

Maria Mesner

THE ABORTION CONFLICT: WAR VERSUS CONTEINMENT: POLITICAL CULTURE IN AUSTRIA AND IN THE UNITED STATES

Laws concerning abortion have been at the center of public discussion during the last third of the 20th century in many western democracies. Different from other legal topics being usually left to some experts the abortion-debate transcended the limits of juridical expert circles and went into the public realm ending up as an issue everybody has to take a clear position to. Furthermore the discussion on abortion showed societal cleavages and upset emotions resulting in mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, even in murder.

The high attention abortion raised – at least temporarily – in the United States and in Austria caused a lot of sociological, historian and political research trying to scrutinize, reconstruct and explain the pre-conditions, developments and features related to the abortion debate at a national or even lower level.¹ Only a small part of research deals with abortion at an international scope. These attempts usually resulted in – very useful – collections of articles dealing with one country each². But the comparison and the conclusions to be drawn are left to the reader.

Nevertheless a cross-national perspective as I intend to apply seems worthwhile in two respects: First, it should avoid errors resulting from an approach which concentrates too much on national characteristics overlooking national special developments – or making them an absolute. Second, an international comparison sharpens the profile and the weight of national institutional or cultural characteristics and thereby gives an insight to the interdependences of political culture, institutions, social movements, and traditions. Only recently two attempts of international comparisons were published dealing – at least in parts – with the abortion debate: A successful and illuminating example is J. Christian Soper's study on evangelical Christians in the United States and in Great Britain (Soper 1994, also Hadley 1994) which I owe much to in this article.

At the center of my considerations there is the political conflict about abortion, a conflict between two antagonist attitudes, taking place in two very different countries concerning their political traditions and culture. These antagonists, generally labelled as *pro-choice* and

¹For the US see, for example, Luker 1984, Ginsburg 1990, Petchesky 1984; for Austria see Lehner 1989, Mesner 1994.

²Eser / Koch 1989, Feminist Review 1988 (29), International Handbook on Abortion 1988, the chapters on abortion in Women and Politics Worldwide 1994.

pro-life, will be analysed as social movements, mobilizing respectively for the same goals under very different social, institutional and political conditions. I intend to concentrate on the question how these differences shaped the development and the outcome of the conflict on the one hand, on the other hand on the discussion how different political cultures in Austria and in the United States formed and determined the national movement formation, tactics, and the eventual results. I will show how – given similar ideologies and goals of social movements – the development, the institutional shape and the outcome of a movement are formed by national political traditions, by a specific political system and the political culture of a country, the specific "grammar" of a national political discourse.

In some recent literature, the outbreak of the struggle over abortion laws in the late 1960s in Austria, the astonishing similarities in the public debate especially in respect to the women's movement, its arguments, its tactics in gaining public attention, the development of the issue and the eventual legal regulation is seen as the result of the influence the American women's movement exerted on similar groups in Western Europe (Grillenberger 1989). By comparing the abortion debate in the United States and in Austria I will modify this impression by identifying the extent of the American influence.

In the last part of my contribution I will try to answer the question why the abortion debate has developed so different since the mid-1970s in Austria and in the United States. While abortion has nearly ceased to be a political topic in Austria, the struggle about abortion has exceeded the limits of debate in America and became actually a fight for life or death.

THE STORY BEFORE THE 1970S – TRADITIONS AND PROTAGONISTS

On January 23, 1974 the Austrian *Nationalrat*, the legislative body comparable to the US-Congress, passed a law which allowed abortion on demand during the first term of pregnancy. Nearly exactly one year before this date, on January 22, 1973, the US-Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Roe v. Wade*, forbidding the state from interfering in a woman's decision to have an abortion before the fetus is viable and thereby ruling unconstitutional the abortion laws of all states. In both countries these events were seen as a victory of the so called "Second" or "New" women's movement.

The formation of both national movements had occurred during the last decade, i. e. since 1965 on the basis of a very similar ideology. At its core there stood an interpretation of society, which identified gender as at least one important category grounding societal divisions and defining hierarchies in society. Thus, gender became a mobilizing identification for those women starting to organize during the late 1960s at first in the US, but soon also in

many Western European countries. These women's movements had in common their rejection of traditional family patterns and the one-dimensional role of mothers and homemakers it offered to women. The activists demanded self-determination and sexual liberation for women. In this respect, abortion and birth control became crucial points in the mobilizing of the American as well as the Austrian women's movement – despite differences concerning organizational resources and frameworks. In order to identify these differences I am going to outline a few historically founded features.

The abortion debate between women's movements and party politics

Concerning the tradition of debating abortion Austria and the United States have a rather different history. The organizational origins of the US-American movement dating back to even to the middle of the 18th century (Ryan 1992, Hymowitz/Weissman 1978), a women's movement outside party structures had organized by the second half of the 19th century in both countries (for Austria: Anderson 1992). While the Austrian first women's movement had its members mostly among bourgeois urban women, the activists of the American women's movement were mainly among white middle-class natives (Hymowitz/Weissman 1978, 174). Though I do not want to neglect the tremendous differences between the two movements, regarding to the abortion debate the American and the Austrian movement took a quite similar position out of quite similar ideological reasons. Adhering to a theory of a public male and a female sphere of the home they did not question the "natural duty" of women to bear children and fulfil their societal role as mothers and nurturers. Therefore they did not advocate the liberalization of the strict abortion laws in effect in both countries.

It is due to the existence of a very active socialdemocratic women's movement, especially after World War I, that abortion became a political topic in Austria during the 1920s. Considering the weakness and thus ineffectiveness of the communist women's movement, the socialdemocratic women were the only important organization of female workers and a branch of the Socialdemocratic Party, the most powerful democratic-parliamentary opposition after it had left the governing coalition in 1920. While in the United States the women's movement started lobbying and mobilizing for ERA, i. e. for legal prescription of equality for women at the working places, in Austria, the socialdemocratic women's movement made abortion law reform an important issue of its campaigning. The language and argumentation of this campaign were, however, marked – at least partly – by the eugenic discourse, that was led above all by some medical experts. One of these experts was the Socialdemocrat Julius Tandler, a physician who was as a town councillor in Vienna during the 1920s and early 1930s very active in creating communal health programs and who was influential in his party concerning all questions connected to health and health system. He and his colleagues discussed abortion law reform within the framework of eugenic

population policy. By controlling female reproductivity they wanted to improve "human resources" in a eugenic way. Thus, individual needs and wishes of pregnant women, their right to self-determination and individual decision about their lives, did not stand at the core of the socialdemocratic argument. Nevertheless the proposals for law reform introduced by the Socialdemocrats aimed at and would have resulted in an extension of the women's right to decide about their pregnancies.

Due to the persistent predominance of catholic-conservative forces strictly opposing any liberalization the Socialdemocrats did not succeed in having passed a new law. Nevertheless I would like to point out, that the Socialdemocratic women founded a strain of political, publicly led debate on abortion and thereby established abortion as a subject of public political discourse, though it was not a discourse on individual or collective female rights. Meanwhile the "century of silence" (Luker 1984, 40) about abortions, taking place hidden in backyards for the poor or in the private consultation rooms of doctors for the privileged, remained undisturbed in the United States from the second half of the 19th to the second half of the 20th century.

In 1933/34, however, in Austria *Clerico-fascism* made an end to the existence of the Socialdemocratic women's movement and the public debate on abortion. While the *clerico-fascist* government, successor of the catholic-conservative party, continued and even reinforced the pronatalist policy of its predecessor from the 1920s and early 1930s, the Nazis, after Austria had become part of the "Third Reich" in 1938, introduced a split policy versus abortions according to the aims of their racist population policy (see Bock 1986, Czarnowski 1991).

After World War II, as a result of fascist oppression and expulsion the tradition lines to non-partisan prewar women's movements were disrupted. Only the socialdemocratic women re-organized as a part of the socialdemocratic party's framework nearly immediately after the war had ended – and resumed their prewar efforts for abortion law reform as soon as the democratic political system had been re-constructed. But while, at least in the beginning, the content of their resolutions was generally nearly identical to their prewar demands, they met a political climate and discourse which were different: Nazi racist population policy, the crimes and atrocities it had caused had brought eugenic arguments into total discredit. Having been a serious and wide-spread perspective on abortion vested with academic expertise in the prewar debate, eugenic arguments lost much of their influence on public discourse after World War II in general³ and disappeared from socialdemocratic positions at all.

³Eugenic residues remained only in far-right, mostly national-catholic appeals to save the Western christian superiority against the Eastern enemy by having a lot of children.

But not only political argument, also structural conditions had changed: The socialdemocrats had joined a three-party reconstruction-government together with the *Volkspartei*, successor of the interwar catholic-conservatives, and the Communist party. This coalition became a two-party agreement in 1947, when the Communist party left the government. Under these conditions the socialdemocratic party's mainstream had little interest in a reform of the abortion laws. Given the continuing opposition of the Roman Catholic church which was very influential in the *Volkspartei*, a strong pressure for liberalization of the laws according to the demands of the women's organization would have caused enormous conflict within the governing coalition. It was, however, the paramount goal of the two parties to maintain their cooperation. In a way – as I will show later – typical of unitary and centralist political culture in Austria, the socialdemocratic women neither tried to find an ally to support their demands outside their own party (which would have been actually breaking a long held socialdemocratic taboo) nor continued to lobby within the partisan realm after their long maintained claim had been turned down by the leading party bodies. But the abortion law debate did not stop entirely. It survived in small inner-party circles being led by some female politicians and few medical and juridical experts.

The American political culture gave rise to a relevant political representation of women in the labor force only in respect to the negotiation of labor relations and related conflicts. The First women's movement, which – most important in our context – had its roots in "moral movements" as temperance and abolition, was marked nearly exclusively by views of white protestant middle-class, native born women who did not want to question the gender roles grounded in presumptions of human, in their case female "nature". The protagonists of the First women's movement adhered to a theory of two separated spheres based in the human nature of the two sexes, the home as female realm of care taking, child bearing and child rearing, and the public male sphere of business, money earning and politics. In this view being a mother was an indispensable, absolutely essential part of being a woman. Abortions were seen as the outcome of uncontrolled, irresponsible, raw and untamed male sexuality (Hymowitz/Weissman 1978, 67), and so – in the words of Elizabeth Cady Stanton – a "degradation of woman" (quoted after: Ginsburg 1990, 29). The existence of a female sexuality was simply denied. Thus, the non-existence of organized female resistance against the legal restriction of abortions was maybe an "outgrowth of sexual and class conservatism" (Ginsburg 1990, 33-4), especially if it went together with the view, which related birth control and abortion to "race suicide". In any case, however, it was due to the belief that "motherhood was a woman's source of dignity in a world that all too often denied it to her" (Gordon 1977, 236). Advocating abortions had meant challenging this ideological foundation.

Summarizing I would like to make the following points: In the US as in Austria existed women's movements organizing on the basis of gender differences at least until the 1920s. Though this movement in respect to the US was very active and tried to influence the political decision making process, there were no voices against the restrictions enacted on abortions from that side. In Austria, the continuity within the Austrian party structure, here the persistence of socialdemocratic organizations and politicians, resulted in a continuous debate about abortion law reform lacking in the US, though the socialdemocratic party leaders attached varying importance to the issue.

Re-Construction, Cold War and Baby-Boom

Outside the political field, a set of changes in reproductive and marriage behavior occurred, which were, as I would suppose, very important for the shape the abortion debate took, or more exactly: did not take, in the United States as well as in Austria. The "hightime" of the family started in the United States during the 1940s and – with some delay due to postwar shortage in food and the lack in coverage of other fundamental needs – in the early 1950s in Austria and lasted to the mid-1960s. The following trends were significant in both countries⁴: Young people married more often and at a lower age. These newly wed couples were going to have more children than their parents had done, thereby breaking the demographic long term trend of dropping birth rates. The parents of the "baby-boomers", coming of age during World War II in the US and during the late 1940s and early 1950s in Austria, became the "most marrying generation on record" (Tyler 1988, 20).

What seems even more interesting – and decisive in our case – than a change in marriage and birth rates is the fact, that this change in figures was accompanied by a renaissance of traditional family patterns with clearly distinct and separated gender roles: The mother of the children and wife totally wrapped up in her role as the housemaker. The respective father and husband had to earn the family income by his work outside the home. Correspondingly, the young women of the postwar era appearingly cared less about a carrier outside their homes – or saw less opportunities for themselves – than their mothers had done: At the same time the birth rates rose, the number of women in colleges dropped (Hymowitz/Weissman 1978, 326). It is important to point out that only in respect to the leading family-model it is correct to talk of a renaissance. In fact, what took place in the middle of the 20th century was – in respect to the history of modern societies – "the first wholehearted effort to create a home that would fulfil virtually all its members' personal needs through an energized and expressive personal live" (Tyler 1988, 11). An Austrian

⁴For detailed figures and statistical data see for instance Tyler 1988 in respect to the US, Münz 1985 for Austria.

author called the years after 1955 the "golden age of marriage and having children" (Münz 1985, 12).

The until then unknown acceptance of traditional gender roles precluded a public debate on abortion. Demanding facilities for performing abortions is generally questioning the assumption that bearing and having children is women's only destination. Accepting legal abortions means accepting the existence of justified reasons for a woman not to have a child – at least at that point of time in her life. The claim that there might be other priorities in female lives than procreative ones is a challenge of the ideological foundation of gender roles in some "nature" which is not socially defined and construed. For our case it is important to remark that the young women did not object their new "old" roles for the time being – at least as can be concluded from the lack in publicly uttered opposition and measured by the strength of women's movements. In the US as well as in Austria strong women's movements did not exist during the 1950s. The "postwar years saw an almost total rejection of feminist programs and awareness; building a home and bringing up a family seemed to be enough for most women." (Hymowitz/Weissman 1978, 326) The American women's movement, already split and weakened, nearly vanished (Hoff 1991, 206-8). Endeavors by Austrian socialdemocratic women's politicians to advocate women's rights policies failed due to obviously missing public female response.

Though this is not the place to elaborate on it, I just want to make the point, that this – as it seems – deliberate wrapping up totally in their domestic roles by many women did not happen without contradictions and frictions: All available estimates and evidence suggest that the number of abortions – most of them illegal – remained high during the entire postwar era in the United States as well in Austria (Luker 1984, 53; data in Mesner 1994, 74-5).⁵ Nevertheless the postwar family model and the related gender roles were not challenged publicly up to the 1960s.

Coming to the reasons for this development, most authors presume, that it was the "postwar desire to return to 'normalcy'" (Hymowitz/Weissman 1978, 326), that – after the chaos of the postwar and (in respect to Europe) reconstruction-era – made the family the focus of individual and collective needs for happiness, stability and harmony (Sieder 1987, 241). Though the explanations offered by social research sound quite similar in respect to Austria and the US I think it is useful to differentiate between the two countries. Elaine Tyler May pointed out in her study on American families and the cold war, that after World War I

⁵ As in respect to abortion – especially if prohibiting laws are in effect – the number of unreported cases is supposedly high, all estimates concerning the amount of abortions actually performed are very vague and usually coincide with the political intentions their authors aim at. Even so I think it to be permissible to suppose a relationship of 1 abortion to 3 to 10 births.

no similar rise in birth and marriage rates occurred (Tyler 1988, 6). She ascribes the development concerning patterns of family founding and reproduction after World War II to the dynamics of the cold war. In this connection, the flight into the homes, being nearly like fortresses, is interpreted as a reflection of the containment of the foreign-policy enemy Soviet Union and the internal McCarthyan enemy communism. I agree with her in the suggestion that the family cult was not only a private, individual postwar reaction to Great Depression and World War II, but had also an important political component. The exportation of American family ideology was part of American education activities in Europe against the backdrop of the cold war and the competition against the Soviet Union and the ideologies it represented. The ERP provided the economic support for European, i. e. for Austrian reconstruction and helped Austrian families to get at least some of the technical appliances typical for modern households. At the same time, the high number of American movies shown in Austrian motion picture theaters throughout the 1950s delivered the pictures and images of a successful "American way of life" which should form Austrian family ideals.⁶ From an Austrian perspective, the United States thereby became the symbol of modernity, progress, affluence, freedom, democracy. Thus, American mass media, above all the film industry provided the models for the Austrian "reconstruction". This process, however, actually did not result in the re-building of something having already existed but in establishing a new type of economic, social and above all cultural system, which produced and underlied the climate preventing abortion from being discussed as a political topic in the public.

So, I would like to conclude that the United States' cultural impact on Austria, together with the consequences of fascism – personal and political instability, effects of war, disruption of political traditions –, formed the socially conservative postwar climate that made it impossible to challenge traditional gender roles.

THE WAY TO ABORTION RIGHTS

In this chapter I am going to show that abortion law reform became a "symbolic issue" – a term I shall explain below – at the end of the 1960s in the United States as well as in Austria. I shall turn to the protagonists of the arising abortion struggle and describe their tactics, their organizational development and their successes or failures in connection with national political system and culture. Though pro-choice and pro-life activists respectively had quite similar ideologies and aims in both countries, applied quite similar arguments here and there, the abortion discussion developed differently. Why the conflict at last got so violent in the United States is, in my opinion, due, on the one hand, to the characteristics of the

⁶In 1955, for example, 468 movies were shown in Austrian theaters, 440 of them were foreign ones, 229 thereof US-movies. – Wagnleitner 1991, 299

American political system which is very open to the pressure of well organized interest and single-issue groups. On the other hand the effects of the role religious groups play in American politics should not be underestimated.

The Austrian political system was very unitary and focused – and to some extent still does – on political parties, which were nearly the only channel to the political decision making process. Compared to American parties, their Austrian counterparts are centralized, strong institutions who decide autonomously about candidate nomination and are not very open to political groups outside their organization. During a long period of the Second Austrian Republic they functioned as representatives of historically grown, socially and culturally different constituencies and still determine Austrian politics to a great extent. Up to the 1970s parties had almost a monopoly in their function as "transmission belts" (Ebbinghaus 1976, 26) between the needs of certain constituencies and groups and the executive or legislative branches of the state.

Abortion as a Symbolic Issue

Joseph Gusfield described the temperance movement as a "symbolic crusade" of American Protestants of the late 19th and early 20th century, who felt their social status endangered by the rivalry of immigrant groups (Gusfield 1963). The attitude towards drinking alcohol became the pivotal point, the "symbolic issue", as I would like to call it, which the Protestants chose to prove their superiority in state and society. They turned to the government for the acknowledgement of their point of view, because "governments affect the distribution of values through symbolic acts" (Gusfield 1963, 167), and succeeded in achieving a victory when the state legislature accepted their point of view by ruling the practices of the immigrant cultures which did not oppose drinking alcohol out of order. This "symbolic act" of legal prohibition was the actual aim of the "crusade", not to make sure, that nobody drank alcohol. In the conflict between white protestant natives and the immigrants of the late 19th century the attitude towards drinking alcohol became the symbol for a set of values, for a life style, for an attitude towards and interpretation of society.

Justified criticism arose because Gusfield concentrated in his interpretation of social movements to much upon economic status (Soper 1994, 11). Therefore, in my interpretation of the abortion conflict I am going to modify Gusfield's notion of status. In my approach, the status of a group cannot be measured only in economic terms but is also determined by the extent a group is able to assert its norms within society. "Symbolic crusades" are not only made to maintain economic status during social change but are undertaken if a group feels its world interpretation and norms endangered in order to ensure the prevalence of its set of values and norms concerning desirable social behavior in a changing society. In the abortion

debate, it is not the social status of a group which is at stake, but conflicting world interpretations and related sets of values.

Furthermore, I would like to show that not only groups defending worldviews questioned by social change made abortion a subject of symbolic confrontation. Also for feminist groups advocating change in society abortion became a symbol – for their ideas about how the world should be. Laws concerning abortion are suitable as a symbolic issue because they are connected to social reproduction and gender relations, which are fundamental in society. Negotiating abortion laws is negotiating the social definition of gender roles and gender relations, the traditional gender hierarchy is at stake.

Discussing the question why it was abortion which became a "symbolic issue" of social movements during the 1960s, I think it is crucial, that the occurring social change challenged exactly the traditional gender hierarchy. In the United States as well as in Austria more women than in the past entered the labor force. Maybe even more important was, that at least a part of these women were better educated or were getting a better education than women had before. At the same time divorcing rates began to rise, marriage rates dropped after the "hightime" of the family. Birth control became more available: The pharmaceutical industry provided safe oral contraceptives, which were appreciated – at the time being – by many women in the United States as well as in Austria. The Supreme Court passed on a judgement ruling out restrictions of birth control at least for married couples referring to the right to privacy (*Griswold v. Connecticut*).

Obviously more and more women felt that having a child was not any more the only goal of their lives. Thus, for them getting control of their reproductivity became the crucial point, or as Kristin Luker put it: "When women accepted the definition that a woman's role was as wife and mother, control of one's own body meant little. When the biological working of one's body and one's social status (or intended social status) are congruent, who needs control? In everyday terms, if one's role in life is to be a mother, it is not such a problem that one's biology often seems singlemindedly bent on producing children. (...) Once (women) had choices about life roles, they came to feel that they had *a right to use abortion in order to control their own lives.*" (stresses by Luker 1984, 118)

At the end of the 1960s new women's groups entered the political stage, first in the United States, later in Western Europe and in Austria. In many countries, they were going to change the abortion debate, which, if existing at all, until then had been restricted to small circles of physicians and lawyers. At the center of this second women's movement, there stood the question if and what kind of difference between men and women existed beyond the physical one, thereby the challenge of all concepts about naturally founded gender roles.

In connection to the claim of a self-determined life for women abortion and birth-control became crucial – symbols to fight for. In the words of one of the first pro-choice activists in California 1967, interviewed during Kristin Luker's study: "When we talk about women's rights, we can get all the rights in the world – the right to vote, the right to go to school – and none of them means a doggone thing if we don't own the flesh we stand in, if we can't control what happens to us, if the whole course of our lives can be changed by somebody else that can get us pregnant by accident, or by deceit, or by force. So I consider the right to elective abortion, whether you dream of doing it or not, is the cornerstone of the women's movement. (...) if you can't control your own body you can't control your future, to the degree that any of us can control futures." Another contemporary activist said: "To advocate the right of abortion (...) meant destroying the ultimate punishment of sex and allowing the pleasure of sex for its own sake without the concomitant obligation of childbirth. Abortion stood at the apex of all our nightmares and inhibitions about sex." (Luker 1984, 97) A history of the American women's movement summarized the situation in the United States: "Without the right to abortion many women felt there could be no true sexual freedom for women." (Hymowitz/Weissman 1978, 360)

The European evidence is quite similar. A document standing at the beginning of the women's movement in Western Europe and being also published by Austrian women's rights activists stated in respect to abortion laws: "The availability of abortions on demand and free of charge is *not* the end of the women's struggle. It is only one of the most fundamental demands. Without this demand being met the political struggle cannot start. For this fight, it is necessary, that women achieve the right to their bodies, that they are free to do what they want with it. (...) We don't demand a better law, we demand the repeal of law. We don't demand charity, we demand justice (...) We demand our due: the freedom of our bodies."⁷ A leaflet spread in Vienna by the first postwar feminist group in the early 1970s attached similar great importance to abortion: "The fight against the law prohibiting abortions is part of the fight for the women's right of self-determination, for their equal rights, in the law, in the public, at the places of work and within the families!"⁸

⁷"Die freie und kostenlose Abtreibung ist *nicht* das Ziel im Kampf der Frauen. Sie ist nur eine der elementarsten Forderungen dieses Kampfes, eine Forderung, ohne deren Erfüllung der politische Kampf der Frauen nicht beginnen kann. Es ist notwendig für diesen Kampf, *daß die Frauen das Recht auf ihren Körper erlangen, daß sie frei über ihn verfügen können.* (...) Wir wollen kein besseres Gesetz, wir wollen die Aufhebung des Gesetzes. Wir wollen nicht Nächstenliebe, wir wollen Gerechtigkeit. (...) Wir wollen, was uns gebührt: die Freiheit unseres Körpers." – 343 Französinnen. Ich habe abgetrieben. Ein Aufruf – a document from the French women's movement going to become central to the young German and Austrian women's movement – quoted in: Mesner 1994, 178.

⁸"Der Kampf gegen den Abtreibungsparagraphen ist ein Teil des Kampfes um das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Frau, um ihre Gleichberechtigung im Gesetz, im öffentlichen Leben, im Betrieb und in der Familie!" - quoted in: Mesner 1994, 207.

Thus, pro-choice campaigning women saw free access to abortion for every woman deciding to have one as a symbol of women's liberation and self-determination in Austria as well as in the United States. But, what for the activists of the women's movement was the chance for change, was the threat of "modernity" and moral decay to their opponents. In both countries, the demand for the women's right to decide about their pregnancies soon evoked groups gathering in order to uphold the laws prohibiting abortions. While the pro-choice activists claimed a different notion of gender, family, reproductivity, and womanhood, the pro-life activists tried to defend a society with, as they thought, naturally founded sex roles and gender relations at its basis against a threatening "modernity", defined as "materialism", "decadence", etc. This defense of abortion prohibitions can, in fact, be interpreted as a defense of the "old" order in times of accelerated social change. The ban of abortion, in this respect, is a dike, a bulwark against the menaces of "modernity".

To support my argument I again would like to give only a few examples. The first one is a quotation out of the Newsletter of the LIFE coalition, a pro-life group in North Dakota: "Could it be that we have allowed idols of materialism, drugs, alcohol, money, sex, power or success to bind us (...) and now our children and our families are being destroyed and taken away captive by satan? We must return to the God of the Bible (who) speaks clearly what we must do to reclaim our land and our beloved State of North Dakota from the enemy." (quoted in: Ginsburg 1990, 109-10). In Austria, a conservative judge, critic of the reform efforts said: "The natural order for a child to be raised in is the family, where the father and the mother fulfil their duty to the child in a morally good, responsible, sacrificing way. Precondition is a respectable marriage. (The) carelessness about the results of an immoral and disorderly life and to the values of life is one of the main causes of all further offenses against the sacredness of life, covered by the Penal Code – from abortion to murder. The descendants of morally good marriages don't become murderers. Parents, who love each other, wish to have children and don't have to abort any unwanted results of disorderly relationships (...)." ⁹ One of the founders of the most important Austrian pro-life group called the protection of the "unborn" the "limit of tolerance" which must not be crossed in order to prevent the foundations of a well ordered community from being endangered (Mesner 1994, 185-6). In 1993, the former Catholic cardinal of Vienna said: "I ask you to keep in mind, that, the tenet that nobody has the right to dispose of the life of another human being – however

⁹"Die natürliche Ordnung, in der das Kind aufwächst, ist die Familie, in der Vater und Mutter die Pflichten dem Kinde gegenüber in sittlicher verantwortlicher, opfervoller Weise erfüllen. Voraussetzung ist die rechte Ehe. (Die) Unbekümmertheit um die Folgen eines unsittlichen und unordentlichen Lebenswandels und gegen die Werte des Lebens ist eine Hauptursache für alle weiteren vom Strafgesetz erfaßten Verstöße gegen die Heiligkeit des Lebens - von der Abtreibung bis zum Mord. Kinder aus guten Ehen sind keine Mörder, Eltern, die sich lieben, wollen ihre Kinder und haben es nicht nötig, die unerwünschten Folgen eines ungeordneten Verhältnisses (...) abzutreiben." – quoted in: Mesner 1994, 147.

this life looks like – once dumped, there will not be anything to protect us against the total availability, against the total manipulation of man. Then man will be only the stuff, which will be measured by its utility."¹⁰ Though this last quotation is a very moderate one, it shows how abortion is linked to the threats of modernity endangering humanity.

FEMINISM – A CHALLENGE TO THE "OLD" ORDER

Scrutinizing the institutional and organizational conditions of the pro-choice campaign and the way it reached its end it becomes obvious that the respective political system and ideological traditions formed both movements in a specific and – as I want to argue – typical way: First, the American movement had its models and predecessors in the First women's movement on the one hand and the civil rights-movement on the other, while Austrian feminism started its development within the traditional party structures.¹¹ Second, the American women's movement hesitated to adopt the abortion plank to their basic policy statement and entered new ground by doing so eventually, while the Austrian advocates of free abortion could refer to already existing traditions. Third, in the United States pressure groups at state and later national level lobbied legislators to pass a liberal abortion law or to repeal the existing ones. The Austrian women's movement, however, gained its first great success, namely a law legalizing abortion on demand within the first three month of pregnancy, not at least by using traditional party networks. Fourth, the American activists addressed the Courts when it grew difficult to reach their goals at state legislatures and finally succeeded in *Roe v. Wade*, in Austria the legislative assembly, deeply divided along party lines, passed the new abortion law.

The American pro-choice campaign until Roe v. Wade

The American women's movement, the most important agency for abortion rights in the United States, has its origins in the mid-1960s and, similar to its predecessor, mobilized mainly white middle-class or upper-class women, who wanted to take "action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society *now*, exercising all

¹⁰"Ich bitte Sie, zu bedenken, wenn einmal der Grundsatz fällt, daß kein Mensch das Recht hat, über das Leben eines anderen Menschen zu verfügen - wie dieses Leben auch aussieht -, dann schützt uns nichts mehr vor der totalen Verfügbarkeit, vor der totalen Manipulation des Menschen. Dann ist der Mensch Material, das nur nach seinem Nützlichkeitswert gemessen wird." - Der Standard, June 3, 1993.

¹¹Though I do not want to elaborate on this point here, because it is connected to an extensive juridical, political and philosophical discussion, I would like to note, that the focus on individual rights, which marked the pro-choice stance in the US is related to the American tradition of liberalism and (liberal) individual civil rights. In Austria, the pro-choice position was connected to a higher extent with a concern for societal, i. e. state responsibility for the social circumstances of reproduction, child rearing, etc.

privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men." (Hymowitz/Weissman 1978, 344) The first central goal and mobilizing issue was – taking up the tradition of the 1920s – lobbying for ERA in order to eventually achieve equality at the work. In the beginning, NOW, the first and largest mainstream women's organization of the Second Women's movement, avoided talking too much about reproductive rights because the activists were afraid – obviously rightly – that advocating free access to abortion would split the movement and put off the white middle-class women they addressed at.

Thus, outside NOW, which was seen as reformist, groups of "radical" feminists gathered former civil rights- and anti-war movement-activists. These women were disappointed by the very traditional behavior in respect to gender relations they had experienced within the New Left and the students' movement, and thus decided to form their own organizations. While NOW relied on steady organizational work and traditional reform tactics, the radical feminists carried out provoking actions they took over from the students' movement, so called "zap actions", the first well-known in 1968 on the occasion of the Miss America beauty pageant, when a sheep was crowned and high-heeled shoes, cosmetics, and bras were thrown into a "freedom trash can".

Finally the radical feminists' demand for repeal of abortion laws was taken over by the mainstream women's movement. On its Second Annual Convention in 1967 NOW added to its Bill of Rights a plank claiming "the right of women to control their own reproductive lives" and demanding the repeal of all laws restricting birth control and all penal laws governing abortion. By the way, it may be interesting to note, that this was the first time in American history that any major women's organization made abortion to its issue, though this resolution was very controversial¹² and caused – as expected – a split within the mainstream women's movement.

Thus, the women's groups publicly rejected a reform proposal introduced by the highly reknown American Law Institute, which permitted abortions under certain conditions¹³. By their campaign against all respective state laws nationwide, the women's movement took the abortion law reform out of small expert circles, made it a subject of political discussion and changed its content. The public response was overwhelming. A mass movement evolved. Even groups like Church Women United and the YMCA supported NARAL, the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws, the first national pro-choice group. But it was

¹²Faye Ginsburg quotes Betty Friedan, NOW's first president talking about "a very painful confrontation with our own conflicts on abortion". - Ginsburg 1990, 39.

¹³An abortion should be justifiable, if a doctor stated that the pregnancy threatened life or health of a woman, that the child would be born seriously disabled, if the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest or began, when the woman was under the age of 16.

not only a public discussion about the re-definition of who should decide about abortion on what grounds and with what kind of legitimation. It was a discussion about women's rights, the position of women in American society, and about the societal values connected to child bearing, reproduction, and the traditional family structure. The pro-choice activists talked in the language of democratic and human rights. They claimed that abortion on demand was the *right* of a woman, not anything, she had to ask for, whomever (her husband, her doctor, the state).

Pro-choice activists started to engage in civil disobedience by establishing (illegal) abortion referral-services and used them for political mobilization. For example, for a period of time the Californian Society for Human Abortions did not inform women seeking an abortion about how to get one until they had written a letter to their legislator urging the repeal of abortion laws (Luker 1984, 98).

At first, the pro-choice activities were more and more successful, getting passed laws according to their proposals by four state-legislatures: Hawaii, Alaska, New York, and Washington. But soon the campaign for repeal came to a standstill at the state level due to rising resistance by quickly emerging pro-life groups. So the pro-choice activists changed their tactics and turned to the courts to declare laws restricting abortions unconstitutional. They finally succeeded when the Supreme Court ruled in his decision in *Roe v. Wade*, handed down on January 22, 1973, that the state must not interfere in a woman's decision to have an abortion until the fetus is viable.

Austrian Feminists between Provocation and Accomodation

The American women's movement and its position towards abortion laws had an enormous influence on Western European societies, especially in Western Germany and thereby in Austria, as well. Although socialdemocratic women had not stopped discussing abortion law reform, the demand for repeal of these laws, now publicly raised, was new, polarizing and accelerating in a reform debate that had been only trickling for almost twenty years. At the beginning, which for Austria is to be dated in the early 1970s, mainly young women pushed for liberalizing abortion laws. It is typical for the Austrian political system, that these activities were carried out within the traditional partisan structures.

The earliest origins of the new feminism were a study group, called *Arbeitskreis Emanzipation im Offensiv Links*, formed by members of the communist youth organization in 1969, and a group of several young women who had gathered within the *Junge Generation*, the youth branch of the socialdemocratic party. In 1971, the socialdemocratic head of the Department of Justice introduced reform plans concerning abortion. His proposals contained

conditions for legal abortions: in the case of danger for life or health of the pregnant woman, if the woman could not afford having a child, if there was the possibility that the child would be born mentally or physically disabled. Inspired by the success of American pro-choice activists, especially the passage of New York's liberal law reported by Austrian newspapers and provoking intense discussions, the socialdemocratic women's group decided to found an initiative, the *Aktionskomitee für die Abschaffung des §144*¹⁴. This committee combined and merged new ways of campaigning in traditional policies. They used the traditional political framework and propagated their proposals, total repeal of abortion laws or permission of abortions within the first three months of pregnancy, within and by the socialdemocratic organizational and decision making network.

At the same time, they transcended and thereby changed the limits of traditional political culture by addressing a broader, non-partisan public. They gathered signatures from prominent people who supported their claim, spoke publicly in the streets and market-places. Like their American predecessors, the Austrian activists succeeded in making abortion a subject of public discussion and thereby changed the content of the debate. Medical or juridical regulations, discussed in small inner-partisan expert circles, ceased to be at stake and were replaced by abortion on demand, which was expected to result – as the contemporary activists put it – in the "women's liberation from the coercion to bear children"¹⁵.

When the committee in April 1972 eventually succeeded in having the socialdemocratic party convention pass a resolution claiming new abortion laws permitting abortion on demand within a certain term after conception this was a very important, maybe the most important single step on the way to a new liberal law: The legislative majority of socialdemocratic representatives finally voted for a law according to that party resolution and had it passed against fierce resistance from all the other legislators, on January 23, 1974.

It is typical for the Austrian situation and the prevailing roles parties used to play in political culture, that the ranks of one of the two major parties had to be persuaded and gained from within, i. e. by people who were official party members and had campaigned within the organizational building of the party. I would suppose, that without using a political party as "channel", as "transmission belt", during the 1970s it would have been actually impossible to succeed in liberalizing abortion laws the way the women's committee had claimed. In addition, the socialdemocratic party was, due to its ideological traditions, the only potential "policy-channel" for the pro-choice activists of the 1970s.

¹⁴*Action Committee for the Repeal of Article 144*, i. e. the Penal Code-article which prohibited abortions.

¹⁵"die Befreiung der Frau vom Gebärzwang" - quoted in: Mesner 1994, 189.

At the same time, the Austrian Second Women's Movement, one of the first social movements outside traditional party structures in Austria after World War II, had its earliest roots within exactly these structures. As shown above, it was in the socialdemocratic and communist party's environment, where the first groups of mostly younger people dealt with questions of women's emancipation and liberation.

At the climax of the abortion conflict the socialdemocratic women's efforts were backed up by the "Autonomous" or "New" women's movement. Its activists had detached from traditional parties, they perceived as male defined and dominated institutions, during the abortion campaign, in order to form their own – "autonomous" – organizations, groups, committees. Their organizing principle – as in the case of their American counterparts – was not *class* as for the socialdemocratic or communist movement, but *gender*. Women gathered on grounds of "womenhood" and the related oppression, they had to share. But the feminist activists did not refer to their Austrian ancestors from the turn-of-the century – these traces and tradition lines had been disrupted by fascisms. The Austrian Second women's movement found its ideological and organizational model in the women's movement in the United States in general, especially in its radical branch. The conditions of its emergence, however, were determined and marked by Austrian political culture and tradition.

WAR AND CONTAINMENT

For every observer the most obvious difference concerning the abortion debate in Austria and in the United States lies in the aftermath of the strict abortion law's repeal in both countries. Describing and interpreting tactics and outcomes of the attempts to reduce access to abortion after its legalization lead to the identification of two main reasons why the abortion conflict was settled in Austria while it escalated in the United States.

As shown above, abortion had not been a major issue in the US until *Roe v. Wade*. The conflict afterwards, however, resulted in bombings and arson attacks at clinics, death threats to clinic staffers, acts of vandalism, and five killings. First, I want to point out an institutional pre-condition within the political system: Compared to Austria, America's federal system and its weak political parties provide more opportunities of access for interest groups (Soper 1994, 128, McSweeney/Zvesper 1991). The fact that abortion is in the responsibility of state legislatures multiplied the opportunities for lobbying and mobilization. Given the symbolic potential of abortion there are manifold chances to provoke fierce emotions.

Second, the United States knew strong religious groups with corresponding organizational resources and ideological traditions. Evangelical Christian groups as well as

the Roman Catholic church were determined to take advantage of their resources and the institutional opportunities to get through their moral norms. They used the political pre-conditions to put pressure on every candidate running for any public office, even non elective-ones, and succeeded finally in making the stance to abortion a kind of "litmus-test" (Hadley 1994, 107-8), as only recently was the case with the (non-)appointment of Henry Forster for Surgeon General.

To elaborate on the points I have made, it is necessary to summarize the history of the abortion debate since the mid-1970s in both countries briefly. In Austria, the passing of a new abortion law in 1974 was the climax of a public debate which surged highly since 1971, when the socialdemocratic administration introduced a law permitting abortions only under certain conditions. This proposal evoked the resistance of socialdemocratic and feminist women on the one hand, of religious groups on the other hand. When the pro-choice activists succeeded in getting passed a law permitting abortion on demand within the first three month of pregnancy, a pro-life group, supported by the Roman Catholic church, started a petition for a referendum. During the following campaign, which was going to achieve the greatest number of signatures ever reached until then, the conflict spread to every parish, thus, dividing every town and village in the country. At the same time, the legislature of the Austrian province of Salzburg tried to defeat the law by appealing the *Verfassungsgerichtshof* (which is equivalent to the US-Supreme Court) to examine its constitutionality.¹⁶ Groups of pro-life activists picketed several times before a reproductive health center in Vienna and before the houses of doctors performing abortions in smaller towns and harassed arriving patients.

After the *Verfassungsgerichtshof* had ruled the abortion law constitutional and the Austrian parliament had turned down the pro-life petition, all legal possibilities to get the law reversed were exhausted. From this point on, pro-life activities in Austria weakened, in contrast to American events, and have nearly vanished by now. The *Volkspartei*, the big catholic-conservative party with a strong relationship to catholic lay-organizations, withdraw its political support for anti-abortion legislation. It avoided discussing abortion during electoral campaigns ever since the end of the 1970s because all polls conducted since the mid-1970s showed permanently that abortion discussions were favourable for parties taking a liberal point of view. The Roman Catholic church, whose membership comprises over 80% of the Austrian population, returned to its position of keeping distance from politics, which it had taken gradually after World War II as a conclusion from prewar civil-war and *Clerico-fascism*. After the *Volkspartei* and the Roman Catholic church had refrained from advocating anti-abortion legislation, a *status quo* developed which is some kind of a compromise

¹⁶The Court ruled the Austrian abortion law constitutional in 1974 stating that the Austrian constitution does not contain an absolute right to life.

between groups disapproving of abortions, above all the Roman Catholic church and its lay organizations, and people advocating free access to abortions: Though a federal law is in effect permitting abortions on demand within the first term of pregnancy, in some regions of the country – especially in the rural and Catholic ones – abortions are not available due to clinics and doctors refusing to perform them. Inhabitants seeking an abortion have to travel to one of the bigger cities, for example to Vienna, in order to have the operation performed. The national health insurance does not cover abortions (except for medical reasons), though the pro-choice movement had demanded public funding during the 1970s. In 1979, 1984, and – up to now – the last time in 1993 small groups formed to advocate stricter abortion legislation. (By the way, using the well-known US-American label the group which went public in 1993 called itself *Prolife-Spot*.) Though some of these groups were supported by individual conservative Catholic bishops, none could mobilize mainstream Catholicism or a political party. Thus, none of these groups was able to exert relevant influence on the public debate.

So, while the anti-abortionists, in general, refrain from demanding a new law according to their ideals, groups advocating free access to abortion usually do not make any efforts to make it available everywhere. Furthermore, the women's and feminist movement has split and turned to other issues, in the meanwhile.

It was not before *Roe v. Wade*, that the abortion debate started on a national level in the United States. The repeal of the abortion laws was not carried out by a parliamentary body but – another evidence for the weakness of the American party system – by a court, which is more open to individuals and small, but well organized groups, as the pro-choice movement was at that time. The decision in *Roe* did not meet the opinion of the majority (Blake 1977) and was not expected by most people. They were struck as "a bolt from the blue" (Luker 1984, 141). Under these conditions, mobilizing against abortion on demand was easy for various Christian churches using their dense networks of churches, parochial schools and other religious institutions. Whereas the National Conference of Catholic Bishops was the first to work for the limitation of access to abortion and a Human Life Amendment criminalizing it, it was followed, however, soon and very efficiently by fundamentalist evangelical Protestants going to become the most dynamic branch of pro-life groups.

The Evangelicals presented themselves as a reform movement within the mainstream churches which – according to their opinion – had left the way determined by the bible and had become too permissive towards the vices of modernity. Various Evangelicals groups had gained a large membership since the 1960s filling a void actually left by more liberal churches and providing the clear rules some people were missing. The Evangelicals were not ready to accommodate their rules and beliefs to a liberalized pluralist society and

advocated traditional family values and norms concerning sexuality. Furthermore, according to their interpretation of the bible, evangelical Christians saw it as a duty to use the political process as a way of realizing the social goals and norms they believed being consistent with God's will (Soper 1994). So, they were attractive to people feeling endangered and – as can be concluded from the quotation below – in fact scared by the social change and the change in sexual mores during the 1960s and 1970s, caused among others by the women's movement: "America is now facing a grave crisis. Unless, we God's faithful, stand up and are counted, we could see our entire nation destroyed from moral decay", it says in a publication of the 1978 founded Christian Voice (quoted in: Soper 1994, 56). As shown above, abortion became – together with school prayer – the most important "symbolic issue" to defend the whole set of evangelical norms and the respective world interpretation.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s the anti-abortion movement used the manifold opportunities, the American political system and the media offer to intervene into the decision making process, very efficiently by contributions to candidates, television advertising campaigns, grass-roots mobilizations, and legislative initiatives for imposing waiting periods, demands for "informed consent", cutting public funding, etc. At the end of the 1970s, the New Right, a coalition of traditional right-wing politicians, religious leaders, and "pro-family" groups, succeeded in gaining high influence in the Republican Party, thereby "politicizing" the abortion conflict also in a partisan way – and demonstrating the openness of the American party system in respect to pressure groups. Until then neither Democratic nor Republican Party had been very sympathetic to cultural topics as abortion, school prayer, or pornography, because they cut across the social basis of both parties. Ronald Reagan was the first president who made his anti-abortion stance a political argument aiming at evangelical and fundamentalist Christians and single-issue groups advocating traditional roles of family, church, and school (Ginsburg 1990, 47).

The Roman Catholic church did not refrain from the political fight against access to abortion either, as it had done in Austria. In my opinion this is due to the competition between the churches existing in the United States, where mainstream churches lost many former members to alternative and fundamentalist religious groups, and lacking in Austria. So, the Family Life Division of the National Catholic Conference outlined and implemented a "Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activity" in 1975 which led to the foundation of 18,000 pro-life committees across the country to monitor and influence national and local elections (Ginsburg 1990, 44). The Catholic Bishops continue to support pro-life activities by millions of dollars.

It seems like a paradoxon that religious groups were and are that influential in American politics compared with the Austrian situation. The First Amendment of the American

Constitution prohibits an established church. None of the many churches and denominations succeeded therefore in building integral bindings to the state. Though there are no formal ties between state and churches, religiosity went into American politics, however, through the general structure of the American political system and culture, its openness to and high importance of pressure groups, by its highly competitive character. On the contrary, in Austria there were strong institutional ties between the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the Austrian state in the past, which are still existing partly. But as a result and a conclusion of the interwar period, the Roman Catholic church has gradually refrained from exerting direct political influence to Austrian politics, politicians and parties (though there still exist personal relationships between the Austrian *Volkspartei* and Catholic lay-organizations).

Since the mid-1970s the American pro-life movement took advantage of the political culture the way the pro-choice activists had done before and was very successful on national and state level: Since 1976, the Hyde Amendments have prevented public funding of abortions except if they are performed for medical reasons. Many states reduced the access to abortion by waiting periods, cutting of funding, etc and were not hindered by courts. At the same time, the pro-life demonstrations and actions of civil disobedience as clinic picketing and other threats reduced the number of clinics and doctors performing abortions, so that in 1988, 83 percent of all United States counties lacked any facilities for abortion (Hadley 1994, 102).

Eventually, it seemed as if the pro-life activists were successful in their attempt for a reversion of *Roe* as well. The presidents Reagan and Bush had used the appointments to the Supreme Court they had to make during their term in office to establish a pro-life majority. The Republican Party platforms for the presidential elections from 1980 to 1992 contained an anti-abortion plank. But the threat of the renewed criminalization of abortion eventually mobilized the women's movement, which started to defend abortion rights more actively. Again, the women's movement made abortion rights its mobilizing "symbolic issue". Between 300,000 and 600,000 people participated in one of the largest marches ever held to Washington for "Women's Equality, Women's Lives" on April 9, 1989. The membership and the fund raising results of NOW and NARAL (National Abortion Rights Action League) rose to new heights (Ryan 1992, 144-6).

The revived pro-choice efforts were, at least partially, successful: Though the executive branch under President Bush repeatedly demanded the reversion of *Roe*, the Supreme Court upheld its 1973-decision, at least in principle (Goldstein 1994). The campaigns for the presidential election in 1992 made abortion once again a central issue, between pro-life George Bush and pro-choice Bill Clinton, and ended with Clinton's victory. As a result of this defeat, the Republican Party gradually withdrew from aggressive pro-lifers: "I will not allow

abortion to be a litmus test for membership", a senior Republican was quoted in the newspapers in 1993 (quoted in: Hadley 1994, 197). As a sign of this refrain, the Republican "Contract for America" as the elections to Congress in November 1994 approached contained no anti-abortion plank (International Herald Tribune, September 29, 1994). Under Clinton's presidency, federal legislation forbade protesters from obstructing or threatening to use force against clinics. The gag-rule which prevented public employees from informing their patients about abortion was lifted.

So, the influence of anti-abortionists to public legislation and administration weakened, the legal possibilities of prohibiting access to abortion dwindled. According to my opinion, it was this frustration of pro-life activists which caused an radicalization finally leading to the first killing of a doctor performing abortions in March 1993. This and the murders going to follow were not the acts of some mentally ill fanatics. I would state, that they were a – maybe unintended, but not accidental – outcome of fundamentalist anti-abortion campaigns and actions of years and a consequence of the fact that mainstream institutions as the Catholic church and the Republican Party supported or at least did not reject fundamentalist positions. Religious anti-abortionists introduced the language of war and killing into the discourse: "Abortion is the greatest war of all time", it says in a pamphlet of Human Life International (The New York Times, January 15, 1995). The Catholic Cardinal of Boston only withdrew his justification of clinic picketing after the shooting of two clinic staff members in December 1994. (The New York Times, January 4, 1995) A Nonviolent Action Project exhorted in respect to abortion: " (...) the mandate in Scripture is clear. (...) Enough looking. Enough talking. Enough ignorant evasion of responsibility. When you know that an innocent and helpless child is about to be killed, you must intervene." (quoted in: Soper 1994, 113) The murderers who by now killed five persons in their anti-abortion struggle might have taken that too serious.

Summarizing, I would like to make the point, that the reasons why the abortion conflict escalated in the United States and did not in Austria lie in the different ideological and institutional traditions. In Austria, relevant evangelical traditions were missing, the Roman Catholic church, despite diverging attitudes of some conservative dignarities, had no incentive to engage seriously in the political process for a renewed anti-abortion legislation. Furthermore, the centralized political system in Austria gave little or no room and points of access to radical anti-abortionists. The American polity is more open to little pressure groups, even though they do not represent many people. Paul Weyrich, director of a right-wing interest group, said at a meeting of 50 leaders of anti-abortion groups in 1980: "It doesn't matter what the majority of American people think on a poll. What matters is the perception members of Congress have about your issue and their future." (quoted after Nelson/Carver 1994, 747) So fundamentalist religious groups had and seized numerous

opportunities in order to mobilize emotions which could not be channeled and contained in each case.

CONCLUSION

Comparing the abortion debate in Austria and the United States I have shown that differences in development and outcome of the conflict depend on certain – respectively different and characteristic – institutional and ideological pre-conditions determining political culture, the "grammar" of political discourse, though issue and content of the conflict may be the same.

One of the most important elements of political culture is the political system and how it works. While in Austria political parties and their organizational structure had almost a monopoly in channelling political demands and interests up to the 1970s and are still the most important "transmission belts" between the needs and interests of certain groups and the executive or legislative branches of the state, the American polity offers – due to its federal character and its weak parties – many points of access for single-issue pressure groups and lobbies. Additionally, given this weakness and the parties' inability to deal with conflicts running across their basis, the courts, above all the Supreme Court, became very influential in cultural conflicts, f. e. the struggle about the access to abortion.

Concerning the national protagonists of the conflict, I have identified some crucial differences determining the debate: The facts that the American women's movement had its roots in "moral" movements as temperance and abolition and that it defined motherhood as the core of womanhood prevented abortion from becoming a "feminist" issue before the late 1960s. A political movement of labor women advocating different positions publicly lacked. Though the Austrian bourgeois women's movement did not make abortion its political concern either, Austria has had a tradition of discussing abortion as a political topic from the 1920s onwards due to the reform efforts of the Socialdemocratic women's organization. In the early 1970s, the advocates of a repeal of the abortion law could pick up this threat in respect to ideological and organizational traditions. So the socialdemocratic networks were used to introduce and to get through the proposals for a liberal abortion law. It was out of these efforts and the related mobilization an autonomous women's movement emerged.

In respect to the pro-life movement the evangelical traditions, existing in the United States and almost lacking in Austria, fuelled the conflict after the repeal of the strict abortion laws – besides the already mentioned characteristics of political culture. Abortion became and remained a symbolic issue by which world interpretations and sets of social norms were

negotiated. A dynamic arose which could not be contained by now and resulted in physical violence finally claiming the lives of five clinic staff members.

In Austria, political culture and ideological / religious traditions did not support the escalation and polarization of the conflict. None of the institutionalized societal forces, including the Roman Catholic church, had an interest in making the topic of abortion its crucial point after the 1970s. The Austrian feminist movement has turned its attention to other issues, f. e. equal pay, violence in families, etc. Its main demand concerning abortion laws met, the issue had lost its mobilizing effect. Supposedly it would not have been possible to continue campaigning in respect to abortions – for public funding or for abortion facilities everywhere in the country – successfully. Additionally, the feminist movement, splitting up in many small groups, did not succeed in creating an efficient political structure of its own. So, the unitary political system in Austria, which provides very few channels to decision making prevented the now and then forming small anti-abortion groups from becoming of great political importance. – Thus, under these conditions, abortion laws could lose their importance as symbolic values.

References

Anderson, Harriet. 1992. Utopian Feminism: Women's Movements in Fin-de-siècle Vienna. New Haven-London.

Blake, Judith. 1977. "The Abortion Decisions: Judicial Review and Public Opinion." In Abortion: New Directions in Policy Studies, ed. Edward Manier, William Liu, and David Solomon, 51-82. Notre Dame, Indiana.

Bock, Gisela. 1986. Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik. Opladen

Czarnowski, Gabriele. 1991. Das kontrollierte Paar. Ehe und Sexualpolitik im Nationalsozialismus. Weinheim.

Ebbinghaus, Rolf. 1976. "Legitimationsproblematik, jüngere staatstheoretische Diskussion und der Stand historisch-empirischer Forschung." In Bürgerlicher Staat und politische Legitimation, 9-39. Frankfurt/Main.

Ginsburg, Faye D. 1990. Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London.

Feminist Review 29. 1988. Abortion: The International Agenda. (Spring)

Goldstein, Leslie Friedman. 1994. Contemporary Cases in Women's Rights. Madison, Wisconsin-London.

Grillenberger, Silvia. 1989. Eine Chronologie der Frauenbewegungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Österreich in den siebziger Jahren unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Abtreibungsdiskussion, University of Vienna.

Gusfield, Joseph. 1963. Symbolic Crusade. Urbana.

Hadley, Janet. 1994. "God's Bullies: Attacks on Abortion." Feminist Review 48 (Autumn): 94-113.

Hoff, Joan. 1991. Law, Gender, and Injustice. A Legal History of U. S. Women. New York-London.

Hymowitz, Carol / Michaela Weissman. 1978. A History of Women in America. Toronto-New York-London-Sydney-Auckland.

International Handbook on Abortion. 1988. ed. Paul Sachdev. New York.

Lehner, Karin. 1989. Verpönte Eingriffe. Sozialdemokratische Reformbestrebungen zu den Abtreibungsbestimmungen in der Zwischenkriegszeit. Wien.

Luker, Kristin. 1984. Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London.

Mesner, Maria. 1994. Frauensache? Zur Auseinandersetzung um den Schwangerschaftsabbruch in Österreich. Wien.

McSweeney, Dean / John Zvesper. 1991. American Political Parties: The Formation, Decline and Reform of the American Party System. London-New York.

Münz, Rainer. 1985. Soziologische Aspekte der Familienentwicklung und die Instrumente ihrer Beeinflussung. (grund- und integrativwissenschaftliche Habilitationsschrift) University of Vienna.

Petchesky, Rosalind. 1984. Abortion and Woman's Choice. New York.

Ryan, Barbara. 1992. Feminism and the Women's Movement. Dynamics of Change in Social Movement, Ideology and Activism. New York-London.

Sieder, Reinhard. 1987. Sozialgeschichte der Familie. Frankfurt/Main.

Soper, J. Christopher. 1994. Evangelical Christianity in the United States and Great Britain: Religious Beliefs, Political Choices. New York.

Tyler May, Elaine. 1988. Homeward Bound. American Families in the Cold War Era.

Wagnleitner, Reinhold. 1991. Coca-Colonisation und Kalter Krieg. Die Kulturmission der USA in Österreich nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Wien

Women and Politics Worldwide, 1994, ed. Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, New Haven-London.