CONTRADICTORY ATTITUDES TOWARDS PARTISAN ISSUES:
ABORTION AND GUN CONTROL
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In this study, I examine how self-reported religiosity predicts political opinion toward abortion and gun control. In particular, I examine how self-reported religiosity relates to individuals’ inconsistent attitudes on these two issues where liberal attitudes are held toward one issue, but conservative attitudes are held toward the other. Most commonly, these inconsistent attitudes are found among individuals who hold pro-life (conservative) and pro-gun control (liberal) views. Using data from the 2018 General Social Survey, I find that religiosity significantly predicts these inconsistent attitudes regarding abortion and gun control. This suggests that religious ethics regarding life and death can offer a partial explanation for inconsistent attitudes toward partisan issues.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2021, abortion and gun control have been hot topics in the U.S. Within this year alone, various state legislatures have passed at least 90 abortion restrictions and bans (Bowman, 2021). One new law in particular regarding abortion has captured Americans’ attention: the Texas Heartbeat Act. The Texas Heartbeat Act prohibits getting an abortion after an unborn child’s heartbeat has been detected (Texas SB8 | 2021-2022 | 87th Legislature, 2021). Along with the Texas Heartbeat Act, Texas recently passed various gun control bills that deregulate gun ownership and restrictive gun policies (Pérez-Moreno, 2021; Texas Legislature Online - 87(R) History for HB 1927, 2021): HB 1927, SB 19, SB 20, SB 550, HB 957, HB 1500, and HB 2622. These new laws have sparked excitement for some and outrage for others.

Whether an individual is excited or outraged by the new laws largely depends on their political ideology (liberal or conservative). Therefore, it is expected that opinions regarding partisan issues such as abortion and gun control go hand-in-hand. More specifically, it is expected for liberals to be pro-choice and pro-gun control and conservatives to hold the opposite views across these issues. However, despite popular convention, views on these issues are not always aligned. Findings have shown there is a substantial population with contradictory attitudes toward abortion and gun control (ex. pro-life and pro-gun control or pro-choice and anti-gun control) (Celinska, 2007; Smith et al., 2018). Holding pro-life and pro-gun control attitudes or pro-choice and anti-gun control attitudes are referred to as contradictory attitudes throughout this study because these views contradict his or her political ideology (conservative or liberal). This leads to the question: Why do individuals have contradictory attitudes toward partisan issues such as abortion and gun laws?
In this paper, I examine the factors driving contradictory views between abortion and gun control. I focus, in particular, on whether individuals’ levels of religiosity can help us shed light on these contradictory views. Religiosity may play an important role because of various religions’ shared belief that life is sacred and should not be ended unnaturally. Using data from the 2018 GSS, I conduct a multinomial analysis, finding that religiosity significantly predicts holding pro-life and pro-gun control views. These results suggest that contradictory attitudes toward abortion and gun control can be explained by religiosity. In particular, religious individuals’ pro-life stance appears to often translate to pro-gun control attitudes on the basis of preserving life, even though it contradicts the alignment of conservative political ideologies. In what followed, I first review research on abortion, gun attitudes, and their contradictions. Then, I describe my data and methods before presenting the result of my analysis and discussing their implications.
CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

2.1 Partisan Issues: Abortion and Gun-Control

2.1.1 Moral Opposition to Abortion: Pro-Choice or Pro-Life?

The political debate regarding abortion is one of the most controversial topics in American politics (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Grossman, 2017; Scott & Schuman, 1988). Some individuals believe it is permissible for a woman to have an abortion for any reason; some individuals believe it is not permissible for a woman to have an abortion for any reason, and other individuals believe it depends on the circumstances (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018). Therefore, Americans’ opinions regarding the morality of abortion are often split into three categories: pro-choice, pro-life, and mixed (Scott & Schuman, 1988).

Pro-choice individuals are not morally opposed to abortion. It is often argued by pro-choice individuals that the life of a human being begins once the fetus is outside of the womb. As a result, pro-choice individuals argue abortion is not murder, but simply a procedure that eliminates embryotic cells or fetal tissue from the womb. Therefore, pro-choice individuals claim abortion is not an immoral means of dealing with an unwanted or endangered pregnancy. The pro-choice movement’s main mission is to advocate for reproductive freedom. Reproductive freedom is the freedom to have access to all reproductive health care options, including abortion care and contraceptives (Abortion Access - NARAL Pro-Choice America, n.d.). In addition, pro-choice individuals view abortion as a means of having reproductive freedom; not as a means of taking away an unborn fetus’ right to life (Abortion Access - NARAL Pro-Choice America, n.d.). Therefore, unlike pro-life individuals, pro-choice individuals suggest access to abortion enhances lives; not ends them.
In contrast to pro-choice individuals, pro-life individuals are morally opposed to abortion. The pro-life movement’s main mission is to argue that fetuses are unborn human beings for which they advocate (Abortion Information | National Right to Life, n.d.). To pro-life individuals, an unborn child’s life begins at conception and should not be tampered with by external forces; no matter the circumstances (ex. rape, incest, teen pregnancy, etc.) (Scott & Schuman, 1988). Pro-choice individuals, therefore, believe that abortion is murder; an unnecessary selfish procedure that takes away an unborn child’s right to life (Abortion Information | National Right to Life, n.d.; Scott & Schuman, 1988). Therefore, unlike pro-choice individuals, pro-life individuals believe access to abortion ends lives as opposed to enhancing them. To deter pregnant women who are seeking abortions, pro-choice individuals often promote other means of dealing with unwanted pregnancies, such as putting the child up for adoption (Abortion Information | National Right to Life, n.d.; McCutcheon, 1987).

The majority of pro-choice individuals are reported to identify as politically liberal, have a low level of religiosity, and/or are reported to be affiliated with a non-Christian-based religion or no religion at all (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Saad, 2011). In contrast, the majority of pro-life individuals are reported to identify as politically conservative, have a high level of religiosity, and/or be affiliated with a Christian-based religion (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Saad, 2011). However, empirical evidence from Adamczyk and Valdimarsdóttir’s (2018) study showed that an individual’s level of religiosity does not fully determine their stance on abortion (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018). Consistent with their findings, data from the 2018 GSS show that about 15% of respondents who identify as not religious indicated they are morally opposed to abortion and about 10% of respondents who claimed to be “very religious” indicated they are not morally opposed to abortion. Although religiosity is a powerful predictor
of abortion attitudes, it is not deterministic (Smith et al., 2018).

People who fall under the category of “Mixed” consider themselves neither pro-choice nor pro-life (Scott & Schuman, 1988); their opinions regarding abortion depend on certain circumstances. Before deciding if he or she should support or discourage a woman’s decision to get an abortion, some individuals feel the need to know how long the woman has been impregnated, if the pregnancy endangers the mother’s health, if the mother was raped, if the contraception failed, if the mother is a teen, the mother’s economic situation, and/or other circumstances (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Scott & Schuman, 1988). These “Mixed” individuals are more similar to pro-life individuals than pro-choice individuals due to indicating that abortion should be somewhat regulated.

2.1.2 Gun Control: Pro-Gun Control or Anti-Gun Control?

Alongside abortion, gun control is also one of the most often debated and controversial topics in American politics (Celinska, 2007; Shepherd & Kay, 2018). Typically, individuals either want gun control to be regulated or deregulated (Celinska, 2007; Merino, 2018; Miller, 2019). Therefore, Americans’ attitudes regarding gun control are often split into two categories: pro-gun control and anti-gun control (Celinska, 2007; Merino, 2018; Miller, 2019).

Pro-gun control individuals support the regulation of gun control. It is often argued by pro-gun control individuals that the Second Amendment protects the right for militia organizations to keep or bear arms; not the private right of individuals to keep or bear arms (Interpretation: The Second Amendment | The National Constitution Center, n.d.). In the minds of pro-gun control individuals, deregulation of guns encourages violence and increases the likelihood of homicides (Kleck et al., 2009). As a result, pro-gun control individuals argue that the regulation of guns protects and saves lives and is thus a means of protection.
In contrast to pro-gun control individuals, anti-gun control individuals oppose the regulation of gun control. Anti-gun control individuals argue that the Second Amendment protects the private right of all adult American citizens to keep and bear arms (Interpretation: The Second Amendment | The National Constitution Center, n.d.). Therefore, anti-gun control individuals feel that gun control should be deregulated. Their interpretation of the Second Amendment and the need to deregulate gun control sprouts from the fear of “big government,” valuing self-reliance, and belief that issues regarding firearms are due to irresponsible individuals as opposed to the existence of firearms (Esposito & Finley, 2014; Interpretation: The Second Amendment | The National Constitution Center, n.d.). Therefore, unlike pro-gun control individuals, anti-gun control individuals believe that the regulation of guns is a means of endangerment, not protection.

The majority of pro-gun control individuals are reported to identify as politically liberal, have a low level of religiosity, and/or are reported to be affiliated with a non-Christian-based religion or no religion at all (Celinska, 2007; Ellison et al., 2021; Esposito & Finley, 2014; Merino, 2018; Miller, 2019; Shepherd & Kay, 2018; Vegter & Kelley, 2020). In contrast, the majority of anti-gun control individuals are reported to identify as politically conservative, have a high level of religiosity, and/or be affiliated with a Christian-based religion (Celinska, 2007; Esposito & Finley, 2014; Merino, 2018; Shepherd & Kay, 2018; Vegter & Kelley, 2020). However, empirical evidence from Ellison et al.’s (2021) study showed that one’s level of religiosity does not fully determine one’s stance on gun control (Ellison et al., 2021). Consistent with their findings, data from the 2018 GSS show that about 28.5% of respondents who identify as not religious indicated they are opposed to gun control regulation, and about 74.2% of respondents who claimed to be “very religious” indicated they are in favor of gun control
regulation. Although religiosity is a powerful predictor of attitudes toward gun control, as it is with predicting abortion attitudes, it is not deterministic (Ellison et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2018).

2.2 Attitudinal Contradictions toward Abortion and Gun Control

Like most attitudes towards partisan issues, attitudes toward abortion and gun control are often driven by political ideology. However, there is a meaningful share of individuals who hold conservative attitudes regarding abortion and liberal views on gun control (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018; Celinska, 2007; Smith et al., 2018).

Although few studies are examining contradictory political attitudes toward abortion and gun control, there is good reason to believe religiosity may play a key role. In many religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, etc., life is viewed as holy and sacred, and thus should not be ended unnaturally (Falcon & Blatner, 2011; Leaman, 2008; Ramshaw, 2013; Srinivasan, 2011). Abortion and gun control are linked to the ethics of life; specifically, the debate of whether a human life should be taken due to unnatural causes (Boylan, 2003; McCutcheon, 1987). As stated earlier in this paper, the belief that life is sacred and should not be ended unnaturally drives pro-life views among the religious (McCutcheon, 1987).

Religiosity may also predict support for gun control based on the common religious belief that life is sacred. However, religiosity has generally been found to predict opposition to gun control (Merino, 2018; Vegter & Kelley, 2020; Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998). Yet, after accounting for political conservatism, religiosity may predict support for gun control based on the common religious belief that life is sacred. For example, due to being religious and thus believing life is sacred, one would expect religious people to be pro-gun control to help prevent death due to improper use of firearms. Therefore, one’s degree of religiosity has the potential to explain why someone would hold pro-life and pro-gun control views. The question thus arises:
Can one’s degree of religiosity explain contradictory attitudes regarding abortion and gun control? Therefore, this paper explores how religiosity is related to attitudes toward abortion and gun control.

2.3 Significance

This study examines if religiosity is a significant predictor of contradictory attitudes toward abortion and gun control. From previous literature, it is well established that attitudes toward abortion and gun control are typically driven by political ideology. However, as stated earlier, there is little literature that gives reasoning as to how attitudes toward abortion and gun control could be contradictory to his or her political ideology. Research on major religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism, have shown that they share a common belief that life is sacred and should not be taken away by unnatural causes (ex. abortion, homicide) (Falcon & Blatner, 2011; Leaman, 2008; Ramshaw, 2013; Srinivasan, 2011). Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 1: Respondents who identify as religious will be more likely to hold contradictory attitudes that are pro-life and pro-gun control than respondents who identify as non-religious.*

It should be noted, to be pro-choice and anti-gun control is another possible contradictory attitude toward abortion and gun control. However, this attitude is very uncommon, present in only 5.58% of respondents (see Table 4.1). Therefore, this study primarily focuses on explaining why individuals are pro-life and pro-gun control which constitutes the primary basis for contradictory political attitudes on these topics.
CHAPTER 3
DATA AND METHODS

3.1 Research Design and Data

In this study, I use publicly available data from the 2018 General Social Survey. The General Social Survey (GSS) is a biennial, nationally representative survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center that aims to provide “high quality” data on American society’s trends and constants in attitudes, behaviors, and attributes (About the GSS, NORC, 2016; General Social Survey (GSS), NORC.Org, n.d.). It contains modules on political attitudes, religion, attitudes regarding abortion, and many other societal topics (GSS, NORC.org, n.d.). The target population of the 2018 GSS is the population of adults (18 years of age and older) residing in households in the United States (GSS, NORC.org, n.d.).

The sample of the 2018 GSS contains 2,348 individuals. To collect this sample for the 2018 GSS, the NORC employed a full-probability sampling design to provide all households an equal probability of inclusion in the sample and subsampled the non-respondents to keep the sample design unbiased (Smith et al, 2018). After gathering the sample, the NORC asked sampled respondents to participate in the survey. Respondents were told that from participating in the survey, they will receive the following: a special and rare opportunity to share his or her own opinion and input on various issues, a special experience, a chance to represent the USA, and a token of the NORC’s appreciation for his or her time and cooperation (GSS, NORC.org, n.d.). Respondents were also told that their privacy will be fully protected. To protect respondents’ privacy, the NORC promised the following; complete anonymity to all respondents; all published results will be summarized; respondents’ personal information will not be sold or shared to a third party; protection of all information by law from any disclosure; researchers are
legally self-bound in writing to keep all participants’ provided information completely confidential and secure, and all computers being utilized for the study are encrypted (GSS, NORC.org, n.d.). The NORC’s promises of privacy and list of potential rewards they will receive for participating in the survey were incentives for respondents to partake in the survey. The NORC hoped that these incentives would help increase the response rate. The actual response rate of the 2018 GSS has not been publicly disclosed, but it can be said that the average response rate of the GSS is 70.04%.

Sampled respondents who agreed to participate were then scheduled for interviews. Only one interview was completed at each selected household and interviews were able to be administered in Spanish or English. The vast majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location of the respondent’s choosing (GSS, NORC.org, n.d.). If an in-person interview could not be arranged with a sampled respondent, interviews were conducted by telephone (GSS, NORC.org, n.d.).

3.2 Measures

The dependent variable is political attitudes toward abortion and gun control. It has four categories: (1) = pro-choice and pro-gun control; (2) = pro-choice and anti-gun control; (3) = pro-life and pro-gun control; and (4) = pro-life and anti-gun control. To create this variable, I used two variables: moral opposition to abortion and attitude toward gun permits. Moral opposition to abortion is coded as (1) = morally opposed; (2) = not morally opposed; and (3) = it depends. Because “it depends” indicates some extent of being morally opposed to abortion I grouped these respondents with others reporting they were morally opposed. Attitude toward gun permits is coded as (1) = favor and (2) = oppose. The intersection of gun and abortion attitudes is divided into four categories as illustrated in Table 3.2.
Table 3.1: Measures (Recoded Variables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Variable</th>
<th>Variable Construct</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Level of Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                  | Education          | 0 = High School degree or no degree  
|                  |                    | 1 = Bachelor’s degree or higher     |
|                  | Political Ideology | 1 = Extremely liberal  
|                  |                    | 2 = Liberal  
|                  |                    | 3 = Slightly liberal  
|                  |                    | 4 = Moderate  
|                  |                    | 5 = Slightly conservative  
|                  |                    | 6 = Conservative  
|                  |                    | 7 = Extremely conservative         |
|                  | Race               | 1 = Non-Hispanic, White  
|                  |                    | 2 = Non-Hispanic, Black  
|                  |                    | 3 = Non-Hispanic, Other  
|                  |                    | 4 = Hispanic  |
|                  | Religious Affiliation | 0 = Not Christian-based religion or no religion  
|                  |                    | 1 = Christian-based religion     |
|                  | Sex                | 0 = Female  
|                  |                    | 1 = Male        |
| Independent Variable | Religiosity    | 0 = Not religious  
|                    |                    | 1 = Religious     |
| Dependent Variable | Political Identity Regarding Abortion and Gun Control | 1 = Pro-choice and Pro-gun control  
|                    |                    | 2 = Pro-choice and Anti-gun control  
|                    |                    | 3 = Pro-life and Pro-gun control  
|                    |                    | 4 = Pro-life and Anti-gun control  |

Table 3.2: Measurement of Political Identity Regarding Abortion and Gun Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gun Control Attitudes</th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abortion Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not morally opposed to abortion</td>
<td>1. Pro-choice and Pro-gun control</td>
<td>2. Pro-choice and Anti-gun control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morally opposed to abortion/It depends</td>
<td>3. Pro-life and Pro-gun control</td>
<td>4. Pro-life and Anti-gun control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, the independent variable, religiosity, is measured by someone’s self-reported level of religiosity. In the 2018 GSS, respondents were asked, “Would you call yourself a strong (preference named in relig) or a not very strong (preference named in relig)?”
“Preference named in relig” refers to the religions the respondent indicated as their religious preference. Respondents then answered very religious, moderately religious, slightly religious, or not religious (Smith et al., 2018). Because my focus is on comparing religious individuals to non-religious individuals and moderately religious and slightly religious imply that one is not strongly or completely dedicated to calling themselves a religious person, I dichotomize this variable as follows: 0 = not religious (not religious, slightly religious, and moderately religious) and 1 = religious (very religious).

The following sociodemographic variables are also included in the study as control variables: sex, age, race, education, and religious affiliation. In the 2018 GSS, researchers had respondents indicate if they were either female or male. In this study, to measure the effect of being male, the variable sex was recoded as 0 = female and 1 = male. To measure age, researchers had respondents indicate their age in years; if 89 years of age or older, the respondent’s age was recorded as 89. To measure race, respondents were first asked, “What race do you consider yourself?” Respondents answered either White, Black, or other. Respondents were next asked, “Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino/Latina?” and answered yes or no. I combined these two variables into a new race variable coded as (1) = non-Hispanic, White; (2) = non-Hispanic, Black; (3) = non-Hispanic, other; and (4) = Hispanic. Education is measured by highest degree obtained. In the 2018 GSS, to measure the highest degree obtained, respondents were asked, “Did you ever get a high school diploma or a GED certificate?” and “Do you have any college degrees?” Respondents then answered either less than high school; high school; junior college, bachelor, or graduate. To see how attaining a college degree or higher affects one’s political identity regarding abortion and gun control, education is recoded as 0 = less than a bachelor’s degree (less than high school, high school, and junior college) and 1 = bachelor’s
degree or higher (bachelor and graduate). Religious affiliation is measured by whether an individual is associated with a Christian-based religion or not Christian-based religion/no religion. In the 2018 GSS, to measure religious affiliation, respondents were asked, “What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?” With an understanding that attitudes toward abortion and gun control are often consistent among individuals affiliated with Christianity (Adamczyk & Hayes, 2012; Merino, 2018; Vegter & Kelley, 2020), I control for affiliation with a Christian-based religion. Therefore, I have recoded religious affiliation into a dichotomous variable: not Christian-based religion or no religion and Christian-based religions. Therefore, religious affiliation is coded as follows: 0 = not Christian-based religion or no religion (Jewish, none, other, Buddhism, Hinduism, other Eastern, Muslim/Islam, Native American), 1 = Christian-based religion (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox-Christian, Christian, inter-nondenominational).

Political ideology was also included as a control variable because political ideology is a significant predictor of both abortion attitudes and attitudes toward gun control (Saad, 2011; Scott & Schuman, 1988). In the 2018 GSS, respondents were told, “We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I’m going to show you a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal (1) to extremely conservative (7).” Respondents were then asked, “Where would you place yourself on this scale?” Therefore, political ideology was measured using a Likert scale from 1 to 7 (1 = extremely liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = extremely conservative). In this study, political ideology is measured as a continuous variable.
3.3 Methods

First, I report descriptive characteristics of the sample to identify how political identity regarding abortion and gun control tends to differ between individuals who identify as religious and individuals who identify as not religious. Then, I use a multinomial logistic regression equation to identify differences between the sub-groups constituting the intersection of abortion and gun control. Weights are used in all models to account for sampling error and design. Multinomial logistic regression is appropriate to use for this research because it is used to analyze the relationship between independent variables and a discrete (nominal or ordinal) dependent variable that has more than two levels.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Results

In the 2018 GSS sample 1415 respondents reported valid answers regarding their sex, race, age, level of education, religious affiliation, how religious he or she deems himself or herself, attitude toward gun control, and attitude toward abortion. As seen from the descriptive statistics in Table 4.1, the mean age of the sample is about 48 years old. With regards to their political ideology, respondents in the sample consider themselves to be moderate. Of the total sample, a little less than one-third (31.80%) have a bachelor’s degree or higher. The majority (65.80%) of respondents are non-Hispanic, White; over half of the individuals are affiliated with a Christian-based religion (71.45%), and slightly less than half of the respondents are male (44.24%).

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics (N = 1415)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Mean (SD) or %</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regarding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion and Gun Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-choice and pro-gun control</td>
<td>22.40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-choice and anti-gun control</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-life and pro-gun control</td>
<td>49.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-life and anti-gun control</td>
<td>22.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religiosity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-religious (reference group)</td>
<td>83.82</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>16.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (years)</strong></td>
<td>48.18 (18.18)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Less than bachelors degree (reference group)</td>
<td>68.20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors degree or higher</td>
<td>31.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Ideology</strong></td>
<td>(rating of 1 to 7)</td>
<td>3.99 (1.48)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Figure 4.1 shows how political attitudes regarding abortion and gun control differ by religiosity. There is a substantive difference (20 percentage points) between the percentage of respondents who identify as not religious and are pro-life and pro-gun control (46%) and the percentage of respondents who identify as religious (66%) and are pro-life and pro-gun control. There is another relatively substantial difference between religious and non-religious respondents holding pro-choice and pro-gun control views. Non-religious respondents are 17 percentage points more likely than religious respondents to be pro-choice and pro-gun control. Having pro-choice and anti-gun control views does not seem to differ by religiosity. This is possibly due to a very small number of individuals holding pro-choice and anti-gun control views. Similarly, the share of respondents holding pro-life and anti-gun control views are similar across religious (24%) and non-religious (22%) respondents.

Overall, Figure 4.1 suggests that religious individuals are more likely to hold contradictory views than non-religious individuals. Although few respondents hold pro-choice and anti-gun control views, there is a substantially larger share of religious respondents who hold conservative views on abortion (pro-life) alongside liberal views on gun control (pro-gun control) than non-religious respondents.
4.2 Multinomial Logistic Regression Results

The multinomial logistic regression results are shown in Table 4.2. The multinomial logistic regression computed three models: The first model uses the pro-life and pro-gun control group as the referent group. The referent in the second model is the pro-choice and anti-gun control group, and the referent in the third model is the pro-choice and pro-gun control group.

The first model reported in Table 4.2 shows that religiosity is indeed a significant predictor of holding pro-life and pro-gun control views. Religious respondents are more likely to hold pro-life and pro-gun control views than any other attitude, controlling for covariates in the model ($p < .05$). Among covariates, the following findings are reported: Individuals who are affiliated with a Christian-based religion ($p < .001$) and are female ($p < .01$) are more likely to be pro-life and pro-gun control than be pro-choice and anti-gun control. Individuals who have a bachelor’s degree or higher ($p < .01$), identify as politically conservative ($p < .001$), and are affiliated with a Christian-based religion ($p < .01$) are more likely to be pro-life and pro-gun
control than be pro-choice and pro-gun control. Individuals who identify as politically liberal ($p < .001$) and are female ($p < .01$) are more likely to be pro-life and pro-gun control than pro-life and anti-gun control. In summary, along with religiosity, education, political ideology, religious affiliation, and sex are significant predictors of holding pro-life and pro-gun control attitudes.

Education, more specifically having less than a bachelor’s degree or no degree, appears to be a significant predictor of holding pro-life and pro-gun control attitudes when the referent category is pro-choice and anti-gun control. With respect to political ideology, being conservative is a predictor of holding pro-life and pro-gun control attitudes when the reference category is pro-choice and pro-gun control, while being liberal is a predictor of holding pro-life and pro-gun control attitudes when the reference category is pro-life and anti-gun control. Religious affiliation, more specifically being affiliated with a Christian-based religion, is a significant predictor of being pro-life and pro-gun control when the referent groups are either pro-choice and anti-gun control or pro-choice and pro-gun control. Lastly, sex, more specifically being female, is a significant predictor of being pro-life and pro-gun control when the referent groups are either pro-choice and anti-gun control or pro-life and anti-gun control.

The first model identifies predictors of pro-life and pro-gun control views relative to other attitudes. Additional models in Table 4.2 provide further insight on comparisons between the remaining three attitudes. Using the pro-choice and anti-gun control group as a reference, we find that individuals who identify as politically conservative ($p < .01$), are not associated with a Christian-based religion ($p < .05$) and are male ($p < .05$) are more likely to be pro-choice and anti-gun control than pro-choice and pro-gun control. Individuals who identify as politically liberal ($p < .01$) and are not affiliated with a Christian-based religion ($p < .001$) are more likely to be pro-choice and anti-gun control than pro-life and anti-gun control.
The last model uses the pro-choice and pro-gun control group as a reference and shows that individuals who have a bachelor’s degree or higher \((p < .01)\), identify as politically liberal \((p < .001)\), are not associated with a Christian-based religion \((p < .01)\), and are female \((p < .05)\) are more likely to be pro-choice and pro-gun control than pro-life and anti-gun control.

Overall, Table 4.2 shows that religiosity is associated more with pro-life and pro-gun control attitudes than any other perspective on abortion and gun control.

Given the difficulty of comparing religiosity differences across each of the possible comparisons from the multinomial logistic regression model, I estimated, for individuals who identify as religious and individuals who identify as not religious, the predicted probabilities of holding each type of attitude toward abortion and gun control (Figure 4.2). Predicted probabilities are based on the multinomial logistic regression model shown in Table 4.2, with all remaining covariates fixed at their mean values.

Figure 4.2 reports that, in comparison to people who identify as not religious, people who identify as religious are less likely to be pro-choice and pro-gun control, pro-choice and anti-gun control, or pro-life and anti-gun control, but are substantially (17 percentage points) more likely to be pro-life and pro-gun control. This provides strong support for my hypothesis because holding pro-choice and pro-gun control views is more common among the religious than non-religious.

It should be noted, although it has been found that religious individuals are more likely to have pro-life and pro-gun control views, this was not observed in the other contradictory category, pro-choice and anti-gun control. This is consistent with my theoretical hypothesis that contradictory views among the religious are driven by commitments to life that lead to conservative views on abortion but liberal views on gun control.
Table 4.2: Coefficients from Multinomial Logistic Regression Models Estimating Political Identity Regarding Abortion and Gun Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ref: Pro-Life &amp; Pro-Gun Control</th>
<th>Ref: Pro-Choice &amp; Anti-Gun Control</th>
<th>Ref: Pro-Choice &amp; Anti-Gun Control</th>
<th>Ref: Pro-Choice &amp; Pro-Gun Control</th>
<th>Ref: Pro-Choice &amp; Pro-Gun Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity (ref: non-religious)</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>-2.052** (0.642)</td>
<td>-0.877** (0.305)</td>
<td>-0.465* (0.217)</td>
<td>1.175 (0.686)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (yrs)</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.005)</td>
<td>0.000 (0.005)</td>
<td>-0.008 (0.007)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref: less than bachelors degree)</td>
<td>Bachelors degree or higher</td>
<td>0.209 (0.312)</td>
<td>0.555** (0.175)</td>
<td>-0.090 (0.178)</td>
<td>0.346 (0.320)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>-0.065 (0.127)</td>
<td>-0.427*** (0.065)</td>
<td>0.297*** (0.064)</td>
<td>-0.361*** (0.130)</td>
<td>0.362** (0.134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (ref: non-Hispanic White)</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic Black</td>
<td>-0.878 (0.488)</td>
<td>-0.199 (0.254)</td>
<td>-0.219 (0.235)</td>
<td>0.679 (0.527)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Hispanic other</td>
<td>-0.419 (0.579)</td>
<td>-0.169 (0.474)</td>
<td>-0.843 (0.434)</td>
<td>0.250 (0.554)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.588 (0.520)</td>
<td>-0.383 (0.259)</td>
<td>-0.456 (0.257)</td>
<td>0.175 (0.524)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation (ref: not Christian-based or no religion)</td>
<td>Christian-based</td>
<td>-1.294*** (0.284)</td>
<td>-0.631** (0.183)</td>
<td>-0.046 (0.206)</td>
<td>0.663* (0.294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex (ref: female)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.760** (0.285)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.172)</td>
<td>0.460** (0.163)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.245 (0.694)</td>
<td>1.597*** (0.363)</td>
<td>-2.120*** (0.383)</td>
<td>2.842*** (0.709)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 1415. Log odds and standard errors are rounded to third decimal point. Ref = reference. Standard error in parentheses. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.
Figure 4.2: Predicted Probabilities of Political Identity Regarding Abortion and Gun Control by Religiosity

- Pro-choice and Pro-gun control
- Pro-choice and Anti-gun control
- Pro-life and Pro-gun control
- Pro-life and Anti-gun control

The diagram illustrates the predicted probabilities for different political identities across a range of religiosity levels. The x-axis represents the political identities and the y-axis represents the probability values from 0.00 to 0.70.

The key values are:
- Pro-choice and Pro-gun control: 0.24 Not religious, 0.15 Religious
- Pro-choice and Anti-gun control: 0.06 Not religious, 0.01 Religious
- Pro-life and Pro-gun control: 0.48 Not religious, 0.65 Religious
- Pro-life and Anti-gun control: 0.23 Not religious, 0.19 Religious

Legend:
- Not religious
- Religious
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results from the multinomial regression support my hypothesis that individuals who identify as religious are more likely to hold pro-life and pro-gun control views. Therefore, there is reason to believe that religiosity can explain contradictory attitudes toward abortion. My findings from this research add to the study of political attitudes by suggesting that religious people are not a uniform conservative voting bloc. Instead of being guided by their political ideology, individuals are guided by religious tenets, making the pull-back of gun control legislation less viable.

I find there is a meaningful relationship between religiosity and contradictory views. Although I do not examine the underlying mechanisms driving this association, a key feature of religion, valuing life, provides important insight. As discussed earlier, to value life means to believe life is sacred and should not be ended by unnatural causes. The question of the matter is not which group values life more than the other, but how different groups view life. Religious people often extend their definition of life to unborn children (Adamczyk & Valdimarsdóttir, 2018). Contradictory to conservative ideology, attitudes toward supporting life for religious individuals are not only applied to abortion but gun control as well. This is evident in the large amount of pro-life-and-pro-gun control individuals found in my study and indicates that religious veneration of life results in conservative views on some issues (abortion), but liberal views on others (gun control).

This study has noteworthy limitations. The sample size of respondents who hold pro-choice and anti-gun control views and the sample size of respondents who identify as religious are not ideal. As stated earlier, only about 5.6% of the sample is pro-choice and anti-gun control,
and approximately 16.2% of the sample identify as religious. How religiosity is measured could also be improved. In future research, religiosity could be measured with additional religiosity variables such as frequency of attending a holy place for religious reasons and frequency of prayer. Lastly, this study was limited in solely using secondary data. With utilizing secondary data, the survey design was not explicitly created for my study and thus I was unable to probe respondents with more detailed questions.

My study found that religiosity has a significant relationship with contradictory attitudes toward abortion and that religious people tend to be pro-life and pro-gun control. The findings from this study are driven by the key feature of religion, support for life. It is suggested from these findings that religious people are not a uniform conservative voting bloc. Instead, religious beliefs, such as the particular ways value is placed on life, can often result in conservative views on some topics, such as abortion, alongside liberal attitudes on others, such as gun control. With understanding that attitudes toward partisan issues vary by region (Dillon & Savage, 2006) and change over time depending on political climates (Carter et al., 2009), I call for future research to consider examining longitudinal trends and regional variation of contradictory attitudes toward abortion and gun control.
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