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Abstract

Since the Supreme Court's announced its decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), individuals and groups opposed to legalized abortion in the United States have battled to reverse the ruling. Using established political processes, incremental steps such as parental consent requirements and/or twenty-four hour waiting periods have been strategically advanced as they charted the path to their real goal – an all-out abortion ban. Contemporary South Dakota Pro-Life activists abandoned this incremental approach in 2006, in the belief that the time was ripe for a voter-supported broad-based abortion ban that could be used to challenge the Supreme Court decision. They failed, however, to find the right combination of policy components to appeal to a majority of South Dakota voters. The November 2006 election resulted in 56% of South Dakota voter opposing the ban compared to 44% who supported it. The November 2008 election results were extremely close – 55% to 45%. However, analysis of individual attitudes towards abortion using 2006 GSS data suggested that a much wider margin of opposition and support exists in the voting public. When we compare the individual responses to abortion questions to the severe requirements of the proposed ban, we find that as many as 92% of the voters should have opposed the law. In this article, we attempt to explain the discrepancy between attitude preference and voting behavior by showing how the debate on abortion, in South Dakota specifically but also across the nation, has been reconceptualized not as a rational calculation of preferences about abortion but perhaps as a much broader referendum on family values.

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INTRODUCTION

Abortion has been a relentlessly controversial issue in contemporary American society. Historically, however, this has not always been the case. Prior to the 19th century, abortion was merely one of the many choices in the reproductive lives of women (Hull and Hoffer 2001). Women chose abortion for a variety of reasons including an inability to provide economically for their children, unwed pregnancies, pregnancies due to rape, and a fear for their personal physical or mental health. Attitudes about abortion were considered private affairs and not openly discussed, and abortions were often self performed with or without the help of herbalists and midwives, doctors, family and/or friends. Products used were locally produced with herbal knowledge widespread. During the 19th century, many of the products that were used as abortifacients were fairly easily obtained at local businesses; they were often indirectly but publicly marketed to women as products that could restart or regulate menstruation with common knowledge understanding the true purpose of the remedy (Hull and Hoffer 2001; Myrsiades 2002). It was during the latter half of this century that abortion was criminalized in the United States (Hull and Hoffer 2001).

While abortion continued to be illegal in the United States for most of the 20th century, by the 1960s it was a fairly noncontroversial issue in American society as a whole and seen as a "humanitarian medical issue under the control and supervision of physicians" (McDonagh 2007:188). The largest dissenting group was Roman Catholics. In 1973 when *Roe v Wade* reestablished the legality of abortion for American women, the arguments in favor were framed as a protection of women, returning the decision whether to terminate a pregnancy to the woman who was pregnant. Soon after the Supreme Court decision, however, concern with the morality of abortion resurfaced as a central moral concern for not just Roman Catholics but also increasingly for American Evangelical Protestants. Since the 1970s the number of citizens at

the ideological extremes of the abortion issue has increased, but the number of people found in the middle has remained fairly stable (Sullins 1999).

This ideological extremism both solidified and became increasingly part of the public dialogue during the 1980s and the 1990s, driving a cultural wedge in American attitudes between those who increasingly identified themselves as either Pro-Life or Pro-Choice (Hoffman and Johnson 2005; Joffee 2005). The issue of abortion was assaulted directly with attacks on women's health clinics and the doctors and nurses who participated in or performed abortions. Other more indirect battles were also fought over issues such as RU486, stem cell research and partial birth abortions.

From the passage of *Roe v Wade*, the public battle on abortion would lead us to believe there have been two and only two clearly delineated and contradictory positions on this issue – Pro-Life and Pro-Choice. Traditionally, identification of membership in particular demographic categories such as religion, political party, level of education, etc., have provided placement into one of these two groups, and voting behaviors were thought to be clear (Adams 1997; Bohlzendahl and Myers 2004; Craig and O'Brien 1993; Evans 1997, 2002; Hoffman and Miller 1998; Jelen and Wilcox 2003) Those identified as Pro-Life would vote to ban abortion, seeing it as an issue about the right to and sanctity of life. Those identified as Pro-Choice would vote to retain it, seeing it as an issue about the limitation of individual rights.

More recently the boundaries began to blur somewhat between the two categories with identification of differing attitudes towards traumatic and convenience abortions. Traumatic reasons, such as danger to a woman's life and health or in the case of rape or incest, have tended to elicit much stronger support for abortion from the general public. Elective (or what have been called convenience) abortions, such as for reasons of financial hardship, a desire for no more children, or if the mother is unmarried, have found much lower levels of support

(Hoffman and Johnson 2005). This idea that there are women and circumstances that are "worthy" of abortion and those that are "unworthy" is somewhat reminiscent of past sociological discussions on the worthy and unworthy poor (Gans 1972). Even as advocates of both the Pro-Life and Pro-Choice movements have used "absolutist rhetoric" (Strickler and Danigelis 2002:189) to battle it out in the media, contemporary Americans have proved somewhat ambivalent in their attitudes towards abortion, and the extremist definitions of the two categories have not necessarily matched this ambivalence. Most Americans support abortion remaining legal (Joffee 2005), but the blurring of the boundary between the two opposing positions has raised the idea that the deciding element for many centers on the *reason* motivating the wish for the abortion (Hoffman and Johnson 2005; Shaw 2003).

WHAT VOTER CHARACTERISTICS SEEM TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Several variables commonly have been investigated by researchers attempting to identify American attitudes towards abortion. The first three -- education, gender, and race -- have been found to have inconsistent predictive abilities for attitudes about abortion. Three other variables – political affiliation, church affiliation, and church attendance -- have proven to be somewhat more explanatory about American attitudes on abortion than any of the others.

Education

In the past, education was identified as a strong indicator of a person's stance on abortion (Chafetz and Ebaugh 1983; Granberg 1991; Harris and Mills 1985; Jones and Westoff 1978; Petersen and Mauss 1976). The higher the level of education a person had, the more likely they would be to support abortion, even within religious traditions (Evans 1997). There has been a decline, however, in this correlation between education and support for abortion, regardless of religious affiliation (Petersen 2001). Active affiliation (and the key here is level of

church attendance, not just congregational membership) appears to reduce the liberalizing effects of education (Jelen and Wilcox 2003).

Gender

Gender is another commonly believed correlate with pro-abortion attitudes. In particular, liberal gender attitudes have been linked to higher levels of support for the Pro-Choice position. There has been a clear liberalization of gender attitudes in American society (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004), but while past studies may have found that gender can be explanatory of liberal gender ideology (Craig and O'Brien 1993; Luker 1984), more recent research would indicate that a that this does not necessarily provide a link to higher levels of support for abortion (Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Kaufmann 2002; Strickler and Danigelis 2002). Many areas that were one time perceived as feminist (right to equal pay, job opportunities, and education) have gained such broad cultural acceptance that they are just commonly held by a large portion of the population and are no longer identified with feminism. This change has not occurred in attitudes towards abortion (Bolzendahl 2004). Some research indicates that attitudes about abortion actually have become more divided over time related to this one issue (DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996).

Race

In general, abortion attitudes are not strongly affected by race and ethnicity, although Black Americans and Hispanics traditionally have been identified as more Pro-Life than White Americans (Evans 2002; Hall and Ferree 1986). Strickler and Danigelis (2002) found that by the middle 1990s, there was a greater proportion of African American adults who were Pro-Choice than there were White adults. Black Americans have increasingly diverged on the issue of abortion from both White evangelicals and Roman Catholics (Evans 2002). Hispanic Americans, even with their overwhelmingly Roman Catholic tradition, are shown to have the

same attitudes about abortion as the general population, although there is a greater inclination for them to be Pro-Life (Bolks et al. 2000; Roberts 2007). In the case of both Hispanics and Black Americans, race seems to trump religion.

Political Affiliation

The Republican Party today is the usual political affiliation of Pro-Life proponents and the Democratic Party for Pro-Choice advocates. It is interesting to note that this is a relatively recent situation. In the 1968 election between Humphrey and Nixon, Pro-Lifers voted predominantly for Humphrey and Pro-Choicers for Nixon (Adams 1997). Distinctly different positions on abortion are found beginning with the 1984 Democratic and Republic National Platforms (Carmines and Woods 2002). As recently as 2008, the Republican National Platform clearly indicated "At its core, abortion is a fundamental assault on the sanctity of innocent human life" (p. 59), while the Democratic National Platform stated "The Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports *Roe v Wade* and a woman's right to choose a safe and legal abortion ... and we oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right" (p. 52). This switch in focus has been perceived to be as a result of the guiding hand of party elites (Adams 1997; Carmines and Wood 2002; Roh and Haider-Markel 2003). Some researchers have proposed the abortion issue can actually serve as a tactical tool for political elites to position themselves in the nominating process (Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Layman 2001).

Religious Affiliation

Roman Catholics were the group that began the Pro-Life crusade. After *Roe v Wade,* Evangelical Protestants joined the battle, and today the Pro-Life position is usually presented through the lens of a fundamentalist religious orientation identified as the Christian Right. American Christian religious affiliation can be divided into three major groups: Roman

Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, and Mainline Protestants[1]. The first two groups have been seen as overwhelmingly Pro-Life with the last one Pro-Choice. There have been recent changes in this positioning. Roman Catholics have become increasingly polarized over the issue of abortion (Evans 2002; Hoffman and Johnson 2005), even while the official position of the church is Pro-Life, and this "within-group" diversity has increased over the past 30 years (Evans 2002; Hoffmann and Miller 1998). Hoffmann and Miller (1998) looked at attitudes among different religious groups to abortion from 1972 to 1994 and found that over time, both Catholics and Protestants have become slightly less unified regarding abortion. Protestants, primarily Lutherans and Methodists, have diverged on the issues of abortion. According to Sullins (1999), over time younger Roman Catholics have become slightly more permissive in their attitudes towards abortion, while younger Protestants have become slightly less permissive. Even some Evangelical Protestants seem to be moving in a less divisive direction. "[A] younger generation of evangelical pastors – including the widely emulated preachers Rick Warren and Bill Hybels – are pushing the movement and its theology in new directions" (Kirkpatrick 2007:40) including a renewed focus on saving souls, spiritual growth, social justice and a movement away from the strident anti-abortion and anti-same sex marriage arguments of the past. Alliances between the Christian Right and Roman Catholics also seem unlikely to broaden beyond the common attitude towards abortion. Bendyna et al. (2001) identify strong differences on issues such as the death penalty, Creationism, and social welfare.

Church Attendance

Church attendance has proven to be one of the strongest indicators of attitudes towards abortion, trumping all of the others characteristics, including religious affiliation. Younger Protestants overall attend religious services more, and they have become less Pro-Choice.

[1] There is some disagreement (both popular and academic) about how Latter Day Saints (LDS) should be categorized, but the GSS clearly places the LDS in the Protestant classification along with the Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists (Smith 1986/87).

Church attendance has dropped among young Roman Catholics since 1972, and they have become more Pro-Choice in their attitudes (Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Sullins 1999). Even frequent attendees of denominations that voice a stronger Pro-Choice message are more Pro-Life in their attitudes (Jelen and Wilcox 2003). Overwhelmingly, it seems that those individuals who have active participation in their religious organization are more strongly against abortion then those with lesser levels.

SOUTH DAKOTA AND ABORTION IN 2006 AND 2008

In 2006 South Dakota took center stage in the first legislative attempt to set up a *direct* legal challenge to *Roe v Wade*. In the past, political action only had been taken to chip away at the decision (parental consent, etc.). South Dakota was an interesting state to select for this attack on reproductive rights. With a population under 800,000 people and predominantly rural in geography, there was actually only a single abortion provider in the state, located in its largest city (Sioux Falls) in the far southeast corner. South Dakota already had one of the most restrictive climates in the nation for abortion: parental consent for minors, a 24-hour waiting period for all women seeking abortion, pharmacies allowed to refuse to provide contraception (Halloran 2006), and, most recently, a 2008 requirement that doctors providing a woman with an abortion ask if she wished to see the sonogram of the fetus. South Dakota is also one of only six states in the nation with a "trigger" law on the books that would automatically make abortion illegal in the state if federal policy allows it (Vestal 2006).

The South Dakota state legislature successfully passed HB 1215 in 2006, which would have made all abortions in the state a felony except in the case of threat to the pregnant woman's life. The bill failed to include the traumatic exceptions often highlighted as necessary to draw the backing of moderates – rape and incest (Hoffman and Johnson 2005), but it was signed into law by Governor Mike Rounds who had openly proclaimed his support for the

legislation: "I am Pro-Life and I do know that my personal belief is that the best way to approach elimination of abortion is one step at a time. And I do think that this court will ultimately take apart *Roe v Wade* one-step at a time" ("South Dakota legislature attacks *Roe v Wade"* 2006). The law was subsequently referred to South Dakota voters prior to its effective date where it was defeated 56% to 44% (Kafka 2007).

Commonly held reasons for its defeat were varied. Its failure to include the traumatic exceptions for rape and incest made it unappealing to many voters, including many conservatives: "The fact that this bill didn't have exceptions for the mother's health was what concerned a lot of women, even conservative women" (Sunshower 2006:28). It was also perceived as the government forcing its will on individual decision makers: "People in South Dakota don't like government telling them what to do" (Bravin 2006). For some Native American women, the issue was seen as opposing traditional cultural values. Theresa Two Bulls, a one-time vice president of the Ogala Sioux Tribe and present state senator, explained, "In our tradition, the woman is the backbone of the family. It's up to her to decide when and where to have and raise children" (Sunshower 2006:27). Native Americans are 8.5% of South Dakota's population (U.S. Census Bureau 2008).

The 2008 South Dakota abortion ban bill was not brought to the legislature directly. Preceded by HB 1193 which stated, "No facility that performs abortions may perform an abortion on a pregnant woman without first offering the pregnant woman an opportunity to view a sonogram of her unborn child," Initiated Measure 11 targeted the perceived failure of the 2006 legislation to address voter dissatisfaction with its lack of exceptions for traumatic reasons. The 2008 legislation included exceptions for the life and/or health of the mother, or in the case of rape or incest. While these exceptions seemed to provide much broader latitude to allow abortion, in reality they were highly regulated exceptions with the health of the mother

related to "the serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily organ or system of the woman" (Initiated Measure 11 Initiative Petition 2008). Framed as a method to protect women and children, Initiated Measure 11 included rigorous ties to the criminal justice system through required biological sampling for forensic DNA testing of both the mother and the aborted fetus as part of its intention to "deter fraudulent claims" (Ballot Pamphlet 2008) and severe penalties for doctors who didn't meet the requirements of the law including being charged with a Class 4 felony with punishment of up to 10 years in jail and a fine of up to $20,000 (Initiated Measure 11 Initiative Petition 2008). Resistance to Initiated Measure 11 came from both ends of the ideological spectrum. Many religious conservatives found themselves unable to vote for a ban that provided exceptions for any reason. To try to deal with this moral conflict for Roman Catholics, dioceses in South Dakota urged congregants to vote for the measure. In an open letter to his diocese, Bishop Blase Cupich of the Diocese of Rapid City said, "The ultimate and preferred goal is to defend the right to life for all the unborn against the violence of abortion. However, a gradualist approach is also a responsible and justifiable way of proceeding" (Cupich 2008). At the other end of the spectrum, ideological liberals could not support the idea of any limitations on the ability of a woman to have an abortion. Regardless of the included exceptions, the 2008 abortion ban was defeated, this time with a 55% to 45% vote.

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS – CHANGING SYMBOLS

Symbolic Interactionism can provide a lens through which we can try to interpret the failure of the 2006 and 2008 attempts to ban all forms of abortion in South Dakota. Blumer explained, "Humans act toward a thing on the basis of the meaning they assign to the thing" (Blumer 1969:2). One key to understanding human behavior like voting to support or not support specific policy positions (for this study, abortion) lies in this very process of social

interaction. Abstract representations, symbols, can have different meanings for different individuals. The meanings attached to symbols arise out of the context of individuals' social interactions and their interpretation of the situations within which the symbols exist (Blumer 1969). Meaning is not inherent but rather is constructed as action takes place within this interpreted social environment. Words or gestures that evoke common meanings among users and others in their social groups are called significant symbols (Mead 1934). They are important in social interaction because they allow people to communicate and "enable people to anticipate how others are likely to act in a situation" permitting coordination of action (Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine 2006:4). The meanings people give to things are not static but can change as the individual's interpretation of the interactive process changes (Blumer 1969), and "...people create, negotiate, and change social meanings through the process of interactions" (Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine 2006:1). When we try to understand the narrow margins by which the South Dakota 2006 and 2008 abortion legislation failed there are two important significant symbols to consider – the symbol of family and that of abortion itself.

Abortion and family are symbols that have had different meanings for different people at different points in history. People perceive their social environment as composed of divergent social categories that have values, beliefs and significant symbols attached to them, and these are held to be important by individuals that identify themselves as members of the social category (Miller and Hoffman 1999). There are, of course, many social category groupings in each individual's life. Individuals essentially choose "sides" and then coordinate their actions based on the unique value-set they perceive to be held by members of that social category. Once an individual has self-identified with a particular social category, the norms of that category provide a polarizing vehicle, which leads to a differentiation of others into in-groups or out-groups, impacting attitudes and behaviors of the individuals in both sets of groups. The

decision in *Roe v Wade* (1973) and the formation of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition as political forces in the 1970s and 1980s led to the solidification of two clearly delineated and meaningful oppositional positions about the meaning of abortion and the family, and by extension to two recognized social categories – Pro-Life and Pro-Choice.

For the Pro-Life social category, a significant symbol has been that of abortion. This very same significant symbol is influential for the Pro-Choice social category. How can both sides use the same symbol? Although the symbol itself is the same, the definition of that symbol and its meaning is widely different, and the difference in the symbol itself revolves around two contradictory but equally powerful definitions of family. It is these two contradictory definitions of family and their symbolic meaning that we find in the contemporary abortion dispute – the traditional family structure vs. the contemporary family structure.

Advocates of the Pro-Life position have identified with the definition of the traditional family based on a clearly identified set of family values articulated by Talcott Parsons in the mid-20th century. He branded it as the only family structure leading to societal equilibrium. This explanation of the structure of the family has been adopted (although falsely) as the historical norm (Coontz 1992, 2005). To have traditional family values has included a very specific set of criteria. One of the most visible contemporary definers and proponents of this traditional family values set has been Dr. James Dobson with his Focus on the Family franchise. On the Focus on the Family website (http://www.focusonthefamily.com), the value set of the traditional family are clearly articulated: heterosexual marriage and nuclear family structure originated in the plans of the Christian God; distinctly divided gender roles and responsibilities with the husband clearly identified as breadwinner and the wife as homemaker; the permanence of marriage; sexual relations only within marriage, and the sanctity of life. The opposite characteristics (definitional of the contemporary family values structure) are seen as harmful to the family, and

ultimately to society as a whole. They include non-traditional family structures and roles, and the acceptance of divorce, cohabitation and premarital sex, and abortion. The traditional family values position holds that failure to comply with the characteristics of the traditional family endangers the institution of the family, society as a whole, and the United States as a nation.

Advocates of the Pro-Choice position have argued the opposing position on the health and structure of the family: the family is not deteriorating; in fact, it might even be stronger than in the past. Researchers such as Amato (Amato 2004), Coontz (1992; 2005) and others (Sandberg and Hofferth 2001) would indicate that families are undergoing change, but that they are resilient and even happier today than they have been in the past. Families are not defined by a single structure, but may have multiple forms and instead are defined by whether they undertake a certain set of core responsibilities: physical maintenance and care of members; addition of new members to the family unit through procreation or adoption; engagement in the socialization of new generations; social control of the family unit, production, distribution and consumption of goods and services necessary to the family; and maintenance of the family and motivation of its members using love (Cheal 2002).

Radical Pro-Life and Pro-Choice individuals from the adoption of *Roe v Wade* have defined the meaning of the abortion symbol in a consistent manner: Pro-Life extremists have seen abortion as a serious social problem undermining the traditional family, the symbol of the ideal America, and the glue holding society together. Pro-Choice extremists have not seen abortion as harmful to the social system and consider it may even be beneficial to families, since the opportunity to exercise reproductive choice was and is an exercise of individual civil and human rights leading to a more egalitarian and democratic society as a whole. The definition of the abortion symbol from the position of the extremists is clear and not in question, but what about those individuals who do not hold these same extremist positions? How do they

interpret the situation and define the abortion symbol and the institution of the family? What impact do they see abortion having on traditional American society and its bedrock, the traditional family?

Some Pro-Choice voters may have redefined the significant symbol of abortion. These individuals may still label themselves as Pro-Choice, but where abortion was once for them the symbol of individual freedom and reproductive rights, it is now perceived to be a symbol of destruction, a serious social problem eroding the foundations of the American family and by extension American society as a whole. For them, the two symbols – abortion and family – are inextricably intertwined, and in contemporary American society, the changing face of the American family and its perceived fragility has huge emotional currency. This identification of the family as a significant symbol with a traditional family values definition as a concern for some who might otherwise define themselves as Pro-Choice may help explain the unexpected results associated with the 2006 and 2008 South Dakota failed abortion initiatives.

Where do we see evidence that members of the Pro-Choice social category are concerned about the fitness of the American family? If this explanation is viable, then there should be an indication of a changing meaning of the symbols of family and abortion for some who have defined themselves as Pro-Choice. In South Dakota, the organization that holds the Pro-Choice position is meaningfully named South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families. In the literature they provided for canvassing purposes during the 2008 election period, the family and the effects on it are also clearly highlighted:

> "The decision to have an abortion is profoundly difficult for a woman and her family. This complex, personal decision should be between a woman, her family, her God and her doctor. No woman makes this decision without consulting with family and after deep soul-searching. Sometimes a woman decides that ending a pregnancy is the best decision for her and her family" (http://sdhealthy.3cdn.net/423df35d50e0f58a5a_w4m6bpntq.pdf)
> .

A series of television advertisements aired during summer and fall of 2008 from this group advocated the idea that the proposed abortion would give Government (which level is not indicated) undeserved power "over certain personal and private medical decisions of South Dakota families" (http://www.sdhealthyfamilies.org/news/entry/new_ad_highlights_unprecedented_government_intrusion_of_measure_11/).

An example of this on the national level was the clear inclusion of the traditional family symbol in both the 2008 Republican and Democratic Platforms: "It's time we just stop talking about family values and start pursuing policies that truly value families" (p. 15) and "We support the appointment of judges who respect the traditional family values and dignity of human life" (p. 52).

Commentary on the fast-approaching destruction of the traditional American family is found in both the scholarly and popular presses. In the scholarly press, research like that done by Gallagher (1996:184) blames the deterioration of the family on women's failure to seek out suitable breadwinners freeing them to be homemakers who can "devote their talents and education and energy to the rearing of their children, the nurturing of family relationships, and the building of community and neighborhood." Ten years later, Thistle (2006:7) continued to support this idea highlighting the harms suffered through the loss of the "traditional" male and female division of labor resulting from an increased presence of women in the workplace: "While emphasis on women's role as mothers, for example, once blocked their opportunities outside the home, the withdrawal of support for women's domestic labor in recent years is creating new hardships."

This paper argues that some South Dakotans, in particular some of those who have identified themselves as Pro-Choice, may have changed their voting behaviors on abortion after

redefining the meaning of abortion and the family, adopting new symbolic meanings for them. Critical for the analysis in this study is the idea that social categories are not cemented in meaning, and over time they can be and are reconstructed based on the changing interactions and definitions assigned to the significant symbols that represent the social categories. Using the lens of Symbolic Interactionism we can investigate the possibility that the changing meanings of the significant symbols abortion and the family may provide an explanation for voting behaviors in middle-ground voters in the Pro-Choice social category.

HYPOTHESES

American citizens had never had the opportunity to vote directly on the issue of abortion. The 2006 South Dakota abortion ban legislation, referred to the voters through the referendum process, provided this opportunity. Using attitudinal survey data we attempted to make sense of the 2006 abortion ban vote. It quickly became clear that the established causal variables used to explain attitudes toward legalized abortion were not capable of explaining the results of this election. The initiative driven 2008 South Dakota abortion ban election results provided another opportunity to collect data related to this issue.

This situation, an election in 2006, an attitudinal survey from 2006, and an election in 2008, presented a unique opportunity for the study of abortion attitudes and votes in a quasi-experimental design. We could use public opinion survey data to measure support for the abortion ban and then compare the survey data to the actual vote on the proposed abortion bans recorded in both the November 2006 and November 2008 elections. Initially, we expected that the percentage of voters supporting/opposing the abortion ban in 2006 would be different than the percentage in 2008. The 2008 abortion ban was the less restrictive of the two, thus we expected there would be more public support for the 2008 ban. Additionally, we expected that the 2006 attitudinal data would predict the voting behavior for both elections; people who

expressed agreement/disagreement with abortion in different situations would vote accordingly in both 2006 and 2008.

However, analysis of the actual election returns in conjunction to the attitudinal survey data made clear that neither of these expectations were supported. More people voted for the abortion ban than would be expected based on their expressed attitudes about abortion. Also, the for and against vote distributions in 2006 were practically identical to the vote distributions in 2008 even though there were significant differences between the 2006 and 2008 abortion ban policies. If attitudes about abortion were not guiding the vote decisions, what was?

Based on language used by both sides of the abortion ban campaigns, we decided to investigate the influence of attitudes about family values on expressed abortion attitudes. Using Blumer's symbolic interactionist lens with the opposing symbols of traditional family values and contemporary family values, we developed a new composite independent variable which served as an indicator of commitment to "family values" and used it model attitudes toward abortion. The use of this variable in our model provided one possible explanation for the discrepancy between the attitudinal survey data and the actual vote outcome in South Dakota.

Hypothesis 1: Voters with traditional family values will be more likely to support the abortion ban.

Hypothesis 2: Family values attitudes can be used to explain why the vote results in 2006 and 2008 are so similar.

METHOD

In order to assess the level of support for the proposed South Dakota abortion ban with exceptions for the life/health of the mother and victims of rape/incest, we utilized the 2006 General Social Survey from the National Opinion Research Center. This raised the question of

whether national survey data could be disaggregated in such a way as to analyze regional or state attitudes. A number of researchers have used aggregated individual responses in national surveys to develop indicators of state level attitudes on issues (Brace, Sims-Butler, Arceneaux, and Johnson 2002; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Griffin 2006; Jones and Norrander 1996; Norrander 2001; Norrander and Wilcox 1999). Specifically, Brace et al. (2002) analyzed the use of national GSS data to study state level attitudes on a number of issues, including abortion. They found, "while the sampling strategy used to collect the data was not designed to produce representative state samples, these samples appear to be representative" (177). However, sample size can be a significant problem when national data is broken down by state. In order to use GSS data specific only to South Dakota and attain a sample size large enough for statistical analysis, we would have needed to pool survey responses over a long period of time. For example, Brace et al. (2002) pool state specific GSS data from 1974 to 1998. Although Brace et al. (2002) find high reliability and validity, especially with abortion attitudes, using this method, our theory argued that the causes of abortion attitudes had changed in the last three decades. Consequently, we were unwilling to use the pooled state-specific data over such a long period of time. As an alternative, we decided to analyze attitudinal data only from the 2006 GSS survey but expanded our sample to the regional level to increase our sample size. The West North Central region is comprised of Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas.

We hypothesized that attitudes about family values influence abortion attitudes, thus, we first operationalized family values and then conducted reliability testing on this composite measure to ascertain its usefulness. Next we mapped the frequency distributions of abortion attitudes for the West North Central (which contains South Dakota) as well as the other regions in the United States. These frequencies were categorized by the conditions under which the

abortion would occur: any reason, not married, married but doesn't want more children, low income, strong chance of a serious birth defect, pregnant as a result of rape, and in the case that the woman's own health was seriously endangered by the pregnancy. These categories corresponded to the exceptions (or lack thereof) included in the 2006 and 2008 abortion bans, which allowed us to speculate how the votes on the ban should have distributed had people voted solely on their attitudes about abortion. Given the difference between the expected vote distribution and the actual vote distribution, we attempted to construct a better predictive model for abortion attitudes using OLS regression. Specifically we compared a model including a family values variable to one without this variable to show that the family values variable exhibits a strong relationship to abortion attitudes. Finally, we employed bar charts to better illustrate the influence of family values attitudes on abortion attitudes. These charts provided some support for our second hypothesis, that family values attitudes explain why the vote distributions in the 2006 and 2008 abortion ban votes were so similar even though the proposed policies were significantly different.

Dependent Variables

The GSS asked seven questions regarding legalized abortion. Respondents answered either "yes" (1) or "no" (2).

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

If she wants an abortion for any reason.
If she is not married and does not want to marry the man?
If she is married and does not want any more children?
If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children?
If there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby?
If she became pregnant as a result of rape?
If the woman's own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy?

These questions were considered separately as well as in a simple additive scale which ranges from approval in all cases (7) to disapproval in all cases (14). The first four questions listed above have been described in some of the literature as "elective" reasons (some groups/research refer to these questions as the "convenience" rationales for abortion) while the final three questions are referred to as the "traumatic" reasons for legalized abortion (Hoffman and Johnson 2005).

Independent Variables

A number of independent variables are used to explain levels of support (or lack thereof) for an abortion ban in general and for the proposed South Dakota initiative. Arguably, level of support for legalized abortion varies across the country. The GSS breaks the fifty states and District of Columbia into nine different regions. See Table 1.

(1) New England = Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island
(2) Middle Atlantic = New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania
(3) East North Central = Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio
(4) West North Central = Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas
(5) South Atlantic = Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, District of Columbia
(6) East South Central = Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi
(7) West South Central = Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas
(8) Mountain = Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico
(9) Pacific = Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii

South Dakota is located in the West North Central Region. The West North Central region includes an interesting combination of states covering a large area of the country. Politically, Minnesota is moderately liberal while South and North Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas are more conservative (and the western sides of these states also have strong libertarian elements.) This raised the question of whether data from the West North Central region would accurately reflect the attitudes of citizens of South Dakota. But just as this West North Central region includes liberal and conservative communities, so does the state of South Dakota. Within the state,

people often refer to “east river” and “west river” when discussing politics – the Missouri River splits the state nearly down the middle. “East river” includes the Sioux Falls area as well as four of the state’s public universities and is reliably more liberal especially compared to “west river.”

Table 1 Percentage of “Yes” Responses for Each Abortion Question for Each Region

	GSS Abortion Questions						
	Abortion if woman wants for any reason	Not married	Married – wants no more children	Low income – can’t afford more children	Strong chance of serious defect	Pregnant as a result of rape	Woman’s health seriously endangered
Middle Atlantic	46.0%	42.4%	47.2%	47.3%	77.8%	82.2%	89.3%
East North Central	42.1%	40.8%	41.6%	41.5%	72.3%	75.9%	84.1%
West North Central	35.5%	38.8%	36.1%	37.7%	74.6%	76.9%	90.8%
South Atlantic	35.9%	37.0%	38.3%	37.4%	71.2%	75.0%	87.9%
East South Central	30.0%	29.0%	30.6%	35.1%	64.3%	70.1%	77.1%
West South Central	28.3%	25.9%	33.5%	31.3%	65.0%	71.1%	85.6%
Mountain	45.9%	45.3%	47.4%	48.1%	84.3%	85.4%	93.7%
Pacific	51.2%	51.9%	54.3%	55.8%	80.5%	82.8%	92.2%
All Regions Combined	40.4%	40.1%	42.5%	42.6%	74.2%	77.6%	87.9%

In addition to studying abortion attitudes based on region, we also modeled abortion attitudes using a number of independent variables. As mentioned earlier: gender, race, education level, income level, political ideology, and religion have been used in the past to predict abortion attitudes. The GSS allowed us to model these variables as well:

Female: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.

White: 0 = Black and Other; 1 = White.

Education: 0 = Less than high school;
1 = high school;
2 = junior college;
3 = bachelor;
4 = graduate

Family Income 2006:
1 = Under $1,000;
2 = $1,000 to $2,999;
3 = $3,000 to $3,999;
4 = $4,000 to $4,999;
5 = $5,000 to $5,999;
6 = $6,000 to $6,999;
7 = $7,000 to $7,999;
8 = $8,000 to $9,999;
9 = $10,000 to $12,499;
10 = $12,500 to $14,999;
11 = $15,000 to $17,499;
12 = $17,500 to $19,999;
13 = $20,000 to $22,499;
14 = $22,500 to $24,999;
15 = $25,000 to $29,999;
16 = $30,000 to $34,999;
17 = $35,000 to $39,999;
18 = $40,000 to $49,999;
19 = $50,000 to $59,999;
20 = $60,000 to $74,999;
21 = $75,000 to $89,999;
22 = $90,000 to $109,999;
23 = $110,000 to $129,999;
24 = $130,000 to $149,999;
25 = $150,000 or over.

Political Views (Ideology):
1 = extremely liberal;
2 = liberal;

3 = slightly liberal;
4 = moderate;
5 = slightly conservative;
6 = conservative;
7 = extremely conservative.

The GSS accessed respondents' religious choices in a number of ways, including affiliation and level of fundamentalism, but church attendance has been one of the most reliable predictors of attitudes toward abortion in earlier research.

Church attendance: "How often do you attend religious services?"
0 = Never
1 = Less than once a year
2 = Once a year
3 = Several times a year
4 = Once a month
5 = Two to three times a month
6 = Nearly every week
7 = Every week
8 = More than once a week

As the literature review above notes, past research has had mixed success with these standard predictors of abortion attitude. Upon study of the rhetoric used in the 2006 and 2008 abortion ban campaigns (by both those who supported and opposed the ban), we identified a concept that we believe will be particularly effective in understanding how someone feels about the abortion issue: family values. As discussed in the theory section above, traditional family values include heterosexual marriage and nuclear family structure originating in the Christian God's plan; distinctly divided gender roles and responsibilities with the husband clearly identified as breadwinner and the wife as homemaker; the permanence of marriage; sexual relations only within marriage; and the sanctity of life. Contemporary family values include support of non-traditional family structures and roles, divorce, cohabitation and premarital sex, and abortion. To operationalize this concept we created an index using questions asked in the GSS related to these aspects of family values. These questions include:

1. Bible as word of God

"Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?

a. The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.

b. The Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word.

c. The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men."

2. Premarital sex

   "If a man and woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?"

3. Extramarital sex

   "What is your opinion about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than the marriage partner -- is it always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?"

4. Homosexual sex

   "What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex -- do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?"

5. Divorce law

   "Should divorce in this country be easier or more difficult to obtain than it is now?"

6. Better for a man to work, woman to tend the home

   "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

7. Mother working does not hurt children.

   "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work."

Once coded appropriately, we created a simple additive index of these variables resulting in a variable we call Family Values Index, which ranges from contemporary family values to traditional family values with an alpha of .681 when we looked at the nation as whole and an alpha of .697 for the West North Central region (which includes South Dakota). Given the exploratory nature of this research, these levels were acceptable even though they fell just shy of the standard .7 alpha criteria for an adequate scale. Our theory provided strong justification

for the inclusion of all of these items in the Family Values Index based on face validity. Item analysis also supported the inclusion of each item, although some more than others. See Table 2. The items related to premarital sex, homosexual sex, women staying at home, and their interpretation of the Bible strongly correlate with one another. The questions regarding women working (R^2 = .174) and divorce laws (R^2 = .227) were the weakest correlates. We elected to retain both of these questions even though they stand out as the least productive items in the index because opposition to divorce and beliefs regarding the effect on the well-being of the children of the mother working are fundamental to the traditional family values position.

Table 2 Item Analysis of Family Values Index

	All Regions		**West North Central**	
	Squared Multiple Correlation	**Alpha If Item Deleted**	**Squared Multiple Correlation**	**Alpha If Item Deleted**
Mother Working Hurts Children	.174	.681	.213	.696
Man Work, Woman Home	.255	.640	.315	.644
Premarital Sex	.362	.598	.381	.643
Extramarital Sex	.121	.664	.285	.663
Homosexual Sex	.399	.584	.480	.573
Bible	.244	.638	.217	.673
Divorce	.070	.685	.137	.705
Family Values Index All Seven Items	Cronbach's Alpha = .681		Cronbach's Alpha = .697	

RESULTS

The 2006 South Dakota abortion ban (Referred Law 6) included exceptions that would allow a woman to get an abortion only in the event that her life was in danger. This ban was rejected by the voters by a 55.57% to 44.43% margin. Activists supporting an abortion ban modified the exclusions in 2008 to be slightly more expansive in hopes of attracting enough voter support to pass the ban. Thus, the 2008 South Dakota abortion ban (Initiated Measure 11) included exceptions for the health of the mother and in the case of rape or incest. In an interesting turn of events, once again the voters in South Dakota rejected the ban by a very similar margin with 55.21% voting against the ban and 44.79% voting for it (South Dakota Secretary of State Election Results 2008). This was a surprising result. Why were the vote margins practically the same given the differences between the two abortion bans?

To begin to answer this question we first turned to public opinion survey data on abortion attitudes. Using the 2006 GSS, we looked first at the frequency distribution of responses in the abortion scale for respondents living in the West North Central region, which includes South Dakota, illustrating the differing levels of support for legalized abortion. See Table 3. Looking at the extremes of the scale, 33% of the respondents supported legalized abortion for any reason while only 8.5% supported a complete abortion ban by responding “no” to legalized abortion for all of the reasons offered in the survey. The breaking point between the elective and traumatic reasons for legalized abortion is also telling; 47.2% of the respondents indicated “yes” to at least one of the elective reasons. However, relating this to the November 2008 vote on the South Dakota ban, the initiative did not provide exceptions for all of the traumatic reasons listed, only in the case of rape/incents and when the health of the mother was seriously threatened. Thus, this data shows that without the inclusion of an exception for “a strong chance of a serious birth defect,” only 28.3% of the respondents should

Table 3 Percentages Abortion Attitudes Scale

	West North Central Region		All Regions	
	Percent	**Cumulative Percent**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Yes in every case.	33.0	33.0	35.4	35.4
Yes in every case, yes to not married.	4.7	37.7	4.9	40.3
Yes in every case, yes to not married, yes to married.	6.6	44.3	4.6	45.0
Yes in every case, yes to not married, yes to married, yes to low income.	2.8	47.2	5.4	50.4
Elective Reasons Above – Traumatic Reasons Below				
Yes in every case, yes to not married, yes to married, yes to low income, yes to serious birth defects.	24.5	71.7	21.1	71.5
South Dakota Abortion Ban 2008 – Below				
Yes in every case, yes to not married, yes to married, yes to low income, yes to serious birth defects, yes to rape.	8.5	80.2	9.8	81.2
Yes in every case, yes to not married, yes to married, yes to low income, yes to serious birth defects, yes to rape, yes to health of the mother.	11.3	91.5	9.0	90.2
South Dakota Abortion Ban 2006 - Below				
No in every case	8.5	100.0	9.8	100.0
	N=106		N=1764	

have supported an abortion ban like the one proposed in South Dakota in 2008 and only 8.5% of the voters should have supported an abortion ban like the one proposed in South Dakota in 2006.[1]

Instead of answering the question we posed above, this analysis of attitudinal data raised additional questions. We not only lacked an explanation for why the 2006 and 2008 votes were so similar, even though the abortion bans were different, now we had to ask why the actual vote distributions were roughly 55% to 45% for both years instead of the 72% to 28% for the 2008 ban and 91% to 9% for the 2006 ban indicated by the attitudinal data. In the context of the 2008 election, why did roughly 18% of the voters (the difference between 45% and 28%) vote for a ban that did not include exceptions they personally supported as valid? For the 2006 election, that number increases from 18% to 36% of the electorate voting against their preferences. Given the lack of exit polling data that might more directly address this discrepancy, we turned again to the GSS available attitudinal data and decided to specify a predictive model of abortion attitudes.

Surveys of previous research had identified a number of independent variables used to predict abortion attitudes. These included gender, race/ethnicity, education level, income, political ideology, and religion. Using OLS regression we modeled the relationship between our

[1] Because we were attempting to evaluate actual voting behavior rather than just attitudes, it could be more accurate to map the attitudes of likely voters rather than those of the general adult population. We ran this analysis, selecting for people who had voted in the 2000 and 2004 presidential election, and found that likely voters appeared to be slightly less supportive of an abortion ban than the adult population in general. However, a t-test comparison of all respondents to likely voters showed that the means were not significantly different between the two groups. The focus on likely voters dropped our sample size for the West North Central region from N=106 with all respondents to N=82 with just the likely voters. Small samples sizes affect generalizability as well as tests of statistical significance. Additionally, elections with abortion bans attract a lot of voter attention. According to the South Dakota Secretary of State's Office – Voter Statistics, the voter turnout in the 2006 election, an off-year election that did not have even a South Dakota Senate race to draw voter attention but did include the more restrictive abortion ban initiative, the voter turnout of registered voters was 67.3% (58% of the voting age public). This was a remarkably high voter turnout for an off-year election; only Minnesota had higher turnout that election. The 2008 election included the presidential race as well as the revised abortion ban, drawing high voter interest. For these reasons the rest of this analysis continued to include all respondents rather than limit itself to only likely voters.

abortion index and these standard independent variables for both the West North Central region and for the entire United States. See Table 4. Education level, political ideology, and church attendance were statistically significant predictors of abortion attitudes for both the West North Central region and for the nation as a whole. As education increased, so did abortion tolerance; conservatives and frequent church attendees were less tolerant of abortion. Gender, race, and income were not significant predictors of abortion attitudes in either model. These results corresponded to those found in most of the earlier research on this topic. Unfortunately, these results did not seem to clearly address the questions we identified regarding the difference between expressed attitude and voting behavior in South Dakota.

Table 4 OLS Regression of Abortion Attitudes Index Without Family Values

	West North Central		**All Regions**	
	B (Std. Error)	Beta	B (Std. Error)	Beta
Constant	8.019 (1.001)		7.792 (.214)	
Female	.370 (.427)	.074	.021 (.108)	.004
White	-.721 (.643)	-.100	-.169 (.124)	-.029
Education	-.394* (.192)	-.178	-.439*** (.045)	-.208
Family Income	-.019 (.019)	-.094	.002 (.003)	.015
Political Ideology	.461** (.160)	.255	.405*** (.038)	.230
Church Attendance	.394*** (.080)	.426	.321*** (.020)	.354
N	101		1716	
R	.598		.500	
R-Square	.358		.250	
p<=.000***; p<=.01**; p<=.05*				

In the 2008 election, the campaigns both for and against the abortion ban appealed to voters' notions of family values. As noted above, the campaigns' marketing research found this concept to be especially salient to the abortion issue for voters in South Dakota. We decided to operationalize the concept of family values in an index and then construct a model that would include this independent variable. See Table 5.

Table 5 OLS Regression of Abortion Attitudes Index With Family Values

	West North Central		**All Regions**	
	B (Std. Error)	Beta	B (Std. Error)	Beta
Constant	5.401 (1.860)		4.664 (.440)	
Family Values Index	.188* (.082)	.294	.250*** (.023)	.397
Female	-.188 (.599)	-.037	-.179 (.151)	-.036
White	-.476 (.957)	-.064	-.032 (.175)	-.005
Education	-.404 (.270)	-.190	-.191** (.067)	-.091
Family Income	-.039 (.027)	-.186	-.006 (.005)	-.037
Political Ideology	.484* (.223)	.249	.174** (.056)	.103
Church Attendance	.324* (.122)	.350	.178*** (.030)	.200
N	49		761	
R	.706		.587	
R-Square	.499		.344	
p<=.000***; p<=.01**; p<=.05*				

Looking at the OLS regression model of abortion attitudes, the family values index predicts attitudes about abortion in the expected way; as you move away from contemporary family values to traditional family values, opposition to legal abortion increases (b=.188* for West North Central and b=.250*** for all regions). Of interest to us was the observation that among all independent variables included in the model, family values seemed to be one of the strongest predictors of abortion attitudes (Beta = .294 for West North Central and Beta = .397 for all regions). In the West North Central model, only church attendance was a stronger predictor (Beta = .350) and in the model for All Regions, family values is the strongest predictor of abortion attitudes. Additionally, the general predictive power of the model increased with the inclusion of the family values variable. In the West North Central model without family values, R = .598, while the model including family values has an R of .706. In the All Regions model without family values, R = .500, while the model including family values has an R of .587.[1]

The family values variable appears to be a valuable addition to the study of abortion attitudes, providing strength and clarity to the abortion attitude model. Additionally, we argued that it provided an explanation for the puzzling questions we have raised regarding the vote margins in the 2006 and 2008 elections as well as the apparent difference between voting behavior and attitudinal data on abortion. Simple bar charts presenting the relationship between family values and abortion attitudes lend support to this argument. See Figures 1 and 2[2]. Looking at the chart presenting this relationship for all regions, among people who supported banning abortions for "elective" reasons, people with traditional family values outnumbered those with contemporary family values. Among people who supported abortion

[1] It is also interesting to note that including the family values variable affected the performance of one of the other independent variables in the models. In the second model for the West North Central region only family values and political ideology were significant, education level was no longer significant.
[2] For both Graphs 1 and 2 the contemporary/traditional family values continuum was roughly divided in half with those scoring in the lower half labeled "contemporary" and those scoring in the upper half labeled "traditional."

for at least one of the "elective" reasons, people with contemporary family values outnumbered those with traditional family values. Figure 1 shows that traditional family values were prevalent among those surveyed from the West North Central region. As shown by our regression models, the family values variable was the strongest predictor of abortion attitude.

Figure 1 West North Central Region: Abortion Attitudes by Family Values

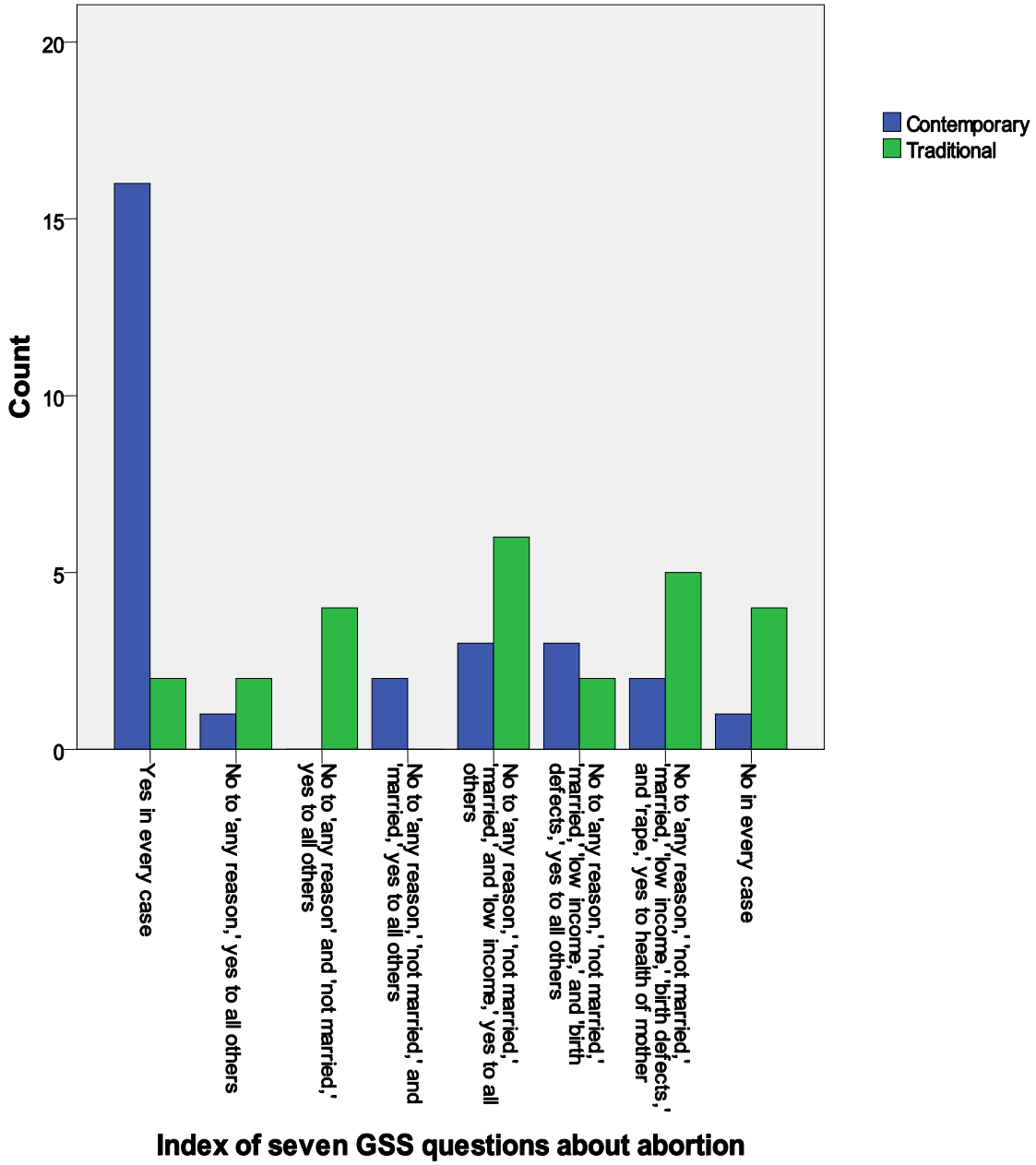
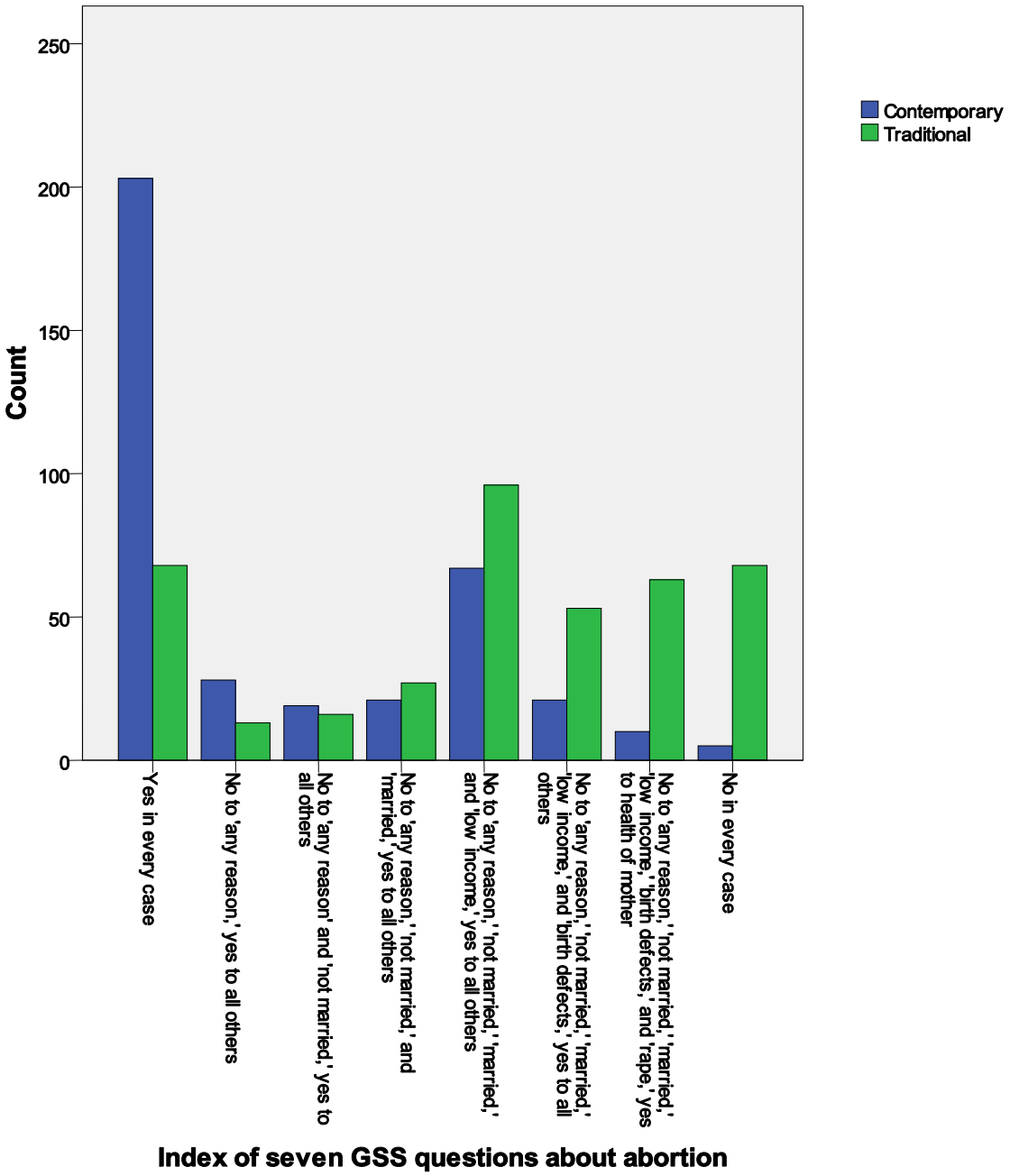


Figure 2 All Regions: Abortion Attitudes by Family Values



Although we do not have the exit polling data necessary to test this directly, we argued that individuals who ascribed to traditional family values may be more likely to vote to support

the abortion bans even if they also believed that there should be additional categorical exceptions to the ban. For example, because of his or her commitment to traditional family values someone who believed there should be exceptions to the ban in the case of severe birth defects may have still voted for the ban because he or she believed the threat abortion makes to traditional family values outweighed his or her belief in a birth defect exception. In the language of our theory, this person may have voted against his or her abortion symbol in favor of his or her family values symbol. Thus, the addition of exceptions to the abortion ban between 2006 and 2008 did not make a difference in the final vote margin because the vote decision was not about the included exceptions; it was about family values. However, the percentage of the electorate adhering to traditional family values arguably would not have changed between 2006 and 2008, thus providing a plausible explanation for the vote results in 2006 and 2008 being almost identical though the proposed policies were significantly different.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although the abortion issue has been receiving attention for decades, the vote in South Dakota in 2006 was the first public referendum on the issue. This provided the first opportunity we have had to compare public opinion polling data with an actual voting event and as a result we became aware of this very interesting discrepancy between expressed attitudes about legalized abortion and an actual vote on an abortion ban. Changes in the exceptions to the abortion ban between 2006 and 2008 did not result in a meaningful change in voter response to the bans. It appears people did not vote in accordance with their expressed opinion about the necessity of legal abortion in the cases of birth defects, rape/incest, and a threat to the health of the mother.

As a result, the inadequacy of the standard predictors of abortion attitudes, especially in relation to voting behavior, was exposed. In the context of the South Dakota elections we

conceptualized, operationalized, and modeled a new variable: family values. The addition of this variable has increased the strength of our abortion attitude model. It also provided one plausible, although one we admittedly could not test directly, explanation for the discrepancy between expressed abortion attitude and actual vote choice on the abortion issue.

There are some real limitations to what we were able to accomplish with this research. We could not directly connect the attitudinal data on family values or abortion to choices made by voters about the abortion bans. This means we were unable to directly test either one of our hypotheses. Instead we relied on logical inference to draw comparisons between our model of abortion attitudes and actual voting behavior. This is why we offer this research as a theoretical analysis of abortion attitudes in South Dakota. Additionally, while attitudes about family values may strongly influence attitudes about abortion, other attitudes may have also influenced the actual abortion ban vote choice. Future research should investigate the effect of other symbols on the abortion vote as well as the possibility that the family values symbol may resonate more with certain types of voters than with others.

Some might argue the theoretical and operational integrity of the family values index, suggesting that we simply took a number of issues strongly correlated with abortion, stuck them in an index, and then used them to predict abortion attitudes. In response, we offer that "family values" is a symbol that has meaning in society. It is used by both those on the traditional and on the contemporary side of the issue. As was shown above in our theory, "family values" has been used somewhat casually by sociologists but used frequently by the general public. What was surprising was that we could not find any examples from the relevant literature of ways to operationalize this concept. Scholars talk about "family values" but apparently have not attempted to model it quantitatively. Consequently we were obliged to create our own operationalization using items available to us in the GSS. However, we do

recognize that an index is only as valid as its constituent parts. We were somewhat limited by the questions asked by the GSS in 2006. On past surveys the GSS has asked different questions, collected different data, which might better fit the family values theoretical concept. Next steps include further refining the operationalization of this concept and then testing its utility in other contexts. Experimental research designs should also be utilized to draw clear connections between the family values symbol and the abortion issue. We also plan a more extensive analysis of relevant content to clearly support our argument that "family values" as a symbol has been employed by all sides in the South Dakota abortion ban campaigns.

An obvious next step in this research project would be to collect attitudinal and vote choice data that is specific to South Dakota. This would address a number of the weaknesses with the study we present here. First of all, we relied on a national survey to study attitudes in South Dakota. Although we could study the specific region (West North Central) in which South Dakota is placed by the GSS, we could not confirm that the attitudes of this wider region matched those of respondents specific to South Dakota. Secondly, we could not directly connect a voter's attitudes about abortion and their vote choice with our current data. We theorize that, logically, the attitudes expressed in the GSS survey should correspond to the choices voters made in the 2006 and 2008 elections but that is a theory we cannot actually test with our current data. A survey of South Dakota voters would address both of these problems.

However, we used the vote in South Dakota merely to identify a possible problem with using attitudinal data to study the abortion issue in general. Abortion attitude does not appear to be the same as abortion vote choice. Based on this observation we identified a different theoretical concept to be used to analyze abortion attitudes, family values. We applied this concept to the GSS region that includes South Dakota but also analyzed its utility when applied to abortion attitudes across the country. Compared to the standard variables used to predict

attitudes about abortion, our analysis suggested that this concept may have real predictive power. People seeking to understand public opinion on abortion could benefit from including attitudes about family values in their analysis.

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