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P A 397C: Data Management and the Research Life Cycle

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**How Abortion Provision, Health Care Coverage, and State Factors can Predict the Number of Crisis Pregnancy Centers in a State**

***Introduction***

Crisis pregnancy centers are organizations which operate to target people with unintended or crisis pregnancy centers to dissuade them from choosing abortion. They typically do this through directed options counseling, where counselors may try to persuade the person considering their options by referencing links between abortion and adverse mental or physical health effects – links which have been scientifically disproven.(1,2) They may also provide such services as referrals for childcare or adoption services, some material resources for childcare such as diapers, and may also provide some medical services such as ultrasounds or pregnancy testing.(3) CPCs often use advertisements to reach potential clients such as billboards, web-based advertisements, or their websites, but these sometimes suggest that the facility may provide medical services or even abortion services.(4) CPCs have been a source of controversy because their counseling involves bias and because of the misinformation that may be involved in their counseling or advertisements. In addition, some states, including Texas, have directed some public funding to crisis pregnancy centers, which is also quite controversial.(5)

There has been a lot of research and writing on crisis pregnancy centers. Some of the literature available is empirical studies on the quality of care provided by the center or centered around the clients. Much of the research around crisis pregnancy centers has revolved around the quality of care provided. Some researchers have looked at the accuracy of the information provided at such locations. Bryant-Comstock et al analyzed CPC websites for the accuracy of sexual health information and found much of it to be inaccurate or misleading.(6) Tsevat et al conducted a mystery client survey at a random sample of 55 CPCs and found that many purposed their facility to provide direct medical care despite the fact that only one provided such services; the researchers also found that many of the locations gave overestimates of the danger of abortion and counselors at a majority of site visits expressed judgment about the mystery client’s decision.(7) Other researchers have focused on what services clients seek and whether clients are satisfied with the quality of care provided. [continue summarizing other research]

Crisis pregnancy centers sometimes open near abortion providers and may use language that makes it difficult for potential patients to tell whether or not the clinic provides abortion.[cite] Some crisis pregnancy centers that operate near abortion providers have adopted names similar to the abortion provider, which may cause people seeking an abortion to go to a crisis pregnancy center by accident instead, which can cause confusion and delay care.[cite] A 2010 study by Yuengert and Fetzer focused on the locations of abortion providers and CPCs in California found that the number of abortion providers in a location had no independent effect on the number of abortion providers.(8)

Other research has looked at the legal implications of such centers, or the policy implications such as where they get funding. [examples to come] In recent years, in some states, crisis pregnancy centers have been able to get more and more state funding.[cite] At the same time, nationwide, restrictions on abortion providers have increased in number[cite] and scope [cite] and the number of abortion providers has sharply decreased[cite]. People in 27 cities live more than 100 miles away from an abortion provider.(9) A study by Blank, George, and London, in 1996, found that the number of abortion providers in a state is a determinant of the abortion rate within the state.(10)

Crisis pregnancy centers are typically not medical facilities and so are not regulated in the way that other facilities are. Many states and advocacy organizations have attempted to regulate crisis pregnancy centers in recent years but often these efforts have run into legal issues, particularly surrounding the right to free speech of the facility and their employees.(5) Some states and cities have passed legislation requiring CPCs to post signs declaring that they do not provide abortion services nor referrals for abortion services; this type of legislation in Austin, TX, New York, and Maryland has been struck down by federal courts citing violations of freedom of speech.(11–13) California’s Reproductive FACT Act, passed in October 2015, required CPCs to inform their clients that the state offers free or low-cost access to comprehensive family planning services, prenatal care, and abortion for eligible women; this law was struck down by the courts for similar reasons.(14–16)

On the other hand, abortion been the focus of a lot of state-level regulations, particularly in recent years. The Guttmacher Institute found in 2019 that one in three of the state-level regulations on abortion passed since Roe v. Wade guaranteed the right to abortion in 1973 were enacted in the past seven years (add cite). Abortion restrictions have caused many facilities to close (CITE), causing issues for those in communities without abortion providers. State regulations vary in their focus and measure. Some restrictions focus on the provision of abortion, aiming at abortion providers themselves. Some states require facilities to adhere to regulations that restrict the way facilities can be constructed, such as requiring them to adhere to the restrictions around ambulatory surgical centers (cite). Other states may restrict the methods that may be used to induce abortion or require providers to have admitting privileges at local hospitals, introducing a hurdle that may be insurmountable if local hospitals are Catholic owned or otherwise unsupportive of abortion providers. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its *Roe v. Wade* decision, held that states may only constitutionally ban or restrict abortions after the point of fetal viability, except where necessary to preserve a woman’s life or health, but some states restrict abortion even further, despite the legal requirement to allow abortion until viability (cite).

Other state restrictions focus on those seeking abortion services. Some of these restrictions include requiring those seeking abortion to receive state-mandated counseling prior to being able to receive the procedure, or requiring them to have ultrasounds prior to the procedure (ultrasounds are not considered medically necessary before an abortion in the first trimester). Some states require people to wait between seeing the provider and having the procedure (this can be anywhere from 24-72 hours, depending on the state’s law). The Hyde amendment, adopted every year since 1976, prohibits federal funds from paying for abortion except in the case of life endangerment or if the pregnancy arises from incest or rape (cite). Medicaid is a public (EXPLAIN MEDICAID AND FED & STATE DOLLARS) Some states follow the Hyde amendment for state Medicaid funds, while others allow for state Medicaid funds to pay for abortion that do not meet these restrictions. Some states restrict private insurance use for abortion. States may have special restrictions on minors, requiring them to have a parent consent to their decision or go through a process known as judicial bypass to allow them to move forward without getting a parent’s consent.

Restrictions on abortion, whether on providers or on those seeking abortions, restrict the ability of people within the state to access comprehensive reproductive health care. On the other hand, crisis pregnancy centers, which have been found to provide misinformation to those seeking abortion, are often unregulated. The research question this analysis seeks to address is as follows: how is the number of crisis pregnancy centers in a state affected by abortion provision within the state and health care coverage within the state, controlling for political and demographic factors? The working theory behind my analysis is that crisis pregnancy centers open in response to abortion providers in the state, and may also be spurred to open by a concentration of donors, politicians, or voters in a state who may also be unfriendly toward abortion provision or other health coverage within the state.

***Data Sources***

*Crisis Pregnancy Centers*

The data on crisis pregnancy centers by state come from a dataset by Reproaction.(19) Reproaction, an organization dedicated to creating a more favorable climate for abortion rights and reproductive justice, compiled the dataset to include all discoverable crisis pregnancy centers operating nationwide.(19,20) The dataset is open-source and available on the Reproaction website.

*Abortion Provision*

This analysis operationalizes abortion provision within the state by looking at the number of aboritons provided within the state, the number of abortion providers within the state, and regulations on the provision of abortion within the state. In order to measure abortion provision within the state, this analysis uses the number of abortion providers within the state, the number of abortions provided within the state, and whether or not certain regulations on abortion providers and abortion patients are in place and enforced within the state.

The data on the number of abortion providers within the state and the number of abortions provided within the state both come from the Guttmacher Institute’s National Provider Census. As part of this research, researchers at Guttmacher compile records of all of the facilities and individuals who are providing abortions and take a census of them to find the number of abortions provided within the country in a year.(17) This data is unique in its coverage and source: some state health departments report the number of abortions provided within the state to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but not all states report this data and not all providers within states report the information to their respective health departments.(ADD CITE). This analysis will use Guttmacher’s data on the number of abortion procedures and providers by state in the most recent year for which data are available, 2014.(17)

The data on abortion regulations come from datasets available on the Kaiser Family Foundation website. The datasets use data from the Guttmacher Institute. In order to validate the datasets, I confirmed the data against the Guttmacher website. The abortion regulations I am using in this analysis include whether or not states have restrictions on clinics’ structural standards similar to ambulatory surgical centers, whether or not states restrict abortion past a certain point in pregnancy, whether states require ultrasounds before an abortion, whether private insurance plans in the state or states’ health insurance marketplaces restrict abortion coverage, whether states have a mandatory waiting period prior to abortion services, whether states follow the federal standard and allow Medicaid to fund abortions only for cases involving life endangerment, rape, or incest, whether states require parental consent for minors seeking abortions, whether states have a so-called “partial birth” abortion ban, and whether states have laws in place banning abortion (from prior to the *Roe* decision) or expressing the intent to limit abortion to the maximum extent permitted under the law. I am also looking at whether state law protects the right to abortion.

Some states have regulations in place which have been enjoined by court orders or are similarly non enforceable: I included a law on the books only if the law was in place and enforced within the state, with one exception. In the case of state policy banning abortion existing from prior to the *Roe* decision or expressing the intent to limit abortion to the maximum extent permitted under the law, I included these laws although they are not enforced.

*Health Care Coverage*

I operationalized health care coverage within the state by looking at the percent of people within the state who do not have health insurance and whether or not the state has expanded Medicaid. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid was only available to children, parents, people with disabilities, and some people over age 65, although states had some discretion with regard to income eligibility levels. The ACA offered states the option to expand eligibility for Medicaid to individuals with incomes up to 138% of the federal poverty level, offering federal funding to cover the costs of newly eligible enrollees for a set number of years.(18) So far, XX states have expanded Medicaid, and studies have found improved outcomes due to Medicaid expansions (CITE). The data on whether or not the state has expanded Medicaid are from a dataset available from the Kaiser Family Foundation. The data are current as of the end of April, 2019.

The data on people within the state who do not have health insurance come from a dataset uploaded to Kaggle by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.(cite) The dataset gives the percent of people without health insurance in 2010 by state, the percent without health insurance in 2015, and the change in this coverage from 2010-2015, as well as a few other variables, to look at the effects of the Affordable Care Act. This analysis uses the percent of people without health insurance in 2015 to look at health care coverage within the state.

*Political and Demographic Factors*

In order to control for political and demographic factors within the state, this analysis uses voting behavior in the state and state population. In order to analyze state voting behavior, I constructed a simple dataset with each state coded as Democrat or Republican for 2012 and 2016, using data from the Federal Elections Commission on the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections. States’ voting behavior for 2012 was highly correlated with voting behavior for 2016, with only five states’ results different in 2016 than in 2012. All of these states voted Democratic in 2012 but Republican in 2016. Because the data on CPCs and the data on abortion regulations are within the last few years, I have chosen to use states’ voting behavior in 2016.

The data on state population come from a dataset available from Kaiser Family Foundation, using population numbers from 2017. The data on KFF come from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Communities Survey.

***Data Management***

All of the data used in this analysis come from publicly available datasets. In order to manage the data, I saved all code, data, and output separately, with raw data files saved separately from working data files and merged data in another folder. All code is annotated and available via my GitHub, as is my final dataset. For more on data management for this project, see Appendix A (“Data Management Plan”).

***Methods***

This research ties together data from many different sources, as discussed above, building upon prior data collection work. For this analysis, I cleaned all datasets in Python using pandas to remove columns with data not used in the analysis, remove empty rows, remove U.S. totals, and rename columns to be more informative. The CPC database from Reproaction included the city, state, and zip all in the same cell; for analysis, using pandas and Python, I separated out the state for each facility and then reorganized the dataset so that it was organized by state and each state was associated with the total number of unique CPC facilities within that state. I then used Python and pandas to merge together all datasets on the state variable.

In Stata, I cleaned the data a bit more to recode for dummy variables. I used Stata to do the final analysis, performing an ordinary least squares regression to analyze the relationship between abortion provision in a state, health care coverage in that state, and crisis pregnancy centers in that state, controlling for political and demographic factors within the state.

In order to look at the relationship between crisis pregnancy centers and the indicators from my research question, I used a few different models. All of these are based on the theory that crisis pregnancy centers open in response to anti-abortion sentiment, or nearby abortion providers, or both.

In model number 1, I looked only at the relationship between the number of crisis pregnancy centers and abortion providers in a state, controlling for state population, as states with a higher population will likely have more of both types of facilities. Model number 2 looks at the relationship between the number of crisis pregnancy centers and providers in a state, controlling for both state population and voting behavior, in order to look at whether adding voting behavior better predicts the number of CPCs in a state. For model number 3, I added in all of the regulations to model number 2.

Abortion regulations in the model all acted as dummy variables (whether or not the state had the regulation in place and enforceable, except for the restrictions from before Roe), which had the effect of canceling one another out. In order to operationalize anti-abortion sentiment in a state, I constructed a composite score that totaled the number of abortion regulations within a state, ranging from XX to XX. In model 4, I looked at the relationship between number of CPCs, number of providers, and the score of total abortion regulations, controlling for voting behavior and state population. For model number 5, I wanted to look at only regulations targeting abortion providers, to see if crisis pregnancy centers were opening more in response to abortion providers in a state, so I used a composite score which only totals the restrictions on abortion from the supply side (cite Ted Joyce). I wanted to isolate regulations which seek to dissuade people from receiving abortions, whether by introducing delays or preventing them from obtaining abortion services, so I created another composite score that totaled the number of regulations on abortion on the demand side. For model number 6, I looked at the relationship between the number of crisis pregnancy centers, providers, and demand-side abortion regulations, again controlling for state population and voting behavior.

I also wanted to look at whether states’ supportive policies around abortion had some effect. For my final model, number 7, I used the total composite score as model number 4, but subtracted from the score for states which had a policy supporting the right to abortion.

***Results***

To come

***Limitations***

One issue with this model is in the number of crisis pregnancy centers by state. The data from Reproaction includes data for 2,629 clinic locations, but some advocacy organizations estimate there to be over 3,500 locations nationwide: NARAL Pro-Choice America estimated there to be over 3,500 in 2017.(19,21) This could be an error, or it could be that facilities have closed in recent years, or it could be that the Reproaction database does not include all facilities nationwide. This model assumes that, if there are clinic locations missing from the database, they are not missing in a systematic way; however, if this is not the case, it may introduce bias into the results.

***Discussion***

Since abortion is a time sensitive issue and crisis pregnancy centers may introduce further delays (maybe look at other laws that may introduce delay as another DV), it would be interesting to look at whether the number of crisis pregnancy centers affects abortion services in the state. It may be that the number of crisis pregnancy centers causes the abortions provided in a state to be further along in gestational age, or the number of self-managed abortions to be higher. Further research could look at the number of crisis pregnancy centers on these measures; however, as these data are highly sensitive, it is outside the scope of this paper.

Furthermore, the measures in this research are very geographically specific; therefore, it would be interesting to look at these measures using spatial or geographic analysis. It would be interesting to see whether these effects differ based on how far a person is from an abortion provider or how many abortion providers and crisis pregnancy centers are within a certain distance of a person.

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