

Abortion Views on a College Campus

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Abstract

I examined abortion views of students at a small private Liberal Arts college located in the Southeast United States. Many studies have been conducted on how people view abortion; however, there are not any studies examining if people's beliefs on when life begins influences their views on abortion and what people feel is most influential to their views on abortion. In my study, I explored these aspects as well as other factors that are commonly examined when researching how people view abortion. The other aspects I examined are how religious affiliation, political affiliation, gender, class standing, knowing someone who has had an abortion, and a wide variety of scenarios can influence a person's view on abortion. I gathered data by distributing an online survey through email to all students at the selected college. One hundred and twenty-five students completed the survey. After examining previous research on abortion views, I hypothesized that college students will be more supportive of abortion when the abortion is completed due to medical or traumatic reasons (traumatic abortion) rather than when the abortion is completed due to non-medical or non-traumatic reasons (elective abortion). Also, I hypothesized that the reason for the abortion (the scenario) and a participant's religious affiliation will be the most influential factors as to why someone supports or opposes abortion. In my study, the most influential scenario in support for abortion is that the mother will die during delivery. The most influential scenario against the use of abortion is when the child was conceived during an affair/cheating. The data supports my hypothesis that religion and the reason for the abortion greatly influence abortion beliefs. Additionally, Republican respondents are much less supportive of abortion than are members of other political parties. There is no difference between the abortion views of males and females.

INTRODUCTION

Researching views on abortion can be difficult considering that it is a very controversial topic and there are a variety of views on the subject. To better understand why there are a variety of views on abortion, researchers have conducted a number of studies to determine what factors influence these beliefs. A few factors include religious and political affiliation, gender, race, and the reason for the abortion.

I surveyed students at a small private Liberal Arts college on their abortion beliefs to determine whether more students support or oppose abortion, what factors influence their stance on abortion, and whether students with similar demographic characteristics such as race, gender, and political affiliation view abortion similarly or differently. Even though many studies have been completed concerning how people view abortion, my study adds to the preexisting literature by supporting and contradicting other research as well as filling gaps in the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The debate on the legality of abortion in the United States has been around for decades. The debate was heightened

in 1973 due to the inception of *Roe v. Wade*. The Supreme Court passed *Roe v. Wade* allowing women the right to have an abortion, yet each state can still put restriction on the access to abortion.

While abortion has always been a controversial topic, within the past few years, discussion surrounding abortion views has significantly risen due to state abortion laws changing and politicians greatly leaning on abortion in order to gain votes. (Republicans often argue against abortion access and Democrats often argue for abortion access.) This has led many researchers to study the complexity of how people view abortion. Jozkowski, Crawford, and Hunt (2018) argue that many state abortion laws are becoming stricter, suggesting that the majority of people oppose abortion, even though many studies show that overall support for abortion is increasing. A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center determined that the main concern of United States' citizens is that states are implementing abortion laws that are too strict. Also, the majority of people in the United States do not agree with completely overturning *Roe v. Wade*—seven out of ten people state that they do not want to see it completely overturned. In fact, 61.0% agree with the use of abortion in all

scenarios (27.0%) or in most scenarios (34.0%) (“U.S. Public Continues to Favor Legal Abortion, Oppose Overturning *Roe v. Wade*” 2019).

Currently, the United States Supreme Court is examining the case of *June Medical Services v. Russo*. After the first hearing, the case has been declared one of the most unpredictable Supreme Court abortion cases (Washington 2020). In other words, the media and United States citizens are unsure of which side the Supreme Court will rule in favor of. If the Supreme Court rules in favor of *Russo*, then all Louisiana abortion doctors will go out of business except for one due to complex restrictions that will be implemented through the new law (Berenson 2020). The main restriction that the new law will implement is that doctors will be required to have the authority to admit patients into a hospital that is within thirty miles of the abortion clinic; however, these privileges are extremely hard to obtain and are not truly a health and safety precaution (Berenson 2020). In addition, the third-party standing law, where doctors represent their patients in court, will be overruled due to possible conflicts of interest between doctors and patients (Washington 2020). This will cause women who are denied or do not have access to an abortion to have to file their own case to the federal court, which will more than likely not be reviewed until it is too late for the woman to have an abortion (Washington 2020). There will not be a final decision on the case until June of 2020. Similar to other abortion cases, *June Medical Services v. Russo* has sparked discussions on abortion and has made researching abortion views more beneficial and necessary.

For over fifty years, numerous studies have been conducted concerning what factors influence one’s view on abortion. Researchers have specifically examined the influence of religion, the type of abortion being completed, gender, scenarios, and political affiliation.

People have a variety of views on whether or not abortion should be allowed, and those views are affected by many factors. In numerous studies, religion has been an influential factor affecting personal beliefs on abortion. A person is more likely to view abortion the same way as their religious doctrine if they are extremely involved in the religion (Harris and Mills 1985). Similarly, a person is more likely to oppose abortion if they are a very religious person who attends many religious services and puts a great amount of faith into their religion (Harris and Mills 1985; O’Brien and Noy 2015).

Another factor found to significantly influence religious groups’ views on abortion is the type of abortion that is being completed (Hoffmann and Johnson 2005). Traumatic abortion occurs when a woman wants to have an abortion due to threatening reasons, such as medical complications for the pregnant woman and/or fetus or the fetus having been conceived during rape or incest. Elective abortion takes place when a woman wants to have an abortion because she does not want a baby or feels unprepared to have a baby. Elective abortion is often seen as morally wrong by people of many

religions because the abortion is completed due to the pregnant woman’s feelings and not due to life-threatening or emotionally threatening scenarios.

When looking at various denominations of Christianity, one finds there are a few denominations that are less accepting of abortion based on the type of abortion being completed. Hoffmann and Johnson (2005) found that Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, Protestants, and Catholics oppose elective abortion more than they oppose traumatic abortion.

In addition to opposing elective abortions, Evangelicals and Catholics are the main denominations who oppose traumatic abortions (Hoffmann and Johnson 2005). Up until the 1990s, Catholics were much less supportive of traumatic abortion than Evangelicals were; however, at the beginning of the 1990s, Evangelicals began to oppose the traumatic form of abortion much more than Catholics do (Hoffmann and Johnson 2005). Evangelicals have increased their opposition for both traumatic and elective abortion much more than any other Christian denomination (Hoffmann and Johnson 2005). Hoffmann and Johnson (2005) state that the increase in opposition may have happened for many reasons: increasing presence of abortion discussions within society, conflict between state governments and the federal government over abortion laws, and an increase in people with conservative views attending Evangelical churches.

Differences also exist between the way Protestants and Catholics view abortion (Hoffmann and Johnson 2005). Protestants have long been known to be more supportive of abortion than Catholics are; however, that support is decreasing, but Hoffmann and Johnson (2005) do not state why the views of Protestants are changing. Since many Protestants are beginning to oppose abortion, Protestants and Catholics are becoming more similar in their views of abortion (Hoffmann and Johnson 2005). People who identify as Protestant or Catholic currently have little, if any, approval for abortion practices (Barkan 2014).

Religion and gender often intersect when examining people’s views on abortion. When religion is a factor, females become more supportive of abortion (Barkan 2014). For example, Swank and Fahs (2016) found a relationship between attending religious services and views on abortion; however, the relationship varies based on the participants’ gender. Men who attend religious services are more likely to oppose abortion, yet attending religious services does not affect females’ views on abortion (Swank and Fahs 2016).

The data concerning gender and abortion views is inconsistent. Alvargonzález (2017) surveyed a sample of students (596 females and 427 males) and concluded that gender does not influence people’s views on abortion. The majority of studies align with Alvargonzález’s (2017) conclusion, but there are a few studies that argue otherwise.

Some researchers have concluded that there is a relationship between abortion views and gender. For example,

some studies show that females support abortion more often than males do (Siwek, et al. 2019). Siwek, et al. (2019) found that women are more likely to support abortion, whereas men are more likely to support limiting access to abortion or banning it altogether. Siwek, et al. (2019) states that gender is statistically significant when examining abortion views, but the relationship is weak.

Other studies show that gender does not have a significant influence on abortion views until certain factors are controlled for. Once other variables are controlled for, females often become more supportive of abortion, compared to males. For example, Strickler and Danigelis (2002) found that when they included other attitudes in their model, such as how the participants feel about sexual freedom and their belief in the holiness of human life, females became more supportive of abortion. When the attitudes were not included, there was no difference in male and female views on abortion. When both females and males oppose abortion, females usually oppose due to religious beliefs; however, males usually oppose abortion due to having an authoritarian personality (Swank and Fahs 2016).

Couture et al. (2016) examined how male and female views on abortion differ when applying different scenarios to their own life and when applying the same scenario to another person's life. The views of the male participants remained constant when applying the scenario to their own life and to someone else's life; however, the views of the female participants did not remain constant (Couture et al. 2016). Females are more likely to support abortion when they are applying the scenario to another person's life rather than to their own. Females are also more likely than males to think that abortion should not be allowed under certain conditions, such as after a woman has been pregnant for over three months (Carlton, Nelson, Coleman 2000).

Another aspect that many researchers have examined is how abortion views vary when various scenarios are explored. Carlton et al. (2000) examined how 1,118 college students from one midsized southeastern university feel when thinking about whether or not abortion is okay in presented scenarios. Siwek et al. (2019) also conducted a study where participants were asked about using abortion in given scenarios; both studies found similar results. People support abortion more when the pregnancy is due to rape, if the pregnant woman will have severe medical complications if she continues to carry the fetus, or if the fetus will have a physical or mental disability when it is born (Carlton et al. 2000, Siwek et al. 2019). Siwek et al. (2019) also found that people support abortion more when the pregnancy is due to incest. Many people do not support abortion when it is used as a method of birth control or after the woman has been pregnant for three or more months (Carlton et al. 2000). As these studies show, abortion views are complex.

Jozkowski, et al. (2018) used data from the General Social Survey and also surveyed college students to examine

the complexity of abortion views. They concluded that the majority of people do not have a one-sided view of abortion, but instead their views of abortion fluctuate due to the scenario of the woman who is pregnant.

Jozkowski, et al. (2018) also examined the complexity of abortion views in relation to political affiliation. Complexity in abortion views is measured by examining how much or how little a person's feelings on abortion fluctuate in various scenarios (more fluctuation in a person's view means more complexity). They found that Republicans have more complex abortion views compared to Democrats. People who identify as Democrat, Independent, and "Other" are much more accepting of abortion compared to Republicans (Jozkowski, et al. 2018).

There is limited research concerning how people of various racial/ethnic groups view abortion. Strickler and Danigelis (2002) found that before the 1980s, Caucasians were more approving of abortion than African Americans were; however, at the beginning of the 1980s, African Americans became more supportive of abortion compared to Caucasians. African American support for abortion may have risen due to the increase in black reproductive rights activists (Strickler and Danigelis 2002). Strickler and Danigelis (2002) also found that when attitudes and socioeconomic variables are controlled for, African Americans are more supportive of abortion than Caucasians are. To help fill this gap in the literature, I will compare race/ethnicity with views on abortion to see if a relationship exists.

There is also limited research concerning how knowing someone who had an abortion affects how a person views abortion. People who know someone who has had an abortion are more supportive of abortion than are those who do not know someone who has had an abortion ("U.S. Public Continues to Favor Legal Abortion, Oppose Overturning Roe v. Wade" 2019).

As the research shows, religion greatly influences abortion views. Gender has been proven to be an inconsistent variable throughout the literature, but many researchers are leaning toward the belief that women are more supportive of abortion than men, especially when certain factors are controlled for (Couture et al. 2016; Siwek, et al. 2019; Strickler and Danigelis 2002; Swank and Fahs 2016). Another key factor that researchers have discovered is that people's (especially Christians') views on abortion will often fluctuate depending on the reason for the abortion. In my study, I plan to examine a number of variables that may or may not influence people's stances on abortion, which will add to the existing literature on the topic.

Although abortion views have been thoroughly researched, there are two gaps in the literature concerning abortion views: how abortion views are affected by when a person feels that life begins and what aspects (religion, morals, media, family, friends) people feel affects their views on abortion. Since no research exists in these areas, I examined

these relationships, among others, to see if there are any significant differences in the data.

METHODS

I examined how undergraduate and graduate students at a small private Liberal Arts college view abortion by electronically distributing a survey that I created. The survey consisted of a variety of questions measuring how a student’s view of abortion can fluctuate due to a number of factors (e.g., scenario, religion, political affiliation, gender, and so on).

On my behalf, the Dean of Students and Vice President of Student Engagement at the college distributed the link to my survey to all of the students through email on March 23rd, 2020. The email addressed who I am and what my research study examined. The email also addressed that participation in the study was completely voluntary, all answers were anonymous, and completion and submission of the survey indicated the student’s willingness to participate in the study. The survey closed on April 3rd, 2020. The email and survey are located in the Appendix*.

The online survey was designed using SurveyMonkey. Participants who submitted a survey where fewer than three of the eleven questions were completed were excluded from the analysis. Answers that appeared to be “falsified” were also excluded from the analysis. Once all responses were collected, the data was exported from SurveyMonkey to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to be analyzed.

My dependent variable is whether each participant supports or opposes abortion (in different scenarios). The independent variables are the participants’ religious affiliation, political affiliation, when the participant feels that life begins for a fetus, whether or not the participant knows someone who has had an abortion, and the scenario of the woman who is pregnant/reason for the abortion. Based on previous literature, I made the following hypotheses: the scenario of the woman who is pregnant/reason for the abortion and a participant’s religious and political affiliation will have significant influences on whether or not participants support or oppose abortion; gender and race will not have significant influences on whether or not participants support or oppose abortion; respondents will be more supportive of traumatic abortion and less supportive of elective abortion; and respondents who feel that conception is the beginning of life will be less supportive of abortion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

After eliminating seven respondents for submitting a survey where fewer than three questions are answered, the total sample was 125 students; this produces a response rate of 13.9%.

Demographic variables.

When examining gender, the sample is 68.9% female, 27.0% male, 2.5% transgender, and 1.6% identify as “Other,”

yet the “Other” respondents provided answers that appear to be falsified.

The majority of the sample identify as Caucasian (86.1%). Of the remaining respondents, 9.8% identify as African American, 2.5% identify as Hispanic, 0.8% identify as Multiracial, and 0.8% are falsified data.

When examining class standing, 14.8% of the respondents are freshmen, 21.3% are sophomores, 34.4% are juniors, 23.0% are seniors, and 6.6% are graduate students.

When examining religious affiliation, 82.0% of the sample identify as Christian. Of the respondents who identify as Christian, the main two denominations that the respondents identify with are Baptist (49.0%) and Non-denominational (23.0%). Of the non-Christian respondents, 10.7% identify as non-religious, 1.6% identify as Atheist, and 5.7% identify as “Other.” Of the “Other” respondents, 28.6% misunderstood the question and stated “Catholic” instead of initially identifying as “Christian,” and 14.3% are falsified data.

The main political affiliations that the sample identifies with are Republican (43.1%), Democratic (18.7%), and no political affiliation (24.4%). The two other political affiliations that respondents identify with are Independent (8.1%) and Libertarian (5.7%). To display the most significant results, each table and graph concerning political affiliation examines only the responses from respondents who identify as Republican, Democratic, and no political affiliation.

Table 1

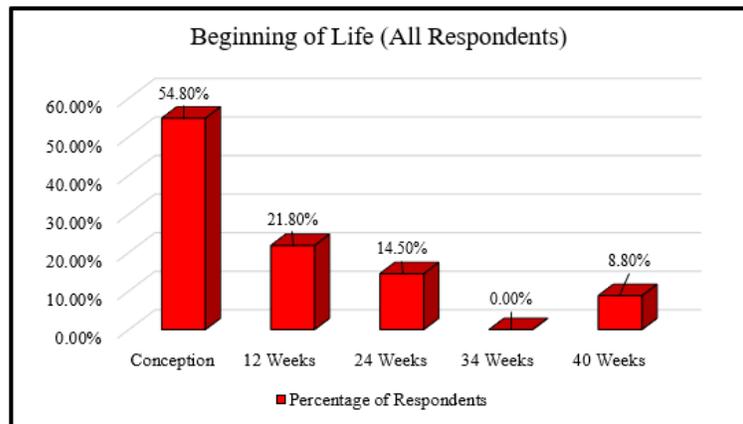
Abortion Views of All Respondents and Scenarios

Abortion Scenarios	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Cannot Afford to Care for the Child	37.9%	17.7%	13.7%	16.9%	13.7%
Plan to Send the Child to Foster Care	37.9%	20.2%	12.1%	19.4%	10.5%
Pregnancy due to Rape	12.9%	13.7%	14.5%	16.9%	41.9%
Pregnancy due to Incest	18.5%	12.9%	9.7%	23.4%	35.5%
Mother Will Die During Delivery	8.9%	6.5%	23.4%	23.4%	37.9%
Child Conceived During an Affair/Cheating	51.6%	20.2%	12.9%	8.1%	7.3%
Mother is Under the Age of 18	36.3%	17.7%	22.6%	7.3%	16.1%
Unwanted Pregnancy	43.5%	17.7%	12.9%	12.9%	12.9%
Unplanned Pregnancy	46.8%	17.7%	16.1%	9.7%	9.7%
Abnormal Fetus Development	32.3%	16.9%	21.8%	14.5%	14.5%

Abortion views.

When examining the reason for the abortion, I found that the majority of respondents agree with the use of abortion due to medical complications or traumatic scenarios, which supports my hypothesis. When “agree” and “strongly agree” responses are combined, the majority of respondents agree with the use of abortion in three scenarios: when the mother will die during delivery (61.3%), when the pregnancy is a result of incest (58.9%), and when the pregnancy is a result of rape (58.8%). The majority of respondents disagree with the use of abortion in the remaining scenarios (non-medical or non-traumatic scenarios), except for when the fetus is affected by abnormal development. When “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses are combined, the majority of respondents disagree with the use of abortion when the child was conceived during an affair/cheating (71.8%), unplanned pregnancy (64.5%), unwanted pregnancy (61.2%), the child will be sent to foster care (58.1%), the parents cannot afford to care for the child (55.6%), and the mother is under the age of eighteen (54.0%). In the event of abnormal development of the fetus, 49.2% disagree with the use of abortion, while 29.0% agree (“agree”/“strongly” agree are combined and “disagree”/“strongly” disagree are combined). My findings align with previous findings that abortion views are complex because they fluctuate with each scenario. These findings are further examined in Table 1.

Graph 1



Views on the beginning of life.

The majority (54.8%) of the sample states that life begins at conception (when the egg is fertilized). Of the remaining sample, 21.8% state that life begins at 12 weeks into the pregnancy, 14.5% state that life begins at 24 weeks, 0.0% state that life begins at 34 weeks, and 8.9% state that life begins at 40 weeks (fetus is ready to be born). This data is displayed in Graph 1.

Factors that influence abortion views.

Respondents were asked to rank what they feel influences their views on abortion the most on a one-to-five scale (one being the most influential and five being the least

influential—each number could be only used once). Religion and morals ranked extremely close together as the most influential factor; however, religion had the highest percentage for being the most influential (38.1%)—morals was ranked as the most influential by 35.8% of respondents. Of the remaining factors: 14.5% of respondents ranked media as the most influential, 7.6% ranked family as the most influential, and 7.4% ranked friends as the most influential. Asking this question adds to the literature because it has not been asked before and produces data concerning what factors the respondents feel are the most influential to their views on abortion.

Social network experiences with abortion.

The majority of the sample does not have a close or non-close family member or friend who has had an abortion, at least that they know of. Of the sample, 16.3% have a close family member who has had an abortion, 14.8% have a non-close family member who has had an abortion, 25.2% have a close friend who has had an abortion, and 43.9% have a non-close friend who has had an abortion.

Inferential Statistics

I am 95% confident that religion has a significant impact on the respondent’s feelings about the use of abortion in various scenarios (as shown in Table 2). In each scenario, Christians are more likely to disagree with the use of abortion than are respondents who do not identify as Christian. Respondents who identify as Christian are most supportive of abortion when the mother will die during delivery (25.0% agree and 29.0% strongly agree). Respondents who identify as Christian are least supportive of abortion when the fetus was

Table 2

Religion and Disagreement with the use of Abortion in Various Scenarios

Abortion Scenarios	Non-Christian	Christian	Non-Religious	Chi-Square (X ²)
Cannot Afford to Care for the Child	14.3%	66.0%	7.1%	.002
Plan to Send the Child to Foster Care	42.9%	66.0%	7.7%	.001
Pregnancy due to Rape	14.3%	32.0%	0.0%	.029
Pregnancy due to Incest	14.3%	38.0%	0.0%	.041
Mother Will Die During Delivery	14.3%	18.0%	0.0%	.013
Child Conceived During an Affair/Cheating	42.9%	79.0%	38.5%	.000
Mother is Under the Age of 18	14.3%	60.0%	23.1%	.008
Unwanted Pregnancy	14.3%	68.0%	38.5%	.018
Unplanned Pregnancy	28.6%	71.0%	38.5%	.009
Abnormal Fetus Development	57.2%	54.0%	23.1%	.039

Strongly Disagree and Disagree responses are combined

conceived during an affair/cheating (20.0% disagree and 59.0% strongly disagree).

Religion also has a significant influence on when respondents feel that life begins ($\chi^2 = .027$). Christians (62.0%) are the most likely to feel that conception is the beginning of life. Respondents who do not identify with a religion have more scattered views but lean more toward the middle and end of the pregnancy. Of the respondents with no religious affiliation, 38.5% state that life begins at 24 weeks and 23.1% state that life begins at 40 weeks.

The respondents' Christian denominations are not significant in any of the scenarios, which is inconsistent with prior research. Hoffmann and Johnson (2005) state that Evangelicals, Protestants, and Catholics oppose abortion more than other Christian denominations do; however, due to a lack of respondents who identify with these denominations, my data cannot support these findings.

The number of religious services that a respondent has attended in the past month has a significant impact on five of the ten scenarios. The five scenarios that are significantly impacted by attending religious services are pregnancy due to rape ($\chi^2 = .005$), pregnancy due to incest ($\chi^2 = .007$), the parents cannot afford to care for the child ($\chi^2 = .001$), the mother will die during delivery ($\chi^2 = .009$), and unwanted pregnancy ($\chi^2 =$

.025). In these five scenarios, approval for the use of abortion decreases as the number of religious services attended increases. These findings align with previous studies concerning abortion views and religious service attendance (Harris and Mills 1985; O'Brien and Noy 2015).

I am 95% confident that political affiliation has a significant influence on each scenario presented in the survey (as shown in Table 3). When examining political affiliation, I found that the main significant scenarios are that the parents cannot afford to care for the child ($\chi^2 = .000$), pregnancy due to rape ($\chi^2 = .000$), and pregnancy due to incest ($\chi^2 = .000$). Data for the scenarios with the highest statistical significance are displayed in Graph 2. The majority of Republican respondents do not agree with the use of abortion in every scenario except for when the mother will die during delivery. When the mother will die during delivery, Republican respondents are split on their agreement (37.7%) and disagreement (30.2%) with the use of abortion (22.6% agree and 15.1% strongly agree while 13.2% disagree and 17.0% strongly disagree). Two scenarios where the views of respondents who identify as Republican or Democratic contrast sharply is the use of abortion due to financial concerns where 84.9% of Republicans disagree (24.5% disagree and 60.4% strongly disagree) while 63.7% of

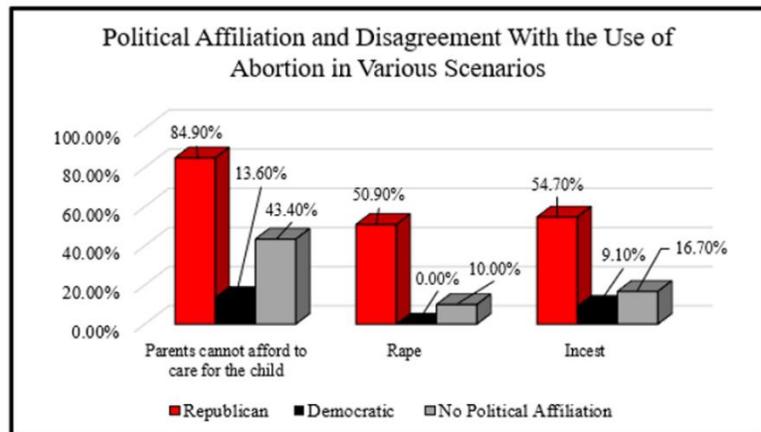
Table 3

Political Affiliation and Abortion Views in Various Scenarios

Abortion Scenarios	Republican Agreement	Republican Disagreement	Democratic Agreement	Democratic Disagreement	No Political Affiliation Agreement	No Political Affiliation Disagreement	Chi-Square (X ²)
Cannot Afford to Care for the Child	11.4%	84.9%	63.7%	13.6%	40.0%	43.4%	.000
Plan to Send the Child to Foster Care	11.3%	79.2%	59.1%	22.7%	40.0%	50.0%	.004
Pregnancy due to Rape	26.4%	50.9%	95.4%	0.0%	80.0%	10.0%	.000
Pregnancy due to Incest	28.3%	54.7%	90.9%	9.1%	80.0%	16.7%	.000
Mother Will Die During Delivery	37.7%	30.2%	77.3%	0.0%	83.4%	6.6%	.002
Child Conceived During an Affair/Cheating	5.7%	88.7%	31.8%	40.9%	26.7%	63.4%	.002
Mother is Under the Age of 18	9.5%	77.4%	54.6%	22.7%	26.6%	43.4%	.003
Unwanted Pregnancy	11.3%	83.1%	54.6%	18.2%	30.0%	56.7%	.005
Unplanned Pregnancy	11.3%	83.0%	36.3%	27.3%	23.3%	63.3%	.008
Abnormal Fetus Development	15.1%	66.0%	50.0%	27.2%	40.0%	43.3%	.017

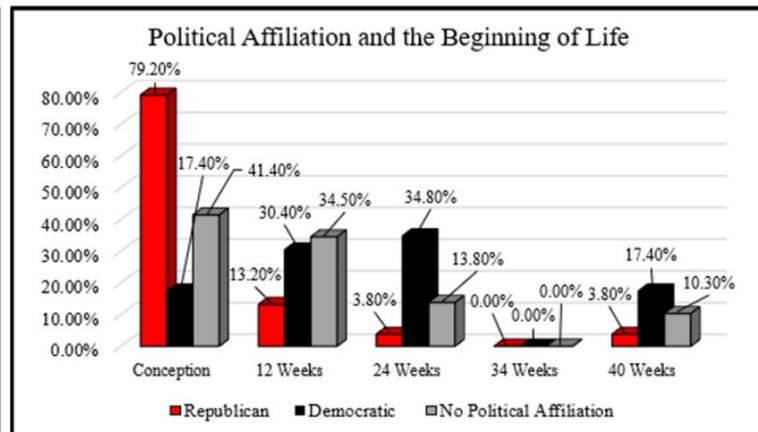
Strongly Disagree and Disagree responses are combined—Strongly Agree and Agree responses are combined

Graph 2



The scenarios analyzed in this graph have the most significant chi-square (χ^2) results. Chi-square for all three scenarios is $\chi^2 = .000^$

Graph 3



Democrats agree (36.4% agree and 27.3% strongly agree), and abnormal development of the fetus, where 66.0% of Republicans disagree (13.2% disagree and 52.8% strongly disagree), while 50.0% of Democrats agree (22.7% agree and 27.3% strongly agree). In every scenario except for three (pregnancy due to rape, pregnancy due to incest, and the mother will die during delivery), over 50% of the Republican respondents indicate that they “strongly disagree” with the use of abortion instead of just “disagree.” In the event of pregnancy due to rape or incest, the majority of Republican respondents disagree with the use of abortion, but the responses are closely divided between “disagree” and “strongly disagree.” My findings do not align with previous findings that Republicans have more complex views on abortion than other political parties because the majority of Republican respondents in this study consistently disagree with the use of abortion, yet their level of disagreement varies depending on the scenario. My findings do align with previous findings that Republicans are less supportive of abortion than other political parties are, which also supports my hypothesis (Jozkowski, et al. 2018).

I am 95% confident that there is a significant relationship between political affiliation and views on the beginning of life ($\chi^2 = .000$). The majority of Republican respondents (79.2%) feel that conception is the beginning of life, whereas Democratic respondents and respondents with no political affiliation have more diverse views on the beginning of life (as displayed in Graph 3). As the data depicts, Republicans feel that life begins at conception and are less supportive of abortion than other political parties are, whereas Democrats have varying views on the beginning of life and are more supportive of abortion. This data also displays the relationship between abortion views and when a person feels that life begins.

When examining gender, I found a significant variable in four scenarios when transgender individuals are included in the analysis; however, when I exclude transgender individuals, the relationship is not significant in any scenario. Males and

females have similar views on abortion (when one agrees or disagrees, so does the other), whereas the majority of transgender respondents agree with the use of abortion in every scenario. I did not find a difference in the abortion views of males and females, which aligns with the majority of other researchers’ findings (Alvargonzález 2017). Some researchers argue that females are more supportive of abortion than males are; however, my data does not support this argument. More research needs to be conducted in order to develop a better understanding of the relationship between gender and abortion views.

When examining gender in relation to the beginning of life, I found that gender is significant when I include transgender individuals in the analysis ($\chi^2 = .003$) and when I exclude them from the analysis ($\chi^2 = .035$). The majority of transgender respondents (66.7%) state that life begins at 40 weeks. The majority of both males (57.6%) and females (55.4%) state that conception is the beginning of life; however, the views of the remaining male respondents lean more towards the middle and end of the pregnancy (24 and 40 weeks), whereas the remaining female respondents stay more towards the beginning of the pregnancy (12 weeks).

The race/ethnicity of the respondent is significant when determining whether abortion should be used if the parents plan to place the child in foster care ($\chi^2 = .016$). The majority of Caucasian respondents (61.5%) do not agree with the use of abortion when the child will be sent to foster care (19.2% disagree and 42.3% strongly disagree), whereas the majority of African Americans (66.6%) agree with the use of abortion in this scenario (58.3% agree and 8.3% strongly agree). This data adds to the extremely limited literature concerning race/ethnicity and abortion views.

At what point in the pregnancy the respondents feel that life begins has a significant relationship with all ten scenarios. The chi-square (χ^2) for the beginning of life and each scenario is .000. Respondents who believe that life begins at conception disagree with the use of abortion more than do

respondents who believe that life begins at 40 weeks of pregnancy, which supports my hypothesis. Examining this data is important because it allows researchers to have more nuanced views of what factors affect abortion beliefs.

When analyzing how knowing someone who has had an abortion affects the respondents' views on abortion, I found that only five scenarios are significant. When the respondent has a close friend who has had an abortion, the only significant scenario is when the pregnancy is due to incest ($\chi^2 = .024$). When the respondent has a close family member who has had an abortion, four scenarios are significant: the child was conceived during an affair/cheating ($\chi^2 = .019$), the mother is under the age of 18 ($\chi^2 = .023$), unwanted pregnancy ($\chi^2 = .027$), and unplanned pregnancy ($\chi^2 = .003$). In the majority of the statistically significant scenarios, respondents who know someone who has had an abortion are more supportive of abortion than are those who do not know someone who has had an abortion; this relationship is also depicted in data from the Pew Research Center ("U.S. Public Continues to Favor Legal Abortion, Oppose Overturning Roe v. Wade" 2019). This data adds to the limited literature concerning whether or not knowing someone who has had an abortion influences a person's view on abortion. From this data, it seems that the influence not only comes from knowing someone who has had an abortion, but it also stems from the scenario of the person having the abortion, which also displays complexity.

The respondents' class standing does not have a significant impact on their abortion views—one class is not more or less approving of abortion.

LIMITATIONS

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, respondents might not have been honest in their answers—which may explain some of the falsified data. I did not receive many diverse answers regarding the respondents' religious affiliations, political affiliations, and racial/ethnic groups; therefore, comparisons among groups were limited, and the data was skewed in some areas. This analysis would have benefited from having more respondents. Of the 899 students who received the survey, only 125 students completed it, yielding a response rate of 13.9%. Because of my low response rate, nonresponse error (i.e., a large percent of the population does not participate in the study) is an issue. Although I am confident in my sample estimates, specifically because my results align with other findings, I would be even more confident if my response rate had been higher. One reason for my low response rate could be because my survey was online; however, an online survey was unavoidable due to the current pandemic, COVID-19. Even though college students access their email often, COVID-19 has increased the use of email, which may have caused my email to become lost in some of the recipients' inboxes.

CONCLUSION

This study used a random sample of undergraduate and graduate students at a small private Liberal Arts college, so the results can be generalized to all students enrolled at the college. The majority of respondents feel that life begins for a fetus at conception. The scenario in which an abortion would be used has a significant influence on whether or not the respondents agree or disagree with the use of abortion, which supports my hypothesis. Christian respondents are less supportive of abortion compared to non-Christian respondents and respondents who do not identify with a religious affiliation. Republican respondents are much less supportive of abortion in all ten scenarios compared to Democratic respondents.

While there has been a push to completely overturn Roe v. Wade, my study and other studies show that there are a number of factors that prevent this action from being the most representative of popular opinion. As shown in my study, abortion views fluctuate when one examines the scenario in which an abortion will be performed. The majority of respondents agree with the use of traumatic abortion. The majority of respondents disagree with the use of elective abortion. Asking about public views on abortion in various scenarios is beneficial because it allows policy makers to have more concrete ideas of how the United States population views abortion. My data displays that views on abortion fluctuate due to a variety of factors; therefore, policy makers must further examine the abortion views of United States citizens in order to create and/or remove laws that better reflect these views.

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*Appendix: An online appendix is available for this publication at <https://www.lagrange.edu/academics/undergraduate/undergraduate-research/citations/index.html>