

# The Abortion Privilege: What Power Looks Like in the Aftermath of A Landmark Abortion Case Overturned

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## Abstract

On June 24, 2022, one of the most controversial Supreme Court cases, *Roe v. Wade*, landed in a ruling to overturn individual protections for abortion after five decades of legality. The decision, symbolizing not only reproductive freedom, reshaped America's social, cultural, and economic landscapes. While scholars long studied variables influencing abortion attitudes in public polling data, few paid attention to rooting people's attitudes in associated risks and imagined consequences of abortion overturned. The study used quantitative data from a demographic, attitudinal survey, and qualitative data from in-depth interviews to unpack the dense aftermath of the overturning of abortion rights on four levels: the individual, relational, societal, and cultural levels. Whereas gendered childcare, bodily autonomy, and the disenfranchisement of economic and symbolic power drove the discussions at the individual and relational levels, apprehension in the feminist agenda, political polarization, and socioeconomic status reflected public insecurities on the societal and cultural levels. This work conceptualized the profound social ramifications of abortion overturned by understanding people's perceived social risks on different levels of impact, pointing out new productions of inequalities in this process.

**Keywords:** Abortion, *Roe v. Wade*, Gender, Reproductive Politics, Childcare, Power, Inequality

## 1. Introduction

Merely five years ago, one in four women in the U.S. would have an abortion by age 45 (Jones, Jerman, 2017). Today, abortion-seeking as a common experience has become a pastime. As I write in the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision to revoke the individual protections established in the Supreme Court rulings in the cases of *Roe v. Wade*, *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*, and *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Healthcare*, 13 states around the country had banned most abortion procedures. The current generation of young Americans is facing a more restricted reproductive landscape than their parents before them. This study aims to unravel the social, economic, political, and cultural ramifications of *Roe's* overturn after five decades of legalized abortion.

Sociologists have long been interested in understanding the staunch partisan divide of abortion from the 1970s persisted through the 2020s, fueling the cultural wars in America (DiMaggio et al., 1996; Florian et al., 2006; Koleva et al., 2012; Lewis, 2017). Some past works have treated abortion as political sorting of ideological camps, with fewer conservatives supporting legal abortion each year after abortion was legalized in the 1973 Supreme Court ruling on *Roe v. Wade* and more liberals supporting abortion (Adams, 1997; Carrey & Lauman, 2006; Levendusky, 2009). Yet often, the labels of pro-choice and pro-life advocates between the liberal and conservative parties oversimplify the topic. More recent scholarships have addressed various attitudinal,

behavioral, and sociodemographic factors influencing attitudes toward legal abortion. Researchers have attempted to interrogate differences of opinion by political affiliation, religion, race, education, and other significant independent variables. For example, research comparing religious people's attitudes toward abortion with non-religious have proved personal religiosity to be one of the most powerful indicators of support for legal abortion (Hoffmann, Johnson, 2005; Valdimarsdóttir, Adamczyk, 2018; Dozier, Hennink, Molskey, Narasimhan, 2020). Similarly, education affects abortion attitudes as college graduates are shown to be one-third of a point more supportive in the conditional marginal difference of legal abortion than high school graduates in the General Social Surveys, 1974-2018 (Hout, Perrett, Cowan, 2022). The trend on race has reversed as fewer Blacks supported legal abortion (on the net) than White people in the 1980s, but significantly more Black people have turned to support legal abortion after the 1990s. These scholarly efforts to interpret characteristics shaping people's abortion attitudes demonstrate a rising tendency toward polarization in the United States, indicated by the growing social and demographic differences.

While variables that Oseie abortion attitudes have been studied extensively over time, little attention has been paid to uncovering where such attitudes come from and their subsequent systems of impact on people seeking abortion care. To further decipher the factors influencing abortion, I ask what people consider while forming

opinions on abortion. Previous studies on abortion stigma address how individuals experience socially based emotions and structurally endorsed outcomes during the abortion process (Baker, Papp, Crawford, McClelland, 2023). Studies reveal that women consider judgments from others as a major underlying factor in their decisions to get an abortion or conceal the fact of having undergone an abortion. These studies also shed light on how stigma circulates among individuals and communities, implicating the social and cultural production of abortion stigmas. I build upon this idea of surrounding meso and macro cultural and structural influences to examine four imagined consequences people conjure while forming attitudes toward abortion. These four levels include the individual level, where people directly associate risks with individuals; the relational level, where two or more interacting parties experience a similar effect; the societal level, where changes in structural settings jolt groups of individuals in the system; and the cultural level where ideologies or values transmit impact on the environment within which individuals are embedded.

I first investigate public opinions by asking about people's perceived impacts of abortion on others and themselves in a study survey. The demographic data in the survey pinpoint sociodemographic differences, and prominent characteristics of people's considerations in the aftermath of the abortion overturn. Bodily Autonomy, Economic Status, and Childcare have emerged as key considerations that altered people's opinions. These prominent codes are later supported by qualitative interview data analysis illustrating four change levels. Despite these factors' frequent appearances in the common abortion discourse,

few studies have been dedicated to connecting them with the multitude of impacts they exert on people's abortion views and access. I illustrate that abortion and reproductive policies are part of a social process with deep circumstantial and associational implications.

Whereas the survey encompasses general data of people from diverse age groups, the in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis present data from mostly young adults of different genders, sexuality, and race. This is because young people face the most legal restrictions to abortion under parental consent laws and the most consequences to overturning abortion in their teens. Their insights are valuable to understanding the interpersonal, relational, societal, and cultural levels of risks associated with abortion. This paper helps us think through how concretely identifying a variable affecting abortion attitude is not as simple as coming to reveal a factor's spanning influence on four different levels of an individual's experience with the overturning of abortion. When the focus of abortion has evolved from legal access to privileged, selected care, it becomes a social force amplifying current power structures, driving divides across lines of gender, sexuality, class, and race. Restrictive abortion laws may not be as impactful for some groups of people as others. As a result, I argue that overturning Roe v. Wade can marginalize some identities, intervene in people's social networks, and make certain groups' futures seem more unattainable. In the following pages, I outline the forces behind this nationwide abortion curtail that is expected and already shifting lives, communities, and society.

## 2. Method

**Table I: Female vs. Male Survey Data Table**

Demographic Groups	% Of Participants In Each Group
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	37
Female	61
Non-Binary	2
<b>Age</b>	
18-289	63
30-39	13
40-49	14
50-64	10
<b>Race</b>	
Asian and Pacific Islander	81

Caucasian	11
African American	6
Hispanic and Latino	2
<b>sexuality</b>	
Heterosexual	64
Bisexual	21
Asexual	7
Queer	3
Pansexual	3
Gay	2
<b>Religious Affiliations</b>	
Non-religious	65
Christian	13
Buddhist	12
Catholic	3
Jewish	3
Hindu	2
Multireligious	2

This study collected two types of data, one from a survey investigating differential abortion attitudes among different groups in the United States and the other from structured interviews. The survey interrogates the opinions and behaviors of the general population after the overturning of Roe v. Wade or constitutional abortion rights. It allows individuals to answer anonymously with the option of leaving their preferred way of communication to be contacted for additional information and structured interviews. Survey data were collected between August 2022 and January 2023, where 100 participants above 18, residing in the U.S., completed the survey. Table I provides more detailed information on the survey participants' demographics. Some notable population differences include that 81% of participants were Asians and Pacific Islanders, 61% of the participants were female, 63% of participants were aged 18-29, 64% of participants were heterosexual, and 65% of participants were Non-religious. Given the above percentages of demographics, I conclude that the survey does not embody an equal proportion of all US demographics. Still, it represents a particular point of view of Asian Americans, the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States.

Participants are recruited in-person and online around the New England and California regions. Data is visited regularly throughout the planning and data collection phases to maximize sample diversity, adjust recruitment, and monitor results' validity. Although some demographic factors were skewed in this survey, I didn't intentionally emphasize the recruitment of one demographic over another, as I believe some of these differences innately reflect differential attitudes toward abortion. After all, the data were collected, I summoned the cumulative results for each question to interpret preliminary findings and check participant biases. Then, I organized interpretations and compared results from a list of selected questions for the demographics involving Asian vs. Non-Asian participants, Male vs. Female participants, Heterosexual vs. Non-heterosexual participants, and Religious vs. Non-religious participants. The results table for Male vs. Female participants was especially meaningful; the quantitative data provided core hypotheses and guiding practices for my follow-up qualitative data collection. Ten survey participants of different demographics — gender, sexuality, and race— were invited to the structured interviews. I conducted the interviews with theoretically

informed expectations from the survey. I entered the field to test whether they could explain what was seen from the survey. Three major questions that emerged from the Male vs. Female survey data were used to guide the in-depth interviews that averaged 20-30 minutes each. The interviews were crucial in explaining the underlying factors behind people's attitudes toward abortion, often relating to people's understanding of abortion's impact on different groups. These texts responded to many hypothesized themes from the survey and revealed deeper, more insightful findings discussed in the next section.

All interviews were transcribed and checked with redundancy and clarity for coding. I conducted both deductive and inductive coding in the qualitative analysis process. The three codes that emerged from the survey and literature review—*Bodily Autonomy*, *Economic Status*, and *Childcare*—were used in the individual, relational, societal, and cultural levels of analysis. Each code was highlighted in a designated color and compared frequently in participants' texts and with other codes. Drawing on the survey data analysis, the deductive interview coding process was specifically grounded in attention to gendered responses to abortion overturn and impact.

I also used an inductive coding approach where unfamiliar themes emerged from deep engagement with the interview data. After rigorous coding, I noted the emergence of two categorical themes: *Political Power* and *The Right to Privacy*. These analytic categories are anchored in participants' own proposed interpretations of their

imagined and lived experiences after the overturning of Roe, not imposed from former literary presumptions. The five themes altogether offer unique perspectives from the participants. I analyze all relevant texts emphasizing the social context to avoid the generalization and abstraction of cases. By delineating different threads of observations in each categorical theme, I center my explanation on systems of influence, representative quotes, and their implications in the finding section.

The study organizes results into four levels of impact, the individual level, the relational level, the societal level, and the cultural level. I draw from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which emphasizes multiple levels of social environments that influence individual lives to adopt a holistic perspective on abortion's impact on various social groups. Using Bronfenbrenner's framework, I look at individual development, considering wider influencing factors and the social and cultural contexts within which people are embedded.

As a final review of interview textual data, I transformed qualitative codes into quantitative representations in Table II. I determine the number of texts each code appears at least once and the percentage of texts it appears in the whole corpus. In this way, the quantitative data table serves as a symbolic summary of the measured outcome I support with qualitative analysis in the section below.

### 3. Findings

**Table II: Female vs. Male Survey Analysis Data**

1: extremely impactful/important 7: not impactful/important at all	Female (Average Score)	Male (Average Score)
How Impactful Is The Abortion Overturn To You?	2.90	3.92
How Impactful Is The Abortion Overturn To Others?	2.54	2.47
How important is addressing abortion in the 2022 midterm election? (before midterm elections)	2.51	4.03

Table II shows the gendered results for three key analysis questions in the survey. These primary findings point to impacts on the individual, relational, and political levels and shed light on three inductive codes in the qualitative analysis: bodily autonomy, childcare, and political power. First of all, the average score for how impactful the overturning of Roe v. Wade is to oneself was rated as 2.90 impactful for female participants, whereas it was rated as 3.92 for males. This means that female participants feel that abortion overturn was generally more impactful to them, with a 1.02 higher average rating. There's a significant gender gap worth interrogating. I drew inquiries about participants' implicit bias and belief

on gender roles and childcare to further analyze this gender gap. Based on male participants' generally higher rating for impactfulness, I hypothesized that people might bear implicit biases believing that men bear fewer responsibilities or women bear more responsibilities in the face of pregnancy, abortion, or childbirth. I ask how much the prospect of having children influences males and females similarly or differently in later interviews following up with participants who participated in this survey. The preliminary findings suggest that people feel differential individual-level impacts after the overturn of abortion.

In the following question, I posed how impactful is the

overturning of *Roe v. Wade* to others. Female and male participants displayed a similar average score, with males scoring 2.47, slightly lower (more impactful) than the females scoring 2.54. Compared with the previous question, both female and male participants feel that overturning *Roe v. Wade* is more impactful to others than themselves. Yet male participants feel more significantly this way, as they rated a significantly higher 3.92 for themselves in the previous question. These survey results revealed important relational impacts to the overturning of abortion rights. I address this salient finding by following up with interview participants to examine how they feel the overturning of *Roe* would be impactful for others, with specific examples included in the qualitative analysis.

Additionally, the third question investigated participants' opinions on abortion in the 2022 midterm election before its closure. While abortion's effect on swaying political behaviors, such as voting, has been studied extensively, the gendered difference, in this case, was often ignored. The survey results point to another political gender that exemplifies the structural impact of the overturning of abortion of different populations.

Overall, female participants feel it's more important to address reproductive health issues (such as abortion and birth control) in the 2022 midterm election, with an average score of 2.51. In contrast, male participants feel it's less important, scoring an average of 4.03. I ask why more women correlate abortion with politics, and what part of political standings are they relating abortion to — bodily autonomy, choice, or sexual citizenship? I also hypothesized that more females believe that politics hold certain control over their reproductive lives. From this hypothesis, I raised questions to interview participants regarding the impacts of the overturning of abortion on women's social standing and the structural level.

After all, the survey's major findings highlighted key gender differences and influences on individual, relational, and structural levels. It enhanced three inductive codes — bodily autonomy, child care, and political power — and guided the in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis processes.

**Table III: Interview Coding Data**

<i>Code</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Bodily Autonomy</i>	<i>1.0</i>
<i>Economic Status</i>	<i>0.9</i>
<i>Childcare</i>	<i>0.9</i>
<i>Political Power</i>	<i>0.6</i>
<i>The Right to Privacy</i>	<i>0.3</i>

The percentage of corpus texts in which a code appears at least once is denoted as a value between 0 and 1, called *p*.

As this research focuses on understanding the aftermath of the overturning of abortion in the United States, the results reflect many social impacts on the individual and societal levels. Using the Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory, I adopt a holistic perspective on how individuals interact with their environments. The work looks beyond personal consequences, considering wider influencing factors and the contexts within which people are embedded.

The quantitative data in TABLE 1 indicate that people discussed economic status, bodily autonomy, childcare, political polarization, and the right to privacy. Below, I also reference and elaborate on each subject to support the quantitative data with qualitative analysis.

In my findings, I categorize systems of influence on four levels: individual level, relational level, societal level, and cultural level. These different layers of social and cultural influence explain how people's lives are affected by the overturning of abortion in many ways. The four systems are interrelated, such that the influence of one system may be interwoven with others. I present these four categories of impact in the following section, provide examples of the topics discussed in each category and discuss their implications.

### **A. Individual Level**

The interactions within the individual level of influence are often personal, including things that directly impact individuals in their immediate environment after the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* and abortion. Participants expressed concerns about the negative impacts of the post-*Roe* environment on personal choices, encompassing both their own and other related and unrelated individuals. One heterosexual female participant, Abigail Katz, referred to resources, such as “medical reasonings,” “money,” and “where you live,” as increasingly important factors of empowerment and disempowerment after the overturn of abortion. She perceives people without resources as vulnerable, with choices becoming significantly narrower for those who can't “travel across state lines” or are subjected to “difficult finance,” like those who are “unable to get the morning-after pills.” As a heterosexual youth, Abigail Hart suggests that the abovementioned factors would play a greater role later in her life. However, she acknowledges that those factors are urgent for many underprivileged people.

Another heterosexual female, Joey Qiao, echoed Abigail's account of an increased social risk for childbearing, arguing that it has a disproportionate individual-level impact on women. In one scenario she described, Qiao listed the direct consequences of not being able to get legal abortions, including more “healthcare stress, financial stress,” stress on mothers of unwanted children with the experience of childbearing, and women who



might “go to the back alley” to get illegal abortions outside of legal restraints. Qiao compared the risks of childbearing after the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* with the risk of an economy running into recession. She continued to explain the physical and realistic considerations that burden women who carry unwanted children:

*“Because a lot of mothers aren’t ready to be a mom yet, and they are not ready to go on maternal leave, the overturning of Roe v. Wade leaves women in positions where they’re unable to take care of their bodies and lives.”*

There’s a consensus in the interview data that the overturning of abortion impacts women more directly. Under the theme of bodily autonomy, all participants out of the 100% who mentioned the theme of bodily autonomy included women in the texts in which they reference the theme. Concerns surfaced in two strands, as implied by Qiao’s quote, on women’s physical health and livelihood after childbearing. Maggie Osei, another heterosexual woman, attached a broad range of dangers to pregnancy and motherhood, associating abortion access with women’s reproductive health. Osei exclaimed that limiting abortion access can have fatal consequences for women with poor health. In contrast, women are “punished,” and men, who also engage in sexual relationships, do not receive equal consequences. The relationship between the mother and the child is the only one of direct impact upon which women perform childbearing and childbirth.

In addition to the association of abortion with reproductive health, 90% of participants in the interview connected abortion with some degree of power owned on the individual level. For instance, Osei claimed that “power has been taken away from women,” as abortion rights, a right she presumed to be a personal choice, were overturned. Some others also view this process as bi-directional, meaning the disenfranchising of women’s choices can become an enfranchise on the men’s side. A bisexual woman, Andrea Salerno, believed that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* “makes women feel they have less control over their bodies, in a way that they are almost less than men.” In this case, the social impact is the loss of power in one’s body and the resulting power imbalance from an unequal share of consequences. The image of the unmarried woman unable to escape the burden of childbirth would push the discourse of economic status and childcare further at societal and cultural levels.

### **B. Relational Level**

The relational level encompasses interactions between two or more parties on the individual level. In this system of impact, the individual may not be directly related to an interaction but connected to its effects by one direct

medium. For instance, a mother’s body is physically attached to the baby or the fetus. In contrast, a man’s body is not, while men can still experience a certain degree of impact by limiting abortion. Individuals’ differential ties with stakeholders determine the risks of relational impact. There are two ways that people mentioned relational impact in the interview. Firstly, participants discussed the social ties that individuals carry in their communities. For example, a participant explained the significance of *Roe v. Wade* to many people in society by arguing that “everyone has family members that might give birth or might become pregnant, like an aunt, a daughter, a sibling...” Familial ties are one example of the many connections in an individual’s social network. Other ties include friendships, romantic relationships, group or organizational affiliations, etc. In this context, abortion and childbirth are not only events that redefine one’s own identity but events that also redefine others’ identities. The new roles and responsibilities created for those affiliated with the direct recipient of abortion overturned constitute the relational level of impacts.

The most prominent example throughout the participants’ speech is the relationship between a prospective child’s mother and father. Many participants argued that there’s a weaker connection between the men and the prospective child as fetuses live in the woman’s wombs. Avery Xiao, a gender-fluid man, suggested that impact can be measured by how close the bond of relational stakeholders and the primary stakeholders are— with primary stakeholders being the ones who go through an abortion, namely the women and the fetus. Xiao said that because men “don’t experience the 10-months pregnancy, they have a lot less to worry about, especially when the relationship is not in a marriage.” He points out that biological ties and legal bonds are two key factors in determining men’s responsibilities in childbirth. Although a man does not bear the equal consequences to the overturn of abortion rights, it affects them relationally through childcare responsibilities and identity shifts, regardless of marital status or biological ties.

Interestingly, people also brought up the relational impacts of the overturn of abortion on themselves by referencing groups of people with little or no social ties with them in their immediate environment. Salerno said, “Although [the overturn of abortion] might not affect someone personally, it’s still important for single mothers or women who simply cannot afford to have a child out there.” She demonstrated concern for a vulnerable population at risk of harm under tightening abortion restrictions. Yet such ties are distant and vague compared to impacts from the immediate network.

### **C. Societal Level**

The societal level of influence incorporates structures

or environments in which the individual is involved. These impacts tend to be more external to individuals' experiences than the previous systems of impact, but they are impactful. The discourse around economic status is at the forefront of societal impacts. Many participants raised concerns about abortion's potential influence on the working class. Andrew Yuan pointed out that socioeconomic status, often intertwined with race, played a significant role in the abortion process. With a plethora of restrictions enacted after the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, Yuan argued:

*"Rich white women will not be as impacted by this decision as poor women because when you go to an abortion clinic, they will be willing to pay more. They will probably be more accepted than women of other races and social and economic standings."*

Some of the societal impacts of *Roe v. Wade* overturned are tied to inequalities within the system. Wealth, a prominent indicator of privilege a small designated group holds, aggravates inequality. Accessing safe and legal abortion has become hard for many without the abortion privilege — the privilege of having abortion care in the state, paid for by private or public health insurance or other easily accessible funds. People at the margins of society face the most undue burdens with limited abortion access. Meanwhile, these people are acutely the ones who would most likely seek and obtain abortion care in the first place, as US public polling data shows that most abortion patients come from low-income backgrounds, live below the poverty line, and are disproportionately women of color (Guttmacher Institute, 2017). In other words, abortion restrictions impose the most substantial barriers on the most vulnerable groups of women seeking abortion care.

These findings provide a look into how the economic stress of abortion compounds with racial and gender inequalities in the U.S. Some data supporting this claim include that when new abortion restrictions surged from 2018 to 2020, the average U.S. maternal mortality rate increased from 17.4 deaths to 23.8 deaths per 100,000 live births for White women. In contrast, it increased from 17.4 deaths to 28.4 deaths per 100,000 live births for Black women (PRB, 2021). In these observed disparities, a systemic narrative of abortion access privilege arises. Savannah LeBarge, a transgender man, enlisted historical knowledge on the prospering 1990s economy, right after 18-20 years after *Roe v. Wade* decision was passed, to argue for her opinion on abortion's potential impact on the US society:

*"There's concrete proof that it [the passing of Roe] did something. There were lower crime rates and a prospering*

*economy, and this is what happens when women get to choose their bodies. There's more financial stability in general."*

LeBarge brought up the reproduction of opportunities in U.S. society to illustrate how abortion can become part of the process. While wealth and cultural capital are outcomes of individual endeavors, they are equally likely the result of inheritance in a society like the U.S. Children born into more wealthy and healthy families are more likely to succeed (Hess, 2019). Savannah is a recipient of economic and schooling privileges, as she explains in the interview:

*"Myself, I was born when my mom was 40 years old. My sisters when my mom was 38. And that extra time she had before we were born gave her that financial stability for me to come here and attend boarding school."*

There are many societal consequences associated with unprepared childbirth. The denial of abortion can relegate children and families to physical, mental, and economic hardships lasting for generations. Without adequate support programs, families also bear the weight of an unprepared system for child welfare and education. LeBarge expressed concern for the estimated 10,000 babies born between July and now who wouldn't have been born without new abortion laws. Qiao believed that "it's irresponsible to bring a child into the world if you know that the child is not going to have a happy upbringing" or if "the child would be born to unprepared single mothers."

The narrative of the unmarried, childbearing single mom looms in the backdrop of many discourses, from the disparity of the women's and the men's childbearing experience to ones in the workplace. An idea that repeatedly appeared throughout the theme of economic status is employment and equal payment. As the costs of getting an abortion rise, more women would give birth to children instead of working. Childbearing and maternal leave have been major causes of gender disparities in employment and workspaces' salaries. Many female and male participants discussed the correlation between abortion and women's employment opportunities. Qiao explained her worries about employment bias:

*"Before Roe, employers knew that when a married woman gets pregnant, they have the choice to get an abortion. But now that employers know there's no way for women to get an abortion in certain states, they might prefer not to employ women anymore. This is already an existing problem because of maternal leave and just exacerbating with no abortion."*

Young women in this study were especially worried about the resurgence of discriminatory workplace policies against women due to childbirth. The negative impacts participants associate with childbirth include expelling pregnant students from schools, firing pregnant employees, and denying employment to women with children. Participants frequently inferred an increased social risk of childbirth or failed abortion, attributing the illegitimacy of unmarried single mothers. However, it's important to note that abortion is not a practice limited to the unmarried, and hence no longer committed solely to escape the social disgrace associated with illegitimacy or the pressure of being a single mother. Contrary to popular assumptions, abortion has been overwhelmingly the domain of married women. The average age of interview participants in this study explains why the article's discourses mainly reflect concerns of unmarried youth. I would strive to include married women's voices and interrogate discourse around married women in further studies.

### D. Cultural Level

The cultural level of influence focuses on how cultural elements, such as ideology, practices, or religion, affect individual life. I analyze discourse on political values, established norms, and practices to articulate the cultural impact of the overturning of abortion. A few participants in the study discussed the idea of the right to privacy, which held that individuals should be free from unwarranted publicity in matters relating to their private lives. This right is debated in increasingly heated issues such as marriages and contraceptives. The *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 and its overturn in 2022 were notoriously based on a dispute of the right to privacy from the First, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments, as with other Supreme Court cases on abortion—*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, *Dobbs v. Jackson*, etc.

The right to privacy, instrumental to the abortion cause, poses a challenge to the fundamental value of some Americans as we face its shaken validity in the overturn of abortion. Qiao proposed that *Roe v. Wade*'s national impact arose partly from people's stronghold on the right to privacy:

*"[The overturning of Roe v. Wade is] impactful because many people are brought up thinking that it's an absolute personal right to have the choice to choose abortion; they have not realized that it can be overturned."*

She mentions religion in her next remark to illustrate how people are cultured differently, with values imparted to them by the communities around them. From the right to religion to the right to use contraceptives and abortion, Qiao brought up an important point of tension

in the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, a collective cognitive dissonance experienced differently by different groups. For youth, generation Z, immigrants, and many of those in the population, the decision to overturn abortion rights are seminal and unprecedented. The distinct nature of *Roe v. Wade* and abortion as a private matter turned public after almost 50 years of assured existence is breaking the inherent structures in communities and society. The overturn throws doubt and fear into the air by calling into question certain personal decisions that once belonged to individuals.

In addition, the disapproval of the right to privacy also implicates a host of other deliberations — from sexual relations to marriage to procreation. In another way, this theme was brought up; participants expressed concerns about similar issues regarding privacy rights. Andrew Yuan, a queer Asian man, used the right to privacy as a basis for his claims on marriages:

*"All people should recognize Roe because the encroachment of one fundamental issue would mean that the other ones are getting encroached on as well, say, like mixed-race marriage or same-sex marriage. Rights don't depend on religion, gender, or some identity."*

The contingency of abortion to the right to privacy poses threats to issues along a joint course. Yuan's mention of same-sex marriages was especially true to today's landscape, with soaring numbers of anti-transgender bills introduced into the legislation, 155 in 2022, and an 800% increase since 2018. These measures reflect an increasingly emboldened conflict in lifestyle in the United States today. One's proximity to a certain community affects their stance on these issues. Yuan listed an example supporting this: "Say you are not a member of the LGBTQ community, then you will care less about gay marriage and its legal validity. And it's similar with abortion and other issues." It's time for people, scholars, and policymakers to consider what these exaggerations of ideologies would look like shortly. Likely, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* would lead to a greater social and political gap which I spell out in the themes about political polarization and childcare below.

Given the political and religious strongholds surrounding abortion, it is unsurprising that abortion has become a highly polarized issue around the nation, with almost everyone holding their attitude on it. Savannah LeBarge expressed concern for the country's and future generations' safety. With Gen being the last to experience universal abortion access, LeBarge is worried for the well-being of abortion supporters, especially those living in "red states," with "larger ideological issues," "increased economic problems," and "unequal resource allocation." Tony Li, a heterosexual man, implied that abortion is "not



just about abortion; it can be used as a political weapon or to politicize things.” “The atmosphere, where men politicians get to dictate women’s reproductive rights,” Li claimed, “will affect people, especially teenagers’ mindsets.” Yuan, LeBarge, and Li all believed that abortion implicated a level of the future, the environment upon which we live, and our political landscape “in the next 15 years, 20 years,” where LeBarge suggested that we are going to have so many “people that we can’t take care of.”

Among instabilities installed by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, gender disparity again becomes the most frequently referenced instability in texts. Many participants spelled out gender norms in the theme of childcare to highlight a greater concern toward a shifted social and cultural landscape. Childcare responsibilities have been long subscribed to women; in the rise of childbirths and undue childcare burdens, the concern for gender asymmetrical childcare reflects general apprehension in the feminist agenda. Whereas on the relational level, biological attachment to fetuses can result in a lessened personal autonomy for women, on a cultural level, gender norms like childcare can dictate women’s social standing and understanding of citizenship in the long run.

Many participants raised concerns about existing gender norms in American media and society. In TV shows and newspapers, Avery Xiao claimed he “can think of examples of a guy who gets a girl pregnant and they just abandon the girl altogether.” Andrea said she’s “pretty sure there are more single moms than single dads” because there’s “a social norm where men tend to leave women and avoid responsibility.” In these accounts, the overturn of abortion invoked patriarchal ideals in the cultural backdrop of America. They imply a reverse of the patriarchal culture that may threaten future public mindsets as the current one seems to rest upon the instabilities of gendered childcare and patriarchal practices. LeBarge remarked that she had thought feminist advancements in America had broken away such social attitudes, yet it might be coming back with the overturn of *Roe*.

### **3. Conclusion and Discussion**

There’s no doubt that several personal and social considerations have worked together to produce a jolted abortion climate after the overturn of constitutionally protected abortion access. This study has unpacked four levels of the perceived impacts of abortion on individuals, related groups, the social environment, and the cultural landscape. Individuals, especially women directly affected by abortion, childbearing, and childbirth, are deemed to be in a disempowered state. The survey data suggest that women feel the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is more impactful to them than men. The interview

data illustrate that people believe the abortion overturn is more significant to female individuals as they receive overwhelming physical, economic, and social risks. Some also believe that power has been taken away from these individuals symbolically. On the relational level, familial and paternal ties are frequently described as influential in considering the abortion overturn. People associate impact with the scale of responsibilities and closeness of ties. There’s a general agreement that impacts on relationships are generally less powerful than impacts on individuals due to a reduced level of urgency in the secondary or tertiary response poll. The concepts of race and socioeconomic status drove discussions on the societal level of impacts, with employment being a major concern for heterosexual female participants in the interview. Other participants feel threatened by the uncertainty of ideological divides and political polarization posed by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* on the cultural level.

Future studies can incorporate theories into experimental data to extrapolate themes and factors influencing people’s abortion attitudes. The qualitative method of a survey and interviews only provides an abstract interpretation of different populations’ experiences of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the United States and their perceived experience of others. Future studies can enhance ethnography and draw upon the strength of observational data in studying people’s behaviors and lives under restricted abortion access. By bringing the study subjects to life through innovative, empathetic research approaches, future studies can make fewer claims based on empirical data and more statements in context-specific or demographic-specific social risk frameworks. Past research on abortion has largely relied on public polling or equivocal data; researchers should focus on understanding the point of view of the people they are studying. While in the aftermath of a landmark abortion case overturned, the increased social risks of abortion correlate to various largely undiscovered consequences. In the end, I conclude with a call for more engaged scholarship on the different levels of impacts that abortion overturn poses on individuals and vulnerable groups of the population.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Survey Prototype

#### Roe v. Wade

Confidentiality Statement: Your responses are entirely **ANONYMOUS**. The information you enter will be **confidential** and we do not collect identifying responses unless you agree to interview or provide further information at the end. And please **do not take** this survey if you are **below the age of 18**.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes. We greatly appreciate your time and contribution to the study! It involves a recently overturned Supreme Court case, Roe v. Wade (1973), that granted the constitutional right to an abortion to all people in the United States. Now, the power to regulate abortions is given back to the states.

**\* Required**

1. Consent: Do you consent to this data being disseminated for research? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. What gender do you identify as? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Nonbinary

☐ Genderfluid

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which race or ethnicity best describes you? (select all that apply) \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Non Hispanic White/Caucasian  
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander  
☐ African/African American  
☐ Middle Eastern  
☐ Hispanic/Latino  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your sexual orientation? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Asexual  
☐ Bisexual  
☐ Gay  
☐ Heterosexual or straight  
☐ Lesbian  
☐ Pansexual  
☐ Queer  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your age (in years) (ex. 18) \*

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you receive financial aid?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not Applicable (not in school)

7. Do you have a religious affiliation?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Protestant
- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Non-religious
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. If religious, how important would you say religion is in your life?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Fairly important
- ☐ Not very important



9. What is your political stance? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Liberal

*Skip to question 10*

### Social and Political Interests

10. List a few social issues that you care about (name anything from local to international) \*

---

11. List a few social issues that you see others care about (can be those from social media, the internet, people around you, news, etc...)

---

12. How aligned are the issues you care about and the issues other people care about? (in general)

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not at all aligned

13. How impactful do you feel is the overturning of Roe v. Wade to you? (A recent Supreme Court Decision that gives US states the ability to regulate or ban abortion)

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Extr ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Doesn't matter to me

14. How impactful do you feel is the overturning of Roe v. Wade to others? (those you don't know, people in the United States)

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Extr ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Doesn't matter to them

15. Before the overturning of Roe v. Wade, how has the topic of abortion been brought up in your life? (give an example if it has)

\_\_\_\_\_

16. As you may know, several states around the US are considering or have passed laws that place additional restrictions on abortion providers or women seeking abortions. Do you think these laws are generally designed to:

(select all that apply)

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Protect the health and safety of unborn children
- ☐ Protect the rights of unborn children
- ☐ Make it more difficult for women to access abortion
- ☐ Control women's body
- ☐ Increase birth rate in the U.S.
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Has your state or country enforced laws banning abortion?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Partial restrictions
- ☐ Don't know

18. Do you personally know anyone who has ever had an abortion?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

19. At what point in a pregnancy do you think most abortions occur?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than 8 weeks
- ☐ Between 8-13 weeks
- ☐ 13 weeks or later into pregnancy
- ☐ Don't know

20. Have you heard of Mifepristone?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

21. How important do you think addressing reproductive health issues (such as birth control and abortion) is for the 2022 midterm election?

*Mark only one oval.*

- 1   2   3   4   5   6   7
- 
- Extr. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Not at all important
-

22. Do you think limiting abortion constitutes a decline in women's status as full citizens?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Don't know

23. Do you think abortion should be:

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Legal in all cases
- ☐ Legal in most cases
- ☐ Legal in some cases
- ☐ Illegal in all cases
- ☐ Illegal in most cases
- ☐ Illegal in some cases
- ☐ Don't have an opinion / don't care



24. Which of the following do you think should be used as criteria in assessing whether women can legally obtain an abortion? (select all that apply)

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Instances of rape or coercion
- ☐ Physical conditions
- ☐ Economic burdens
- ☐ Mental Health
- ☐ Age of pregnancy
- ☐ Patient's own will
- ☐ Partner or family's will
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Roe v. Wade**

25. In what ways do you feel the controversy of abortion can affect you? (e.g engagement in sexual activities, future education, occupation, or life opportunities, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_

26. Do you feel concerned about accessing medical resources in the U.S. after the overturn of Roe v. Wade?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No Difference Before & After
- ☐ Not Applicable
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Eviction is an experience where people lose their homes for a variety of reasons-- including low income, mortgage loans, racist housing policies, etc. What do you think is the importance of eviction compared to abortion?

*Mark only one oval.*

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Evic ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Evictton is much less important than abortion

28. If you had to guess, what percent of women in the U.S. do you think will have an abortion in th lifetime?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than 10%  
☐ 10%-14%  
☐ 15%-19%  
☐ 20%-24%  
☐ 25%-29%  
☐ 30%-49%  
☐ 50% or more

Beyond Roe v. Wade

29. - Approximately one in four(23.7%) American girls or women have an **abortion** in their lifetime  
- Approximately one in four people born into deep poverty will experience **eviction** by age 15.  
- Women with low income and women of color are more likely to have an **abortion** in their lifetime.  
- It's predicted that 341,756 women are **evicted** annually, 16% more than men.

Based on this information, what do you think is the importance of eviction compared to abortion?

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Evic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Eviction is much less important

30. Generally, how do you decide what social issues you care about?

\_\_\_\_\_

31. Would you be willing to be contacted for an interview? (greatly appreciate all your time and help)

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Maybe  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

32. Please provide your contact: if willing to provide further information

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

2023 Abortion Privilege  
Interview Protocol