

Student Academic Showcase Abstract

Post Roe v. Wade: Evaluation of Abortion Attitudes

Justice Jones and Rumbi Chisango

Shortened 150 word Abstract

With the recent overturning of Roe v Wade, abortion is at the forefront of many political discussions. This study aims to investigate how exposure to a politically charged topic (abortion) versus a general health topic (Cancer) affects a person's bias and social identity. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: abortion or cancer and then completed measures on collective self-esteem, global self-esteem, Conservatism, in-group bias, and demographics. The younger group rated republicans more favourable ($t(198) = 2.48, p < .01$), had less abortion knowledge ($t(103) = -2.51, p < .01$), and were higher in core conservatism ($t(200) = 2.9, p < .01$) compared to the older group. Republicans (in a forced choice question) rated themselves higher and democrats lower, were higher in conservatism, but were lower in prochoice attitudes, abortion knowledge, all p 's $< .001$). There were no significant differences in conservatism, pro-choice attitudes, and political bias when comparing states with legal abortion access versus illegal abortion laws.

Full Abstract

With the recent overturning of Roe v Wade, abortion is at the forefront of many political discussions. This study aims to investigate how exposure to a politically charged topic (abortion) versus a general health topic (Cancer) affects a person's bias and social identity. Robinson and colleagues (1995) found that after exposure to political topics, people thought the political views of the out-group were more extreme than those of the in-group. Cohen and colleagues (2007) found that people who felt that their beliefs were being challenged were less willing to compromise in negotiations. Addressing a person's views about abortion might make them feel threatened and therefore polarized in their assessment of the opposing party. This study will also examine if political topics threaten social identity in different age cohorts.

Method

Our sample ($N = 219$) identified predominantly as white (82%), female (55%), heterosexual (55%), and as a Democrat/Liberal (77%). The average age was 28.9 ($SD = 10.3$). The participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: abortion or cancer. The cancer knowledge test (Klein et al., 2022) was chosen as a "control" condition as it is within healthcare and is not known to be politically divisive. The abortion knowledge scale (Mollen et al., 2018) was chosen because it may provoke a threat. Participants received immediate feedback on the correct responses on the respective knowledge scales. Following, all participants responded to questions on collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), global self-esteem (Rajlic, 2019), Conservatism (Solomon & Harvey, 2014), in-group bias (Houston & Andreopoulou, 2003), and demographics.

Results and Conclusion

For the purpose of this presentation, we will be sharing the analyses from the abortion condition. We found a few interesting findings:

1. We did a median split on age to create 2 groups (n= 105, 26 or below; n= 98, 27 and above). **The younger group rated republicans more favourable** ($t(198) = 2.48, p < .01$), **had less abortion knowledge** ($t(103) = -2.51, p < .01$), and **were higher in core conservatism** ($t(200) = 2.9, p < .01$) compared to the older group.
2. We also found, as expected, that **republicans (in a forced choice question) rated themselves higher and democrats lower, were higher in conservatism, but were lower in prochoice attitudes, abortion knowledge, all p's < .001).** and collective self-esteem ($p < .05$).
3. We coded the states that participants lived in on legal vs illegal access to abortion care. We then re-analysed our data to see if there were any differences in conservatism, abortion knowledge, and republican/democratic bias between states that were legal vs. Illegal. There were no significant differences however pro-choice attitudes and abortion knowledge were higher in illegal states. These findings could be due to unequal sub-groups sizes.

Discussion/Implications

We were most surprised by the age differences in conservatism, and also that not all our predictions came true, which is why we do research.