Introduction: The Politics of Abortion 50 Years after *Roe*

Katrina Kimport
University of California, San Francisco

Rebecca Kreitzer
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Abstract Abortion is central to the American political landscape and a common pregnancy outcome, yet research on abortion has been siloed and marginalized in the social sciences. In an empirical analysis, the authors found only 22 articles published in this century in the top economics, political science, and sociology journals. This special issue aims to bring abortion research into a more generalist space, challenging what the authors term "the abortion research paradox," wherein abortion research is largely absent from prominent disciplinary social science journals but flourishes in interdisciplinary and specialized journals. After discussing the misconceptions that likely contribute to abortion research siloization and the implications of this siloization for abortion research as well as social science knowledge more generally, the authors introduce the articles in this special issue. Then, in a call for continued and expanded research on abortion, the introduction to this special issue closes by offering three guiding practices for abortion scholars—both those new to the topic and those deeply familiar with it—in the hopes of building an ever-richer body of literature on abortion politics, policy, and law. The need for such a robust literature is especially acute following the US Supreme Court's June 2022 overturning of the constitutional right to abortion.

Keywords abortion, siloization, marginalization, social sciences, *Roe v. Wade*

Abortion has been both siloed and marginalized in social science research. But because abortion is a perennially politically and socially contested issue as well as vital health care that one in four women in the United States will experience in their lifetime (Jones and Jerman 2022), it is imperative that social scientists make a change. This special issue brings together

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insightful voices from across disciplines to do just that—and does so at a particularly important historical moment. Fifty years after the United States Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision set a national standard amid disparate state policies on abortion, we again find ourselves in a country with a patchwork of laws about abortion. In *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022), the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion it had established in *Roe*, purportedly returning the question of legalization of abortion to the states. In the immediate aftermath of the *Dobbs* decision, state policies polarized, and public opinion shifted. This moment demands scholarly evaluation of where we have been, how we arrived at this moment, and what we should be attentive to in coming years. This special issue came about, in part, in response to the on-the-ground conditions of abortion in the United States.

As we argue below, the siloization of abortion research means that the social science literature broadly is not (yet) equipped to make sense of this moment, our history, and what the future holds. First, though, we make a case for the importance of political scientists, economists, and sociologists studying abortion. Then we describe the siloization of abortion research through what we call the "abortion research paradox," wherein abortion research—despite its social and political import—is curiously absent from top disciplinary journals, even as it thrives in other publication venues that are often interdisciplinary and usually specialized. We theorize some reasons for this siloization and discuss the consequences, both for generalist knowledge and for scientific understanding of abortion. We then introduce the articles in this special issue, noting the breadth of methodological, topical, and theoretical approaches to abortion research they demonstrate. Finally, we offer three suggestions for scholars—both those new to abortion research and those already deeply familiar with it—embarking on abortion research in the hopes of building an ever-richer body of literature on abortion politics, policy, and law.

Why Abortion?

Abortion has arguably shaped the American political landscape more than any other domestic policy issue in the last 50 years. Since the Supreme Court initially established a nationwide right to abortion in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), debate over this right has influenced elections at just about every level of office (Abramowitz 1995; Cook, Hartwig, and Wilcox 1993; Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1994; Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1992; Paolino 1995; Roh and Haider-Markel 2003), inspired political activism (Carmines and

Woods 2002; Killian and Wilcox 2008; Maxwell 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995) and social movements (Kretschmer 2014; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996, 2008; Munson 2010a, Munson 2010b; Rohlinger 2006; Staggenborg 1991), and fundamentally structured partisan politics (Adams 1997; Carsey and Layman 2006; Killian and Wilcox 2008). Position on abortion is frequently used as *the* litmus test for those seeking political office (Flaten 2010; Kreitzer and Osborn 2019). Opponents to legal abortion have transformed the federal judiciary (Hollis-Brusky and Parry 2021; Hollis-Brusky and Wilson 2020). Indeed, abortion is often called the quintessential "morality policy" issue (Kreitzer 2015; Kreitzer, Kane, and Mooney 2019; Mooney 2001; Mucciaroni, Ferraiolo, and Rubado 2019) and "ground zero" in the prominent culture wars that have polarized Americans (Adams 1997; Lewis 2017; Mouw and Sobel 2001; Wilson 2013). Almost fifty years after *Roe v. Wade*, in June 2022, the US Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion in its *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, ushering in a new chapter of political engagement on abortion.

But abortion is not simply an abstract political issue; it is an extremely common pregnancy outcome. Indeed, as noted above, about one in four US women will get an abortion in her lifetime (Jones and Jerman 2022), although the rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion vary substantially across racial and socioeconomic groups (Dehlendorf, Harris, and Weitz 2013; Jones and Jerman 2022). Despite rampant misinformation claiming otherwise, abortion is a safe procedure (Raymond and Grimes 2012; Upadhyay et al. 2015), reduces physical health consequences and mortality (Gerdts et al. 2016), and does not cause mental health issues (Charles et al. 2008; Major et al. 2009) or regret (Rocca et al. 2013, 2015, 2020). Abortion also has a significant impact on people's lives beyond health outcomes. Legal abortion is associated with educational attainment (Everett et al. 2019; Ralph et al. 2019; Mølland 2016) as well as higher female labor force participation, and it affects men's and women's long-term earning potential (Bernstein and Jones 2019; Bloom et al. 2009; Everett et al. 2019; Kalist 2004). Access to abortion also shapes relationship satisfaction and stability (Biggs et al. 2014; Mauldon, Foster, and Roberts 2015). The preponderance of evidence, in other words, demonstrates substantial benefits and no harms to allowing pregnant people to choose abortion.

Yet access to abortion in the United States has been rapidly declining for years. Most abortion care in the United States takes place in stand-alone outpatient facilities that primarily provide reproductive health care (Jones,

Witwer, and Jerman 2019). As antiabortion legislators in some states have advanced policies that target these facilities, the number of abortion clinics has decreased (Gerdts et al. 2022; Venator and Fletcher 2021), leaving large geographical areas lacking an abortion facility (Cartwright et al. 2018; Cohen and Joffe 2020) and thus diminishing pregnant people's ability to obtain abortion care when and where they need it.

The effects of policies regulating abortion, including those that target facilities, have been unevenly experienced, with people of color (Jones and Jerman 2022), people in rural areas (Bearak, Burke, and Jones 2017), and those who are financially struggling (Cook et al. 1999; Roberts et al. 2019) disproportionately affected. Even before the *Dobbs* decision overturned the constitutional right to abortion, the American landscape was characterized by ever-broadening contraception deserts (Axelson, Sealy, and McDonald-Mosley 2022; Barber et al. 2019; Kreitzer et al. 2021; Smith et al. 2022), maternity care deserts (Simpson 2020; Taporco et al. 2021; Wallace et al. 2021), and abortion deserts (Cartwright et al. 2018; Cohen and Joffe 2020; Engle and Freeman 2022; McNamara et al. 2022; Pleasants, Cartwright, and Upadhyay 2022). After *Dobbs*, access to abortion around the country changed in a matter of weeks. In the 100 days after *Roe* was overturned, at least 66 clinics closed in 15 states, with 14 of those states no longer having any abortion facilities (Kirstein et al. 2022). In this moment of heightened contention about an issue with a long history of social and political contestation, social scientists have a rich opportunity to contribute to scientific knowledge as well as policy and practice that affect millions of lives. This special issue steps into that opportunity.

The Abortion Research Paradox

This special issue is also motivated by what we call the abortion research paradox. As established above, abortion fundamentally shapes politics in a myriad of ways and is a very common pregnancy outcome, with research consistently demonstrating that access to abortion is consequential and beneficial to people's lives. However, social science research on abortion is rarely published in top disciplinary journals. Abortion is a topic of clear social science interest and is well suited for social science inquiry, but it is relatively underrepresented as a topic in generalist social science journals. To measure this underrepresentation empirically, we searched for original research articles about abortion in the United Sates in the top journals of political science, sociology, and economics. We identified the top three journals for each discipline by considering journal reputation within their

respective discipline as well as impact factors and Google Scholar rankings. (There is room for debate about what makes a journal a "top" general interest journal, but that is beyond our scope. Whether these journals are *exactly* the top three is debatable; nonetheless, these are undoubtedly among the top general-interest or "flagship" disciplinary journals and thus representative of what the respective disciplines value as top scholarship.) Then we searched specified journal databases for the keyword "abortion" for articles published in this century (i.e., 2000–2021), excluding commentaries and book reviews. We found few articles about abortion: just seven in economics journals, eight in political science journals, and seven in sociology journals. We read the articles and classified each into one of three categories: articles primarily about abortion; articles about more than one aspect of reproductive health, inclusive of abortion; or articles about several policy issues, among which abortion is one (table 1).

In the three top economics journals, articles about abortion focused on the relationships between abortion and crime or educational attainment, or on the impact of abortion policies on trends in the timing of first births of women (Bitler and Zavodny 2002; Donohue III and Levitt 2001; Myers 2017). Articles that studied abortion as one among several topics also studied "morally controversial" issues (Elías et al. 2017), the electoral implications of abortion (Glaeser, Ponzetto, and Shapiro 2005; Washington 2008), or contraception (Bailey 2010). Articles published in the three top political science journals that focused primarily on abortion evaluated judicial decision-making and legitimacy (Caldarone, Canes-Wrone, and Clark 2009; Zink, Spriggs, and Scott 2009) or public opinion (Kalla, Levine, and Broockman 2022; Rosenfeld, Imai, and Shapiro 2016). More commonly, abortion was one of several (or many) different issues analyzed, including government spending and provision of services, government help for African Americans, law enforcement, health care, education, free speech, Hatch Act restrictions, and the Clinton impeachment. The degree to which these articles are "about abortion" varies considerably. In the three top sociology journals, articles represented a slightly broader range of topics, including policy diffusion (Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015), public opinion (Mouw and Sobel 2001), social movements (Ferree 2003), and crisis pregnancy centers (McVeigh, Crubaugh, and Estep 2017). Unlike in economics and political science, articles in sociology on abortion mostly focused directly on abortion.

The *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* (*JHPPL*) would seem well positioned to publish research on abortion. Yet, even in *JHPPL*, abortion research is not very common. In the same time period (2000–

Table 1 Number of Articles about Abortion in Top Disciplinary Journals, 2000–2021

Discipline	Journal	Years	Abortion	Reproductive health	Abortion among policies
Economics	*AER*	2002, 2008, 2010, 2017	1	2	1
	QJE	2001, 2005	1		1
	JPE	2017	1		
Political science	*APSR*				
	AJPS	2006, 2012, 2016	1		2
	JOP	2005, 2006, 2009, 2009, 2022	3		2
Sociology	*ASR*	2004	1		
	AJS	2001, 2003, 2015, 2017	4		
	ARS	2014, 2015		2	

Note: *AER* = *American Economic Review*; *QJE* = *Quarterly Journal of Economics*; *JPE* = *Journal of Political Economy*; *APSR* = *American Political Science Review*; *AJPS* = *American Journal of Political Science*; *JOP* = *Journal of Politics*; *ASR* = *American Sociological Review*; *AJS* = *American Journal of Sociology*; *ARS* = *Annual Review of Sociology*.

2021), *JHPPL* published five articles on reproductive health: two articles on abortion (Daniels et al. 2016; Kimport, Johns, and Upadhyay 2018), one on contraception (Kreitzer et al. 2021), one on forced interventions on pregnant people (Paltrow and Flavin 2013), and one about how states could respond to the passage of the Affordable Care Act mandate regarding reproductive health (Stulberg 2013).

This is not to say that there is no extensive, rigorous published research on abortion in the social science literature. Interdisciplinary journals that are focused on reproductive health, such as *Contraception* and *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, as well as health research journals, such as the *American Journal of Public Health* and *Social Science & Medicine*, regularly published high-quality social science research on abortion during the focal time period. Research on abortion can also be found in disciplinary subfield journals. In the same time period addressed above, the *Journal of Women, Politics, and Public Policy* and *Politics & Gender*—two subfield journals focused on gender and politics—each published around 20 articles that mentioned abortion in the abstract. In practice, while this means excellent research on abortion is published, the net effect is that abortion research is siloed from other research areas in the disciplines of economics, political science, and sociology. This special issue aims to redress some of this siloization and to inspire future scholarship on abortion. Our motivation is not simply premised on quantitative

counts, however. As we assert below, abortion research siloization has significant consequences for knowledge—and especially for real people's lives. First, though, we consider some of the possible reasons for this siloization.

The Origins of Siloization

We do not know why abortion research is not more commonly published in top disciplinary journals, given the topic's clear importance in key areas of focus for these disciplines, including public discourse, politics, law, family life, and health. The siloing and marginalization of abortion is likely related to several misconceptions. For one, because of social contention on the issue, peer reviewers may not have a deep understanding of abortion as a research topic, may express hostility to the topic, or may believe that abortion is exceptional in some way—a niche or ungeneralizable research topic better published in a subfield journal. Scholars themselves may share this mischaracterization of abortion. As Borgman (2014) argues about the legal arena, and as Roberts, Schroeder, and Joffe (2020) provide evidence of in medicine, abortion is regularly treated as exceptional, making it both definitional and reasonable that abortion be treated differently in the law and in health care from other medical experiences. Scholars are not immune to social patterns that exceptionalize abortion. In their peer and editor reviews, they may inappropriately—and perhaps inadvertently—draw on their social, rather than academic, knowledge. For scholars of abortion, reviews premised on social knowledge may not be constructive to strengthening the research, and additional labor may be required to educate reviewers and editors on the academic parameters of the topic, including which social assumptions about abortion are scientifically inaccurate. Comments from authors educating editors and peer reviewers on abortion research may then counterintuitively reinforce the (mis)perception that abortion research is niche and not of general interest.

Second, authors' negative experiences while trying to publish about abortion or reproductive health in top disciplinary journals may compound as scholars share information about journals. This is the case for research on gender; evidence from political science suggests that certain journals are perceived as more or less likely to publish research on gender (Brown et al. 2020). Such reputations, especially for venues that do not publish abortion research, may not even be rooted in negative experiences. The absence of published articles on abortion may itself dissuade scholars from submitting to a journal based on an educated guess that the journal does not welcome abortion research. Regardless of the veracity of these

perceptions, certain journals may get a reputation for publishing on abortion (or not), which then may make future submissions of abortion research to those outlets more (or less) likely. After all, authors seek publication venues where they believe their research will get a robust review and is likely to be published. This pattern may be more common for some author groups than others. Research from political science suggests women are more risk averse than men when it comes to publishing strategies and less likely to submit manuscripts to journals where the perceived likelihood of successful publication is lower (Key and Sumner 2019). Special issues like this one are an important way for journals without a substantial track record of publishing abortion research to establish their willingness to do so.

Third, there might be a methodological bias, which unevenly intersects with some author groups. Top disciplinary journals are more likely to publish quantitative approaches rather than qualitative ones, which can result in the exclusion of women and minority scholars who are more likely to utilize mixed or qualitative methods (Teele and Thelen 2017). To the extent that investigations of abortion in the social sciences have utilized qualitative rather than quantitative methods, that might contribute to the underrepresentation of abortion-focused scholarship in top disciplinary journals.

Stepping back from the idiosyncrasies of peer review and methodologies, a fourth explanation for why abortion research is not more prominent in generalist social science journals may arise far earlier than the publishing process. PhD-granting departments in the social sciences may have an undersupply of scholars with expertise in reproductive health who can mentor junior scholars interested in studying abortion. (We firmly believe one need not be an expert in reproductive health to mentor junior scholars studying reproductive health, so this explanation only goes so far.) Anecdotally, we have experienced and heard many accounts of scholars who were discouraged from focusing on abortion in dissertation research because of advisors', mentors', and senior scholars' misconceptions about the topic and about the viability of a career in abortion research. In data provided to us by Key and Sumner from their analysis of the "leaky pipeline" in the publication of research on gender at top disciplinary journals in political science (Key and Sumner 2019), there were only nine dissertations written between 2000 and 2013 that mention abortion in the abstract, most of which are focused on judicial behavior or political party dynamics rather than focusing on abortion policy itself. If few junior scholars focus on abortion, it makes sense there may be an undersupply of cutting-edge social science research on abortion submitted to top disciplinary journals.

The Implications of Siloization

The relative lack of scholarly attention to abortion as a social phenomenon in generalist journals has implications for general scholarship. Most concerningly, it limits our ability to understand other social phenomena for which the case of abortion is a useful entry point. For example, the case of abortion as a common, highly safe medical procedure is useful for examining medical innovations and technologies, such as telemedicine. Similarly, given the disparities in who seeks and obtains abortion care in the United States, abortion is an excellent case study for scholars interested in race, class, and gender inequality. It also holds great potential as an opportunity for exploration of public opinion and attitudes, particularly as a case of an issue whose ties to partisan politics have solidified over time and that is often—but not always—"moralized" in policy engagement (Kreitzer, Kane, and Mooney 2019). Additionally, there are missed opportunities to generate theory from the specifics of abortion. For example, there is ample evidence of abortion stigma and stigmatization (Hanschmidt et al. 2016) and of their effects on people who obtain abortions (Sorhaindo and Lavelanet 2022). This research is often unmoored from existing theorization on stigmatization, however, because the bulk of the stigma literature focuses on identities; and having had an abortion is not an identity the same way as, for example, being queer is. (For a notable exception to this trend, see Beynon-Jones 2017.)

There is, it must be noted, at least one benefit of abortion research being regularly siloed within social science disciplines. The small but growing number of researchers engaged in abortion research has often had to seek mentorship and collaborations outside their disciplines. Indeed, several of the articles included in this special issue come from multidisciplinary author teams, building bridges between disciplinary literatures and pushing knowledge forward. Social scientists studying abortion regularly engage with research by clinicians and clinician-researchers, which is somewhat rare in the academy. The interdisciplinary journals noted above that regularly publish social science abortion research (*Contraception* and *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*) also regularly publish clinical articles and are read by advocates and policy makers. In other words, social scientists studying abortion frequently reach audiences that include clinicians, advocates, and policy makers, marking an opportunity for social science research to influence practice.

The siloization of abortion research in the social sciences affects more than broad social science knowledge; it also dramatically shapes our

understanding of abortion. When abortion researchers are largely relegated to their own spaces, they risk missing opportunities to learn from other areas of scholarship that are not related to abortion. Lacking context from other topics, abortion scholars may inaccurately understand an aspect of abortion as exceptional that is not, or they may reinvent the proverbial theoretical wheel to describe an abortion-related phenomenon that is not actually unique to abortion. For example, scholars have studied criminalized behavior for decades, offering theoretical insights and methodological best practices for research on illegal activities. With abortion now illegal in many states, abortion researchers can benefit from drawing on that extant literature to examine the implications of illegality, identifying which aspects of abortion illegality are unique and which are common to other illegal activities. Likewise, methodologically, abortion researchers can learn from other researchers of illegal activities about how to protect participants' confidentiality.

The ontological and epistemological implications for the siloization of abortion research extend beyond reproductive health. When abortion research is not part of the central discussions in economics, political science, and sociology, our understanding of health policy, politics, and law is impoverished. We thus miss opportunities to identify and address chronic health disparities and health inequities, with both conceptual and practical consequences. These oversights matter for people's lives. Following the June 2022 *Dobbs* decision, millions of people with the capacity of pregnancy are now barred from one key way to control fertility: abortion. The implications of scholars' failure to comprehensively grapple with the place of abortion in health policy, politics, and law are playing out in those people's lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Articles in this Special Issue

In this landscape, we offer this special issue on "The Politics of Abortion 50 Years After *Roe*." We seek in this issue to illustrate some of the many ways abortion can and should be studied, with benefits not only for scholarly knowledge about abortion and its role in policy, politics, and law but also for general knowledge about health policy, politics, and law themselves.

The issue's articles represent multiple disciplines, including several articles by multidisciplinary teams. Although public health has long been a welcoming home for abortion research, authors in this special issue point to opportunities in anthropology, sociology, and political science,

among other disciplines, for the study of abortion. We do not see the differences and variations among disciplinary approaches as a competition. Rather, we believe that the more diverse the body of researchers grappling with questions about abortion, abortion provision, and abortion patients, the better our collective knowledge about abortion and its role in the social landscape.

The same goes for diversity of methodological approaches. Authors in this issue employ qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, showcasing compelling methodological variation. There is no singular or best methodology for answering research questions about abortion. Instead, the impressive variation in methodological approaches in this special issue highlights the vast methodological opportunities for future research. A diversity of methodologies enables a diversity of research questions. Indeed, different methods can identify, generate, and respond to different research questions, enriching the literature on abortion. The methodologies represented in this issue are certainly not exhaustive, but we believe they are suggestive of future opportunities for scholarly exploration and investigation. We hope these articles will provide a road map for rich expansions of the research literature on abortion.

By way of brief introduction, we offer short summaries of the included articles. Baker traces the history of medication abortion in the United States, cataloging the initial approval of the two-part regimen by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), subsequent policy debates over FDA-imposed restrictions on how medication abortion is dispensed, and the work of abortion access advocates to get medication abortion to people who need it. Weaving together accounts of health care policy, abortion advocacy, and on-the-ground activism, Baker illustrates both the unique contentions specific to abortion policy and how the history of medication abortion can be seen as a case of health care advocacy.

Two of the issue's articles focus on state-level legislative policy on abortion. Roth and Lee generate an original data set cataloging the introduction and implementation of statutes on abortion and other aspects of reproductive health at the state level in the United States monthly, from 1994 to 2022. In their descriptive analysis, the authors highlight trends in abortion legislation and the emergent pattern of state polarization around abortion. Their examination adds rich longitudinal context to contemporary analyses of reproductive health legislation, providing a valuable resource for future scholarship. Carson and Carter similarly attend to state-level legislation, zeroing in on the case of abortion policy in response

to the COVID-19 pandemic to show how legislation unrelated to abortion has been opportunistically used to restrict abortion access. The authors also examine how abortion is discursively constructed as a risk to public health. This latter move, they argue, builds on previous constructions of abortion as a risk to individual health and points to a new horizon of anti-abortion constructions of the meaning of abortion access.

Kim et al. and Kumar examine the implementation of US abortion policies. Kim et al. use an original data set of 20 years of state supreme court decisions to investigate factors that affect state supreme court decision-making on abortion. Their regression analysis uncovers the complex relationship between state legislatures, state supreme courts, and the voting public for the case of abortion. Kumar charts how 50 years of US abortion policy have affected global access to abortion, offering insights into the underexamined international implications of US abortion policy and into social movement advocacy that has expanded abortion access around the world.

Karlin and Joffe and Heymann et al. draw on data collected when *Roe* was still the law of the land to investigate phenomena that are likely to become far more common now that *Roe* has been overturned. Karlin and Joffe utilize interviews with 40 physicians who provide abortions to examine their perspectives on people who terminate their pregnancies outside the formal health care system—an abortion pathway whose popularity increases when abortion access constricts (Aiken et al. 2022). By contextualizing their findings on the contradictions physicians voiced—desiring to support reproductive autonomy but invested in physician authority—in a historical overview of how mainstream medicine has marginalized abortion provision since the early days after *Roe*, the authors add nuance to understandings of the "formal health care system," its members, and the stakes faced by people bypassing this system to obtain their desired health outcome. Heymann et al. investigate a process also likely to increase in the wake of the *Dobbs* decision: the implementation of restrictive state-level abortion policy by unelected bureaucrats. Using the case of variances for a written transfer agreement requirement in Ohio—a requirement with no medical merit that is designed to add administrative burden to stand-alone abortion clinics—Heymann et al. demonstrate how bureaucratic discretion by political appointees can increase the administrative burden of restrictive abortion laws and thus further constrain abortion access. Together, these two articles demonstrate how pre-*Roe* data can point scholars to areas that merit investigation after *Roe* has been overturned.

Finally, using mixed methods, Buyuker et al. analyze attitudes about abortion acceptability and the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision, distinguishing what people think about abortion from what they know about abortion policy. In addition to providing methodological insights about survey items related to abortion attitudes, the authors expose a disconnect between how people think about abortion acceptability and their support for the *Roe* decision. In other words, as polarized as abortion attitudes are said to be, there is unacknowledged and largely unmeasured complexity in how the general public thinks about abortion.

Future Research on Abortion

We hope that a desire to engage in abortion research prompts scholars to read the excellent articles in this special issue. We also hope that reading these pieces inspires at least some readers to engage in abortion research. Having researched abortion for nearly three decades between us, we are delighted by the emerging interest in studying abortion, whether as a focal topic or alongside a different focus. This research is essential to our collective understanding of abortion politics, policy, and law and the many millions of people whose lives are affected by US abortion politics, policy, and law annually. In light of the limitations of the current field of abortion research, we have several suggestions for scholars of abortion, regardless of their level of familiarity with the topic.

First, know and cite the existing literature on abortion. To address the siloization of abortion research, and particularly the scarcity of abortion research published in generalist journals, scholars must be sure to build on the impressive work that has been published on the topic in specialized spaces. Moreover, becoming familiar with existing research can help scholars avoid several common pitfalls in abortion research. For example, being immersed in existing literature can help scholars avoid outdated, imprecise, or inappropriate language and terminology. Smith et al. (2018), for instance, illuminate the implications of clinicians deploying seemingly everday language around "elective" abortion. They find that it muddies the distinction between the use of "elective" colloquially and in clinical settings, contributing to the stigmatization of abortion and abortion patients. Examinations like theirs advance understanding of abortion stigmatization while highlighting for scholars the importance of being sensitive to and reflective about language. Familiarity with existing research can help scholars avoid methodological pitfalls as well, such as incomplete understanding of the organization of abortion provision.

Although Planned Parenthood has brand recognition for providing abortion care, the majority of abortions in the United States are performed at independent abortion clinics. Misunderstanding the provision landscape can have consequences for some study designs.

Second, we encourage scholars of abortion to think critically about the ideological underpinnings of how their research questions and findings are framed. Academic research of all kinds, including abortion, is better when it is critical of ideologically informed premises. Abortion scholars must be careful to avoid uncritically accepting both antiabortion premises and abortion-supportive premises, especially as those premises unconsciously guide much of the public discourse on abortion. Scholars have the opportunity to use methodological tools not to find an objective truth per se but to challenge the uncontested common sense claims that frequently guide public thinking on abortion. One strategy for avoiding common framing pitfalls is to construct research and analysis to center the people most affected by abortion politics, policy, and law (Kimport and McLemore 2022). Another strategy is to critique what Baird and Millar (2019, 2020) have termed the performative nature of abortion scholarship. Abortion scholarship, they note, has predominantly focused on negative aspects and effects of abortion care. Research that finds and explores affirmatively positive aspects—for instance, the joy in abortion—can crucially thicken scholarly understanding.

Third, related to our discussion above, scholars of abortion face an interesting challenge regarding how abortion is and is not exceptional. Research on abortion must attend to how abortion has been exceptionalized—and marginalized—in policy and practices. But there are also numerous instances where abortion is only one example of many. In these cases, investigation of abortion under the assumption that it is exceptional is an unnecessary limitation on the work's contribution. Scholars of abortion benefit from mastery of the literature on abortion, yet knowing this literature is not sufficient. There are important bridges from scholarship on abortion to scholarship in other areas, important conversations across and within literatures, that can yield insights both about abortion and about other topical foci.

As guest coeditors of this special issue, we are delighted by the rich and growing body of scholarship on abortion, to which the articles in this special issue represent an important addition. There is still much more work to be done. Going forward, we are eager to see future scholarship on abortion build on this work and tackle new questions.

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Katrina Kimport is a professor with the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences and a medical sociologist with the ANSIRH program at the University of California, San Francisco. Her research examines the (re)production of inequality in health and reproduction, with a topical focus on abortion, contraception, and pregnancy. She is the author of *No Real Choice: How Culture and Politics Matter for Reproductive Autonomy* (2022) and *Queering Marriage: Challenging Family Formation in the United States* (2014) and co-author, with Jennifer Earl, of *Digitally Enabled Social Change* (2011). She has published more than 75 articles in sociology, health research, and interdisciplinary journals.
katrina.kimport@ucsf.edu

Rebecca Kreitzer is an associate professor of public policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on gendered political representation and intersectional policy inequality in the US states. Much of her research focuses on the political dynamics of reproductive health care, especially surrounding contraception and abortion. She has published dozens of articles in political science, public policy, and law journals.
rkreit@email.unc.edu

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