

Thesis: Surprising Religious and Republican Roots to Planned Parenthood: An Arizona Case Study

Editor's note:

Claudia Nunez-Eddy defended her thesis titled "Surprising Religious and Republican Roots to Planned Parenthood: An Arizona Case Study" in April 2016 in front of committee members Jane Maienschein, Erica O'Neil, and Alexis Abboud earning her a Bachelor's degree from Barrett, the Honors College. <https://repository.asu.edu/items/37290>

Abstract:

Planned Parenthood, one of the United States' largest providers of reproductive health services, has campaigned for decades to secure women's reproductive rights in the political sphere. However, few scholars have written on the social and political history that preceded the general religious and Republican hostility toward the organization in the twenty-first century. Through Planned Parenthood's growth in the mid-twentieth century, both political parties and many religious organizations pushed for family planning and access to contraception as solutions to population growth and poverty. Arizona was used as a case study to examine the broader context of the shift in the ideas of political parties and religious organizations surrounding the reproductive rights movement from the start of the twentieth century until the 1980s. The historical trajectory of the shifting religious and political support for Planned Parenthood Arizona was demonstrated using both a literature review and archival research.

Throughout the early 1900s, Republicans advocated for limited governmental intrusion into citizens' lives, which extended to women's reproduction, where contraception was seen as a private decision between a woman and her doctor. That changed in the late twentieth century when religious concerns exacerbated the political discussion following the legalization of abortion in 1973 and the appointment of Ronald Regan in 1981, one of the first outspoken pro-life presidents. Planned Parenthood faced increasing criticism from religious organizations and the Republican Party. The social and political history surrounding Planned Parenthood Arizona illustrates the interplay between politics and the reproductive rights movement throughout the twentieth century. The contextualization of major historical events during the development of Planned Parenthood Arizona gives insight into the current political and religious beliefs regarding the reproductive rights movement.