IS ABORTION “TOO POLITICAL”? ASSESSING UNIVERSITY REFERENCE BY FACULTY IN POPULAR US NEWSPAPERS

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BACKGROUND
- Abortion is a common¹ and safe² medical procedure
- In 2018, 40% of Americans expressed a high level of confidence in the scientific and medical communities³
- Popular media is a common and pervasive source of public health information⁴,⁵ that influences attitudes and beliefs⁶

RESULTS
Proportion of Faculty University Affiliation Use in Popular Media Articles, by Public Health Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Health Topic</th>
<th>% Affiliation Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abortion*</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Control</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p=0.006

WHY?
Possible reasons for lack of university reference:
- The University does not wish to be associated with a particular topic
- Concerns for faculty member safety
- Fear of retribution/risk to faculty promotion
- Faculty preference
- Limited word count
- Journalist’s decision

WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?
➢ Abortion is most commonly covered as a political issue, not a public health issue in popular media⁷
➢ Universities are important sources disseminating evidence-based information to the public
➢ Absence of university affiliation reinforces the legitimacy paradox and imparts negative consequences for women who have abortions, abortion providers, and abortion law and policy making⁸

DISCUSSION
Faculty members speaking about abortion are significantly less likely to use their university affiliation in popular media

Faculty located at universities in the west were more likely to be quoted on abortion and university faculty based in the south were more likely to be quoted on gun control (p<0.008)

Faculty in more protected/prestigious positions were more likely to mention their affiliation than those in more tenuous/lower ranked positions (p<0.001)

The Legitimacy Paradox: “Although many highly trained, legitimate physicians provide abortion care, abortion providers continue to be depicted as illegitimate, deviant, or substandard doctors.”⁸

METHODS
IDENTIFICATION
- ProQuest 2015-2020
  # Articles: 469 Ab, 926 GC, 1002 Sm

SCREENING
Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria Applied
- # Articles: 201 Ab, 334 GC, 326 Sm

ELIGIBILITY
- # Articles: 41 Ab, 102 GC, 130 Sm

INCLUSION
Key
Ab: Abortion GC: Gun Control Sm: Smoking

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