

# The Pro-Choice Republican's Political Right to Life

Sarah Bender

Undergraduate Honors Thesis  
Sanford School of Public Policy

Duke University  
Durham, North Carolina

2016

**Abstract**

Abortion has evolved into a highly partisan issue that now defines both the Republican and Democratic parties. Though it remains a salient political issue, it is unclear how abortion affects vote choice in contemporary elections. This thesis examines the relationship between state legislative candidates' abortion positions and their electoral outcomes. Specifically, it examines whether candidates who deviate from their national political party's abortion position – pro-choice Republicans and pro-life Democrats – have better or worse electoral outcomes than those who do not. Using data from the 2012 and 2014 National Candidate Studies ( $n = 1,907; 1,869$ ), I constructed a series of multiple logistic regression models to determine how candidates' abortion beliefs impacted their electoral outcomes at both the primary and general election levels for those years. I also interviewed a number of relevant political actors in order to better understand and contextualize my quantitative analysis. Though the regression results were somewhat inconsistent, my findings indicated that abortion does have some effect on vote choice, particularly at the primary level. These results suggest that candidates who deviate from their national party's abortion position are somewhat less likely to be elected.

## I. Introduction

Today, the perception that the Republican Party is pro-life while the Democratic Party is pro-choice is almost universally understood as a given. However, this was not always the case. Despite the saliency of the issue post-*Roe v. Wade*, which in 1973 asserted a woman's constitutional right to terminate her pregnancy, neither party began to define a clear stance on abortion until 1980.

Abortion has since evolved into a highly partisan issue that now characterizes and distinguishes both the Republican and Democratic platforms. The 2000 Republican Platform asserted that unborn children have a "fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed," and calls for a constitutional ban on abortion (The American Presidency Project 2000b), while the Democratic Platform from the same election year expressed unequivocal support for "the right of every woman to choose," and asserted that abortion is a fundamental constitutional liberty (The American Presidency Project 2000a). Similar statements and themes regarding abortion policy have been reflected in both parties' platforms in subsequent years (The American Presidency Project 2004a; 2004b; 2008a; 2008b; 2012a; 2012b).

Though the courts play a critical role in determining abortion policy, abortion remains a salient issue both in the legislature and in campaigns and elections. It has again emerged as an important issue in Congress and in the upcoming 2016 presidential race after an anti-abortion group released a series of sting videos targeting Planned Parenthood over the summer of 2015. In the months since, policymakers at both the state and national levels have attempted to defund the organization, which provides abortion and reproductive health care services, and to pass various measures limiting abortion access.

Importantly, evidence indicates that abortion has the power to determine voters' decision-making and to influence electoral outcomes regardless of one's political party and ideology (Pew Research Center 2012). As evidenced by Figure 1, the percentage of voters who feel that candidates must share their abortion views has been steadily increasing over the last several decades, spiking to nearly 20% in 2014. In the same election year, the percent of voters who said that abortion was *not* a major factor in determining their vote for major offices dropped dramatically, from about 35% of voters to nearly 25%.

Given the tremendous and enduring influence of abortion on American politics, it is critical to understand how the issue influences campaigns, elections, and politicians. Though past research indicates that abortion attitudes can influence vote choice (Pew Research Center 2012, Abramowitz 1995, Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994a, Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994b), little research has, in a contemporary context, examined how abortion affects elections or vote choice. This study will examine whether state legislative candidates' abortion policy positions affect their electoral outcomes, paying particular attention to candidates whose abortion policy positions deviate from their party norm (i.e. pro-life Democrats and pro-choice Republicans). Because existing scholarship has stopped short of investigating this topic, it is unclear whether such candidates have similar, better, or worse electoral outcomes than those whose abortion positions follow their party's norms. Regardless of the outcome, an updated evaluation of how abortion affects elections is needed.

## Literature Review

The growing polarization of abortion attitudes is also reflected by diverging public opinion about the issue. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Americans had remarkably similar outlooks on abortion across party lines (Saad 2010). Since the 1990s, however, Republicans' and Democrats' views on abortion have become increasingly polarized (Saad 2010). Though the majority of both Democrats and Republicans have consistently favored legal abortion "only under certain circumstances", more and more Republicans have adopted the most extreme pro-life position of making abortion "illegal in all circumstances" (see Figure 2). The reverse pattern is also true among Democrats, who have increasingly supported legalizing abortion in all circumstances (see Figure 3).

The gap between Democrats and Republicans has been growing over time (see Figure 4). While most Democrats have always identified as pro-choice and most Republicans have not, the two parties have become increasingly polarized across these traditional lines, jumping from a difference of roughly 25 percentage points in 2001 to almost 40 in 2015 (Saad 2014).

Abortion is a clear example of a so-called "easy issue" (Carmines, Gerrity, and Wagner 2010; Carmines and Stimson 1980; Carmines and Stimson 1989). Defined by their long-standing presence on the political agenda and their strong symbolic and emotional elements, easy issues are those that are simple for voters to understand and develop an opinion about (Carmines and Stimson 1980; Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994a; Adams 1997). As a result, they are likely to result in issue voting, which occurs when voters cast their vote based on their views about a specific political issue.

Not only do these issues have the ability to influence electoral outcomes and candidate choice, but they also have the potential to undergo an issue evolution (Adams 1997; Carmines,

Gerrity, and Wagner 2010; Carmines and Stimson 1980; Carmines and Stimson 1989). That is, they have the ability to become politically salient enough to create an enduring transformation in the overall political environment. According to the issue evolution theory, this transformation of the abortion issue is one that began among party elites before eventually shaping the abortion attitudes and party identification of the masses. That is, as each party's stance towards abortion has grown clearer and more distinct at the elite-level, voters have gradually responded by changing their party identification in a manner consistent with their abortion attitudes, resulting in mass-level changes (Adams 1997; Carmines and Woods 2002). As a result, abortion has evolved from a matter that had, historically, divided the rich and secular from the uneducated and religious into one that now divides partisans and defines and differentiates our national parties (Killian and Wilcox 2008; Adams 1997; Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994a; Carmines, Gerrity, and Wagner 2010). This evolution has resulted in today's extreme polarization of abortion attitudes across party lines among both policymakers and voters.

In some ways, the U.S. Supreme Court has superseded the legislature as the ultimate determinant of abortion policy. The high court has delivered multiple decisions defending a woman's right to choose. In addition to *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court has issued decisions upholding this right and limiting states' ability to regulate abortions in *Planned Parenthood v. Danforth*, *Hodgson v. Minnesota*, and *Stenberg v. Carhart*. However, it has also overturned some elements of these decisions in other cases. In *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, the court upheld Missouri's ban on the use of public facilities and public health employees to perform abortions and the state's requirement that doctors test for viability of a fetus starting at 24 weeks of gestation. Similarly, in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the Supreme Court ruled that states could regulate abortions in order to protect the health of the woman and could outlaw abortions of

“viable” fetuses. Most recently, in 2007, it upheld a federal law banning “partial birth abortion” in *Gonzalez v. Carhart* and *Gonzalez v. Planned Parenthood Federation of America*<sup>1</sup>.

Though these court cases have established a set of basic protections for women seeking abortions, states have adopted a wide range of restrictions on whether, when, and under what circumstances a woman can obtain an abortion. This web of abortion laws includes physician and hospital requirements, gestational limits, bans on public funding, restrictions on insurance coverage, waiting periods, state-mandated counseling, and parental consent requirements for minors seeking abortions. As of November 1, 2015, 43 states prohibit abortions after a specific point in pregnancy (usually fetal viability), except when necessary to protect the woman’s life or health (Guttmacher Institute 2015). At least 32 states and the District of Columbia prohibit the use of public funds for abortion except in cases where the woman’s life is in danger or the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest (Guttmacher Institute 2015). Seventeen states mandate that women receive counseling before an abortion – five of these require that this counseling include information on the alleged link between abortion and breast cancer, twelve require the inclusion of information about the ability of a fetus to feel pain, and seven require warnings about the long-term mental health consequences for the woman (Guttmacher Institute 2015). In addition, 28 states require women seeking abortions to wait a specified period of time (usually 24 hours) between when she receives counseling and when the procedure is performed (Guttmacher Institute 2015). Advocates of these laws contend that, in addition to protecting fetuses, these policies also protect women from unsafe medical practices and exploitation. Critics, on the other hand, argue that these laws are solely geared towards restricting abortion access and only put women at increased medical risk. Many contend that these laws also disproportionately affect

---

<sup>1</sup> Medically known as *intact dilation and extraction* (IDX), partial birth abortion is a method of late-term abortion typically performed between weeks 19 and 26 of pregnancy that results in the death and intact removal of a fetus from the uterus. This procedure has been illegal in the U.S. since late 2008.

low-income women, particularly those who have to travel far distances to reach an abortion clinic.

Given the issue's saliency at the state level, state legislative candidates undoubtedly experience at least some degree of pressure to follow their national party's platform on reproductive issues. As evidenced by increasing partisan cohesion on abortion policy in Congress since 1976, most politicians do seem to follow party norms on abortion policy (Jaenicke 2002). However, some candidates do deviate from the positions of their national parties, either as pro-life Democratic candidates or pro-choice Republican candidates. Though those who deviate from party norms are often viewed as being politically courageous, it is unclear whether deviating from party norms on abortion actually hurts, helps, or has any effect at all on candidates' electoral outcomes. Though at first glance it seems intuitive to assume that such candidates would be disadvantaged by their abortion views, growing polarization between the two parties' abortion positions may cause voters to pay more attention to the national party's abortion position than to individual candidates' views. At the time of this study, no research has specifically examined how voters respond to candidates whose social policy positions reverse those of their national parties.

Research has provided evidence for issue voting on abortion in both national and subnational elections. In a study of the 1992 Presidential Election, abortion was found to have a stronger influence on voter decision-making than any other policy including the state of the economy, particularly among voters for whom abortion was a salient issue (Abramowitz 1995). Similarly, a study of gubernatorial elections found that abortion had a greater impact on vote choice than state economic conditions in eight of the ten states included and, in another state, was an even stronger predictor than partisanship (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994a). A study of the 1990 U.S. Senate elections found that attitudes toward abortion had an independent effect on vote



choice in a number of states, indicating that the issue could potentially determine the outcomes of close Senate elections (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994b).

Not all studies of abortion attitudes and electoral choice have indicated such a strong connection. A study of the 1990 Louisiana governor's race found that the influence of abortion depended on specific electoral and contextual circumstances (Howell and Sims 1993). Similarly, studies of the 1980 and 1984 Presidential and Congressional elections found that abortion had little influence on candidate choice (Granberg 1987; Granberg and Burlison 1983). However, given that these studies examined different election cycles in different election years than the other studies included in this literature review, their findings do not necessarily contradict literature that does provide evidence for issue voting. It is instead possible that abortion was more or less salient in certain regions or in certain election years, resulting in this disparity.

Research has also indicated that abortion attitudes influence the strength of partisan attachments and can even result in party switching (Killian and Wilcox 2008; Carsey and Layman 2006). One study found that abortion influenced people's party identification, pushing those with divergent abortion attitudes towards the political party with similar abortion positions and causing some to switch parties over time (Killian and Wilcox 2008). Interestingly, pro-life Democrats were significantly more likely to become Republicans than other Democrats, while pro-choice Republicans were less likely to become Democrats in the short-term (Killian and Wilcox 2008). These results fit the conventional assumption that abortion is a more salient issue to pro-life voters than it is to those who identify as pro-choice. However, it may also indicate that for some reason Republicans felt more comfortable deviating from their national party's abortion position than Democrats. However, the same study found that abortion attitudes move partisanship in both directions over the longer term (Killian and Wilcox 2008). These findings confirmed a previous

study's findings that abortion attitudes resulted in changes in partisanship along the traditional 7-point National Election Studies scale, which measures the strength of one's party identification (Carsey and Layman 2006). It also provides convincing evidence of an issue evolution in which voters are effectively 'sorted' into across party lines based on their abortion positions (Carsey and Layman 2006).

Unfortunately, research on the relationship between abortion attitudes and candidate choice is quite limited. Much of the existing research is at least twenty years old and there are no studies examining the influence of abortion attitudes on candidate choice or electoral outcomes for elections in the 21st century. In addition, little research exists about how abortion affects candidates at the primary election level. This is important, as abortion might have the most significant effect on elections by influencing candidate selection. Existing research does little to examine these effects. Furthermore and as previously discussed, there is no research examining how candidates who deviate from their party norm on abortion fare in elections, nor how candidates who deviate from their party on other highly partisan policy issues are affected by such views. As noted by Cook et al. (1994b), examining such candidates and their electoral outcomes would fill a critical gap in abortion policy research. This study will attempt to fill this gap and will provide further insight into the role that abortion plays on contemporary politics and elections.

### Hypotheses and Observable Implications

This study examines whether candidates' abortion policy positions affect their electoral outcomes at both the general and primary election levels. Though past research has shown that abortion attitudes can influence vote choice (Abramowitz 1995; Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994a; Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994b), I expect that both Republican and Democratic candidates whose abortion policy positions deviate from their party norms will be equally likely to be elected in than candidates who follow their party norms. This does not mean that abortion does not influence vote choice. However, given today's sharp partisan divide on abortion policy, I expect that voters will associate abortion policy more closely with a candidates' party affiliation than with the individual candidates' stated or demonstrated stance on abortion. Therefore, the abortion issue could shape voters' party preferences in a way that trumps evaluation of individual candidates' stances, guiding which party an individual votes for regardless of the candidate's position. If there are any differences in electoral outcomes, I expect to see them most primary level, when voters are deciding between candidates of the same party. As a result, voters must evaluate candidates as individuals rather than as representatives of either national party.

## II. Methods and Data

### Methods

To answer my research question, I used data from the 2012 and 2014 National Candidate Study to examine the electoral outcomes of state legislative candidates running for office in these election years. I did this by comparing the electoral outcomes of candidates who deviate from their party norms on the abortion issue with those of candidates whose positions correspond with their national parties through a series of multivariate logistic regression models. That is, I examined whether pro-choice Republicans are more or less likely to be elected than pro-life Republicans and whether pro-life Democrats are more or less likely to be elected than pro-choice Democrats. I chose to examine state legislative candidates rather than candidates seeking office at the national or local level because most abortion policy is determined at the state level (Guttmacher Institute 2014). In addition, I chose to look at candidates running for office in 2012 and 2014, as these were the most recent election years for which data was readily available. In addition, these years represent both a presidential election year and a midterm election year, which could yield different results.

In addition to my quantitative analysis of abortion and electoral outcomes, I also conducted a number of interviews with policymakers and other political actors about their perceptions of how the abortion issue influences elections, any pressures they face to conform to identify as either pro-life or pro-choice, and how they present their abortion positions to constituents. These interviews helped to shed light on how the abortion issue influences elections and campaigns, not just in terms of electoral outcomes, but also in terms of how politicians must position themselves politically both to their constituents and within the Republican and Democratic institutions.

## Data Collection

To examine the effects of abortion on electoral outcomes, I used data from the 2012 and 2014 National Candidate Studies. The National Candidate Study (NCS) is a national survey of state legislative candidates that is jointly conducted by Duke University, the University of Michigan, the University of California Berkeley, and Sewanee: The University of the South. This survey includes responses from 1,907 state legislative candidates in 2012 and 1,869 candidates in 2014. However, because of missing data, only 1,503 respondents were used in my 2012 analysis and only 1,576 were included in my 2014 analysis. Candidates were asked a variety of questions concerning their experiences before running for office, when they decided to run for office, and while campaigning for office. In addition, the survey includes questions about candidates' stances on a variety of policy issues, including whether or not abortion should be legal under a variety of circumstances. Unique identifiers match each respondent to his or her state district, electoral results, and party affiliation. These data allowed me to identify candidates whose abortion positions reverse those of their political parties (i.e., pro-life Democrats and pro-choice Republicans) and to compare their electoral outcomes with those of candidates whose positions are consistent with their national parties. Sample surveys from the 2012 and 2014 NCS can be found in Appendix B.

My response variables are the candidates' electoral outcomes, which were measured by candidates' success in both the general and primary elections. Electoral outcomes are also included in the survey's candidate identifiers, which indicate whether respondents won or lost in their primary elections and whether they won or lost in the general elections. Both of these measures of electoral success will be used in my analysis of the 2012 NCS data. Electoral

outcomes for the 2014 dataset will be assessed only by candidates' success in their general elections, as data on candidates' primary election results was incomplete.

My explanatory variables are the respondents' political party and their abortion policy position. Candidates are identified as "Republican", "Democratic", "Independent", or "Other". However, my analysis only included candidates who identified as members of the Republican or Democratic parties, which constituted approximately 91% of the total respondents in 2012 and 99% of respondents in 2014. Of the respondents for whom party information was available from the 2012 NCS, 785 (~ 45%) ran as Republicans and 957 (~ 55%) as Democrats. Of the 2014 NCS respondents, 766 (~ 41%) ran as Republicans and 1,091 (~ 59%) as Democrats.

Unfortunately, my analysis was somewhat limited by my ability to fully assess candidates' exact abortion positions (see Figure 5 for an analysis of how abortion attitudes differ among 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' voters). At their most extreme definitions, 'pro-choice' can be understood as the belief that a pregnant woman should be able to terminate her pregnancy under any circumstance, while 'pro-life' can be understood as the belief that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances on the grounds that it is taking a human life. However, many who identify as pro-choice or pro-life adopt more moderate stances and may even have overlapping views. Many who identify as both pro-life or pro-choice favor some variation of the more middle-ground position that abortion should be legal only in certain circumstances, such as in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger.

This ambiguity, unfortunately, cannot be captured by my data. Candidates' abortion position in the 2012 survey was determined by their response to a question that asks respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "Abortions should always be illegal." Respondents can agree, disagree, or not respond. The 2014 survey varies in its approach

to measuring abortion attitudes, instead asking respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following two statements: “Always allow a woman to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice,” and “Permit abortion only in case of rape, incest or when the woman’s life is in danger.” As was the case with the 2012 survey, respondents could agree, disagree, or abstain from answering one or both of these questions.

Though both of these definitions are based on relatively extreme stances on abortion and likely do not fully represent the views of all individuals who identify as either pro-life or pro-choice, respondents’ answers to these questions was the best way to reliably decipher candidates’ abortion attitudes given the limitations of the NCS survey questions. Thus in my analysis of the 2012 dataset, “pro-life” is defined as those who agree with the statement, “Abortion should always be illegal,” while “pro-choice” is defined as those who disagree. However, in my analysis of the 2014 data, candidates’ abortions positions are instead are based on whether respondents agree or disagree with the statement, “Always allow a woman to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice”. In this analysis, “pro-choice” is defined as those who agree with this statement, while “pro-life” is defined as those who disagree. Since the statement “Permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman’s life is in danger,” in the 2014 survey falls in the gray area between the pro-choice and pro-life camps, as both “pro-life” and “pro-choice” candidates (according to traditional definitions) would likely disagree with this statement, I did not use this statement when defining candidates’ abortion attitudes (i.e. whether they are pro-life or pro-choice), but did include it in my multivariate analysis of the 2014 data.

In addition to my analysis of the NCS surveys, I also conducted five interviews with relevant policymakers and political actors. These included Congressman Dan Lipinski (D-IL-3), State Representative Chris Ross (R-PA-158), a former candidate for Michigan State Senate, the

government relations director of the Republican Majority for Choice, and the executive director of Democrats for Life. I conducted these interviews both in person and over the phone. I received IRB approval and received oral consent from all of my subjects to be identified in my research.

I chose to interview these individuals for a number of reasons. First, I wanted to my interviews to encompass a wide range of views and experiences. My subjects include a pro-life Democratic congressman, a pro-choice Republican state legislator, executives from both the leading pro-choice Republican PAC and the leading pro-life Democratic PAC, as well as a former state legislative candidate who switched from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party in large part because of his views on abortion. This selection of interviews helped me understand how both Republicans and Democrats were affected by this issue, how abortion played out on both the state and national levels, how it affected both veteran politicians and those running for office for the first time, and how policy actors navigated the pro-choice and pro-life agendas within their parties.

I asked my subjects a variety of questions about whether they felt politicians were pressured to align their abortion position to those of their national parties and about how they felt abortion influenced contemporary politics and elections more broadly. A list of sample questions can be found in Appendix A. However, my interviews were quite fluid and I adjusted many of my questions based on my subjects' background and previous responses.



## Data Analysis

My analysis of the NCS data includes a combination of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. My descriptive analysis includes statistics on the number and proportion of candidates from each political party who agree or disagree with the survey question(s) on abortion, the electoral outcomes of candidates from either party, and the electoral outcomes of pro-life Democrats vs. pro-choice Democrats and of pro-choice Republicans vs. pro-life Republicans. For my inferential statistics, I conducted a series of logistic regression models in order to establish whether there is a statistically significant correlation between candidates' abortion positions and their electoral outcomes.

Given the differences between the 2012 and 2014 NCS surveys, I conducted separate analyses for each election year. For the 2012 NCS analysis, I conducted multivariate logistic regression models for both the primary and general elections. By using an interaction variable between the pro-choice variable and the candidates' political party, I was able to compare the electoral outcomes of Democrats who agreed that "Abortion should always be illegal" (pro-life Democrats) with the electoral of Democrats who disagreed (pro-choice Democrats), and the electoral outcomes of Republicans who agreed (pro-life Republicans) with those of Republicans who disagreed (pro-choice Republicans). In these models, the pro-choice variable was thus coded where as a 1 if candidates disagreed with this statement and as a 0 if candidates agreed.

I conducted similar multivariate analyses of the 2014 NCS survey. As in the 2012 NCS survey, I conducted a regression model for the general election results using the survey's first question on abortion attitudes ("Always allow a woman to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice"). The pro-choice variable for these models were thus coded as a 1 if candidates agreed with this statement and as a 0 if candidates disagreed. Unlike the 2012 data, however, I ran this

model a second time and substituted the pro-choice variable with the second question on abortion attitudes (“Permit abortions only in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman’s life is in danger.”). This variable, which I reference as the limit abortion variable, was coded as a 1 if candidates agreed with it and as a 0 if candidates disagreed. Including this variable gave me a more comprehensive understanding of my results and of candidates’ true abortion positions.

As previously discussed, my study measured electoral outcomes at both the primary and general election levels, where 1 = winning and 0 = losing. I did not include candidates who withdrew or were removed from the elections or for whom no information was available. For the 2012 NCS data, which had a total of 1,907 respondents, this resulted in a sample size of 1,451 for the primary election models and 1,302 for the general election models. Sample sizes vary since candidates who lost the primary election were not included in the general election model. My sample sizes for the 2014 data, which had a total of 1,869 respondents, were 1,348 for the models with only the pro-choice variable and 1,294 for the models that also included the limit abortion variable. Sample sizes vary since some candidates answered only one of the abortion questions.

Control variables include candidates’ geographic region and whether candidates had previously held or run for state legislative office. Geography was included in order to control for the varying degrees of saliency that abortion has in different parts of the United States.

Geographic regions, dichotomously coded, were based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s regional divisions<sup>2</sup>: New England (the reference category), Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central, East North Central, West North Central, Mountain, and Pacific.

Similarly, candidates’ legislative experience was included to control for the effects of incumbency and name recognition on candidates’ electoral outcomes. Incumbents or candidates

---

<sup>2</sup> Regional divisions as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.  
[http://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us\\_regdiv.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf)

who had previously run for state legislative office were given a 1 for these measures. Of the 1,742 Republican or Democratic candidates in the 2012 NCS, 690 (~ 40%) had previously run for state legislative office and 619 (~ 36%) had previously held state legislative office. Among the 2014 respondents, 933 (~ 50%) had previously run and 708 (~ 38%) had previously held the position.

If my hypothesis is true, candidates' abortion policy should have no effect on their electoral outcomes in the general elections, and state legislative candidates who deviate from their party norm will be neither more nor less likely to win elections at the general election level in both the 2012 and 2014 analyses. If candidates' abortion positions have any effect on their electoral outcomes, I would expect this to occur at the primary level, when candidates are competing with members of their own party. Evidence to the contrary would not provide support for my hypothesis. Should candidates who deviate from their party norms have significantly better or worse electoral outcomes, this might indicate that abortion influences candidate choice independently of voters' party preferences.

As was previously discussed, my interviews are intended to supplement my quantitative findings. Thus, my findings from these interviews served primarily to contextualize and provide additional support for my findings from the NCS data and will be integrated throughout my paper. My interviews addressed my research questions more indirectly than my quantitative analysis, but help to connect my research with previous research about the abortion issue and its influence on elections.

### **III. Results**

#### 2012 National Candidate Study

##### *Descriptive Statistics*

As was expected, the majority of voters from both parties disagreed with the 2012 NCS abortion question, which asked whether abortion should always be illegal. Of the Democrats included in the study, only 12.62% agreed with the statement, while about 43.97% of Republicans agreed (see Figure 6). Of the 1,650 total respondents who answered the survey question on abortion attitudes, 73.58% disagreed and 26.42% agreed. This is consistent with other measures of abortion policy preferences, as most voters favor more middle-ground policies that provide at least a few exceptions for abortion.

The mean differences in electoral outcomes between pro-choice and pro-life candidates were very small for both parties. Among all Democrats, 89.73% of pro-choice Democrats and 88.68% of pro-life Democrats won their primary elections (see Figure 7). In their general elections, 50.76% of pro-choice Democrats and 57.61% of pro-life Democrats won. Among all Republicans, 83.80% of pro-life Republicans and 86.23% of pro-choice Republicans won in their primary elections. About 62.08% of pro-life Republicans and 59.94% of pro-choice Republicans won in their general elections. Overall, about 60.66% of Republican candidates won in their general elections, while only 52.36% of Democratic candidates won in their general elections.

*Multivariate Analysis*

As previously discussed, I conducted two models for the 2012 elections. The first model analyzed primary electoral outcomes results and the second examined the general election results.

Candidates' abortion attitudes did not appear to be a significant determinant of their electoral outcomes in either the 2012 primary or general elections. Table 1 shows the results for the primary elections; Table 2 shows the results for the general elections. For both outcomes, the statement on abortion was not significantly related to the odds of winning for either Democrats or Republicans.

However, while the pro-choice variable was not statistically significant for either the Republican ( $p=0.944$ ) or Democratic ( $p=0.367$ ) primaries, these findings are still informative. The odds ratio for the pro-choice variable was approximately 0.983 for Republican candidates and 1.380 for Democratic candidates. The fact that these coefficients go in different directions is suggestive of some kind of relationship between abortion attitudes and electoral outcomes. These numbers indicate that pro-life Democrats were approximately 38% less likely to be elected than those who disagreed that abortion should be illegal in all cases, while pro-life Republicans were slightly more likely to be elected than those who disagreed. However, as these variables were not statistically significant, it is possible that any differences in electoral outcomes were due to chance alone.

Results were similar for the general election outcomes. The odds ratios for the pro-choice variable were 0.841 among Republicans and 1.063 among Democrats. Similar to the first model, the direction of these coefficients indicates that candidates of both parties who deviated from their party's traditional abortion position were less likely to be elected than candidates who did not. Though these results are suggestive, the variable was statistically insignificant for both the

Democratic ( $p=0.832$ ) and Republican ( $p=0.434$ ) candidates. As a result, these findings again indicate that candidates' abortion positions did not have a significant effect on their electoral outcomes in the general elections and that any differences in electoral outcomes may have been due to chance alone.

The differences in magnitude of the pro-choice variable for the Republican and Democratic candidates can likely be attributed to the asymmetrical nature of this survey question. As the question is assessing a relatively extreme pro-life position, Democratic candidates who agree with this statement are deviating much further from their national party's platform than are Republicans who disagree. As a result, the issue was likely more salient for Democrats who agreed with the statement, than for Republicans who disagreed.

My analyses of both the primary and general elections provide support for my hypothesis that Republican and Democratic candidates whose abortion policy positions deviate from their party norms are not significantly more or less likely to be elected than candidates who follow their party norms. However, these results were inconsistent with regards to my hypothesis about how this would affect primary election outcomes versus general election outcomes. Among Democratic candidates, the pro-choice variable was more strongly associated with candidates' electoral outcomes in the primary elections than in the general. This suggests that, while abortion attitudes did not play a significant role in either election level, the issue may be more salient in primary elections. These findings thus support my hypothesis that individual candidates' abortion positions would have a stronger effect at the primary level, when voters are choosing between candidates within the same party rather than comparing Democratic and Republican candidates. However, the opposite was true among Republican candidates. The pro-choice variable was more significantly associated with Republican candidates' electoral outcomes in the general election

that in the primaries. However, despite these mixed results, these findings as a whole do support my main hypothesis, as individual candidates' abortion attitudes did not have a significant effect on their electoral outcomes at either election level.

## 2014 National Candidate Study

### *Descriptive Statistics*

The first 2014 NCS survey question, which asked whether abortion should be available as a matter of choice, proved to be a more contentious question than the 2012 question. Of the 1,586 total respondents who answered the first survey question, 40.86% disagreed and 59.14% agreed (see Figure 8). Among Democratic respondents, 85.53% agreed with the statement and 14.57% disagreed. Among Republicans, only 20.13% agreed and 79.87% disagreed.

Slightly fewer respondents answered the second question on abortion attitudes, which asked whether they would permit abortion only in the case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger. Of the 1,552 candidates who answered this question, 67.33% disagreed and 32.67% agreed (see Figure 9). Of the Democratic respondents who answered the question, 13.76% agreed and 86.24% disagreed. Among Republicans, 61.44% agreed and 38.56% disagreed with the statement.

As in the 2012 analysis, the mean differences in electoral outcomes between pro-choice and pro-life candidates were very small for both parties. As previously defined, this analysis of the 2014 NCS data defines "pro-life" as those who disagree that abortions should be available as a matter of choice, and "pro-choice" as those who agree. Overall, about 60.38% of Republican candidates won in their general elections, while only 43.19% of Democratic candidates won in their general elections. Among all Democrats, 43.85% of pro-choice Democrats and 37.72% of pro-life Democrats won in their general elections. These electoral outcomes for both parties are illustrated in Figure 10. Among all Republicans, about 65.71% of pro-life Republicans and 50.45% of pro-choice Republicans won in their general elections.



*Multivariate Analysis*

I again conducted two logistic regression models for the 2014 NCS data, which analyzed results from the state legislative general elections from that year. The first model includes the first survey question on abortion attitudes (“Always allow a woman to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice”), while the second model includes the second question on abortion attitudes (“Permit abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or when the woman’s life is in danger”).

In the first model, the pro-choice variable was associated with decreased odds of winning for Republicans ( $p=0.019$ ), but had no statistically significant relationship with Democrats electoral outcomes ( $p=0.511$ ) (see Table 3). The odds ratio for this variable was 0.529 among Republicans. This number indicates that pro-choice Republican candidates were approximately 47% less likely to be elected in their general elections than their pro-life counterparts. The odds ratio for the pro-choice variable among Democratic candidates was 1.198. Though this variable was not statistically significant, the direction of this coefficient suggests that pro-choice Democratic candidates were more likely to be elected than those who disagreed that abortion should be legal as a matter of choice.

As was the case in the 2012 survey, the pro-choice variable may be significant among Republicans but not Democrats because of the asymmetrical nature of the 2014 survey question. Republicans who agree with the statement “Always allow a woman to obtain an abortion as a matter of choice” are diverging much further from their party’s position than are Democrats who disagree with the statement. As a result, the issue was likely more salient among Republican candidates who agreed than Democratic candidates who did not. The limit abortion variable was thus helpful to include, as it assessed a more moderate abortion attitude.

In the second model, the limit abortion variable was associated with worse electoral outcomes for Democratic candidates ( $p=0.045$ ), but did not have a statistically significant association with Republican candidates' odds of winning ( $p=0.154$ ) (see Table 4). The odds ratio for this variable was approximately 0.564 among Democrats. This number indicates that Democratic candidates who believe abortion should be legal in certain circumstances were about 44% less likely to win in their general elections. The odds ratio for the limit abortion variable was about 1.380 among Republicans, suggesting a positive relationship between Republican candidates' electoral outcomes and their response to this question. While this relationship was not statistically significant, the p-value is small enough that these findings should not be discounted altogether. The fact that the coefficients for the pro-choice variable are in opposite directions for Republican and Democratic candidates also suggests that candidates of both parties who deviate from their party's abortion position are disadvantaged electorally.

As was previously discussed, this measure of abortion attitudes is somewhat ambiguous as both pro-life candidates who believe abortion should be illegal in all circumstances and pro-choice candidates who believe abortion should always be legal would disagree with the statement, "Permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger." However, its inclusion is valuable as it indicates that Democratic candidates who agree with this abortion position, which is more conservative than the national Democratic Party platform, may be disadvantaged electorally. This position also falls quite close to the Republican Party platform, and to the position that most self-identified 'pro-life' voters agree with (see Figure 5).

These findings from the 2014 NCS survey do not support my hypotheses as they contradict the notion that individual candidates' abortion attitudes do not affect their electoral outcomes. Rather, abortion appears to have been a significant determinant of both Democratic

and Republican candidates electoral outcomes in the 2014 state legislative races, with both pro-life Democrats and pro-choice Republicans less likely to win in their general elections than candidates whose abortion views conformed to those of their national parties.

These findings are also inconsistent with my multivariate analysis of the 2012 NCS data, which indicated that candidates' abortion attitudes did not affect their electoral outcomes in either the primary or general elections and supported my hypotheses. However, there are several reasons why these results might be different for the two election years. First, the 2012 and 2014 NCS surveys used drastically different questions to assess abortion views, which made it difficult to reliably assess candidates' positions and to compare them across survey years. The addition of a second question on abortion attitudes in the 2014 survey allowed for a more nuanced understanding of candidates' abortion views, and measuring the same variables across election years might have yielded more similar results. Second, the two surveys measured electoral outcomes for different election years. The abortion issue may have been more or less polarized or more or less salient from one election year to the next. It is difficult to assess this at the state level, since the issue might have been more relevant to certain states or electoral contests independently of the issue's relevance in the national political arena. However, it is worth noting that 2012 was a presidential election year while 2014 was only a midterm election year. Abortion was also particularly high on the political agenda during the 2012 presidential race, arguably driven by Republican Senate candidate Todd Akin's controversial comments about abortion and "legitimate rape"<sup>3</sup> (Pew Research Center 2012). It is possible that this resulted in increased issue voting across party lines rather than based on individual candidate's positions.

---

<sup>3</sup> When asked during an interview in August 2012 whether he believed abortion was justified in cases of rape, former Republican Missouri Congressman Todd Akin replied: "It seems to be, first of all, from what I understand from doctors, it's really rare. If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut the whole thing down." This statement sparked outcry from the public and from other policymakers and initiated a national conversation about abortion and sexual assault. (Moore 2012)

## Interviews

While the results of my multivariate analyses varied between the 2012 and 2014 election years, my findings from my interviews were remarkably consistent. As previously discussed, my interview respondents spanned the political spectrum and had a wide range of political experiences, ideologies, and abortion views. However, despite the diversity of my subjects, they had a number of shared experiences and beliefs about how abortion affected contemporary elections and politics.

My interviewees included two policymakers – a pro-choice Republican state representative and pro-life Democratic congressman. The former is State Representative Chris Ross, who serves in Pennsylvania’s House of Representatives. Representative Ross was first elected to represent Pennsylvania’s 158th district in the state legislature in 1996. Since then, he has repeatedly voted to protect abortion rights and access in Pennsylvania and has consistently received a 100% rating from Planned Parenthood Pennsylvania Advocates<sup>4</sup>. He believes abortion should be legal as defined by the standards set by *Roe v. Wade* and *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*. The latter is Congressman Dan Lipinski, who represents Illinois’ 3rd congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives. Lipinski took office in 2005, after his father retired from the same seat. He is one of the few and most outspoken pro-life Democrats in Congress and has voted consistently to restrict abortion access and to limit government funding for abortion services. He opposes abortion in all cases except to save the life of the woman, but has been willing to compromise on various policies to include exceptions for rape and incest.

In addition to these policymakers, I also interviewed Ryan Fishman, a former state Senate candidate for Michigan’s 13th district. Fishman lost in the 2014 Democratic primary for this seat,

---

<sup>4</sup> Ratings found at Project Vote Smart - <http://votesmart.org/candidate/10163/chris-ross?categoryId=75&type=V,S,R,E,F,P#.ViljFWSrRsM>

which the Republican Party's nominee then won overwhelmingly in the general election.

Fishman's perspective is particularly relevant to this study because he switched from the GOP to the Democratic Party shortly before running for office because his views on abortion and other social issues conflicted with those of the Republican Party.

Though my research focuses on candidates for public office, many of my most interesting findings came from my interviews with representatives from the Republican Majority for Choice (RMC) and Democrats for Life (DFLA). The RMC and DFLA are the leading special interest groups and political action committees for pro-choice Republicans and pro-life Democrats, respectively. I interviewed Mallory Schwarz, the government relations director of the RMC, and Kristin Day, the executive director of DFLA. Both organizations have relatively similar functions, including lobbying Congress, providing funding for candidates who share their party and abortion views, and helping candidates with political strategy.

From these interviews, several themes emerged. First, all of my interview subjects agreed that abortion has become an increasingly partisan issue in the last decade. Though they hoped this trend would reverse, they anticipated that it would continue to remain a polarized issue in the upcoming decade.

When asked what the turning point was that caused abortion to become so polarized, my respondents had a few ideas. Schwarz pointed to the 1980s, when Reagan and the Republican Party began to appeal to Christian values as a way to bring Southern evangelicals into the party. Before this, she noted, the Democratic Party had much stronger religious ties and Republicans were some of the strongest advocates for family planning programs like Title X, which was started under the Nixon administration. The Republican Party's growing emphasis on religion thus went hand-in-hand with its adoption of a pro-life agenda.

Day cited the 1992 Democratic Convention, when Pennsylvania Governor Casey was allegedly denied a speaking spot because he did not support abortion, as the key turning point for the Democratic Party and one that prompted many “Reagan Democrats” to leave the party. More recently, Day pointed to the 2009 and 2010 votes regarding the Affordable Care Act, which left pro-life Democrats “decimated” by both the Democratic Party and the pro-life movement. She explained that pro-life Democrats, who supported the health care law as a whole but opposed some of the original provisions that pertained to abortion services, were alienated both by their party for not supporting the law in its entirety and by the right-wing pro-life movement, which opposed the ACA altogether.

My interview subjects also agreed that this issue affected candidates more at the primary level than in the general election. Several of my respondents cited elections that they knew of in which a pro-life Democrat or pro-choice Republican was running for public office but their parties actively worked to prevent them from receiving the nomination because of their views. Although these candidates were running in districts that shared their abortion views and that championing these individuals could have helped the party to secure the seat, the parties were reluctant to support them. Congressman Lipinski further elaborated by noting that, despite being an incumbent in a district that predominately shares his views on social issues, his Democratic opponents always attack his pro-life position during primary elections. Representative Ross agreed that he felt that Republican candidates felt the most pressure to conform their views to a pro-life stance at the primary level, especially when running for public office the first time. Fishman echoed these sentiments and said that the pressures that pro-choice Republicans experience at primary level drove his decision to run for office as a Democrat.

Another commonality between my interviewees is that pro-choice Republicans and pro-life Democrats felt that they approached the abortion issue differently than pro-choice Democrats and pro-life Republicans, respectively. Day, in particular, stressed this point. She characterized the Republican abortion position as “half-life”, in that they wanted to ban abortions yet refused to support welfare and social security programs that supported pregnant women, children, and families. She advocated instead for a “whole life” perspective, which would provide social supports to make it easier for women to be pregnant and to support a family. She felt that this was a critical distinction between pro-life Democrats from pro-life Republicans and was a way to integrate the pro-life platform with traditional Democratic values.

Schwarz also stressed a Republican framework for supporting choice. Unlike the Democratic Party, which she said advocates a “my body, my choice” position, the RMC instead uses economic arguments and conservative language and themes to support its abortion position, and encourages pro-choice Republican candidates to do the same. Examples include emphasizing the importance of limited government, as well as the “pocketbook reasons” for supporting family planning and abortion services.

In addition, both the Democrats and Republicans that I interviewed expressed concerns that their parties’ polarizing abortion platforms would result in the demise of their parties as a whole. Schwarz stated that RMC was particularly concerned about pro-choice Republicans switching parties, as Ryan Fishman did, unless the Republican Party adopted a more mainstream social agenda. She called RMC “the last remaining stronghold” of pro-choice Republicans, yet noted that many of their longtime supporters have increasingly decided to vote for Democrats. Representative Ross echoed the idea that pro-choice Republicans were “disappearing”, citing the sharp decline in the number of pro-choice Republicans in the Pennsylvania state legislature since

he took office 19 years ago. Fishman stated that, because of these social issues, the Democratic Party had taken over the Republican Party's place as the "big tent party" because it was more accepting of diverging views.

Pro-life Democrats felt similarly about their party. Day firmly rejected the notion that the Democratic Party was a big tent party. Rather, she attributed the Democratic Party's poor electoral outcomes in recent congressional and state legislative elections to the party's pro-choice platform. She stressed that the country was moving towards becoming pro-life, though evidence may suggest the opposite (see Figure 11), and argued that adopting a more neutral abortion position was the only way the Democratic Party could regain and retain its majorities in both the national and state legislatures.

Interestingly, my interviewees agreed that the ideal abortion position for their parties would be a neutral position that advocated for neither a pro-life or pro-choice agenda. None advocated a complete reversal of the current position and instead said they hoped their parties would become more inclusive to those with diverging positions.

One of the only issues on which my respondents were split was whether voters who cared about abortion voted based on the individual candidates' position or by political party. Day agreed with my hypothesis and said she felt that issue voting increasingly occurred based on the national parties' platforms rather than individual candidates' positions. Schwarz stated she believes that voters predominately base their decision on the individual candidate, however she noticed that the RMC has found it increasingly difficult to convince voters who rate abortion as their top issue that they can still vote for GOP candidates, even when Republican candidates share their abortion views. Though Representative Ross and Congressman Lipinski both said that they believe voters still base their decisions on individual candidates' views, Ross noted that many of



his constituents automatically assume that he is pro-life based on his party affiliation. Lipinski agreed that there is a growing sense that “if you’re Republican, you’re going to be pro-life and if you’re a Democrat, you’re going to be pro-choice.” These findings provide support for the notion that both voters and political elites are being ‘sorted’ into political parties on the basis of their abortion positions, which would be evidence of an issue evolution.

## **IV. Discussion**

### Limitations

These results have several limitations that future research should work to overcome. The most pressing of these was simply that the NCS survey questions on abortion attitudes were both limited in scope and inconsistent across survey years. This made analyzing and comparing my results difficult as I had to define ‘pro-choice’ and ‘pro-life’ differently in each analysis and had to base both definitions on relatively extreme and unpopular abortion views. It is also possible that candidates’ survey responses, which are confidential, are not consistent with their public abortion positions. Ideally, candidates’ abortion attitudes would be measured only by the positions they have shared with voters.

Unfortunately, I was also unable to analyze results for the 2014 primary elections, as this variable was not available at the time of my research. This, too, made it difficult to compare my results across survey years and to reliably evaluate my hypotheses using this metric. Hopefully this variable will be available soon and can be included in future research.

Another significant limitation was my ability to determine how abortion might affect candidate selection. As my interviews indicated, abortion might affect elections most significantly by determining who chooses to run for office. While analyzing primary election results might account for some of these candidate selection effects, these analyses still cannot account for those individuals who choose not to run for office as a result of these political pressures.

Additionally, my findings did not allow me to measure the sensitivity of electoral outcomes. I was unable to determine whether candidates who deviated from their national party’s abortion position won or lost by greater margins than those who did not. Rather, my data only

indicated whether candidates won or lost their election. It would be interesting to see whether a more nuanced measurement of electoral outcomes would yield different findings.

Finally, my sample sizes were relatively small which limited my analysis. Because of missing data and other characteristics of the NCS respondents, I could only include a fraction of the total respondents in my models. A larger sample size might yield clearer and more statistically significant findings.

## Conclusion

The recent fight over Planned Parenthood has brought abortion back into the political spotlight, both on the national level and in state legislatures across the country. However, if the nascent campaign for the 2016 Presidential election is any indication, there is little reason to expect that abortion will become any less polarizing of an issue anytime soon. Rather, in recent months abortion has reemerged as key issue central to both the Republican and Democratic parties' platforms. All five of the Democratic candidates in the first Democratic presidential debate have expressed their unwavering support for abortion rights, while all sixteen of the initial Republican candidates oppose a woman's right to choose as defined by *Roe v. Wade*. In fact, the debate has grown even more polarized, with nine of these Republican candidates advocating to ban abortion even in cases of rape and incest, a position that is extreme even among the pro-life community.

As evidenced by my interviews, policymakers who deviate from their parties' abortion positions are undoubtedly feeling the full weight of this growing partisan divide. Even politicians like Congressman Lipinski and Representative Ross, who have held their office for decades and whose constituents overwhelmingly share their views, have experienced strong pressures both from outside interest groups and from within their party institution to conform to their national parties' position. As the next election cycle approaches, it becomes increasingly important to understand whether this issue affects such candidates' electoral outcomes and how it affects contemporary politics as a whole.

Though my findings from the 2012 NCS data supported my hypothesis that candidates' abortion positions would not affect their electoral outcomes, my analyses of the 2014 NCS survey did not. Candidates' abortion attitudes did not affect their electoral outcomes at either the primary

or general election level in 2012. However, abortion was more closely associated with candidates' electoral outcomes at the primary level than in the general elections. Though the pro-choice variable was not a statistically significant determinant of electoral outcomes at either election level, the directionality of these coefficients suggests that candidates who deviate from their party positions may have been less likely to be elected. However, as a whole, these findings support my hypotheses and the notion that voters who care about the abortion issue may vote based on candidates' political party than on the individual's abortion position.

However, abortion attitudes were found to be significant determinants of both Republican and Democratic candidates' outcomes in the 2014 general elections. Candidates of both parties who deviated from the national party's abortion position were less likely to win in the general election. This suggests that voters did, in fact, consider the individual candidates' abortion views and did not just base their decision on political party alone.

Though it is hard to say what might have caused these inconsistencies between my 2012 and 2014 analyses, my interviews helped to contextualize many of these issues and provided further support for my hypotheses. First, my interviewees unanimously agreed that candidates felt the most pressure to align their abortion positions with those of their national party at the primary level. Next, while most of my interview subjects believed that voters who cared about the abortion issue still weighed the candidates' individual abortion position, they all indicated that the candidates' party played an increasingly important role in shaping voters' decisions as the two parties have grown more polarized. Schwarz's concerns about party switching and remarks about the difficulty of convincing pro-choice voters that they could vote for Republican candidates, even when they were pro-choice, were particularly telling. Though candidates' abortion positions may still influence voters and electoral outcomes, my interviews make it clear that the national

parties' platforms has increasingly influenced voters' decision making as the issue has become more partisan.

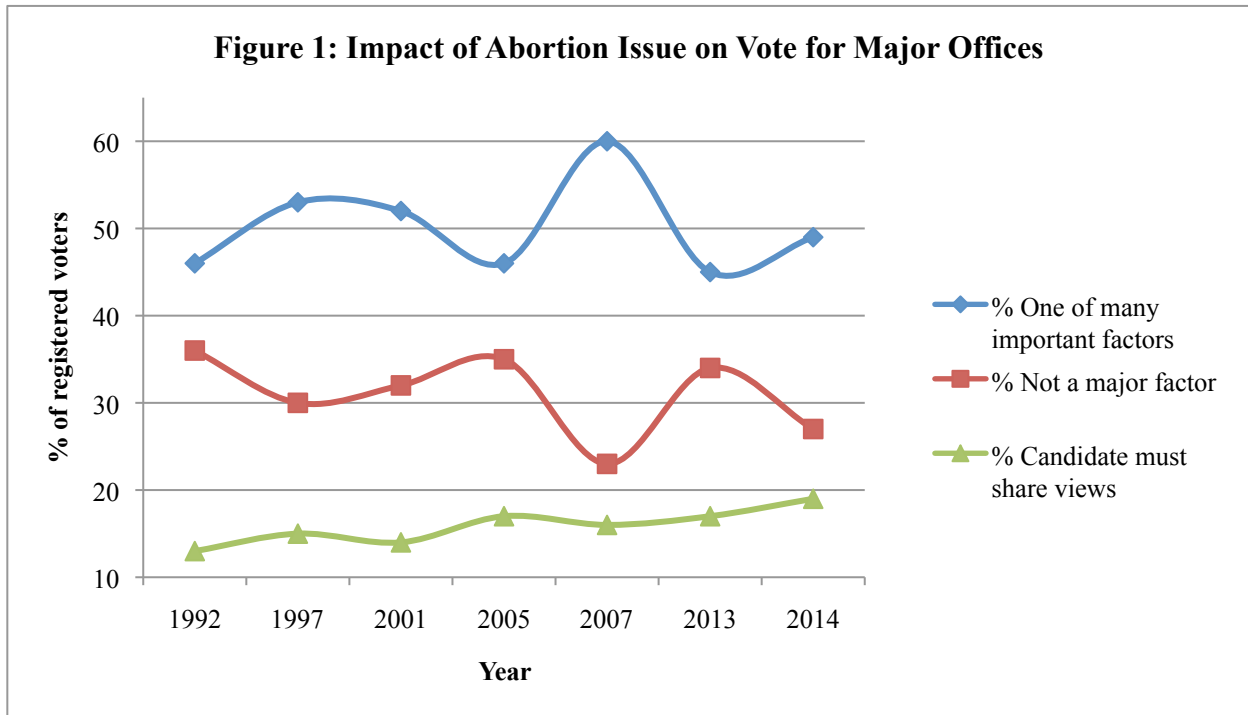
As the first study to examine the electoral outcomes of candidates who deviate from their political parties' abortion norm, these findings fill a key gap in abortion policy research. By examining an otherwise overlooked group of candidates, this research provides important insight into the relationship between abortion attitudes and candidate choice. Furthermore, this study is one of few recent attempts to understand the role that abortion has on contemporary politics and elections. Though my quantitative findings were inconclusive, this study lays out a useful framework for examining this issue.

Further research should be done to more conclusively examine the relationship between abortion attitudes and candidate choice, particularly with regards to candidates who deviate from their national parties' abortion position. As evidenced by my interview results, these policymakers are dwindling in numbers, as the Republican and Democratic parties grow more polarized over this issue. However, examining these candidates provides unique insight into how the abortion issue affects contemporary politics. My interviews with Schwarz and Fishman also yielded some fascinating information about voters and candidates switching parties because of the abortion issue. As noted by Congressman Lipinski and Schwarz, voters and candidates are increasingly being 'sorted' into the Republican and Democratic parties on the basis of their abortion views. Killian and Wilcox's study on party switching provides an excellent framework for evaluating this topic and should be repeated to examine more recent election years.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching, but are especially important for those tasked with determining the national parties' abortion positions. Though individual candidates' abortion attitudes still appear to have some impact on voters' decision-making, it is clear that

those who care about the abortion issue are increasingly considering the Republican and Democratic abortion platforms before voting for candidates of either party. Not only does this result in party switching among voters of both parties, but it may also discourage individuals with diverging abortion views from running for office at all. This is unfortunate, as these candidates may in some cases be better suited to run for office in districts that are more socially moderate than a Democratic or Republican candidate with conventional abortion views may be. Alienating such candidates and voters with clashing abortion views thus seems to hurt both parties' overall electoral outcomes. This raises the question of what either party stands to gain by adopting increasingly polarized abortion platforms, and whether relaxing their positions would benefit the parties overall.

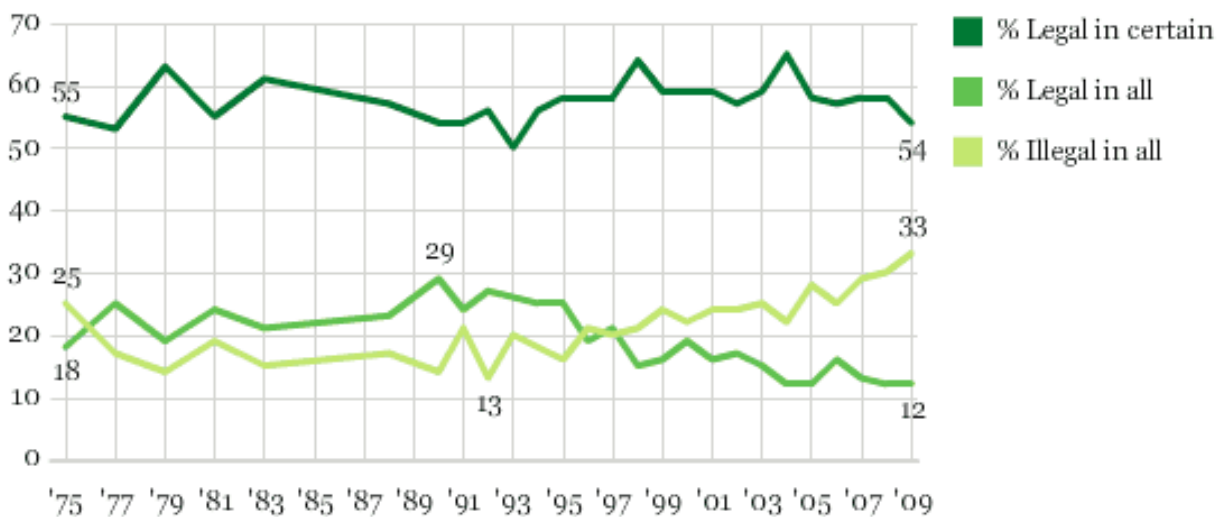
V. Figures and Tables



Source: GALLUP "U.S. Still Split on Abortion" 2014

**Figure 2:**

*Trend in Abortion Legality Views^ -- Based on Republicans*



^ Figures based on annual averages

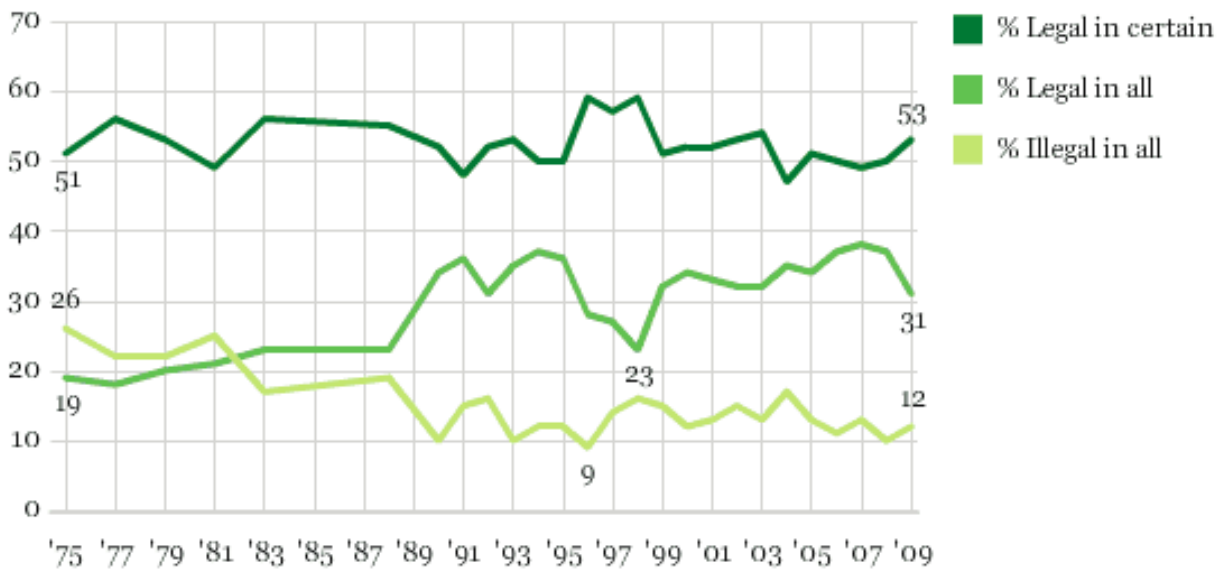
GALLUP

Source: GALLUP "Republicans', Dem's Abortion Views Grow More Polarized" 2010



**Figure 3:**

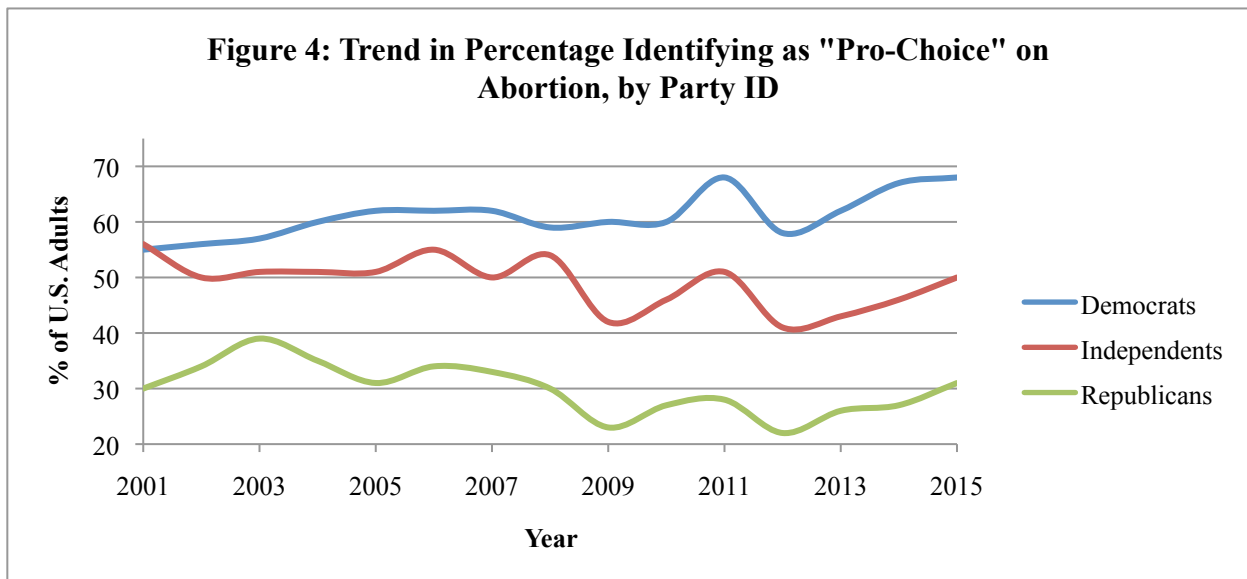
*Trend in Abortion Legality Views^ -- Based on Democrats*



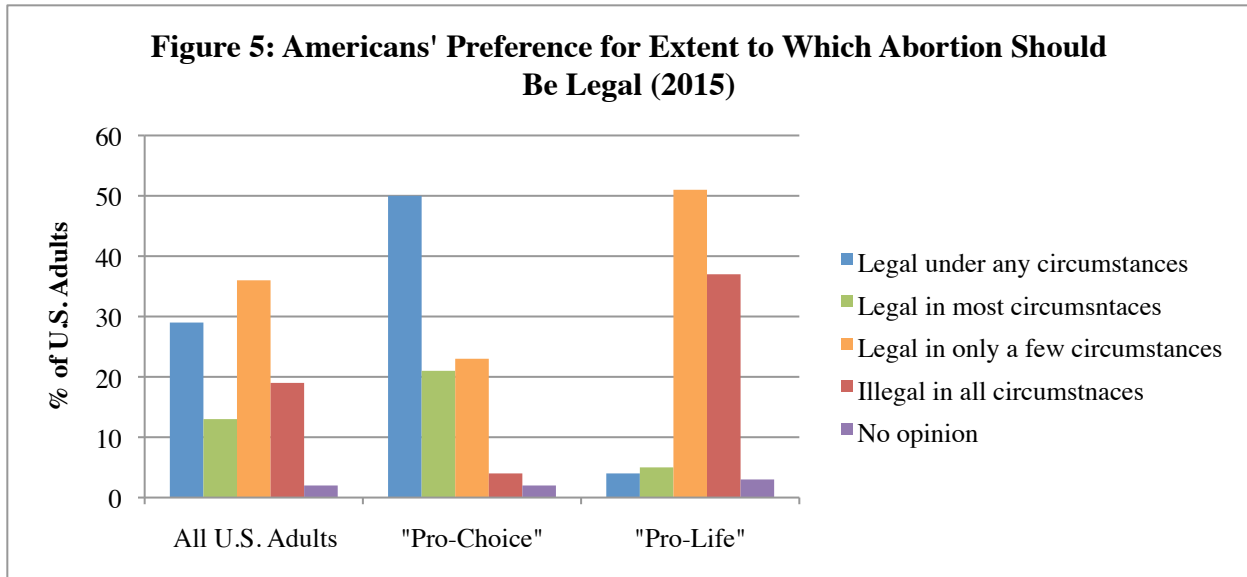
^ Figures based on annual averages

**GALLUP**

Source: GALLUP "Republicans', Dem's Abortion Views Grow More Polarized" 2010



Source: GALLUP "U.S. Still Split on Abortion" 2014



Source: GALLUP "Americans Choose 'Pro-Choice' for First Time in Seven Years" 2015

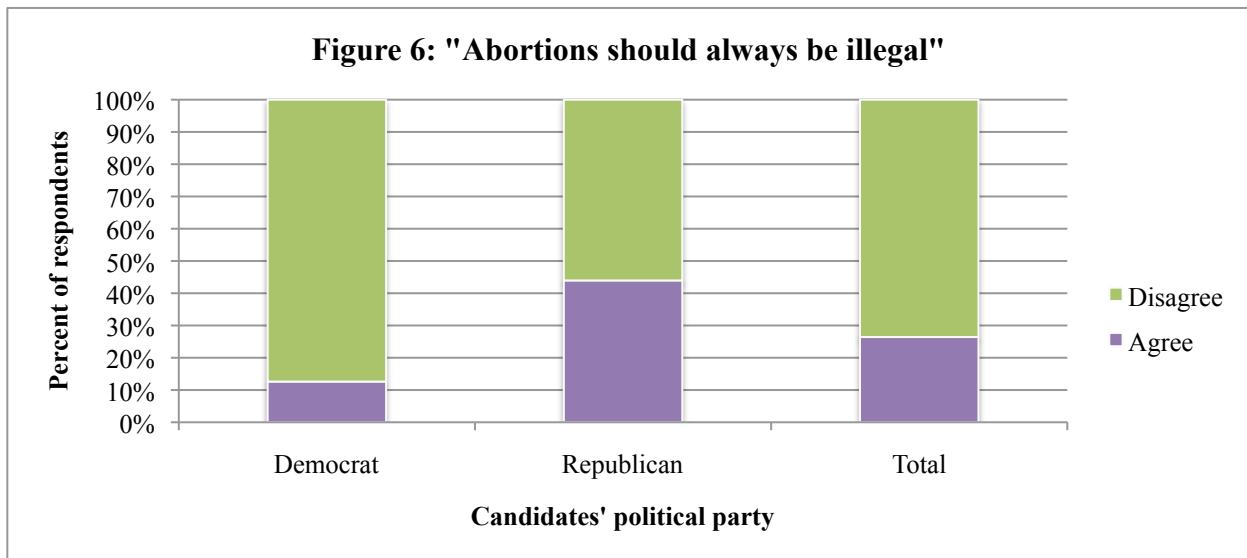
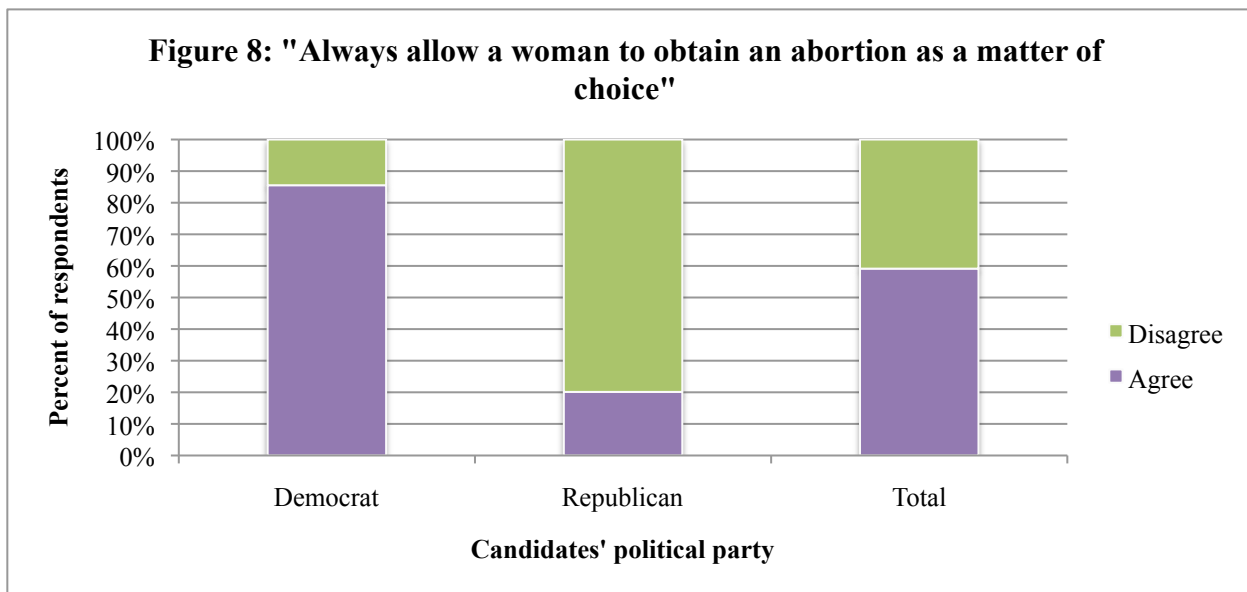
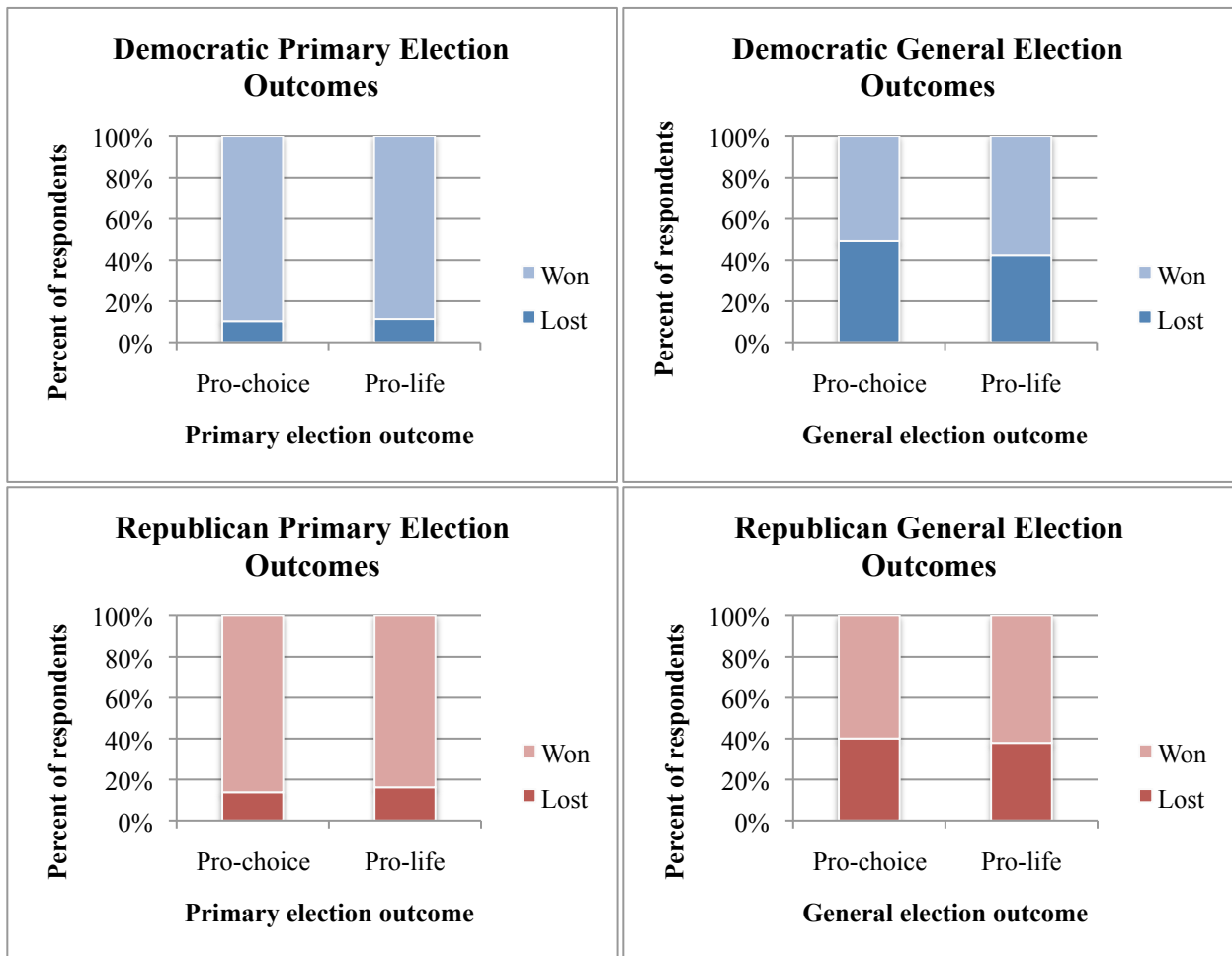
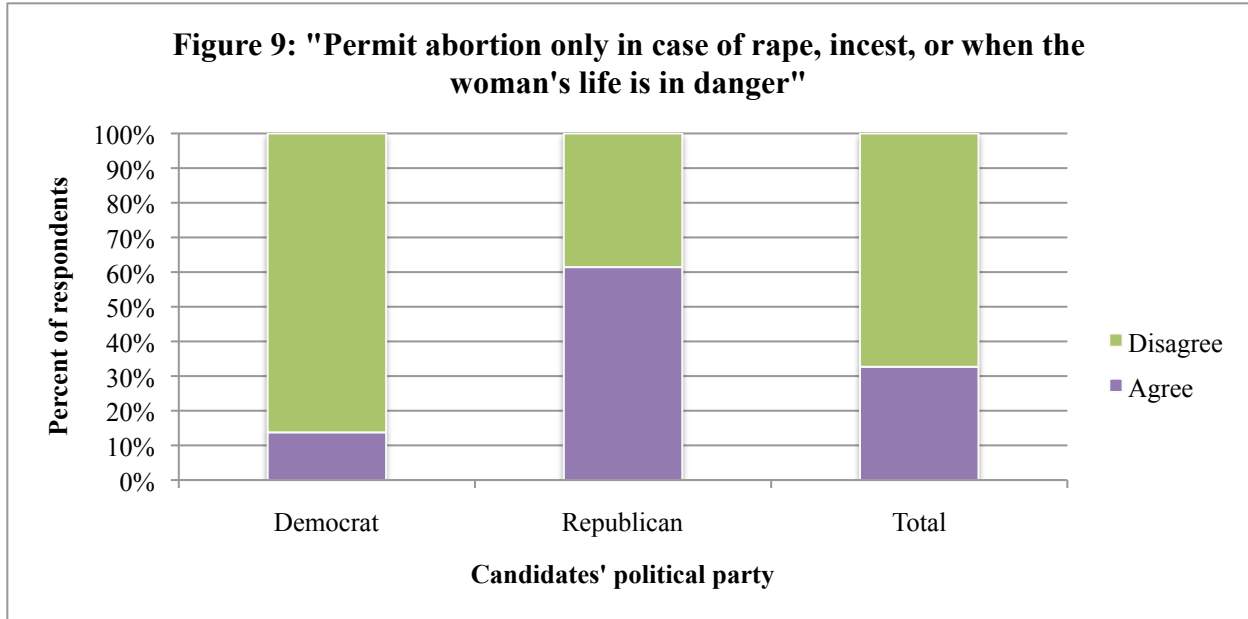
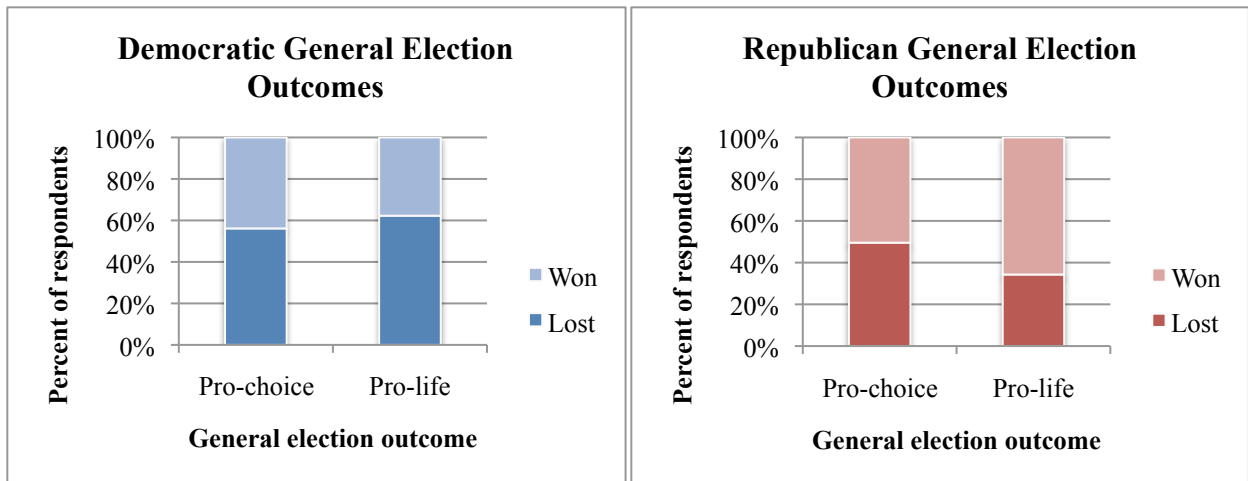


Figure 7: 2012 Electoral Outcomes





**Figure 10: 2014 Electoral Outcomes**



**Table 1.** Determinants of electoral outcomes in 2012 state legislative primary elections

Vignette factors	Pro-life Republican as reference			Pro-life Democrat as reference		
	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>
Pro-choice Republican	-0.017	0.983	0.239			
Pro-life Democrat	0.255	1.291	0.483			
Pro-choice Democrat	0.339	1.404	0.606			
Pro-choice Democrat				0.322	1.380	0.492
Pro-life Republican				-0.255	0.775	0.290
Pro-choice Republican				-0.339	0.712	0.308
<i>Political experience</i>						
Previously ran for state legislature	0.078	1.081	0.237	0.078	1.081	0.237
Previously held seat in state legislature	2.196	8.993***	2.876	2.196	8.993***	2.876
<i>Region</i>						
Pacific	-0.862	0.422**	0.141	-0.862	0.422**	0.141
Mountain	0.675	1.963†	0.793	0.675	1.963†	0.793
West South Central	0.073	1.075	0.582	0.073	1.075	0.582
East South Central	-	-	-	-	-	-
South Atlantic	-1.574	0.207***	0.071	-1.574	0.207***	0.071
West North Central	-0.929	0.395**	0.122	-0.929	0.395**	0.122
East North Central	-1.193	0.303***	0.097	-1.193	0.303***	0.097
New England	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mid-Atlantic	-0.254	0.776	0.394	-0.254	0.776	0.394
Constant	1.794	6.012***	1.899	2.049	10.706***	2.993
<i>Sample size</i>	1451					

Source: The 2012 National Candidate Study

† $p \leq 0.1$ , \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

**Table 2.** Determinants of electoral outcomes in 2012 state legislative general elections

Vignette factors	Pro-life Republican as reference			Pro-life Democrat as reference		
	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>
Pro-choice Republican	-0.173	0.841	0.186			
Pro-life Democrat	-0.392	0.676	0.213			
Pro-choice Democrat	0.233	1.263	0.456			
Pro-choice Democrat				0.061	1.063	0.304
Pro-life Republican				0.392	1.479	0.466
Pro-choice Republican				-0.233	0.792	0.286
<i>Political experience</i>						
Previously ran for state legislature	-0.250	0.779	0.143	-0.250	0.779	0.143
Previously held seat in state legislature	3.048	21.075***	4.265	3.048	21.075***	4.265
<i>Region</i>						
Pacific	-0.341	0.711	0.190	-0.341	0.711	0.190
Mountain	0.165	1.180	0.257	0.165	1.180	0.257
West South Central	0.563	1.755†	0.575	0.563	1.755†	0.575
East South Central	0.325	1.384	0.643	0.325	1.384	0.643
South Atlantic	0.826	2.283**	0.699	0.826	2.283**	0.699
West North Central	-0.229	0.795	0.183	-0.229	0.795	0.183
East North Central	-0.346	0.708	0.183	-0.346	0.708	0.183
New England	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mid-Atlantic	-0.247	0.781	0.273	-0.247	0.781	0.273
Constant	-0.505	0.603*	0.141	-0.897	0.408**	0.127
<i>Sample size</i>	1302					

Source: The 2012 National Candidate Study

† $p \leq 0.1$ , \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

**Table 3.** Determinants of electoral outcomes in 2014 state legislative general elections  
Includes first abortion attitudes variable (“pro-choice”)

Vignette factors	Pro-life Republican as reference			Pro-life Democrat as reference		
	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>
Pro-choice Republican	-0.637	0.529*	0.143			
Pro-life Democrat	-1.509	0.063***	0.221			
Pro-choice Democrat	0.818	2.266*	0.872			
Pro-choice Democrat				-0.181	1.198	0.329
Pro-life Republican				0.691	4.521***	1.297
Pro-choice Republican				0.818	0.441*	0.170
<i>Political experience</i>						
Previously ran for state legislature	-0.255	0.775	0.125	-0.255	0.775	0.125
Previously held seat in state legislature	3.369	29.061***	5.449	3.369	29.061***	5.449
<i>Region</i>						
Pacific	-0.218	0.804	0.198	-0.218	0.804	0.198
Mountain	0.216	1.241	0.273	0.216	1.241	0.273
West South Central	1.025	2.787*	1.380	1.025	2.787*	1.380
East South Central	0.713	2.039	0.907	0.713	2.039	0.907
South Atlantic	0.382	1.465	0.426	0.382	1.465	0.426
West North Central	-0.020	0.980	0.227	-0.020	0.980	0.227
East North Central	0.163	1.177	0.296	0.163	1.177	0.296
New England	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mid-Atlantic	0.435	1.545	0.992	0.435	1.545	0.992
Constant	0.0285	0.752	0.149	-1.794	0.166***	0.052
<i>Sample size</i>	1358					

Source: The 2014 National Candidate Study

† $p \leq 0.1$ , \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$

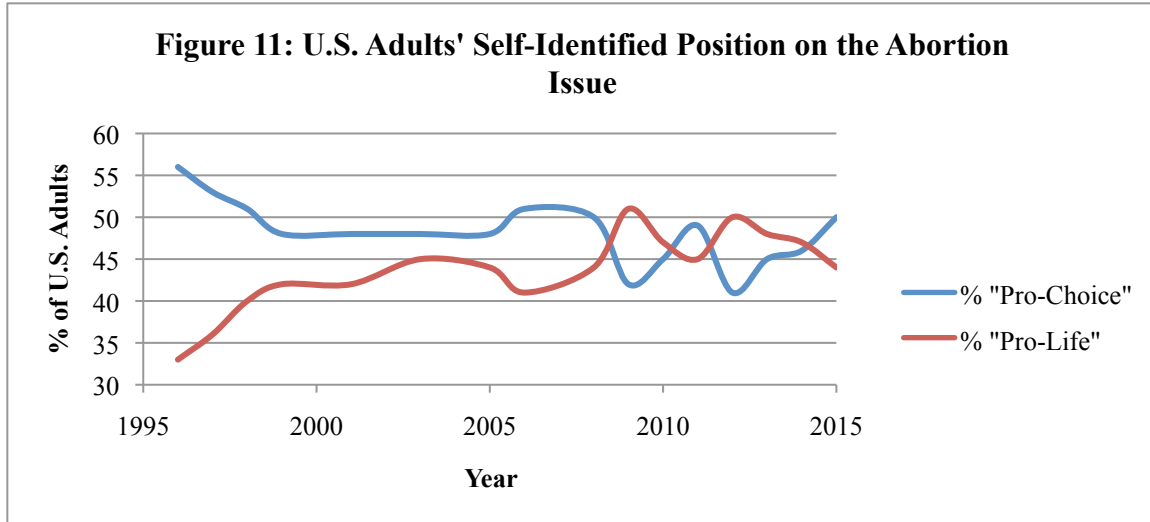
**Table 4.** Determinants of electoral outcomes in 2014 state legislative general elections  
Includes second abortion attitudes variables (“limit abortion”)

Vignette factors	Republican who disagrees as reference			Democrat who disagrees as reference		
	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	Odds ratio	<i>SE</i>
Republican who agrees	0.322	1.380	0.312			
Democrat who disagrees	-0.948	0.387***	0.078			
Democrat who agrees	-0.895	0.408*	0.149			
Democrat who agrees				-0.573	0.564*	0.161
Republican who disagrees				0.948	2.582***	0.519
Republican who agrees				0.895	2.448*	0.892
<i>Political experience</i>						
Previously ran for state legislature	-0.289	0.742†	0.123	-0.289	0.742†	0.123
Previously held seat in state legislature	3.367	29.005***	5.528	3.367	29.005***	5.528
<i>Region</i>						
Pacific	-0.298	0.742	0.186	-0.298	0.742	0.186
Mountain	0.155	1.168	0.260	0.155	1.168	0.260
West South Central	1.178	3.248*	1.703	1.178	3.248*	1.703
East South Central	0.711	2.036	0.913	0.711	2.036	0.913
South Atlantic	0.457	1.579	0.457	0.457	1.579	0.457
West North Central	-0.111	0.895	0.209	-0.111	0.895	0.209
East North Central	0.168	1.183	0.299	0.168	1.183	0.299
New England	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mid-Atlantic	0.391	1.478	0.960	0.391	1.478	0.960
Constant	-0.546	0.579*	0.132	-1.494	0.224***	0.043
<i>Sample size</i>	1326					

Source: The 2014 National Candidate Study

† $p \leq 0.1$ , \* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$





Source: GALLUP "Americans Choose 'Pro-Choice' for First Time in Seven Years" 2015

## References

- Abramowitz, Alan I. 1995. 'It's Abortion, Stupid: Policy Voting in the 1992 Presidential Election', *The Journal of Politics*, 57: 176-86.
- Adams, Greg D. 1997. 'Abortion: Evidence of an Issue Evolution', *American Journal of Political Science*, 41: 718-37.
- Carmines, Edward G, and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ).
- Carmines, Edward G, and James Woods. 2002. 'The role of party activists in the evolution of the abortion issue', *Political Behavior*, 24: 361-77.
- 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: 1135-58.
- Carmines, Edward G., and James A. Stimson. 1980. 'The Two Faces of Issue Voting', *The American Political Science Review*, 74: 78-91.
- Carsey, Thomas M., and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2006. 'Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate', *American Journal of Political Science*, 50: 464-77.
- Cook, Elizabeth Adell, Ted G. Jelen, and Clyde Wilcox. 1994a. 'Issue Voting in Gubernatorial Elections: Abortion and Post-Webster Politics', *The Journal of Politics*, 56: 187-99.
- . 1994b. 'Issue Voting in U.S. Senate Elections: The Abortion Issue in 1990', *Congress & the Presidency*, 21: 99-111.
- Granberg, Donald. 1987. 'The abortion issue in the 1984 elections', *Family Planning Perspectives*, 19: 59-62.
- Granberg, Donald, and James Burlison. 1983. 'The Abortion Issue in the 1980 Elections', *Family Planning Perspectives*, 15: 231-38.
- Guttmacher Institute. 2014. "Fact Sheet: Induced Abortion in the United States."
- Guttmacher Institute. 2015. "State Policies in Brief: An Overview of Abortion Laws."
- Howell, Susan E., and Robert T. Sims. 1993. 'Abortion attitudes and the Louisiana governor's election', *Am Polit Q*, 21: 54-64.
- Jaenicke, Douglas W. 2002. 'Abortion and Partisanship in the US Congress, 1976-2000: Increasing Partisan Cohesion and Differentiation', *Journal of American Studies*, 36: 1-22.
- Killian, Mitchell, and Clyde Wilcox. 2008. 'Do Abortion Attitudes Lead to Party Switching?', *Political Research Quarterly*, 61: 561-73.
- Moore, Lori. 2012. "'Rep. Todd Akin: The Statement and the Reaction'", *The New York Times*, August 20, 2012.
- Pew Research Center. 2012. "The Complicated Politics of Abortion."
- Saad, Lydia. 2010. 'Republicans', Dems' Abortion Views Grow More Polarized', *Gallup Poll News Service*.
- Saad, Lydia. 2014. 'U.S. Still Split on Abortion: 47% Pro-Choice, 46% Pro-Life', *Gallup Poll News Service*.
- Saad, Lydia. 2015. "Americans Choose 'Pro-Choice' for First Time in Seven Years", *Gallup Poll News Service*.
- The American Presidency Project*. 2000. "Democratic Party Platform of 2000." Democratic Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.

- The American Presidency Project*. 2000. "Republican Party Platform of 2000." Republican Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.
- The American Presidency Project*. 2004. "Democratic Party Platform of 2004." Democratic Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.
- The American Presidency Project*. 2004. "Republican Party Platform of 2004." Republican Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.
- The American Presidency Project*. 2008. "Democratic Party Platform of 2008." Democratic Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.
- The American Presidency Project*. 2008. "Republican Party Platform of 2008." Republican Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.
- The American Presidency Project*. 2012. "Democratic Party Platform of 2012." Democratic Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.
- The American Presidency Project*. 2012. "Republican Party Platform of 2012." Republican Party Platforms, edited by Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley.

## Appendices

### *Appendix A: Sample interview questions*

- What is your opinion on abortion? When do you think it should be legal, if ever?
- How do you think your stance on abortion compares to that of your national party? Are you more pro-life, more pro-choice, or about the same?
- How do you think your stance on abortion compares to those of your constituents? Are you more pro-life, more pro-choice, or about the same?
- How do you think constituents in your district compare to other districts on the abortion issue? Are they more pro-life, more pro-choice, or about the same?
- What has influenced your opinion on abortion?
- Have you ever felt pressured by anyone to align your abortion position more closely with that of your political party? If so, who pressured you and did it affect your position?
- Do you think political candidates, in general, feel pressured to adopt the abortion position of their national party? If so, where does this pressure come from and how do you think it affects candidates and politicians?
- Has your opinion on abortion changed over the course of your political career? If so, in what ways and why? If not, why do you think it has remained stable?
- Do you emphasize or downplay your abortion attitudes based on your audience?
- How do you think contemporary voters think about the abortion issue? Do you think voters would be less likely to vote for a candidate whose position on abortion differs from that of the national party?
- If your abortion position differs from that of your national party, has this affected your political career in any way? How and how have you responded to it?

*Appendix B: Sample surveys from 2012 and 2014 National Candidate Study*

See attached file