



# The Association between the Gender of One's Child and Attitude Towards Abortion Policies



Alana Penoyer, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University

## Introduction

- Some evidence has found that having a daughter is significantly associated with more positive support for abortion (Conley & Rauscher, 2013; Washington 2008).
- However, other research suggests that the gender of one's child may contribute to stronger views on abortion only in line with one's existing political ideology, found to be a much stronger correlator (Van Effenterre, 2017)
- The majority of research has focused on the gender of an individual's child in relation to more general variables such as political ideology and empathy for feminist issues rather than the specific relationship with abortion attitudes (Oswald & Powdhavee, 2010; Washington, 2008).

## Research Questions

- How is the gender of one's child associated with one's attitude towards abortion?
- Are individuals with daughters more likely to have supportive views of abortion?
- Does this relationship differ depending on the individual's own gender?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=8280) were drawn from the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2020 Time Series Study.
- ANES is a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized American citizens aged eighteen or older residing in one of the fifty U.S. states or the District of Columbia.

### Measures

- Respondents were asked if they had any living sons or daughters. Possible responses included "Daughter", "Son", "Both", or "Neither."
- Abortion attitudes were measured with a question asking respondents to place themselves at one of four options according to their support for abortion.
- Responses ranged from least supportive, 1 ("By law, abortion should never be permitted") to most supportive, 4 ("By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice").

## Results

### Univariate

- The mean abortion self-rating score was 3.046 out of 4.

### Bivariate

- Chi-square analysis showed a **significant association** between gender of child and abortion attitudes ( $p$ -value  $< 2.2e-16$ ).
- The percentage breakdown of abortion self-rating levels varied among each of the four 'gender of child' categories (Fig. 1).

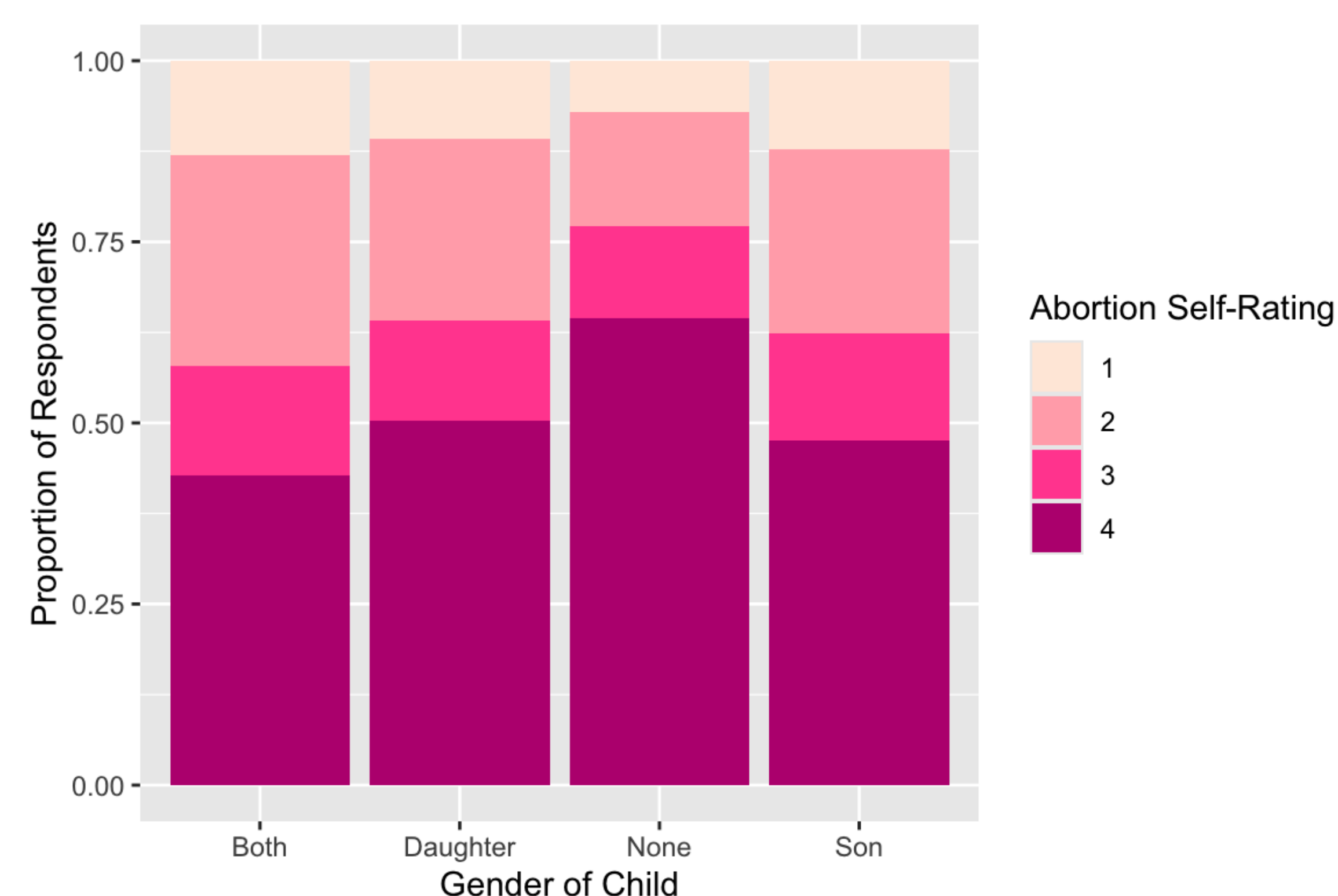


Figure 1: Breakdown of Abortion Attitudes According to the Gender of One's Child

### Multivariate

- Linear regression analysis showed that having no children was **significantly and positively associated** with abortion support (Beta = 0.302 greater than individuals with a daughter).
- There was a **significant negative association** between having both a son and daughter and abortion support (Beta = -0.169).
- Having a son was the **only variable possessing no significant association** with abortion support.
- The respondent being male was significantly associated with less support for abortion compared to females (Beta = -0.070).
- The interaction between the gender of the respondent's child and the respondent's own sex was **not statistically significant** in predicting abortion attitudes (Fig. 2).

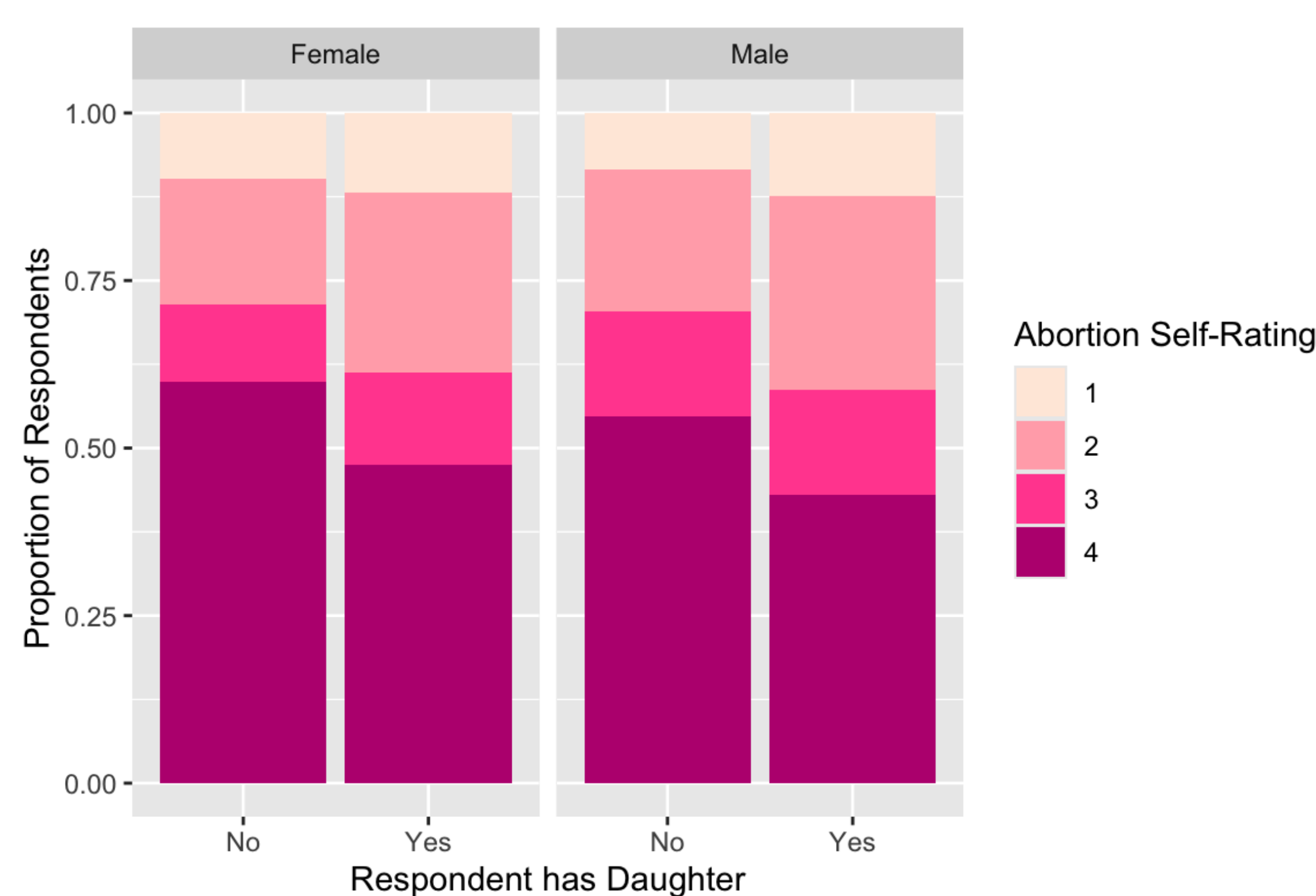


Figure 2: Breakdown of Abortion Attitudes by Respondent's Sex Based on the Gender of Their Child

## Discussion

- People with no children may be more likely to have favorable attitudes towards abortion than people with a daughter, a son, or both.
- Individuals with a daughter still may be more likely to support abortion than to not.
- Independently, the respondent's sex may be associated with their abortion attitudes.
- However, the association between the gender of one's child and attitude towards abortion does not depend on one's own sex.
- Further research is necessary to explore the dynamic between one's gender and that of their child within the context of other covariates (e.g. political ideology, religiosity) in predicting abortion attitudes.

## References

- Conley, D., & Rauscher, E. (2013). The Effect of Daughters on Partisanship and Social Attitudes Toward Women. *Sociological Forum*, 28(4), 700–718. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sof.12055>
- Guttman Institute. (2023, January 9). *Parental Involvement in Minors' Abortions*. Guttman Institute. <https://www.guttman.org/state-policy/explore/parental-involvement-minors-abortions>
- NW, 1615 L. S., Suite 800 Washington, & Inquiries, D. 20036USA202-419-4300 | M.-8-8. | F.-4.-4. | M. (2022, August 23). *Abortion Archives*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/politics-policy/political-issues/abortion/>
- Osborne, D., Huang, Y., Overall, N. C., Sutton, R. M., Petterson, A., Douglas, K. M., Davies, P. G., & Sibley, C. G. (2022). Abortion Attitudes: An Overview of Demographic and Ideological Differences. *Political Psychology*, 43(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12803>
- Oswald, A. J., & Powdhavee, N. (2010). Daughters and Left-Wing Voting. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 92(2), 213–227. <https://doi.org/10.1162/rest.2010.11436>
- Van, Effenterre, C. (2017). Papa Does Preach: Daughters and Polarisation of Attitudes Toward Abortion. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3081411>
- Washington, E. L. (2008). Female Socialization: How Daughters Affect Their Legislator Fathers' Voting on Women's Issues. *American Economic Review*, 98(1), 311–332. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.98.1.311>