

Civil Discourse

By: Robin Linger

"As a young woman in the twenty-first century, the right to an abortion is a topic that has weighed heavily on my mind from a young age. Before I had even reached eighth grade I was researching the facts and opinions on abortions, trying to develop a moral and evidence based stance on the issue. When engaging in discourse surrounding the topic, it is easy to be insulting and empathetic of the opposing viewpoint, especially in the age of social media when anything can be said anonymously. However, I have observed that when opposing views engage with an established respect to one another, there is often a point which we can agree upon.

On one end of the spectrum is the idea that life begins at conception. As someone who plans to pursue a career in biology in my future, my first concern was establishing the true facts behind it. When an egg cell is fertilized, the embryonic period begins (fifth to tenth week). After the embryonic period is the fetal period. During the embryonic period and early fetal period there is very little about the embryo that characterizes it as "living". Biologists declare viruses as non-living because they cannot survive without a host, and with this precedent in mind, it would be fair to declare an early embryo the same way. However, just because the fetus is not alive, it still holds significance emotionally. It is unfair to claim that no attachment should be held to a fetus in its early stages, despite it not being technically alive. This factor presents why many take the standpoint that life begins at conception, and while it may scientifically be incorrect, emotionally it is true. Thus, when we ponder when an abortion should be available, we must consider that no one wants to have an abortion. There is no woman who wants to get pregnant so that she can terminate it, and we must consider that it is a life-altering decision that she must make for her own good, and we should not guilt women who fall into these unfortunate circumstances. Hence, life does not begin at conception, but we can civilly compromise that despite the scientific precedents, an unborn fetus is undeniably significant emotionally and anyone who must make the decision to terminate the pregnancy should be treated with respect. There is nothing more important in collaboration and compromise than mutual respect.

Living in an affluent neighborhood, I am at a lower risk for teen pregnancy and the risk of sexual abuse. For many in the United States, they are not fortunate enough to be in the same position. In the area that I have grown up in, it is easy to not consider those who do not have the same privilege as me, especially when it comes to a topic as heavy as abortion. Thus when we engage in discourse discussing the topic, along with respect we must have empathy. We must consider those with wildly different lives than ours and take their perspective into account. Many young girls who fall pregnant for various reasons cannot support a baby, physically, financially, or emotionally. It is easy to disregard their experiences as they are not prevalent in my everyday life, but when enacting federal changes like abortion laws, taking these individuals into account is necessary in coming to compromises that benefit everyone. Having empathy for one another when considering any issue is what strengthens our ability as a nation to come to more informed and responsible decisions."