

A Look into Determining Factors for Views on Abortion: The Focus on Education

Research Question

- Does the level of education completed affect views on abortion?
- Does the association vary between Whites and non-Whites?

Significance

- Understanding public opinion on abortion is important because it not only tells us why people think this way but helps determine how we can change these views.

Background

- The higher the education level of a respondent, the more likely he or she is to support abortion (Adamson et al 2000).
- Exposure to more roles for women than motherhood is a predictor (Strickler & Danigelis, 2002).
- Blacks were originally more disapproving than Whites but flipped (Strickler & Danigelis, 2002).

Hypothesis

- People with a higher level of education completed will approve of abortion in more circumstances.
- Non-Whites will have lower approval rates of abortion based on many factors including religion and traditional views on women's role.

Data

- General Social Survey 2016 (GSS)
- U.S. adults aged 18 and older (N = 2,867)
- The question regarding views on abortion was asked in a subsample (N=1,659).

Dependent Variable

View on abortion

- In how many of the 7 listed circumstances* do you approve of abortion?

* Birth defects, low income, health in danger, single, no more children, rape, any reason

- 17.1% approved of abortion in two or less circumstances including none at all (Scale 0-2)
- 45.7% approved of abortion in 3 to 6 of the circumstances (Scale 3-6)
- 37.2% approved of abortion in all 7 circumstances (Scale 7)

Independent Variable

Highest Level of Education Completed

- Less Than HS 13.4%
- HS Grad 29.2%
- Some College 26.3%
- College Degree 31.2%

Control Variable

Race

- Non Hispanic White 65.3%
- Non White incl. Hispanic 34.7%

Analysis

Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

Results

Fig. 1 % Distribution of When Abortion is Okay by Education Level for All U.S Adults

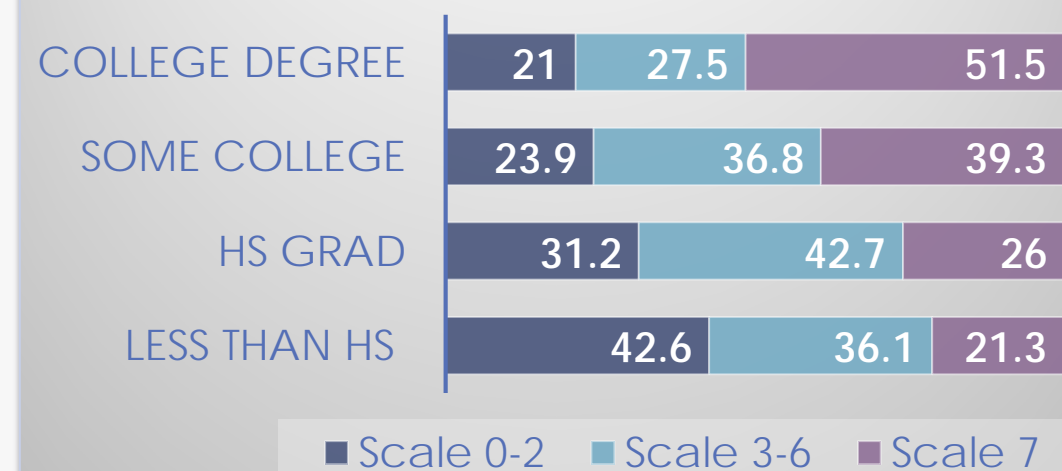


Fig. 2. % Distribution of When Abortion is Okay by Education for Non-Hispanic Whites

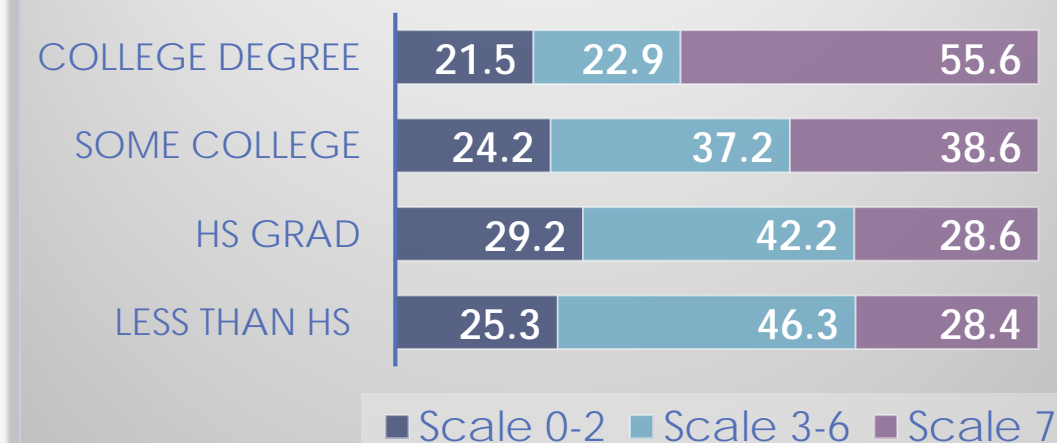
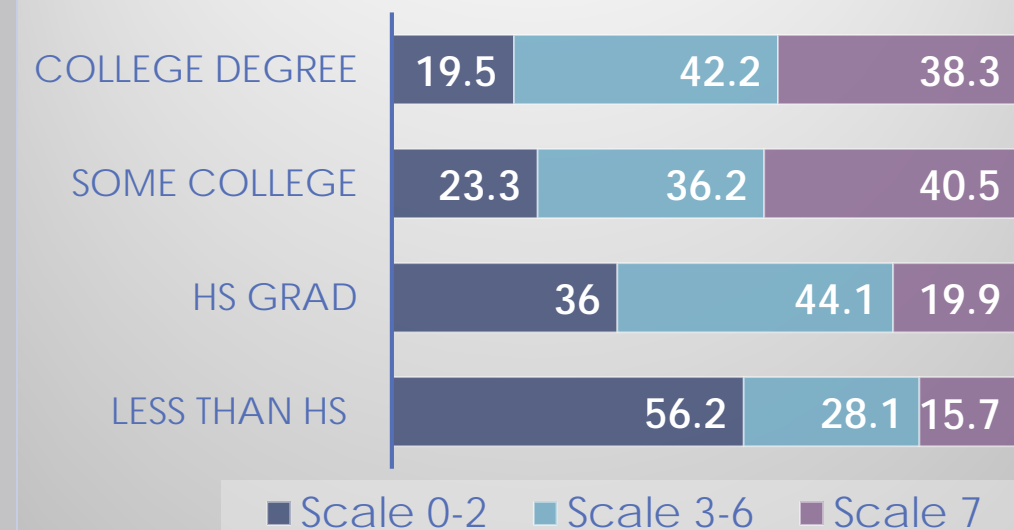


Fig. 3. % Distribution of When Abortion is Okay by Education for Non-Whites



Results

- Adults with at least some college are more likely to agree with abortion for almost any reason (Fig. 1).
- Non-Whites, including Hispanics, are less likely to approve of abortion for any reason than non-Hispanic Whites (Fig. 2 and 3).
- The higher the level of education completed, the higher the likeliness of approval for abortion in any circumstance especially among Whites compared to non-Whites.

Implications

- If views of abortion are influenced by education, then there should be more information and proper education on abortion at every level of schooling including high school.

References

- Adamson, David M., Nancy Belden, Julie DaVanzo, and Sally Patterson, "How Americans View World Population Issues: A Survey of Public Opinion." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000.
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- Strickler, Jennifer, and Nicholas L. Danigelis. 2002. "Changing Frameworks in Attitudes towards Abortion." *Sociological Forum* 17:187-201.