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Research Paper

Quantitative Research Methods

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Introduction

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the relationship between political views and attitudes on the topic of abortion. Political parties, abortion and women's rights are constantly debated in politics and the clashing viewpoints make for an interesting topic of study. Looking at political views and how identifying as liberal or conservative shapes opinions on abortion is important sociologically because sociology is the study of human society and behavior. Society is full of groups and institutions, just like political affiliations, that end up shaping and impacting legislation across the country that in turn enforce laws on women's bodies and what they can do with them. Currently, presidential elections are in full swing and political parties are in a full divide on their opinions on important topics like abortion rights. This research will aim to find if identifying with a certain political party influences attitudes towards abortions.

Literature Review

The scholarly literature surrounding the topic of abortion analyzes the different political affiliations people identify with and how those individual political standings shape personal opinions on topics such as abortion, fetal rights, and women's rights. My study was not specifically found in any of the literature gathered, however the studies the literature provided great insight on the topics of political affiliation and abortion rights and how they can coincide.

The way that the topic of abortion is analyzed and researched in the literature that was gathered varies article to article. However, my study being conducted in this research paper only looks at General Social Survey (GSS) variables and the data. The researchers in the studies I looked at in the literature dive deeper into exploring the topic of abortion beyond just a "yes" or "no" answer. The researchers break down political debates on abortion rights, fetal rights and

women's rights to control their own body. The research covers debates on pro-life and pro-choice movements, and the continuing argument of when life begins. The literature did not just cover if it was okay that a woman received an abortion or not, but explored the issues surrounding the rights and laws states have to control the accessibility of the procedure.

While none of the studies specifically addressed the topic analyzed for my study, political parties and abortion, the literature provides a background for my research. Previous studies found that the personal decision of receiving an abortion is not only in the hands of women but also in the hands of policymakers, whose political views and ideologies shape their personal platforms. The studies being analyzed looked at the debates, political conflicts and state policies on abortion laws. According to many of the studies, political affiliations influence a person's decision to identify as pro-life or pro-choice (Kahane 1994). The studies find support for the fact that conservative-minded individuals are likely to believe that life begins at the moment of conception and that liberal-minded individuals are more hesitant to pinpoint when life begins and believe that the decision to have an abortion should be up to the woman. Borgmann (2009) found that having the debate of abortion in the hands of policymakers is unjust and the policies and laws that surround a woman's right to their body and the choices that they wish to make should ultimately be up to the woman and not government officials. Borgmann concluded that political debates on abortion rights are based purely on opinions and individual morals and do not revolve enough about the science surrounding abortions. Williams (2013) concentrated on America's views on fetal rights and abortions by looking at laws shaping abortion rights in the past and present. Williams also analyzed different political debates on the topic of abortions. He came to conclusion that Americans will continue having "middle" views on the topic of abortion laws and that there might never really be a change in legislation. He found that Americans had a hard

time deciding if abortion was absolutely right or wrong and found themselves mostly undecided. Williams concluded that because the topic of abortion is such a personal choice, it is hard to decide how to regulate the abortion procedure based just on governmental laws and regulations. Kahane (1994) looked closer at the political determinacies of the position of abortions by analyzing state legislators and governors. After looking at 50 U.S. governors' opinions on abortion, the researcher was able to come to the conclusion that the individuals forming policy are absolutely influenced by political affiliation and their own personal ideologies instead of focusing on the scientific research on abortion and the needs and rights of women first. To further deepen the study of the policies that is in place regarding abortion, Kimport, Weitz, and Foster (2014) looked at the laws that force clinics and doctors to give the woman the option to view their ultrasound before receiving an abortion. The legislation that is in place that encourages doctors to offer women to view their ultrasound image is to change a woman's mind after seeing the ultrasound and being described how their fetus is developing. The researchers' study looked at 702 women's emotional response to their abortion after viewing their ultrasound. Their study looked at 30 different facilities in the United States between the years of 2008 and 2010. They found that 48% of the participants in their study were offered to view their ultrasound at their doctor's appointment; 65% of those women chose to view their ultrasound. The researchers found that despite being prompted to view their ultrasound, the ones who chose to view it did not have any significant effect on their emotions in a negative way.

The studies that were examined further proved that there is a significant correlation between a person's political affiliation and their opinion on abortion rights. Based on the conclusions in the studies it is safe to assume that identifying as conservative makes an

individual lean more on the side of the pro-life movement just as identifying as liberal makes an individual lean more on the side of the pro-choice movement.

Gaps In the Literature

There are quite a few limitations and gaps that can be found in the literature. My research was conducted using the 2010 modified GSS, which provided me with a large population to analyze. The previous literature I analyzed focused on specific populations like women who received an abortion (Kimport et al. 2014) and state legislatures and governors (Kahane 1994). Kimport, Tracy, and Diana (2014) stated their limitations as the fact that their data was retrieved from their participants one week after their abortion and the authors believed that it was possible that the women may have changed their views or forgotten the emotions they felt during the doctors appointment. Kahane's (1994) study was limited in their population of state legislatures and governors instead of looking at all policy makers that can influence legislation regarding abortion and woman's rights.

The purpose of my research study was to analyze political affiliation and abortion attitudes to see if there was a sociological relationship between them and to fill any gaps in the previous literature. I will conduct my study by testing a research and null hypothesis.

H₁: There is a significant correlation between political affiliations and attitude towards abortion rights.

H₀: There is no significant correlation between political affiliations and attitude towards abortion rights.

Methods

The General Social Survey, or GSS, is conducted to learn more about the American society and its ever-changing complexity. The GSS collects a wide array of information to be

studied and kept for historical data. Surveys have been conducted via GSS since 1972. The survey is conducted and managed by the NORC (Nation Opinion Research Center) at the University of Chicago. GSS is conducted by a 90-minute survey taken by the target population of 18+-year-old people living in a household. After the results are found, the GSS is then readily available on the Internet for anyone to use. The General Social Survey of 2010 was used to measure the independent variable political views on a scale from extremely liberal to extremely conservative against the dependent variable attitude towards abortion. Using the data collected by the GSS, I am able to conduct my research by observing the findings when comparing both variables.

The variable political view is an ordinal level of measurement with a list of ranked answer options. The respondent ranked their political views when answering the question regarding their political views has choices from, "Extremely Liberal," "Liberal," "Slightly Liberal," "Moderate," "Slightly Conservative," "Conservative," or "Extremely Conservative." The variable that looked at the attitude toward whether or not a woman should be able to obtain an abortion for any reason is nominal because the answer options were only "Yes" or "No." I did not choose to recode any of the data the GSS provided.

I will be using the Chi-Square Test of Independence to test my hypotheses because the two variables chosen are nominal and ordinal. The Chi-Square Test provides a statistical method of analyzing data by testing two variables to see if there is an observed association or no association at all between the two variables. With the results from the Chi-Square Test I will be able to see if there is a correlation between political views and views on abortion.

Findings

Table 1: Frequency Table of Variable Abortion
ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| YES | 537 | 26.3% |
| NO | 693 | 33.9% |
| Total | 1230 | 60.2% |

Table 1 contains data over the frequency of the variable abortion. The table covers frequency of “Yes and “No” answers as well as the percent of the responses. For the variable abortion, the frequency of the response “Yes” was 26.3% of the population and “No” was 33.9% of the population. There is a total number of 1,230 valid responses that is 60.2% of the valid percent that is being analyzed. There are 814 responses (the remaining 39.8%) is listed as missing according to the GSS and that data is not used when conducting this study. According to the data, more people believed when answering this question that they believed that it was not okay for a woman to receive an abortion for any reason. It can be observed that many of the responses are missing, however this does not effect the analysis in any way because the total valid cases is a large enough data set to analyze.

Table 2: Frequency Table of Variable Political Views

THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| EXTREMELY LIBERAL | 76 | 3.7% |
| LIBERAL | 259 | 12.7% |
| SLIGHTLY LIBERAL | 232 | 11.4% |
| MODERATE | 746 | 36.5% |
| SLIGHTLY CONSERVATIVE | 265 | 13.0% |
| CONSERVATIVE | 315 | 15.4% |
| EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE | 80 | 3.9% |
| Total | 1973 | 96.5% |

Table 2 contains data over the frequency of the variable political views. The table covers the frequency of the range of answers from “Extremely Liberal” to “Extremely Conservative.” When analyzing the data the response with the highest frequency is moderate with conservative second and slightly conservative third. The total number of respondents is 1,973 which is 96.5% of the population. There are 71 responses listed as missing and that data is not used when conducting this study. The total number of people that identify as liberal is 567 people. The total number of people that identify as conservative is 660. While the liberal and conservative numbers are close, the moderate category had that most respondents at 746.

Table 3: Crosstabulation of Abortion and Political Views

THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE * ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON Crosstabulation

| | | ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON | | Total |
|--|------------------------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| | | YES | NO | |
| THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE | EXTREMELY LIBERAL | 4.6% (24) | 2.3% (15) | 3.3% (39) |
| | LIBERAL | 20.7% (109) | 8.4% (56) | 13.8% (165) |
| | SLIGHTLY LIBERAL | 15.4% (81) | 8.7% (58) | 11.7% (139) |
| | MODERATE | 37.6% (198) | 39.4% (262) | 38.6% (460) |
| | SLIGHTLY CONSERVATIVE | 10.6% (56) | 14.1% (94) | 12.6% (150) |
| | CONSERVATIVE | 9.7% (51) | 22.0% (146) | 16.5% (197) |
| | EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE | 1.5% (8) | 5.1% (34) | 3.5% (42) |
| Total | | 100.0% (527) | 100.0% (665) | 100.0% (1192) |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5.

Table 3 summarizes the above data and graphs by comparing them side by side in a crosstabs analysis. Table 3 looks at the number of times a person responded a political view and their same answer when asked if they believe that a woman should be able to receive an

abortion for any reason. The respondents who viewed themselves as “Extremely Liberal” responded to the abortion question by answering “Yes” 24 times and “No” 15 times. The respondents who chose “Liberal” responded to the abortion question by answering “Yes” 109 times and “No” 56 times. The “Slightly Liberal” individuals responded by answering “Yes” 81 times and “No” 58 times. “Moderate” ranking individuals responded by answering “Yes” 198 times and “No” 262 times. The respondents who viewed themselves as “Slightly Conservative” responded to the abortion question by answering “Yes” 56 times and “No” 94 times. “Conservative” individuals responded “Yes” 51 times and “No” 146 times. “Extremely Conservative” individuals responded by answering “Yes” 8 times and “No” 34 times. By looking at these responses one is able to see that there may be a correlation between the two variables and further analysis should be conducted to come to a conclusion.

To further the analysis of the data I conducted a Chi-Square Test to observe if there was a significant indication that there was an influence on a persons view on abortion and their personal political views. The data shows that there is a significant relationship between the two variables. For that reason, I reject the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between political views and thoughts on abortion. The p-value is at .000 that proves that the relationship between the two variables is not due to chance. The results show that the more liberal a person identifies the more that they feel that it is okay for a woman to receive an abortion for any reason. The more conservative a person identifies also shapes how they feel about abortion. Conservative thinkers, according to the data, tend to feel that it is not okay for any reason for a woman to get an abortion.

Conclusion

This research study analyzed political parties and attitudes towards abortion. Those topics are of sociological importance and required further analysis, especially in a time of presidential elections and politics. Research that was conducted that studied the topics political party and abortion rights found that a persons' political affiliation does have an effect on their beliefs. The research made it clear that the abortion debate is very two sided; one side has more liberal thinking in believing that it is okay for a woman to receive an abortion if she chooses to and the other side is more conservative in fighting to protect what they believe is a life that needs defending and saving. Several studies proved that people who identify as liberal believe that abortion should be legal and people who identify as conservative believe that abortion should be regulated or against the law all together. This study contributed and supported previous findings on the topic variables political party and attitude towards abortion. The results of this study and the Chi-Square Test that was conducted coincides with previous research by finding that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Despite finding a statistically significant relationship, the study that was conducted for this paper can be improved upon and can increase the trustworthiness of the research. For example, having a larger sample to gather data from could increase the reliability of the research and would be more representative of society. It would also be helpful to look at other variables and see if there are other factors that contribute to believing that a woman should be able to receive an abortion or not. Perhaps looking at age, education level, and religious affiliation would deepen the research to see how other factors form various opinions on women's rights.

References

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Annexure A: SPSS Output

Statistics

| | | ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON | THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE |
|---|---------|--|--|
| N | Valid | 1230 | 1973 |
| | Missing | 814 | 71 |

ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | YES | 537 | 26.3 | 43.7 | 43.7 |
| | NO | 693 | 33.9 | 56.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 1230 | 60.2 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | IAP | 763 | 37.3 | | |
| | DK | 34 | 1.7 | | |
| | NA | 17 | .8 | | |
| | Total | 814 | 39.8 | | |
| Total | | 2044 | 100.0 | | |

THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|----------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | EXTREMELY LIBERAL | 76 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.9 |
| | LIBERAL | 259 | 12.7 | 13.1 | 17.0 |
| | SLIGHTLY LIBERAL | 232 | 11.4 | 11.8 | 28.7 |
| | MODERATE | 746 | 36.5 | 37.8 | 66.5 |
| | SLGHTLY CONSERVATIVE | 265 | 13.0 | 13.4 | 80.0 |
| | CONSERVATIVE | 315 | 15.4 | 16.0 | 95.9 |
| | EXTRMLY CONSERVATIVE | 80 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 1973 | 96.5 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | DK | 61 | 3.0 | | |
| | NA | 10 | .5 | | |
| | Total | 71 | 3.5 | | |
| Total | | 2044 | 100.0 | | |

Case Processing Summary

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE * ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON | 1192 | 58.3% | 852 | 41.7% | 2044 | 100.0% |

ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON * THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE

Crosstabulation

| ABORTION IF WOMAN WANTS FOR ANY REASON | THINK OF SELF AS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| | EXTREMELY LIBERAL | LIBERAL | SLIGHTLY LIBERAL | MODERATE | SLIGHTLY CONSERVATIVE | CONSERVATIVE | EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE |
| YES | 24 61.5% | 109 66.1% | 81 58.3% | 198 43.0% | 56 37.3% | 51 25.9% | 8 19.0% |
| NO | 15 38.5% | 56 33.9% | 58 41.7% | 262 57.0% | 94 62.7% | 146 74.1% | 34 81.0% |
| Total | 39 100.0% | 165 100.0% | 139 100.0% | 460 100.0% | 150 100.0% | 197 100.0% | 42 100.0% |

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 88.556 ^a | 6 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 91.003 | 6 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 84.208 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 1192 | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17.24.

Annexure B: Code Book

abany – Is it acceptable for a woman to want to get an abortion for any reason?

1 YES

2 NO

polviews – Do you think of self as liberal or conservative?

1 EXTREMELY LIBERAL

2 LIBERAL

3 SLIGHTLY LIBERAL

4 MODERATE

5 SLIGHTLY CONSERVATIVE

6 CONSERVATIVE

7 EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE

Annexure C: Charts and Tables

