
Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019

2014

Pro-Life Progressivism: The Effect of Abortion Attitudes on Attitudes Towards Government Welfare Programs

Lauren Gilmore
University of Central Florida



Part of the [Sociology Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

STARS Citation

Gilmore, Lauren, "Pro-Life Progressivism: The Effect of Abortion Attitudes on Attitudes Towards Government Welfare Programs" (2014). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019*. 4837.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/4837>



University of
Central
Florida

Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship

STARS

PRO-LIFE PROGRESSIVISM: THE EFFECT OF ABORTION ATTITUDES ON
ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNMENT WELFARE PROGRAMS

by

LAUREN GILMORE
B.A. University of South Florida 2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Sociology
in the College of Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2014

Major Professor: David Gay

© 2014 Lauren Gilmore

ABSTRACT

There is an extensive body of literature exploring the way in which a variety of factors affect a person's attitudes towards abortion. There is significantly less research, however, on the way in which a person's attitude towards abortion affects their attitudes towards other issues. At the same time, there is evidence to suggest that a growing number of people are using their "pro-life" stance on abortion to influence their stance on other issues that revolve around the quality and sustenance of life, and that Generation Y may be more liberal than previous generations on most, if not all, issues. This research seeks to explore the extent to which "pro-life progressivism" may have affected Generation Y with two sets of logistic regression analysis. The first analysis looks exclusively at members of Generation Y, and explores the effect of a person's attitudes toward abortion on their attitudes towards government spending on childcare, assistance to the poor, and healthcare. This is to see if there is a difference between pro-life and pro-choice members of Generation Y in the way they approach other issues relating to the quality and sustenance of life. The second analysis compares pro-life members of Generation Y to older cohorts. The results show that attitudes towards abortion among members of Generation Y had no effect on their attitudes towards childcare and healthcare. Furthermore, the attitudes of pro-life members of Generation Y were statistically no different from older cohorts, with the exception of members of the Silent Generation on the issue of government assistance to healthcare. Further research, particularly of the qualitative nature, is suggested to delve more deeply into this research question.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
Consistent Life Ethic and Pro-Life Progressivism.....	3
Abortion Attitudes.....	3
Factors Affecting A Woman’s Decision to Abort a Pregnancy.....	7
Attitudes Towards The Welfare State.....	9
Generation Y.....	11
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	14
Data.....	14
Dependent Variable.....	14
Independent Variable.....	14
Control Variables.....	15
Race, Gender, and Income.....	15
Subjective Religiosity, Political Ideology, Region, and Community Size.....	15
Analytic Strategy.....	16
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	17
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	24
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	26

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Descriptives of Independent and Control Variables.....	18
Table 2 Logistic Regression Results: Effects of Abortion Attitudes and Covariates on Attitudes Toward Social Spending.....	20
Table 3 Logistic Regression Results: Effects of Abortion Attitudes, Generational Cohort, and Covariates.....	23

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

While there is an established body of literature that explores the factors that might affect someone's attitude towards abortion (for a more in-depth discussion, see Jelen and Wilcox 2003), there is far less research that explores the ways in which someone's attitudes towards abortion might affect their attitudes towards related issues, such as government spending on social services. Several studies suggest that economic stressors, such as lack of access to childcare, adequate employment, or affordable healthcare, are among the most common reasons that women give for why they had an elective abortion (Biggs, Gould and Foster 2013; Finer et al. 2007; Jones, Frohwith, and Moore 2007; Kirkman et al. 2009). Furthermore, studies suggest that women in many states who have access to welfare programs designed to mitigate the effects of these stressors are less likely to seek out abortions than other low-income women (Hussey 2011).

Attitudes towards these government programs have been thoroughly studied (for further discussion, see Gilens 2009), but these attitudes have never been studied in relation to the issue of abortion. Understanding the way in which people with a strong opinion on abortion feel about social issues that can encourage abortions will offer important insight into the nature of this debate, particularly the extent to which people are thinking about the root causes of abortion, rather than just abortion itself. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which a person's attitudes towards abortion relate to their attitudes towards government aid for these economic stressors.

Furthermore, this study looks the attitudes of Generation Y, for two reasons. First, while studies show a difference in abortion attitudes between the Baby Boomers and Generation X, there is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to understanding the political and social

attitudes of the most recent generation to enter adulthood (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1993) .

Second, since the overwhelming majority of women (68.8%) who seek out abortions in the United States are between the ages of 18 and 30 (Jones, Finer and Singh 2010), access to abortion is particularly relevant to Generation Y, which, according to the Pew Center, comprises adults born after the year 1980 (Pew Research Center 2011).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Consistent Life Ethic and Pro-Life Progressivism

There is a small but growing body of research that explores the way in which a “pro-life” ethic affects people’s attitudes towards issues other than abortion. In the early 1980’s, several prominent Catholics began to push for a “consistent life ethic”, in which the traditionally conservative “pro-life” stance is combined with more traditionally liberal stances on other issues deemed to be important to the affirmation of life, such as an opposition to war and the death penalty, and support for welfare programs (Perl and McClintock 2001; Unnever, Bartkowski and Cullen 2010). For these people, who also identify as “pro-life progressives”, it is not enough to defend the sanctity of the lives of the unborn; all human life must be respected and protected (Fuechtmann 1988).

While this consistent life ethic has historically been associated with the Catholic Church, there is evidence that some Protestants are also embracing this ideology, at least in the case of opposition to capital punishment (Perl and McClintock 2001; Unnever, Bartkowski and Cullen 2010). Very little research, however, has explored the consistent life ethic outside of defined religious parameters, and there are aspects of the ethic, such as poverty and access to healthcare, which have also not been studied extensively. This study aims to expand on the existing body of research surrounding the consistent life ethic by looking into some of the aspects of this ethic that seem to be missing from the literature, while also investigating the extent to which this ethic has been embraced by Americans in Generation Y, as compared to older adults.

Abortion Attitudes

Generally speaking, attitudes towards abortion can be thought of in terms of a spectrum. On one end, people who identify as “pro-choice” generally view access to abortion as being part

of a woman's reproductive freedom, and oppose efforts to make the procedure illegal. On the other end of the spectrum is the "pro-life" movement, which considers abortion to be murder and condemns the procedure (Strickler and Danigelis 2002). While the two ends of the spectrum tend towards extremism, either wholly supporting or opposing access towards abortion regardless of the circumstances, the majority of Americans fall in the middle of the spectrum, with somewhat ambivalent opinions towards the procedure (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1992; Jelen and Wilcox 2003). Nevertheless, previous research has identified several factors that can help explain variations in attitudes towards abortion.

Many researchers believe that religion is the strongest social predictor of abortion attitudes (Jelen and Wilcox 2003). Catholics and fundamentalist Protestants are more likely to oppose access to abortion than mainstream Protestants, African American churches, and Jews (Cook, Jelen and Wilcox 1992; Ebaugh and Haney 1980; Gay and Lynxwiler 1999; Granberg and Granberg 1980; Huber and Spitze 1983). Higher levels of church attendance are linked to pro-life attitudes across denominations, even among denominations which are loosely affiliated with pro-choice organizations (Emerson 1996, Jelen and Wilcox 2003). Biblical literalism has also been shown to be linked to pro-life attitudes, although the strength of this relationship is lower among African American literalists, literalists living outside of the American South, and literalists with higher incomes and more liberal political views (Gay and Lynxwiler 1999). Generally speaking, people with conservative personal morals are shown to have the strongest pro-life attitudes (Granberg and Granberg 1980; Hall and Ferree 1986). Even within specific religious traditions or belief systems, differences in life experiences can have a significant affect on attitudes towards social issues like abortion.

Educational attainment and income has also been shown to be one of the strongest determinants of attitudes towards abortion for both men and women, with both sexes showing stronger support for legal abortion as their educational attainment and income increases (e.g., Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1992; Granberg and Granberg 1980; Kenny 1993; Ladd and Bowman 1997). Researchers have suggested that this may be because women with higher levels of education are more likely to seek personal fulfillment outside of motherhood and thus might see pregnancy as a hindrance to their goals, rather than the fulfillment of them (Luker 1984). Since higher levels of education are inversely correlated with many aspects of conservative religious and political ideologies (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; McFarland, Wright and Weakliem 2011), the effect of education on abortion attitudes may also be related to the rejection of conservative religious ideals.

The effect of race and gender on attitudes towards abortion is not straightforward. While it might make sense that women, whose bodies and lives are most directly impacted by pregnancy, would have more accepting attitudes towards abortion, the research shows that this is not the case. Several studies suggest that gender is not a significant determinant of abortion attitudes, particularly when other socioeconomic factors are controlled for (Cook et al. 1992. Secret 1987, Stricker and Danigelis 2002). There are some studies that suggest women are more pro-choice than men (Hertel and Russell 1999), but other other studies suggest just the opposite (Craig and O'Brien 1993). This may be explained by short-term fluctuations in attitudes towards abortion, while the long-term trend has been one of gender equality in attitudes (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). Beyond this, scholars have posited that abortion is often held as a proxy for larger attitudes towards the importance of motherhood and the role of women in society. White women who abstain from wage labor are usually more opposed to abortion than women who seek paid

employment outside of the home (Dugger 1991; Jelen, Damore, and Lamatsch 2002). This may be because the first category of women often choose to stay home as part of their fulfillment of a conservative worldview in which the primary role of women is to be mothers and wives. It may also be because these women have invested more time and energy into the domestic sphere, and so are more likely to embrace worldviews that place value on motherhood and stratified gender roles (Dugger 1991, Luker 1984). While historically, black Americans have been less supportive of abortion rights than white Americans (Craig and O'Brien 1993, Hall and Ferree 1986), this began to change in the 1990's with black Americans becoming more supportive of abortion rights than white Americans (Carter, Carter, and Dodge 2009; Strickler and Danigelis 2002). Black and Hispanic men tend to be more supportive of abortion rights than white men (Bogges and Bradner 2000), while several studies suggest that there is little difference between the attitudes black and white women (Carter, Carter, and Dodge 2009; Lynxwiler and Gay 1994, Misra and Homan 2000).

A more effective predictor of abortion attitudes than race or gender is worldview or ideology. Not surprisingly, those with liberal or feminist political leanings are more pro-choice than conservatives or people who reject feminism (Fine 2006, Strickler and Danigelis 2002). Since the debate around abortion is also linked to issues such as women's participation in the labor force, gender roles, and extramarital sexual activity, it is not surprising that those who hold more conservative attitudes towards sexuality and gender roles would also take a more oppositional stance regarding abortion (Jelen, Damore, and Lamatsch 2002; Wang and Buffalo 2004). Similarly, Democrats are more likely to support abortion than Republicans (Sahar and Karasawa 2005, Simien and Clawson 2004). The evolution of both political parties since *Roe v. Wade* has been towards acceptance of abortion by Democrats and rejection of abortion by

Republicans, and there is evidence to suggest that abortion was a significant enough issue to cause subsequent party shifts among the American electorate (Abramowitz 1995; Adams 1997; Carmines, Gerrity and Wagner 2010).

Other factors, such as age and region, have also been shown to be influential in determining attitudes towards abortion. While it might seem that young adults, for whom the risk of an unwanted pregnancy is more present, would be more accepting of abortion, the opposite is the case. Older generations tend to be more supportive of abortion than younger adults when other socioeconomic variables are controlled for (Kenny 1993, Strickler and Danigelis 2002). Regional differences have also shown to be significant, with respondents living in or reared in the South tending to be more opposed to legal abortion, particularly among African Americans (Wilcox 1992).

Factors Affecting A Woman's Decision to Abort a Pregnancy

In a discussion about the legalization of abortion, it is important to understand the factors that influence a woman's decision to seek out the procedure. While the majority of the research focuses on women outside of the United States (Bankole, Singh, and Haas 1998; Vestermark and Asping 1990), there have been a few studies on women from the United States. The largest study on this topic was conducted by the Guttmacher Institute in 2004, in which over 1,200 abortion patients were interviewed. It offered significant insights into women's reasons for seeking out abortion. Seventy-four percent of women said that "having a baby would dramatically change my life" and 73 percent said that "I can't afford a baby now" (Finer et al. 2005). Within these reasons were several subreasons or specifications. The most commonly cited subreason was that women could not afford a baby because the women were unmarried (cited by 42% of the women), but other women frequently replied that having a baby would interfere with her

education (38%) or employment (38%), that they already had other children to take care of (32%), that they could not afford childcare (28%) or the basic needs of life (23%), that they or their partner were unemployed (34%), that they could not leave their job to raise a child (21%), or that they were currently on welfare (8%) (Finer et al. 2005).

While there were other explanations for having abortions, such as relationship problems or having completed their childbearing, the vast majority of respondents cited dramatic life change and affordability as the reasons for their abortions. Women who were nonwhite, of a lower socioeconomic status, and under the age of 24 were the most likely to cite financial difficulties as the reason why they sought out an abortion. Many of these women were already single mothers who felt that they lacked the resources to care for another child (Finer et al. 2005).

Various theorists have also surmised that strong welfare programs would encourage women to choose childbirth over abortion. For one, programs designed to aid low-income women and children would ease the “worker-mother conflict” and remove women’s constraints from having children (Rindfuss Brewster 1996:263) While the research on the relationship between abortion rates and access to welfare is limited, the relationship between poverty and abortion rates is undeniable. According to rational choice theorists, the decision to carry a pregnancy to term is an economically rational one, and policies which decrease the financial burden of a child or increase a family’s financial capabilities make the decision to have a baby more economically viable (Becker and Murphy 2000).

Other studies conducted on this subject have confirmed the influential role of financial instability in a woman’s decision to abort a pregnancy (Biggs, Gould and Foster 2013; Faria, Barrett and Goodman 1985; Torres and Forrest 1988). Aside from directly interviewing women

who cite financial instability as being a reason for their abortions, the data show that women who live below or near the poverty line is four times higher than for women in households earning 300 percent above the poverty line (Jones, Darroch, and Henshaw 2002). Furthermore, there is research that suggests that, in states with restrictive abortion policies in place, the presence of comprehensive welfare programs and expansive family leave laws is correlated with lower rates of abortion (Hussey 2011). Other research has suggested that welfare programs, as part of an overall pro-mother or pro-child culture, has had a small effect on increasing fertility in several countries (Gauthier 2007).

Attitudes Towards The Welfare State

In a discussion of the relationship between abortion and government assistance to families, it is important to differentiate between welfare and the American welfare state. “Welfare”, specifically, is any government-run program that provides the “working-age, able-bodied poor” (Gilens 2009:12) with cash-like assistance, such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The American welfare state is a more amorphous concept can be understood as the system of social programs geared towards helping Americans in a variety of socioeconomic conditions. Gilens breaks these programs down into three categories: education, social insurance, and means-tested poverty programs (2009).

Considering the influence of public opinion has on shaping public policy (Page and Shapiro 1992), it is important to understand how Americans feel about welfare programs. Attitudes towards welfare and the welfare state in the United States have long been complex and ambiguous. Historically, Americans have been supportive of the idea that the government has some responsibility to help the needy, with the strongest support being for programs targeted towards “deserving” recipients like children or the elderly (Cook 1979, Gilens 2009).

Nevertheless, the majority of Americans state that they are opposed to “welfare”, and view welfare recipients in a negative light (Feagin 1975, Gilens 2009). Gilens proposes that this is due to a concerted media and political campaign to discredit welfare recipients as being lazy “moochers” who forgo paid employment in order to receive money from the government.

Support for welfare programs among Americans has increased drastically since the 1990’s. A Pew survey that was conducted in 1994 and 2007 about attitudes towards the government’s role in caring for the needy suggest that almost every social, political, and demographic group has become more supportive of the poor and towards government programs designed to aid them. (Morin and Neidorf 2007). Attitudes towards welfare programs now closely resemble the social attitudes of the late 1980’s, with the majority of Americans believing that “the government should do more to help the needy” (Morin and Neidorf 2007). Some of the greatest increases in supportive attitudes have, interestingly, been among adults older than 65, adults with households in the lowest quartile of income, white people, college graduates, and people who identify as political Independents (Morin and Neidorf 2007)

While the overall trend has been towards accepting welfare programs, there are still significant demographic and ideological differences in attitudes towards government safety nets. Demographic breakdowns in the Pew study were provided based on the percentages of people who agreed with all three of the following statements: that the government should help more need people, even if the debt increases; guarantee food and shelter for all; and take care of people who can’t care for themselves. Young people between the ages of 18-29 are the most likely to agree with those statements, closely followed by adults between the ages of 50-64. Democrats and Independents are far more likely than Republicans to support those ideals, with only a quarter of Republicans agreeing with all three. Interestingly, income and education were

negatively correlated with the attitude statements; people with only high school diplomas or less, and people in the lowest quartile of household income were far more likely to agree with all three of the statements than people with college education or higher incomes (Morin and Neidorf 2007). This may be due to the fact that people with less education and lower incomes are more likely to utilize the government safety nets in question.

While it may be several years before this survey is revisited, there is evidence to suggest that, since 2007, overall public support for these social programs has diminished. A more recent Pew study suggests that, compared to 2007 and 2009, there has been a ten point decline in the percentage of Americans in 2012 who agree that the government has a responsibility to take care of those who cannot care for themselves. Furthermore, only 43 percent of Americans believe that the government should help more needy people, even if it means going deeper in debt, an 11 percent decrease since 2007 (Pew Research Center 2012). While these numbers are still slightly higher than those reported in the 1990's, it does suggest that these opinions are volatile and should be tapped often.

Generation Y

Every generation of Americans is different from the generation that came before it, and has unique approaches to the social institutions with which it interacts. There is evidence to suggest that generational differences are at least as significant, if not more so, in predicting attitudes towards social and political issues as life stage differences (e.g., Elias, Fullerton, and Simpson 2013; Firebaugh and Davis 1988; Lewis and Gossett 2008). This is to say that, while a person's political and social ideologies may change as they age, there are still significant differences in the way that each generation views the world.

There has been some variation in the operationalization of generations, or birth cohorts. The most recent generation to enter adulthood is Generation Y, also known as “Millennials”. Howe and Strauss, who were the first to use the term “Millennials”, define this generation as anyone born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe and Strauss 2000). The Pew Research Center, in turn, defines Millennials as adults born after the year 1980 (2010). For the purposes of this study, Generation Y will be operationalized as anyone born after 1980 (2010). “Generation X” will be used to describe anyone born between 1965 and 1980, “Baby Boomer” will be used to describe anyone born between 1946 and 1964, and the “Silent Generation” applies to anyone born between 1928 and 1945 (Pew Research Center 2010).

When it comes to political engagement and attitudes towards social issues, Generation Y is distinct among the adult generations. While they are still less politically active than older adults, when compared to 18 to 29 year olds from older cohorts, this cohort has shown much higher levels of political interest and engagement (Leyden and Teixeira 2007; Pew Research Center 2010). Members of Generation Y also have a much different worldview than their parents or grandparents. Generation Y is currently the most likely generation to identify as Democrats (Leyden and Teixeira 2007), although their political affiliation is comparable to young Baby Boomers or members of the Silent Generation (Pew Research Center 2010). Members of Generation Y are also more progressive than their elders; of all the generations currently alive, Generation Y is the most likely to identify as progressive (Halpin and Agne 2009; Leyden and Teixeira 2007; Pew Research Center 2010). They tend to be less critical of the government, more likely to support an activist government, and more liberal on social issues (Pew Research Center 2010). While the extent to which Generation Y supports a safety net is unclear, it is clear that the majority of Generation Y supports government assistance to the poor and that they are the

generation most likely to approve of such aid (Halpin and Agne 2009; Pew Research Center 2010). This support for government aid is strongest among Hispanic and black Millennials, women, and those with at least some college education (Pew Research Center 2010).

There is significant evidence that the attitudes of Generation Y are different from the attitudes of previous cohorts when they were young adults (Leyden and Teixeira 2007, Smith 2009). Considering the fact that Generation Y is the largest generation in American history, and is the most recent generation of Americans to come of age in our democracy, it is important to understand the way they feel about issues of social and political importance. This study aims to fill the gap in current research by exploring the relationship between Generation Y attitudes towards abortion and their attitudes towards government aid for financial stressors. While members of Generation Y are generally more liberal than older adults, it is hypothesized that there will still be a difference between pro-life and pro-choice members of Generation Y when it comes to attitudes towards government spending on welfare programs, with pro-choice attitudes being positively correlated with support for government spending on aid to the poor. And given the relatively recent rise of the consistent life ethic in American culture, it is also hypothesized that young adults will be more supportive of this government spending than older adults.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Data

I use data collected from the 2010 and 2012 General Social Survey (GSS). These data come from in-person interviews of adults in the United States ages 18 and older who are not institutionalized. The GSS surveys a representative portion of the population, so that generalizability from its data is possible. The sample is limited to those adults born between the years of 1980 and 1992 for the first set of analyses, 1980 being the earliest year in which Millennials were born, and 1992 being the latest birth year for adult Millennials eligible to take part in the General Social Survey. The entire sample is used for cohort comparisons.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is attitudes towards government spending on social programs. This attitude is tapped by three questions from the GSS. Each question asks the respondent whether we (as a nation) are spending too little (1), about the right amount (2), or too much (3) on child care, assistance to the poor, and healthcare, respectively. These specific variables were chosen because issues of poverty, healthcare, and access to childcare were frequently cited by women as influential factors in their decision to obtain an abortion (Jones, Finer, and Singh 2010). Each variable's responses is recoded so that 1= "too little", and 0= "about right" and "too much". "Other", "Don't Know" and "Refused" are treated as missing.

Independent Variable

The independent variable is attitudes towards abortion. This attitude is measured by the GSS question that asks the respondent "whether or not [they] think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if the woman wants it for any reason". The possible responses are 1= "yes" and 2= "no". This variable is chosen in place of creating a scale from all

of the abortion-related opinion questions in the GSS since it does a sufficient job of determining a person's attitude towards abortion; it can be reasonably assumed that a person who believes a woman should be able to have an abortion for any reason would be pro-choice, and that a person who disagrees would be pro-life (Gay and Lynxwiler 1999). The variable will be recoded so that 0= pro-life and 1=pro-choice attitudes.

Control Variables

Variables shown to be significant predictors of attitudes towards abortion and government aid programs serve as controls and are identified below.

Race, Gender, and Income

Race and ethnicity are coded using the questions from the GSS about race and Hispanic identity, including respondents who identify as White, African American, and Hispanic. These variables are recoded, with white respondents serving as the reference category and dummy variables representing African American and Hispanic respondents. Gender is recoded, with 1 standing for female respondents and 0 standing for male respondents. Income is measured with a 25-point scale, with 1= "under \$1000" and 25= "\$150000 or over". Education is not controlled for in this study, since a significant portion of the population being studied is still too young to have finished a college degree.

Subjective Religiosity, Political Ideology, Region, and Community Size

Subjective religiosity is measured with the GSS variable asking: "To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?" The responses to this are (1) very religious, (2) moderately religious, (3) slightly religious, and (4) not religious at all. Responses 1 through 4 are used. Political ideology is measured with a seven point scale that ranges from (1) extremely conservative to (7) extremely liberal. A score of (4) on the scale represents moderate political

views. Region of residence is recoded so that 1=South and 0= all other regions. The variable for community size is a scale that ranges from (1) counties having no towns of 10,000 or more to (6) the central city of the twelve largest SMSAs.

Analytic Strategy

Since the independent variable is dichotomous, logistic regression will be used to analyze the relationship between these variables. Two sets of analyses are used to examine the research questions. The first set of analyses examines the effect of attitudes towards legal abortion and control variables on the Generation Y respondents' attitudes towards government spending on social programs. Two models are run for each of the dependent variables. Model I is a bivariate test and only includes the attitudes toward legal abortion dummy variable as the independent variable. Model II includes the control variables. The second set of analyses uses the entire sample. Each of the models include the abortion attitudinal item, the control variables, and dummy variables for Generation X, the Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation. Generation Y serves as the reference category. Thus, the second set of analyses addresses whether cohort differences in attitudes toward legal abortion and social spending are evident.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and proportions of the attitudinal, generational, and sociodemographic variables for the entire sample. Some questions are not asked of every respondent so the sample sizes in Table 1 vary. Table 1 shows that 43.8 percent of the entire sample support the legal right for a woman to have an abortion for any reason. Approximately 28 percent of the sample is from Generation X, 33 percent is from the Baby Boomer generation, 19 percent is from the Silent Generation and the remaining 20 percent is from Generation Y. Just over half of the respondents are female (55.8%).

The average income of the respondents is between \$30,000 and \$40,000 (mean =16.54). Religiosity is measured by a subjective religious questions. Respondents were asked, “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?” The response categories were (1) very religious, (2) moderately religious, (3) slightly religious, and (4) not religious at all. Hence, higher scores indicate less subjective religiousness. The overall mean is 2.42. Fifty three percent of the respondents are married, and 20% are divorced. In regards to residence, 39 percent of respondents live in the South, and the mean for the urban scale is 3.02, indicating that, on average, respondents live in the suburbs of large cities. Finally, approximately 16 percent of the respondents are African American, and 13 percent identify as Hispanic.

Table 1: Descriptives of Independent and Control Variables

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pro-Choice Attitude	2342	0.4385	
Spending on Childcare	3532	0.5068	
Spending on Assistance for Poor	1839	0.6580	
Spending on Healthcare	1847	0.6806	
Generation X	3817	0.2882	
Baby Boomer	3817	0.3343	
Silent Generation	3817	0.1855	
Female	3817	0.5580	
Considers Self Religious	3782	2.42	0.986
Married	3817	0.5337	
Divorced	3817	0.2007	
Income	3817	16.54	5.536
Southern Residence	3817	0.3911	
Urban	3817	3.0186	1.51233
African American	3817	0.1593	
Hispanic	3817	0.1313	
Political Ideology	3663	3.9135	1.45190

Table 2 displays the results of the logistic regression model for Generation Y respondents and shows the regression coefficient, the odds ratio, and the standard error for the independent and control variables. The Chi-square for Model I for the childcare item is not statistically significant. Hence, the abortion attitudinal variable has no effect on attitudes toward spending on child care. The Chi-square for Model II for childcare is statistically significant but shows that the independent variable is still not significant once controls are entered in the model. This model does show that the odds for reporting that the government is spending too little on childcare are higher for women than men. The odds are also higher for African Americans. The only other significant effect is that the odds for Southerners are lower than respondents in other parts of the country.

The Chi-square in Model I for assistance for the poor is not statistically significant. As a result there is no main effect for the independent variable. Once the controls are added in Model II, the Chi-square and the independent variable become significant. The model shows that the odds of reporting that the government is spending too little on assistance to the poor is higher for married people than never married people. The odds of reporting this are also higher for African Americans.

The Chi-square in Model I for spending on healthcare is not statistically significant. Thus, the attitudinal variable about abortion has no significant effect on attitudes towards healthcare spending. When the controls are added in Model II, the Chi-square becomes significant. However, the independent variable in Model II remains statistically insignificant. The only significant effect shown in this model is that having a strong sense of subjective religiosity increases the odds of reporting that the government is not spending enough money on healthcare.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Results: Effects of Abortion Attitudes and Covariates on Attitudes Toward Social Spending

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	Childcare		Assistance to the Poor		Healthcare	
	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II
Pro-Choice Attitude	.121/1.129 (.189)	.074/1.076 (.208)	-.303/.739 (.279)	.735/.479 * (.349)	.487/1.627 (.269)	.298/1.347 (.305)
Female		.421/1.524* (.204)		.455/1.576 (.318)		.196/1.217 (0.293)
Considers Self Religious		.140/1.151 (.114)		.009/1.009 (.174)		.307/1.359 * (.157)
Married		.178/1.195 (.240)		.757/.469 * (.362)		-.067/.935 (.337)
Divorced		.039/.962 (.433)		.186/1.204 (.653)		.721/2.057 (.640)
Income		-.025/.976 (.018)		.000/1.000 (0.030)		-.003/.997 (.026)
Southern Residence		-.523/.593 * (.214)		-.128/.880 (.333)		-.161/.852 (.304)
Urban		.109/1.115 (.067)		.075/1.078 (.105)		.110/1.116 (.096)
African American		.768/2.156 ** (.295)		2.391/10.925 ** (.781)		.304/1.355 (.429)
Hispanic		-.001/.999 (.261)		.374/1.453 (.408)		-.494/.610 (.360)
Political Ideology		.055/.946 (.074)		.202/1.224 (.122)		-.112/.894 (.103)
N	462	445	241	230	241	229
Chi-Square	0.412	24.514	1.178	33.145	3.304	12.623
Cox & Snell R²	0.001	0.054	0.005	0.134	0.014	0.054
Note: Cell entries are given as logistic regression coefficient/odds ratio with the standard error given in parenthesis						
* p < .05 **p < .01						

Table 3 displays the logistic regression results for the full sample and includes the independent variable, control variables, and three dummy variables for Generation X, the Baby Boom cohort and the Silent Generation. The Chi-square for the model on assistance for childcare is statistically significant, . There is a difference between members of Generation Y and members of the Silent Generation; the odds of reporting that the government does not spend enough money on assistance for childcare is higher for members of Generation Y. Income and political ideology are also significant; higher incomes decrease the odds of reporting that the government spends too little on childcare, while a liberal political ideology increases the odds of reporting this. The odds are also higher for women and African Americans.

The Chi-square for the model on assistance to the poor is statistically significant, although the independent variable is not. Hence, there is no difference between members of Generation Y and older cohorts in the odds of reporting that the government spends too little on assistance to the poor. The odds of reporting this are higher for women than men, black respondents than white respondents, and Hispanic respondents than non-Hispanics. The odds of reporting this are lower, however, among married people than unmarried people. Religiosity, political ideology, and income also have significant effects; strong subjective religiosity and higher incomes lower the odds of reporting that the government spends too little on assistance to the poor, while having a liberal political ideology increases the odds of reporting this.

Lastly, the Chi-square for the model on government spending for healthcare is also statistically significant, while the independent variable is not. The odds of reporting that the government does not spend enough on healthcare is higher for women than men, and higher for African Americans than white respondents. The odds of this response are also higher for those

living in the South than in other areas of the country, decrease as income increases, and increase as the political ideology scale increases.

One last series of models are used to examine whether any effect of attitudes toward legal abortion vary by cohort. Three interaction terms are created between cohort membership and the abortion attitude independent variable. The results do not change once these interaction terms are included in the full models and the interaction terms are not statistically significant. As a result, there is no differential impact of attitudes toward legal abortion and the three dependent variables. Since, there is no change, the results are not displayed.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Results: Effects of Abortion Attitudes, Generational Cohort, and Covariates on Social Spending Attitudes

	Assistance For Childcare	Assistance to the Poor	Assistance for Healthcare
Independent Variable	Model I	Model I	Model I
Pro-Choice Attitude	.006/1.006	-.193/.824	-.133/.876
	(.146)	(.227)	(.210)
Generation X	-.101	-0.156	-0.148
	.021/1.022	.369/1.446	.359/1.431
	(.146)	(.227)	(.210)
Baby Boomer	-.099/.906	.322/1.379	.357/1.429
	(.149)	(.229)	(.213)
Silent Generation	-.358/.699 *	-.027/.974	-.081/.922
	(.177)	(.260)	(.246)
Female	.240/1.271 **	.440/1.552 **	.467/1.596 **
	(.093)	(.139)	(.133)
Considers Self Religious	.046/1.047	-.175/.840 *	.138/1.148
	(.052)	(.078)	(.075)
Married	.066/1.069	-.643/.526 **	-.136/.873
	(.135)	(.215)	(.194)
Divorced	.268/1.308	-.358/.699	.192/1.211
	(.152)	(.245)	(.244)
Income	-.033/.967 **	-.053/.948 **	-.034/.966 *
	(.009)	(.015)	(.016)
Southern Residence	.019/1.020	.123/1.131	.273/1.314 *
	(.097)	(.147)	(.140)
Urban	-.025/.976	-.012/.988	.030/1.030
	(.032)	(.049)	(.046)
African American	.820/2.270 **	1.037/2.821 **	.574/1.775 **
	(.142)	(.256)	(.215)
Hispanic	.239/1.270	.487/1.627 *	-.348/.706
	(.144)	(.232)	(.208)
Political Ideology	.201/1.222 **	.356/1.428 **	.332/1.394 **
	(.034)	(.056)	(.052)
N	2080	1089	1098
Chi-Square	143.634	147.248	113.179
Cox & Snell R²	0.067	0.126	0.098
	Note: Cell entries are given as logistic regression coefficient/odds ratio with the standard error given in parenthesis		
	* p < .05 **p < .01		

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to see how young pro-lifers feel about social issues, as compared to young pro-choicers. This study was to determine whether or not the concept of “pro-life progressivism” had permeated the culture of Generation Y enough to have a significant effect on their attitudes. The results of this study suggest that abortion attitudes do not have a significant effect on Generation Y attitudes towards government spending on healthcare and childcare. Furthermore, with one exception, the attitudes of pro-life members of Generation Y are not significantly different from the attitudes of older cohorts. One possible explanation for this is that the concept of pro-life progressivism may be becoming more appealing for Americans of all ages. This study presumed that pro-life progressivism would be more popular among young Americans, but that may not be the case.

Rather than abortion attitudes, the data do suggest that there are other factors that are more influential in determining a person’s attitudes towards government spending on social programs. The strongest socioeconomic predictors of attitudes towards social spending are gender, race, income, and political ideology. These factors are strongest when you examine intergenerational attitudes, since the statistical between attitudes within Generation Y are almost nonexistent. The fact that sociodemographic factors have such a strong effect on attitudes in the intergenerational population, and not within Generation Y, could suggest that, despite the similarity of pro-lifer attitudes across generations, pro-lifers and pro-choicers within Generation Y are abnormally similar in their approach to social spending. This could mean that, even if pro-life progressivism is becoming more common for all generations, that its effect is strongest among members of Generation Y. It could also mean that social spending is an important enough

issue for members of Generation Y that support for it unites people of otherwise differing political ideologies. Furthermore, these socioeconomic differences tend to be consistent with the existing literature. The number of statistically significant sociodemographic variables within the pro-life population suggests that opposition to abortion does not uniformly predict attitudes about other social issues.

This study does have some limitations. This study attempts to study pro-life progressivism, but since the GSS is the source of data, the study can only explore questions that are predefined in the survey. The upside to this is that using the GSS gives this study national generalizability and a large sample size. Future research should involve qualitative interviews, particularly of people who identify as pro-life, to see the extent to which the “womb to tomb” philosophy affects their approach to social issues.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abramowitz, Alan I. 1995. "It's abortion, stupid: Policy voting in the 1992 presidential election." *The Journal of Politics* 57(1): 176-186.
- Adams, Greg D. 1997. "Abortion: Evidence of an issue evolution." *American Journal of Political Science*: 718-737.
- Bankole A, Singh, S and Haas T. 1998. "Reasons why women have induced abortions: evidence from 27 countries." *International Family Planning Perspectives* 24(3):117–127.
- Becker, G. S., & Murphy, K. M. (2000). *Social Economics: Market Behavior in a Social Environment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Biggs, Antonia M, Heather Gould, and Diana Greene Foster. 2013. "Understanding Why Women Seek Abortions in the US." *BMC Women's Health* 13(1):1-13.
- Bogges, Scott, and Carolyn Bradner. 2000. "Trends in adolescent males' abortion attitudes, 1988-1995: differences by race and ethnicity." *Family Planning Perspectives* 32: 118-123.
- Bolzendahl, Catherine and Daniel J. Myers. 2004. "Feminist Attitudes and Support for Gender Equality: Opinion Change in Women and Men, 1974-1998." *Social Forces* 83(2):759-89.
- Carmines, Edward G., Jessica C. Gerrity, and Michael W. Wagner. 2010. "How Abortion Became a Partisan Issue: Media Coverage of the Interest Group- Political Party Connection." *Politics & Policy* 38 (6): 1135-1158.
- Carter, J. Scott, Shannon K. Carter, and Jamie Dodge. 2009. "Trends in Abortion Attitudes by Race and Gender: A Reassessment Over a Four Decade Period." *Journal of Sociological Research* 1(1).
- Cook, Elizabeth Adell, Ted G. Jelen, and Clyde Wilcox. 1992. *Between Two Absolutes: Public Opinion and the Politics of Abortion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Cook, Elizabeth Adell, Ted G. Jelen, and Clyde Wilcox. 1993. "Generational Differences in Attitudes Toward Abortion." *American Politics Research* 21(1):31-53.
- Cook, Fay Lomax. 1979. *Who Should Be Helped? Public Support for Social Services*. Sage
- Craig, Barbara and David O'Brien. 1993. *Abortion and American Politics*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers.

Elias, Vicky L, Andrew S Fullerton, and Joseph M Simpson. 2013. "Long-Term Changes in Attitudes Toward Premarital Sex in the United States: Reexamining the Role of Cohort Replacement." *Journal Of Sex Research* MEDLINE, EBSCOhost.

Faria, Geraldine, Elwin Barrett, and Linnea Meany Goodman. 1985. "Women and Abortion: Attitudes, Social Networks, Decision-Making." *Social Work in Health Care* 11(1):85-99

Feagin, Joe R. 1975. *Subordinating the Poor: Welfare and American Beliefs*. Prentice-Hall.

Fine, T.S. 2006. "Generations, Feminist Beliefs, and Abortion Rights Support." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 7:126-41.

Finer, Lawrence B., Lori F. Frohworth, Lindsay A. Dauphinee, Susheela Singh, and Ann M. Moore. 2007. "Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 37(3):110-18.

Firebaugh, Glenn and Kenneth E. Davis. 1988. "Trends in Antiblack Prejudice, 1972-1984: Region and Cohort Effects." *American Journal of Sociology* 94(2):251-72.

Fuechtmann, Thomas G., ed. 1988. *Consistent Ethic of Life*. Chicago: Sheed & Ward.

Gauthier, Anne H. 2007. "The Impact of Family Policies on Fertility in Industrialized Countries: a Review of the Literature." *Population Research and Policy Review* 26(3):323-46.

Gay, David and John Lynxwiler. 1999. "The Impact of Religiosity on Race Variations in Abortion Attitudes." *Sociological Spectrum* 19:359-77.

Gilens, Martin. 2009. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Granberg, Donald, and Beth Wellman Granberg. 1980. "Abortion attitudes, 1965-1980: Trends and determinants." *Family Planning Perspectives* 12(5): 250-261.

Hall, Elaine J., and Myra Marx Ferree. 1986. "Race Differences in Abortion Attitudes." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50(2):193-207.

Halpin, John and Karl Agne. 2009. "The Political Ideology of the Millennial Generation." *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved October 13, 2013.

Hertel, Bradley R., and Mark C. Russell. 1999. "Examining the absence of a gender effect on abortion attitudes: is there really no difference?." *Sociological inquiry* 69 (3): 364-381.

Howe, Neil and William Strauss. 2009. *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation*. New York: Knopf Doubleday.

- Hussey, Laura S. 2011. "Is Welfare Pro-Life? Assistance Programs, Abortion, and the Moderating Role of States." *Social Service Review* 85(1):75-107).
- Jelen, Ted G., David F. Damore, and Thomas Lamatsch. 2002. "Gender, employment status, and abortion: A longitudinal analysis." *Sex roles* 47(7-8): 321-330.
- Jelen, Ted G. and Clyde Wilcox. 2003. "Causes and Consequences of Public Attitudes Toward Abortion: A Review and Research Agenda." *Political Research Quarterly* 56(4):489-500.
- Jones, Rachel K., Jacqueline E. Darroch, and Stanley K. Henshaw. 2002. "Patterns in the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortion in 2000–2001." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 34(5):226–35.
- Jones, Rachel K., Lawrence B. Finer, and Susheela Singh. 2010. "Characteristics of US Abortion Patients, 2008." *New York: Guttmacher Institute*.
- Jones, Rachel K., Lori F. Frowith, and Ann M. Moore. 2008. "I Would Want to Give My Child, Like, Everything in the World: How Issues of Motherhood Influence Women Who Have Abortions." *Journal of Family Issues* 29(1):79-99.
- Kenny, Christopher. 1993. "Social Influence and Opinion on Abortion." *Social Science Quarterly* 74(3):560-74.
- Kirkman, Maggie, Heather Rowe, Annarella Hardiman, Shelley Mallett, and Doreen Rosenthal. 2009. "Reasons Women Give for Abortion: A Review of the Literature." *Archives of Women's Mental Health* 12(6):365-78.
- Ladd, Everret Carl and Karlyn Bowman. 1997. *Public Opinion About Abortion*. Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press.
- Lewis, Gregory B. and Charles W. Gossett. 2008. "Changing Public Opinion on Same-Sex Marriage: The Case of California." *Politics and Policy* 36:4-30.
- Leyden, Peter and Ruy Teixeira. 2007. "The Progressive Politics of the Millennial Generation." New Politics Institute. Retrieved October 11, 2013.
- Luker, Kristin. 1984. *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Berkeley: University of California.
- McFarland, Michael J., Bradley R. E. Wright, and David L. Weakliem. 2011. "Educational Attainment and Religiosity: Exploring Variations By Religious Tradition." *Sociology of Religion* 72(2)166-188.

Millennials: A Portrait of a Generation Next: Confident, Connected, Open to Change. 2011. Pew Research Center.

Misra, Ranjita, and Steven Hohman. 2000. "Trends in Abortion Attitude Among Young Adults: 1977-1993." *American Journal of Health Studies* 16(2): 85-98.

Morin, Richard and Shawn Neidorf. 2007. "Surge in Support for Social Safety Net." Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C.

Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Perl, Paul and Jamie S. McClintock. 2001. "The Catholic Consistent Life Ethic" and Attitudes Toward Capital Punishment and Welfare Reform." *Sociology of Religion* 62(3):275-299.

Pew Research Center. 2010. *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. 2012. "Partisan Polarization Surges in Bush, Obama Years." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

Rindfuss, R. R., & Brewster, K. L. 1996. "Childbearing and Fertility." *Population and Development Review* 22: 258-289

Sahar, Gail and Kaori Karasawa. 2005. "Is the Personal Always Political? A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Abortion Attitudes." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 27(4):285-96.

Secret, Philip. 1987. "The Impact of Region on Racial Differences in Attitudes Towards Legal Abortion." *Journal of Black Studies* 17(3):347-69.

Simien, Evelyn and Rosalee Clawson. 2004. "The Intersection of Race and Gender: An Examination of Black Feminist Consciousness, Race Consciousness, and Policy Attitudes." *Social Science Quarterly* 85(3):793-810.

Smith, Christian. 2009. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. New York City: Oxford University Press.

Strickler, Jennifer and Nicholas L. Danigelis. 2002. "Changing Frameworks in Attitudes Toward Abortion." *Sociological Forum* 17(2):187-201.

Torres Aida and Jacqueline Darroch Forrest. 1988. "Why Do Women Have Abortions?" *Family Planning Perspectives* 20(4):169-176.

Unnever, James D., John P. Bartkowski, and Francis T. Cullen. 2010. "God Imagery and Opposition to Abortion and Capital Punishment: A Partial Test of Religious Support for the Consistent Life Ethic." *Sociology of Religion* 71(3):307-322.

Vestermark V, Petersen FV and Asping UI. 1990. "Reasons for Choosing Legal Abortion (in Danish)." *Ugeskrift for Laeger* 152(31)2306-2309.

Wang, Guang-zhen, and M. D. Buffalo. 2004. "Social and cultural determinants of attitudes toward abortion: A test of Reiss' hypotheses." *The Social Science Journal* 41(1): 93-105.

Wilcox, Clyde. 1992. "Race, Religion, Region, and Abortion Attitudes." *Sociological Analysis* 53(1):97-105.