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## Planned Parenthood: Defend or Defund?

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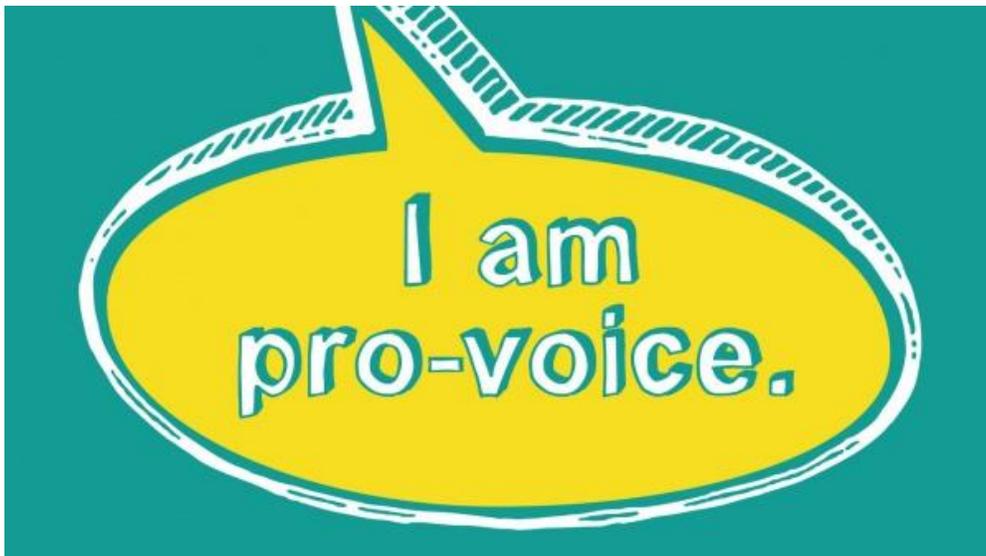
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## Planned Parenthood: Defend or Defund?



Pro-Voice Image from Abortion Petition Website (<https://exhaleprovoice.org/feature/sign-pro-voice-pledge>)

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Practical and Professional Ethics  
Essay  
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Division of Humanities and Communication  
Spring 2017

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## Project Proposal

HCOM 475: SENIOR CAPSTONE  
PROJECT PROPOSAL  
ESSAY OPTION

1. **Jasmine Lopez - Practical and Professional Ethics**
2. **Focus:** Should the government defund Planned Parenthood? I chose this area to focus on because I feel passionate about women's rights, and the taking of power and decisions from humans that we should always have the right to. Specifically, reproductive rights. This has been an issue of debate for many years.
3. **Alignment with Common Theme:** My project will focus on how power is being used in this situation and what we should do about the decision. I will be applying leadership by doing research on this topic and informing the community about all the points of view before coming to a well informed decision.
4. **Purpose:** I hope to be able to better inform my community (and myself) about the real benefits of this organization. I wish to bring light to a situation that has been under fire for as long as it has been around by showing all the multiple perspectives of the debate.
5. **Capstone Title:** "Planned Parenthood: Defend or Defund?"
6. **Working Summary:**  
My project will be addressing the debate on whether the government should defund planned parenthood. In doing so, I will address multiple points of view on this issue, and talk about all those who are affected.

### **The Bill:**

The bill that was passed stated that any federal funds to Planned Parenthood, or any of its affiliates, is prohibited. This excludes any affiliates/clinics that certify that they will not perform, or provide any funds to other entities that will perform abortions.

It can be found here:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/3134/all-info>

### **Defund Key Points:**

- *TAX MONEY.* Taxpayers believe their money is being wasted by going into an organization they believe is giving out more abortions than actual healthcare services.
- *We don't need Planned Parenthood.* Not enough women of reproductive age will ever need/use/go into a Planned Parenthood.
- Not enough prenatal services/cancer services exist to actually help women.

- Many other clinics organizations they believe will better care for women and their healthcare needs, without taxpayers having to fund the many abortions that take place at Planned Parenthood.
- Do not want to give money to an organization that “commits abortions”.
- Promotes sexual activity in young women.

**Defend Key Points:**

- *Access to affordable birth control.* This gives a woman, or even a family, some control over when they want to become a parent. It is a huge responsibility to take care of another life for the rest of your life, this organization helps women choose when they are ready. Take some control over their lives.
- *Prevention.* This organization helps prevent teen pregnancy, STD’s, risk of developing cervical cancer, and deaths from labor in teen pregnancies.
  - Women under the age of 20 are more likely to have premature deliveries, toxemia, placenta Previa, etc.
- *Not just for women.* Planned Parenthood also serves men for services such as UTI detection, infertility screening, and prostate cancer screening.
- *Affordable annual exams.* Women who are living stressed for money can still get their annual screenings such as a Pap screen and breast exam.
- Lastly, *access to safe and legal abortions.* There always has, and always will be abortions, whether they are legal or not, or accessible or not. Planned Parenthood provides access to these services that are safe and allow women to have control over their body in a way that will not put them at risk. Abortion services represent 3% of their work. While most women use their services for pregnancy prevention.

I will look at the issue through the philosophy of bell hooks. I will then talk about how power is involved in the situation using Keltner’s theory of power. Also with that, I will come to my conclusion on the decision I think would be the most beneficial/ethical using these lenses.

7. **Sources:**

- I anticipate needing the knowledge of the organization, the insights from both sides of the debates, more info on the theories I am going to be using. Some resources I could use are professors, books, internet, women, etc.

I am going to be using sources such as government statistics about tax money. I will be looking into the organization's website and researching what services they provide. I will use scholarly articles from the library database to find a history of planned parenthood and services. I will also use this for arguments on all sides of perspectives. I would like to get input from protesters, feminist theory lecturers, etc. I will collect information on theories/theorists from books/professors/scholarly articles.

8. **Next Steps:**

- I need to read up on bell hooks theories and find the specific ones I am going to use to look at my project.

- I need to do research on the history of planned parenthood, the benefits, the harms, and both sides of the arguments.
- I need to talk to outside (professional) sources such as professors to include in my research.

9. **Timeline:**

1. Gather the information needed about the theories/theorists I will be using
2. Start research on the organization (History, Benefits/Harms)
3. Start research on the debate - multiple points of view
4. Put the first part (the debate through bell hooks eyes) together
5. Evaluate the second part using Keltner's theory of power
6. Make a conclusion about how power comes into play in the topic
7. Put the second part together
8. Come to a conclusion about my decision after assessing all points
9. Work on the poster
10. Have paper done
11. Have poster done

## Research Essay

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HCOM 475  
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10 April 2017

### **Planned Parenthood: Defend or Defund?**

#### **Introduction**

For over 100 years, Planned Parenthood has been providing affordable and accessible healthcare to women and men across the nation. It provides a variety of different services such as STI/STD testing, cancer screening and prevention, abortion services, and other women's health services. (Planned Parenthood) However, their work has not been without controversy.

It all began in 1916 with Margaret Sanger's then-illegal discussion and distribution of birth control. Sanger, and her sister, began with opening a birth control clinic, which was soon raided by the police nine days after its open. This was the beginning of a revolution for women and birth control. Sanger opened more clinics, while others joined in the movement to provide different means of family planning for women. The Supreme Court sanctioned birth control in 1965, but women's health remained in jeopardy. They still did not have access to safe and legal abortion services. However, in 1967, "Reverend Howard R. Moody, along with 19 ministers and 2 rabbis, established a nation network of 1,400 clergy members to help women seeking abortion" (Planned Parenthood | 100 Years Strong). Although the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973, the decision has been among its most controversial, with Planned Parenthood often at the center of the storm for the last forty years.

Planned Parenthood is still thriving today, serving around 2.5 million people each year (Planned Parenthood). The most recent controversy revolves around the support they receive from the federal government. Their health care services depend in part on federal funding, which reimburses the organization for preventative care. (<https://www.istandwithpp.org/defund-defined/how-federal-funding-works-planned-parenthood>) Although the funds do not go toward abortion, tax payers and political parties are divided on whether Planned Parenthood should be defunded or defended. The bill to defund Planned Parenthood set forth in 2015 is a great example of the divide the nation faces on this issue. More recently, the country showed their divide when it was reported that the federal budget of the United States would uphold a rule set forth by the Obama administration, “that effectively barred state and local governments from withholding federal funding for family planning services related to contraception, sexually transmitted infections, fertility, pregnancy care, and breast and cervical cancer screening from qualified health providers — regardless of whether they also performed abortions.” (Julie Hirschfeld Davis, New York Times). However, the new proposed healthcare legislation signed by President Trump in April of 2017 completely nullifies this rule, which cuts off federal funding to Planned Parenthood. This is just another example of our country’s divisiveness on this controversial issue.

This essay examines the controversy and explores multiple points of view in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the issue. Through the frameworks of bell hooks, I will learn to understand these viewpoints and make sense of why this debate is occurring at all. Through the frameworks of Dacher Keltner, I will analyze the effects of the debate and how power is involved. By doing this, I will be able to help recommend how to better communicate with each other despite differences. I aim to take an unbiased approach to the informative aspect of this

research paper in order to allow readers to gather the information being presented no matter what their own biases are. I then aim to use the knowledge displayed through the theoretical framework to explain my own personal decision on the issue. Through the information provided, my hope is to provide recommendations for means of understanding and communication that will allow people to better understand their own decisions and the impact it may leave on others.

## **THE DEBATE: To Defend or Defund**

### **The Defund Planned Parenthood Bill of 2015**

The Defund PP bill of 2015 focuses directly on abortion. The congressional summary states:

“This bill prohibits, for a one-year period, the availability of federal funds for any purpose to Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc., or any of its affiliates or clinics, unless they certify that the affiliates and clinics will not perform, and will not provide any funds to any other entity that performs, an abortion during such period. The restriction will not apply in cases of rape or incest or where a physical condition endangers a woman's life unless an abortion is performed” (Diane Black, Congress).

This bill was introduced to the House in July of 2015. The underlying idea behind this bill is the rejection of the idea to have federal funding support organizations that provide abortion services. What will be discussed in this essay going forward will be the arguments both for and against this proposed bill.

## **Supporters of the Bill**

Supporters for defunding Planned Parenthood have several key points to back their argument. The first is tax money. These taxpayers disagree with the ethics of spending their tax money on Planned Parenthood in order for the organization to “profit” and then provide abortion services, even though it is a non-profit organization. The Susan B. Anthony List, a pro-life lobbying group, identifies the “Top 12 Reasons to Defund Planned Parenthood Now” (“Top Twelve Reasons,” 2011), the more taxpayer money that goes into this organization, the more abortions will be performed. This poses a huge problem for many people who identify as pro-life. “More taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood equals more abortions, fewer adoption referrals,” (“Top Twelve Reasons,” 2011). The argument being made here is that the more money put into this organization, the less people are going to care about the option of adoption because they can use abortion as a substitute.

The next key point for this side goes hand in hand with the first. The basis of this whole debate: abortion. Morally, some people see it as wrong to spend their tax money on abortion services. If we do not believe in something, we do not support it. That is the nature of humans. Some people are pro-life for religious reasons and then some are pro-life for more personal and individualistic reasons.

Another key point found from the research is simply that we do not need Planned Parenthood as an organization. We could stop pushing money into the clinics for this organization and, instead, push the money into the other small clinics that provide affordable health care without abortion services. According to the Susan B. Anthony website, women have other options for affordable healthcare and family planning. “According to the Chiaroscuro Foundation, in addition to the tens of thousands of U.S. doctors and hospitals providing this care,

there were 1,048 federally qualified health centers in the U.S. which provide women cancer screening, contraception, and STI testing.” (“Top Twelve Reasons,” 2011). This statistic is used to show that Planned Parenthood is not the only clinic out there that aims to provide affordable healthcare to low-income communities. There are other options throughout the United States that do not provide or support abortion services, and this is what is the most appealing to the people who are for defunding Planned Parenthood.

### **Opponents of the Bill**

The opposing side brings out various arguments against the bill to defund Planned Parenthood as well. The first key point in the debate being that for the last 100 years, Planned Parenthood has set out to provide affordable healthcare to those in need of it. The people on this side of the argument state that this organization offers people, women, a choice. It allows people to choose when and under what circumstances they want to be parents. Planned Parenthood has been one of the biggest providers of family planning services in the United States. This does not always mean by preaching abortion. Planned Parenthood is more than that. In 2013, abortions only accounted for 3 percent of the total 10.6 million services provided by Planned Parenthood that year (Planned Parenthood Services). The other services Planned Parenthood provides women (and men) include: STI/STD testing and treatment, contraception, cancer screening and prevention, and other women’s services such as pregnancy tests and prenatal services (Planned Parenthood). Not only would defunding this organization take away a resource to affordable healthcare, it would be taking away sexual education and family planning for young women who are naive on these subjects. This leads to the next key point for this side of the debate.

Prevention. Planned Parenthood focuses much of what they do on prevention. This ranges from preventing unwanted/teen pregnancies to preventing breast cancer. Planned Parenthood is a

great resource for young women who are sexually active but have no one to go to for the reality of the possible consequences. This organization provides these young women with access to contraceptives and talks to them about how to properly use them, while answering any questions they may have. Teen pregnancy is something that has been on the rise in past years and preventing these pregnancies could be as simple as providing more sexual education, and that is what Planned Parenthood strives to do. The main goal of Planned Parenthood is not to advocate for abortions as a method of birth control, but to help women find a safe way to avoid needing abortion services in the first place. Planned Parenthood also offers adoption referrals for any women who choose against abortion.

The other way Planned Parenthood acts on prevention is towards cancer. Planned Parenthood offers a variety of services to screen for or prevent cancer. These services include Pap tests, HPV vaccinations, breast exams/care, colposcopy exams, etc. These services can be lifesaving, and with Planned Parenthood, they are also very accessible and affordable. An article from the Huffington post talks about a woman who went into Planned Parenthood for a concern about a lump on her breast, and the clinic took care of her. They got her a same-day appointment, gave her an exam, and referred her to a radiologist. Not only that, but they also applied to Medicaid for this woman and she was able to have a double-mastectomy that ended up saving her life. “Benner learned that her aggressive breast cancer was already spreading to her lymphatic system, and she was able to have an emergency double mastectomy that saved her life,” (Laura Bassett, Huffington Post). This is just one of many successful stories from the services provided by Planned Parenthood.

A third key point found from the research is that Planned Parenthood does not only have services for women. Planned Parenthood serves men for services such as UTI detection,

infertility screening, and prostate cancer screening. This bill to defund Planned Parenthood is not only a bill that affects just women.

The last, and arguably the most important key point for this side of the debate is that Planned Parenthood provides women access to safe and legal abortions. Abortions have taken place far before today. However, most of them were illegal and harmful to women. Although Planned Parenthood does provide abortions to women today, it is only 3% of the services they provide annually.

If the debate is truly about not wanting tax dollars to fund abortion services, then that is something that is already in place today. The Hyde Amendment was passed in Congress in 1976 and excludes abortion services provided by Medicaid. In layman's terms, this means that federal funding is prohibited by Congress to go towards any abortion services. The exception to this law is in the cases of rape or incest, or in the circumstances in which a pregnant woman's life is endangered by a physical disorder, illness, or injury (Public Funding for Abortion). Planned Parenthood makes abortion services accessible and affordable to pay out of pocket if need be, or if your insurance covers these services.

With this amendment in place, it begs the question: is this really a debate about facts and statistics? If one of the main arguments for supporting the defunding of PP is that taxpayers do not want their money supporting a service they find unethical, but there is already a law in place preventing that, what is the real argument here? Throughout my research I have found that this debate is far more than just facts and statistics, but about morals and values. We prioritize things differently depending on our own personal morals and values. So, where do we go from here?

### **Theoretical framework - Keltner**

To truly understand this controversial topic, the possible consequences to the people affected must be explored. Dacher Keltner's theory of power helps to understand these consequences. Keltner's theory is called "The Power Paradox" and this is a theory that the tools that helped us rise to power are often the reason that we fall from power as well. They are the same concepts that cause our downfall, or make us cause pain to others. Within this theory, Keltner lists 20 different principles. These principles act as guidelines for enduring power.

The first principle that addresses the debate on whether or not to defund Planned Parenthood is principle 18, "Stress defines the experience of powerlessness" (Keltner 146). The basis to this principle is that when a person feels that their identity is being attacked, or devalued, they become defensive. This defensiveness causes cortisol levels to rise in the body and trigger fight-or-flight behaviors. All of this puts the body under stress. High stress levels cause "sickness" behaviors such as increased sleep and withdrawal. This is what happens to the body when we start to feel disempowered. These higher levels of stress and cortisol levels are often seen in low-income areas.

Planned Parenthood provides services to predominantly women, most of these women coming from a low-income background. The taxpayers that are debating on whether or not to defund Planned Parenthood are mostly people of higher positions of power. They are also mostly people who would never need to use the services provided by Planned Parenthood because of their financial security. This leads to a feeling of disempowerment to women of lower incomes who rely on Planned Parenthood's health services because people in higher positions of power would be making decisions for them, making these women feel devalued because of their class status. Taking away the access to Planned Parenthood can be seen as a threat and according to

Keltner's theories, "Threats that devalue a person's social identity are particularly potent triggers of cortisol release and elevated cytokine levels" (Keltner 149).

Taking away the accessibility to the services that Planned Parenthood provides to these women could also be a trigger for stress. While there are other resources for affordable health care, the other clinics on average only provide about one third of the services that are offered by Planned Parenthood.

The other principle that can be used to understand this debate is principle 9, "Enduring power comes from empathy" (Keltner 73). Empathy is an essential part to our everyday understanding. When we choose to be empathetic towards one another, we are able to see people on a deeper level and make better connections with others. There is a lack of empathy going on between all the different perspectives in this debate. We live in a society that dehumanizes people when they hold different positions from our own. We choose to ignore empathy towards others and that causes us to feel disconnected to people. This makes hostility and violence easier to succumb to. If we choose empathy instead of hate, we can empower not only ourselves, but the people around us.

### **Theoretical framework - bell hooks**

The feminist theorist bell hooks fits well to assist in making sense of this conversation because her theories on feminism have an overall focus on the systems that cause the divide and oppression occurring in the world. Hooks calls this system *white supremacist capitalist patriarchy*. "...a label that suggests interlocking structures of sexism, racism, class elitism, capitalism, and heterosexism" (Feminist Rhetorical Theories, Foss, Foss, Griffin, pg. 76). Together these systems that we have created provoke domination and foster hatred between

humans. It is not the humans who are born with hatred in their heart, but the systems they are raised in that transforms them in every direction.

Humans live in a world that is separated by class. We gain our sense of power through these various levels and along with this separation comes the sense of domination. People who find themselves in the higher classes, also find themselves in higher positions of power. This gives them more freedom to make decisions for people other than themselves. Oppression begins in this way. Those who would be negatively affected by this bill fall usually fall in lower classes, and that takes away from their power. It takes away from their freedoms. It strips these people, these women, from their freedom to make decisions for themselves because they are constantly falling victim to this system of oppression. Hooks was onto something when she created this theory because she is right, all these systems are interconnected. There is never oppression coming from one direction, it is always multiple. Planned Parenthood offers services mainly to low-income women, now this is not only a discussion about classism, but about sexism. Many of those who are at the top 1% and have the power to make decisions such as passing the bill to defund Planned Parenthood are male. These males are at war with women based on their values. However, this is usually seen as normal. Males in power, making the decisions for other women because their values are usually prioritized over anyone else's. There are many links of interconnected systems of oppressions at work with this issue.

If we become aware of these systems, and how exactly they are related into this issue, we may be able to better understand why issues like this arise to begin with. The first step to figuring out how to come to a resolution is to acknowledge what is actually taking place. Once we have realized that it is not the necessarily us as humans, as individuals, that create hostility. It is the systems that we have created and been raised into that pit us against each other. When we

take away the systems, we can begin to see each other as humans, and as individuals. We can then begin to figure out the heart of the issue.

Through my research I have found that the heart of this issue is abortion. This debate is a war on values, on what we each feel is important. The priority that is placed on the different positions is the sole reason this bill has come under such heavy controversy. The debate has escalated into something that is just facts being hauled at one another, without actually trying to understand why someone may hold the position they do. I have found that many people's opinion on the matter come from personal experiences or religious background, and these are things that we hold dear to our hearts. We cannot try to argue or change someone's personal experience, but we can try to understand. If we took the time to understand, we may dissolve much tension around this issue.

### **Advocacy**

This research started off with the sole purpose being to dive into the debate to understand and then to try and advocate my own position. Throughout my research, however, I have found evidence that now allows me to see that the point of this essay is not that at all. The purpose of this paper is to figure out a better way to lead in a divided world. I attempted to do this by taking an issue that has pitted everyone against each other, and finding a way, through all of the hate, to connect to one another. That doesn't mean to convince people to be on my side, or to think similar to me. What it does mean is to essentially get to the heart of the problem. What does the issue mean for you? Why do you hold your position so firmly? What in your life has affected these decisions? In these questions we can find that there are many aspects that allow us to see each other not as "objects of the mind, but as subjects of the heart" (Debian Marty). By doing

that we can resolve much hate and tension from this issue, and all the issues that split the world apart.

I want to take this section of the essay to provide my own position on debate. Women's rights are a subject that I hold dear to my heart. My reasons for my position align with many of the key points presented in the "Opposed to The Bill" section. Planned Parenthood has helped, and continues to help, millions of women not only have access to preventative healthcare, but also to health education that can change lives. It allows women the opportunity to choose. They can choose when to be a mom, under what circumstances, and at what stage in their lives. This is something hugely profound in society because it is a right that women have fought long and hard for. It is amazing that in such a progressive society, this right is still something that women find themselves fighting for.

Reproductive rights are being revoked. Women are having decisions made for them by people who sit in higher positions of power. Others with differing values place a high priority on the principles they believe in, and they allow that to dictate the lives of others. No matter what side you may find yourself on, pro-life, pro-choice, pro-voice, etc., there is no deny the fact that the women's rights are being decided on by people other than the women who are being directly affected.

## **Conclusion**

How do we come to a consensus? How do we create an argument strong enough convince everyone to come to agreement on an issue so divided and controversial? The answer is that you don't. Instead, you find a way to seek out the humanness in others in order to relate to them. This creates an environment that allows people to see each other in a different light. It is

much easier to listen to someone I see as an actual person with a life and emotions, than someone with just an opinion that I do not agree with. There is much hatred and anger built up in the world because people choose not to see others as humans. In November of 2015, three people were killed over this tension. Three people with family, dreams, a future. Tension and hatred that could have been avoided if we had someone showing us a better way to communicate. We need leadership and guidance on how to shift our perspectives to begin to look at others with the respect of being human.

There is a video called “Pro-Voice” that show these women who hold different faiths recounting their different experiences with abortion. In the video they mention that all they needed during that time was someone to understand, and to be there for them. They all felt the same fears of judgement and hatred by their peers. This is what ultimately led them to speak out for others. They want to provide an open and safe space for other women to express their concerns without fear of judgement, but only hope of support. These women figured out a way to come together despite their differences in their faiths and beliefs. They did what most people fail to do every day, and that is listen to understand. Too often do we listen only to argue. We may not have to agree with each other, but we must try to understand.

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