their contributions were so influential that women would line up and down the block to await and receive the services offered. PP was founded on the revolutionary idea that women should have the access and care they need to live strong and healthy lives paired with the opportunity to fulfill and live out their dreams. The famous empowering slogan associated with PP is, "No ceilings, No limits!" This slogan as well as the brand's most recent

tagline, “Care. No matter what,” offer both a valuable reflection and insight on behalf of the brand’s identity.

Unbeknownst to the majority of opposition, Planned Parenthood centers around the country do not primarily just focus on the distribution of sexual health advice and abortions. They also offer general health care services such as screenings for anemia, cholesterol, diabetes, and a thorough list of other diagnostic testing. [iii] The staff strives to be caring and knowledgeable as well as to provide a wide range of services to each and every patient. So far, “PP has provided nearly 11 million medical services for nearly three million people, and has helped to prevent approximately 515,000 unintended pregnancies. They also have provided sexual education programs, dating back to 2012, with an estimation of 743 affiliate staff and volunteer educators.”[iv] These volunteer educators provide more than one million people of all types of demographics such as: preschools, universities, prisons, social service programs, religious institutions, and civic organizations. The programs focus on more than 28 different content areas, such as AIDS/HIV and contraception/family planning. [v] In addition to the services they offer in the United States they also have provided health care and education through local partners to advocate for sound U.S. foreign policies that affect sexual and reproductive health and rights globally. In 2012, PP supported partners in 10 developing countries with reproductive health care and education. [vi] Furthering their contributions, they have raised awareness of international reproductive health and rights issues and have mobilized support for responsible U.S. legislation.

One may ask if Planned Parenthood did not exist, what would life be like without the preventive Planned Parenthood measures? The results of unintended pregnancy can carry serious

consequences for women and their families. According to research conducted in 2008 the following findings were found illustrating pregnancy statistics:

Of the 208 million pregnancies that occurred in 2008, it is estimated that 41 percent were unintended. The unintended pregnancy rate fell by 29 percent in developed regions and by 20 percent in developing regions. The highest unintended pregnancy rates were found for Eastern and Middle Africa and the lowest for Southern and Western Europe and Eastern Asia. [vii]

These statistics identify a trend; pregnancy rates are higher in developing nations that do not have access nor education in regards to reproductive health. However, in contrast wealthy developed nations have lower rates of unintended pregnancy due to their subsequent education and access in regards to reproductive health and services.

Aside from the valuable services offered, the question still remains, is Planned Parenthood cost effective? Is it what society deems as valuable? Opposition to PP makes a strong argument in its deontological held views. Motives for opposition include a foundation primarily based upon conservative beliefs. Much of opposition is compiled of members of society that label themselves as “pro-life.” These people hold strong religious beliefs on the status and rights of a child as soon as conception happens. However, these intellects face reciprocal opposition from, relatively new in the last hundred years, enlightened individuals that qualify themselves as “pro-choice.” These “pro-choice” and “pro-life” individuals create a segregation in society. The divide is “too deep,” so to speak, as it seems almost impossible to persuade each person’s ideology, due to their strongly rooted beliefs. Another group that strongly opposes PP is parents. Planned Parenthood pushes confidential services for minors and supports teens as they go against their parents’ wishes; thus establishing another motive to defund, or not support PP in the United

States. This was illustrated just recently when actress Jennifer Lawrence told Glamour magazine that she received birth control from Planned Parenthood when she was a teen growing up in a devout Kentucky household. [viii] One last obvious motive to defund PP is presented by angry taxpayers. These angry citizens believe strongly the government should not be funding social programs. Planned Parenthood was said to have received:

\$553.7 million in taxpayer money last year and showed a bottom-line “income in excess of expenditures” of \$58.8 million. It didn’t even use all the money taxpayers gave them. Over the last 20 years, PP has received \$6.8 billion in taxpayer funds and reported \$1.3 billion in excessive income. It’s no wonder even pro-choice fiscal conservatives are calling for taking all taxpayer funding from Planned Parenthood. [ix]

In contrast, support motives, as mentioned before, consist of new emerging values. These values are rooted away from religious beliefs and push for women’s rights to their own bodies. They see the controversial service of abortion that PP offers, as just another reproductive health service. These “pro-choice” individuals push for new thinking that ultimately having a child is up to the women who will bear and raise that child. They support PP in its controversial option available to women, because abortion is simply just another health service.

The consequences of these two ultimate decisions to fund or defund Planned Parenthood lead into the teleological viewpoint of this divide. If PP was defunded, as stated before, it is estimated and predicted that unintentional pregnancies would increase. In the same line of thinking, women across the U.S. that rely on PP for health services would have to turn elsewhere; they would be left at a dead end. With no other insurance, these women would be left stranded. PP also, even as controversial as it is, does undeniably provide abortion services. If

women who relied on PP all of a sudden no longer had the option to get an abortion legally and with ease of access, we would resort back to a hundred years ago. Abortion would remain as the taboo subject of discussion. Unintentionally pregnant women would feel at a loss of options and may resort back to unsafe practices of abortion. Or if not resorting to this consequence, then being forced by society to continue and have a child they do not wish to raise. On the other hand, to examine the consequences from a “pro-life” view, things could be completely different. The government would save a large quantity of money and could efficiently put it elsewhere; thus being beneficial to the economy and infrastructure as a whole. In “pro-life” eyes, fetuses would no longer die at the hands of doctors, and a fetus would maintain their right to life from the minute of conception.

Today Planned Parenthood is still around. Roe vs. Wade has not been overturned. And abortion as well as reproductive health services are still at ease of access to the public. However, in lieu of recent events, the election may have a future impact. With more seats in senate made up of republicans, perhaps there will be a future shift in funding towards Planned Parenthood. Whatever the case may be, people are reacting in an upset roar. Julie Lynn, manager of external affairs for Planned Parenthood Illinois, said PP “saw an 82 percent increase in the number of women making appointments online for intrauterine devices last month after the election compared with the previous November — an increase of about 200 appointments. After the election, appointments made online for all kinds of birth control services spiked 40 percent over the same time last year.” [x] This is not just limited to the concerns of Illinois women; it is happening nationwide. Cecile Richards, President of Planned Parenthood Action Fund, stated to the public, in a recent statement released to the press on the future for Planned Parenthood post-election, she said, “There are almost no words to capture the threat that this election result poses

to our democracy, to our economic security, to access to reproductive health care and most especially to the safety and dignity of people of color.”[xi] America will just have to stay tuned to find out what’s next for Planned Parenthood.

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[i] Parenthood, P. (2016). Planned Parenthood | Official Site. Retrieved November 30, 2016, from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

[ii] Planned Parenthood | 100 Years Strong. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from <https://100years.plannedparenthood.org/>

[iii] Parenthood, P. (2016). Planned Parenthood | Official Site. Retrieved November 30, 2016, from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

[iv] Ibid.

[v] Ibid.

[vi] Ibid.

[vii] Singh, S., Sedgh, G., & Hussain, R. (2010, December). Unintended Pregnancy: Worldwide Levels, Trends, and Outcomes. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from <http://www.mpts101.org/docs/SinghSFP-UnintendedPregnancy.pdf>

[viii] The Future Is Beginning to Look Bleak for Planned Parenthood. (2016). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from <http://www.cnsnews.com/commentary/jim-sedlak/future-beginning-look-bleak-planned-parenthood>

[ix] Ibid.

[x] Schencker, L. (2016). IUD appointments up 82% after Trump's win, Planned Parenthood of Illinois reports. Retrieved November 29, 2016, from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-trump-birth-control-demand-spike-1202-biz-20161201-story.html>

[xi] What a Trump presidency could mean for Planned Parenthood, women's health. (n.d.). Retrieved November 29, 2016, from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-donald-trump-presidency-could-mean-for-planned-parenthood-womens-health/>

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