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College Students' Perceptions of the Efficacy of Different Strategies to Reduce the Rate of Abortions

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in Human

Ecology

By

Sophia Doros

Under the mentorship of Dr. Trent Maurer

ABSTRACT

This study examines college students' perceptions of different strategies and the efficacy of those strategies to reduce the rates of abortions. Factors such as comprehensive, medically accurate sex education, widespread accessibility and affordability of contraception, and affordable and accessible pre-natal care are all factors that the literature has established lower the rates of abortions. Factors such as waiting periods of 24 hours or more to perform a surgical abortion, restricting state funding for abortions, and legal bans of abortions altogether are factors that *do not* reduce the rates of abortions (Medoff, 2015); they may even be counterproductive to their original purpose and cause the number of abortions to rise, not fall. This study uses a mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative questions including a Likert-type scale, to measure participants' perceptions against what the peer reviewed data knows to be effective in lowering abortion rates. The data had shown that sex education, contraception and prenatal care are factors that these college students thought would lower the rates of abortion which directly links to what the literature lists as factors that will reduce the rates or abortion. However, my participants thought bans on abortion and restrictive laws would lower the rates which we know to be false according to the literature.

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The opportunity to have an education and academic career is one I do not take lightly. My education is something I value dearly in my life because it is mine and can never be taken from me. Fredrick Douglas famously once said: Once you learn to read, you will be forever set free. My education has and will continue to set me free.

I would like to thank my family and friends who have supported me through this new and exciting process of researching. Most importantly, I would like to thank my mentor Dr. Trent Maurer for gently and patiently guiding me through this, at times, daunting process of researching and writing. Without his guidance and expertise, this project would not have been possible.

College Students' Perceptions of the Efficacy of Different Strategies to Reduce the Rate of Abortions

Introduction

The topic of abortion is extremely widespread and well known across our own nation and many different parts of the world. It is not a requirement for you to be a person who is well versed on the subject, or dealing with abortions on a daily basis to have a perception or opinion on the matter. However, it is almost certain that you have thoughts or a stance on the topic itself. Most consider themselves to be experts on this subject and you would be hard pressed to find a person whose stance is easily swayed. Many are set in their ways and typically do not deviate with what they perceive to be true, and it often has to do with religious affiliation among other variables. In our current times, this topic is being talked about all over the nation regarding the many different state wide abortion bans in states like Texas, Alabama and Georgia, all leading up to most recently, the nationwide overturning of Roe vs. Wade.

Now that we know what is being talked about around the country, we can get a better idea of what actually works and what does not regarding lowering abortion rates. The literature is clear about the efficacy of the many different strategies used to attempt to lower abortion rates. That is why it is astonishing that the people who are fighting to lower the rates are doing the exact opposite of what has been proven to lower them. The most vital piece of information we know is that restrictive abortion laws do not lead to lower rates. Per the Guttmacher report, we know that things such as focusing on the individual needs of the pregnant person, having policies grounded in medical ethics and having high quality contraceptive and prenatal care available are all things that do work (Guttmacher Institute, 2018). These things will lead to a lower rate of abortions.

As far as what we know does not work, the main and most prevalent one would be highly restrictive laws against abortions. They make it much more difficult for a pregnant person to obtain an abortion but not impossible. This may lead to much more unsafe and risky means of terminating a pregnancy which makes the problem even worse. A study done by Medoff considered those restrictive laws and how making abortions harder to receive affected the unintended birth rates. He found that "Using a variety of methodologies, the empirical results show that, contrary to the theoretical prediction, these four antiabortion laws do not have a significant positive effect on unintended birth rates" (Medoff, 2015, p 589).

It is important to note that these two points of what work and what do not work are just scratching the tip of the iceberg. There is so much literature to compare and review but we know that they all coincide with one another. It is clear to me what people "think" will lower the rates and that is clear in our news and media today. As previously mentioned, the recent overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* is a great example of the knowledge of these politicians and policy makers. If what they want is to truly lower the rates of abortion, they need to put into effect the measures that the data and research lays out for them.

Literature Review

Perception is "to attain awareness or understanding" according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Merriam-Webster, n.d). However, perceptions can become easily skewed when you are not *aware* of the full picture. Perceptions can be affected by many differing variables in a person's life such as social class, gender, race, religion, and many varying lived experiences. They could be likened to the "rose colored glasses" that one may see the world through. Being that perceptions are an integral part of who we are as individuals, it is difficult to comprehend that there has been no research done on the perceptions of what lowers the rates of abortions.

How is it that there is extensive research on the topic of abortion itself, but a complete void of research on perceptions surrounding the methods of lowering the rates and their efficacy? Perreria et al. states that “no national studies have documented current perceptions of abortion access among women residing in the United States or the associations between abortion policy contexts and perceptions of abortion access” (Perreria et al., 2020, p 1039).

The weight of false perceptions

There are a majority of Americans who are alarmingly misinformed on the topic of abortion. Americans overestimate the safety risks for women who have abortions. Most participants in a poll done by vox.com thought abortion is either "less safe" or "about as safe" for women as giving birth (Kliff, 2016). “These misperceptions aren't just unfortunate psychological quirks; they work together to contribute to a view of abortion as being infrequent and risky for the people who have one. That ultimately shapes the way we regulate abortion in the United States and how we judge which restrictions ought to stand” (Kliff, 2016, p 7).

Perceptions and false information in the media are causing a major shift in the thought process of Americans and it is apparent. “By magnifying the size of the perceived problem, it could intensify the effort to restrict abortions” (Kliff, 2016, p 31). The problem is that Americans aren't coming up with this false information all on their own; they are receiving it from outside sources.

The internet is a wasteland of false information that is being spoon-fed for the public to consume regularly. Abortion misinformation is among one of the many topics that is frequently and regularly misreported on because it is unregulated. For example, a cross sectional online survey about false abortion websites states, “While there is a vast repository of searchable information online, much of the content is unregulated and therefore potentially incorrect, conflicting, or confusing. Abortion information online is particularly prone to being inaccurate as

anti-choice websites publish purposefully misleading information in formats that appear as neutral resources” (Chaiken et al., 2021, p 1). How can a person have a valid perception of what lowers the rates of abortion if the information that is posted online about it is not only unregulated but misrepresented in order to persuade people?

This kind of misinformation is detrimental for our society to be able to consume readily. “Inaccurate information about abortion, known as *abortion misinformation*, adversely affects knowledge about abortion, and may impair informed decision-making” (Patev & Hood, 2020, p 1). The goal is that our public would be properly informed when making decisions about such a crucial topic, but how should we expect that from them when there is an unregulated amount of websites disguised to earn the favor of the population they are looking to attract?

In recent years, it is apparent that bans on abortion are becoming much more widespread and prevalent. However, from the peer reviewed literature, we know that this tactic to reduce abortions will likely be counterproductive to the ostensible outcome. “These restrictive policies do not appear to have been the primary driver of declining abortion rates. There was also no consistent relationship between increases or decreases in clinic numbers and changes in state abortion rates” (Jones et al., 2017, p 7). These restrictive laws are not only ineffective in lowering the rates of abortion, but they are also harmful to patients and providers alike. “Abortion related laws build on the misconceptions that those who seek abortions are irresponsible or selfish and on the inaccurate stereotype that abortion is dangerous or unsafe” (Turan & Budhwani, 2021, p 37). Health care providers and patients have been harassed, shamed and regarded as deviants.

“Abortion itself is not associated with an increased risk of any physical or mental health issues, but experiences and fears of abortion related stigma can result in lower self-efficacy, reduced perceptions of social support to help with abortion decision making, increased use of

denial and avoidance coping techniques, and avoidance of needed services” (Turan & Budhwani, 2021, p 38).

It is clear to see that the intensity surrounding the topic of abortion is palpable. Both sides of the debate are firm in their stance and often times feel extremely strongly about their position; they will go to any measure to ensure the world is perceiving abortion the way they want them to. As they continue to push their uninformed and biased perspectives, information, and perceptions, on the unassuming public, they are unknowingly leading themselves further away from their original goal!

Research Questions/Hypotheses

The guiding research question for this project is: What do college students think will be the efficacy of multiple different strategies that claim to lower the rate of abortion, and how do those perceptions compare to what we know the data has established reduces abortion rates? Living in a modern world where the internet is our main source of information is something that should be revered and feared to some degree. With the sheer volume of abortion misinformation that is available to the public, it will be interesting to uncover the perceptions of Georgia Southern University students. I want to be able to understand how their perceptions compare to the accurate and inaccurate information using my quantitative data. Furthermore, I want to understand where these perceptions may stem from using the qualitative data I have collected and where my participants land amongst it all.

Method

Sample and Participant Selection

The final sample included 67 college students ranging in age from 18-25 years old with the mean being 20.4 and the standard deviation being 1.7. From the sample, we received 64.2% identified as Female participants, 22.4% identified as Male participants, 0.00% identified as Gender-queer or Non-Binary and 0.00% self-reported their identity as “A better description not specified above”. None of the participants preferred not to answer, being 0.00%, and 13.4% did not report a gender identity at all. The ethnicities reported were, 0.00% American Indian/ Native American, 9.0% African American/ Black, 0.00% Asian/ Asian American, 3.0% Hispanic/Latino/Latina, 74.6% White, 0.00% Multiracial, 0.00% reported “A better description not specified above”, and 13.4% did not report an Ethnicity at all.

Assessments and Measures

This research study used a survey that included three open-ended questions, along with a Likert-type scale for participants to rate which factors they thought would increase the rate of abortions, as opposed to those they thought would decrease the rates of abortions. As there were no previous measures or research on the specific subject of perceptions of the factors that lower abortion rates, the measures in this study are original to the study itself.

The survey itself uses a mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative questions for participants to answer. The survey was distributed through a link. It was sent out to multiple groups around campus, including CHFD classes using Folio, the Child and Family Development Club using a recruitment flyer, and Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority using Groupme. The first question was qualitative and gives participants a chance to share their own views and perceptions

of what is most effective, regarding laws and government policies, in lowering the rate of abortions. The survey then moves into the Likert-type scale.

Here, participants were presented with 6 factors in total taken from the research literature, 3 of which reduce the rate for abortions and 3 that are ineffective or sometimes counteractive and increase the rates. Participants are instructed to rate these factors from “will significantly reduce abortion rates” to “will significantly increase abortion rates”. Finally, participants were asked two more open ended qualitative questions. The first asks how they decided on their answers to the Likert-type scale. The final question simply asks if there are any questions that we have not asked in the survey on the topic of perceptions of lowering the rates of abortion and the laws and policies that go with them. See Appendix for the complete questionnaire.

Procedure

Survey participants were recruited as described above and notified about the survey through a post or flyer which provided a brief description of the purpose of this research study, as well as informing participants that there was no compensation for participation in the survey.

Upon clicking on the provided link, participants were then led to the informed consent page where they were made aware of the voluntary nature of the survey and that any and all responses would remain anonymous. After participants read the informed consent document, they were made aware that through the action of clicking to the next slide, they confirmed that they had read the informed consent and agreed to continue with the survey.

The first page of the survey defined the phrase “abortion rates” as “refers to the percentage of pregnant people who voluntarily terminate their pregnancies with an abortion

(either through medication or surgical procedures)” so that participants had an accurate understanding of the content of the survey before moving on to the body of it. Participants were presented with the survey body and answered the open-ended and the Likert-type scale questions. Once participants have moved through and answered the survey questions, they were led to a set of demographic questions to answer including their age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Finally, at the end of the survey, participants were met with a thank you message for participation in the survey and the contact information to resources that would be able to assist anyone who has been emotionally triggered or unsettled by the topic of the survey.

Results

This study was aimed at understanding college students’ perceptions of the efficacy of multiple different strategies to reduce the rates of abortions. Using a qualitative and quantitative approach to collect the data, I was able to analyze and understand where exactly the gap lies between what the research has shown to be effective in reducing abortion rates and college students' perceptions of different strategies.

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed with SPSS. The question posed to participants was “Listed below are six possible laws and policies that have been hypothesized to influence abortion rates (either positively or negatively). For each one, indicate *your* opinion on the likely influence of that law or policy on abortion rates”. Participants were asked to rate the overall effectiveness of the given factor from significantly reducing abortion rates to significantly increasing them. A total of 66 survey participants answered all 6 questions on the likert-scale and 1 participant did not fully answer all 6. For descriptive statistics see Table 1.

Table 1.

Question	Will significantly REDUCE abortion rates	Will somewhat REDUCE abortion rates	Will neither REDUCE nor INCREASE abortion rates	Will somewhat INCREASE abortion rates	Will significantly INCREASE abortion rates	Mean	Std. Deviation
Waiting periods of 24 hours or more from initial appointment to performing a surgical abortion	7.5% (5)	38.8% (26)	47.8% (32)	6.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	2.5	.7
Restricting state funding for abortions.	17.9% (12)	22.4% (15)	37.3% (25)	16.4% (11)	6.0% (4)	2.7	1.1
Affordable and accessible pre-natal care.	37.3% (25)	41.8% (28)	11.9% (8)	4.5% (3)	4.5% (3)	1.9	1.0
Widespread accessibility and affordability of contraception.	61.2% (41)	20.9% (14)	7.5% (5)	6.0% (4)	4.5% (3)	1.7	1.1
Legal ban of abortions altogether.	20.9% (14)	29.9% (20)	26.9% (18)	13.4% (9)	9.0% (6)	2.6	1.2

Comprehensive, medically-accurate sex education including information about contraception, disease prevention, and abstinence.	50.7% (34)	29.9% (20)	14.9% (10)	3.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.7	.8
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Note. Number in parentheses = Number of Participants. Responses were scored 1-5 with 1 = Will significantly REDUCE abortion rates and 5 = Will significantly INCREASE abortion rates

Qualitative Analysis

All qualitative data was obtained from the three open-ended questions within the survey. The data was exported from qualtrics and was coded on the qualitative data analysis software NVIVO.

The first question was “People vary significantly in their thoughts and opinions about abortion. When thinking **specifically about laws and government policies** that influence abortion rates, what is one factor that you think will reduce the rate of abortion?”

Nine themes emerged from the responses to this question: access to affordable contraception which 13 participants (6.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “better access to birth control and contraceptives”); complete ban/ strict laws on abortion which 12 participants (5.9% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Laws banning abortion will reduce the rate of abortion”); education which 14 participants (6.9% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Proper sex education on safe sex, pregnancy options, and deep education on birth control options as well as their side effects, different uses. Both for boys and girls”); fetus regarded as a

life which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “I think teaching people about the importance of life, touching their hearts. I think it will reduce rates also laws can be broken, change, so making a difference is in the person's heart and mind”); healthcare which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “HEALTHCARE! Access to free/reduced cost birth control (condoms, the pill, etc)”); reproductive autonomy which 3 participants (1.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “making it legal”); social welfare assisting mothers which 12 participants (5.9% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “accessible yet sensible financial aid to women/families that abort due to the financial burden they view a child to be”); traditional values which 1 participant (0.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Stop spreading it wide and laying it low for every Tom, Dic, and Harry. You can not make what you don’t enter. Keep the barn door closed, do not let anyone steal your milk and have it for free. Value your milk!.”); and women’s choice which 1 participant (0.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Allowing people to freely choose if they can have an abortion”)

The second question was “In answering the prior question about the influence on abortion rates of the listed laws and policies, what was the basis for your conclusions? In other words, how did you decide whether a given law or policy would reduce, increase, or have no impact on abortion rates?” Twelve themes emerged from the responses to this question: access to affordable contraception which 9 participants (4.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “I think that if free contraception is more widely spread than it will increase women using it leading them to lower their chances of having an unwanted pregnancy”); complete ban/ strict laws on abortion which 11 participants (5.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “By full out making abortion illegal then people will still have them just unsafely”); Education which 14 participants (6.9% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Knowledge gained from previous

classes taken at Georgia southern”),; fetus regarded as a life which 1 participant (0.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “It more of a opinion everyone has different outlooks on it. Everyone has rights but a baby being aborted is murder because it’s a living creature the mother is growing in her stomach”); healthcare which 3 participants (1.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “if the policy advocated for healthcare i think abortion rates would go down because less people would get pregnant by accident and if they are already pregnant than they could provide a healthy womb for the baby”); prenatal care which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “I think that anything that has to do with providing prenatal care, sex education, etc. will help people make informed decisions when it comes to sexual intercourse and thus reduce unwanted pregnancies and abortion”); preventing pregnancy which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “preventing the pregnancy will have a larger effect than the other options listed. if people want an abortion they will figure out a way to get it regardless”); religion which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “My Christian values”); reproductive autonomy which 3 participants (1.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Most of the laws trying to stop abortion will only increase the amount of unsafe ways to about an embryo. For those, I said no impact. for the ones helping people have safe pregnancies, I said decrease rates. For the ones that made it harder for people to afford a baby, I said increase.”); social welfare assisting mothers which 10 participants (4.9% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “I thought about how people could gain more help from all of the laws and policies before they made the ultimate decision of abortion. The laws/polices provided support and benefits to new mothers.”); traditional values which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “My grand mother generation did not have birth control and etc., stop hoe hopping and keep it in your pants. Teach people about sex and that’s it meant for love, you partner only, value your stuff in your pants it’s not meant for everyone. Having law

is good but we have laws for drugs, and people still do it.”); women's choice which 3 participants (1.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “I believe in womens choice.”).

The third and final question was “People vary significantly in their thoughts and opinions about abortion. No survey is going to fully capture all perspectives. When thinking about laws and government policies that could influence abortion rates, what have we *not* asked about that you think might influence those rates?” Nine themes emerged from the responses to this question: access to affordable contraception which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Affordability and accessibility for emergency contraceptives like the morning after pill”); complete ban/ strict laws on abortion which 3 participants (1.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “The Heartbeat bill”); Education which 3 participants (1.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Education about abortion and the statistics on them.”); fetus regarded as a life which 1 participant (0.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “I think that some women do not fully understand the gravity of what an abortion is actually doing. When an abortion is performed, a developing infant is being inoculated, or more graphically, killed. If women were made more aware of what was actually taking place, I believe they would be substantially more hesitant when pursuing the idea of having an abortion.”); healthcare which 1 participant (0.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “providing more healthcare resources such as birth control and general medical care- basically a more universal healthcare system”); rape cases which 2 participants (1.0% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Rape cases/victims. I'm surprised this wasn't covered in a survey about abortion when a large amount of abortions are from rapes, and should be analyzed differently”) religion which 5 participants (2.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “Religious influences based on regions; traditional values”); social welfare assisting Mothers which 8 participants (3.9% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “A serious overhaul of the foster and adoption system in the US, as

many abortion seekers completely forget that adoption is an option.”); traditional values which 1 participants (0.5% of the coded responses) mentioned (e.g., “How generations now aren’t afraid to have sex because they know they can get an abortion easily”).

Discussion

Prior to carrying out the research portion of this project, there were many questions that arose and became the driving force for wanting to research and study this topic. All of those questions lead to this project exploring what college students think is effective in lowering the rates of abortion, as opposed to what we know is effective in lowering abortion rates. It perplexed me that many of my peers were so sure that certain methods would be effective in lowering abortion rates when in reality many of those methods were not nearly as effective as they had perceived them to be. It made me wonder how uninformed their perceptions about this topic were.

After a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data received, it is clear that college students are much more informed on some factors and equally as uninformed on others. Going into this project I had thought that their perceptions would be much more uninformed as a whole, but was surprised to see that the overwhelming majority was correct according to what we know from the peer reviewed literature to be true. For example: The factor “Widespread accessibility and affordability of contraception” is a factor that has been proven to lower the rates of abortion (Jones et al., 2017). The overwhelming majority of participants thought this factor will significantly reduce abortion rates at 61.2% (n=41) and 20.9% (n=14) thought it would at least somewhat reduce the rates of abortion.

This was exciting to see because as previously stated, we know this to be a factor that will significantly reduce the rates of abortion. However, on the opposite side of that spectrum, it seemed that some of the factors were less on par with the literature. For example: The factor “Legal ban of abortions altogether” is one that we know based on the literature does not decrease the rate of abortions and can actually be counterproductive to its original goal (Medoff, 2016). Unfortunately, the majority of participants at 29.9% (n=20) thought this factor will somewhat reduce abortion rates and 20.9% (n=14) of participants thought this factor will significantly reduce abortion rates. Identifying and incorporating cultural values into decision-making reduce abortion rates.

The duality in these responses is a very interesting pattern that is noted throughout all of the data. I am however surprised at the factors that these college students seemed to be accurately informed on, but am not at all surprised to see things such as legal bans being a factor that most people thought would significantly reduce them. It has been fascinating to see where the gap in my sample is and it makes me wonder if there is a similar information gap within society.

As for the qualitative data, the overall tone and outcome of the answers given by participants was very similar if not mirroring the quantitative data. It seemed that most participants were well informed on some of the factors and on others not so much. Several participants stated to some degree that abortions would be lowered by a restrictive law or ban being put in place which matches the qualitative data perfectly. Many participants gave robust and well thought out answers to each question and others gave something rather short and to the point. However, there were a handful of participants who didn't answer the question that was posed at all. For example, in the first question I asked specifically about legal or government policies and some participants wrote about their “traditional values” avoiding the question completely.

Looking at the qualitative and quantitative data together, I am actually quite surprised at the amount which these college students' perceptions match up with the peer reviewed data. For example, when talking about comprehensive sex education in both qualitative and quantitative questions, it seemed that this is one factor that these college students knew would lower the rates of abortion. We see this trend also when it comes to affordable and accessible contraception being a factor that we know lowers the rates of abortion. The majority of participants in both qualitative and quantitative questions thought that affordable and accessible prenatal care would lower the rates which also matches up with the peer reviewed literature.

Unfortunately, the majority of participants thought that restrictive laws and policies would help to reduce abortion rates which we know to be untrue based on the peer reviewed literature. This however, was not surprising to me as I had assumed that many of the participants would have that perception based on location and demographic.

Limitations and Future Directions

This being an undergraduate research project, there were a plethora of limitations, one of the largest being demographics. Going to Georgia Southern University, many people tend to be from the southeast of a similar background, who are all enrolled in college. It would've been interesting to have a much more diverse perspective as opposed to a centralized one, but I had to use the population that was available to me.

As well as location demographics, I was working with a mostly female population so it would be interesting to have a larger number of men to be able to compare any differing trends in the information that men know vs women. Time was also another large limitation as this project is carried out over the course of 3 semesters. I would've loved to really be able to dive into and

comb through the data at length but with the time constraints I was only able to scratch the surface. However, I was able to collect my data before the supreme court overturned Roe vs Wade which made for a very interesting end to a project all about how factors such as bans on abortion and restrictive laws do not lower the rates of abortion.

The final limitation would be the lack of prior research. This specific research study has never been done before, leaving me with no measures to base my project off of and a full set of measures to design from the ground up. It would have been much easier to have something to go by making this project more challenging, however more important to find out the answers to.

Finally, I think the future direction for this project would be to expand it beyond the limits of what an undergraduate student can do. Maybe with some funding and a team of researchers it would be possible to look at this from society's perspective and not just a college student's. I also think that it is important to add more perspectives of pregnant people who have dealt with abortion first hand because these are the people that may have been affected by the misinformation directly and their voices deserve to be heard.

Reflective Critique

Learning how to research and write my capstone thesis has been like learning a new language. It has been an experience unlike any other. I had to learn everything from the ground up, but I can safely say I am better for it. Looking back on this project I cannot believe what I learned in just three semesters! At the beginning of this project, it felt like an impossible feat. One that others could conquer but I could not come near completing. During the process, I was full of doubts. Upon completing each piece of the project, I became more confident but was sure that I would soon realize that I was incapable of completing this.

Thankfully, I proved myself wrong. Throughout this research process I have learned so many new things. I have learned about academic writing and how to write a thesis. I have learned how to create a survey and recruit participants. I have learned how to collect and code data. I have learned how to manage my time and keep myself accountable for any delays. I have learned how to search through endless amounts of peer reviewed literature and how to pick out what is most valuable to your research. However, the most valuable thing I learned is that I am capable of immeasurably more than I ever could've imagined. I graduated high school with a 2.8 GPA. The closest I got to honors was having friends who graduated with honors. Through this project I have learned that I can do anything if I truly set my mind to it. I am so thankful for The Georgia Southern Honors College for giving me this opportunity to show my younger self that I did it!

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University students' perceptions of what lowers the rate of abortion

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Welcome! This research study will explore factors hypothesized to lower rates of abortion. The data is being collected for a student's thesis project in the University's Honors College. The purpose of this study is to obtain data on college students' perceptions of the effectiveness of multiple factors in lowering rates of abortion.

Page Break

Q2

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

Informed Consent for College Students' Perceptions of the Efficacy of Different Strategies to Reduce Abortion Rates

1. This study is being done by Sophia Doros, an undergraduate student in the University Honors College. All data collected will be used for a capstone thesis project as part of the Honors College requirement.

2. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to obtain insight into how college students perceive the factors that reduce the rate of abortions.

3. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this research will include completion of an online survey. Participants will be asked to answer a few open-ended questions along with rating the effectiveness of several factors that affect abortion rates.

4. Discomforts and Risks: Topics addressed in the study include information about different policies and practices that have been hypothesized to lower abortion rates. Possible risks include discomfort about an issue that could be sensitive to some participants. If at any time discomfort arises from the topics addressed, participants may reach out to the University's Counseling Center at 912-478-5541.

5. Benefits: a. The benefits of participation include the opportunity to reflect on one's knowledge of policies and practices hypothesized to lower the rate of abortions. b. The benefits to society include revealing possible areas in which future research could be explored on the topic of abortion and perceptions about how to effectively lower its rate.

6. Duration/Time required from the participant: You will only be involved in a one-time survey. The estimated time of participation is 10 minutes long.

7. Statement of Confidentiality: The survey is completely anonymous; no questions will be asked in regard to identifiers. All data will be stored on a password protected personal computer of the Principal Investigator and the co-investigator's password protected work computer. Data will also be stored and collected on the principal investigator's password protected accounts on Qualtrics and Google Drive, provided through the university.

8. Future use of data: The data will be maintained for future use in a de-identified fashion. The method used to render it anonymous for future use is that, no identifying data will be collected, all responses will be anonymous.

9. Right to Ask Questions: As a participant, you have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named below or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board at 912-478-5465 or irb@georgiasouthern.edu.

10. Compensation: There will be no compensation offered for participation in this survey.

11. Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to end participation at any time throughout the duration of the survey. If you decide to stop participation, you can do so by exiting the survey.

12. Penalty: You may decide at any time they do not want to participate further and you may withdraw without penalty or retribution.

13. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this survey.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the GS Institutional Review Board under tracking number

Title of Project: College Students' Perceptions of the Efficacy of Different Strategies to Reduce Abortion Rates
Principal Investigator: Sophia Doros, sd15726@georgiasouthern.edu
Research Advisor: Dr. Trent Maurer, (912) 478-1522, tmaurer@georgiasouthern.edu

To indicate your consent to participate in this research study, please click "next" advance to the next page and begin the survey. If you do not consent to participate, please close this browser window to exit.

Page Break

Q1 For the purposes of this survey, the phrase "abortion rates" refers to the percentage of pregnant people who voluntarily terminate their pregnancies with an abortion (either through medication or surgical procedures).

Q2 People vary significantly in their thoughts and opinions about abortion. When thinking **specifically about laws and government policies** that influence abortion rates, what is one factor that you think will reduce the rate of abortion?

Page Break

Q2 Listed below are six possible laws and policies that have been hypothesized to influence abortion rates (either positively or negatively). For each one, indicate **your** opinion on the likely influence of that law or policy on abortion rates.

	Will significantly REDUCE abortion rates (1)	Will somewhat REDUCE abortion rates (2)	Will neither REDUCE nor INCREASE abortion rates (3)	Will somewhat INCREASE abortion rates (4)	Will significantly INCREASE abortion rates (5)
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Waiting periods of 24 hours or more from initial appointment to performing a surgical abortion. (1)

Restricting state funding for abortions. (2)

Affordable and accessible pre-natal care. (3)

Widespread accessibility and affordability of contraception. (4)

Legal ban of abortions altogether. (5)

Comprehensive, medically-accurate sex education including information about contraception, disease prevention, and abstinence. (6)

Q3 In answering the prior question about the influence on abortion rates of the listed laws and policies, what was the basis for your conclusions? In other words, how did you decide whether a given law or policy would reduce, increase, or have no impact on abortion rates?

Page Break

Q4 People vary significantly in their thoughts and opinions about abortion. No survey is going to fully capture all perspectives. When thinking about **laws and government policies** that could influence abortion rates, what have we **not** asked about that you think might influence those rates?

Page Break

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

Q5 What is your current age? (Please use a numeric response)

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Q6 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Genderqueer/ Non-binary (3)
- A better description not specified above (4)
- Prefer not to answer (5)

Q7 What is your race?

- American Indian/ Native American (1)
- African American/ Black (2)
- Asian/ Asian American (3)
- Hispanic/Latino/Latina (4)
- White (5)
- Multiracial (6)
- A better description not specified above (7)

Q14 Thank you for your participation in this survey!

If you experienced any emotional distress while taking part in this study, contact the Georgia Southern University Counseling Center.

To contact the Counseling Center, please call 912-478-5541.

Q15 Below are resources if you are seeking additional support:

National Abortion Federation Hotline: 1-800-772-9100

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK (8255)