

A Cross-National Examination of Abortion Politics: Contrasting Perspectives in the United States and France

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Abstract: The debate surrounding abortion laws has been one of great prominence in current politics. While some nations take a strong stance against the accessibility of the practice, others view it as an essential protection of women's autonomy. The main objective of this paper is to perform a comparative analysis of both the historical and contemporary legal landscape of abortion within France and the United States. Throughout this paper, the examination of the evolution of abortion laws in both countries are laid against a backdrop of shifting societal values, cultural influences, and political dynamics. In the United States, the narrative of abortion laws is marked by intense ideological complications and complex legal battles that result from deep rooted societal divisions. In contrast, France's progression leaned towards growing liberalization, strongly influenced by public health priorities and an emphasis on gender equity. Through delving into key legal decisions, political movements, and public relations, this paper aims to illustrate the shaping legal and cultural frameworks within the two nations shape their respective policies and practices surrounding the topic of abortion. This paper highlights the implications of these divergent approaches towards women's reproductive autonomy, government health outcomes, and overarching societal norms. The comparative analysis of abortion within the two democracies seeks to provide insights into the underlying reasons for the stark differences in their approaches, striving to draw conclusions that may provide insight for future legal and policy initiatives in the realm of reproductive rights.

Keywords: France, United States, Abortion, Legal Analysis, Policy Reform

1. Introduction

The topic of abortion remains one of the most contentious issues in modern society, reflecting deep dilemmas of ethical, legal, and societal concerns. A comparative analysis of abortion politics in two democracies with divisive approaches--United States and France--provides a unique lens to how varying legal frameworks, societal attitudes, and historical contexts influence approaches to this continuous issue. Although both nations are deeply rooted in liberal and democratic beliefs, their legal precedence and cultural traditions offer starkly contrasting views on the issue of abortion policy. The United States and France's polarizing paths of abortion legislation provides a lens into the profound impact of societal elements on governmental issues. The comparison between the tumultuous journey of abortion laws in the U.S. and the more progressive, yet still challenging, evolution in France, this paper illustrates how legal approaches to abortion reflect deeper societal

values and political structures. Through this comparative analysis, we aim to understand not only the legal and ethical dimensions of abortion laws but the broader implications of these decisions for women's autonomy and societal health in both nations.

2. Historical Perspectives

2.1. Evolution of Abortion Laws in the United States

The topic of abortion has always been one of great conflict within the United States, with its history vividly illustrating the complex interplay between society, legal and political influences, unveiling the broader cultural shifts throughout time. While abortion was initially somewhat tolerated under common law, by the late 19th century, changing medical ethics and societal attitudes led to a shift in states. This change in society led to states to enact laws that either heavily restricted abortion or outright banned the practice with no exceptions at any stage of pregnancy. Largely influenced by moral and ethical considerations, this restrictive period lasted until the Supreme Court decision in 1973 -- *Roe v. Wade*. The decision made under *Roe v. Wade* radically transformed the legal landscape of abortion in the United States. Specifically, it established that a woman's ability to make a decision on whether or not to receive an abortion falls under the right to privacy with the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment [1]. Though a federal decision altered the overarching law surrounding reproductive rights, this newly amended right was balanced against the individual states' interests in abortion regulation, particularly in cases of post-viability. Nevertheless, this ruling effectively decriminalized abortion on a national level, establishing a woman's legal right to obtain an abortion up until the point of fetal viability. The decision made during *Roe v. Wade* marked a monumental turning point in the discussion of reproductive rights but did not put an end to the national debate over the subject. The issue of abortion once again rose to the Supreme Court with the case of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* in 1992 [2]. This case weighed elements of the original *Roe v. Wade* with the familial relations of the women; in a bitter 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court upheld the decision of the precedent. However, though the core principle was upheld, this case pushed for the introduction of the "undue burden" standard, which states that if the person seeking an abortion of a non-viable fetus can prove that they would endure an undue burden as a result of a state restriction on abortion, then the statute imposing an undue burden will be struck down either entirely or partially [3]. This standard has since played an essential role in abortion jurisprudence, determining that the Court could regulate abortions so long as they do not impose significant obstacles prior to the full viability of the fetus, thus protecting a woman's right to choose.

Conflicting debates surrounding the topic of abortion continued throughout the late 1990s and the early 2000. In 2007, the Supreme Court's decision in *Gonzales v. Carhart* reaffirmed the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, the first time where the Court upheld a ban on a specific abortion procedure since *Roe* [4]. This decision was a reflection of the Court's ever-changing composition and evolving political climate, signaling a shift away from the previously lenient understanding of reproductive rights, leaning towards a more restrictive policy.

The struggle between the limitations of state jurisdiction versus federal regulation continued with the *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* in 2016, where the Supreme Court overruled two provisions of a Texas law that imposed strict statutes on abortion clinics and providers throughout the state. During this case, the court ruled that the provisions under Texas law placed a burden on women seeking abortions and the medical benefits given along with the burden did not justify the restrictions [5]. The Supreme Court reinforced the standard of undue burden set in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* trial and underscored the continuous tension between federal, state, and individual rights [6]. In June of 2020, *Medical Services v. Russo* was struck down by the Supreme Court, ruling against a Louisiana Law that required doctors who performed abortions to have

privileges at nearby hospitals [7]. In a 5-4 decision, the Court deemed the requirement to be unconstitutional, citing its similarity to the Texas Law presented in the *Whole Woman's Health* case of 2016.

Most recently, the United States Supreme Court made a historic and far-reaching decision on June 24, 2022, in which *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. This ruling determined that the constitutional rights to abortion which had been upheld for nearly half a century, were no longer accepted. This decision took away the protection of the federal umbrella and shifted abortion rights to be a matter of state discretion, creating a divisive landscape of laws regarding abortion that varies significantly across states. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* opened the doors to future actions to be taken against the right to abortion [8]. Just last month, the Supreme Court heard arguments that asked for FDA action to be taken to make the abortion pill Mifepristone harder to obtain. While the results of this case are yet to be seen, the implications for the accessibility to abortion services are extremely significant, especially regarding regulations surrounding online prescriptions, mail delivery and provision of drugs by nonphysician providers.

The legal and societal landscape of reproductive rights in the United States is continuously being reshaped by emerging cases and judicial decisions. These laws and the history of its evolution not only illustrate the nation's ongoing debate over the topic of abortion but underscores the interconnected delicate balance of individual liberties and state interests, one that will continue to evolve with each new legal decision and policy reform.

2.2. Evolution of Abortion Laws in France

Unlike the United States, the evolution of abortion laws in France reflects a much more reversed journey moving from a strict prohibition to broader access, representation and societal progression to gender equality and reproductive freedom. Dissimilar to the highly polarized sides of abortion politics within the United States, the French journey has been characterized by a steady move towards loosening restrictions and liberalization, influenced by significant cases, feminist activism, and public opinion.

This shift away from strict restrictions began with the infamous 1972 Bobigny Affair. This pivotal moment highlighted the dangers of illegal abortions. The details of this case included a young 16-year-old Marie-Claire who had become pregnant as a result of rape [9]. As abortion at the time was determined to be illegal, her mother Madame Chevalier sought out the help of Madame Bambuck in order to obtain an abortion for her daughter [10]. However, this procedure was illegal under French law and the police investigation into criminal charges and Marie-Claire's trial attracted significant attention from the media and the entire nation. This trial brought awareness to the harsh realities and dangers restrictive abortion policies can have on women in society, and shifting public opinion ultimately led to Marie-Claire's acquittal under the argument of extenuating circumstances. This case shook France and pushed for a movement towards legal reform in legalizing abortion. The Bobigny Affair also laid the groundwork for the introduction of the Veil Law by Health Minister Simone Veil in 1975 [11]. Taking after its creator, the Veil law marked a monumental progression in French society, allowing for accessible and protected abortion under specific situations. This newly introduced law legalized abortion to within the first ten weeks of pregnancy, given certain criterion are met. Nevertheless, the law still placed an emphasis on not encouraging abortion but simply allowing for exceptions instead of ultimatums. Simone Veil's determined advocacy and dedication played a pivotal role in pushing the French societal view to move towards a more compassionate stance for the women involved, one that took into consideration the rights and health of individuals instead of solely focusing on the fetus.

This trial kicked off a series of movements that shifted the progression towards providing more accessible abortion to women in France over the following decades. Key legislative changes such as

extension of the period for which abortions could be performed without specific justifications from 10 to 12 weeks in 2014 was an impactful step in reaching a compromise between protecting the fetus and female autonomy. This change also included the rights of minors to access abortion without parental consent, placing an emphasis on the privacy of young women in extreme circumstances. In 2016, France once again took a significant step in reproductive rights through the legalization of purchasing medical abortion pills at home. This change was focused on protecting the privacy for those who choose to terminate pregnancies, placing the government in a position of facilitating the people and supporting them through hard times and decisions instead of merely permitting it under desperate circumstances. In the two years that followed, the French government established protection zones that surrounded abortion clinics in an effort to protect women from anti-abortion activists, ensuring that individuals were able to enter facilities without the fear of harassment or intimidation. This continuous movement towards protecting those who seek out abortion services under the law placed an emphasis on the safeguarding of government guaranteed women's rights to abortion services and demonstrated the government's commitment to the cause.

In 2019, the French government once again demonstrated their commitment to improving abortion access for women through its policy reform of fully reimbursing the cost of medical abortions for all. This statute aimed to eliminate the previously existing financial barrier that may have been placed on women, reflecting its goal of reproductive rights protecting and equity. Complementing these political advancements, French education has also placed an emphasis on educating the young on sexual education and contraceptives, equipping their future generation with the knowledge and understanding of the complicated subject to make informed decisions about their own bodies.

France has clearly demonstrated a commitment to reproductive health and women's rights through multiple progressive steps. This contrasts sharply with the more reserved and divergent approaches taken in the United States. The history of French law evolution can be seen not only through the legal and political changes made by the government but also indicates the change in society values towards the connotation of abortions, placing more focus on protecting a women's health and body.

3. Legal Frameworks and Regulations

3.1. United States and Abortion Legality

The current stance on abortion within the United States remains at a height of polarization between groups, with influencing factors both legally and socially. The legality and availability of services vary drastically across states. While some states place strict restrictions regarding mandatory waiting periods, medical requirements, and gestational limits, others opt for a focus on female autonomy and a woman's constitutional right. Regardless of the focus, the debate over abortion rights continues to be fiercely argued in all sectors of political, religious, and judicial life, with continuous efforts by both sides of advocates and opponents. The controversy continues to shape reform and legislation and organizations continue to assert their beliefs surrounding the accessibility of legal abortion.

The divisive views surrounding abortion are marked most evidently through the conflict regulations at certain federal and state levels, most clearly seen in recent legislative trends and conflicts that continue to stir public opinion and pushing for legal challenges on rulings. The complex structure of federal and state regulation layers creates a structure within the United States that allows for this drastic variation present in reproductive regulations across the country. Historically, the federal stance on abortion has consistently set a broad framework for which individual states may add restrictions to regular abortion. However, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, removed federal protection of abortion rights and allowed for states to restrict abortion without a bottom line of access [12]. This decentralization of legal parameters surrounding such a controversial topic led to extremely divisive laws. Some anti-abortion states implemented "trigger laws" during the trial that would come

into effect to completely ban abortions the moment *Roe v. Wade* was shot down [12]. In stark contrast, pro-abortion states prepared protective laws to safeguard abortion rights within the borders of their states in preparation for the reversal. With this monumental change, the United States legal framework does not contain a uniform policy surrounding abortion, but instead a patchwork of individual state laws that significantly vary from one region to another.

The legislative landscape surrounding abortion in the U.S. has been determined by controversy and continuous shifts. Some conservative states have passed laws that effectively ban all abortion after six weeks of pregnancy without exceptions, a time limitation at which many women may not even be aware of their pregnancy. These new restrictive legislations have been met with significant amounts of push back in the forms of litigation as well as advocacy challenges on constitutionality and various other legal grounds. However, the legal aspect of debates remains to be only a part of a larger conversation. Many arguments surrounding reproductive rights are deeply entrenched in political and religious influences. The bipartisanship of the United States exacerbates the polarized views on the issue, bringing the topic of abortion to the forefront of many political debates and legislative campaigns. Strong religious groups in the U.S. society also play a significant role, with many protesting against the accessibility of abortion on grounds of moral and ethical lines [13].

The continuous discussion surrounding drastic legislative actions have influenced policy on both a national and state level. Nevertheless, many continue to assert the importance of safe and legal access to abortion to the overall health and wellbeing of the female population. Advocates claim that ultimatum restrictive laws do not cease the need or occurrence of abortions but rather change the nature of such operations to more unsafe and unregulated practices that place the lives of the women at risk. Strong voices have begun to emerge to try to find a compromise between the polarization beliefs, focusing on implementing laws that restrict abortion to but provide leniency and leeway for those who seek out the practice for personal reasons [14]. As the debate over abortion rights in the U.S continues to be intensely argued, deep societal divides have emerged, ensuring this to be an issue that will remain present in political and social debates for years to come.

3.2. French Abortion Policies

The abortion landscape in France remains in great variation to that seen in the United States today. Despite minor debates, the statutory perimeter and recent legislative changes within France underscores the nation's progressive stance surrounding abortion, aiming to ensure rights of access are upheld and protected for the women. The main contributor to such a unified front in France's stances on reproductive rights can be attributed to the strong central framework that the government has guaranteed, determining abortion access to be a fundamental right. French law emphasizes the cruciality of informed consent and mandates that provide information and support throughout the abortion process. Their goal focuses on respecting the autonomy of the individual while ensuring that the decision of the abortion is one of free will and gravely thought through.

The French political system allows for the implementation of these policies on all levels, with a strong central backing to oversee the consistency of healthcare provision across the country. This structure ensures women in all regions of France have equal access to abortion services, directly contrasting the decentralized and scatter access framework used by the United States. Throughout the 2010s, France underwent multiple significant legislation changes that further solidified their expansions into providing access abortion. Despite a steady flow of progressive measures, abortion remains a contentious issue in many circles in France, particularly within communities of conservative views and religious dominance. However, unlike the U.S, these views fall mainly as outliers and do not dominate the public discourse as prominently as the various parties do in the United States. Moreover, the views revolve mainly around how to improve access and support rather than the legalities of abortion.

The France positioning on abortion demonstrates a strong governmental and societal commitment to protecting women's autonomy and providing safe legal abortion services. The commitment is reflected through the continuous evaluation and amendment of laws to adapt to the ever-changing needs of society.

4. Societal Attitudes and Cultural Influences

4.1. Cultural Factors Shaping Abortion Attitudes in the US

The debate surrounding abortion rights in the United States is shaped by a intertwining of cultural factors, encompassing religious influences, partisan ideologies and advocacy groups. Each of these elements reflects the multifaceted social, political, and religious landscape of the nation and reinforces the values in which this complex issue is embedded.

One element that remains in significant power throughout the abortion debate is the influence of religion on abortion attitudes. In the United States, religious traditions offer varying perspectives, having a profound effect on the views of their adherents. For instance, the Catholic Church's strong stance on abortion comes from their religious belief that life begins at conception, translating to their staunch opposition toward accessible abortions. Their viewpoint, grounded in the Christian belief that all human life is sacred, echoes the teachings and values of the Church and their religion. Similarly, the evangelical Protestant branch of Christianity also takes the stance against abortions, citing biblical teachings that emphasizes the sanctity and divinity of life at conception. With these deeply rooted beliefs, these religious groups are active in promoting their pro-life positioning through community outreach, teachings, and political engagement. However, it is not to say all denominations of religion oppose the accessibility of abortions. Right leaning religious groups, such as mainline Protestant and Reform Judaism often support reproductive rights. Their emphasis is placed on the health and wellbeing of the women involved and argue that seeking an abortion is a personal decision, one that the interpretation of their religion does not intervene with. These groups advocate for policy reforms that encourage the protection of safe and legal abortion services, reflecting a differing theological and ethical perspective between religious groups.

Another powerful cultural factor that influences abortion attitudes in the US is political ideology. With the increased bipartisanship in the nation, the abortion issue has become highly polarized, often in line with major political parties adopting opposing sides of the issue. While exceptions do exist, the consensus of the Republican Party aligns with the conservative ideology of opposing abortion, deeming the practice to be morally and ethically unjust. Republicans often pursue legislative action that actively works towards the prohibiting and banning of accessible abortions, believing that a federal rejection of the practice would lead to a decrease in the action and a protection of what they consider to be their traditional moral values. On the other hand, the Democratic Party strongly supports the right to choose abortion, incorporating this positioning into a broader political agenda that speaks to the right of personal autonomy and women's rights. Democrats view access to safe abortions as a fundamental aspect of reproductive health care and believe the banning of abortions will only lead to an increase in more dangerous versions of such practices [1]. It is important to note that this ideological divide is not simply a matter of party politics but a reflection of deeper philosophical differences surrounding rights, autonomy, and the role of government in society.

Advocacy groups are another growing movement in the US that plays a critical role in shaping public and political opinions on abortion. These organizations have the ability to mobilize support, influence public views and affect policy through exercising their right to free speech and protest, a keystone value of Americanism. Groups in support of the Pro-life movement such as the National Right to Life committee, focus on promoting anti-abortion laws and encouraging alternative options such as adoption. They can advocate for their cause through lobbying, rallies, and education

campaigns to engage with the public. While on opposing sides of the battle, pro-choice organizations such as Planned Parenthood similarly champion for the protection and expansions of abortion rights through counteracting the stigma surrounding abortion and educate the public about reproductive rights and health issues; all of which they used to protect public access to safe reproductive health services and fight against restrictive legislative attempts.

Abortion attitudes in the United States are ever changing, constantly being reshaped by a complex dynamic between religious beliefs, political ideologies, and advocacy groups. These various factors within society collectively influence the perception, discussion, and legislation of reproductive rights in the United States, highlighting the deep gap between beliefs but also the opportunity for communication in American society [4]. As such, understanding the influences of these elements remain crucial for continuing the conversation surrounding reproductive rights.

4.2. Cultural Factors Shaping Abortion Attitudes in the France

Like that of the US, abortion attitudes in France are shaped by a variety of societal and cultural factors that include public health opinions and the growing feminist movements. However, in contrast to the United States where religion and politics are closely intertwined, the French view on abortion is characterized by a more secular and rights-based approach.

Despite its rich religious history, France is a staunchly secular nation, with its dedication to *laïcité* (secularism) being a cornerstone of its national identity and policy making. This emphasis secures religion as a matter of individual privacy and choice, once that remains separate from public and political life. This secular approach creates a foundation of attitudes towards abortion in France that is not ruled by religious doctrine like that of many other nations but one that focuses on the progression of rights and movements in society. However, religious influences continue to exist, primarily through that of the Roman Catholic Church, one whose history is intertwined with the cultural and political origins of the nation. As a result, although the influence of Catholicism has waned significantly in recent decades, the values it holds dear still acts as a factor that shapes the opinion and beliefs of parts of the population. Nevertheless, the secular ethos and political justice often overrides these religious viewpoints in policy and legislation, prioritizing women's rights and political ethics over religious beliefs.

Unlike the United States where the main debate surrounding abortion focuses on the morality of the issue, France views abortion as more of a public health issue rather than one of ethical dilemma. The French health system has historically supported abortion as an essential part of healthcare, emphasizing the importance of accessible female-specific medical services for the good of the general population. This belief stems from the perspective that abortion services are a crucial part of women's health and should be managed and protected as such. The government's actions offer a clear commitment to their directive, to provide clearly regulated access to abortion through a national health program, a vital element of public health. By presenting a united front to the public, the government's dedication reduces the stigma around abortion, moving the focus away from a debate of morals and creating the narrative of a necessary medical procedure in women's medical services [10]. The focus on public health has resulted in new policies that not only supports the accessibility of abortions but also the improvement and education and prevention strategies, cultivating an environment that works to provide the most and best number of options for those making such a decision.

The growing feminist and women's rights movements in France have no doubt had a profound impact on shaping the discussion around abortion laws. Movements like such have historically framed abortion to be a fundamental right of women, a crucial point of protection in order to ensure one's physical autonomy. The infamous *Manifesto of the 343*, published in 1971 sparked significant public discourse that led to the decriminalization of abortion. The manifesto documented 343 French women

who openly admitted to having an illegal abortion, a non-violent refusal to obey a law that they do not agree with [13]. This would prove to be one of the bravest acts toward achieving French women's reproductive rights, ultimately leading to the "Veil Law" in 1975. Movements like these continue to have a profound impact on abortion policy. The advocacy for women's rights to make decisions over their own bodies remains at the forefront of the discussions, challenging restrictions and promoting the moralization and de-stigmatization of abortion. Feminism in France has been a political movement that intersects with many parts of society, influencing policy reform and legislative debates that contribute to the larger framework of gender equality in society [7].

The cultural and societal influences on abortion views in France can be attributed to its secular government framework and commitment to gender equality. These factors combined with a shift in societal perspective from abortion being a debate or morality to one of health allows for a progressive approach to abortion. Understanding these cultural elements and how they influence French public opinion provide insight into France's commitment to incorporating abortion as part of their healthcare, carefully navigating a complex and ever-changing issue.

5. Public Health and Reproductive Rights

5.1. Public Health Implications of Abortion Policies in the US

Policies surrounding abortion in the United States have profound implications for public health, affected maternal health policies and highlight the socioeconomic disparities in the US healthcare system. As policies fluctuate, state and federal organizations continue to evolve the public health landscape, revealing the benefits of accessible abortions and the health challenges restrictive laws impose on those seeking.

As one may easily infer, the relationship between safe abortion access and maternal health outcomes is significant. Legal abortion procedures in the United States are generally safe for the woman and carry minimal risk, especially during the early stages of pregnancy. In contrast, the risk of complications increases drastically from illegal abortions, making it one of the five leading causes for maternal mortality. Access to safe providers helps prevent these unnecessary morbidity rates, posing a greater health risk for the mother than providing a safe obtainment of the procedure. Restrictive abortion policies may force some women to carry unwanted pregnancies to term, for those of previous medical history, posing an even greater health risk due to the complications that may arise out of childbirth. For example, women that are at higher risk of complications during pregnancies are more likely to experience severe issues such as postpartum hemorrhage, infections, and other long term health problems, all of which can be avoided with an abortion. In many of these cases, the mortality rate of these women is simply too high in comparison to the effects of an abortion. Furthermore, restrictive policies such as Texas's prohibition of abortion throughout the state often leads to women going out of state to seek for these services, resulting in delays and pushing procedures into stages of pregnancy where they become inherently riskier.

Another public health implication of limited access to abortion are seen most significantly in varying socioeconomic statuses. Geographic location, economic status, and race are all elements that play a crucial role in one's ability to obtain an abortion as regulations tighten. States with more restrictive abortion laws will often have a significantly less number of clinics and states that view it as inherently necessary. As a result, women in those states, especially in rural or impoverished areas may have to travel long distances to access these services, incurring travel costs and time off work they may not be able to afford, as well as putting them in a position of high risk for complications. These disparities are particularly pronounced amongst low-income women and women of color, who face additional barriers rooted in other areas of society such as lack of health insurance, limited availability of providers and discriminatory practices within healthcare systems. The restrictions on

abortion in many states disproportionately affects these groups in society, further enforcing a vicious cycle. The intersection of race, poverty and access to healthcare means that the negative impacts of restriction abortion policies target specific groups in society, creating barriers that are not borne by all [6].

The public health implications of restrictive abortion policies in the United States are far reaching, influencing maternal health outcomes, and deepening socioeconomic divides within society. As policies continue to evolve, the need for comprehensive health strategies that place focus on safe Medicare care for the people remains vital. Abortion policies and strategies must take into account the needs of women across all socioeconomic levels, aiming to address the health disparities that already exist under current health policies. Understanding and emphasizing these implications is essential for policy makers and health care providers as they advocate for their respective positions, influencing the health of women across all sectors of the nation.

5.2. Public Health Implications of Abortion Policies in France

French abortion policies reflect a much more secular and public health-oriented approach than that of the United States, its implications for the nation's healthcare demonstrated a much higher directive towards protection of reproductive rights. The nation's legislative framework supports the integration of safe abortions into the healthcare system, leading to better health outcomes for women in the country.

France's abortion policies have revolved around the objective of ensuring safe and accessible abortion services for all and the impact of this commitment is seen in drastic contrast to other nations. According to French laws, abortion during the first trimesters do not need specific conditions or medical provisions and those during later trimesters still receive a great amount of leniency. This creates a sense of security where the government is working with the women and supporting them in their decision instead of against them, largely reducing the incidence of unsafe abortions, a common issue in areas with more restrictions [14]. As a result, the public health outcomes associated with France's abortion policies are generally positive. With the necessary medical support, standards of the practice are held to high expectations leading to relatively low complication rates of abortion in France. Moreover, the integration of these services within the general health care system allows for equal access for all women in the country, eliminating the barrier that various socioeconomic backgrounds may present. This allows for all to obtain the necessary care needed for an abortion, lower the risk of medical complications, and relieves excessive financial burden. Combined with a dedication to sexual education and easy access contraception, France de-stigmatizes the connotations surrounding abortion, allowing individuals to receive help when needed which ultimately benefits all. This proactive approach not only lowers unintended pregnancy rates but by extensions decreases the need for abortions, improving general reproductive health outcomes. The French approach to abortion has generally positive implications, demonstrating through their own actions how preventative measures and humane leniency provide more value to society than restrictive legislation.

Abortion policy in France places a strong emphasis on reproductive rights and bodily autonomy, reflecting a greater society desire for gender equality. This can be seen through their legal framework and continuous recognition of abortion as an essential protected right. Under French law, the right to abortion is protected by the legal framework, placing an importance on lowering excessive legal and bureaucratic barriers, working to uphold the right to autonomy. Moreover, the argument surrounding this topic in France is largely avoidance of moral and religious concerns but instead focuses on the emphasis of individuals and their public health considerations, providing a much more secular viewpoint that aims for a protection of personal liberty instead of moral condemnation. This perspective is aligned with the notion that women are capable of making their own decisions regarding personal reproductive health, free of external influences that are not of importance to their

own situation. With this public belief, France has taken steps to continue to protect and expand the rights within their country [9]. Recent reforms have worked to increase unrestricted access to abortion services through the establishment of new clinics and facilities. Moreover, the country has worked towards covering the financial costs of abortion under the national health insurance, a change that will allow for more women to have abortions as a viable option. These changes reinforced the French government's commitment to reproductive rights and demonstrates a strive for equality that sets a standard many other nations have yet to achieve [8].

France's approach to abortion policies demonstrates a positive influence, one that works towards the integration of a key reproductive health service into their national healthcare, prioritizing safe access and women's autonomy. These actions not only lead to an overall better public health but in contrast illustrate the repercussions of restrictive policies. Aligning with France's secular and rights-based values, their support for accessible abortions serve as a model for balancing health imperatives and individual liberties, illustrating the benefits of inclusivity and communication that results in the betterment of the nation.

6. Political Discourse and Policy Debates

The debate over abortion policy has been one that includes a large number of stakeholders in both the United States and France. From political parties to interest groups, each organization exerts influence in their respective communities, influencing public opinion and national legislation. No matter their views, these groups play a significant role in political and social spheres, their impact shaping the cultural and legislative landscapes of abortion policies around the world.

In the United States, political parties and advocacy organizations are at the forefront of the abortion debate. Under the current political climate, the Republican and Democratic parties are often at opposing positions on the issue of abortion, both of which are reflected in their policy proposals and legislative efforts. Democrats often place importance on women's autonomy and personal rights, supporting the shift towards more lenient policies and accessible abortions. Influenced by many conservative Christian ideologies, the Republican party on the other hand often pushes for stricter abortion laws, placing an emphasis on the protection of all life. Moreover, the joining of advocacy organizations such as the National Right to Life Committee and Susan B Anthony are very active in promoting their Pro-Life beliefs, lobbying for stricter laws and endorsing political candidates whose beliefs align with theirs. Similarly, pro-choice organizations like Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America utilize the same strategies to advocate for more accessibility services. No matter their beliefs, organizations like such play an important role in influencing public opinion on the topic of abortion, bringing it in as key agendas of political campaigns and a hot topic in current US politics.

Another element that plays an essential role in shaping public opinion in the US is the media. As social media platforms and alternative news sources become more and more prominent, information and knowledge are more easily obtained than ever. As a result, the portrayal of abortion in the media can greatly influence perceptions and exacerbate polarization. In the current political atmosphere, media coverage often mirrors the divisions within American society surrounding the topic of abortion, with news outlets presenting dramatically different perspectives on the issue. While right leaning sources such as fox news often advocate for the support of abortion prohibition, liberal outlets push for more leniency in legislation. As a result, public opinion on abortion in the US remained deeply divided, with media representation reflecting a complex dispersion on the scale of pro-life to pro-choice. Influenced by a variety of factors, abortion has shifted from an issue of legality to one intertwined with personal beliefs, moral values, and situational considerations.

In France, while the Parliament and positions of political parties still play a large role in the decision-making process for abortion policies, most mainstream parties are generally in favor of abortion rights. The nation has a unique interest in protecting personal freedoms which is reflected in

the continuous legal history of supporting accessible abortions. However, outlying values still exist. Parties on the far right of the political spectrum still push for more restriction measures and abortion prohibition but the overall focus remains on the importance of bodily autonomy. Recent changes in legislation such as extending the gestational limit for abortions demonstrate a majority support within the Parliament, and the steady commitment to institutional support for abortion rights.

Another key player in abortion policy in France are medical professionals and non-government organizations (NGOs). The medical community in France has been a strong voice for pro-abortion advocacy, emphasizing the importance of providing safe abortions and the prioritization of patient health and safety. Their perspectives often hold weight in the legislative process, ensuring that government laws align with the ethical stands of modern medicine. As a result, the public often values the views of the medical community, using them as a bridge to speak for the people, working with legislators to create inclusive and effective reproductive policy. These groups often contribute to the conversation, demonstrating through their own actions of providing essential services and support of vulnerable populations to advocate for the importance of reproductive rights.

Within the United States and France, a wide variety of stakeholders hold influence over the conversation surrounding abortion. While specific dynamics within each nation may vary, the influence of political parties, media, medical professionals, and non-governmental organizations remain extremely relevant in the creation and implementation of abortion laws. Nevertheless, both nations work hard to maneuver the complex topic of abortions and find a balance between morals rights and public health that helps the nation progress in the right direction.

7. Comparative Analysis

Conducting a comparative analysis of abortion politics in the United States and France, a key difference between the two stems from their governmental and healthcare frameworks. While the US utilizes a federalist framework, France adopts a more centralized system. Both types of government structure translated over to their healthcare, causing disparities in the nations' approach to the subject of abortion.

The federalist system in the United States allowed for an overarching broad brush to paint over abortion discussions. However, policies made on a federal level tend to be vague and open to interpretation, leaving the actual implementation of said legislation to the individual states. As a result, this leads to significant room for leeway, creating a diverse collection of different abortion laws that remain effective within state borders. The impact of this division must not be understated. As abortion laws lack a unified national front, those seeking for the procedure may be forced to spend excessive time and money to simply access the practice safely. States have the power to impose laws that require waiting periods, mandatory counseling and unnecessary regulations and paperwork on both facilities and individuals, exacerbating healthcare inequities and causing confusion in society, increasing the risk of pregnancy related mortality rates and medical emergencies.

On the other hand, France's centralized healthcare system paints a picture of stark contrast. Abortion services are supported through the National Health Service, incorporating it as an essential part of their healthcare program. As a result, abortions are viewed as a uniform standard of care across the country illustrating a centralized approach and a united government front. This allowed for the State to oversee abortion services and funding to ensure that all women, regardless of their economic status, are able to exercise their right. Though regional variations still exist, and accessibility may decrease in rural areas where healthcare facilities are scarce, the government's commitment to protecting abortion rights allowed for the Parliament to spend time creating legislation that mitigate these smaller issues instead of fighting within themselves to decide on a direction. Regardless, the French centralized system allowed for a clear presentation of public opinion on abortion, deeming it a basic women's right that the nation continues to protect.

The contrast in political systems between the United States and France reveals part of the reasoning behind their drastically varying approaches to the topic of abortion. While the US experiences a deep division in society fueled by political climates and a lack of federal unity, France's centralized model provides a broader continuity of values but faces challenges in implementation throughout urban and rural regions. These differences highlight the impact of the government system and ideological landscapes on abortion views in the two nations. Nevertheless, the topic of abortion is one of great complexity in both nations, a constant struggle of finding the delicate balance between morality, legality, and public health.

8. Lessons Learned

The lessons learned from abortion politics in the U.S. and France provide valuable insights into improving access and equity in reproductive healthcare. These lessons underscore the importance of addressing both logistical and cultural barriers to access. As the global community continues to advocate for women's rights, these insights can help shape more inclusive, effective policies that ensure every woman has the right to make decisions about her own body. The future direction of global reproductive rights movements should aim not only to defend existing rights but also to expand them, ensuring that reproductive autonomy is a reality for all women, everywhere.

9. Conclusion

This cross-national examination of abortion politics in the United States and France reveals a complex tapestry of legal frameworks, societal attitudes, and historical contexts that shape each nation's approach to reproductive rights. Through this analysis, we observe stark contrasts between the U.S.'s federalist approach, which creates a mosaic of varying state policies, and France's centralized healthcare system, which provides a more uniform application of abortion laws. These differences underscore the broader implications of governance structures on public health and women's autonomy.

The insights from this comparative analysis highlight important lessons and directions for future policymaking. Enhancing access and equity remains a pivotal challenge, especially in places like the U.S., where legal and cultural barriers continue to restrict comprehensive reproductive healthcare. Meanwhile, the global reproductive rights movement can draw on the successes and challenges of both nations to advocate for policies that ensure safe, accessible, and equitable abortion care worldwide.

Understanding these diverse approaches enriches our global discourse on reproductive rights, illustrating how legal and cultural environments influence the ongoing struggle for women's autonomy. By learning from each nation's experiences, stakeholders globally can better navigate the complex interplay of factors that affect reproductive health policies, ultimately working towards a more just and equitable landscape for all women.

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