

## WGS.151 Reading Reflection

I was fascinated by this week's reading by Jenny Higgins: "Sex, Unintended Pregnancy, and Poverty: One Woman's Evolution from 'Choice' to 'Reproductive Justice'." I think it has huge implications for understanding gender and health in the context of pro-choice and reproductive rights movements. I found myself relating a lot to the thought processes Higgins herself went through: initially viewing the right to choice in nearly a romanticized, abstract right, but then struggling to come to terms with issues of "repeaters" and histories of little or no contraceptive use. But what Higgins elucidated for me was the macro level structural inequalities that often underlie these issues. Even before considering the very important class and race implications, the issue of gendered power dynamics alone, especially in the realm of sex, helps explain why a woman's right to an abortion is so important. Even pro-lifers who make exceptions in case of rape/incest probably leave women who are simply peer pressured into not using a condom by the wayside; especially given how difficult it is emotionally and practically to report rape (and how many women probably would not even self-classify these instances of pressure or coercion as rape or assault). Delving even further into an issue that Higgins doesn't raise is the profound inadequacy of sex education in many parts of the country: without the proper information about contraception, how can we hold women accountable for "irresponsible" behavior (i.e. lack of contraceptive use). By understanding how gendered power dynamics function, I think it's far easier to make an even stronger case for women's rights to abortions, especially to those who may find it unnecessary given the existence of contraceptives. Equally as interesting to me was the framework of reproductive justice as opposed to pro-choice. I think it's incredibly important to take into account issues of race and class when thinking about how different groups of women are affected by certain issues, particularly health issues. I had never even considered the fact that underfunded clinics would have to rush their patients more, probably leading to less counseling, and increasing the rate of "repeaters." It's important and relevant how other social issues affecting poor women (for example, lack of educational and career opportunities) are not only more pressing for low-income women, but might also have direct implications on their relationship with the need for abortion services in the first place. I think as a whole, the framework of reproductive justice creates huge implications for how the feminist movement chooses to approach the issues of abortion and reproductive rights and health moving forward, to be as empowering and helpful to all walks of women, and not just white, middle-class ones.

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