

DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION AND YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS GAY MARRIAGE AND ABORTION: THE DECLINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ARGENTINA

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the extent to which the current young adult cohort in Argentina reports ties to the Catholic Church, and how these ties or lack thereof impact their attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion. I analyze data from 120 paper surveys distributed and collected in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This convenience sample was drawn among students of the private University of Belgrano and the public high school General San Martín Technical School No. 5. Binary logistic regressions show that controlling for age, gender and class, Catholicism does not significantly predict attitudes towards gay marriage or abortion, but increased religious attendance significantly predicts negative attitudes towards both. Age is the only control variable that significantly predicts attitudes towards abortion, while class is nearly significant in predicting attitudes towards gay marriage. Overall, the data shows widespread secularization and religious diversification, and suggests that low levels of institutional integration among young adult members of the Catholic Church lead to high levels of acceptance of both gay marriage and abortion.

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of religion, politics and moral debate is inseparable from the historical context within which a nation's broader societal views have developed, as legal changes reflect changing social values (Domingo 2010). Argentina, whose government has already legalized gay marriage and currently faces pressure to reconsider the legal status of abortion, provides a prime example of how a traditionally Catholic society can come to contextualize moral debates within a secular frame. Changing institutional contexts as well as individual characteristics shape attitudes towards each of these topics. In Argentina, the deinstitutionalization of individual attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion draw upon a socio-historical context in which the decline of the Catholic Church plays a hand in the expansion of progressive attitudes among younger populations.

This research contributes to the literature on the factors which influence an individual's attitudes towards the controversial sociopolitical debates on gay marriage and abortion rights, while placing these attitudes within the context of a process of religious deinstitutionalization among Argentine youth. In doing so, this paper outlines the extent to which the current young adult cohort in Argentina reports ties to the Catholic Church, and how these ties or lack thereof impact their attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion.

LEGAL STATUS AND APPROVAL OF GAY MARRIAGE IN ARGENTINA

Argentina takes a considerably progressive political stance on the topics of gay marriage and abortion. In 2003, civil unions were legalized in Buenos Aires, the first city in Latin America to make such a step. On July 21, 2010, the second female President of Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, signed a bill legalizing gay marriage throughout the country. With the passing of this law, Argentina became the first Latin American country to fully legalize same-sex marriages, following in the footsteps of South Africa and Canada, as well as seven countries in Europe. The rights granted to same-sex couples in Argentina are now equal to those of heterosexual couples, including the right to adopt children.

While the passing of the gay marriage law quelled much of the political debate regarding the topic, abortion continues to be a hot-button issue among many feminists and human rights activists in Argentina. After the legalization of gay marriage, abortion has come to the forefront of moral and political debate in the country (Piette 2010). Abortion in Argentina is illegal yet common. While the law allows for abortion under a few special circumstances such as rape, mental disability, and health threat to the mother, this allowance is rarely upheld under the law, and is subject to long delays (Guse 2010). In early 2012, the Argentine Supreme Court passed a ruling which modified the traditional interpretation of the penal code that only mentally disabled women were entitled to a legal abortion if subjected to rape. The recent ruling, confirming that any rape victims are legally entitled to an abortion, is widely considered a victory for reproductive rights activists throughout Latin America. Despite this recent legal progress, in practice abortion remains the leading cause of maternal mortality in Argentina (Gogna, Romero, Ramos, Petracci and Szulik 2002; Guse 2010). With 40 percent of pregnancies illicitly aborted, this statistic poses a serious strain on Argentina's health-care systems, and has an enormously negative impact on women's health throughout the nation (Borland 2004; Guse 2010). While the legal status of abortion remains a topic of debate, the expansion of abortion rights in the wake of the recent change in the gay marriage law requires further investigation of the social climate for such a change.

The recent legalization of gay marriage in conjunction with the continued push for abortion rights pose unique but comparable topics to study, as their societal approval or disapproval are both largely reflective of the intersection between religious and political attitudes. Polling in Argentina just months before the legalization of gay marriage showed a fairly even split of approval and disapproval for the legalization of gay marriage (Mallimaci 2008), while over half the population supports abortion in the cases currently provided for under the law (Romer 2010). Youth attitudes pose an understudied but important area of investigation, as they can suggest trends in the current role of religious institutions in shaping (or not shaping) a generation's moral stance.

The Catholic Church in Argentina: An Institution in Decline

The Catholic Church has been a powerful institution in Argentine society throughout the country's history and is inseparable from a study of attitudes towards moral politics, which Blofield (2006) defines as encompassing "issues at the core of our religious and ethical worldviews" (1). The Catholic Church defines abortion as homicide (Blofield 2006) and has been the most vocal institutional opponent to the recent legalization of gay marriage; therefore, a study of attitudes towards such topics requires attention to the influence of religious institutions on broader Argentine society as well as on individual attitudes.

Throughout Argentine history, the political role of the Catholic Church has been central, particularly through the maintenance of longstanding ties to the elite classes. During the 1950s, it was one of the only institutions to avoid "Peronization" and served as a refuge to higher-class anti-Peronists and a symbol of resistance; factions from both ends of the political spectrum "rallied behind the Church" (Rock 1987: 318) against Perón. During this time period, the Catholic Church experienced an increase in institutional integration through its symbolic and real link to political powers. However, the Church's position has not traditionally been one of alliance with the Argentine masses. Under the military dictatorship of 1976-1983, the Catholic Church supported the state, a move which alienated many Catholics. Notably, the domination of Catholicism waned in the second half of the 20th century as it lost support among the public, who sought new forms of "innovative political expression" (Levine 2009:123) to counter the strong ties between societal elites and the dominant institutions.

Indeed, while the role of the Catholic Church in shaping attitudes towards moral debates such as abortion and gay marriage is deeply embedded in a traditional view of the family, current trends in Argentina suggest that the Catholic Church is an institution in decline, as other religious institutions gain support among the public and take a more modernized approach to political issues such as gay marriage and abortion (Mallimaci and Béliveau 2007; Jones 2010). This trend bears particular weight on the study at hand as the Catholic Church has long been viewed as a central opponent to liberal-leaning policies such as the depenalization of abortion (Borland 2004). Following in the wake of the legalization of gay marriage, the fight for abortion rights in Argentina faces comparable obstacles of "a strong Catholic presence, unstable governments, and socially constructed gender norms" (Guse 2010:63). For this reason,

a decline in influence of the Catholic Church on Argentine politics can bear weight on moral and political debates such as those on gay marriage and abortion.

Despite longstanding Church and state ties in Latin America, Gonzalez (2010) found in a cross-national study of Latin American countries, there were no significant correlations between the strength of the Church in the country and existing civil union or gay marriage laws (302). Balivé (2005) argues that in particular “Argentines are increasingly willing to take God out of politics” (3), making policy changes that do not reflect the values traditionally upheld by the dominant religious institutions. Despite Catholicism’s continued religious majority in Argentina, changes in public policy such as the legalization of gay marriage and the opening of debates about abortion rights reflect the willingness of Argentine society to reexamine issues considered “taboo” by the Church (Balivé 2005). To this end, the women’s rights movement has led aggressive attacks on the Church’s abortion position which has contributed to the opening of societal discourse (Borland 2004). Along these lines, Petracci (2007) found in a survey conducted in the major cities in Argentina that 70% of respondents felt that the Catholic Church should take a more flexible position towards abortion, while similar discourse regarding gay marriage contributed to the 2010 legalization of gay marriage despite very public protest by the Catholic Church. As such, the decline of the Catholic Church as a religious institution with political power is reflected not only in the expansion of new and more progressive religious groups, but also in individual attitudes towards moral politics which do not align with traditional Church doctrine.

RELIGION, RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE, AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The decline of the role of the Catholic Church in Argentine society has opened the door to processes of both secularization and religious diversification. While a 2008 study by Mallimaci, Esquivel and Irrazábal found that 76% of respondents reported being Catholic, 9 % Evangelical, and 11.3% atheist, agnostic or other, the same vast majority which reported belonging to the Catholic faith also reported infrequent to no attendance to religious gatherings. Argentina’s religious makeup is relatively diverse when compared to other Latin American countries, with the highest Jewish population in Latin America according to current statistics (Dellapergola 2010), and the fifth highest number of Protestant denominations after Chile, Mexico, Brazil and Haiti (Wilkie, Alemán and Ortega 2001). Mallimaci (2008) further suggests that laicism, or secularization on an institutional level, has led to increased expression of more individualized religious beliefs outside of institutional contexts. Likewise, individual secularization poses a growing trend in the form of atheism, agnosticism or general disaffiliation with any religious institution, although Mallimaci (2008) proposes that this process and its consequences remain vastly understudied.

On the other hand, the same study points to trends of membership expansion among other religions, leading to great pluralism and diversity among citizens in terms of religion. Evangelism in particular has seen a great increase in membership in Argentina in younger generations, with hybridized varieties gaining members particularly in the middle classes (Mallimaci 2008; Patterson 2004). Similarly, organizations such as Catholics for Choice have seen great expansion in recent years, supporting progressive political positions that counter traditional Church doctrine (Gallo 2011). These new religious institutions and organizations have been found to take diverse positions on issues of sexual morality, depending on their political orientation as more liberal- or conservative-leaning (Jones 2010).

Drawing on these dual processes of secularization and religious diversification, data presented by Mallimaci et al. (2008) points to deinstitutionalization of attitudes related to moral politics. Along these lines, Patterson (2004) suggests that basic demographics such as age and education have become better predictors of political attitudes than religion. As Argentina’s religious composition diversifies to include growing, more progressive-thinking sects as well as increasing populations not affiliated with any particular religious institution, individual attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion become important measures of the ways in which these broader institutional processes have a concrete impact on society and its individuals.

Recent polling in Argentina on attitudes towards gay marriage show variation among religions and religious sects in terms of approval. Evangelicals in Argentina were significantly less likely to support same-sex marriage than all other religious groups, while atheists were the most likely to approve

(Germán and Corral 2010; Romer 2010). In one poll taken by *La Nación*, a leading Argentine newspaper, Catholics were more likely than Protestants to approve, with slightly under half approving (Romer 2010). This finding is interesting in light of the Catholic Church's explicit disapproval of gay marriage, and reflects a disparity between individual members' attitudes and the Church doctrine.

Striking similarity in the breakdown of approval of abortion was found in polls taken in Buenos Aires by Mallimaci, Esquivel and Irrazábal (2008). A majority of Catholics approved of abortion under the special circumstances currently provided by law, and a significant percentage supported under any circumstances. A minority of Evangelicals approved of the current legal status, although a small but significant percentage also approved of abortion under any circumstances, reflective of the diversity of positions taken by different varieties of Evangelical institutions. This study suggests a general distancing from the dominant religious doctrine in regard to individual attitudes towards abortion similar to the process occurring regarding gay marriage. Likewise, a qualitative study by Petracci (2011) conducted among a sample of men in Buenos Aires found that non-religious men reported greater approval of depenalization of abortion. These findings support trends of secularization and its relationship with attitudes towards moral politics.

While attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion certainly vary by religion or religious sect, studies have also shown that in general, strength of affiliation and religious attendance better predict attitudes towards moral politics regardless of the individual's religion (Patterson 2004). These measures are pertinent to the study at hand as attendance or non-attendance of religious services reflects not only religiosity but degree of institutional involvement.

With regard to same-sex marriage, religious attendance was found to have a significant negative impact on support for same-sex marriage, as were strong religious values (Germán and Corral 2010; Gaines and Gorand 2010). A similar, longitudinal study conducted in the U.S. (Olson, Cadge and Harrison 2006) found that Non-Protestants in the U.S., notably Roman Catholics, increased in likelihood to approve over time. Interestingly, religiosity was found to be a stronger predictor than basic demographics in this study as well as others (Besen and Zicklin 2007). These findings parallel trends in Argentina, and suggest that cross-national comparisons can be drawn.

As for the relationship between religious attendance and abortion attitudes, Harris and Mills (1985) conducted a study among a large portion of the U.S. population that, while dated, merits mention here. These researchers used value conflict theory to argue that conflicting values of self-determination and responsibility towards others intervened in the relationship between religious attendance and attitudes towards abortion. They concluded that religion influences attitudes on abortion through a group-reinforced value of responsibility that is stronger among more frequent participants.

While these findings can be extrapolated to Catholics in Argentina through exposure to the same Church doctrine, evidence from Argentina suggests that this relationship may not be so clear-cut. In a 1996 study in Argentina which touched on religion and attitudes towards abortion among Argentine females, Petracci (2004) found among Catholics with regular attendance to Church services, a minority reported the attitude that abortion is "incorrect" (36%)—however, this study does not present findings for infrequent or very frequent attendance. A study conducted among Argentine by Belden Russonello Strategists LLC (2011) among Argentine residents 18 and older living in large cities found significant differences in approval under any circumstances between those who attended Church weekly, and those who attended less frequently. Despite this significant finding, further exploration is needed on the relationship between religious attendance and attitudes towards abortion in Argentina as a potentially strong predictor of attitudes.

In sum, individual attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion have been found to reflect processes of secularization as well as deinstitutionalization of individual attitudes despite continued membership. However, to thoroughly explore the relationship between religion, religious attendance and attitudes towards moral politics, a number of control variables must be explored which have been found to have an influence on said attitudes.

CLASS

Class is generally examined using variables for socioeconomic status (SES) and education, because these variables are more conducive to objective measurement. However, Rozada and Menendez (2002) suggest that in Argentina, education and SES reflect class distinctions. Despite universal access to tuition-free public universities, the majority of students in both private and public universities come from middle- or upper- class backgrounds (Rozada and Menendez 2002). This finding suggests that studies which approach the effects of education and SES on attitudes towards moral politics in Argentina can provide useful insights into the impact of class on said attitudes.

Blofield (2006) approaches the concept of class directly in her discussion of how the anti-choice movement in Argentina tends to be composed of upper-class citizens. She highlights that this distinction is in part due to an upper-class view of abortion as an issue of the lower or middle classes, and attributes upper-class visibility in anti-abortion protests to their greater access to resources. While this finding is helpful in understanding the connection between class and activism, Blofield does not address the broader impact of class on attitudes towards moral politics.

Studies which utilize education and SES to approach the concept of class are more frequent in the literature; such studies can suggest the impact of class on attitudes towards moral politics. For attitudes towards gay marriage, Germán and Corral (2010) found that both education level and SES have a positive impact on attitudes towards gay marriage in Argentina. With regard to abortion attitudes, Petracci (2011) found that more educated males were more approving of depenalization, as were males with experience with abortion. Similarly, a U.S. study conducted in Princeton, New Jersey, found that educated women were the most supportive of legalized abortion (Saad 2004). Although such a study focuses on a subset of the United States rather than Argentina, this finding is particularly comparable to the sample which was taken at the private University of Belgrano in Buenos Aires, also considered to be an elite institution. This research seeks to contribute a more thorough understanding of the direct effect of class, as a variable, on youth attitudes towards moral politics.

AGE

The current generation of young adults in Argentina, particularly those born after the end of the last military dictatorship, pose an interesting subset of the population to study in terms of views on moral debates, as ongoing processes of liberalization and deinstitutionalization of beliefs may be manifested in their attitudes towards moral politics. The age stability hypothesis (Inglehart 1977), which suggests that younger more tolerant generations replace older more conservative ones, is countered by studies in the United States that show that cohort attitudes can change with cultural, legal or political changes in regard to a specific issue (Anderson and Fetner 2008). This second hypothesis is arguably applicable in Argentina, with younger generations' liberal attitudes reflective of the 1983 change in political status of the country as well as the recent changes in the legal statuses of gay marriage and abortion.

With regard to age as a predictor of liberal-leaning beliefs in Argentina, Germán and Corral (2010) and Romer (2010) found that younger respondents were significantly more likely to approve of gay marriage. More specifically, Romer (2010) found that of 18-20 year olds, just under half were in favor of gay adoption, and just over half were in favor of gay marriage. Respondents over the age of 21 had significantly lower levels of approval, with approval decreasing as age category increased. These findings align with arguments that young adults in Argentina have more open views and experiences with regard to gender and sexual relations (Sardá 2007).

As for age and attitudes towards abortion, Petracci (2004) found in a study of 200 females 18 and older that women over the age of 40 were the most likely group to approve of abortion as well as its legalization, consistent with the demographic most involved in the feminist movement, while women age 30-39 were the least tolerant. However, little mention was given to the young adult age group in this study. Another study conducted by Belden Russonello Strategists LLC (2011) found that approval increased slightly with age. On the other hand, a poll conducted throughout major cities in Argentina by Ipsos-Mora y Araujo, a marketing research company, highlights the young adult age group (18-29) as the most approving of abortion, with just under half in this sample saying that they are in favor of legalization ("Para el 44%" 2010). A similar study by Petracci (2011) using qualitative data to approach views of men between the ages of 25-39 found that this group was largely approving of depenalization.

However, she also argues that this cohort inaccurately assesses the social climate for political change, with the majority reporting the belief that most Argentines are against the legalization abortion.

A focus on the young adult cohort will clarify the relative ambiguity on the attitudes of this generation towards gay marriage and abortion. Such a focus is central to understanding the political stance of the next generation of social actors.

GENDER

Gender can constitute a central force in determining whether one supports gay marriage and abortion, as each of these topics deal with issues related to gender and sexuality. Germán and Corral (2010) found that Argentine females were significantly more likely to support gay marriage than males. This finding is interesting in light of Kornblit, Pecheny and Vujosevich's (1998) finding that there is significantly greater social acceptance of gay men than lesbians in Argentina. These researchers hypothesize that gays have greater visibility within Argentine society, and that the underlying societal phallocentrism leads to intolerance of a lifestyle where good sex does not include men.

With regard to abortion, gender has been an ambivalent predictor of attitudes, varying across generations depending on the contemporary social context (Lista 1993). This trend is reflected currently in the push from feminist activists and members of the women's rights movement for legalization, which has come to the forefront of human rights movements in recent years. However, in terms of current gender differences in attitudes, Lista (1993) found no significant differences among men and women in terms of approval of depenalization. Likewise, Belden Russonello Strategists LLC (2011) found no significant differences among men and women in approval of depenalization of abortion. Saad (2004) argues that education is a better predictor of attitudes towards abortion. Regardless, the interplay of gender and attitudes towards abortion as a gender-related issue is central to furthering understanding on the factors which influence attitudes towards moral politics.

SUMMARY

Individual influences on attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion can be contextualized within the evolution of Argentina's democracy, whose focus on rights-based citizenship has brought said topics the forefront of public and political debate. The Catholic Church's long-standing ties to the elite classes and the last military dictatorship have contributed to its decline, reflected in widespread processes of secularization and religious deinstitutionalization.

In turn, these broader social processes are apparent in individual attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion. Among individuals of different religious backgrounds, Catholics have been found to be more supportive of both gay marriage and abortion than Protestants, notably the burgeoning Evangelical population. However, this trend is contingent upon religious attendance, with more frequent attendance corresponding with increased adherence to the Church doctrine, which prohibits both gay marriage and abortion. On other hand, class, approached most frequently in the literature as education, has a positive relationship with approval, with the exception of mobilized upper-class conservative activists. Age has also been found to have a variable relationship with approval within different cohorts, although the young adult cohort is thought to be more consistently approving. Likewise, studies of gender's impact on moral politics show mixed results. These findings provide ample space for the study at hand to contribute to existing knowledge on the factors which influence attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion.

METHODS

The target population was Argentine young adult residents, and surveys were collected from a convenience sample (n=120) of this population in Buenos Aires in Fall 2011. The vast majority of surveys were distributed at the University of Belgrano, a private university located in Buenos Aires (n= 85). To supplement these surveys, additional surveys (n= 35) were distributed near General San Martín Technical School No. 5, a public technical high school in Buenos Aires.

HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses for this analysis draw upon the literature on factors that influence attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion, and the current state of the Catholic Church as an institution in decline in Argentina. The hypotheses for the analysis are as follows.

Controlling for age, gender and class:

(A1) Catholicism will not significantly predict attitudes towards gay marriage.

(B1) More frequent religious attendance will significantly predict a “never justified” response for gay marriage attitudes.

(A2) Catholicism will not significantly predict attitudes towards abortion.

(B2) More frequent religious attendance will significantly predict a “never justified” response for abortion attitudes.

FINDINGS

To test the hypotheses, various analyses were conducted on the variables to examine their characteristics as well as the extent to which they influence one another. SPSS was used to carry out various phases of statistical analyses.

Descriptive statistics for age show that the age range of the sample is 18-27, with a mean age of 20.75 and a standard deviation of 2.414 (n= 100). Frequencies for gender show that the sample included 73 female respondents, 46 male respondents, and 1 respondent self-reporting as “other gender”. Frequencies for class show that 71.7% of respondents reported belonging to the upper middle class. Frequencies for religion show that well over half the respondents reported being Catholic (64.2%), while 13.3% reported being atheist and another 13.3% reported being “other”. Jewish respondents made up 5.8% of the sample, while Evangelicals made up only 1.7%. For religious attendance, just over half the respondents report never or practically never attending religious services (51.7%).

Frequencies for the variables that measure views on gay marriage and abortion show interesting differences. A majority of respondents said that gay marriage is always justified (55.9%), with 24.6% reporting sometimes, and 19.5% reporting never. On the contrary, a small minority of respondents reported that abortion is always justified (9.3%), with the majority reporting sometimes (67.8%), and 22.9% reporting never. These frequencies suggest that complete approval of gay marriage is more common among the sample, perhaps at least partly reflective of the legalization of gay marriage in contrast to the current legal restrictions on abortion.

Table 1: Logistic Regression Models for Gay Marriage Justification

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
<i>Gender</i>	B= -.378 Exp(B)= .685	--	B= -.075 Exp(B)= .648	--	B= -.181 Exp(B)= .301
<i>Age</i>	B= -.063 Exp(B)= .939	--	B= -.434 Exp(B)= .928	--	B= -1.202 Exp(B)= .835
<i>Class</i>	B= .617 Exp(B)= 1.854	--	B= .716 Exp(B)= 2.045	--	B= .709 Exp(B)= 2.032
<i>Catholicism</i>	--	B= -.623 Exp(B)= 1.045	B= .567 Exp(B)= 1.764	--	--
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	--	--	--	B= -.623** Exp(B)= .536	B= -.812** Exp(B)= .444
<i>Constant</i>	B= -.937 Exp(B)= .392	B= -1.447* Exp(B)= 2.35	B= -1.208 Exp(B)= .299	B= 1.280 Exp(B)= 3.597	B= 6.064 Exp(B)= 430.302

*P<.01, **P<.05

Table 1 shows that Catholicism did not significantly predict attitudes towards gay marriage when run alone or with the control variables. Class was nearly significant (P= .051, Exp(B)= 2.045), suggesting that with each class increment moving higher to lower, log-odds of believing that gay

marriage is never justifiable doubles. These findings confirm hypotheses A1, that Catholicism does not significantly predict attitudes towards gay marriage when controlling for age, gender and class.

Table 1 Model IV shows that when religious attendance is run alone in the model, it significantly predicts attitudes towards gay marriage ($\text{Exp}(B) = .536$). When the controls are added to the equation (Model V), religious attendance still predicts attitudes towards gay marriage, ($\text{Exp}(B) = .444$), suggesting that as religious attendance decreases, log-odds of believing that gay marriage is never justifiable decreases by half. In this model, no control variables significantly predict views on gay marriage. These findings confirm Hypothesis B1, that more frequent religious attendance significantly predicts the belief that gay marriage is never justifiable.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Models for Abortion Justification

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
<i>Gender</i>	B= .740 Exp(B)= 2.097	--	B= .685 Exp(B)= 1.983	--	B= .375 Exp(B)= 1.454
<i>Age</i>	B= .223* Exp(B)= 1.250	--	B= .215* Exp(B)= 1.239	--	B= .165 Exp(B)= 1.180
<i>Class</i>	B= .235 Exp(B)= 1.265	--	B= .359 Exp(B)= 1.432	--	B= .193 Exp(B)= 1.213
<i>Catholicism</i>	--	B= .829 Exp(B)= 2.291	B= .776 Exp(B)= 2.173	--	--
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	--	--	--	B= -.691** Exp(B)= .501	B= -.658** Exp(B)= .518
<i>Constant</i>	B= -.7587** Exp(B)= .001	B= -1.792** Exp(B)= .167	B= -8.128** Exp(B)= .000	B= 1.792** Exp(B)= 6.001	B= -2.845 Exp(B)= .058

* $P < .01$, ** $P < .05$

The same binary logistic regressions were run on the abortion variable. Findings found in Table 2, Model I show that of the control variables, age increase significantly predicts the belief that abortion is never justified ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.250$).

When Catholicism is run alone in Model II, it does not significantly predict attitudes towards abortion. When the controls and Catholicism are run on abortion (Model III), only age significantly predicts attitudes towards abortion ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.239$), suggesting that as age increases, so does the log-odds for believing that abortion is never justified. This model confirms Hypothesis B1 that Catholicism is not a significant predictor of the belief that gay marriage is never justified.

Table 2 Model IV shows that when religious attendance is run alone in the model, it significantly predicts attitudes towards abortion ($\text{Exp}(B) = .501$). When the controls are added to the equation (Model V), religious attendance is the only significant predictor of attitudes towards abortion ($\text{Exp}(B) = .518$), confirming Hypothesis B2 that increased religious attendance significantly predicts the belief that abortion is never justified.

DISCUSSION

This study explores what factors shape attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion among the current Argentine young adult cohort. Moreover, these individual attitudes are framed within broader processes of secularization, religious deinstitutionalization, and the decline of the Catholic Church in Argentina. Such processes are important to understanding increasingly progressive political changes made under Argentina's developing democracy, as well as the connection between religious heritage and political attitudes.

Binary logistic regressions confirmed all hypotheses. While Catholicism was not a significant predictor of either gay marriage or abortion justification when controlling for age, gender and class, religious attendance was a significant predictor of both when controlling for the same. Higher classes were twice as likely to report that gay marriage is never justifiable. Older respondents were slightly more

likely to report that abortion is never justifiable, albeit only in models which lacked any other significant predictors. Nevertheless, while the absence of significant controls takes away from the overall predictive power of the models, the non-finding that Catholicism is not a significant predictor of attitudes towards either gay marriage or abortion makes a meaningful contribution to the literature on the impact of religious deinstitutionalization in Argentina discussed by Mallimacci (2008).

Indeed, the data suggests both secularization and religious diversification, captured by the more than one-tenth of the sample who reported being atheist and another one-tenth who chose "other" as their religious category. Findings also highlight a trend of deinstitutionalization of attitudes towards moral-politics among Catholics, in that identifying with the Catholic religion does not necessarily lead to adherence to its Church doctrine. Instead, increased attendance to church services rather than Catholicism in itself predicts negative attitudes towards gay marriage and abortion. This finding suggests that institutional integration of the individual (in this case measured through regular attendance) is key to the transfer of Church attitudes to the individual. Taken as a whole, these conclusions provide important insights into how the Catholic Church in Argentina, while nominally the dominant religious institution in the country, does not hold political sway over the current young adult cohort. The overall low church attendance among this group significantly predicts their high levels of approval of both gay marriage and abortion.

This study is also unique in terms of its sample, which while limited in its generalizability can tell us about a specific but critical subset of the Argentine young adult population. While the sample composition included two unique groups of students: those of the private, elite University of Belgrano and those of the public high school, General de San Martín Technical School No. 5, the majority of the respondents belonged to the upper middle class. The lack of a diverse class background must be taken into consideration when analyzing the near-significance of class as a predictor of attitudes towards gay marriage. Lower class respondents were more likely to hold attitudes that reflected the Church doctrine; this trend highlights a potential point of contention between the Catholic Church and the elite class. When considering that the sample overall had low levels of religious attendance, particularly among the upper classes, it becomes evident that the channels through which the Church traditionally influences its historically most powerful allies are narrowing.

While the implications of this study are numerous, a number of limitations must be taken into account. Foremost, the researcher's inability to draw a random sample, due to lack of access to social networks as a foreigner, shaped the convenience sample approach. As a result, sample bias limits the external validity or generalizability of the findings. There are also problems posed by the lack of variation in the variable measuring class, which limits statistical significance of this variable as a predictor of attitudes. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size is in large part responsible for the low significance levels in the analyses, as well as the lack of significant predictors.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study point towards high levels of acceptance of gay marriage and abortion rights among the current young adult cohort in Argentina. This approval is concurrent with the decline of the Catholic Church as a religious institution with political sway. As part of the first generation born under a stable democracy, this cohort holds great potential to ensure that human rights remain central to the nation's political development. Drawing less upon institutional doctrine when formulating their individual attitudes, Argentine young adults are taking a critical approach to the social structures that limit progressive change. Continued exploration of this topic can further illuminate these trends, and provide key insights into understanding progressive political change under recently formed democracies.

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