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THE CORRELATION BETWEEN GENDER IDENTITY, FEMINIST IDEOLOGY, AND
OPINIONS CONCERNING THE OVERTURNING OF ROE V. WADE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors Undergraduate Thesis Program in Political Science
in the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs
and in the Burnett Honors College
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ABSTRACT

For many years, research has been done regarding the psychological link between gender, sex, and policy attitudes. Including, common investigations focusing on how female disposition may be a simple predictor of attitudes on “women’s issues.” However, the 2016 American presidential election—the first election with a female candidate as a leading party candidate, who was defeated by a male candidate accused of making discriminatory remarks about women—showed just how complex and evolving this relationship is. This was demonstrated yet again when the U.S. Supreme Court added a new female justice, then overturned the reproductive health protections of *Roe vs. Wade* in 2022. Clearly, the relationship between gender and policy attitudes continues to evolve, and so our research understanding of this phenomenon must evolve too. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following questions: does being a woman, man, or non-identifier impact political behavior? If so, does this occur more or less when self-identified as a feminist, versus not? What other factors matter in this actively evolving phenomenon? How does this track in reference to what is already known about women, feminism, and policy? Ultimately, this research will seek to unpack if it is true that gender identity and self-identification as a feminist impacts opinions on the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender Identity, Reproductive Rights, Opinions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all the women in my life who taught me how to be heard. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

A lot of research has been done regarding the psychological link between gender, sex, and policy attitudes. One of the most common investigations focuses on how female disposition, or more traditionally feminine attributes, may be a predictor to voting behavior—especially under the scope of the 2016 American presidential election. Yet, as reproductive rights continue to be an evolving phenomenon, the effort to understand them must also move forward. Given recent U.S. Supreme Court behavior as well as the ongoing creation of state-specific abortion legislation since the Dobbs decision, this topic is particularly salient.

With increasing female representation in some of America's highest offices, there has been a sociopolitical movement regarding feminist ideology, leading to a particularly intense lens being placed on issues regarding identity. This narrative was heightened during the 2016 Presidential election, when for the first time, a female was within the top two candidates—and was actively projected to win, until a male candidate with controversial remarks about women achieved a surprise win instead. This sparked many debates over the degree to which identity—and identity against—gender would motivate presidential votes. There were the common sentiments that Hillary Clinton was either not the right woman, the perfect woman, not feminist enough, or too much of a feminist, just as there were common sentiments that women who did not vote for Hillary Clinton were traitors, patriots, deplorable, or commendable. Why was this the case? If gender roles used to have a straightforward relationship with political attitudes, why was it not a given that all cisgender women vote for Clinton? Why did some cisgender men vote for Clinton when there was a male candidate? Given the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on overturning *Roe v. Wade*, a similar—yet perhaps even more controversial—conversation has

begun. If what we knew about women and voting was completely true, why did Amy Coney Barrett vote in favor of overturning Roe? Why did male Supreme Court justices vote against it?

All of these questions have been complimented by *another* contemporary shift, in how we understand the influence of other factors outside of gender and how they might intersect with that identity. For example, consider age. Given that those born after 1997 have shown the most variance, acceptance, and opinionatedness concerning gender fluidity and expression, it is crucial to explore all the possibilities. Does identifying as a woman, man, or as non-binary actually impact political behaviors? If so, does this occur more or less when self-identified as a feminist, versus not?

These questions point to a practical divide that may exist between feminism and womanhood. How does this track in reference to what is already known about those identities and policy? As changes in reproductive rights, feminist identities, and generational attitudes continue to evolve, research needs to keep up. Therefore, this study will explore the interrelationships of each of these topics, using social identity theory to argue that female gender identities, feminism, and youth respectively, should lead individuals to disapprove of the recent overturn of *Roe v. Wade* and to prefer more inclusive gender and reproductive health related policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender, Generational, and Feminist Identities—Where Can Shifts be Seen?

Given the central tenets of the topic at hand, the first step is to understand what is commonly understood about gender identity. It is no secret that the concept of gender fluidity and expression has evolved in light of cultural discourse. An increasing number of people, both in the public political sphere as well as in the context of social relations, have concluded that the world is gendered. Meaning that the world is one in which people operate through *doing* gender as an almost performative act (Butler 40-4). Smith and Smith even go as far as to posit that “Ideas and emotions regarding gender permeate nearly every aspect of our daily lives” (Smith 62). This concept can be seen in practice under the lens of the continued discussions over same-sex marriage, or the pay gap that exists between men and women.

Yet, if this is true, why is gender identity such a “hot button” issue? Something crucial to remember regarding gender in society is that people rely on a sense of identity. Gender provides a sense of belonging and a set of expectations and meaning—it is simply human nature to gravitate towards the status quo, even if outdated (Smith 65-7). This is the framework that guides how society chooses to “do” gender. In the past, when individuals strayed from this social schema, it not only skewed perceptions of that individual but also everything from social interactionism and psychological safety (Smith 67). However, in recent years, the ways in which people are “doing” gender is changing—meaning that more people are feeling safer to express themselves in ways beyond the traditional schema. People are more comfortable in situations surrounding gender non-conforming displays, even if less comfortable with personal displays. As a result, it can be deduced that as gender perceptions and attitudes are changing, the role that

gender has played in policy opinions on political topics surrounding sex and gender may also be impacted.

Yet, gender identity is not the only thing that must be considered. When you think about the token 1950s outlook, what comes to mind? During that time, what must life have been like for minorities and how might it be different now? A large part of current political discussions also focuses on the concept of generational identity and ideology—specifically, the evolution of how the different generations approach the same issue.

In a traditional sense, Boomers and Gen-Xers lean more conservatively than their Millennial and Gen-Z counterparts. Similar to how increased expressions of gender fluidity may have made people feel safer to identify with that identity group, increased exposure to diversity and inclusiveness via social media and the internet may be the cause. In addition, internal diversity may also be a critical factor. The two latter generations are more diverse than their predecessors when it comes to race and ethnic background—therefore, it may be deduced that the increased level of comfort when it comes to race is a result of this heightened level of integration (Schildkraut and Marotta 158-61). Although, the linkage does not stop there; age has also been shown to be a significant indicator of opinions concerning social issues overall—meaning it could also play a role when it comes to attitudes of feminism and reproductive rights.

In addition to gender identity and generational evolution, the evolution of feminist ideology must also be discussed to understand where the gap in knowledge lies. As was previously mentioned, now that gender expression is more widely accepted as fluid, the terms woman and feminist are no longer presumed to be synonymous. Of course, as third wave feminism has evolved, there are ties between the two—but the two terms are not the same. In

other words, there is a distinction between social standards, customs, and expectations and what is anatomically present (Hatemi et al. 76-8). The primary points of feminist theory have evolved to center around the patriarchal social structure, sexual violence, genital mutilation, purity culture, and healthcare gaps (Feminism 271-75). While historically there was the common understanding that only those with female sex organs could subscribe to feminist theory, now feminism is not only fighting for being “allowed in the room” or “given the same rules”, but also for the redefinition of what it means to be a woman (Nguyen 157-58). To put it plainly, feminism is no longer purely about being a woman or a man, but really about diversity and intersectionality—therefore it should be approached under a wider breadth (Zalewski 5-6). This development would provide a plausible explanation to some recent political happenings and general voting behavior under the lens of gender and feminism.

Gender and Political Behaviors

One of the primary bodies of research investigating women and how their identities shape political behavior explores gender’s effect on voting. After all, the United States’ history with women’s suffrage is deeply ingrained in female political consciousness. Yet, women are not always a political monolith in the way one would think (Cascio and Shenhav 25-32). Yes, generally speaking women do tend to lean towards similar attitudes on “women's issues”, but not always; there are female candidates on both sides of the aisle with varying policy preferences (Hatemi et al. 76-8). When further examining policy developments under this lens, a large part of the connection between women and voting is not in reference to *who* women vote for, but also which women run for office—and the gender gap within the two primary parties in the United

States. Of course, this is not to say that there are no women in high offices—just that in comparison to male representation in politics the disparity is glaring regardless of political affiliation (Simon and Hoyt 157-59). This fact only perpetuates the way in which women are perceived when running for office. It has been shown that if there is an option between a male and female candidate, voters will search for different kinds of information about the female candidate in comparison to that of purely the male candidate's qualifications (Ditonto et al. 336-38). Additionally, voters, men, women, or otherwise, expect female candidates to be more centered around “compassion issues” than their male competitors. This not only encompasses issues surrounding abortion, birth control access, and parental leave, but also general welfare and protection from job discrimination. (Barnes and Cassese 127-30). This isn't the case with all female candidates, but it does show the unique ways in which women are perceived—and even penalized—in electoral politics. All of this illustrates that while women's voting behaviors are commonly explored in the media, it is equally an equity and representation discussion (Swers 435-37).

With all this in mind, one may ask how these unique dynamics between evolving norms of gender, generational, and feminist identities intersect with the political actions women take and political offices they hold. Using the 2016 Presidential election as a point of reference, the observations are quite interesting. From the very beginning, the narrative surrounding the two primary candidates was stark. On one hand, there was a masculine candidate, who appealed to the “male gaze”. On the other, a feminine candidate who dressed herself in white, like that of a 1920s suffragette. In both situations, the candidates appeared to be trying to appeal to their respective, if not stereotypical, demographics (Bauer and Carpinella 395-97). Even though 2016

was the first time in which a woman was a primary contender for the oval office, it was certainly not the first time that gender dynamics influenced the election. To put it plainly, gender dynamics have been a prevalent part of every U.S. presidential election to date. The presidency is viewed as one of the most masculine positions in the world; mostly in pursuit of achieving the strong, decisive, and powerful brand that, according to some, women may lack. That can sway voting behaviors, regardless of whether a voter can identify with either candidate (Dittmar 807-11).

However, the presidency is not the only office in which gender has come into play. In addition to the that of the Presidency, the U.S. Supreme Court has also discussed the importance of female representation and diversity. In particular, whether those factors should be accounted for at all when it comes to nominations has been explored at length (Scheurer 294-301). The primary points of such conversations are usually in reference to the different perspectives the genders tend to have towards politics and law. In this line of thinking, a point that is relevant to this study is that concerning Amy Coney Barrett; one the most controversial justices in recent history given the timeline of her nomination. Barrett's case brings up a particularly interesting note concerning the role and impacts of gender on voter turnout and abortion rights. Based on the previously understood notions concerning the gender lens, one could assume that regardless of partisanship, men would be opposed to a female justice over a male justice. However, in this case the opposite was true. In the 2020 election, the desire to overturn *Roe v. Wade* was a significant factor for men in specific, in reference to support for Barrett (VanSickle et al. 40-1). In other words, a large reason men supported Barrett was their desire to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in the upcoming presidential term. Directly playing into the central ideas of this study—clearly,

what is known about gender identity's role on reproductive rights decisions is not all-encompassing.

Indeed, abortion rights are often presented as one of the most prevalent driving forces behind the ideological-culture war within in the United States. It is a topic that is so commonly, and passionately, defended and discussed to the point that “pro-lifers” and “pro-choicers” become diametrically opposed. You would think that because of the frequency of such topics the intricacies of both sides, and particularly their relationships to gender and feminism, would be clear. Yet, because of the volume of this convoluted discourse, ironically, an oversimplification—and subsequent lack of understanding—occurs. When it comes to abortion, this is true for not only the political debate aspect of it, but also regarding what the procedure itself entails (Osborne et al. 31-45).

Instead, contrary to popular belief, past studies have shown that men and women actually have a null relationship when it comes to opinions on legal abortions. In other words, men and women hold similar views to one another when it comes to this topic regardless of which end of the spectrum they are on. Prior to this discovery many assumed that women should be more likely than men to support legal abortion (Barkan 940-42). Yet, because of this development, academics have leaned more towards the idea that social backgrounds may indicate voting opinions more than gender alone. Most of these theories have tied religion into opinions on abortion. Yet, the gap in knowledge concerning the intersection between gender and feminism, respectively, on abortion opinions remains apparent.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Given all of the inconsistencies and evolutions regarding how and when gender, generational, and feminist identities influence (or do not influence) political behavior nowadays, this Honors Undergraduate Thesis seeks to offer a concrete answer to these questions. Specifically, it draws on Social Identity Theory to explain why we can expect the new, more fluid definitions of these identities to lead to specific political attitudes like increased disapproval of reproductive health restrictions.

A commonality between the identities explored in the literature review is the concept of grouping. Gender identity, feminism, age, etc. all are their own concepts, yet they are dependent on the common idea of coupling of people into subsections—subsections that are stereotypically created through people identifying others with similar ideas and binding together. In turn, this creates a system in which people who share those social attributes find each other, become influenced by the ideals of that group, and solidify those shared attitudes over time. This concept is called social identity theory (Kalin and Sambanis 239-42).

It is a commonly understood reality that this kind of group assimilation can impact attitudes towards many things, including politics specifically. That is why buzz-phrases like “Gen-Z believes this” or “Hard-right conservatives want that” appear and gain traction; they are generalizations made based on common sentiments of specific groups. In other words, when things like age, feminism, and gender are being discussed, it is important to keep in mind what you are really investigating is evolutions of social identities (Bittner and Goodyear-Grant 561). This research project is centered around social identity theory in the sense that it argues that increasing prevalence of gender fluid, generationally fluid, and feminist fluid identities mean

individuals will gravitate towards those social groups' existing attitudes—and that as a result, individuals who hold those strengthening identities will have specific group-informed opinions on *Roe v. Wade* that their gender, political affiliation, or other attributes might not otherwise predict. This similar argument about the effect of social identity theory heavily influencing other political attitudes in the recent past can be seen in a number of examples. For example, youth support for March for Our Lives shows how an evolving generational identity led to a shift in attitudes towards gun control, regardless of where students lived or what their political affiliation is (Bent 55-60).

Therefore, the primary purpose of this research is to unpack whether or not there is a correlation between feminist ideology, gender identity, and generational identity, and how those identities might predict opinions on reproductive health and the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. Specifically, it hypothesizes two things:

Firstly, that female gender identity will increase disapproval of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*, and secondly that self-identification as a feminist will also increase disapproval of the *Roe v. Wade* overturn decision in the United States. In addition, it will hypothesize that generational identities—particularly for those who grew up with *Roe v. Wade* already in place—is likely to compound this effect. The reasoning behind these claims is that, considering what we know about social identities and evolving norms of gender and feminism, we can expect a new generation of female-identifying, feminist-identifying, and Gen-Z-identifying individuals to have new and very strong shared opinions on issues relating to reproductive policies.

METHODOLOGY

Data and Research Design

To further investigate these ideas, this qualitative study used an anonymous online survey that was distributed via two social media channels at the University of Central Florida (GroupMe and Microsoft Teams) to students who were at least 18 years of age. This purposive sample was particularly appropriate for the research question at hand, since it was targeted at a group that would be familiar with the topics and identities being discussed. Though the sample was not technically random for all students at the University, it is worth noting that it was distributed to eligible respondents of multiple ages, races, and gender identities. The final sample included 14 total students. Those students completed survey questions covering demographic variables, policy attitudes, feminism and feminist identities, and knowledge of the decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. It also asked students for their general thoughts and opinions about recent events on behalf of the United States. The study was formally approved by the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB).

In the analysis itself, this study will use utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative frameworks to understand the research findings. The reason for this being that despite is heavily qualitative nature, it is still important to acknowledge the numerical figures that come up. For example, the number of people who left the survey after certain questions or the number of people who utilized the denoted codes. These acknowledgements are not meant to sway the direction of the research itself into a solely quantitative approach, but rather to provide a fully encompassing and objective illustration of the results of the survey in reference to the hypotheses.

Though, as is the case with any academic research, there are certain limitations. With this particular study, there are two primary limitations that come to mind. Firstly, a qualitative study can be hard to obtain answers for; it requires more investment from participants to engage with qualitative prompts than to select simple numeric responses like those of a quantitative study. Secondly, it is difficult to recruit participants who are willing to discuss sensitive topics and give candid answers. To handle all of the variables at play and address these limitations, the survey was designed to take no more than 15 minutes, to be completely anonymous, and to be participated in purely through a volunteer basis. This encourages participants to elaborate and be candid and unbiased in their responses, without overburdening their time or placing any outside forces or pressure to respond. The complete survey questionnaire is reprinted in Table 1 below.

Additionally, something of note when it comes to this subject matter is that there are limitations in the language used. Many of the studies and literature that this research draws from, and even at times this study itself, relies on outdated phraseology and definitions concerning sexuality and gender denominations. The use of these terms is not meant to insinuate that the binary ideas surrounding gender are correct—only to offer the most commonly used identity categories to explain the research findings.

Survey Component

Table 1.

Questionnaire
<i>Demographics</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is your gender identity? If you prefer to not disclose this, leave it blank.2. How old are you?3. What is your country of origin?
<i>Topic Questions</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are the main things that come to your mind when you think about U.S. history, leadership, values, etc.2. If applicable, how does the United States of America compare to your home country?3. How do you think the United States compares to other countries when it comes to human rights and social justice? You can compare any country.4. In the last year, what political topics have you heard the most about in the media? For example, from the news, radio, social media, etc.5. In your experience, what do regular people/the mass public say about the United States?6. Do you know what Roe v. Wade is?7. If you answered yes to #7, what are your thoughts on Roe v. Wade being overturned?8. How safe do you feel in this country on a scale from 1-10 (1 being not at all and 10 being completely safe)? This can be in regards to anything from physically to psychologically.9. What factors contribute to your answer to the previous question?10. What does the word <i>feminism</i> mean to you?11. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Please elaborate.12. Do you think the United States practices equal rights in regards to race, sexuality, gender, etc.?13. Has this opinion changed over time or stayed relatively the same? Please elaborate.

Codes

In reference to the research questions, the responses will be thematically analyzed using codes.

In essence, codes are used to identify commonalities between respondents' answers—they are used by researchers to examine relationships between common themes in a data set. In theory, the more participants mention certain topics, the more pertinent they are to the central ideas.

Codes can be inductive or deductive and can evolve during the course of a study. In this study, a combination of inductive and deductive codes denoted below were identified to analyze the survey findings.

Table 2.

Codes for Qualitative Analysis	
Power	
Equality	
Rights	
Freedom	
Constitution	
Sexism	
Patriarchy	
Religion	
Life	
Men	
Women	
Sexuality	

Reflexivity and Researcher Bias

There have been extensive studies done regarding researcher bias and its influence on the way data is perceived. It is not abnormal to be impacted by certain topics—considering that most researchers focus on topics that interest them, it could be argued that it should be expected, especially in qualitative studies. Furthermore, a researcher's unique approach to an issue can often yield particularly helpful or effective insights into the issue at hand. However, that is not

the purpose of many objective academic studies such as this kind of thesis. The purpose of such projects is to conduct unbiased research and analyze the findings objectively, to ensure the data is generalizable across multiple studies and audiences, and to effectively supplement academic knowledge. Therefore, this study proceeds with its qualitative coding procedures and thematic analysis recognizing that both a commitment to applying the researcher's own beneficial insights, while maintaining a reasonable degree of objectivity, is the best course of action. The data will be analyzed and interpreted drawing on the knowledge and conclusions that I, a feminist woman, *and* an objective academic researcher, have drawn.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

Before any conclusions or observations are made, let's lay the foundation. This is a qualitative study, and the data will be analyzed with that in mind based on the steps noted in the methodology section. However, in this beginning portion especially, a few numbers will be discussed. By doing this, it is not meant to take the research in a quantitative direction—only to provide context on some points that will be developed as the analysis progresses.

In that regard, there were 29 original “clicks” into the survey itself. 24 people disclosed their gender identity, 26 disclosed their age, and 26 disclosed their country of origin. The mean age of original participants is 21.1. Of those who answered the question regarding gender identity, one individual identified as non-binary, one simply stated “cisgender”, 16 identified as cisgender female, and six as cisgender male. Although as these people began answering the questionnaire, some did not continue—in the end there were 14 complete responses past the demographic section. These responses will be the ones in which connections to the research will be drawn later in the analysis section. With all this being said, there is a message told simply within the first few questions. Aside from the 14 complete answers, we know that the original number of people who clicked was 26. The number of answers went from 24, to 26 for the following two questions in the demographic section. Which means that two participants skipped the question regarding gender identity but still went further into the study. What is the reasoning for this considering that the question of gender identity is a relatively common one, if not just a common topic in mainstream media? Why did some people feel uncomfortable self-identifying? Of course, there is the possibility that those individuals found it irrelevant to their responses. Although, there is also the possibility that they either found it too invasive, or just plainly did not

feel comfortable disclosing. I bring this up because a similar trend can be observed throughout the study. After certain questions there were drop-offs in the number of participants who continued to the next question. That could mean nothing or be reflective of flaws in the survey's design. However, it does pose the idea that maybe something within those questions deterred those people from continuing. Perhaps, disgust, anger, disagreement, or just plain boredom. Or perhaps the argument that there is a strong social identity underlying gender identity is indeed incorrect. When conducting qualitative research that references psychological ties, it is important to keep things of that nature in mind.

General Perceptions of the U.S.—Media, Public Opinion, Safety

Before I jump into the direct questions regarding opinions on *Roe v. Wade* and feminism, it is important to provide some background on what the respondents think as a whole. To get the entire picture, I will examine the findings obtained through the general political opinions portion which followed the demographic section.

On the fourth question, which discussed what comes to mind when thinking about the U.S., the number of respondents went down to 18. Which means that there was a decrease in interest after the demographic section when it came to more substantial questions. Out of the answers that were captured though, three depicted the United States in a positive light. Some of the most prevalent codes that were touched upon by these individuals were freedom related notions, constitutional positives, and power. Although not all the responses were positive—most were mixed, acknowledging their subjective lists of pros and cons. For example, some respondents said that “the country has learned a lot, but needs to learn more”, others said “Slow

progress, flawed but better than any alternative” or things of that nature. A few mentions of just general American knowledge were present, like “presidents” and “capitalism”, just to capture the full picture of responses. Yet, the vast majority of people said primarily negative things. The most popular topics brought up across the board were racism, homophobia, violence, guns, colonialism, and corruption. I mention this for a few reasons—mainly because the only shared code that appeared amongst this group was *sexism*, and sparingly at that. But also, because even though the responses represented the entire spectrum, the same topics could be seen within individuals who swayed a certain way. In other words, those who said positives all listed similar points, those who were mixed had similar reasoning, and those who said negatives all had similar ideas in mind. A similar phenomenon occurred in the following questions regarding things covered in the media. The answers had a lot of overlap, even between those who said opposite things in the prior question. Although this makes more sense considering the prevalence of select media sources as most Americans' primary source of news.

In regards to perceptions of the United States, the majority side said the U.S. was purely perceived as negative; lots of thoughts of the U.S. in decline, expensive living costs, wanting to leave but not being able to, self-centrism, gun violence, and negatives about Donald Trump. The codes *freedom* and *equality* appeared, yet in the opposite way as before; as in, “not the land of freedom and equality it claims to be”. There was an individual who said that the U.S. is known for good things, but mentioned rising fear when it comes to gun violence and extremism. Considering that these responses reflect a similar story to that of the previous questions, it poses an interesting potential connection to media and the way it shapes public opinion. This divide was even acknowledged in some of the responses; people saying that you either very negative or

very positive things to say. Clearly, responses appeared as very point blank, side-to-side, one or the other.

Which leads us into the section concerning feelings of safety in the United States. This question could have been in reference to physical or psychological factors—it was up to the respondent. Some of the most common factors that played into the respondents' answers were as follows: police, fear concerning gender identity, abortion access, race, guns, Orlando being a hub for sex trafficking, extremism, natural disasters, and U.S. defense capabilities. Evidently, there a few common themes arising amongst these answers that emerged naturally, not a part of the denoted codes.

Something to note concerning these responses was that yes, there were similar answers across the board. However, on multiple occasions female participants did mention womanhood as a contributing factor towards feelings of unsafety. A few common points of reasoning amongst these women were sexuality (one of the deductively expected codes), as well as limited abortion access. Conversely, a male participant said that being a man contributed to feelings of safety—pointing to another one of the reference codes. As a whole, when asked about the United States' level of human rights, a few said the country was top ranked. While most said it was very good in comparison to some countries and lacking in comparison to others. The examples that people listed of such countries that outrank the United States were Scandinavian. Specifically, Sweden and Denmark were named. Additionally, something of note that occurred within this line of questioning was the use of racial slurs by one of the respondents. Essentially, they stated their feeling of safety was attributed to carrying a gun and staying away from certain groups (as described in expletive terms). This response, though singular, shows how opinionated and

strong-willed some people are when it comes to topics such as this—perhaps indicating that the young, progressive social identities expected may not be as strong as the hypotheses suggested.

Findings on Feminism

This part of the report will begin to hit on some of the more primary points of the research questions. The following questions center around feminism, self-subscription to feminist ideology, and then later into thoughts of *Roe v. Wade*. To begin, none of the participants left the survey at this point and every participant had a similar perception on the definition of feminism. The general understanding was that feminism is activism and support for equal rights between men and women, liberation from patriarchal social norms and gender roles, and the acknowledgement that women have things to offer in addition to men. This definition is an amalgamation of what the participants said, and hits upon several of the codes: equality, men, women, rights, and patriarchy. Do note, however, that an individual mentioned that they thought feminism, in its common usage, was perverted. They said that they themselves believe in the aforementioned definition, but the term was widely used to say that women were superior to men.

In regards to self-identification with feminism, most individuals said that they did identify as feminists, two individuals said no. The people that said yes, which consisted of men, women, and non-binary individuals, listed a few of the themes captured by the codes. The most common codes that were mentioned within this section were women, equality, rights, and constitution-associated concepts. Outside of those reference points, many respondents saw feminism as simply “what’s right” especially regarding ending discrimination and closing the

pay gap—those were common sentiments. When it comes to the noes, one of the people who said they were not a feminist stated that, in their opinion, women had already achieved equality in the workplace, education, jobs, etc. Therefore, they did not view feminism as necessary. The other said that “new age feminism is involved far too much in sex and LGBTQ policies that it has detracted from the purpose of the movement”. Both noes were men—perhaps suggesting that social identities of new feminism are strong, but not so strong as to be universal.

Overall, these results show the shift in the demographic subscription to feminist ideology. Considering that there was a mixed bag of people who said they were feminists, exemplifies the idea that it is not about being a woman or being a man. It is more so about that freedom of thought that was discussed in the literature review. Therefore, it stands to reason that because of this, adherence to feminist ideology may play a role in shaping opinions of the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.

Thoughts and Opinions on Roe v. Wade

A vast majority of people were openly against the overturning of the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Within this group, the most common codes that were identified highlighted topics related to women, rights, constitutional principles, and religion; the latter in reference to how personal religious belief dictates personal choice but does not change that respondent’s disagreement with the overturning. One person did not state agreement or disagreement; only that the outburst from society, as a result, makes sense and that they think that abortion should only be used in extreme circumstances. Their primary reason behind this answer was that they “don’t want to speak for all women”, again resembling one of the common codes.

There were people though that stated they were happy about the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Both mentioned the ideas of life winning and innocence, while only one brought up Catholicism. In other words, *life* and *religion*. Both people who approved of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* were male; one identified themselves as a feminist and one did not. Some interesting points gathered from this data was that even though the majority of people said they disapproved of *Roe v. Wade*, the reasoning behind such answers was not as cut and dry as one would think, or as my hypotheses about social identity might suggest. Of course, there were people who disapproved based on women's health reasons, equity, regression in human rights, etc. Yet, there were also those whose answers were less about women's rights, but more about how the United States is now able to access more private information. In addition to those whose answers were based purely out of a constitutional sense and less about the ethicality of the situation. Both of which have merit within their own right, while also exemplifying that the reasoning behind support is not always about solely supporting women. The implications of all these points will be examined further in the analysis.

Thoughts on Equal Rights

The question that followed centered around equal rights. More specifically if the respondents believed that the United States practices equal rights. In the research question design process, it seemed like outwardly asking this question right after the previous one about *Roe v. Wade* would elicit very candid answers and additional context to any previous responses. At this point in the study, note that one person exited the survey.

Out of the remaining participants, most people said that they did not believe the U.S. practices equal rights. Some common sentiments amongst this group were xenophobia and general inequality across the board. In turn, touching on racism and the inequality/equality dynamic as listed in Table 2. A staggering majority simply felt that while the United States practices it in theory, the follow through has either been too slow, insufficient in general, and imperfect. Overall, this group seemed to share the sentiment that the branches of government and different states are all on different pages when it comes to the standard of equality—once again bringing up some of the codes and themes seen throughout the data. The two people who said that they believed the U.S. does practice equal rights were the same two who supported the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Their reasoning for their answer to this question seemed to lean in a similar direction to that of their previous answers: constitution centered. These individuals' reasoning was as follows: general amendments that were brought on as a result of the Civil War, the 14th, 13th, 15th, and 19th amendments, and the legalization of same-sex marriage.

The Evolution of the Respondents' Opinions

Given what is known about the reach of the media, it is safe to assume that many people have held political opinions from an early age—especially for the generation who grew up in the digital era. Yet sometimes these opinions change overtime. The last question of the study touched upon just that; did any of these people's opinions evolve with age, or time, or experience? Eight participants said that it has stayed the same—some in the negative sense, some in the positive. The individuals who leaned towards the latter were the same people who answered yes to the two previous questions. Yet, most of the people whose opinion has stayed

the same, in either respect, simply said that while their opinion has stayed the same overall, it really depends on the issue at hand.

The remaining individuals said that their opinion has changed mostly in part due to either education, not relying on adults or the news as the sole determining factors, and simply becoming more aware about the pros and cons of the United States. It paints a peculiar picture that while some people said their opinions had changed, the majority said that it has stayed relatively similar. When discussing topics such as public opinion and perceptions of policies, understanding how much updated information actually impacts the average person is pertinent.

CONCLUSION AND ANALYSIS

Circling back to the original research questions, this study aimed to find any correlations between gender identity and feminism and opinions on the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. It was argued that female gender identity would increase disapproval of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and that self-identification as a feminist would increase disapproval of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, respectively. Based on the data collected, both hypotheses achieved noticeable support. Out of the participants, which consisted of men, women, and non-binary individuals, it seemed like women and non-binary people were the most opposed to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. That is not to say that all men approved of the Supreme Court decision, nor that social identity intersections between gender, feminism, and generational identities predict one sole outcome—but it does suggest that trends are emerging wherein these social identities powerfully influence individuals' policy attitudes.

When looking at the questions regarding feminism, there was an almost unanimous definition of what the term even meant. However, when asked about subscription to feminist ideology, every woman said yes, one man said yes, and one man said no. These same men are the people who were in favor of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Evidently, there are men who said they did subscribe to feminist ideology, but the primary parallel drawn was that all women said yes and the same was not true for men. In all, those who subscribed to feminist ideology were more opposed to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* than those who did not. In spite of the fact that there was a case of someone identifying themselves as a feminist and still supporting the overturning. Perhaps in some people's minds the two do not go hand in hand.

With all this being said, keep in mind that there was a significantly lower number of male respondents than there was female. This may not only have produced a less than cumulative understanding of the overall male opinion on the topic, but also uncovered something else. The fact that so many more women than men even entered the survey to begin with shows that despite religious beliefs, or views on the country, women collectively found the topic to be personal, interesting, and deserving of a response. Which makes sense considering that the decision directly impacts women's health and rights. Yet, given the nature of the two most variant male responses it shows that some of the men who chose to continue, continued under the pretense that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* was life winning. Which is also quite the intense set of things at stake. The idea that there were male respondents who participated in the survey using religion and their version of morality as a guidepost shows that people feel they have equal, if not more important, skin in the game than each individual woman herself. Yet, the fact that this topic is even up for discussion, let alone that women have not been alone in voicing their opinions on the matter, could lead one to make some peculiar observations regarding the ownership of women's bodies in the United States in its entirety. Is there a sense of entitlement felt by select individuals concerning women's bodily functions? If so, has such a feeling been ingrained in the male-centered social consciousness? The fact that this discourse ranges from the Supreme Court to studies such as these, tells its own story.

The novelty of the Supreme Court's ruling has caused a stir not only within the political sphere, but also the social, and personal parts of people's lives. Certainly, it could have been deduced that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* had been discussed in political back rooms, however for it to actually happen? Well, given the mass public's response, it was clearly an

unwelcome shock. With this being said though, there is the possibility that these connections rang so prominently in my mind because of my own personal experience. Perhaps there were other connections that could have been made if I felt differently about the topic. This is not to say that the data is inaccurate or that the outlined claims don't have merit, just that people see what they experience. Perhaps if viewed from another individual's point of view, the additional observations I made outside of the research questions may not have been so outward or relevant. This is why I made it a point to include the data so that each individual may take it for what it is and be able to analyze it within their own frame of reference.

What is clear at the end of this study is that new and powerful social identities exist surrounding gender, feminism, and generational attitudes—and that those social identities, on the whole, often relate to very specific political attitudes about abortion and the United States' policies. What remains unclear is the degree to which these identities exist in other environments, or whether they will even hold up over time or change again. The only answer to this challenge is to continue monitoring the evolution of these identities and their complex relationships to these phenomena.

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