

The Association between Political Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Abortion

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Introduction

- Abortion has remained a salient and hot-button political and social issue in the United States for decades, and attitudes toward abortion have been measured by various public opinion polls (e.g., Gallup, National Institute of Health, Pew Research Center) and national surveys such as The General Social Survey since 1972.
- Research shows that, in general, those who identified as Democrats are more supportive of abortion than those who identified as Republicans, suggesting an association between political beliefs and abortion attitudes (Cook et al., 1992; Jalen, 2017; Hadfield et al., 2023).
- While the current literature illustrates strong evidence of an association between political beliefs and abortion attitudes, political opinions are often highly intertwined with other demographic characteristics (Turner, 2022), such as gender, religion, and marital status, and these relationships are yet to be disentangled.

Research Questions

- Are people's political belief associated with their attitude toward abortion?
- Does the association between political beliefs and attitude toward abortion differ for people who are very religious and who are not religious at all?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=4,032) were drawn from the 2021 General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative sample of English-speaking, non-institutionalized adults in the U.S.

Measures

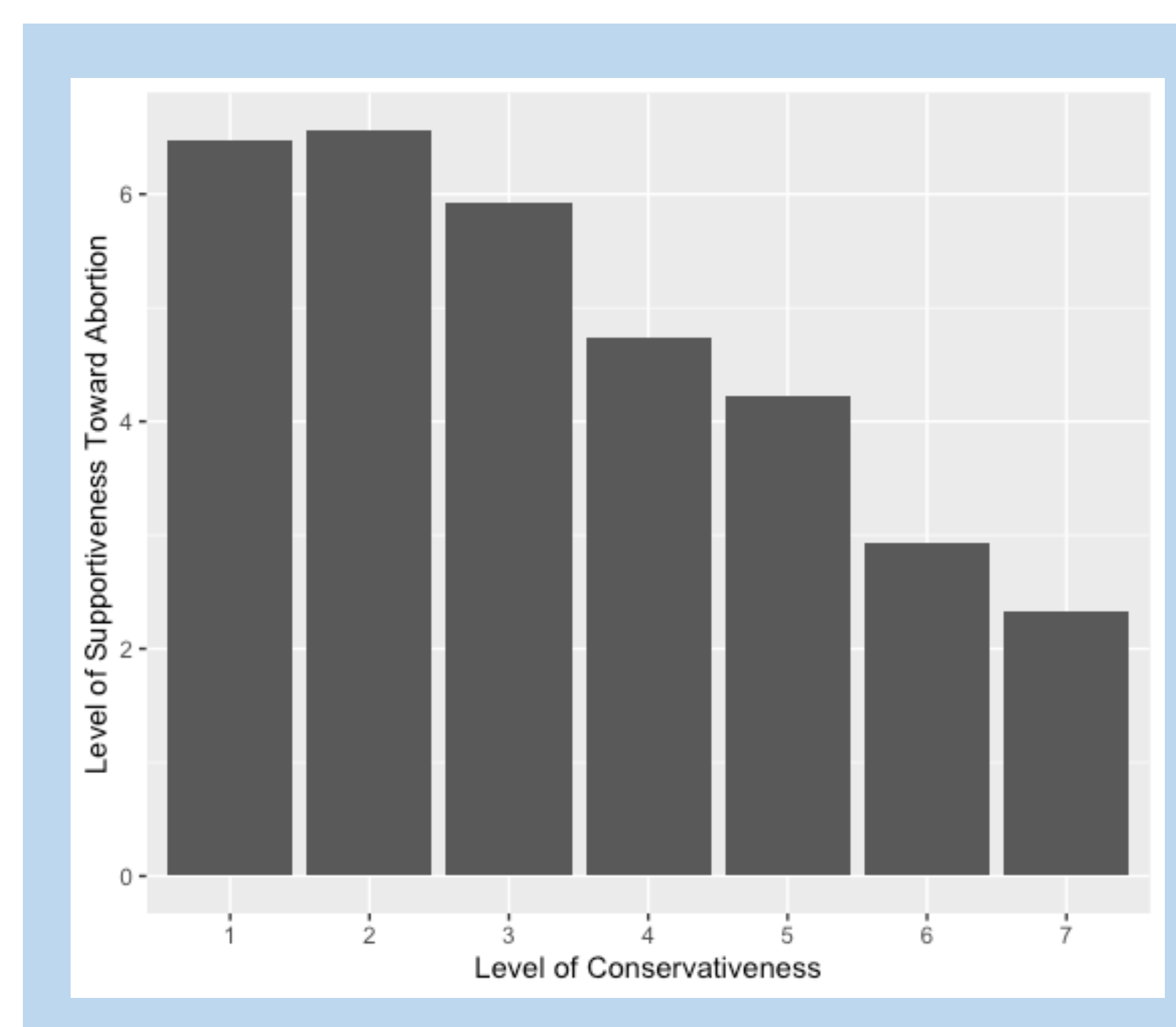
- Political belief was measured through a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold, and possible responses ranged from point 1 (extremely liberal) to point 7 (extremely conservative).
- Attitude toward abortion was measured with a series of seven questions included various scenarios of obtaining legal abortion. Participants were asked to choose whether they support ('YES' = 1) the abortion or not ('No' = 0). Responses were summing to create a quantitative variable ranging 0 to 7, with higher scores reflecting more positive attitudes toward abortion.
- Level of religiousness was measured by a question that asks the participants to self-evaluate the extent do they consider themselves a religious person, ranged from point 1 (very religious) to point 4 (not religious at all).

Results

Univariate

- 34.5% of the respondents place themselves on the liberal side, 30.5% of them are on the conservative side, and 35% described themselves as "moderate, middle of the road"
- 31.5% of the respondents self-scaled as "not religious at all," whereas the 68.5% of them recognize at least "slightly religious"

Figure 1. Distribution of Level of Supportiveness Toward Abortion based on Level of Conservativeness in Political Belief



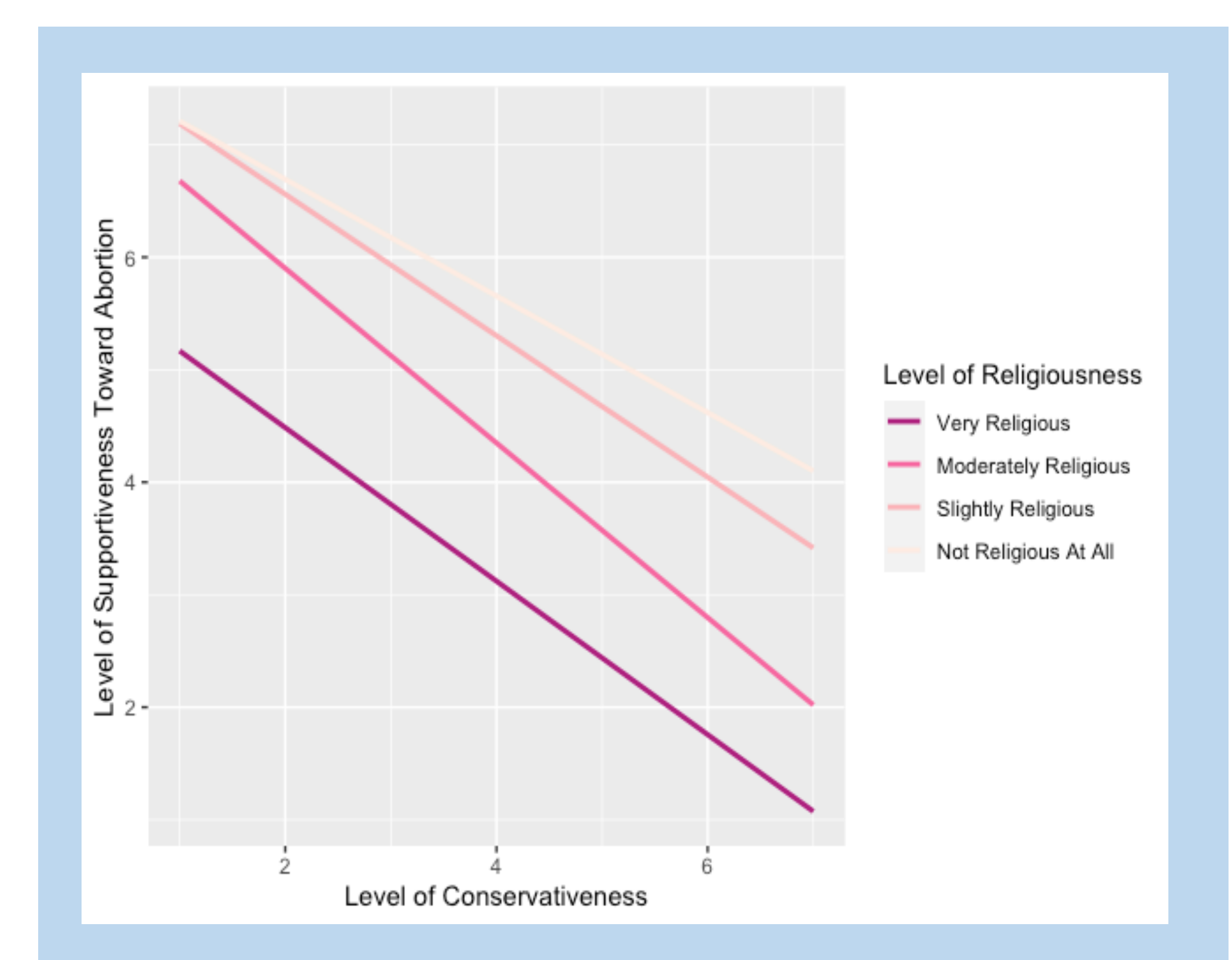
Bivariate

- ANOVA test revealed that among adults 18 or older in the United States (sample), there is an association between their political beliefs and their attitudes toward abortion (mean = 677.3, $F = 146.2$, $p < 2e-16$).
- Post hoc revealed that those on the **liberal side have generally similar levels of supportiveness of abortion**, but those on the **conservative side indicate greater among-group difference**: those who are extremely conservative are much less supportive of abortion than those who are slightly or moderately conservative.
- The result also indicates that the difference between group 1 and 2, 1 and 3, 7 and 6, of political views is not significant.

Multivariate

- Level of religiousness ($p < 2e-16$) is significantly associated with the attitude toward abortion.
- After controlling for level of religiousness, supportiveness of abortion is significantly associated with political beliefs ($B = -0.65$, $p < 0.001$). On average, someone is expected to show 0.65 unit less supportiveness of abortion for each additional unit of increase in their conservative score of political beliefs.

Figure 2. Level of Political Conservativeness vs. Levels of Supportiveness Toward Abortion by Level of Religiousness



Discussion

- People's political beliefs play an important role of affecting and determining their attitudes toward abortion, which aligns with the existing knowledge that conservative groups tend to hold more restrictive views on social issues like abortion.
- The extent one consider themselves as a religious person also shows significant association with their opinions about abortion, which indicates the complex dynamics of factors that shape one's attitude toward abortion.
- These findings may contribute to further understandings of how ideological beliefs and factors have entangled and concurred in affecting people's opinions of social issues and may further inform discussions in public policy and social advocacy.
- While this research focuses on political and religious beliefs, there may be other factors that influence people's thoughts, such as race, marital status, education background, that are yet to explore.