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Copy to: Mr Morton  
Blackwell  
From: Denis  
Strangman.  
Re: Letter 18 Jan 1982.



MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

21 JAN 1982

Dear Senator Harradine

I refer to your letter to the Prime Minister of 26 November 1981 concerning the position to be taken by the Australian delegation to the Commission on Human Rights on the drafting of a Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Prime Minister has asked me to provide a detailed reply to you on the important question you raise relating to the extent of legal protection provided by the proposed Convention.

I should first stress that the Government fully appreciates the significance of this complex and controversial issue.

As you correctly observe, the current draft Convention does not include the relevant preambular reference in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Rather, it is left to individual States to determine the contentious issue of the point at which the child first acquires legal protection. This formulation was developed only after lengthy and difficult discussions between States with sharply conflicting views, and represents a significant improvement on the preceding draft which specifically excluded the notion of protection before birth. In the nature of such negotiated wording, this formulation offers the best chance of being broadly acceptable but probably satisfies no-one completely.

The Government is firmly committed to securing expeditious international adoption of the Convention which will promote the welfare of children and ensure adequate protection of their rights. We would therefore be reluctant to break the carefully developed consensus on the Convention and thus risk prejudicing its early adoption.

In view of the importance of this subject, however, I have instructed Australia's delegation to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva to canvass the possibility of reopening debate on the issue.

I should add that the adoption of a Convention incorporating the current formulation would not alter the status of the 1959 Declaration, and that subsequent ratification of the Convention by Australia would not detract in any way from obligations which the Government has required of the Human Rights Commission through the inclusion of the 1959 Declaration in the Schedule to the Human Rights Commission Act. This point was firmly stated by the Prime Minister in his remarks at the ceremony to proclaim the Human Rights Commission Act on 10 December 1981.

Yours sincerely

A A STREET

Senator B Harradine  
Senator for Tasmania  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 24, 1982

Dear Mr. Doerflinger:

Thank you for sending me survey research on public attitudes towards the pro-life cause. I found Dr. Adarek's testimony especially interesting.

We greatly appreciate your efforts on behalf of the unborn.

When we set up the pro-life meeting with the President on January 22, we made every effort to have a balanced and representative meeting. The participants included several prominent Catholics. We seated Father Fiore near the President. And we understood Mr. Ohlhoff enjoys a particularly close relationship with the Bishops Conference.

I am enclosing a copy of a follow-up memo I sent to participants of the January 22 meeting.

If I can be of assistance to you in the future, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Morton C. Blackwell  
Special Assistant to the President

Richard Doerflinger  
Legislative Assistant  
National Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Bishops' Committee For Pro-Life Activities  
1312 Massachusetts Av., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS  
BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR PRO-LIFE ACTIVITIES  
1312 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005 • 202/659-6673

February 11, 1982

Morton Blackwell  
Special Assistant to  
the President  
Old Executive Office Building  
17th St. and Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20501

*Draft response.  
Thanks for poll data.  
Lulu & we have  
a bishops representative.*

Dear Mr. Blackwell:

Some time ago you asked me about published material on the popularity of the pro-life issue among voters. I understand that Peter Gemma is compiling some information on electoral races; but I thought the enclosed might also be of interest.

Incidentally, I trust that future meetings of pro-life leaders with the President will not exclude the representative from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Sincerely,

*Richard Doerflinger*  
Richard Doerflinger  
Legislative Assistant

RD:ad

Enc.

TESTIMONY OF RAYMOND J. ADAMEK, PH.D., BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION, SENATOR ORRIN G. HATCH, UTAH, CHAIRMAN. 12/7/81.

My name is Raymond J. Adamek. I am a Professor of Sociology at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. I would like to thank Senator Hatch and the members of this Subcommittee for this opportunity to testify regarding the nature of public opinion in the United States on the abortion issue.

I will base my testimony on a review of major national polls on abortion and of major studies of these polls conducted by other social scientists. In my review, I have focused on four questions:

1. Under what circumstances does the American public believe legal abortion should be available?
2. What is the public's view of our current abortion policy?
3. What is the public's view of proposed changes in our current policy?
4. What are the major socio-demographic factors related to attitudes on abortion?

Before we examine these questions, however, I think a few caveats regarding the interpretation of poll findings are in order.

First, since we are interested in the opinions of all adult Americans, national samples which are drawn in such a way that they can be validly generalized to the total U.S. population are preferable to local polls of subsamples of that population.

Second, in interpreting polls, one should consider the actual wording of each question asked. Not knowing the exact wording hinders interpretation and comparison of polls results. Particularly on sensitive issues like abortion, the different wording of questions intended to measure attitudes toward the same object may account for apparent shifts in public opinion as large as 28 percent (see Table 1).

Two recent studies on abortion questions (Blake, 1977b; Schuman et al., 1981) also note that simply reversing the order of the items asked may produce apparent shifts as large as 17 percent.

Third, the fact that people are willing to express an opinion about something does not necessarily mean that they are knowledgeable about it. For example, Blake (1977a, 1977b) found that even as late as 1975, only 49 percent of the public of voting age had heard of the Supreme Court's 1973 decisions, and correctly understood that their effect was to make it easier for a woman to obtain an abortion. This is particularly a problem when we ask people for their opinion about complex and specific matters such as the Court's decisions. When respondents are not familiar with the content of these decisions, they may respond to a question asking them whether they agree or disagree with the decision on the basis of their impression of the Court's prestige, or the erudition of its members.

Fourth, one should be aware of who is sponsoring, conducting, and reporting a poll, since their frames of reference, assumptions, and words will be reflected in the questions asked, the responses obtained, and in the way the findings are reported. Often it is instructive to consider what questions have not been asked, as well as to consider what questions have been asked.

All of this is not to say that poll results are worthless, but only that they must be interpreted with caution.

#### I. UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD LEGAL ABORTION BE AVAILABLE?

Let us now turn to the state of recent and current public opinion regarding abortion. Analysts generally agree (Arney and Trescher, 1976; Blake, 1971, 1977a; Evers and McGee, 1977; Granberg and Granberg, 1980; Jones and Westoff, 1973; Market Opinion Research, 1981) that approval for abortion under various circumstances

increased between the early 1960's and the early 1970's, and then leveled off after a final spurt immediately following the Supreme Court's 1973 decisions. At least three studies (Arney and Trescher, 1976; Blake, 1973; Granberg and Granberg 1980, 1981) indicate that the increase in approval for abortion between 1972 and 1973 may be attributed to the Court's decisions, suggesting that to some extent, we can legislate (or adjudicate) morality. In fact, Dyck (1972) states that "most adults in any culture are at a stage of moral development where existing laws and customs are the most important bases for deciding what is right and what is wrong." Laws, then, can mold public opinion as well as reflect public opinion.

Considering the National Opinion Research Center's (NORC) polls (see Table 2), it is clear that a rather substantial majority of Americans state they believe legal abortion should be available for what have come to be known as "hard " reasons: the mother's health being seriously endangered (88-90 percent), rape (80-83 percent), and a strong chance of serious defect in the baby (80-83 percent). A bare majority support legal abortion where the family has a very low income (45-52 percent) in these polls, and only a minority support abortion if the woman is not married (40-48 percent), if she is married but does not want any more children (39-46 percent), or if she wants an abortion "for any reason" (32-39 percent).

The NORC polls are valuable, since they employ exactly the same questions over time. Two recent (1977, 1979) Gallup polls are even more valuable, however, since they add a time dimension, asking at what stage of pregnancy various circumstances would justify abortion. The results of the Gallup polls may be seen in Table 3. These data indicate that about 22 percent of adult Americans believe abortion should be illegal in all circumstances. The next 54-55 percent (the middle majority) believe that abortion should be legal only for hard reasons (woman's life endangered, severe threat of health damage to the woman, rape/incest), and only in

the first three months of pregnancy. The only circumstance the middle majority feels justifies abortion beyond the first trimester is a threat to the woman's life. It would appear, then, that the middle majority approves of less than five percent of the legal abortions currently taking place in the United States, since less than five percent (and perhaps something approaching one percent) are performed for hard reasons (Kahn et al., 1971; Steinhoff, 1972; U.S. DHEW, 1971).

Parenthetically, we note that more general questions focusing on the stage of pregnancy at which abortion should be legal also show that only a minority approve of abortion beyond the first three months (see Blake, 1977b: 62-64; Gallup, July, 1975). We also note that when the question about circumstances is concretized (as in Table 3) by asking the respondent to think about a particular stage of pregnancy, rather than being asked in a more general way, as in the NORC polls, the amount of support for abortion decreases considerably (see Table 4). Some of this decrease is undoubtedly also due to differences in item wording.

## II. WHAT IS THE PUBLIC'S VIEW OF OUR CURRENT ABORTION POLICY?

Before attempting to answer this question, we should briefly note the nature of the Court's decision. Essentially, considering abortion a private matter between a woman and her physician, the Court mandated abortion on request through viability (considered to occur in the 24th to 28th week of pregnancy), while permitting the State "if it chooses" to "proscribe abortion except where it is necessary, in appropriate medical judgment, for the preservation of the life or health of the mother" (U.S. Supreme Court Reports, 1973:183-184). It further went on to note that in determining whether an abortion was necessary to preserve the mother's health, "medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors--physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age--relevant to the well-being



of the patient" (U.S. Supreme Court Reports, 1973:212). Given this broad definition of the components of health, the Court in effect legalized abortion in the third trimester, as well.

There are two types of questions attempting to gauge the public's opinion of the Supreme Court's 1973 decisions: general questions which tend to indicate approval of the decisions, and more specific questions which tend to indicate disapproval of the decisions.

The general questions are exemplified by those asked by Harris and Gallup (see Table 5). These questions, and particularly the Harris questions (see Adamek, 1978, attached), are seriously flawed, since they narrowly focus the respondent's attention on the first trimester of pregnancy. Asking the question in this form misleads uninformed respondents about the actual nature of the Court's ruling, giving them the impression that the Court did not legalize abortion after three months, while it simultaneously restricts the attention of informed respondents to the first trimester clause. It therefore fails to measure opinions about the Court's overall decision, and tends to overestimate the extent of support for the decision.

More specific questions tapping public opinion about several aspects of the Court's decision strongly indicate that most Americans disagree with the Court. We have already seen, for example (Table 3) that while the Court legitimated abortion on request in the first, second, and even the third trimester, most Americans would limit abortion to the first trimester, and then only for hard reasons. One reason for this substantial disagreement between the public and the Court on timing seems to be clear: a different evaluation of the crucial questions of when human life begins, and when the human being may be considered to be a person. On the first question, the Court's explicit position was that it did not know when human life began (U.S. Supreme Court Reports, 1973:181). Implicitly, however, the Court's

ruling favored the "viability" or "birth" answers to the question of when human life begins, since while it stated that prior to viability the state had no "compelling interest" in protecting "potential human life," it did allow the state to prohibit abortion after viability in some circumstances, and indicated that after birth the Constitution protected the individual.

In a special Gallup poll conducted one week after the Court's decisions, however, Blake (1977a) found that only 15 percent of American men and 12 percent of American women thought that human life begins at viability, and only 19 percent of the men and 8 percent of the women thought human life begins "only at birth." Thirty-six percent of the men and 50 percent of the women, on the other hand, believed that human life "begins at conception" (see Table 6). Three other polls taken just this year indicate that a majority of the public believes that human life begins within the first trimester, while only 5-17 percent believe it begins only when the baby is born (also Table 6).

Gallup has demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between one's beliefs about when life begins and other aspects of the abortion issue. Thus, while only 27 percent of those who believe life begins at conception say they favor the Court's ruling, 73 percent of those who say life begins at birth favor the ruling. Similarly, while only 11 percent of those who believe life begins at conception believe abortion should be legal in all cases, 44 percent of those who believe it begins at birth feel it should be legal in all cases (Gallup, July, 1981).

On the issue of personhood, the Court noted that as used in the Constitution, the word person "has application only postnationally" (U.S. Supreme Court Reports, 1974:179), and concluded that the Constitution's protection of rights guaranteed to persons begins only at birth. However, when Blake (1977a) asked the American public when they thought the unborn "may be considered a human person," only

18 percent of the men and 8 percent of the women adopted the Court's position by responding "at birth," while 33 percent of the men and 51 percent of the women responded "at conception."

Besides strongly disagreeing with the Court on the basic issues of the beginning of human life and personhood, as well as on the issues of timing and circumstances, Blake (1977b) has shown that only a minority of Americans supported the Court's judgment of the type of medical facility where abortions might take place, and on its endorsement of the legality of out-of-state abortions. Likewise, in Gallup polls taken in August 1972, October 1974, and April 1975, Blake (1977a, 1977b) found that only a minority of Americans (20 to 35 percent) agreed with the Court's subsequent (1976) decision that a married woman should be able to get an abortion without her husband's consent. Blake (1981) also found that only a minority of Americans agree with the Court's 1976 decision that minors may obtain abortions without parental consent.

The closest the Court and the American public come to agreement on abortion policy appears to be on the issue of using tax funds to pay for abortions. In 1977 (U.S. Supreme Court Reports, 1977), the Court decided that neither federal nor state governments had to provide tax money to pay for elective abortions. Public opinion polls on this issue generally indicate that Americans do not want their tax dollars to finance abortion (see Table 7).

It is evident, then, that when we ask specific questions about various aspects of the Supreme Court's decisions, a majority of the American public is seriously at odds with the Court.

Given that the Court's 1973 decisions stated abortion was a private matter between a woman and her physician, and that it allows abortion through the second

trimester, and even in the third trimester, I think it is fair to characterize the Court as "pro-choice". Clearly, however, the vast majority of the American public is not "pro-choice" in this same sense.

How, then, do we account for the results of eleven polls (Market Opinion Research, 1981:16) which indicate that between 67 and 81 percent of the American public believe that the right or decision of the woman to have an abortion is for her and her doctor to decide? I believe the apparent contradiction between these polls and those we have just reviewed, which illustrate the public's disagreement with specific ideas embodied in the Court's opinions, is again a question of wording (see Table 8). As we have already seen, more people will agree with a general statement than with specific instances implied by that statement when these are "spelled out". General statements such as those in Table 8 allow respondents to focus on specific instances of their own choosing. For example, even respondents who believe that abortion should be legal only for hard reasons can logically agree with the statements in Table 8 if they focus on the hard reasons. Blake (1973) has noted that the first question in Table 8 also suffers from other methodological errors which bias responses in an affirmative direction. We should also point out that the Harris question (Table 8, #4) focuses the respondent's attention only on the first three months of pregnancy, again tending to elicit an affirmative response. The Market Opinion Research item (Table 8, #6) would appear to be even more loaded in favor of a positive response, which it apparently produces. Thus, it speaks of "the consenting patient" as though her decision has already been made, and then asks whether the abortion (to which she has already consented) "should be performed by a licensed physician in conformance with good medical practice." To disagree with this item, the respondent must almost place himself in the position of endorsing "back alley butchers."

### III. WHAT IS THE PUBLIC'S VIEW OF PROPOSED CHANGES IN PRESENT ABORTION POLICY?

A review of 15 national polls from 1978 through 1981 by Market Opinion Research (1981:15) indicates that anywhere from 49 to 71 percent of Americans say they oppose an amendment to the Constitution which would make abortion illegal, while anywhere from 22 to 45 percent say they favor such an amendment. That there is so much opposition to making abortion illegal should not come as a surprise, since as we have already seen (Table 3), the middle majority of Americans believe that abortion should be legal, but only in the first trimester, and only for hard reasons. However, opposition to an amendment which would ban all abortions does not constitute endorsement of present abortion policy.

Perhaps what is surprising about the responses to the 15 polls reviewed by Market Opinion Research, and two additional polls on this topic (NARAL, 1978:4), is the relatively large minority of Americans (between 29 and 45 percent in 12 of 17 polls) who say they do favor a constitutional amendment banning all abortions. Similarly, three recent polls (see Table 9) on the Human Life Bill are endorsed by 29 to 42 percent of the public, even though they employ strong language, implying that such a law would make abortion "murder." Since Market Opinion Research's (1981:15) recent survey of 8 national polls found that only 10 to 22 percent of Americans believe that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances, why should no less than 22 percent and up to 45 percent endorse a constitutional amendment which would ban all abortions? Judith Blake's (1981) recent study suggests part of the answer to this apparent contradiction.

In a detailed analysis based on eight NORC polls (1972-1980), eight Gallup polls (1968-1974, and 1977), and the two National Fertility polls (1965 and 1970), Blake divided respondents into three groups on the basis of their endorsement of four circumstances which might justify legal abortion (mother's health, deformed baby,

financial stress, and simply not wanting any more children). Those who endorsed abortion under no circumstances, or only where the pregnancy seriously endangered the woman's health, she called "negatives." Those who endorsed all four justifications for abortion she called "positives," and those in between these polar positions she called "equivocators." What she found is that, "People who equivocate ... apparently are more negative than positive in their views about legalizing abortion. In fact, it may be fair to say that these respondents are 'closet negatives'" (i.e., closet anti-abortionists) (Blake, 1981:315). Equivocators were consistently found to be more like "negatives" than "positives" in background characteristics and other attitudes as well.

Blake found that even the group which endorsed all four reasons for abortion generally disagreed with the Supreme Court on three aspects of its decision for which measures were taken: abortion beyond the first three months of pregnancy, abortion if the husband opposes it, and abortion for minors without parental consent. Blake concludes that it is evident that a majority of Americans do not endorse the tenets of the pro-choice movement.

In a study of pro-choice and pro-life activists (members of NARAL and NRLC, respectively), Granberg and Denny (forthcoming) also find that the general adult population is closer to pro-life activists than to pro-choice activists in values and attitudes.

#### IV. WHAT SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ARE RELATED TO ATTITUDES ON ABORTION?

In summary form, studies and polls have generally found that:

1. Whites are more likely to be permissive about abortion than Blacks/Non-whites.
2. Males are more likely to be permissive about abortion than females.

3. Those with more formal education are more likely to be permissive on abortion than those with less formal education.

4. Those who live in large cities are more likely to be permissive on abortion than those who live in small cities, or rural areas.

5. Those who live in the West and East are more likely to be permissive on abortion than those who live in the Midwest and South.

6. Those with higher incomes are more likely to be permissive on abortion than those with lower incomes.

7. At least since the 1970's, younger persons are more likely to be permissive on abortion than older persons.

8. Jews are more likely to be permissive on abortion than Protestants, who are more likely to be permissive than Catholics.

9. Persons who score lower on "religiosity" scales are more likely to be permissive on abortion than those who score higher on such scales.

#### CONCLUSION.

Our analysis of public opinion on abortion in the United States indicates that a majority of Americans do not endorse either the pro-choice or pro-life platforms. If anything, they are closer to the pro-life ideology.

Our present public policy, however, as mandated by the Supreme Court, is essentially pro-choice in ideology. This, I suggest, is the main reason for the turmoil we have experienced over this issue in recent years.

It would seem to me that a constitutional amendment which would remove the major responsibility for our abortion policy from the Supreme Court and return it to the legislatures would go a long way toward resolving the turmoil in a just and rational manner.

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Table 1. The Effect of Question Wording on Response: Three Examples

A. Questions Regarding a Human Life Amendment

	Responses*	
	Should Be	Shouldn't Be
1. "Do you think there should be an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting abortions, or shouldn't there be such an amendment?"	29	67
2. "Do you believe there should be an amendment to the Constitution protecting the life of the unborn child, or shouldn't there be such an amendment?"	50	39

Source: New York Times/CBS News Poll. The New York Times, August 18, 1980, p. 1. Both questions were asked of the same respondents.

B. Questions Regarding the Abortion Decision

	Responses*	
	Agree	Disagree
1. "As you may have heard, in the last few years a number of states have liberalized their abortion laws. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement regarding abortion: The decision to have an abortion should be made solely by a woman and her physician?"	64	31
2. "Do you think it should be lawful for a woman to be able to get an abortion without her husband's consent?"	Yes 24	No 67

Source: Question 1 was commissioned by Planned Parenthood and asked in a Gallup poll. The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 87, Sept. 1972. Question 2 was commissioned by Blake and asked in a Gallup poll two months after Question 1. Blake (1973)

C. Questions Regarding the Supreme Court Decisions of 1973

	Responses*	
	Favor	Oppose
1. "The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that a woman may go to a doctor to end a pregnancy at anytime during the first three months of pregnancy. Do you favor or oppose this ruling?"	47	44
2. "The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that a woman may go to a doctor for an abortion at any time during the first three months of pregnancy. Do you favor or oppose this ruling?"	43	54

Source: Question 1: Gallup poll conducted March, 1974. The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 106, April 1974. Question 2: Sindlinger, "Special Hitchhiker on Abortion," for National Review, May 1974.

\*All responses in this and subsequent tables will be given in percentages. Figures may not add to 100 percent because of rounding, or because the "Other," "Don't Know" and "No Answer" responses have been omitted.

Table 2. Percent of Respondents Approving of Legal Abortions In Various Circumstances, (NORC)

Question: "Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion ...

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1980
1. "If the woman's own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy?"	88	90	90	88	89	88	88	88
2. "If she became pregnant as a result of rape?"	74	80	83	80	80	80	80	80
3. "If there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby?"	74	82	83	80	82	83	80	80
4. "If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children?"	46	52	52	50	51	52	45	50
5. "If she is not married and does not want to marry the man?"	40	47	48	46	48	47	40	46
6. "If she is married and does not want any more children?"	38	46	45	44	44	44	39	45
7. "If the woman wants it for any reason?"	(not asked prior to 1977)					36	32	39

Source: James A. Davis, General Social Surveys 1972-1980. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1980. I have varied the order in which the questions were presented to respondents to indicate decreasing extent of approval as we go from the "hard" reasons to the "soft" reasons.

Table 3. Percent of Respondents Approving of Legal Abortions in Various Circumstances (Gallup)

Question: "Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under only certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?"

Response	1975	1977	1979	1980	1981
Legal, any circumstance	21	22	22	25	23
Legal, certain circumstances	54	55	54	53	52
Illegal, all circumstances	22	19	19	18	21
No opinion	3	4	5	4	4

Focusing, then, upon the middle majority who said they thought abortion should be legal only under certain circumstances, Gallup asked these questions: "Now, thinking about the first (second) (last) month of pregnancy, under which of these circumstances do you think abortions should be legal ... when the woman's life is endangered, when the woman's mental health is endangered, where the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest, when there is a chance the baby will be born deformed, when the woman may suffer severe physical health damage, if the family cannot afford to have the child."

	Life Endangered	Rape/Incest	Health Damage	Baby Deformed	Mental Health	Can't Afford
1st trimester						
1977	77	65	54	45	42	16
1979	78	59	52	44	42	15
2nd trimester						
1977	64	38	46	39	31	9
1979	66	32	46	37	31	9
3rd trimester						
1977	60	24	34	28	24	6
1979	59	19	33	28	22	4

Sources: 1977 poll, The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 153, April, 1978. 1979 poll, The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 166, May, 1979. The lines indicate the circumstances and stage of pregnancy in which a majority of respondents think abortion should be legal. Source for the top half of this table is The Gallup Report, Report 190, July, 1981.

Table 4. Percent of Respondents Approving of Legal Under Given Circumstances in Selected NORC and Gallup Polls, Similar Items

Circumstance*	NORC		Gallup 1st trimester	
	1977	1980	1977	1979
Woman's life endangered	-	-	77	78
Health seriously/severely endangered	88	88	54	52
Rape/Rape-Incest	80	80	65	59
Baby: serious defect/ chance deformed	83	80	45	44
Very low income, can't afford/ can't afford	52	50	15	16

\*The first wording summarizes that of the NORC polls, the wording after the slash summarizes that of the Gallup polls. For complete wording of these items, see Tables 2 and 3.

Source: NORC data: James A. Davis, General Social Surveys 1972-1980. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1980. Gallup data: The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 153, April, 1978, and The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 166, May, 1979.

Table 5. Responses of the Public to General Questions Regarding the Supreme Court's 1973 Decisions

Question: "In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that state laws which made it illegal for a woman to have an abortion up to three months of pregnancy were unconstitutional, and that the decision on whether a woman should have an abortion up to three months of pregnancy should be left to the woman and her doctor to decide. In general, do you favor or oppose this part of the U.S. Supreme Court decision making abortions up to three months of pregnancy legal?"

Response	Feb. 1973	April 1975	Aug. 1976	July 1977	Feb. 1979	June 1981
Favor	52	54	59	53	60	56
Oppose	41	38	28	40	37	41
Not sure	7	8	13	7	3	3

Source: 1973-1979 data, ABC News--Harris Survey, "Majority Favors Abortion, But Foes Have Political Strength." Vol. 1, No. 28, March 7, 1979. 1981 data, Kent-Ravenna Record-Courier, "Majority backs legal abortion," June 8, 1981, p. 17.

Question: "The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that a woman may go to a doctor to end pregnancy at any time during the first three months of pregnancy. Do you favor or oppose this ruling?"

Response	March 1974	May 1981
Favor	47	45
Oppose	44	46
No opinion	9	9

Source: 1974 data, The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 106, April, 1974. 1981 data, The Gallup Report, Report 190, July, 1981.

Table 6. When Does the American Public Believe Human Life Begins?

Question: "It is sometimes said that the morality of abortion rests on the question of when one thinks human life begins. ... Which of these alternatives best expresses your views?"

Human life begins...	Men		Women	
	1973	1975	1973	1975
At conception	36	43	50	58
At quickening	19	15	23	16
At viability	15	14	12	11
Only at birth	19	20	8	10
Don't know/other	11	8	7	5

Source: Blake (1977a). Full text of question not given due to space limitation.

Question: "Some people feel that human life begins at the moment of conception. Others feel that human life does not begin until the baby is actually born. Do you, yourself, feel that human life begins at conception, at the time of birth, or at some point in between?" If last response, "At what point do you believe human life begins?"

	May, 1981
At conception	54
Three months or less/when baby develops features, heart starts beating*	8
When mother feels life in her	1
Between three months and birth	8
At birth	17
Don't know	5
No opinion	7

\*Two categories and figures combined.

Source: The Gallup Report, Report 190, July 1981.

Question: "Just your own opinion, at what point do you think a fetus becomes a human being? Do you think a fetus becomes a human ..."

	May, 1981
At conception, when sperm meets egg	41
During the first three months of pregnancy	30
During the last six months of pregnancy	12
When the baby is actually born	11
Don't know/no opinion/other	6

Source: ABC News/Washington Post Poll. Survey # 0034, June 8, 1981.

Question: "When do you think a fetus becomes a human being? Do you think a fetus becomes a human being ..."

	1981
At conception, when sperm and egg meet	39
When the fetus's nervous system begins to function	11
When the fetus would be able to survive outside the mother's womb	9
When the baby is actually born	5
Or is this a question that can't really be determined one way or the other?	30

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly and White poll for Life Magazine, Nov. 1981.

Table 7. Public Opinion Regarding The Use of Tax Money To Finance Abortion (In Percentages)

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Poll Date</u>	<u>Responses</u>	
1. "Are you in favor of a law which permits a woman to have an abortion even if it has to be at government expense?" Source: Gallup poll as reported in Blake (1977a:56-57)	April 1975	Yes 35	No 57
2. "Do you think the government should help a poor woman with her medical bills if she wants an abortion?" Source: New York Times/CBS News Poll, New York Times, July 29, 1977, p. A2.	July 1977	38	55
3. "Until recently, because the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that abortions up to three months of pregnancy are legal, the federal government has allowed Medicaid money to be used to pay for abortions for women who are poor and cannot afford to pay for them. ... Do you favor or oppose a ban on the use of federal Medicaid funds for abortions ..." Source: The Harris Survey, "Abortion Debate Continues," August 18, 1977. Because of its length, the full question wording could not be included here.	July 1977	Oppose Ban 44	Favor Ban 47
4. "Do you think the government should or should not help a poor woman with her bills if she wants an abortion?" Source: CBS News/ New York Times Poll as reported by NARAL (Jan. 1978).	Oct. 1977	Should 47	Shouldn't 44
5. Do you "agree with President Carter's view that government funds should not be used to finance elective abortions for the poor?" Source: Yankelovich, Skelly and White poll as reported by NARAL (Jan. 1978).	Nov. 1977	Disagree (na) 40	Agree 58
6. "Now I'd like you to tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements: The government should help a poor woman with her medical bills if she wants an abortion." Source: CBS News/New York Times poll as reported in Public Opinion (1978) 1:35.	Jan. 1978	Should 46	Shouldn't 54
7. "Abortion is something that government should not pay for even if a woman seeking an abortion is very poor." Source: ABC News/Washington Post Poll, Survey #0034, June 8, 1981.	May 1981	Disagree 40	Agree 54
8. "Should federal or state funds be used to pay for abortions for women who are eligible for Medicaid?"	Nov. 1981	Should 38	Shouldn't 53
9. "Should federal or state funds be used to pay for abortions for women who are eligible for Medicaid and become pregnant by rape or incest?" Source for questions 8 and 9: Yankelovich, Skelly and White poll for Life Magazine, November 1981.	Nov. 1981	73	22



Table 8. Public Response to General Questions Involving a Woman's Right to Have or Make a Decision Regarding An Abortion in Consultation With Her Physician (In Percentages)

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Poll Date</u>	<u>Responses</u>		
1. "As you may have heard, in the last few years a number of states have liberalized their abortion laws. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement regarding abortion: The decision to have an abortion should be made solely by a woman and her physician." Source: Gallup poll commissioned by Planned Parenthood. The Gallup Opinion Index, Report 87, Sept. 1972.	June 1972	Agree 64	Disagree 31	
2. "The right of a woman to have an abortion should be left entirely up to the woman and her doctor." Source: New York Times/CBS News Poll as reported in NARAL (1978).	Feb. 1976	67	26	
3. "Should the right of a woman to have an abortion be left entirely to the woman and her doctor?" Source: CBS News/New York Times Poll as reported in NARAL (1978).	Oct. 1977	74	22	
4. "Any woman who is three months or less pregnant should have the right to decide, with her doctor's advice, whether or not she wants to have an abortion." Source: Harris Poll as reported in Index to International Public Opinion (1980)	Feb. 1979	73	25	
5. "If a woman wants to have an abortion and her doctor agrees to it, should she be allowed to have an abortion or not?"	Aug. 1980	Should 62	Depends 15	Shouldn't 19
6. "The decision on whether to perform an abortion should rest with the consenting patient and should be performed by a licensed physician in conformance with good medical practice." Source: Market Opinion Research (1981).	Sept. 1981	Agree 91	Disagree 7	

Table 9. Public's Response to Questions Regarding the Human Life Bill

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Poll Date</u>	<u>Responses</u>	
		Favor	Oppose
<p>1. "The anti-abortion Senators in Washington have proposed a new law that says life begins at conception. Under that law, abortions would be considered murder. ... would you favor or oppose a law that would make all abortions murder?" Source: ABC News/Washington Post Poll (June, 1981).</p>	<p>May 1981</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>67</p>
<p>2. "The U.S. Congress is considering a law which would declare human life begins at conceptions, and therefore abortion at any time could be considered a crime of murder. Would you favor or oppose such a law?" Source: The Gallup Report, Report 190, July, 1981.</p>	<p>June 1981</p>	<p>42</p>	<p>51</p>
<p>3. "A new law has been proposed in the U.S. Senate that says that human life begins at conception. Under this proposed law, abortion would be a serious crime and could even be considered murder. Would you favor or oppose a law under these circumstances?" Source: Yankelovich, Skelly and White poll for Life Magazine, November, 1981.</p>	<p>Nov. 1981</p>	<p>32</p>	<p>59</p>

## NEGATIVISM, EQUIVOCATION, AND WOBBLY ASSENT: PUBLIC "SUPPORT" FOR THE PROCHOICE PLATFORM ON ABORTION

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*Abstract*—Although disapproval of all justifications for abortion is rare in the United States, our analysis of numerous surveys taken in the 1960s and 1970s shows that support for the full prochoice platform is also rare. This means that respondents who endorse some justifications for abortion and reject others typically constitute about 50 percent of these samples. If forced to choose politically between polar positions, would these people be more likely to side with a positive or a negative extreme? Using Multiple Classification Analysis as a form of discriminant analysis, we examine whether people who appear to form a "middle" group actually are closer in their characteristics to those who are positive, or to those who are negative. Finally, we test to see whether those respondents who endorse all four justifications for abortion (health, child defect, financial stress, and elective abortion) also endorse additional prochoice positions, such as government payments for abortion, abortion without the husband's or the parent's consent, and abortion after the first trimester.

Since the 1973 Supreme Court decisions on abortion, the "prochoice" movement in the United States has developed a major platform regarding liberalized access to voluntary pregnancy termination. This platform both supports and goes beyond the decisions handed down by the Court in 1973 and 1976. The Court ruled that during the first trimester of pregnancy there should be no State interference in the decision by the patient and physician to abort; that during the second trimester the State's sole concern is with the women's physical safety in relation to abortion; that abortion may be performed outside of hospitals; and that the woman is not required to obtain either her husband's or her parents' consent if she wishes to end her pregnancy. The "prochoice" movement has attempted to extend the effects of these rulings by pressing for the removal of all barriers, not merely legal prohibitions, to abortion ac-

cess. For example, the movement has insisted that poverty, or adventitious lack of access to funds for abortion (such as among teenagers who may be in otherwise comfortable circumstances), not restrict women from freely seeking a termination of unwanted pregnancy. The "prochoice" platform thus not only supports de jure legalization of abortion, but also de facto implementation of this legalized access.

During the past five years, this liberal abortion platform appears to have been undermined. There have been two principal sources of this erosion. First, the Supreme Court itself has not concurred with the "prochoice" emphasis on government funding for abortions. In a five-to-four opinion on *Harris v. McRae* (June 30, 1980), the Court ruled that the Hyde amendment (the Congressional ban on federal support for all but a few types of abortion) does not violate the due process

or equal protection rights of indigent women, but rather that "... the Hyde Amendment bears a rational relationship to [the Government's] legitimate interest in protecting the potential life of the fetus."<sup>1</sup> The Court also ruled that the Hyde Amendment does not violate the First Amendment by establishing religion.

Second, Supreme Court decisions, such as *Harris v. McRae*, have been simply the tip of an iceberg which consists of massive local, state, and Congressional efforts by the "prolife" movement to restrict access to abortion, or to abolish such access altogether.<sup>2</sup> These efforts, more often than not, have been in contravention of the original Supreme Court decisions in 1973. However, invalidating anti-abortion local ordinances and state laws as unconstitutional has been a lengthy judicial process. Moreover, mustering opposition to the anti-abortion amendments that increasingly are appended to Congressional appropriations bills—the Hyde amendments being the most famous—is a politically enervating endeavor. Finally, a growing number of states are calling for a constitutional convention to support a "human life" amendment to the Constitution.

These political victories for a movement, like "prolife," that seeks to abolish all access to abortion, have been perplexing to "prochoice" supporters and to social scientists as well, because public opinion data indicate widespread support for some liberalization of abortion access.<sup>3</sup> Most certainly, outright disapproval of abortion under any circumstances is rare, as is approval only in the case of danger to the mother's health or life should the pregnancy be continued. In fact, although only about 40 percent or less of respondents typically approve all four justifications for abortion (mother's health, child defect, financial stress, and desire to avoid having the child for any reason), most respondents seem to have some sort of middle position—approval of some justifications but not others. How

can a movement that seeks to ban abortions be so successful with elected officials, when most people in the country seem to support some access to abortion? In an effort to provide some answers to this question, we will document, in this paper, the extent of popular support for the content of the Supreme Court's 1973 and 1976 decisions, and for the "prochoice" concern about Government funding for abortions.

Our hypothesis is that, with regard to justifications for abortion, there really is no "middle" position—a position that approves some justifications but not others. People who believe that women should have access to abortion will not try to fine-tune their approval in ways that would make access impossible to implement—proof of irreparable damage to health, proof of major damage to the fetus, proof of financial stress. Hence, we would expect to find that people who equivocate in this manner are closer to those who are totally negative, than to those who approve all justifications. By extension, we would expect that people who do not "scale" in their views on abortion are also closer to being negative than positive. Finally, we expect that, just as outright negativism is rare, so is unconditional support for the entire "prochoice" platform. Let us look at the evidence.

#### DATA AND METHODS

We have used eight General Social Science Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) dating from 1972 to 1980, eight Gallup surveys dating from 1968 to 1977, and two National Fertility Surveys conducted in 1965 and 1970. The sample size in the Gallup surveys is between 1,500 and 1,600 respondents, the NORC samples are approximately 1,500, and the National Fertility Study samples used here were 5,617 in 1965 and 6,752 in 1970. These surveys contained analogous questions on justifications for abortion—the health of the mother, defect or deformity in the child,

financial stress for the couple, and the desire to have no more children (unwantedness). The questions are presented in Appendix A. It should be noted that some incomparabilities exist among the questions in the three sets of surveys, although within each set the questions are identical over time.<sup>4</sup> These incomparabilities in questioning produce some differences in the proportions against abortion among the NORC, Gallup, and fertility surveys (Table 1). However, the incomparabilities do not affect the analysis that follows,

since we do not make comparisons across the different sample groups.

In conformity with our research question, we divided respondents in all the surveys into those whose answers formed a Guttman-type<sup>5</sup> progression with respect to the justifications: 1) negative on all four items, 2) positive regarding only the mother's health, 3) positive regarding only the mother's health and child defect, 4) positive with regard to the mother's health, child defect, and financial stress; 5) positive regarding all justifications and

Table 1.—Approval or Disapproval of Four Justifications for Legalizing Abortion Among Respondents in Eight NORC, Eight Gallup, and Two National Fertility Studies, United States, 1960s and 1970s

Abortion Attitudes <sup>a</sup>	1965	1968	1968	1969	1970	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1980
	<u>NORC</u>												
1	--	--	--	--	--	9	6	6	7	7	7	8	8
2	--	--	--	--	--	7	7	6	6	7	5	7	7
3	--	--	--	--	--	22	26	24	24	26	24	28	24
4	--	--	--	--	--	8	7	9	8	8	9	9	6
5	--	--	--	--	--	34	42	40	39	40	39	34	40
6	--	--	--	--	--	19	12	17	16	12	15	14	15
Total	--	--	--	--	--	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	<u>GALLUP</u>												
1	--	9	8	11	10	9	11	8	--	--	9	--	--
2	--	15	13	12	9	9	11	10	--	--	11	--	--
3	--	38	38	34	27	29	25	23	--	--	26	--	--
4	--	9	10	8	11	10	10	13	--	--	7	--	--
5	--	9	11	13	20	23	23	27	--	--	26	--	--
6	--	20	20	22	23	20	20	19	--	--	21	--	--
Total	--	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	--	--	100	--	--
	<u>FERTILITY STUDIES</u>												
1	10	--	--	--	8	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2	35	--	--	--	18	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
3	34	--	--	--	35	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
4	4	--	--	--	6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
5	5	--	--	--	17	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6	11	--	--	--	16	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	100	--	--	--	100	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

a--The numbers in the stub represent disapproval of all justifications for abortion (1), approval of the mother's health only (2), approval of the mother's health and child defect only (3), approval of the mother's health, child defect, and financial stress only (4), approval of all justifications (5) and inconsistent (6). The sample size in the Gallup surveys is between 1,500 and 1,600 respondents, the NORC samples are approximately 1,500, and the National Fertility Study samples used here were 5,617 in 1965 and 6,752 in 1970.



6) inconsistent. Respondents who did not "scale" in the first five groups (for example, who approved elective abortion but did not approve abortions in the event of a threat to the mother's health or possible defect in the child) were labelled "inconsistent" and will be discussed subsequently. Table 1 shows, for all the surveys, the proportion of respondents by type of response category.

An examination of this table demonstrates clearly why it is important to know more about those respondents who are neither essentially negative nor totally positive regarding legalized abortion (Groups 3, 4, and 6). These people who are between the extremes or inconsistent constitute over one-half to two-thirds of the public. Even if one confines one's consideration to respondents with a consistent set of opinions, (Groups 1 through 5) it is clear that the "middle" positions are strongly predominant. Moreover, since support for all justifications is limited (and, in recent years, not increasing), it is of interest to know whether this group of supporters remains positive regarding other points (such as Medicaid for abortions), or is further eroded as additional issues are brought before it.

Preliminary to the main body of our analysis, a canonical correlation was done using age, sex, race, religion, education, income, and community size as independent variables and the five abortion groups as the dependent variable. This analysis was performed on all the surveys. In all cases the first canonical variate strongly justified our combining group 1 with group 2 (totally negative and mother's health only), group 3 and group 4 (mother's health and child defect, and mother's health and child defect plus financial stress). Thus, we have called these three groups—the "negatives," the "equivocators," and the "positives." Previous research has shown that there are large compositional differences between respondents who are at negative and positive poles in their abortion attitudes.<sup>6</sup> In other words, these background variables

have shown significant discriminatory power regarding the "extremes" of abortion attitudes.

Since the politics of abortion appear to be in the process of polarizing in the United States, and the future of abortion policy will doubtless increasingly involve the electorate rather than the judiciary, it is important to know something of the probable underlying views toward abortion of those who appear to be "in the middle," what we call equivocators. Would people who equivocate (see conditions under which abortion would be acceptable) be more likely to side with a positive or a negative extreme—assuming that this is a choice they might have to make? One way of attempting to answer such a question is to ask whether those "in the middle" on abortion are more similar in characteristics to those who are positive or to those who are negative.

#### ARE EQUIVOCATORS MORE LIKELY TO VEER TOWARD THE POSITIVE OR THE NEGATIVE POLE?

In an attempt to infer whether equivocators would veer toward the positive or the negative pole regarding abortion, we have used a form of "dummy" multiple regression analysis, Multiple Classification Analysis (Andrews et al., 1973) to discriminate among these three groups.<sup>7</sup> Using the amount of explained variance ( $R^2$ ) as an index of the discriminatory power of the predictors, we can infer that a large  $R^2$  indicates more dissimilarity than a small  $R^2$ . Thus, if contrasting equivocators and positives results in a large  $R^2$ , and contrasting equivocators and negatives produces a small one, we may infer that the equivocators are more like the negatives than the positives, and are more likely to side with the negatives. First, we contrasted the groups using background variables as predictors (age, sex, race, religion, education, income, and community size), and later we added selected attitudinal variables.

Are the equivocators similar to negatives or to positives? The answer is clear.

In almost all surveys (Table 2), the equivocators are much closer in background characteristics to the negative than to the positive pole. This is indicated by the fact that the  $R^2$  is much lower when the equivocators are compared with the negatives than with the positives. Typically, the variance explained the background factors is two to three times greater when the equivocators are compared to the positives than to the negatives.

Further confirmation of the greater similarity of equivocators to the negative pole comes from those surveys where a variety of attitudinal items could be used as predictors. These items were available in the 1974, 1975, 1977, and 1978 NORC studies, and the 1970 National Fertility Study. The NORC studies contained a number of attitudinal items that, a priori, we believed might be related to tolerance of abortion legalization. Among these were questions that purported to measure respondents' permissiveness, or lack of it, regarding sexual behavior. These were views about homosexuality, pornography, and premarital sexual relationships. Only the item on premarital relationships was

related to abortion attitudes, indicating that views on abortion are not so much associated with sexual strictness generally as with a specific concern about premarital freedom. Most predominant as predictors of abortion attitudes were items that measured respondents' views on individual discretion regarding mortality—euthanasia and suicide, and those measuring degrees of "familism"—attitudes toward liberalization of divorce laws and toward family size. Interestingly, tolerance of abortion was not correlated with other indicators of "prolife" sentiments such as opposition to capital punishment and war. Views about women's rights also do not seem related to these attitudes, although the prochoice movement has configured the abortion issue partly in these terms. Equally, permissiveness toward abortion does not appear to be associated with measures of political alienation or negativism toward the society, although Vinovskis has suggested that "for many prolife people, abortion is only a symptom of the wrongs in our society . . . . Abortion is a convenient target."<sup>8</sup> In this analysis, we have used, from

Table 2.—Amount of Variance Explained by Selected Background Variables, Comparisons of Respondents Who Are Positive, Negative, and Equivocating Toward Legalization of Abortion. Eight NORC, Eight Gallup, and Two National Fertility Surveys. United States, 1960s and 1970s

Date	$R^2$ (Adjusted for degrees of freedom)					
	NORC		GALLUP		FERTILITY STUDIES	
	Negatives vs Equivocators	Positives vs Equivocators	Negatives vs Equivocators	Positives vs Equivocators	Negatives vs Equivocators	Positives vs Equivocators
1980	.076	.143	---	---	---	---
1978	.038	.106	---	---	---	---
1977	.046	.080	.049	.124	---	---
1976	.040	.094	---	---	---	---
1975	.035	.080	---	---	---	---
1974	.014	.089	.023	.121	---	---
1973	.034	.113	.030	.126	---	---
1972	.126	.122	.064	.116	---	---
1970	---	---	.064	.111	.044	.113
1969	---	---	.071	.101	---	---
1968	---	---	.040	.093	---	---
1968	---	---	.062	.094	---	---
1965	---	---	---	---	.084	.038

the NORC studies, the questions on premarital sex, euthanasia, divorce laws, and family-size preferences. From the 1970 Fertility Study, we have included attitudes toward government aid for abortions, abortion if the husband opposes, and abortion beyond the first trimester.

The attitudinal data were regressed as a second stage, after the effects of the background variables had been taken into account. From Table 3, it is evident that, except when "euthanasia" is included in the regression, the equivocators are markedly more similar to respondents who are negative toward abortion than to those who are positive. The results point up, more-

over, that the relative similarity of equivocators to negatives, and their relative distinction from positives, would hold even if there were no differences in background characteristics. Equivocators are closer to negatives than to positives on attitudinal items, over and above background effects. In addition, the combined differences (background and attitudinal) between equivocators and positives (Table 4) are substantially greater than between equivocators and negatives.

These findings shed some light on the apparently limited public support for abortion in the United States. The fact that high proportions of respondents can

Table 3.—Amount of Residual Variance Explained by Selected Attitudinal Variables. Comparisons of Respondents Who Are Positive, Negative, and Equivocating Toward Legalization of Abortion. Four NORC Surveys and the 1970 National Fertility Study, United States, 1970s

	$R^2$ (Adjusted for degrees of freedom)			
	NORC		1970 Fertility Study	
	Negatives vs Equivocators	Positives vs Equivocators	Negatives vs Equivocators	Positives vs Equivocators
<u>1978<sup>a</sup></u>				
Divorce Laws, Euthansia, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.116	.108	---	---
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.060	.100	---	---
<u>1977</u>				
Divorce Laws, Euthanasia, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.097	.100	---	---
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.048	.093	---	---
<u>1975</u>				
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.063	.078	---	---
<u>1974</u>				
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.052	.091	---	---
<u>1970</u>				
Abortion: Government Expense; Abortion: Husband Opposes; Abortion: More than 3 Months Pregnant	---	---	.072	.160

a--The attitudinal variables are listed in alphabetical order.



Table 4.—Amount of Variance Explained by Background and Attitudinal Variables. Comparisons of Respondents Who Are Positive, Negative, and Equivocating Toward Legalization of Abortion. Four NORC Surveys, and the 1970 National Fertility Study. United States, 1970s

	$R^2$ (Adjusted for degrees of freedom)			
	NORC		1970 Fertility Study	
	Negatives vs Equivocators	Positives vs Equivocators	Negatives vs Equivocators	Positives vs Equivocators
<u>1978a</u>				
Background Factors Plus: Divorce Laws, Euthanasia, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.147	.200	---	---
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.093	.191	---	---
<u>1977</u>				
Background Factors Plus: Divorce Laws, Euthanasia Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.139	.173	---	---
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.091	.151	---	---
<u>1975</u>				
Background Factors Plus: Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.100	.151	---	---
<u>1974</u>				
Background Factors Plus: Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.065	.169	---	---
<u>1970</u>				
Background Factors Plus: Abortion: Government Expense; Abortion: Husband Opposes; Abortion: More than 3 Months Pregnant	---	---	.114	.255

a--The attitudinal variables are listed in alphabetical order.

be found to approve at least one reason for legalizing abortion does not, apparently, constitute very meaningful public support. People who equivocate, who wish to fine-tune the justifications for abortion, apparently are more negative than positive in their views about legalizing abortion. In fact, it may be fair to say that these respondents are "closet negatives."

#### HOW SUPPORTIVE ARE THE SUPPORTERS?

Having seen that equivocators are similar in characteristics to those respondents

at the negative pole, we may ask whether respondents at the positive end of the spectrum regarding legalization of abortion can be relied upon to back a variety of other issues in the prochoice platform? For example, are they positive toward government payments for abortion, abortion beyond the first three months of pregnancy, abortion without the husband's consent, or abortion without parental consent? Our analysis indicates that such broad-gauged support should not be taken for granted, even among the strongest proponents of legalized pregnancy termination.

Our data are from the 1970 National Fertility Survey, and from a 1977 Gallup survey on which we commissioned questions. Both of these surveys queried respondents about their views on the legalization of abortion and, as well, their attitudes toward other features of abortion policy. The 1970 survey asked about abortion at government expense, abortion if the woman's husband is opposed, and abortion if the woman is more than three months pregnant. The 1977 survey also asked about abortion at government expense and in the event the husband is opposed. Additionally, it queried about abortion without the parents' consent if the woman is a minor.

In our analyses, we first adjusted, for the effects of the background variables we have used to date, the proportions who approved legalization of abortion under all circumstances. Then, we considered what proportion of these respondents would remain positive when asked about the additional issues. For example, what proportion would be positive toward all three issues? What proportion positive toward one, toward two, or toward none? Table 5 shows the results for the 1970 and the 1977 surveys. In the 1970 survey, we see that, even among respondents who approve all reasons for legalizing abortion, 26 percent disapprove all three of the additional issues—Medicaid, abortion without the husband's consent and abortion beyond the first three months of pregnancy. Twenty-nine percent approve one of the added conditions, 27 percent approve two, and only 18 percent approve all three. The results are very similar for the 1977 survey. Among respondents who approve legal abortion, when asked about abortion at government expense, abortion if the husband opposes, or abortion without the parents' consent, 20 percent disapproved all three conditions, 27 percent approved one, 28 percent approved two, and only 25 percent approved all three.

What about the popularity of the individual issues? Again, using the same group of altogether positive respondents concerning the legalization of abortion,

we can see from Table 6 how the issues fare individually. Obviously, in both 1970 and 1977 the least unpopular condition is abortion at government expense. However, the 1977 data allow us to disaggregate unenthusiastic from enthusiastic approval. We see that although 65 percent of the respondents give some approval, only 35 percent approved enthusiastically. Highly unpopular, even within this group of respondents who are positive toward legalized abortion, are abortion if the husband opposes, abortion without parental consent, and abortion if the woman is more than three months pregnant.

Quite clearly, although the prochoice movement consolidates all of these issues into one platform of abortion reform, the general public does not share this model. Even "positives" regarding legalized abortion do not carry this sentiment to the point of encroaching on what they appear to regard as family rights and obligations. Nor do these respondents feel that legalized abortion should necessarily be funded by the government, or that abortions should be performed during mid or late pregnancy. The prochoice movement, true to its form as a movement, pursues all encumbrances to abortion—direct and collateral—and attempts to eradicate them. The public is not only a weak ally in this battle, but, when support is forthcoming, it is for statutory legalization, not de facto implementation. Abortion thus takes its place at the end of a long line of issues on which "policy" has run far ahead of the nation's will to execute.

#### THE INCONSISTENTS

We have seen (Table 1) that approximately 15–20 percent of respondents do not scale in the Guttman type progression of attitudes toward the legalization of abortion. Considering these respondents as a group, are their characteristics more like those of respondents who are totally positive, or totally negative?

Again, the results are striking (Table 7). The inconsistent in each survey are markedly more similar to the negatives

Table 5.—Percentage Approving Additional Conditions for Abortion Among Respondents Who Approve All Legal Justifications. United States, National Fertility Study 1970 and Gallup Survey 1977<sup>a</sup>

Among Respondents Who Are Positive Toward Legalizing Abortion, The Percentage Who Approve:	1970	1977
None of the additional conditions	26	20
One condition	29	27
Two conditions	27	28
Three conditions	18	25
Total	100 (1036)	100 (553)

a--In the 1970 National Fertility Study, the additional conditions were: abortion at government expense, abortion if the woman's husband is opposed, and abortion if the woman is more than three months pregnant. In the 1977 Gallup survey, the conditions were the same except that "parental consent" replaced "more than three months pregnant."

Table 6.—Percentage Approving Additional Conditions for Abortion Among Respondents Who Approve All Legal Justifications. United States, National Fertility Study 1970 and Gallup Survey 1977

Among Respondents Who Are Positive Toward Legalizing Abortion, The Percentage Who Approve:	1970	1977
Abortion at Government Expense	65	65 <sup>a</sup>
Abortion if Husband Opposes	39	48
Abortion Without Parents' Consent	--	46
Abortion if More Than Three Months Pregnant	33	--
	(1036)	(553)

a--The 1977 survey distinguished between respondents who approved of abortion at government expense enthusiastically ("a good idea") and reluctantly ("I am not enthusiastic about it"). Thirty-five percent were enthusiastic and 30 percent were unenthusiastic.



than to the positives in background characteristics. Moreover, the differentiation of the inconsistent from the positives is, generally speaking, sharper than was the case with the equivocators. That is, the inconsistent are less similar to the positives than are the equivocators.

Further confirmation of the closer similarity of inconsistent to the negatives comes from Table 8, where, as with the equivocators, attitudinal data were regressed as a second stage, after the effects of the background variables had been taken into account. We see that, in most cases, inconsistent are closer to negatives than to positives.

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper, we attempt to understand the difference between public views on one or another justification for abortion, and public endorsement of the goals of the prochoice movement. Our results, using numerous national surveys taken during the 1960s and 1970s, demonstrate that although out-and-out negativism toward legalized abortion is rare, so is support for basic planks in the prochoice platform. Even respondents who endorse all four justifications for abortion (health, child

defect, financial stress, and elective abortion) undergo enormous attrition in numbers approving when they are asked about Medicaid for abortion, abortion without the husband's or parents' consent, or abortion past the first trimester.

Nor are those we have called "equivocators" regarding justifications for abortion (persons who approve some justifications but do not approve elective abortion) to be counted on by the prochoice movement as either a middle group, or one that is basically positive. Rather, our analysis demonstrates that these respondents are consistently more like, in background characteristics and attitudes, those at the negative pole than those at the positive one. The same is true, in even greater measure, of respondents who are inconsistent regarding justifications for abortion.

We believe that these results explain the perception by politicians that the prochoice platform is not popular. As a totality, it clearly is not widely endorsed—not even by those who support legalization of elective abortion. Among the rest of the people, equivocation and inconsistency place respondents close to the negative pole—certainly much closer than to the

Table 7.—Amount of Variance Explained by Selected Background Variables, Comparisons of Respondents Who Are Positive, Negative, and Inconsistent Toward Legalization of Abortion. Eight NORC, Eight Gallup, and Two National Fertility Surveys. United States, 1960s and 1970s

Date	$R^2$ (Adjusted for degrees of freedom)					
	NORC		GALLUP		FERTILITY STUDIES	
	Negatives vs Inconsistent	Positives vs Inconsistent	Negatives vs Inconsistent	Positives vs Inconsistent	Negatives vs Inconsistent	Positives vs Inconsistent
1980	.044	.145	---	---	---	---
1978	.031	.124	---	---	---	---
1977	.026	.077	.056	.120	---	---
1976	.069	.128	---	---	---	---
1975	.004	.059	---	---	---	---
1974	.023	.075	.045	.146	---	---
1973	.007	.146	.025	.200	---	---
1972	.030	.149	.043	.168	---	---
1970	---	---	.040	.148	.036	.091
1969	---	---	.039	.179	---	---
1968	---	---	.065	.135	---	---
1968	---	---	.060	.148	---	---
1965	---	---	---	---	.029	.069

Table 8.—Amount of Residual Variance Explained by Selected Attitudinal Variables. Comparisons of Respondents Who Are Positive, Negative, and Inconsistent Toward Legalization of Abortion. Four NORC Surveys and the 1970 National Fertility Study. United States, 1970s

	$R^2$ (Adjusted for degrees of freedom)			
	NORC		1970 Fertility Study	
	Negatives vs Inconsistent	Positives vs Inconsistent	Negatives vs Inconsistent	Positives vs Inconsistent
<b>1978<sup>a</sup></b>				
Divorce Laws, Euthanasia, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.102	.092	---	---
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.058	.087	---	---
<b>1977</b>				
Divorce Laws, Euthanasia, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.124	.141	---	---
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.080	.115	---	---
<b>1975</b>				
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.053	.078	---	---
<b>1974</b>				
Divorce Laws, Ideal Family Size, Premarital Sex	.023	.100	---	---
<b>1970</b>				
Abortion: Government Expense; Abortion: Husband Opposes; Abortion More than 3 Months Pregnant	---	---	.150	.138

a--The attitudinal variables are listed in alphabetical order.

positive one, and obviously not equidistant between the extremes. Apparent middle positions just seem to indicate a preference for de jure liberalization, and de facto limitation, of access.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 48 U.S.L.W. 4941.

<sup>2</sup> For a concise and well-organized review of the multiple types of collateral deterrence regarding abortion access, see the journal *Family Planning/*

*Population Reporter: A Review of State Laws and Policies* over the past five years.

<sup>3</sup> See Judith Blake, "Abortion and Public Opinion: The 1960-1970 Decade," *Science*, Vol. 171 (12 February 1971), pp 540-549; also, by the same author, "Elective Abortion and Our Reluctant Citizenry," In Howard J. and Joy Osofsky, ed. *The Abortion Experience*, (Hagerstown, Maryland: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 447-467, and "The Supreme Court's Decisions and Public Opinion in the United States," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 3 (March and June, 1977), pp. 45-62. Also, Elise F. Jones and Charles F. Westoff, "Changes in Attitudes Toward Abortion: With Emphasis upon the National Fertility Study Data," in *The Abortion Experience*, op. cit., pp. 468-471; and, William Ray Arney and William H. Trescher, "Trends in Attitudes Toward Abortion, 1972-1975," *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 8 (May/June, 1976), pp. 117-124.

<sup>4</sup> The Gallup questions were asked in the order of the Guttman scale—health, child defect, financial stress, and unwantedness. This progression produces

some negative order-effect on the last question. This question, moreover, posed the issue of elective abortion pointedly, calling attention to the difference between not wanting the child despite a lack of physical or financial stress, and having stress-related reasons for desiring to terminate the pregnancy. Hence, both the order of items and the wording may have engendered a negative bias toward the question on elective abortion (unwantedness). In the NORC series, this item appeared second in a list of questions on abortion beginning with the justification in terms of child deformity. The NORC question on elective abortion, both because of the order in which it was asked and because it did not point up any difference between stress and nonstress reasons, avoided a possible negative bias. However, it may have produced a positive one. A number of respondents may have answered affirmatively to the item on the grounds of implicit stress reasons for not wanting a child. Respondents had no way of knowing that the additional questions on health and finances were going to be asked and may have injected them into the implicit logic of their responses—if a woman does not want any more children it may be because she is ill or in financial straits. Finally, the National Fertility Studies asked whether abortion would be "all right" under various conditions, rather than whether it should be legal. This may have introduced a negative bias, since many people think that things should be legal that are not, in their view, "all right." See Judith Blake, "Elective Abortion and Our Reluctant Citizenry," *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> See Earl R. Babbie, *Survey Research Methods*, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 272-6.

<sup>6</sup> See Judith Blake and Jorge H. del Pinal, "Predicting Polar Attitudes Toward Abortion in the United States," in James T. Burtchael (ed.), *Abortion Parley* (New York: Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1980), pp. 27-56.

<sup>7</sup> See Frank M. Andrews, James N. Morgan, John A. Sonquist and Laura Klem, *Multiple Classification Analysis*, Second edition, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1973). An alternative method would be the use of discriminant analysis to contrast "positives" and "negatives" and to derive a classification function to allocate "equivocators" into positives or negatives; see Norman H. Nie, C. Hadlai Hull, Jean G. Jenkins, Karin Steinbrenner, and Dale H. Bent, *Statistical Package For The Social Sciences*, Second Edition, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1975), pp. 445. However, this type of analysis is more difficult to use and interpret than MCA. In any case, discriminant analysis with two groups is equivalent to multiple regression with a dichotomous dependent variable; see John P. Van de Geer, *Introduction To Multivariate Analysis For The Social Sciences*, (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman & Co., 1971), p. 266.

<sup>8</sup> "Abortion Politics, 1978," Interview with Maris Vinovskis. *ZPG National Reporter*, August 1978.

## APPENDIX A

The questions from the three sets of surveys were as follows:

## GALLUP

Do you think abortion operations should or should not be legal:

- a. In cases where the health of the mother is in danger?
- b. In cases where the child may be born deformed?
- c. In cases where the family does not have enough money to support another child?
- d. In cases where the parents simply have all the children they want, although there are no major health or financial problems involved in having another child?

## NORC

Please tell me whether you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion:

- a. If there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby?
- b. If she is married and does not want any more children?
- c. If the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy?
- d. If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children?

## 1965 and 1970 Fertility Studies

I'm going to read you a list of possible reasons why a woman might have a pregnancy interrupted. Would you tell me whether you think it would be all right for a woman to do this:

- a. If the pregnancy seriously endangered the woman's health?
- b. If the couple could not afford another child?
- c. If they didn't want any more children?
- d. If the woman had good reason to believe the child might be deformed?