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Influences of Public Opinion Concerning Abortion

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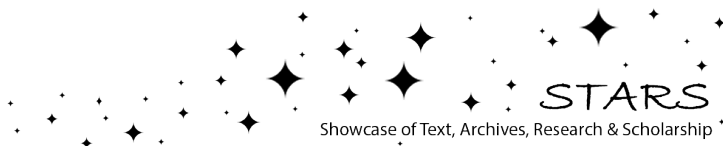
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INFLUENCES OF PUBLIC OPINION CONCERNING ABORTION

by

ENYA BRACKINS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science
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ABSTRACT:

This Honors Undergraduate Thesis seeks to examine the influences of public opinion on abortion policy. Race, Partisanship, and Gender are identified as driving forces which influences the public's opinion. As social and racial movements continue to progress so does the influence that it has on policy makers.

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Introduction

Abortion continues to be one of the most controversial issues of American society. There is a diverse palate regarding how abortion impacts individuals (Bumpass, L. L.1997) and preferences regarding support of abortion (Jozkowski et al. 2018). Many women are advocating for the right to choose due to the rising advocacy of feminism, gender equality, and acceptance in the race of male-dominated occupations. Nevertheless, today's women are breaking the mold of the traditional, stereotypical perceptions of “femininity” by establishing groundbreaking social movements to enhance their political footprints, engaging politics and running for office in higher levels, and increasingly being employed outside of the home. Policy formation surrounding abortion evokes party conflict, and most voters today neglect the fact that policy effect more than legislation (Karol, D., & Thurston, C. N. 2020). Policy in this case is the determinant of the course of life experienced by many women over a choice that they are supposed to have basic human rights to make. It is evident that the lack of diversity and the underrepresentation of woman (Elder, L. 2004) within the political realm has aided in the progression of laws that infringes on the rights of those who are not sitting at the table.

Abortion has always been a polarizing issue, however after the landmark ruling of Roe V. Wade in 1973, general support for legal abortion drastically increased (Granberg, D., & Granberg, B. W. 1980). The gap in racial differences grew smaller and the evidence supporting gender similarities arew larger. However, as social movements and more demographic variables arise, abortion attitudes have become more fluid overtime (Smith, T. W., & Son, J. 2013). Many of the key points of existing research suggest that rising ideological preferences, liberal and conservative views of sexual freedom/orientation, and the role of women in society are all influential in explaining the shifts in attitudes as time moves on (Deitch, C. H. 1983). The most

influential factors that are noted amongst existing research of abortion related attitudes are socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, accessibility, education, religion, party ID, and age (Beckman, L. J. 2017). The findings of current research suggest that being able to afford and access health care (Frederico et al. 2018), the way in which one's familial structure is established throughout their upbringing (Adamczyk, A. 2008) and the generational strongholds of religious beliefs (Harris, R. J., & Mills, E. W. 1985) are all still vehemently influential in shaping public opinion concerning abortion. Nonetheless, in a society where this issue has become politicized, gender, race, and religion are three factors that should be accounted now more than ever. Party-line voting is beginning to take over this issue (Abramowitz, A. I. (1995), and with our government lacking diversity and inclusion of women and minorities, the effects of this way of voting is affecting the progression of women rights.

My thesis will examine how gender, race, and religion affect public abortion-related attitudes. The public's attitudes are very influential in the fight of the right to choose whether a woman should have the ability to choose to carry a pregnancy full term or not and public opinion on this issue shifts dramatically over time. As America becomes more diverse, it is important to understand how the factors existing public opinion research emphasizes as important influence the abortion related opinions of Americans. In this paper, I use a year's worth of data from The General Social Survey 2018 Data Set, and I analyze individual responses that reflect their opinion of whether a woman should be able to have an abortion for any reason. I begin with a background on abortion laws in the US throughout history, discuss existing public opinion research. My theory stems from the basis of the Public Opinion theory, which states that public attitudes toward opinion are due to an individual's socio-economic status. My hypotheses are that Whites will be more supportive of abortion than Blacks, Men will be less supportive of

abortion than Women, and Religious people will be less supportive of abortion than those who are not religious.

My results support my last two hypotheses, which are also visible in a table comparing variables from my study. Moreover, I found that Blacks are more supportive of abortion than Whites, which does not support my first hypothesis. In my conclusion, I state that I plan to further this study by incorporating a longer span of study as well as build upon the question of “To what extent are feminism movements impacting politics today?”

Overview of the History of abortion in the U.S

Since its landmark decision in 1973, Roe v. Wade has become one of the country’s most paramount— and controversial— Supreme Court cases. With a 7-2 ruling, the case solidified a woman’s right to have an abortion. The case involved Norma Corvey, who went by the pseudonym 'Jane Roe.' Corvey was pregnant and wanted an abortion, but she lived in Texas, where abortion was illegal if it is deemed unnecessary for the mother's health. So, she filed a lawsuit against her district attorney to claim that Texas's law against abortion was unconstitutional as it violated the Ninth Amendment's right to privacy. With Roe v. Wade, scholars have found that the voice of the masses profoundly influenced the decision (Adamek, R. J. 1994). When there are no labels to indicate which way to vote officials are most likely to follow the majority vote, which allows a democratic response from the courts and the public (Calderone et al. 2009).

Abortion is a topic that never fails to spark a debate. Based on various public opinion polls that have taken place over history, America has always been split almost entirely half over when it comes to citizens' views on abortion (Greenhouse, L., & Siegel,

R. B. 2010). On the one hand, the country has a long history of advocacy for women's rights, especially her right to choose— in terms of her body and lifestyle. This advocacy has come in hand with the rise of feminist beliefs on gender equality. Even before the establishment of the 19th amendment, which declared it a woman's right to vote, feminism used to combat misogyny in society (De Lauretis, T. 1990). But, its concepts have only spread as people begin to cut ties with more conservative ideas of gender roles and women's rights. Even with the pass of power to the states to decide their way to handle abortion, policy legislation has yet to significantly break the foundation of the top-down approach of decision making (Posner, R. A. 1992). Nevertheless, studies have shown that gender, race, and religion are all factors that powerfully influence the public's opinion on abortion.

Factors that shape public opinion

Female legislators are more likely to favor pro-choice policies and have a significant effect on the system than are male legislators when they are in large numbers (Berkman & O'Connor, 1993). Women who pursue professional careers such as politics view motherhood as a private choice. The more educated a woman is, the more they seek opportunities that require a high demand for commitment (Norris, P. & Inglehart, R. 2001). For some, the mold of a woman being the caretaker is merely outdated. Women try to tap into all the potential they possess and simply value having the option of choosing to drastically change their lives due to giving birth to a child. This influences their stance on abortion because public funding of abortions appears to follow a traditional liberal/conservative standpoint stagnantly.

Furthermore, though there are notable shifts in abortion attitudes over the years,

race and gender differences remain consistent. Studies show that abortion attitudes are fluid not fixed, and they will change with the social context around an individual.

Divergence is temporary because, as time moves on, unification on issues that affect a mass population such as women and women's rights will grow (Carter et al. 2009).

Moreover, studies have shown that women have the right to choose, but not all women receive the means to select them. Competitive Party Systems (McFarlane & Meier, 1993) have explained to be detrimental to the rights of women of lower socioeconomic status. This system is most beneficial to those who are economically disadvantaged, and therefore the issue of abortion should be considered a welfare issue and not one of morality. Accessibility of abortion being a common factor that influences abortion (Henshaw, S. K., & Finer, L. B. 2003), truly capitalizes on the issues within our health care system. Party competition is a negative influence on the funding of abortion, and it is still a definite link to the number of abortions that the government funds. Those with a louder voice in favor of restrictions usually see results that impact women of lower income (Alvarez et al.,2004).

Public debate is more venomous when it comes to bimodal issues due to the socioeconomic candidate's influence favoring one of the two ends of the spectrum (Strickland & Whicker 1992). Nonetheless, abortion is an issue that reflects the differences in the socioeconomic class as well as the differential religious beliefs. Studies suggest that the Cycle Theory, which states that the restrictiveness of abortion policy is due to political factors, is less consistent and supported than the Public Opinion Theory, which suggests that restrictiveness is due to socioeconomic factors.

Race is a determinant in the way one's attitude of abortion formulates (Lynxwiler,

D. G. J. 1999). White and black attitudes toward legal abortion are based on cultural and political factors that are similar yet also include several significant differences by race. Racial differences in abortion attitudes reflect the traditional values of their subculture (Hall, E. J., & Ferree, M. M. 1986). Blacks, like whites, connect legal abortion to other aspects of women's rights, but that the pattern of support varies. For example, pre-marital sex attitudes are dramatically stronger and less permissive in whites than blacks (Reiss, I. L. 1964); however, the effects of age split the two racial groups into two opposite extremes. This research suggests that abortion attitude is persistent over time and influenced by external and historical variables, including where and how a person's upbringing. Traditionally, African Americans have faced an intersectional list of adversities that would contribute to their opposition of abortion. An additional scholarly response from (Combs & Welch, 1982), suggest that a factor that influence abortion-related is race. However, now that the gap of educational and additional religious practices between black and whites suggests are closing, the influence of opposition has shifted. Education is a strong contributor to the rising support of abortion (Hess, J. A., & Rueb, J. D. 2005). Furthermore, now more informed of the increasing technological advancements and options that ensure safety, African Americans view on abortion has slightly shifted to be more supportive.

Subsequently, religion has played an equally impactful role in shaping public opinion on abortion (Petersen, L. R. 2001). The Morality Policy, in which conservative open views and vast religious constituencies result in restrictive abortion policy, is thought to be followed when deciding whether or not one would like to support or negate abortion (Kreitzer, 2015). Religion directly affects individuals' attitudes, which indirectly

affects their political opinion concerning the abortion issue. The churches themselves are their interest group, and they have a platform that produces pro-life campaigns (Andsager, J. L. 2000). Self-identification through religion is related to pro-life attitudes; however, if a person identifies with a specific religion, but does not participate in its practices, they are more likely to be susceptible to pro-choice arguments (Berkman & O'Connor, 1995).

Moral issues such as the legality of abortion motivate citizens to become more politically engaged and active in interest groups that hold their same belief on the subject. Once these interest groups grow in number, they reflect public opinion while they conduct lobbying of state legislators (Norrander & Wilcox, 1999). Additionally, the Representative Democratic Theory, which the delegate /trustee model reflects, has shown that legislators are operating to do the will of the constituents (Schechter, 2001). Studies showed legislators behave as trustees on votes such as abortion and the morality policy. A candidate's religious beliefs and district religiosity are said to be less influential than partisanship.

Scholars have argued that abortion is a bimodal issue (Medoff, M. H., et al. 1995), meaning there is a distribution of opinions that displays two responses that are chosen just as frequently as the other. Determinants of a state's abortion policy include interest advocacy groups and political forces (Wlezien, C. B., & Goggin, M. L. 1993). The fight between the National Right to Life Committee and political forces such as Female Legislators, according to the author, makes abortion an either/ or issue, which results in the 50% chance of a state's abortion policy being pro-life or pro-choice. Legislators vote on a cost-benefit scale. Whichever vote is going to give them the most benefit, whether

directly or indirectly, is the way they vote. Research shows that abortion restrictions do not significantly affect a woman's chances or choice of receiving one (Medoff, 2002). For example, a woman may have a less narrow opinion on the idea of abortion because the issue is not only gender-targeted but can indirectly affect them in their relationships with other people due to the mental consequences as well (Fergusson, D. M., et al. 2006).

Theory and Hypotheses

The overwhelming representation of men in career fields that includes the responsibility of making decisions that serve in the best interest of women, including the lines of women's rights, has been detrimental to understanding all perspectives of abortion. Many would think that the choice of abortion is one of a personal matter, but politicians have shown that the issue of abortion raises the question of constitutionality. Central issues concerning abortion have stemmed from questioning whether an unborn fetus should be considered an actual person, a woman's morality for not wanting a pregnancy, and the aftermath of what happens to this life after it has entered the world. The under-representation of women in politics can extend as far back as the creation of our nation in its entirety (Walker, K. A. 2018). Only receiving the right to vote in the 1920's, a woman's role in governmental participation has been consciously constrained and overseen by men. The 21st-century woman has gained many freedoms and climbed the unequal ladder of sociopolitical success in the U.S; however, the traditional limitations have simply become modernized. Today, fewer women take the initiative to run for state or federal office because they will receive less party and fiscal support than their male constituents (Elder, L. 2004). Also, though the educational gap between men and women is closing, the number of women who meet the eligibility pool's standard is

still notably lower than the number of men. Meaning there are fewer women in the professional workforce to choose from when political openings arise. When women are underrepresented where life staking decisions are being made on their behalf, lack of representation serves as the most blatant detriment to policy formation.

Scholars have done an extensive research to discover the driving forces responsible for the way individual abortion-related attitudes and opinions are formulated and impacted. The theory of Issue Evolution (Adams, G. D. 1997) suggests that controversy surrounding the views of abortion will evolve to partisan lines as time moves on, and I find it to be the most appropriate explanation. It takes into account that just as our nation progresses, the public's attitudes as it deals with controversial issues such as abortion shift with it (Carmines, E. G., & Woods, J. 2002). Essential points in this theory explain that party realignment not only infer dramatic changes in voting behavior, which displays the unanticipated and indefinite evolution in the party system as individuals throw away old party attachments and adopt new ones. According to this theory, the standard partisan change (Killian, M., & Wilcox, C. 2008) is an aftermath of the current evolutionary issues in addition to the generational replacement of the electorate.

I plan to build on this theory by examining the voters' make-up when the issue of abortion first arose to present time and see if party realignment is the primary cause for its new arguments. Also, by analyzing responses in the data to determine and when did uniform responses begin to align with party ID. Furthermore, the key independent variables in my theory are gender, race, and religion.

These factors can build upon the existing research by exploring the historical and

social influences that can attribute to the shifts in responses seen over the years. For example, there have been landmark elections since 1972 that can cause a fluctuation in the attitudes of abortion held by the public and political campaigns and movements that have swept through our country's governmental realm. On the other hand, racial differences in perceptions of abortion opinions have declined over time (Lynxwiler, J., & Gay, D. 1994). However, my theory can build upon this existing research by discovering if social movements and progression influence can account for the abortion-related opinions held by the public.

Subsequently, religion has always been vehemently consistent overtime, but religious followers have developed a more open approach to spirituality. Women empowerment movements have begun to evoke a sense of individuality and independence that tears down the traditional role of a woman (Aidala, A. A. 1985), religiously speaking. Building upon this research can start by comparing the responses of women from 1972-2018 and examining where the change in attitude began to happen and what gender equality movements occurred during the shift (Jozkowski, K. N., et al. 2020). The shifts may not be significant; however, research does consider them. Religion has its complexity, and it describes a personal journey for each person. Though abortion is traditionally immoral and unbiblical, changes in the attitudes of our public has overtime made the pro-choice argument more acceptable.

Though the Cycle Theory suggests political factors are less consistent in influencing the restrictiveness of a state's abortion policy, it neglects everchanging political factors. Such as the change in legislative membership, social movements, or the creation of new laws. Furthermore, the Public Opinion theory suggests that the primary

source of influence on the public attitude towards abortion stems from socioeconomic status (Strickland, R. A., & Whicker, M. L. 1992). Including religion, per capita income, ethnicity, and rural composition. This theory does an immaculate job exploring all possible avenues of explaining the influences on public opinion; however, it is limited by the little to no inclusion of partisanship.

Nonetheless, the Representative Democratic Theory (Medoff, M. H., 2012). is one to include the influence of political factors. It states that legislators serve to do the will of the people, and it moderately reflects how our government operates to a certain extent. However, it fails to establish a secure explanation of how the attitudes of the public regarding abortion formulates. For example, peer influence can be a noted factor that this theory can include since it suggests a bottom-up (Macy, M., & Flache, A. 2009) method of operation. Nevertheless, partisanship, race, and religion are the most preeminent influences on public opinion regarding the attitudes of abortion, and the Issue Evolution Theory allocates the foremost explanation to understand why.

The theory of Issue Evolution (Adams, G. D. 1997) has noted that when an issue such as abortion is brought up, over time, the public starts to define them along partisan lines. When a partisan-unified government is present, the chances of legislative enactments favoring the majority party are high (Dennis et al. 2011). Abortion is vital to the base voters of each political party, and partisanship does indeed influence state abortion policy depending on which political party dominates. This, in turn, affects the attitudes of the public because a social construct forms in which it is believed that to be a Republican is to be pro-life. The same with being a Democrat, the belief is to be a democrat you should be in favor of the pro-choice movement. Both, which are

arguments that serves as a detriment to women of marginalized communities (Smith, A. 2005). I expand on this theory by incorporating race, gender, and religion because just as partisan lines narrow the window of voter choice, these factors also add a subsequent lens that evolves with the progression of our socio-demographic atmosphere in society. As social issues like abortion become more polarized due to political opposition, these factors can give insight to public patterns that develop as the issue evolves.

Hypotheses

Whites have been more open to cultivating a home where mental health and taboo topics such as sex and puberty are allowed to be discussed more than Blacks have. The ability to acknowledge that sexual intercourse is a normal part of our biological needs as human beings, accompanied by sex education/accessible resources, are effective ways of opening the door to women's rights and decisions made about their bodies. In the black community, there is no question of a stigma being placed on women as they began experience puberty and begin sexual activity. The likelihood of Black parents welcoming talks about the complexities and entrance into a sex life is very low, and the deep-rooted seeds of Christianity amongst blacks (Pattillo-McCoy, M. 1998) leads me to expect Whites to be more supportive of abortion than Blacks.

Furthermore, our country was founded by all males on a principle that a woman was to be care takers and solely handle the affairs of the home. We are now living in the 21st century and women still face injustice and inequality on an everyday basis. Being denied jobs because they are seen as too emotional to handle high stress environments (Andibo, A. E. 2012), not being paid the same amount of

money while in the same position as their male counterparts (Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. 2000), as well as having their rights infringed on due to males questions the constitutionality of their personal decision. We are making strides in the right direction on the feminist journey to equality but in the minds of males, women are still seen as subordinate (Chisholm-Burns, M. A., et al. 2017). Which is why I expect Males to be less supportive of abortion than Women.

To continue, religion is a supernatural influence that not only impacts they was we vote on abortion, but it influences our everyday conduct and decisions (Sigalow, E., et al. 2012). Religious people hold strong to the notion of children being gifts from a higher power, so the act of ending a life even before it has started is something that the word deems unacceptable. There are some people that aren't awarded the blessing of motherhood, so religious people believe that if you were chosen to raise one of God's children then you will seem ungrateful and disobedient if you deny the child a right to live (Cook, E. A., Jelen, T. G., & Wilcox, C. 1993). Non-religious people capitalize on the concept of free will and live their life being the captain of their own ship. If having a baby isn't something that they want to do at their stage of life, then they believe in having the option to decide no. Which is why I expect Religious people to be less supportive of abortion than Non-Religious people.

Data and Methods

In my thesis, I examine how gender, race, and religion influence the attitudes of public opinion on abortion. Using one year of General Social Survey data from 2018, I

study the change overtime in opinion of this span and discovered the factors that may be responsible for the wavering uncertainty. The National Opinion Research Center has conducted the General Social Survey (GSS) for 48 years and has successfully studied the transformative process of shifting attitudes and social behaviors amongst American society (Chicago, 2016). Moreover, since the GSS has diligently incorporated topic questions from surveys that occurred before its creation, patterns and trends can be tracked for up to 80 years. It is very efficient for researching issues on abortion because it provides the examination of the framework and operating of society as a whole and incorporates the contribution of relevant subgroups.

From the 2018 GSS dataset, I analyze my dependent variable “r_abany” to capture abortion related attitudes. This variable asks whether the respondent thinks a woman should be allowed to get an abortion if she wants one for any reason; possible response are “0” for no and “1” yes. There was a total of 1,524 responses in which 764 people say “yes” and 760 people say “no”. Resulting in a mean and standard deviation of 0.5. I use logistic regression or the logit model to describe and explain the relationship of the variables.

In my study, my independent variables are gender, race and religion. For gender, I incorporate the dataset to attract “women only” and “men only” responses to the question of whether women should be allowed to get an abortion for any reason. The answer choices for each were “0” for no and “1” for yes. There are 1,255 women only responses and 581 women responded no, 481 responded yes, and 193 say “it depends”. Resulting in a mean of 0.69 and a standard deviation of 0.72. As for the men only responses, there are 1,021 of them. 464 people say “no”, while 423 people say “yes”, and 134 say “it

depends”. Resulting in a mean of 0.67, and a standard deviation of 0.69.

For race, I compare the responses of Whites and Blacks using the variable “race”. The total number of racial observations are 2,348 and Whites make up 1,693 of those responses. While Blacks total 385 responses and lastly 270 of the responses are from people who identify outside of those racial categories. Cultivating a mean of 0.81 and standard deviation of 0.38. Furthermore, in terms of religion I compare the responses of Religious people to Non-Religious people using the variable “relig”. There are 2,327 religious observations and it includes people identifying with: Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhism, Hinduism, Other eastern, Muslim/Islam, orthodox-Christian, Native American, and inter-nondenominational. There are 32 responses of “other”, and 574 responses of “none”. Providing a mean of 2.28 and a standard deviation of 1.83.

Additionally, I incorporate control variables in my study. First, I control for education. I expect education to have a positive effect on my DV. The higher one’s educational level, the more likely they are to support abortion. I use the variable “Educ” to measure this, which asks GSS respondents their highest level of education; possible responses are High school student, College student, Graduate student, and Doctoral student. There are a total of 2,345 responses, including a mean of 13.73 and standard deviation of 2.97.

Second, I account for the influence of age, which I expect to have a negative effect on abortion opinions. I expect that the older someone is, the less likely they are to support abortion. Meaning as someone ages, my DV decreases. The age of respondents ranges from 18 to 89 and older, and with 2,341 responses their mean comes out to be 48.97 with a standard deviation of 18.06. Lastly, I use the variable “partyid” to examine the effects of

partisanship on abortion related attitudes. This variable ranges from Republican, Democrat, and Independent. Since, Democrats have a history of being more liberal, I expect Democrats to be more supportive of abortion than Republicans which I hypothesize will have a positive effect on abortion related attitudes. There are a total of 2,315 political party affiliation responses. 379 of which identify as strong Democrat, 255 as strong Republican, and 307 as independent. Resulting in a mean of 2.61 and standard deviation of 2.28.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1 presents the results from the analysis. The results provide support for two of the three hypotheses I test in this Thesis. First, the “male” variable does not have a statistically significant effect on abortion related opinions.

Table 1: The Factors that Impact Support for Abortion

<i>Variables</i>	(1) Support for Abortion
Men	-0.0569 (0.124)
Religious	-0.964*** (0.155)
Party ID	0.680*** (0.0722)
Age	-0.00834** (0.00342)
White	0.693*** (0.164)
Education	0.130*** (0.0230)
Constant	-2.591*** (0.425)
Observations	1,288

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The findings provide support for H2 as Table 1 shows that religious people are less

supportive of abortion than those who are not religious. It is no doubt that the influence of religion impacts the daily decisions of Americans. When it comes to the arena of policy making, religious beliefs become even more vital than ever before due to individuals making decisions based off what aligns with their personal and moral beliefs. Yes, Church and State are separate but there is only a certain extent to which a person can control how much of their upbringing and spirituality they can turn off when making decisions (Batalla, E. V., & Baring, R. 2019). When it comes to talking about something as personal as abortion, an individual's heart and spirit does most of the talking. Scientific technicalities are often overlooked, and as expected the deep-seeded virtue of religion will forever have a say. Just as it influences our decision on how we choose to carry out our everyday lives.

Lastly, the results of Table 1 do not support my expectations of racial differences in abortion related opinions. The result for the "White" variable suggests that whites are less supportive than blacks. This aligns with an extensive amount of existing research that highlights that blacks hold very conservative opinions on abortion, however the lineage from the Roman Catholic Church is still ever prominent amongst the White community. Highlighting that the Roman Catholic Church, unlike most Protestant churches, possess a formal doctrine stating that life begins at the moment of conception (Petersen, L. R. 2001). This leads me to believe that deep rooted values of religious conservatism amongst the lineage of Catholicism stemming from European ancestry still has heavy influence amongst forming the pro-life opinions in regard to abortion policy (Wilcox, C. 1992). Catholicism has one of the lowest levels of approval amongst religions, and as the religiousness of Catholics increase the support for abortion decreases (Granberg, D., & Granberg, B. W. 1980).

However, another explanation of my unexpected findings is contingent on the political

ideology Republicanism. There is a undoubtedly a higher number of Whites that identify as Republican than there are Blacks that identify as Republican. Blacks have shown to identify with the liberal ideals of being a Democrat (Saad, L., et al. 2019) which emphasizes progressive reforms, social and gender equality, mixed economy, and civil rights. Unlike their Republican counterparts (Brewer, M. D., & Stonecash, J. M. 2001) which are known to hold strong to social and fiscal conservatism, capitalism, gun rights and military spending. Now that abortion has become politicized and the pro-life argument is a staple argument from the Republican party, I understand how and why my research reflects that Whites are less supportive of abortion than blacks. Republican ideology itself isn't fond to evolving drastically which is reflected in the stance of wanting to keep the status quo, which have benefits Whites greater than any other race (Thompson, M. J. 2019). Which is why we see that Blacks are more in tune with social change and pro-choice arguments. Not to mention, after being enslaved for over 400 years, which included having children ripped from their arms and families torn apart as they began to get sold across the globe, it is no question that if Black's value anything it would be the freedom to choose. Furthermore, at the core of the Republican party the religious and conservative views (Layman, G. C. 1997) that cultivates its ideology, influences its members who are majority White on their public opinion of abortion.

Moreover, I also believe these unexpected findings are due to the rising rates of interracial relationships in America (Rosenfeld, M. J., & Kim, B. S. 2005). There is a question of whether there is going to be a pure white race in a few generations. If abortions increase amongst Whites, it lowers their chances of carrying on a pure generation. This was very shocking to learn because the white race is responsible for having the most abortions in our country, so with further research I plan to discover if the regions in which white people live affect their abortion

related attitude, because whites in the South have stronger feelings of abortion than whites in the North.

For control variables, I studied the effects of education, age, and partisanship. This study shows that all three have a significant impact on the public opinion of abortion policy. Individuals that are more educated shows to have higher support for abortion than those that are not (Roh, J., & Haider-Markel, D. P. 2003). Knowing more about the implications and technicalities of the procedure of abortion can aid in the decision of whether or not it should be legal. The less informed you are, the more you see the situation as “life or death”, instead of considering all of the intricate in between factors. As for age, this study showed that the older an individual is, the less likely they are to support abortion (Misra, R. 1998). It is no doubt that before all of these social, racial, and feminist movements, abortion was not supported. Which is why older generations have stuck with the ideals they were brought up on. However, soon the older generation will be replaced with those exposed to the effects of these movements which will then have an impact on this variable. As for partisanship, the number of people that practice political efficacy are very little (Abramson, P. R., & Aldrich, J. H. 1982). Which is why it is so easy to include morals and party line voting to make political decisions. When you are uninformed in government, the consensus of conforming to the ideals of one’s peers/party become ever more prominent. However, when it comes to an issue as humanistic as abortion, the inclusion of party preference should not denote the outcome of policy.

Conclusion

To conclude, in this thesis I examine the factors that influence public opinion on abortion.

Women today are still fighting for the basic human right to choose what to do with their own

bodies as they did previously in history (Walker, A. 2006). The political controversy that accompanies the logistics of the question of abortion really deteriorates the lens of this being an issue that deals with human rights. Females have joined together creating historical movements that highlights the need for gender equality in hope to advance the mission of not having their bodies on a political ballot. However, our governmental realm is still dominated by men, which means the decision making will still be impacted by the opinions of those that will never completely experience the depth of childbirth. Gender overall is a strong predictor of abortion attitudes (Carter, J. S., Carter, S., & Dodge, J. 2009). Males can do their best to empathize on behalf of Females, but some will never be able to fully support the full autonomy of a women and her choices. Their inability to understand have and will continue to influence their opinion on policy concerning abortion, and the progression of women's rights as a whole (Patel, C. & Johns, L. 2009).

Abortion has dramatically become less personal and more political than ever before. Some of my key takeaways were that Whites were actually less supportive of abortion than Blacks. It shows the extent of how Whites are just as deeply rooted in religion as Blacks are. I would incorporate additional control variables such as geographic location, accessibility, and marital status, as well as expand beyond the timeline of a year in order to access the patterns in public opinion on abortion in the US over time to enhance this research.

There are several promising directions for future research related to this today. With women being severely underrepresented in U.S politics, public outcry has been the most impactful way of getting their voices heard. In the future, I would further this study by examining "To what extent are feminism movements impacting politics today?". The application of feminist movements to advance political agendas is a trend we can see as far back as 1848 at

the Seneca Falls Convention (Wellman, J. 1991). With abortion at the forefront of most health care, and women's rights concerns, research in this sector is crucial in the fight of gender equality.

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