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Gender Differences in Attitude Toward Abortion in the Case of Rape

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Abstract

I used feminist theory to analyze gender differences in response to “should a woman be allowed to obtain an abortion in the case of rape?”. I utilized the General Social Survey ($N = 1824$) data. I considered the role of gender, marital status, socioeconomic status, and level of education in shaping abortion attitudes. I used chi-squared/logistic regression to analyze the data, finding that gender was not a significant factor in whether an individual approves of abortion in the case of rape. Married individuals were less likely to indicate support, and as level of education increased, individuals were more likely to indicate support. Socioeconomic status was not found to be a statistically significant indicator of approval.

Methods

I utilized data from the general social survey, a national data set provided to social scientists by the University of Chicago. Respondents are individuals 18 and over, selected to create a nationally representative sample.

The dataset utilized was from a survey conducted in 2016, asking the question “Should a woman be allowed to obtain an abortion in the case of rape?”. The answers were coded *yes* and *no*. Analysis techniques included frequencies, crosstabs, and logistic regression.

Results

The sample size for this study included 647 men ($N = 647$) and 761 women ($N = 761$), with a total of 1408 respondents ($N = 1408$). When responding to the question “Should a woman be allowed to obtain an abortion in the case of rape?”, 79% of men and 75% of women answered yes (see table one). There was no significant difference in response.

Table 1: Gendered Attitudes

			Respondents sex		Total
			MALE	FEMALE	
Pregnant as result of rape	YES	Count	647	761	1408
		% within Respondents sex	79.0%	75.7%	77.2%
	NO	Count	172	244	416
		% within Respondents sex	21.0%	24.3%	22.8%
Total		Count	819	1005	1824
		% within Respondents sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$$X^2=2.753, df=1, p=.104$$

Table 2: Control Variables

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.
Step 1 ^a	Marital status			17.085	4	.002
	Marital status(1)	.518	.168	9.463	1	.002
	Marital status(2)	-.020	.305	.004	1	.947
	Marital status(3)	.047	.218	.046	1	.830
	Marital status(4)	.432	.332	1.693	1	.193
	R's highest degree	-.318	.055	33.578	1	.000
	Respondents sex	.214	.117	3.316	1	.069
	Subjective class identification	-.167	.094	3.167	1	.075
	Age of respondent	.010	.004	5.715	1	.017
	Constant	-1.438	.314	20.989	1	.000

Logistic Regression

Among the control variables, marital status was a significant predictor in response, with married individuals being less likely to be supportive. Widowed individuals were also less likely to be supportive. Highest degree of education was also significant, as the level of education got higher, the more likely an individual was to be supportive. Subjective class identification was approaching significance.

Conclusions

I predicted women would be more supportive of abortion in the case of rape, but my analysis showed no significant difference in men and women’s answers. It is possible men see abortion as a symbolic act, where it is more salient for women, which would influence women’s attitudes toward abortion. Marital status was a significant indicator of reduced support of abortion in the case of rape. Those with higher education backgrounds were more likely to show support. Socioeconomic status was not a significant indicator of support. These results show there are sociodemographic differences that affect worldview and, subsequently, attitudes toward abortion in the case of rape.

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		Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Marital status	
	Marital status(1)	1.678
	Marital status(2)	.980
	Marital status(3)	1.048
	Marital status(4)	1.541
	R's highest degree	.728
	Respondents sex	1.238
	Subjective class identification	.846
	Age of respondent	1.010
	Constant	.237