

# A Ticking Time Bomb: Restrictions on Abortion Rights and Physical Integrity Rights Abuses

NAZLI AVDAN *University of Kansas, United States*

AMANDA MURDIE *University of Georgia, United States*

VICTOR ASAL *University at Albany, United States*


***D**o abortion restrictions augur broader crackdowns on human rights? We examine the relationship between restrictions on abortion and future Physical Integrity Rights (PIR) abuses. We argue that abortion restrictions both directly and indirectly influence PIR. Directly, abortion restrictions serve as a testing ground for repressive policies and behaviors. Indirectly, restrictions worsen inequality across segments of society and winnow support for social and religious diversity. When abortion restrictions are enacted, regimes are better equipped to shift society and consolidate power, as a subdued public is discouraged from voicing collective grievances. Using a variety of time-series cross-sectional approaches, we show that significant retractions in abortion access foretell erosion of PIR.*

## INTRODUCTION: ABORTION IN GLOBAL POLITICS

**M**any countries in the world have witnessed new restrictions on abortion rights in recent years. In the United States, the anti-abortion movement seized a monumental victory when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision. The US movement has inspired similar movements in other countries, as evidenced by Australia's opponents to abortion drawing inspiration from the *Dobbs* decision (Penovic 2022). Prior to the US Supreme Court decision, the European Union, long regarded as a beacon of liberalism, saw several of its member states limit abortion rights (Tanginelli 2022). Hungary's Victor Orban grabbed media headlines when he imposed a raft of bureaucratic limits on abortion access, most recently, for example, requiring patients to listen to a fetus's heartbeat prior to undergoing abortion (Strzyżyńska 2022). In 2020, Poland emerged as another worrying example of regression, when the country's Supreme Court ruled that even congenital deformities would not permit an abortion to go forward, reifying the country's near-total ban (Cursino 2022).

Scholars emphasize that abortion protections are rooted in international human rights law (Rebouché 2016; UN 2022). Abortion rollbacks raise alarms of ripple effects across a broader spectrum of rights. On this note, in responding to the *Dobbs* decision, critics claimed that the decision “strapped a ticking time bomb onto other fundamental human rights” (Vasquez 2022). Human rights practitioners have worried that the decision would disproportionately affect individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, creating a vicious spiral of marginalization and reinforcing existing inequalities (GJC 2023). Describing the decision as a “human rights disaster,” the Global Justice Center, a human rights non-governmental organization, drew attention to the “the disproportionate impact on marginalized populations” caused by *Dobbs* (GJC 2023, 1). The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at the time, Michelle Bachelet, sounded a similar note: “This decision strips such autonomy from millions of women in the US, in particular those with low incomes and those belonging to racial and ethnic minorities” (UN 2022). The overriding fear in the wake of the *Dobbs* decision has been that abortion access represents the first domino to fall among a range of other rights in the US (Vasquez 2022). To that effect, the executive director of another civil rights non-profit recently remarked: “We are on a slippery slope at this point, and the reverberations may be felt for generations to come in ways that are unimaginable” (as quoted in Jumaa 2022).

The slippery slope argument implies expanding repression, as governments emboldened by curbs on reproductive freedoms crack down on other human rights. Equally disquietingly, rollbacks signal the degrading of democratic orders as regimes that claw back abortion rights turn increasingly authoritarian. The same governments that have targeted abortion access have also passed an array of measures that muzzle the independent media, imperil the independence of the

Corresponding author: Nazli Avdan , Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Kansas, United States, [nazliavdan@ku.edu](mailto:nazliavdan@ku.edu).

Amanda Murdie , Georgia Athletic Association Professor of International Affairs, Department of International Affairs, University of Georgia, United States, [murdie@uga.edu](mailto:murdie@uga.edu).

Victor Asal , Professor, Department of Political Science, University at Albany, United States, [vasal@albany.edu](mailto:vasal@albany.edu).

Received: April 11, 2023; revised: September 14, 2023; accepted: June 26, 2024.

judiciary, and undermine civil society and, sometimes, democratic institutions. Poland's Law and Justice Party, Brazil's Bolsonaro, and Hungary's Orban are prominent examples that illustrate that abortion access is the tip of the iceberg of overall liberal (and democratic) regression (Kozłowska 2022). As Kumar, the head of Ipas, a pro-choice non-profit remarked, "We don't necessarily always include reproductive freedom in that package of democracy... But we should, because this is a place where authoritarian regimes often go, if not first, then pretty quickly afterward" (as quoted in Kozłowska 2022).

To date, the handful of empirical studies of abortion rights have tied abortion liberalization to women's empowerment (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa 2008), labor market participation (Hildebrandt 2015), and accession to human rights treaties, most prominently the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Hunt 2021). Abortion rights are a crucial component of reproductive rights, women's empowerment, and gender equality (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2018b; Rebouché 2016). Access to abortion is buttressed by foundational international law pertaining to women's rights and/or human rights (Bloomer, Pierson, and Estrada 2018; Hunt 2021). While existing work has made headway in identifying the motivators of abortion liberalization, it has neglected the consequences of abortion restrictions. Given contemporary concerns linking abortion curbs to limits on other human rights, this is an important omission.

We address this lacuna by asking: do countries' abortion restrictions precipitate the deterioration of human rights protections? More specifically, we probe how abortion backsliding affects protections for Physical Integrity Rights (PIR). We focus on this class of human rights for several reasons.<sup>1</sup> First, conceptually, reproductive rights and PIR are interdependent. As feminist scholars have elucidated, reproductive freedoms share the common denominator of bodily autonomy, physical security, and independent agency, as do physical integrity rights (Heidari 2015). Second, PIR are the most widely studied by human rights scholars, as they are core, indispensable rights that encompass the "life and inviolability of the human person" and require "absolute protection, even when other liberties are temporarily suspended" (Thoms and Ron 2007, 685). Third, the victims of physical integrity violations are not necessarily political opponents; nor do these violations always entail life-threatening violence (Haschke 2017). This comports with our theoretical argument that curbs on abortion rights herald human rights violations that can affect *anyone*, regardless of whether reproductive freedoms directly affect these individuals. Finally, coercion and control by the regime underlie abuses of both

types of rights. Davenport and Armstrong (2004, 539) stress that physical integrity violations represent coercion by "political authorities" within their "territorial jurisdiction for the expressed purpose of controlling behavior and attitudes." Similarly, commentators have cast abortion bans, such as those imposed by states in the US in the wake of *Dobbs*, as "state-sanctioned violence to target, coerce and control significant segments of the population" (Penovic 2022).

We assert that abortion restrictions are associated with the curtailment of PIR. The inherent vulnerability of abortion rights converts them into testing ground for governments, which then emboldens them to widen repression to other rights. Insofar as abortion rights are gendered and rest on conflicting narratives (Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015), they are particularly susceptible to violations, especially when reproductive policies become wedded to nationalist agendas and serve top-down policies of modernization (Yuval-Davis 1997). In some cases, such as in Ireland, abortion restrictions are a vehicle through which states aspire to reassert a nostalgic national ideal (Smyth 2005) and thereby alleviate the negative emotive responses to globalization. In other cases, abortion politics comprise one component of broader biopolitics, that is, nativist policies designed to maintain a politically desirable population (Millar 2015). Examples of biopolitical discourse run the gamut from Putin's reviving the "Mother Heroine" award to Russian women to the Chinese government's "one-child policy" and reversal to the "three-child policy" as of 2016 (Suliman 2022; Tharoor 2021). Seen in this light, abortion curbs represent a "gendered backlash with patriarchal underpinnings" (Moghadam and Kaftan 2019, 2). When states exploit abortion politics to reassert the homogeneous nationalist ideal (Smyth 2005) or scapegoat abortion activism as promulgating a progressive (or "woke") agenda, it can undermine trust in the regime and sap respect for the equal rights of social groupings.

Using a global time-series cross-sectional sample of countries from 1993 to 2016, we show that abortion restrictions significantly correlate with restrictions on PIR. We deploy the Comparative Abortion Index (CAI), an ordered scale that tracks the permissiveness of abortion policies worldwide and over time (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2018a). Two conclusions emerge. First, we find that permissive abortion policies correspond to greater improvements in PIR. Conversely, countries that impose abortion restrictions see either no improvements in PIR over time or, for acute cases of abortion backsliding, witness instead a deterioration of PIR. Second, abortion restrictions impose both direct and indirect effects on PIR, whereby effects are mediated through increased social group inequality. Abortion backsliding not only reduces respect for PIR but also attenuates the protection of rights of all social groupings, thereby driving a wedge between various segments of society and the state.

We contribute to the cross-disciplinary research in several ways. While the corpus of literature has argued that reproductive rights should be core to human rights, the empirical implications of this view heretofore have

<sup>1</sup> We do not rule out the possibility that abortion restrictions affect other types of human rights, such as free speech and the freedom of assembly and association. A recent GJC (2023) report articulates the deleterious effects of overturning *Roe v. Wade* on a gamut of rights, including privacy, and freedom of thought and conscience. For analytical clarity, as well as the interconnectedness between underlying concepts such as autonomy and agency, we focus here on PIR.

remained untested. We redress this deficiency by showing the implications of abortion restrictions for other human rights. We also go beyond existing work that connects gender equality to liberalism and, conversely, structural inequality to patriarchal and sometimes militant nationalism (Caprioli 2005; Caprioli and Boyer 2001). We contribute to work that has connected gender equality to respect for PIR (Melander 2005) by explicating how abortion rights facilitate and fuel repression and undermine equal respect for the rights of all social groupings. In doing so, we draw on critical feminist literature, which ties abortion restrictions to population control strategies by the state (Millar 2015), and similar arguments that link nationalist-populism to patriarchal notions that ascribe roles to women of solely reproducers and socializers of ideal citizens (Moghadam and Kaftan 2019; Yuval-Davis 1997).

By sharpening the focus to abortion access, we shift attention to sexual and reproductive health as it relates to human rights environments. This shift is important because limited reproductive rights can signify women's disempowerment in both private and public spheres, and thus represent a critical, yet often overlooked component of women's empowerment (Cueva Beteta 2006). Indeed, countries that do well on some classic and seemingly objective indicators of gender empowerment may lag on other protections, such as ensuring women's control over their bodies and sexuality; and, in more extreme cases, economic and political empowerment may conceal pervasive misogyny and horrific abuses such as gender-based violence (Cueva Beteta 2006). Moreover, while abortion rights are framed as women's rights, they affect the rights of other "birthing people," such as non-binary and transgender individuals (Powell 2022). The inherently gendered nature of abortion rights has stoked fears in the LGBTQIA+ community that other rights would be stripped away from them (Jumaa 2022).

Our results show evident interdependence between reproductive rights and PIR. On a sanguine note, countries that maintain access or progress on abortion rights see improvements in physical integrity protections. Our findings carry wider relevance for other legal protections, particularly progressive rights such as gender-affirming care and same-sex marriage. As these protections are guided by similar value systems, such as respect for autonomy and agency, and tolerance for societal heterogeneity, the unraveling of abortion access may presage erosion of other legal gender protections.

## GLOBAL ABORTION RIGHTS

While women's rights have improved worldwide, they have done so at discrepant rates even as countries have progressed on expanding other rights (Inglehart and Norris 2003a; 2003b). Specifically, in many countries, the legal right to abortion is still severely restricted or outright outlawed, while in others, it has been legalized and expanded (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa 2008; Hunt and Gruszczynski 2019). Despite considerable cross-

national heterogeneity, there is a general academic consensus that the worldwide trend is characterized by liberalization (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa 2008; Pillai and Wang 1999; Ramirez and McEneaney 1997). Many more countries have expanded access in the past few decades, despite the small subset of countries, like Poland and the United States, where recent movement has been in the opposite direction (CRR 2022).

## The Abortion Debate: Competing Frames

There are multiple frames to understand abortion rights. The women's rights frame has animated liberalization efforts by holding abortion rights as cardinal to women's empowerment and overall gender equality (Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015, 885; Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2019). This frame stresses that "a woman's ability to exercise her rights to control her body, to self-determination, and to health depends in part, on her right to determine whether to carry a pregnancy to term" (Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015, 885). In this view, abortion access empowers women by safeguarding their autonomy and agency over their reproductive choices and produces desirable gender practices (Cook and Dickens 2003, 2–3). Conversely, abortion restrictions are inimical to gender equality insofar as unplanned and unwanted pregnancies foreclose further skill and career development and uphold patriarchal or, in some cases, misogynistic beliefs that consign women to the roles of homemaker, child-bearer, and caregiver (Sommer and Forman-Rabinovici 2019).

The campaign for women's human rights advanced the liberalization of abortion laws by catapulting reproductive health to center stage in international conversations about population or the right to health (Charlesworth, Chinkin, and Wright 1991; Rebouché 2016). CEDAW codified the principle of "women's rights as human rights" in 1979, signaling the UN's commitment to this principle (Reanda 1981). Two landmark events, the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women, further solidified the link between women's reproductive rights and human rights (Eager 2017). Today, members of several important international organizations, including the Council of Europe and the EU, demand a commitment to women's rights as human rights (CRR 2022; Vida 2019). Domestic courts refer to international statutes and bodies, such as the Human Rights Committee (HRC) or CEDAW, to espouse protections for women's reproductive rights (Cook and Dickens 2003; Rebouché 2016).

The public health frame, championed by the World Health Organization, has also supported liberalization by casting abortion rights as the legal obligation of the state to protect health. In a study of Sierra Leone and Northern Ireland, Erdman (2016, 47) documents how the public health narrative altered the penal code by steering attention away from "entrenched political conflict over criminal abortion and toward unsafe abortion as a cause of suffering and death."

Despite trends toward liberalization of abortion access, multiple moral perspectives debate the permissibility of abortion (Al-Hadrawi 2016). Abortion debates are polarized because they involve core values (Brysk and Yang 2023), and collective identities (Adamczyk, Kim, and Dillon 2020). Consequently, attitudes on both sides of the debate calcify into hard absolutes, with little room for compromise.

Dueling narratives of women's rights versus fetal rights highlight the ethical contestation surrounding abortion rights. The fetal rights movement asserts that fetuses are entitled to a right to life at the expense of women's rights (Copelon et al. 2005). Representing this perspective, the American Convention on Human Rights stipulates in Article 4 that the right to life begins at conception. In sharp contrast, international and regional treaties dating back to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights have intentionally utilized the word "born" to exclude the fetus or any antenatal application of human rights (CEDAW 2018, 18). UN committees have proclaimed that the criminalization of abortion is a breach of the right to life, a form of torture, cruel, and inhumane and degrading treatment, and a form of gender-based violence (Copelon et al. 2005). For example, in a 2018 report concerning access to abortion in the United Kingdom, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women stated that "[u]nder international law, analyses of major international human rights treaties on the right to life confirm that it does not extend to fetuses" (CEDAW 2018, 18).

The preceding discussion suggests that there are competing normative frames for abortion rights (Al-Hadrawi 2016), revolving around core values (Brysk and Yang 2023), and collective identities (Adamczyk, Kim, and Dillon 2020). Nonetheless, the survey of the empirical literature in the next section stresses that PIR and abortion access are interdependent and, thus, restrictions on both are driven by common drivers such as authoritarianism and exclusionary nationalism.

### Drivers of Abortion Outcomes

Social scientists have made strides in understanding the correlates of abortion policies, globally (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa 2008; Erdman 2016; Pillai and Wang 1999; Ramirez and McEneaney 1997) as well as in specific regions or countries (Cioffi et al. 2022; Tucak and Blagojević 2021). Within this body of literature, scholars have outlined the complex and multifaceted linkages between religion and religiosity and abortion laws (Hildebrandt 2015; Sommer and Forman-Rabinovici 2019). One conclusion from these works is that Catholicism and the size of religious populations correlate with policy stringency (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa 2008; Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015; Sommer and Forman-Rabinovici 2019). Contrarily, secular legacies cohere with policy liberalization, as witnessed in post-communist societies (Hildebrandt 2015; Htun and Weldon 2018).

Scholars have also observed that women's empowerment, in the political arena and workforce, accords with more lenient policies (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa

2008; Hildebrandt 2015). Greater political representation translates to stronger advocacy, lobby-formation, and agenda-setting on behalf of women's rights. Particularly, where women's advocacy has espoused greater democratic representation, pro-choice lobbies, such as Planned Parenthood and NARAL, can influence policy toward permissiveness, and reframe public agendas to champion women's reproductive rights (Sommer and Forman-Rabinovici 2019).

International advocacy networks, such as non-governmental organizations championing women's rights, and international treaties, in particular CEDAW, can reshape domestic norms, and orient policies toward the liberal end of the spectrum, allowing local coalitions to organize around egalitarian reforms (Copelon et al. 2005; Htun and Weldon 2018; Hunt and Gruszczynski 2019; Sommer and Forman-Rabinovici 2019). Other processes, including the spread of liberal individualism, social modernization, and levels of urbanization, are advanced as correlates of liberalization and pro-choice attitudes (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa 2008; Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015; Brysk and Yang 2023).

A second strain of literature, mostly within critical feminism, lends important insights on the ideational frameworks and processes that promote restrictionist trends in some countries. To reiterate, societal codes with strong roots in Catholicism have wielded the fetal rights frame as a buffer against the advancement of individualist human rights norms. The notion of fetal personhood has effectively stigmatized abortion, portraying those who seek the procedure as failing the feminine ideal (Millar 2020; Norris et al. 2011). Where doctrinal politics holds sway, it allows little room for compromise. The liberalization of abortion undermines the "claim of religious and cultural communities to govern the terms of kinship and reproduction" (Htun and Weldon 2018, 3).

Where abortion politics become enmeshed in projects of nation-making, restrictions have followed, particularly when gender and race have overlapped in promulgating nation-building. Racialized schemas that seek to preserve ethnic homogeneity or racial purity have reimposed on women their roles as child-bearers and socializers, as well as guardians of the nation's culture and values (Yuval-Davis 1997). Nationalist governments ban abortion and limit contraception to augment the dominant group and repress minorities. Australia was a case in point where "the aborting women" came to be seen as a threat to "the white hetero-family" as a national ideal, a perspective with origins in white vulnerability (Millar 2015, 83). Closely related, by conceptualizing abortion as a biopolitics issue, some countries have tied abortion policies to racial demographics and discussions of population control or growth (Millar 2015). In this way, the health of the population, and, more generally, the needs of the collective supersede the rights of the individual (Woliver 2010). Abortion restrictions often go hand in hand with populist agendas, which corrode democratic norms and practices and respect for minority rights. US politics provides a contemporary illustration:

as Ziegler (2022) elucidates, the far-right populist wing of the Republican party owes its ascendance in part to the anti-abortion movement, which pushed to alter campaign finance rules, damaging established democratic norms and spreading anti-minority sentiments in the process.

Baird and Millar (2020, 3) write that “the fusion between race, reproduction and nation in relation to abortion politics” allows states to create and reaffirm borders, at least symbolically, by reasserting the country’s national identity and setting the country apart from others. As an example of how governments pitch abortion curbs as a bulwark against international influence, Ireland embarked on a quest to set the moral character right, and safeguard traditional values, soon after it joined the European Economic Community in 1973 (Smyth 2005). Through the fusion of nationalism, pro-natalism, and pro-life principles, elites can move even less religious and gender-liberal individuals “against the grain” and toward hostility to abortion access (Brysk and Yang 2023, 545).

### THEORIZING THE EFFECTS OF ABORTION BACKSLIDING ON HUMAN RIGHTS

We posit that abortion curbs portend subsequent physical integrity infractions by constituting a slippery slope to wider repression and through intermediary mechanisms that engender precarious rights situations, in turn leading to PIR abuses.

Abortion restrictions come under fire first and thus serve as a testing ground for human rights crackdowns for several reasons. First, in contrast to PIR, abortion rights have not come about by the transferal of already extant rights to women, but rather through direct advocacy, women’s empowerment in the workforce, and greater political representation. The inherently gendered nature of abortion rights (Asal, Brown, and Figueroa 2008, 280), the competing frames surrounding these rights, and their value-laden nature (Brysk and Yang 2023) place them on relatively precarious footing, prone to erosion or instrumentalization as a “displacement activity” (Baird 2006, 214) to counter external influence, or the challenges of globalization and internationalization. Second and related, abortion rights are an easy scapegoat for illiberal regimes who view them as one component of the (Western) liberal agenda and stake their ground on sexual liberalization as the “most basic cultural fault line” (Inglehart and Norris 2002, 235). The United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women have frequently drawn vitriol for their efforts to transform domestic attitudes and laws in favor of women’s rights, on similar grounds, namely that these coalitions introduce foreign norms and undermine traditional, local mores (Sherwood, Sherlaw, and Franklin 2015).

Arguably, common underpinning factors may drive the erosion of both abortion access and PIR. A common set of norms surrounding autonomy, self-ownership, self-determination, and bodily freedom safeguard both PIR and abortion rights. Consequently,

the erosion of these norms underpins and drives the deterioration of both sets of rights, given the interdependence between these sets of rights (Nickel 2008). As another common denominator, increasing authoritarianism and illiberalism undergird the fraying of both sets of rights, as repressive regimes attack these rights to wrest back control over the population, and sometimes as backlash against the expansion of global human rights and gender rights.

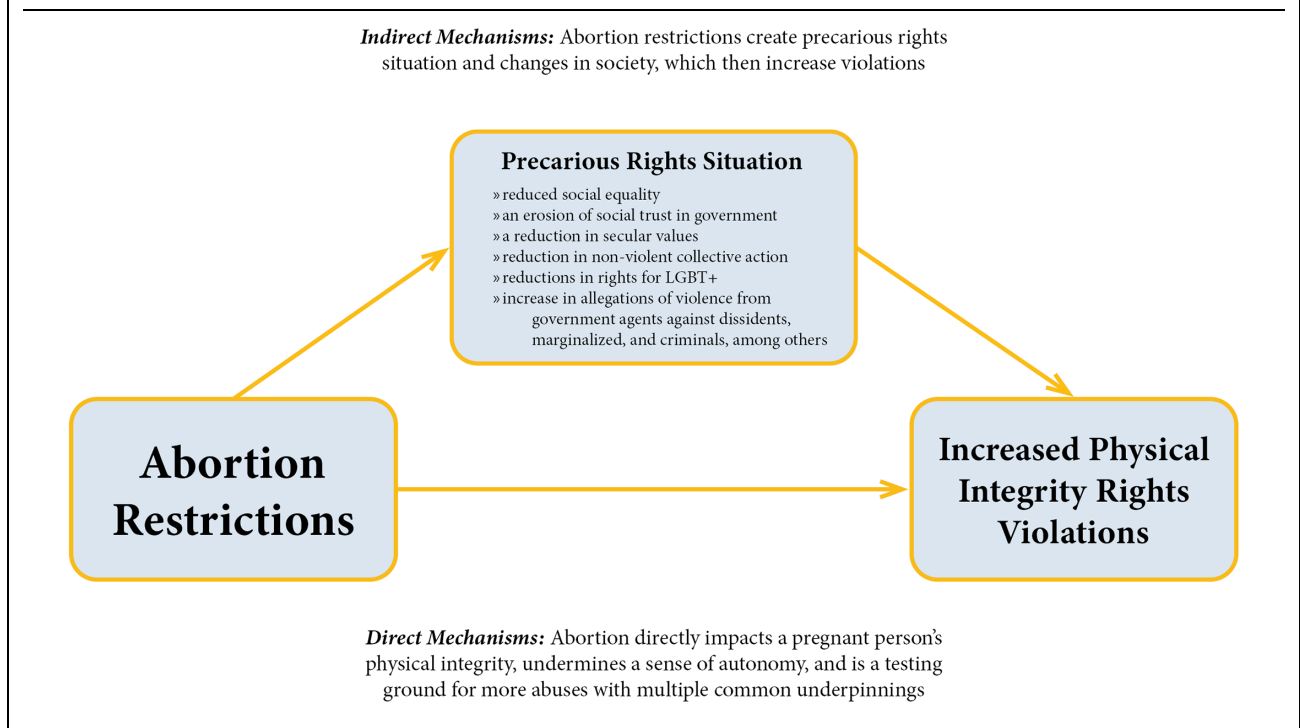
Importantly, however, once in place, abortion limits precipitate the weakening of PIR protections. Abortion restrictions constitute a testing ground for regimes inclined toward expanding crackdowns, forging a direct pathway to PIR violations. In these contexts, restrictions may serve as a signal that a regime is not open to advocacy related to other seemingly liberal ideas, like other components of the global human rights regime. The signal may make collective action for many types of human rights seem bleak, ultimately lessening the civil society spotlight which could protect against further abuses and encourage further socialization around global human rights norms.

Admittedly, the direct pathway may more readily apply to a subset of countries, particularly those that are, by virtue of their democratic backsliding and governance modalities, more inclined to regress on physical integrity protections. This harkens back to Melander’s (2005) proposed correlation between democracy and gender equality, whereby democracies with better female representation in politics are likely to see fewer abuses of PIR. Similarly, Hudson, Bowen, and Nielsen (2015) argue that clan governance, which can materialize in democracies and non-democracies, necessitates and operates through the subordination of women, whereby the reproduction of clan exclusivity hinges on “control over female interests in sex, marriage, and reproduction” (540). That is, some regime types and governance modalities leave social and racial minorities with more limited access to political opportunity structures, ultimately creating an environment with more contentious violence, both from and to the state.

In sum, in the direct pathway, abortion restrictions serve as a convenient vehicle of reasserting control and allow some regimes to flex their muscle over the population. In these circumstances, leaders thus strategically exploit abortion policies to advance their own aims (Ziegler 2022), reify borders and authenticity (Smyth 2005), or pursue ethnonationalist agendas (Millar 2015; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Beyond this set of circumstances, and more generally, abortion restrictions operate through an indirect pathway, damaging respect for diversity, increasing inequality, and creating an imbalance in the extent to which the state respects the rights of different social groupings. In this pathway, the criminalization of worldviews, lifestyles, and behaviors of the marginalized places these communities at greater risk of political imprisonment and state violence, thus cowering them into silence. This has a chilling effect on society writ large as the public is discouraged from collective action. That is, even though abortion restrictions may presage targeted

**FIGURE 1. Theoretical Pathways from Abortion Restrictions to PIR Violations**



abuses—against women and minorities, for example—they reverberate through the broader society. By imposing an executive, unitary vision of national morality, abortion restrictions disregard differing worldviews on the roles and responsibilities of women, the family, sexuality, and religion, among other cognate concepts. These mechanisms create a vicious cycle that snowballs into further breakdown of PIR.

Finally, normative alignment trickles down to and finds expression in public attitudes as well. A prodigious literature has delineated how views on gender more broadly, and reproductive access more specifically, cohere with attitudes toward nationalism and religiosity in discernible ways (Adamczyk, Kim, and Dillon 2020; Brysk and Yang 2023). These empirical associations suggest that “the lens of gender” lends information not just about women’s roles in society, but about “attitudes towards civic tolerance and governance more broadly” (Jacobson 2013, 198). Anti-abortion views go hand in hand with growing exclusionism and dogmatic worldviews (Htun and Weldon 2018). As such, draconian attitudes about reproductive freedoms presage intolerance for alternative lifestyles, feeding back into and legitimizing the criminalization of behaviors of the perceived out-group. Increased intolerance saps societal trust, feeding animosity between segments of society, which serves as a gateway for crackdowns on PIR violations.

The preceding discussion suggests that states that adhere to liberal abortion policies maintain better human rights records. Conversely, restrictions on abortion access may serve as a bellwether for deteriorating social equality and physical integrity protections. Our

argument thus suggests both a direct and an indirect path through which abortion restrictions are associated with reductions in PIR, as summarized in Figure 1, and leads to the following empirical implications:

**Hypothesis 1 (abortion backtracking):** *Abortion restrictions are associated with a decline in PIR.*

**Hypothesis 2 (mediating dynamics):** *The negative impact of abortion restrictions on PIR is mediated by decreases in social equality.*

## RESEARCH DESIGN

We test our abortion backtracking hypothesis using a dynamic time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) approach and then illustrate the process our theory suggests with an exploratory causal mediation model. For both approaches, our unit of analysis is the country-year. Due to data availability on our key dependent and independent variables, our final sample covers 1993 to 2016 and roughly 145 countries per year (see Avdan, Murdie, and Asal 2024).

## Dependent Variable

To test Hypothesis 1, we use Fariss’s (2014) human rights protection score. This estimated human rights score is based on a model that incorporates various measures of PIR abuses, including the CIRI Human Rights Project’s PIR index and the Political Terror Scale (Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2014; Gibney

et al. 2022). Fariss's (2014) measure uses a Bayesian latent variable approach to account for the changing standard of accountability in human rights over time. Greater values mean better PIR performance.<sup>2</sup>

To test Hypothesis 2 and explore our suggested theoretical story more, we also examine an alternative dependent variable that we think could serve as an intermediary step in the process by which abortion rights restrictions lead to more PIR abuses. We use the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) indicator for social group equality in respect for civil liberties ("v2clsocgrp"). A higher score on this indicator means that "members of all salient social groups enjoy the same level of civil liberties," while a lower score indicates that groups enjoy "fewer civil liberties than the general population" (Coppedge et al. 2022, 180–1). Importantly, this indicator does not capture gender- or sex-related social groups, instead looking at groups "distinguished by language, ethnicity, religion, race, or caste" (180). The measure is correlated at 0.57 with Fariss's (2014) human rights protection score.

### Independent Variable and Modeling Approach

We use indices from the Comparative Abortion Index (CAI) Project of Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer (2018a; 2018b) to measure abortion rights and restrictions.<sup>3</sup> These indices are coded based on seven criteria for which abortion may be allowed within a country: "saving a woman's life, preserving a woman's physical health, preserving a woman's mental health, in case of rape or incest, in case of fetal impairment, for social or economic reasons and on request" (Teorell et al. 2022, 162). The first index, CAI #1, scores all countries from 0, indicating abortion is not allowed for any of the seven criteria, to 7, where abortion is allowed for any reason on request. For the second index, CAI #2, the scores from CAI #1 are weighted for each criterion based on the percentage of other countries that accept that criterion. This weighting thus accounts for the "different degrees of acceptance that each criterion represents" (Teorell et al. 2022, 162). CAI #2 varies from 0, indicating no abortions allowed for any reason, to 1, indicating full abortion access.

As mentioned above, generally, abortion rights are increasing worldwide. Figure 2 shows the yearly world mean of CAI #1 and CAI #2 over time, showing a strong upward trend in abortion rights provision in the past two decades. These gains typically come from fewer restrictions on abortion to preserve a woman's mental health, in case of rape or incest, or due to fetal impairment. Despite these global gains, over 60% of countries did not have full access to abortion when the CAI indices end in 2015. Figure 3 shows a heat map of a country's mean CAI#2 index score for the years where the dataset

exists (1992 to 2015). While some countries in Western Europe and former Soviet states have widespread abortion rights protections, many countries throughout the world have far less respect for abortion rights.

Countries that restrict abortion rights, especially after rights have already been in place, are of special interest to our theoretical argument. Additional documentation on our Dataverse provides a list of countries where there was abortion "backsliding" from time  $t-1$  to  $t$ . Although only happening in about 8% of cases according to the CAI#2 index and only 1% of cases according to the CAI #1 index, when it does happen, the losses tend to be among those countries already at or below the global mean and is often across multiple criteria, with the most frequent criteria reversed being abortion in the case of rape or incest. Additionally, there are many repeat offenders, with losses in terms of abortion rights happening multiple times over our study time period. Figure 4 illustrates these dynamics with reference to the CAI#2 index; backsliding here would also represent countries where abortion access laws do not keep up with world acceptance.

Abortion rights appear to be distinct from other commonly used women's rights indicators. Additional documentation on Dataverse shows the relatively low pairwise correlations between the abortion indices (CAI #1 and CAI #2) and women's political rights from CIRIGHTS (Cingranelli, Filippov, and Mark 2021) (around 0.27), the Women, Business, and Law index of the World Bank (2023) (around 0.51), and the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) of the OECD Development Centre (2023) (around -0.28). We see this as further indication that restrictions on abortion rights send a fundamentally different message to the overall population than deterioration of other women and gender rights within a country.

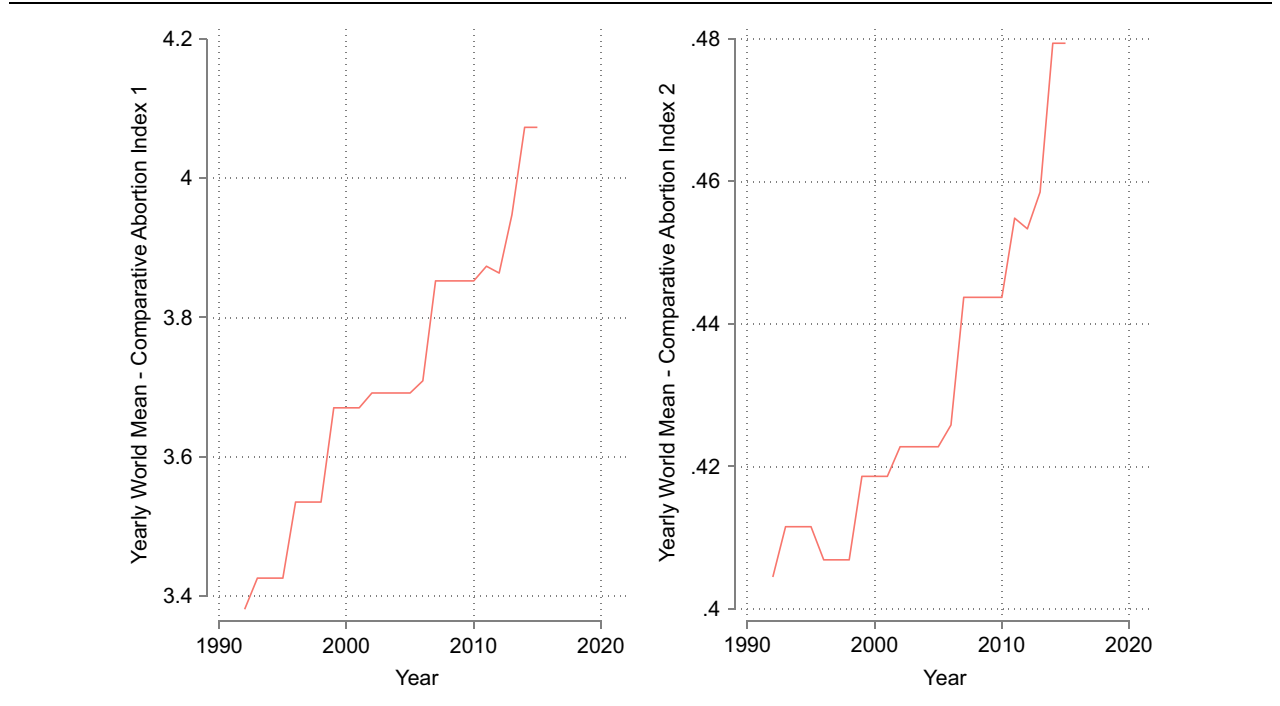
We use a dynamic modeling approach to test our hypotheses (Keele and Kelly 2006; Wilkins 2018; Williams and Whitten 2012). We include a lagged dependent variable as an additional independent variable on the right-hand side of our analyses. The inclusion of the lagged dependent variable is theoretical, reflecting the idea that PIR abuses in time  $t$  are a function of similar abuses in time  $t-1$  and modified by any new situation with respect to abortion rights, which we argue serves as a type of testing ground for future policies and behaviors that harm PIR. After running our baseline models, we use Williams and Whitten's (2012) dynamic simulations approach to investigate how moving from a condition of more to less respect for abortion rights harms both PIR and social group equality in the long term.

We test Hypothesis 2 and further explore our theoretical mechanisms using a causal mediation approach. This approach is more illustrative than our baseline hypothesis test but is intended to help show a process through which restrictions to abortion rights expand to restrictions on other social groups, ultimately expanding to more physical integrity abuses within the country. We first follow Baron and Kenny's (1986) classic approach to causal mediation, running: (a) a model where the key independent variable is abortion rights and the dependent variable is PIR, (b) a model where

<sup>2</sup> A complete list of citations for the datasets used in creating the Fariss (2014) human rights protection score is provided in our documentation on Dataverse (Avdan, Murdie, and Asal 2024).

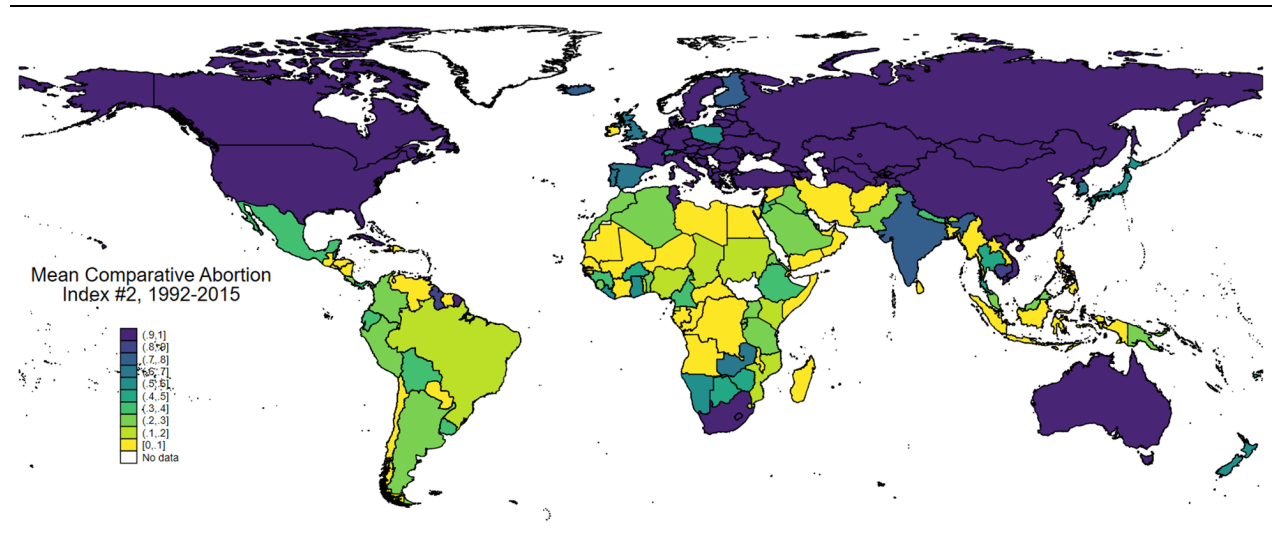
<sup>3</sup> We use Teorell's et al. (2022) Quality of Government Dataset for this and all available control variables.

**FIGURE 2. Abortion Access Over Time, World Mean Comparative Abortion Index**



Note: Data on abortion rights comes from the Comparative Abortion Index (CAI) Project of Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer (2018a; 2018b). A higher score indicates more respect for abortion rights.

**FIGURE 3. Heat Map of Abortion Rights, as Measured by the CAI #2 Index, Over Time**

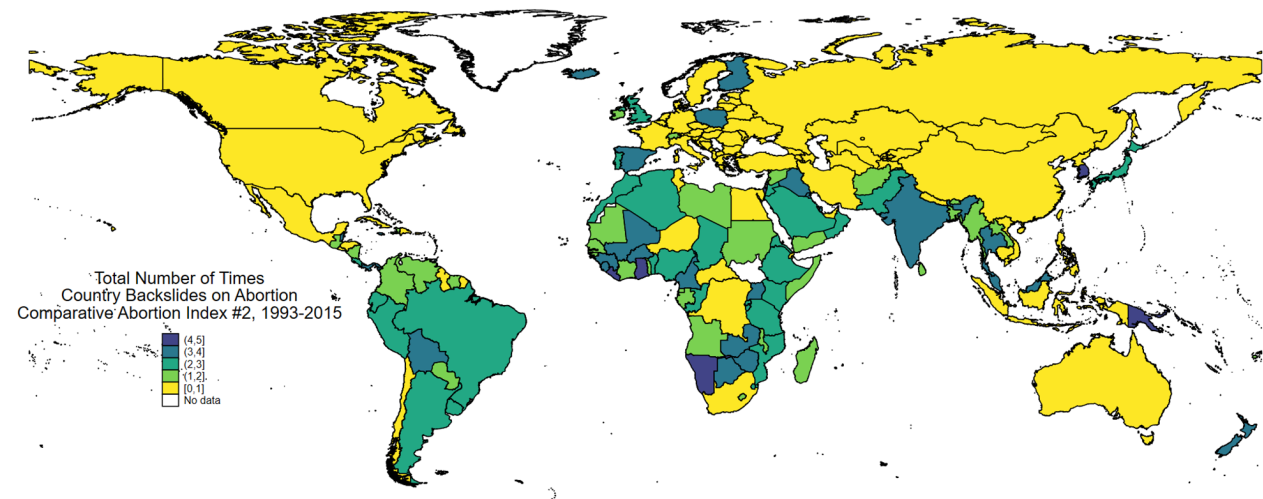


Note: Data on abortion rights comes from the Comparative Abortion Index (CAI) Project of Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer (2018a; 2018b). A higher score indicates more respect for abortion rights.

the key independent variable is abortion rights and the dependent variable is social group equality, and then (c) a model where both the abortion rights variable and social group equality are included as independent variables and the dependent variable is PIR.

We also use a more formal causal mediation model with a continuous treatment (the CAI #1 or CAI #2 index), a continuous mediator (social group equality in respect for civil liberties), and a continuous outcome (human rights protection score), accounting for a



**FIGURE 4. Heat Map of Abortion “Backsliding” Cases, as Measured by Drops in the CAI #2 Index**

Note: Data on abortion rights comes from the Comparative Abortion Index (CAI) Project of Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer (2018a; 2018b).

possible interaction between the treatment and mediator (Imai, Keele, and Tingley 2010; Nguyen, Schmid, and Stuart 2020). For the “control” level of the treatment, we use the median level of the CAI #1 indicator, 4 out of 7, and the mean level of the CAI #2 indicator, 0.481 out of 1. We also run models where the “control” level of CAI #2 is 1. For the “treatment,” we use a drop in CAI #1 of either one or two points. When using the CAI#2 indicator, we set the “treatment” to a drop to 0. Although exploratory, this approach provides us information about the natural direct and indirect effects of reductions in abortion rights on PIR and allows us to access the proportion of the effect that is mediated through changes in social group equality, as suggested by our theoretical story.

### Control Variables

We include several control variables that have been found to be important for PIR performance and could also be correlated with abortion rights (Fariss 2014; Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2018a; 2018b; Hill and Jones 2014; Poe and Tate 1994). First, we include the 21-point regime type indicator from Marshall and Gurr’s (2020) Polity 5 project. A higher value on this indicator means that a country is more of a consolidated democracy while a lower value indicates that the country is more of a consolidated authoritarian regime. A consolidated democracy has been found to better protect human rights and abortion rights (Fariss 2014; Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2018b; Hill and Jones 2014; Poe and Tate 1994).

Next, we include the natural log of population size and GDP per capita (constant 2010 US dollars) to account for how size and wealth in a country could influence rights protection. We also include dichotomous indicators for whether a civil or international conflict occurred involving the country, using the UCDP/PRI0 Armed

Conflict Dataset Version 22.1 (Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2022; Gleditsch et al. 2002). These variables are often considered the “baseline model” in the study of PIR (Hill and Jones 2014, 674).

We include several indicators that have been found to be important to abortion rights (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2018a; 2018b) and, in some past research and specifications, to PIR (Hill and Jones 2014; Poe and Tate 1994). First, we include V-Dem’s indicator for the percentage of the lower chamber that is female; a larger proportion of female legislators has been found previously to have a small influence on respect for abortion rights (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2018b). Next, we include indicators for the percent of the population that are adherents to Islam or Roman Catholic, respectively (Maoz and Henderson 2013).<sup>4</sup> These two religious traditions have been previously linked to reductions in abortion rights (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2018a). Finally, we include a dichotomous indicator for whether the country is post-Soviet (Raciborski 2008). There is some evidence that leftist and communist regimes have diminished PIR (Poe and Tate 1994), but that Soviet states had unique abortion policies that have ramifications on abortion rights and opinions today (Denisov and Sakevich 2023). To account for temporal sequencing, we lag all of our independent and control variables by one year.<sup>5</sup> Our models are not multicollinear; mean variance inflation factors were below 1.5, with no variable’s variance inflation factor above 2.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We interpolate and extrapolate these variables, which are available at five-year intervals through 2010. Our main findings are not dependent on their inclusion.

<sup>5</sup> Our main results are robust when all variables are measured at year  $t$ .

<sup>6</sup> The lagged dependent variable has a VIF higher than 2 (3.82), but even when that is included, the mean VIF is 1.82.

## EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

### Main Results

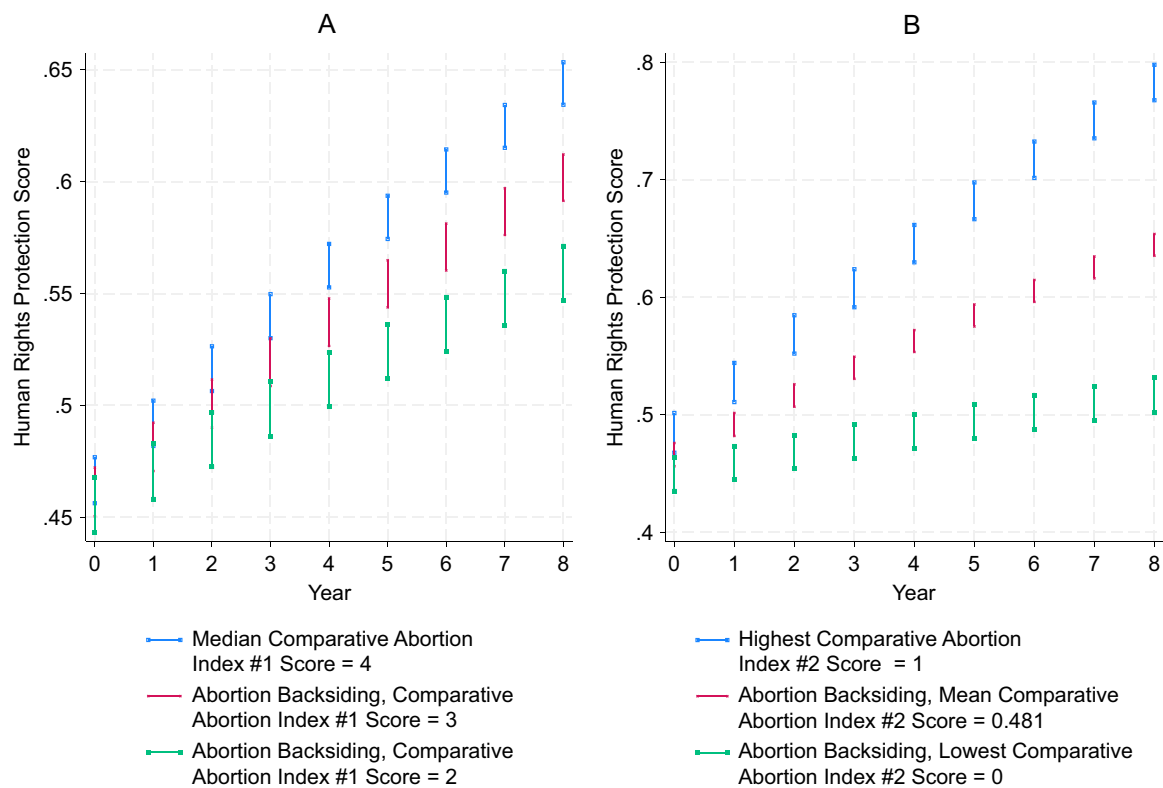
The dynamic time-series cross-sectional results are provided in Table 1. Column 1 and 2 show results where the key independent variable is abortion rights (CAI#1 and CAI#2) and the dependent variable is the human rights protection score (Fariss 2014). Columns 3 and 4 show similar models where the dependent variable is V-Dem’s measure for social group equality in respect for civil liberties (Coppedge et al. 2022). Columns 5 and 6 show models where the dependent variable is the human rights protection score, again, but now both

abortion rights and social group equality are included as key independent variables, consistent with Baron and Kenny’s (1986) classic approach to causal mediation. Across the specifications, we find strong evidence that more permissive abortion policies are associated with improved PIR (Hypothesis 1) and better social group equality in respect for civil liberties (Hypothesis 2). Additionally, both abortion rights and social group equality matter for PIR. Our control variables, when significant, are in the expected directions. As we know from previous scholarship, democracies, smaller countries, and countries with more wealth typically have better respect for PIR. Post-Soviet countries have lower PIR on average.

**TABLE 1. Abortion Rights and Dynamic Changes in PIR and Social Group Equality in Respect for Civil Liberties, 1993 to 2016**

VARIABLES	(1) Human Rights Protection Score	(2) Human Rights Protection Score	(3) Social Group Equality in Respect for Civil Liberties	(4) Social Group Equality in Respect for Civil Liberties	(5) Human Rights Protection Score	(6) Human Rights Protection Score
Human Rights Protection Score $t_{-1}$	0.961*** (0.00620)	0.961*** (0.00620)			0.952*** (0.00706)	0.952*** (0.00706)
Comparative Abortion Index 1 (0 to 7) $t_{-1}$	0.00536*** (0.00203)		0.00273** (0.00135)		0.00395* (0.00214)	
Comparative Abortion Index 2 (0 to 1) $t_{-1}$		0.0342*** (0.0124)		0.0155* (0.00816)		0.0260** (0.0129)
Social Group Equality in Respect for Civil Liberties $t_{-1}$			0.989*** (0.00387)	0.989*** (0.00383)	0.0192*** (0.00577)	0.0192*** (0.00573)
Regime Type $t_{-1}$	0.00255*** (0.000903)	0.00253*** (0.000901)	0.000723 (0.000588)	0.000711 (0.000586)	0.00149* (0.000851)	0.00147* (0.000850)
Population (ln) $t_{-1}$	-0.0172*** (0.00367)	-0.0173*** (0.00368)	-0.00416*** (0.00154)	-0.00416*** (0.00154)	-0.0184*** (0.00372)	-0.0185*** (0.00373)
GDP per Capita (ln) $t_{-1}$	0.0118*** (0.00397)	0.0117*** (0.00394)	-0.00281* (0.00155)	-0.00271* (0.00154)	0.0151*** (0.00397)	0.0149*** (0.00393)
International Conflict $t_{-1}$	-0.0211 (0.0216)	-0.0203 (0.0217)	-0.0202 (0.0130)	-0.0194 (0.0129)	-0.00933 (0.0214)	-0.00885 (0.0214)
Civil Conflict $t_{-1}$	0.0127 (0.0163)	0.0130 (0.0163)	0.00682 (0.00880)	0.00690 (0.00882)	0.0111 (0.0161)	0.0113 (0.0161)
Lower Chamber Female Legislators $t_{-1}$	0.000105 (0.000565)	0.000117 (0.000570)	-0.000345 (0.000220)	-0.000330 (0.000217)	-0.000118 (0.000564)	-0.000115 (0.000569)
Catholics (%) $t_{-1}$	0.0180 (0.0116)	0.0180 (0.0115)	0.00367 (0.00842)	0.00305 (0.00847)	0.0192* (0.0116)	0.0194* (0.0115)
Islam (%) $t_{-1}$	-0.0171 (0.0182)	-0.0166 (0.0183)	-0.0129 (0.00947)	-0.0130 (0.00954)	-0.0193 (0.0180)	-0.0189 (0.0181)
Post Soviet	-0.0285** (0.0123)	-0.0306** (0.0126)	-0.0193** (0.00888)	-0.0193** (0.00906)	-0.0318*** (0.0123)	-0.0339*** (0.0127)
Constant	0.188*** (0.0577)	0.196*** (0.0584)	0.0989*** (0.0283)	0.101*** (0.0285)	0.177*** (0.0568)	0.183*** (0.0575)
Observations	3,413	3,413	3,413	3,413	3,413	3,413
R-squared	0.972	0.972	0.986	0.986	0.972	0.972

Note: Dynamic time-series cross-sectional regression with robust standard errors in parentheses; unit of analysis is the country-year. The results indicate that on average greater respect for abortion rights is associated with better respect for PIR and the civil liberties of social groups in the next year, even when accounting for the pre-existing levels of these rights in each country. Also, social group rights are associated with better PIR in the next year. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.1$ .

**FIGURE 5. Dynamic Simulations of Worsening Abortion Rights on Human Rights Protection Score**

Note: The figure shows a dynamic scenario based on the model results from Columns 1–2 of Table 1 (Williams and Whitten 2012). Panel A shows that a country with the median respect for abortion rights (a score of 4 on the CAI #1 measure) is expected to have a greater increase in respect for PIR over time country with lower respect for abortion rights. Panel B shows similar but more striking findings when we use the CAI #2 measure.

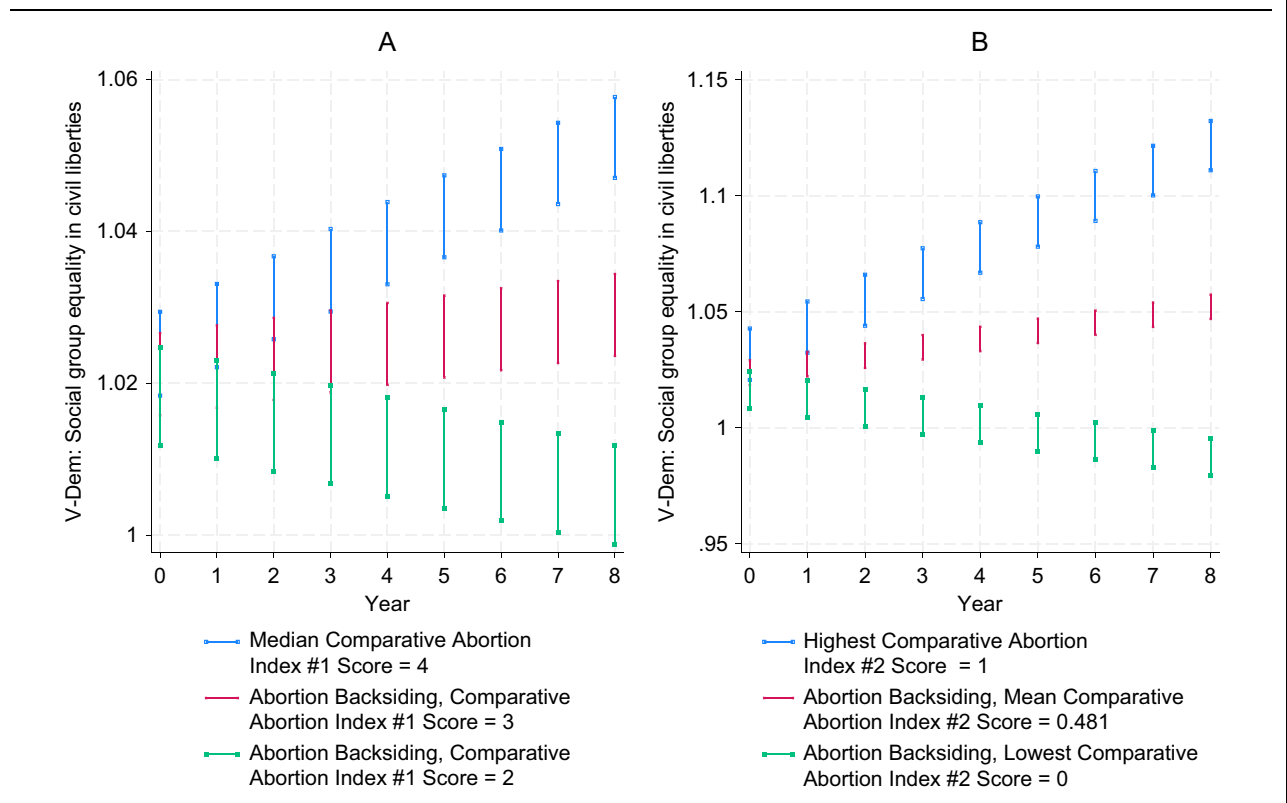
Figure 5 illustrates various dynamic scenarios using the models from Columns 1–2 of Table 1 (Williams and Whitten 2012). Remember again that Fariss (2014) shows that global PIR are generally improving over time. As such, looking over time at Figure 5, Panel A, a “typical” country with the median abortion rights score of 4 on the CAI #1 index in year  $t$  is expected to see PIR increase almost 0.18 points on the human rights protection scale in the next eight years (increase from 0.467 to 0.645).<sup>7</sup> If that typical country were to experience abortion backsliding of just one or two points on the CAI #1 scale, as is common in cases of backsliding, their anticipated gains in human rights protection would drop precipitously over time, gaining 0.136 or 0.093 instead over the same time period. While this numerical shift might seem small, the drop in human rights performance would indicate far more widespread abuses within the country over time. The negative consequences of restrictions on abortion rights are even more

striking when we focus on Panel B of Figure 5, which is based on the different scenarios of abortion backsliding using the full CAI #2 scale. Limits to abortion rights have long-term, reinforcing consequences for PIR. In no uncertain terms, everyday people, even those that might not directly care about abortion rights, could find their PIR impacted after new restrictions on abortion are enacted.

Figure 6 shows similar dynamic scenarios when focusing on what we would consider the mediation stage in the theoretical story, the relationship between abortion rights and social group equality with respect to civil liberties. As shown in Panel A, if CAI #1 is set at the median score of 4, social group equality increases over time. If abortion backsliding were to reduce the score to 3 at the start of the time period, however, the country would have almost no gains in social group equality. The scenario is even more dire if backsliding in time  $t$  were to reduce the CAI#1 from 4 to 2. In that case, the general trend is reversed, with social group equality worsening to a greater and greater predicted degree over time. Panel B shows similar dynamics when focusing on changes in the CAI #2. Reducing abortion rights harms social group equality in civil liberties.

<sup>7</sup> By “typical” country, we refer to a country with the mean previous level of PIR and with all continuous control variables set at their mean, no civil or international conflict, and a country that is not post-Soviet.

**FIGURE 6. Dynamic Simulations of Worsening Abortion Rights on Social Group Equality in Respect for Civil Liberties**



Note: The figure shows a dynamic scenario based on the model results from Columns 3–4 of Table 1 (Williams and Whitten 2012). Panel A shows that a country with the median respect for abortion rights (a score of 4 on the CAI #1 measure) is expected to increase their respect for social group equality in civil liberties over time while countries with lower respect of abortion rights are either supposed to stay relatively constant (the score of 3 on the CAI #1 measure) or diminish their respect for social group equality over time. Panel B shows similar but more striking findings when we use the CAI #2 measure.

### Exploring the Causal Process and Extensions

While our approach is not experimental, the causal mediation models presented in Table 2 allow us to explore the process suggested by our theoretical argument. Table 2 shows the natural indirect, direct, and total effects of different “control” and “treatment” scenarios of the CAI #1 and CAI #2 indices. Full model results are presented in the Supplementary Appendix. The full effect of reductions in abortion rights is felt both directly, perhaps through emboldening country leaders or reducing collective action, and indirectly through our suggested mediator, social group equality. These two pathways combine to amplify the total effect reductions in abortion rights have on human rights protection scores. Across the various specifications, around 21–30% of the total effect of abortion rights on PIR is mediated through our suggested causal pathway.

In addition to these empirical results, we have conducted several auxiliary and robustness tests. Table 3 provides an overview of the evidence we have found. First, our key results are consistent across many

specifications and alternative measures. Second, we find that abortion rights restrictions are more robustly associated with the PIR subcomponents of political killings and disappearances than with political imprisonments or torture, perhaps indicating that abortion backsliding changes the behavior of both regime principals and agents (Mitchell 2004). Third, the inclusion of abortion rights in a model of PIR leads to better predictions of future decreases in PIR than a similar model when abortion rights is not included as an independent variable. (O’Brien 2010). Fourth, we find evidence consistent with our story concerning temporal ordering and the direction of the relationship between abortion rights and PIR.

Finally, we find much auxiliary evidence concerning the indirect mechanism or middle step in our theoretical logic. Abortion rights restrictions limit citizen trust in government (Haerpfer et al. 2021) and reduce non-violent protest (Bell, Murdie, and Peksen 2019) in ways that could embolden repressive leaders. Restrictions are associated with lower respect for LGBT rights (Dicklitch-Nelson et al. 2019) and more widespread torture against certain victims, including

**TABLE 2. Causal Mediation Models, Outcome Is Human Rights Protection Scores, Mediator Is Social Group Equality in Respect for Civil Liberties, Treatment Is Abortion Rights Backsliding, 1993–2016**

	Treatment = Comparative Abortion Index #1 (0 to 7), Control level is 4, Treatment level is 3	Treatment = Comparative Abortion Index #1 (0 to 7), Control level is 4, Treatment level is 2	Treatment = Comparative Abortion Index #2 (0 to 1), Control level is 0.481, Treatment level is 0	Treatment = Comparative Abortion Index #2 (0 to 1), Control level is 1, Treatment level is 0
Natural				
Indirect	–0.00177***	–0.00315**	–0.00396**	–0.00824**
Effects	(0.000590)	(0.00129)	(0.00200)	(0.00416)
Natural Direct	–0.00417**	–0.00834**	–0.0129**	–0.0303**
Effects	(0.00209)	(0.00418)	(0.00611)	(0.0120)
Total Effects	–0.00594***	–0.0115***	–0.0168***	–0.0385***
	(0.00198)	(0.00407)	(0.00630)	(0.0118)
Proportion Mediated	29.8%**	27.4%*	23.6%*	21.4%*

Note: Outcome equation includes treatment–mediator interaction, Robust standard errors in parentheses, Full table of results in Supplementary Appendix. 3,413 observations. \*\*\* p < 0.01; \*\* p < 0.05; \* p < 0.1.

**TABLE 3. Overview of Evidence Provided**

Mechanism Related to Our Argument	Empirical Evidence Provided	Location of Evidence
<b>Direct mechanism: Abortion as a testing ground for further restrictions of PIR; restrictions are part of an overall repressive regime.</b>	<i>Direct Relationships: Reductions in abortion rights in year t–1 are associated with reductions in PIR in year t.</i>	<b>Human Rights Protection Score</b> (Fariss 2014) - Table 1, Columns 1, 2, 5, and 6 <b>CIRI/CIRIGHTS Physical Integrity Rights Scores</b> (Cingranelli, Filippov, and Mark 2021; Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2014) –Additional Robustness Tests – Dataverse Documentation <b>Political Terror Scales – Amnesty and US State Department</b> (Gibney et al. 2022) –Additional Robustness Tests – Dataverse Documentation <b>Components of PIR – Results hold only when looking at political killing and disappearances</b> – Additional Robustness Tests – Dataverse Documentation <b>Additional specifications with Human Rights Protection Score</b> (Fariss 2014)– Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010) indicator for democracy, additional controls for religious freedom, globalization, women’s political control, women’s protest, independent variables measured in the same year, no religious indicators included, Polity squared included subcomponents of abortion rights index– Additional Robustness Tests – Dataverse Documentation; fixed effects, random effects, yearly fixed effects, two-way fixed effects, change as the dependent variable, backsliding as the key independent variable, change in abortion rights as the key independent variable - Supplementary Appendix <b>Direct effect in Causal Mediation Models - Human Rights Protection Score</b> - Table 2, Complete models in Supplementary Appendix <b>Including abortion rights leads to better predictions of future decreases in human rights protection score</b> – Supplementary Appendix <b>Illustrative case vignettes</b> - Nicaragua and Poland - Supplementary Appendix

(Continued)

**TABLE 3. (Continued)**

Mechanism Related to Our Argument	Empirical Evidence Provided	Location of Evidence
<p><b>Indirect mechanism: Abortion rights restrictions first herald a change in society that is correlated with a drop in physical integrity abuses.</b></p>	<p>Examinations Focusing on Temporal Ordering: Abortion restrictions typically precede physical integrity rights restrictions.</p>	<p><b>Table with frequencies of observations where decreases in abortion rights precede, follow, or occur at the same time as decreases in human rights protection score</b> –the highest number of cases where human rights decrease are preceded by decreases in abortion rights and not the other way around – Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Granger Causality test</b> – PIR does not Granger-cause abortion rights – Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Panel Vector Autoregressive (VAR) model</b> - past abortion rights predict PIR but not vice versa – Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Reduces social group equality in respect for civil liberties</b> (Coppedge et al. 2022) – Table 1, Columns 3 and 4</p> <p><b>Reduces personal opinions related to confidence in government – World Values Survey</b> (Haerpfer et al. 2021)- Abortion rights reductions are associated with lower confidence in government generally and the police and justice system/courts specifically, lower willingness to fight for one’s country, but does not have a similar more general association with overall happiness – Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Reduces the number of non-violent protests (either generally or women-specific)</b> (Bell, Murdie, and Peksen 2019) – Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Reduces secular values</b> (Welzel 2013) – Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Associated with lower respect for LGBT rights</b> (Dicklitch-Nelson et al. 2019) – Additional Robustness Tests – Dataverse Documentation</p> <p><b>Associated with more widespread torture allegations against certain victims</b> (Conrad, Haglund, and Moore 2013) – Additional Robustness Tests – Dataverse Documentation</p> <p><b>Illustrative case vignettes</b> - Nicaragua and Poland - Supplementary Appendix</p>
	<p><i>Middle Step: Abortion rights restrictions are associated with changes in society which could create a situation where more PIR occurs.</i></p>	<p><b>Abortion rights restrictions lead to reductions in social group equality, thereby leading to a direct and indirect effect on PIR</b> - Table 2, Complete models in Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Abortion rights restrictions lead to reductions in secular values, thereby leading to a direct and indirect effect on PIR</b> – Supplementary Appendix</p> <p><b>Illustrative case vignettes</b> - Nicaragua and Poland - Supplementary Appendix</p>
	<p>Causal Mediation Process: Abortion rights restrictions lead to changes in society which then led to changes in PIR; directly modeling the full process.</p>	

dissidents and marginalized groups (Conrad, Haglund, and Moore 2013). We also find evidence that secular values diminish when abortion rights are restricted, and reductions in secular values are associated with worse PIR (Welzel 2013). These findings are not definitive but generally support our theoretical argument. We hope future research can help better dissect the various mechanisms through which restrictions on abortion rights could alter state-society relations in ways that ultimately lead to broader and other human rights abuses.

Our Supplementary Appendix includes two illustrative case vignettes of countries that have suffered abortion limits and concomitant or subsequent erosion of PIR protections. We pair these vignettes with

graphs that chart CAI scores, the human rights protection score, and V-Dem’s social equality in civil liberties score. Nicaragua presents a typical case for our theoretical framework, whereby regression on both CAI measures precedes drops in both scores. Poland is a good example of how normative alignment can cement restrictionism and lock restrictive policies in place. A change in electoral fortunes, where a populist leader (Kaczyński) is replaced by a centrist one (Tusk) does not immediately bring liberalization. These cases further buttress our proposed arguments, that abortion rights may be the first domino to fall, or, in other cases, restrictions put in motion other pernicious processes that generate precarious PIR environments.

## CONCLUSION

Abortion access retrenchment contributes to a deteriorating environment for PIR, both directly and indirectly. The increased politicization and fractionalization of abortion, as witnessed in the US, Poland, and Brazil, motivated our paper. These trends are not wholly new; rather, leaders borrow from similar scripts and crack down on abortion to assert the nationalist ideal and preserve authentic norms or amass political power (Smyth 2005). Yet, the marriage of convenience between a new brand of populism and abortion politics became ascendant circa 2016 to 2018. While our analysis does not extend beyond 2016, due to the CAI index's temporal scope, the mounting polemics of abortion rights render our findings more pertinent.

Each of our proposed mechanisms embodies lessons for the policy community. As a *testing ground*, abortion curbs can be a harbinger for the breakdown of other protections, as restrictions can cascade out to other rights, affect other segments of the populace, and dissuade the citizenry from collective dissent. We have postulated the inherent gendered nature feature of abortion rights to be one of the mechanisms that render them the weak link in a country's overall human rights regime. However, if our findings are taken to heart by the policy community, this means that the citizenry must be vigilant in guarding abortion rights if they expect to maintain guardrails against the decaying of social group equality and PIR.

We have also stressed that *democratic backsliding* figures into the story, whereby creeping authoritarianism activates and accentuates the testing ground logic. Our argument is indicative of a backlash, whereby, ironically perhaps, the improvement of global human rights, and specifically PIR and abortion access protections, is met by blowback from repressive governments. Some governments gamble to reassert control over the population and do so by attacking abortion, as a gendered and fraught set of rights, and thus already vulnerable to regression. Alternatively, as well, governments may well react to the process of democratization itself. Perversely, as democratic rights and civil liberties are expanded, reproductive rights may see withering or, at least be swept under the rug, where democratization does not always go hand in hand with liberalization of abortion rights in countries where near or universal bans already exist.

Related, illiberal leaders may instrumentalize abortion politics and use abortion access as a *scapegoat*. This argument highlights that reproductive rights, in general, are rendered more vulnerable under populist leaders, who can cash in on the polemics to curry favor with specific constituencies (Ziegler 2022), cast aspersions on foreign actors, and pursue specific agendas. In other words, domestic agendas fuel attacks on abortion rights, in turn, setting in motion processes that create precarious rights situations. While illiberal leaders accrue praise, they may (inadvertently) activate deleterious processes with far-reaching consequences.

We have stressed that abortion limits are indicative of deeper processes, namely, *normative reconfiguration*,

around not just autonomy and agency but also social intolerance and exclusionism. Disquietingly, if normative corrosion drives abortion restrictions, then the same corrosion can give rise to regressive worldviews, guiding hostility, for example, to diversity and equity, migrants' rights, and indigenous rights. Equally worryingly, the normative realignment we write about may invite dogmatic views, whereby regressive values brook no dissent, lodging them further in the country's psyche.

A similar concept we have pointed to is that of *socialization*. Just as views on religion can become entrenched during formative years (Adamczyk, Kim, and Dillon 2020), a citizenry socialized in an iron-fisted and unforgiving normative environment will likely perpetuate the illiberal normative environment. Crucially, our findings challenge the notion of a progressive, and uni-directional values-shift, from "pro-fertility norms" (emphasizing traditional gender roles and stigmatizing any sexual behavior not linked with reproduction) to "individual-choice norms" (supporting gender equality and tolerance of nontraditional behavior such as homosexuality) (Inglehart, Ponarin, and Inglehart 2017, 1314). Clearly, these norms are not as cemented as would seem based on this wisdom. Just as there may be a tipping point where progressive values are held to be socially dominant, with intergenerational shift (Inglehart, Ponarin, and Inglehart 2017), there can be a reverse tipping point, with enduring regression from individualistic to traditional mores, with pernicious consequences for nonconformist lifestyles.

Our study suggests several fruitful avenues for research. First, we have discussed abortion rights as one component of women's rights. As such, a direct follow up study would examine how other forms of women's rights, such as access to contraception, post-partum care, in-vitro fertilization (IVF) treatments, and family planning, influence PIR. Certainly, while reproductive rights are important to women's life experiences (Htun and Weldon 2012), women's rights are complex, and it would be foolhardy to expect identical mechanisms to be at play when we broaden the focus to other types of rights.

Second, we have drawn a direct empirical link between abortion rights and PIR, which form one component of a state's human rights environment. Another promising avenue would be to analyze how abortion rights relate to women's physical security, encompassing protections from sexual violence as well as women's daily experiences navigating society, a concept that has gained traction in recent work (Cohen and Karim 2022; Karim and Hill 2018). This perspective would take a more granular approach, and probe how societies that guarantee reproductive freedom protect women from possible sexual violence, within the domestic sphere, and in the microcosms in which women operate.

Finally, our empirical models demonstrate several intermediary mechanisms that link abortion curbs to regression on PIR. Possibly, there are other cognate mechanisms. For example, our supplementary results show a decline in secularism. Extrapolating this further, the rise of dogmatic views, exclusionism, and societal intolerance may be other plausible links. Thus, one

avenue forward would be to probe alternative causal links. Another path would be to build on our supplementary models, for example, showing targeted regression of gay rights or targeted torture, and pursue a causal identification approach to pinpoint the conditions under which these mechanisms come into play.

At the same time, our paper also provides some cause for optimism. Take the case of the Philippines, for example, where, prior to his election, President Marcos Jr. called for the legalization of abortion in certain situations (Garcia 2022; Manabat 2022; see also CRR 2023). Given our findings that countries that maintain access to or liberalize abortion rights see improvements in physical integrity protections, these changes, if enacted, may herald greater protections related to physical integrity.

We invite future studies to take on the challenges of broadening this promising research agenda, taking abortion access seriously as a public policy that shapes human rights regimes in multifaceted ways.

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055424000960>.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research documentation and data that support the findings of this study are openly available at the American Political Science Review Dataverse: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/BS3DF7>.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank Avery Murdie, the participants of panels at ISA and SERN, and the many helpful reviewers and editors of APSR.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

## ETHICAL STANDARDS

The authors affirm that this research did not involve human participants.

## REFERENCES

- Adamczyk, Amy, Chunrye Kim, and Leevia Dillon. 2020. "Examining Public Opinion about Abortion: A Mixed-methods Systematic Review of Research over the Last 15 Years." *Sociological Inquiry* 90 (4): 920–54.
- Al-Hadrawi, Hayder. 2016. "Is it Moral to Kill an Innocent Person? The Moral Dilemma of Abortion." *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research* 7 (8): 792–5.
- Asal, Victor, Mitchell Brown, and Renee Gibson Figueroa. 2008. "Structure, Empowerment and the Liberalization of Cross-National Abortion Rights." *Politics & Gender* 4 (2): 265–84.
- Avdan, Nazli, Amanda Murdie, and Victor Asal. 2024. "A Ticking Time Bomb: Restrictions on Abortion Rights and Physical Integrity Rights Abuses." Harvard Dataverse. Dataset. <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/BS3DF7>.
- Baird, Barbara. 2006. "Maternity, Whiteness and National Identity: The Case of Abortion." *Australian Feminist Studies* 21 (50): 197–221.
- Baird, Barbara, and Erica Millar. 2020. "Abortion at the Edges: Politics, Practices, Performances." *Women's Studies International Forum* 80 (1): 102372.
- Baron, Reuben M., and David A. Kenny. 1986. "The Moderator–Mediator Variable Distinction In Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51 (6): 1173–82.
- Bell, Sam R., Amanda Murdie, and Dursun Peksen. 2019. "The Impact of Globalization on Women's and Non-Women's Protest." *Social Science Quarterly* 100 (3): 604–19.
- Bloomer, Fiona, Claire Pierson, and Sylvia Claudio Estrada. 2018. *Reimagining Global Abortion Politics*. London: Bristol University Press.
- Boyle, Elizabeth H., Minzee Kim, and Wesley Longhofer. 2015. "Abortion Liberalization in World Society, 1960–2009." *American Journal of Sociology* 121 (3): 882–913.
- Brysk, Alison, and Rujun Yang. 2023. "Abortion Rights Attitudes in Europe: Pro-Choice, Pro-Life, or Pro-Nation?" *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 30 (2): 525–55.
- Caprioli, Mary. 2005. "Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2): 161–78.
- Caprioli, Mary, and Mark A. Boyer. 2001. "Gender, Violence, and International Crisis." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45 (4): 503–18.
- Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR). 2022. "The World's Abortion Laws." <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>.
- Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR). 2023. "Progress on Abortion Rights in the Philippines." <https://reproductiverights.org/pchr-philippine-commission-human-rights-abortion-decriminalization/>.
- Charlesworth, Hilary, Christine Chinkin, and Shelley Wright. 1991. "Feminist Approaches to International Law." *American Journal of International Law* 85 (4): 613–45.
- Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland. 2010. "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited." *Public Choice* 143 (1): 67–101.
- Cingranelli, David, Mikhail Filippov, and Skip Mark. 2021. The CIRIGHTS Human Rights Data Project Coding Manual Version 2021.01.21. The Binghamton University Human Right Institute. [www.binghamton.edu/institutes/hri/](http://www.binghamton.edu/institutes/hri/).
- Cingranelli, David L., David L. Richards, and K. Chad Clay. 2014. "The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Data Project Coding Manual Version 5.20.14." <http://www.humanrightsdata.com/p/data-documentation.html>.
- Cioffi, Andrea, Camilla Cecannechia, Fernanda Cioffi, Giorgio Bolino, and Raffaella Rinaldi. 2022. "Abortion in Europe: Recent Legislative Changes and Risk of Inequality." *International Journal of Risk & Safety in Medicine* 33 (3): 281–86.
- Cohen, Dara Kay, and Sabrina M. Karim. 2022. "Does More Equality for Women Mean Less War? Rethinking Sex and Gender Inequality and Political Violence." *International Organization* 76 (2): 414–44.
- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). 2018. "Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." Report. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1480026?ln=en&v=pdf>.
- Conrad, Courtenay R., Jillienne Haglund, and Will H. Moore. 2013. "Disaggregating Torture Allegations: Introducing the III-Treatment and Torture (ITT) Country-Year Data." *International Studies Perspectives* 14(2):199–220.
- Cook, Rebecca J., and Bernard M. Dickens. 2003. "Human Rights Dynamics of Abortion Law Reform." *Human Rights Quarterly* 25 (1): 1–59.



- Copelon, Rhonda, Christina Zampas, Elizabeth Brusie, and Jacqueline deVore. 2005. "Human Rights Begin at Birth: International Law and the Claim of Fetal Rights." *Reproductive Health Matters* 13 (26): 120–9.
- Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, et al. 2022. "V-Dem Codebook v12." Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project.
- Cueva Beteta, Hanny. 2006. "What is Missing in Measures of Women's Empowerment?" *Journal of Human Development* 7 (2): 221–41.
- Cursino, Malu. 2022. "Hungary Decrees Tighter Abortion Rules." *BBC News*, September 13. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62892596>.
- Davenport, Christian, and David A. Armstrong. 2004. "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996." *American Journal of Political Science* 48 (3): 538–54.
- Davies, Shawn, Therese Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2022. "Organized Violence 1989–2021 and Drone Warfare." *Journal of Peace Research* 59 (4): 593–610.
- Denisov, Boris, and Victoria Sakevich. 2023. "Birth Control Policies and Abortion Issues in Post-Communist Russia." In *Debates Around Abortion in the Global North: Europe, North America, Russia and Asia*, eds. Fabienne Portier-Le Cocq, 85–97. New York: Routledge.
- Dicklitch-Nelson, Susan, Scottie Thompson Buckland, Berwood Yost, and Danel Draguljić. 2019. "From Persecutors to Protectors: Human Rights and the F&M Global Barometer of Gay Rights™ (GBGR)." *Journal of Human Rights* 18(1): 1–18.
- Eager, Paige Whaley. 2017. *Global Population Policy: From Population Control to Reproductive Rights*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Erdman, Joanna N. 2016. "The Politics of Global Abortion Rights." *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 22 (2): 39–57.
- Fariss, Christopher J. 2014. "Respect for Human Rights has Improved over Time: Modeling the Changing Standard of Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 108 (2): 297–318.
- Forman-Rabinovici, Aliza, and Udi Sommer. 2018a. "An Impediment to Gender Equality?: Religion's Influence on Development and Reproductive Policy." *World Development* 105 (1): 48–58.
- Forman-Rabinovici, Aliza, and Udi Sommer. 2018b. "Reproductive Health Policy-makers: Comparing the Influences of International and Domestic Institutions on Abortion Policy." *Public Administration* 96 (1): 185–99.
- Forman-Rabinovici, Aliza, and Udi Sommer. 2019. "Can the Descriptive-substantive Link Survive Beyond Democracy? The Policy Impact of Women Representatives." *Democratization* 26 (8): 1513–15.
- Garcia, Ma. Angelica. 2022. "Marcos Jr. Favors Legal Abortion for Rape, Incest Victims." *GMA News Online*, January 25. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/819506/marcos-jr-favors-abortion-for-rape-incest-victims/story/>.
- Gibney, Mark, Linda Cornett, Reed Wood, Peter Haschke, Daniel Arnon, Attilio Pisanò, Gray Barrett, et al. 2022. "The Political Terror Scale 1976–2021." <http://www.politicalterrorsscale.org>.
- Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand. 2002. "Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset." *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (5): 615–37.
- Global Justice Center (GJC). 2023. "UN Special Procedures Letter: US Abortion Rights." [https://www.globaljusticecenter.net/files/UNSpecialProceduresLetter\\_USAbortionRights.pdf](https://www.globaljusticecenter.net/files/UNSpecialProceduresLetter_USAbortionRights.pdf).
- Haerper, Christian, Ronald Inglehart, Alejandro Moreno, Christian Welzel, Kseniya Kizilova, Jaime Diez-Medrano, Marta Lagos, et al. 2021. "World Values Survey Time-Series (1981–2020) Cross-National Data-set." Version 2.0.0. <https://doi.org/10.14281/18241.15>.
- Haschke, Peter. 2017. *Human Rights in Democracies*. New York: Routledge.
- Heidari, Shirin. 2015. "Sexual Rights and Bodily Integrity as Human Rights." *Reproductive Health Matters* 23 (46):1–6.
- Hildebrandt, Achim. 2015. "What Shapes Abortion Law?—A Global Perspective." *Global Policy* 6 (4): 418–28.
- Hill, Daniel W., and Zachary M. Jones. 2014. "An Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for State Repression." *American Political Science Review* 108 (3): 661–87.
- Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. 2012. "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005." *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 548–69.
- Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. 2018. *The Logics of Gender Justice: State Action on Women's Rights Around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, Valerie M., Donna Lee Bowen, and Perpetua Lynne Nielsen. 2015. "Clan Governance and State Stability: The Relationship Between Female Subordination and Political Order." *American Political Science Review* 109(3): 535–55.
- Hunt, Kate. 2021. "Social Movements and Human Rights Language in Abortion Debates." *Journal of Human Rights* 20 (1): 72–90.
- Hunt, Kate, and Mike Gruszczynski. 2019. "The Ratification of CEDAW and the Liberalization of Abortion Laws." *Politics & Gender* 15 (4): 722–45.
- Imai, Kosuke, Luke Keele, and Dustin Tingley. 2010. "A General Approach to Causal Mediation Analysis." *Psychological Methods* 15 (4): 309–34.
- Inglehart, Ronald F., Eduard Ponarin, and Ronald C. Inglehart. 2017. "Cultural Change, Slow and Fast: The Distinctive Trajectory of Norms Governing Gender Equality and Sexual Orientation." *Social Forces* 95 (4): 1313–40.
- Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. 2002. "Islamic Culture and Democracy: Testing the 'Clash of Civilizations' Thesis." *Comparative Sociology* 1 (3–4): 235–63.
- Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. 2003a. "The True Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Policy* 62: 62–70.
- Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris 2003b. *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobson, David. 2013. *Of Virgins and Martyrs: Women and Sexuality in Global Conflict*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jumaa, Yasmine. 2022. "Dobbs Decision Could Harm the LGBT Community, Advocates Say." *Louisville Public Media*, June 24. <https://www.lpm.org/news/2022-06-24/dobbs-decision-could-harm-the-lgbtq-community-advocates-say>.
- Karim, Sabrina, and Daniel Hill. 2018. "The Study of Gender and Women in Cross-National Political Science Research: Rethinking Concepts and Measurement." Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association.
- Keele, Luke, and Nathan J. Kelly. 2006. "Dynamic Models for Dynamic Theories: The Ins and Outs of Lagged Dependent Variables." *Political Analysis* 14 (2): 186–205.
- Kozłowska, Hannah. 2022. "Where Democracy Falts, so do Reproductive Rights." *Foreign Policy*, March 16. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/16/where-democracy-falters-so-do-reproductive-rights/>.
- Manabat, Jacque. 2022. "Marcos Jr. Says Abortion Should Be Allowed in Rape, Incest." *ABS CBN News*, January 25. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/01/25/22/marcos-jr-says-abortion-should-be-allowed-in-rape-incest>.
- Maoz, Zeev, and Errol A. Henderson. 2013. "The World Religion Dataset, 1945–2010: Logic, Estimates, and Trends." *International Interactions* 39 (3): 265–91.
- Marshall, Monty G., and Ted Robert Gurr. 2020. "Political 5: Dataset Users' Manual." <https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/p5manualv2018.pdf>.
- Melander, Erik. 2005. "Political Gender Equality and State Human Rights Abuse." *Journal of Peace Research* 42 (2): 149–66.
- Millar, Erica. 2015. "'Too Many' Anxious White Nationalism and the Biopolitics of Abortion." *Australian Feminist Studies* 30 (83): 82–98.
- Millar, Erica. 2020. "Abortion Stigma as a Social Process." *Women's Studies International Forum* 78: 102328.
- Mitchell, Neil James. 2004. *Agents of Atrocity: Leaders, Followers, and the Violation of Human Rights in Civil War*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moghadam, Valentine M., and Gizem Kaftan. 2019. "Right-Wing Populisms North and South: Varieties and Gender Dynamics." *Women's Studies International Forum* 75: 102244.

- Nguyen, Trang Quynh, Ian Schmid, and Elizabeth A. Stuart. 2020. "Clarifying Causal Mediation Analysis for the Applied Researcher: Defining Effects Based On What We Want To Learn." *Psychological Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000299>.
- Nickel, James W. 2008. "Rethinking Indivisibility: Towards a Theory of Supporting Relations Between Human Rights." *Human Rights Quarterly* 30 (4): 984–1001.
- Norris, Alison, Danielle Bessett, Julia R. Steinberg, Megan L. Kavanaugh, Silvia De Zordo, and Davida Becker. 2011. "Abortion Stigma: A Reconceptualization of Constituents, Causes, and Consequences." *Women's Health Issues* 21 (3): S49–S54.
- O'Brien, Sean P. 2010. "Crisis Early Warning and Decision Support: Contemporary Approaches and Thoughts on Future Research." *International Studies Review* 12 (1): 87–104.
- OECD Development Centre. 2023. "SIGI 2023 Global Report." <https://doi.org/10.1787/4607b7c7-en>.
- Penovic, Tania. 2022. "US Abortion Bans Unleash State-Sanctioned Violence Against Women." *Lowy Institute*, August 1. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/us-abortion-bans-unleash-state-sanctioned-violence-against-women>.
- Pillai, Vijayan K., and Guang-zhen Wang. 1999. "Social Structural Model of Women's Reproductive Rights: A Cross-National Study of Developing Countries." *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24 (2): 255–81.
- Poe, Steven C., and C. Neal Tate. 1994. "Repression of Human Rights to Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 88 (4): 853–72.
- Powell, Michael. 2022. "A Vanishing Word in Abortion Debate: 'Women,'" *New York Times*, June 8. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/08/us/women-gender-actu-abortion.html>.
- Raciborski, Rafal. 2008. "kountry: A Stata Utility for Merging Cross-Country Data from Multiple Sources." *The Stata Journal* 8 (3): 390–400.
- Ramirez, Francisco O., and Elizabeth H. McEneaney. 1997. "From Women's Suffrage to Reproduction Rights? Cross-national Considerations." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 38 (1–2): 6–24.
- Reanda, Laura. 1981. "Human Rights and Women's Rights: The United Nations Approach." *Human Rights Quarterly* 3 (2): 1–11.
- Rebouché, Rachel. 2016. "Abortion Rights as Human Rights." *Social & Legal Studies* 25 (6): 765–82.
- Sherwood, Harriet, Maeve Sherlaw, and Jonathan Franklin. 2015. "What Has the United Nations Ever Done for Women?" *The Guardian*, September 15. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/10/un-womens-rights-feminism-equality>.
- Smyth, Lisa. 2005. *Abortion and Nation: The Politics of Reproduction in Contemporary Ireland*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Sommer, Udi, and Aliza Forman-Rabinovici. 2019. *Producing Reproductive Rights: Determining Abortion Policy Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strzyżyńska, Weronika. 2022. "Hungary Tightens Abortion Access with Listen to 'Foetal Heartbeat' Rule." *The Guardian*, September 13. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/13/hungary-tightens-abortion-access-with-listen-to-foetal-heartbeat-rule>.
- Suliman, Adela. 2022. "Putin Revives Soviet 'Mother Heroine' Award for Women Who Have 10 Children." *Washington Post*, August 17. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/17/russia-ukraine-putin-mother-heroine-award-children/>.
- Tanginelli, Ariana. 2022. "Abortion Rights are Backsliding in the US and Europe." *International Public Policy Review*, May 7. <https://ippr-journal.com/2022/05/07/abortion-rights-are-backsliding-in-the-us-and-europe/>.
- Teorell, Jan, Aksel Sundström, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein, Natalia Alvarado Pachon, and Cem Mert Dallı. 2022. The Quality of Government Standard Dataset, version jan22. University of Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute. <https://doi.org/10.18157/qogstdjan22>.
- Tharoor, Ishan. 2021. "China's Three-Child Policy and the New Age of Demographic Anxiety." *Washington Post*, May 31. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/31/china-three-children-anxiety/>.
- Thoms, Oskar N. T., and James Ron. 2007. "Do Human Rights Violations Cause Internal Conflict?" *Human Rights Quarterly* 29 (3): 674–705.
- Tucak, Ivana, and Anita Blagojević. 2021. "Covid-19 Pandemic and the Protection of the Right to Abortion." *EU and Comparative Law Issues and Challenges Series* 5 (1): 853–77.
- United Nations (UN). 2022. "Overturning of Roe v Wade Abortion Law a 'Huge Blow to Women's Human Rights' Warns Bachelet." <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1121312>.
- Vasquez, Tina. 2022. "Overturning Roe Is Slippery Slope to Eroding First Amendment Rights." *Oregon Live: The Oregonian*, July 27. <https://www.oregonlive.com/palabra/2022/07/overturning-roe-is-slippery-slope-to-eroding-first-amendment-rights.html>.
- Vida, Bianka. 2019. "New Waves of Anti-sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Strategies in the European Union: the Anti-gender Discourse." *Hungary, Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 27 (2): 13–6.
- Welzel, Christian. 2013. *Freedom Rising*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilkins, Arjun S. 2018. "To Lag or Not to Lag?: Re-Evaluating the Use of Lagged Dependent Variables in Regression Analysis." *Political Science Research and Methods* 6 (2): 393–411.
- Williams, Laron K., and Guy D. Whitten. 2012. "But Wait, there's More! Maximizing Substantive Inferences from TSCS Models." *Journal of Politics* 74 (3): 685–93.
- Woliver, Laura R. 2010. *The Political Geographies of Pregnancy*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- World Bank. 2023. "Women, Business, and the Law 2023 Report." <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/reports>.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender and the Nation*. London: Sage.
- Ziegler, Mary. 2022. *Dollars for Life: The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Fall of the Republican Establishment*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.