

Southern Political Science Association (SPSA) 2016 Conference Proposal
Changing the Frame: Amicus Curiae Influence on Supreme Court Abortion Decisions

Building on a body of innovative scholarship by Pamela Corley and her colleagues that uses plagiarism detection software (e.g., Collins, Corley, and Hamner 2015) as well as other content analysis software (Corley and Wedeking 2014; Owens and Wedeking 2011) to analyze legal opinions, this project empirically tests two assertions about the abortion debate in the United States: first, that pro-life amicus groups have increasingly reframed the abortion issue in terms of harm to women (as opposed to the unborn-child frame), and second, that this reframing has been successful in shaping Supreme Court doctrine. In this paper, I use content analysis software to identify the most commonly used terms in pro-life and pro-choice amicus briefs from *Gonzales v. Carhart* (2007) and compare those to the framing of amicus briefs in the most recent Supreme Court case, *Whole Women's Health v. Hellerstedt* (2016). Then, using plagiarism detection software, I will analyze the extent to which language from the pro-life and pro-choice amicus briefs appears in the majority opinions by Justice Anthony Kennedy.