Religion, Ideal Family Size, and Abortion: Extending Renzi's Hypothesis

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Recent research has noted a negative relationship between ideal family size (IFS) and proabortion attitudes (AA) which is independent of religious affiliation. The present investigation extends the investigation of this relationship in several ways. First, we find considerable variation in abortion attitudes among the Protestant denominations; this finding warrants a denomination-specific analysis. Second, controlling for religious affiliation within Protestantism, we find numerous examples of the spuriousness of the IFS-AA relationship. Third, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision regarding abortion is found to have limited impact on the number of significant associations between IFS and AA. At the same time, for most denominations, IFS remains a significant predictor of AA. Fourth, we assess the importance of IFS relative to seven other independent variables in a multiple regression analysis and find that IFS is a significant predictor of an index of overall abortion attitudes. While Renzi's hypothesis is therefore successfully extended in each stage of this analysis, numerous exceptions appear, particularly for denominations with strong proabortion sentiments. Finally, we note that IFS may have a limited history as a predictor variable if a national consensus emerges around the two child family.

Research on the relationship between religious affiliation and attitudes towards abortion has shown a consistent pattern, that is, those who express a religious commitment in one form or another, or who attend church regularly, are less likely to support proabortion stands than those with weaker or no church linkages. Renzi (1975) further reported that people's family size preference (PFS) acted as an intervening variable between religion and abortion attitudes.[1] More recently, Arney and Trescher (1976) clarified the relation between religious denomination and attitudes toward abortion by controlling for religious participation. They found littler difference in the distributions of responses of Catholics and Protestants who attended church less than once a month. Among Catholics and Protestants who attended church more than once a month (called the more committed), Catholics were more likely than Protestants to oppose abortion. In addition, Arney and Trescher (1976) note, since the Supreme Court decision of 1973 in favor of abortion, a "substantial increase in approval of abortion among both committed Protestants and Catholics, although the increase among Protestants is for soft reasons (see explanation below) while among Catholics this increase is for hard reasons only" (p. 120).

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Renzi reported that when "comparing members of the same religious group who differ on family size preference, preferred family size appeared to have an independent relationship to abortion attitudes." Catholics and Protestants who preferred small families were consistently more supportive of abortion than their counterparts preferring large families. Renzi concluded that family size preference was indeed an intervening variable between religion and attitudes toward abortion. At the same time he reported that PFS also appeared to act as an independent variable regardless of religion.

In this paper, we take another look at the question and expand the analysis to include the following issues: (a) within Protestantism is there a variation in attitudes towards abortion that is obscured when all Protestants are combined into one category? (b) within Protestant denominations, is the variable of ideal family size significantly related to abortion attitudes (AA)? (c) did the U.S. Supreme Court decision on abortion have any impact on the relationship between IFS and abortion attitudes? (d) what is the importance of IFS compared with other factors in explaining the variance in abortion attitudes? Research (deBoer, 1977–78) has shown that the main variables influencing abortion attitudes are: sex (women more than men oppose abortion); creed and church attendance (Catholics and those who attend church regularly are more likely than others to oppose abortion); age (those older than 45 are more likely than those under 45 to oppose abortion); and education (the less formally educated are more likely than the more formally educated to oppose abortion). These variables will be included with IFS in a multiple regression analysis.

Methodology

The data source in this investigation is the same as in Renzi's, the NORC General Social Survey. We utilize two NORC surveys, one from 1972 and another from 1975, to assess the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court decision on abortion attitudes. These surveys are based on a cross sectional national sample of 1,613 persons in 1972 and 1,490 persons in 1975. All respondents interviewed were over 18 years of age. All were living in noninstitutionalized arrangements within the United States. Block quota sampling was used in 1972, and a combination of block quota and probability sampling was used in 1975. (For a further description of the sampling techniques used see Davis 1978:171–75.)

Attitudes towards abortion are measured in terms of the respondent's approval or disapproval of six abortion situations. These six situations are divided into two sets: in one the reason for getting an abortion is said to be "hard," and in the other it is considered "soft." The three "hard" situations are those in which the woman's pregnancy is: (1) beyond her control because of rape, (2) involves a major health hazard to her, or (3) involves a risk of a severe birth defect in the baby. The soft reasons for abortion involve situations in which: (4) the woman does not want the baby because the family has a very low income and cannot afford more children, (5) the woman is not married and does not want to marry the father, or (6) she is married and simply does not want to have more children.

(For the section of the paper dealing with the regression analysis, an index of abortion attitudes was constructed by summing the respondents' scores on the six abortion questions. Scores were "one" if opposed and "two" if supportive of abortion on the particular question. The index had a coefficient of reproduceability of .940 and a coefficient of scalability of .807.)

Religious affiliation includes nine categories: Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Other Protestant, Jew, and Nonbeliever. One limitation of this classification scheme is that it does not subdivide the category other Protestant, which includes approximately ten percent of the sample. However, these finer categories would be so small as to preclude analysis.

Renzi used ideal family size as his measure of preferred family size, which leads to some terminological confusion (see Ryder & Westoff, 1969). In this paper we will use the term ideal family size (IFS), since it seems to reflect more accurately the question used in the NORC studies: What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?

Furthermore, Renzi dichotomized respondents' answers into "small" (two or fewer children) and "large" (three or more), thereby masking possible variation. To avoid this problem, we coded the responses from a low of zero to a high of five or more. Hence, we use a six part ordinal scale in place of Renzi's dichotomous ordinal scale.

Analysis

To determine whether variations existed on attitudes toward abortion among Protestants in 1972 and 1975 and whether variation between denominations declined over time, we carried out a number of statistical comparisons.

Table 1 presents the data on the percentage of each religious group who favor abortion in each of the six abortion situations. For both 1972 and 1975 considerable differences in AA exist among the Protestant religions. For example, for the year 1972, on the issue of abortion for health reasons, the percentage of Protestants favoring abortion ranged from a low of 79 percent for Baptists to a high 100 percent for Episcopalians. The variation tends to be greater for the soft reasons than for the hard reasons. For example, the range in the percentage favoring abortion is 21 points on the hard reason of health whereas it is 55 points on the soft reason of not wanting to marry the father of the child. In this latter case, in fact, three Protestant denominations each gave less than majority support to this abortion possible situation (Table 1, 1972 data).

Comparing the variation among Protestants to differences between Catholics and all Protestants, we see that the diversity of opinion on abortion among Protestant denominations is indeed masked if one sticks to Renzi's dichotomous measure. For example, the difference in Catholic-Protestant percentages is less than four points for the health reason and ten points for the "low income" reason. A further analysis of denominational differences in the IFS-AA is warranted by these data. We will save the discussion of the 1975 data for the section on the effects of the Supreme Court ruling on AA.

TABLE 1
Members of Each Religious Denomination Favoring Abortion by Abortion Possible Situations for 1972 and 1975 (in percentages)

Abortion Situation	*Non-bel.*	*Jew*	*Episc.*	*Presb.*	*Meth.*	*Luth.*	*Oth Prot.*	*Bapt.*	*All Prot.*[a]	*Cath.*
					1972					
Health	95	96	100	92	92	91	85	79	87	84
Rape	91	98	100	91	86	81	72	69	79	75
Defect	91	93	97	90	88	82	76	69	80	72
Low income	79	80	76	65	56	45*	45	35*	48	38*
Not marry	73	84	75	54	52	43*	36	29*	42	33*
Not want	75	72	69	55	47	31*	35	26*	38	30*
Total *N*	83	54	33	80	232	139	185	324	1,031	413
					1975					
Health	98	96	98	93	91	96	93	87	91	86
Rape	93	100	93	93	85	92	81	76	84	79
Defect	95	95	89	89	87	88	80	77	84	77
Low income	77	91	77	69	51	62*	45	43*	53	45*
Not marry	76	82	71	63	47	59*	38	35*	46	43*
Not want	74	86	71	58	42	55*	36	36*	44	39*
Total *N*	113	23	44	76	175	139	182	309	975	363

NOTE: To determine whether or not the changes from 1972 to 1975 were significant, we used a test for differences between proportions. For a discussion of this technique, see Loether and McTavish (1974: 189–192). The test is tailored for two unequal *N* s and independent samples. We found through use of Cramer's *V* that the variations in abortion attitudes that existed between the six Protestant denominations were all significant at the .05 level, in both time periods. Most of the variation significance was caused by the fact that the Baptists (the largest Protestant denomination) had the most restrictive attitudes on abortion in all situations. Lumping Protestant denominations into one broad category obscures the differences. Cramer's *V* was adopted instead of Tschuprow's *T* since the *T* statistic can attain unity only when the number of rows and columns are not equal. For this reason *V* is judged to be preferable to *T* (Blalock, 1979: 305). Another alternative, the Contingency Coefficient, was not utilized since its upper limit is .707, making it more difficult to interpret than the other measures.

[a]Includes Protestants without a specific denominational identity.

*Change from 1972 to 1975 is significant, $p < .05$, one-tailed test.

Table 1 makes clear that certain Protestant denominations are more liberal on abortion than others. Baptists stand out as being the most conservative on the abortion issue, followed by the category Other Protestants. (In fact, the category is made up of small, conservative groups.) Presbyterians and Episcopalians are the most liberal on the issue. A majority of the members of these two latter groups

favor abortion for all six reasons, soft and hard alike. Methodists and Lutherans take a more "middle of the road" position, with almost twice as much support for the hard as compared with the soft reasons. Nevertheless, their support generally is considerably higher than that of the Baptists.

Comparing Protestants with non-Protestants, Baptists more closely resemble Catholics than do any of the other Protestant groups; less than a six point difference obtains in the ratings of Catholics and Baptists for each of the six abortion situations. Jews and nonbelievers are even more liberal on abortion than either Presbyterians or Episcopalians. While these two sets of liberal religious positions are similar when it comes to the hard abortion situations, greater levels of liberalism are found among the non-Protestant categories for soft reasons. Finally, while most religions were more liberal on most abortion situations in 1975, the relative positions of the different religions stayed approximately the same.

Further evidence on the significant variation in AA was provided by restricting the analysis to the six Protestant denominations. Cramer's *V* statistic of association between Protestant religious affiliation and AA was significant at the .05 level for all six abortion situations (see note to Table 1). However, the level of consensus on some abortion situations, mainly the hard reasons, for some of these denominations is so high (sometimes 100 percent) that in these situations we would expect the IFS variable, as well as other possible independent variables, to have little bearing on AA; little or no variation exists to explain. While Renzi found a significant relationship between religion (measured in dichotomous terms) and AA, we can specify that this is true only for those denominations not having a high level of consensus on AA. In addition, we anticipate that the IFS-AA relationship will be greater in soft situations rather than hard, inasmuch as more consensus on AA exists for hard situations.

Table 2 presents the Kendall's tau measures of association between IFS and AA for each of nine religious denominations and each of the six abortion situations. Restricting our analysis for the moment to the 1972 data, we see that IFS is not always significantly related to AA when we control for religion. In 14 cases the tau value is not significant. However, thirty-seven of the Kendall's taus are significant. On the whole, IFS is still a significant predictor of AA, but there are numerous exceptions. The exceptions to the general rule follow a pattern involving the degree of consensus on proabortion attitudes by hard and soft reasons. Given the high level of consensus on hard reasons, we find that only 14 out of 27 Kendall's taus are significant where it comes to the hard reasons. In contrast, where there are lower levels of agreement (the soft reasons for abortion), nearly all of the measures of association are significant (25 out of 27 cases). Hence, on the hard reasons such as rape and birth defects, we often find that persons support abortion regardless of their reported IFS. (A similar pattern shows up in the 1975 figures.)

On the soft reasons for abortion, there is considerable disagreement between denominations, and lack of majority support among four of the denominations. In these situations IFS appears to play a significant role in shaping abortion sentiments. Those preferring small families are significantly more likely to be proabortion, regardless of religious affiliation.

TABLE 2
Measures of Association (Kendall's tau) Between Family Size and Proabortion Attitudes, by Religious Affiliation, 1972, 1975

Religious Affiliations	*Health*	*Rape*	*Defect*	*Low Income*	*Not Marry*	*Not Want*
			1972			
Catholic (398)	.16*	.19*	.18	.16*	.15*	.13*
Jewish (53)	.28*	.17	.24*	.40*	.40*	.34*
Nonbelievers (76)	–.01	.02	.11	.21*	.26*	.26*
Baptist (312)	.18*	.23*	.26*	.19*	.15*	.18*
Methodist (223)	.02	.16*	.10	.21*	.30*	.21*
Lutheran (133)	.14*	.29*	.29*	.32*	.22*	.36*
Presbyterian (79)	.01	–.02	–.06	.16	.17	.20*
Episcopalian (33)	—[a]	—[a]	.16	.41*	.46*	.42*
Other Protestant (176)	.18*	.14*	.25*	.15*	.24*	.26*
			1975			
Catholic (348)	.23*	.18**	.25*	.27*	.21*	.22*
Jewish (21)	–.16	—[a]	.28	.50*	.85*	.34
Nonbelievers (107)	.04	.19*	.13	.11	.10	.03
Baptists (304)	.07	.13*	.08	.21*	.22*	.24*
Methodists (170)	.22*	.15*	.20*	.25*	.21*	.21*
Lutheran (139)	.19*	.09	.27*	.24*	.26*	.26*
Presbyterian (74)	.06	.22*	.14	.31*	.35*	.32*
Episcopalian (44)	.22	.11	.06	.02	.02	.05
Other Protestant (173)	.08	.03	.18*	.20*	.24*	.25*

[a]All persons approved of abortion.
*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

A second prediction to be tested was that the IFS-AA relationship would tend to be significant among denominations with low levels of proabortion consensus. This is largely borne out by comparing the data in Table 1 with those in Table 2. For example, the IFS-AA relationship is significant on all three hard abortion situations for Catholics, Baptists, and other Protestants. These are precisely the groups that have the lowest support for abortion (between 69 and 84 percent approve of abortion for hard reasons), and hence the lowest level of consensus. Within these groups, when there is somewhat greater disagreement on AA, IFS can help explain the variation.

A third concern of our analysis was to determine if abortion attitudes and the IFS-AA relationship for the various denominations had changed following the U.S. Supreme Court decision on abortion. A trend toward greater support would be expected. Table 1 shows that the percentage of persons in each religious

denomination who supported abortion increased in 40 of the 54 cells between 1972 and 1975. While this is the direction of change that was anticipated, a related issue concerns how many of these increases between 1972 and 1975 were significant. Using a significance test for differences in proportions (Loether & McTavish 1974:189–92), we determined that only six of the 1972–1975 changes were significant at the .05 level. The six significant increases were for Catholics and Baptists on each of the three soft abortion situations. Hence, the Supreme Court's ruling on abortion is associated with a significant liberalization of attitudes on abortion for only two denominations. The finding takes on added importance, perhaps, given that these are the two largest denominations. At the same time, since these denominations were least supportive of abortion for soft reasons in 1972, there was more possibility of change for Baptists and Catholics than for the other religious groups.

Given the general drift towards greater acceptance of abortion that followed the Supreme Court decision, we would anticipate less variance in AA and somewhat fewer significant IFS-AA relationships once we control for religious affiliation. Thus, we expected that the associations between Protestant denominations and AA might be significantly smaller for 1975 than for 1972.

The data (Table 1) do not support our prediction. To assess whether or not significant decreases in the measure of association were present among Protestant denominations Kendall's (1962:62–63) test for differences in correlations was applied. The results were negative; none of the 1972–1975 differences in Cramer's *V* were significant at the .05 level. In all cases the Cramer's *V* for 1975 was smaller than that for 1972. The direction of the difference was as predicted, but none was significant. However, the difference in the 1972–1975 Cramer's V statistics for the abortion situation for health reasons does meet the standards for significance at the .10 level. Measured in the terms of this test, then, the Supreme Court decision cannot be said to have brought the Protestant denominations closer together.

Table 2 concerns the relationship between Ideal Family Size and Abortion Attitudes. The data support the hypothesis of the declining importance of IFS. In 1972 40 of the associations between IFS and AA were significant. In 1975 only 32 were significant. The decline was disproportionately in the area of soft reasons, the area that is marked by higher levels of proabortion consensus in 1975 than in 1972. In the case of the Methodists we found that all IFS-AA relationships were significant. This was what we would anticipate given the Methodists' relative lack of change of abortion attitudes between 1972 and 1975.

Regression Analysis

While we have extended Renzi's finding that IFS is negatively related to a proabortion attitude for specific denominations, there remain some further questions such as the possible spuriousness of this relationship and the question of the relative importance of IFS in determining the variance in abortion attitudes. For example, from the work of Arney and Trescher (1976) we know that education

was the leading determinant of abortion attitudes. While IFS was not included in the analysis of Arney and Trescher, we would anticipate a negative correlation between education and ideal family size; the better educated prefer smaller families. Once we control for education, then, the relationship between IFS and proabortion attitudes might vanish. In addition, we need to weigh the importance of IFS relative to other factors shaping attitudes on this issue: age, frequency of church attendance, sex, race, and the size of the place of residence (Arney & Trescher 1976). That is, is IFS as important a factor as church attendance, sex, etc., in the shaping of attitudes on abortion? The previous research has either dealt with simple bivariate relationships or has introduced only one control variable. The present investigation utilizes the techniques of multiple regression analysis in order to rank the importance of the relevant independent variables.

The results of the first regression analysis are given in Table 3. The dependent variable, the index of proabortion attitudes, was constructed by combining the scores on the answers to the six items regarding abortion. The *t*-statistic associated with IFS indicates that the relationship with abortion attitudes is significant and in the expected direction. Even if we control for religious affiliation, church attendance, and the other independent variables, greater IFS means less approval of abortion. In like manner, education, church attendance, sex, age, and religion (measured in terms of a dummy variable where 0–Protestant, 1–Catholic)[2] exert a significant impact, in the expected direction, on abortion attitudes.

While IFS is significantly related to attitudes on abortion, and while this relationship is independent of seven control variables, there remains the issue of how

TABLE 3
Effects of Education, Age, Religion, Church Attendance, Sex, Race, Ideal Family Size, and City Size on the Index of Proabortion Attitudes, 1975 (N = 1,113)

Variable	*Regression Coefficient*	*Standard Error*	*Beta*	*T*	*P (1 Tail)*
Education	.153	.019	.242	2.174	.000
Age	.011	.003	.101	3.436	.001
Religion	–.264	.122	–.061	–2.163	.016
CA	–.193	.022	–.253	–8.970	.000
Sex	.192	.108	.049	1.782	.038
Race	–.152	.184	–.024	–.830	.204
IFS	–.262	.035	–.212	–7.491	.000
City size	.000	.000	.047	1.628	.052

Intercept 8.517
R = .4287
R^2 = .1836
F = 31.073, p < .00001

strongly it is related to the dependent variable relative to the other factors. To weigh the importance of the variables, we can look at the absolute values of their beta coefficients; the greater a variable's beta coefficient, the greater its importance in explaining the variation in the dependent variable. By this criterion, church attendance is the most important variable associated with abortion attitudes (beta = –.253); years of education is the second most important variable (beta = .242); ideal family size is in third place (beta = –.212). The other variables are considerably less important, the next largest beta being age (beta = .101). All the variables taken together explain 18 percent of the variance in abortion attitudes. While IFS is not the strongest predictor of abortion attitudes, it ranks among the top three in the present study.

The regression results in Table 3 regarding religious affiliation should be taken as problematic since all Protestants are lumped together. There remains the question of whether IFS is a significant predictor of AA in specific denominations. One way to answer this question is to run a separate, conditional analysis for each denomination.[3]

Table 4 provides the beta coefficients for each of seven regressions for the seven specific denominations. Two religious groups, Jews and Episcopalians, were dropped from the analysis because of their limited numbers (less than 45 persons). The rank orders of beta coefficients for these denomination-specific regressions follow some of the same patterns found in the regression based on the entire sample. For example, church attendance and education still tend to be the most important variables associated with the variance in AA. The only exception to this pattern is the case of the religious nones. For those without a religious affiliation, sex is the most important predictor of AA wherein females are more likely to approve of abortion than are males. However, this was only one of two regres-

TABLE 4
Effects of the Independent Variables on the Index of Proabortion Attitudes for Specific Denominations (1975)

Independent Variables	*Non-bel.*	*All Presb.*	*Meth.*	*Luth.*	*Cath.*	*Bapt.*	*Prot.*
Education	.201*[a]	.147	.296*	.227*	.057	.305*	.299*
Church Att.	–.041	–.331*	–.194*	–.268*	–.386*	–.192*	–.220*
IFS	—[b]	–.241*	–.200*	–.067	–.243*	–.248*	–.203*
Race	—[b]	–.026	–.143	–.049	.056	–.044	–.099*
Age	.128	—[b]	.133	.171	.030	.134*	.118*
N	90	52	107	98	237	193	624
adj. R^2	.05	.13	.14	.06	.23	.18	.22

[a]Beta coefficient.
[b]*F* level insufficient for further analysis.
*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

sions where significant results for the sex status variable were found. In contrast, church attendance was significant six out of seven times; education, five out of seven.

The results in Table 4 show that IFS remains an important variable in the denomination specific regressions. Ideal family size is among the top three predictors in five of the seven regressions. The only exceptions are for nonbelievers and Lutherans.[4]

The amount of variance explained ranges from five percent for the religious nones to 23 percent for Catholics. The multiple *R*'s reported here were adjusted for the problem of shrinkage in relatively small samples. All of the multiple *R*'s were significant at the .05 level.

If the number of significant relationships is taken as the test of our seven variable model, the model works best for the category of all Protestants, where all six variables are significant. This regression, however, masks the fact that many relationships do not hold for specific Protestant denominations. For example, age is significant only for Baptists. The model is weakest in explaining the AA of religious nonbelievers. For this group, only two predictors are significant, and only five percent of the variance is explained. Additional research might look at the role of religion of origin of religious nones in order to increase the variance explained.

Discussion/Conclusion

We hypothesized that a reexamination of the data presented by Renzi on the relationship between attitudes toward abortion and religion would be further clarified by subdividing the general category "Protestant" into the various denominations. Specifically, we examined more closely the relationship Renzi had found between ideal family size and abortion: as IFS increased, support for abortion decreased.

Our reanalysis has indeed supported the general finding. At the same time, we have been able to show that, while ideal family size appears to act as an independent variable on attitudes toward abortion, within Protestantism there is a considerable variation in support of abortion whether or not ideal family size is taken into account. As a matter of fact, the attitudes of Baptists more closely approach those of Catholics in all abortion situations than they do those of other Protestants. Thus, to combine Protestants, especially given the large proportion of respondents in the United States who identify themselves as Baptists, only tends to obscure the differences that actually exist between denominations.

The findings also indicate that the U.S. Supreme Court decision on abortion had at best only a modest effect on the liberalization of already fairly strong proabortion sentiments. This supports the position that the court's decision was more consequence than a cause of proabortion attitudes. The modest increase in proabortion attitudes associated with the court's decision did, however, reduce the variation in AA and, hence, decreased the impact of IFS in explaining AA.

The results of the regression analysis for both the sample as a whole and for

specific denominations indicate that IFS is a leading determinant of AA. While education level and the measure of religiosity (church attendance) tend to be more powerful predictors of AA, it seems that IFS, a neglected factor, deserves more attention than it has received. We turn now to a brief discussion of the possible reasons for this association.

We may speculate about why IFS seems to interact with religion to be such an important predictor variable in abortion possible situations. Jews have had a long history of accepting the two-child family as normative (Scanzoni & Scanzoni 1976); support for large families comes only from Orthodox Jews, a small minority in the United States. Orthodox Jews also take a strong anti-abortion stand. Thus, we would hypothesize that if we had a large enough sample of Jews so as to be able to control for Orthodox Jews, we would be able to eliminate the relationship of IFS to abortion.

Episcopalians and other mainline Protestant denominations came to terms with birth control and the two-child family over a 25 year period beginning with the Lambeth Conference of 1930. IFS is less a predictor variable for these denominations than it remains for Baptists and the more fundamentalist sects. We would hypothesize that with an adequate sample to control for Northern and Southern Baptists, IFS would be further diminished as a predictor variable.

The Catholic Church has only recently come to accept the idea of family size limitation, and the hierarchy's continued opposition to contraceptive birth control and abortion are too well known to need elaboration here (Potvin & Burch 1968). We would hypothesize that the continued strong relationship between IFS and abortion attitudes within Catholicism reflects the ongoing struggle between a younger, ever more autonomous laity, which sees the two-child family as ideal and uses contraception to achieve the goal, and the older, more traditional Catholic laity.

IFS may not be so much a variable independent of religion as it is a *reflection* of religious ideology, another indicator of people's religious orientations. People may continue to be religious, but in a much less absolutistic way than their forebears. They may even see a large family as ideal, but not at the risk of the health of the mother, nor begotten under conditions of rape or incest. Likewise, the changes between 1972 and 1975 suggest that acceptance of abortion even for soft reasons is reaching broad consensus levels, regardless of orientation to family size.[5] At the same time, there appears to be a broad and emerging consensus among all people, regardless of religious affiliation, toward the two-child family as ideal. Thus, whatever the power of this variable in the 1970s, it may well have a limited history.

Notes

1. The phrase "family size preference" as used by Renzi refers to the responses to the following question: "What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?" We think the phrase "ideal family size" more accurately describes the question, so we will use it rather than "family size preference" in our own analysis.

2. The treatment of religious affiliation as a dummy variable in the first part of the regression analysis is clearly not consistent with the previous section of the analysis which seeks to decompose Protestantism into its respective denominations. These preliminary regression results should be taken with great caution since all Protestants are grouped together, and the considerable variation in denominational AA is masked.

3. Another approach to the inspection of the denomination specific-IFS interaction is to introduce a multiplicative interaction term to the regression analysis. This was done in a separate analysis using the following procedure. The responses to the NORC question on religious affiliation, which provides data on Protestant affiliations, were recorded into a rank order according to the average proportion favoring abortion in the six abortion situations. An interaction term was calculated by multiplying this new ordinal scale by IFS. The correlation between the interaction term and IFS was rather large, indicating a potential problem of severe multicollinearity. The Klein test for severe multicollinearity was positive. This precluded a meaningful regression analysis of the impact of the interaction term on AA.

4. The remaining four predictor variables are less often associated with AA. Sex is significant only for nonbelievers and all Protestants. Size is significant twice (for Baptists and all Protestants). Race emerges as significant only once (all Protestants). For all significant relationships the signs of the betas are in the expected direction. Even the nonsignificant betas have signs in the expected direction except for the case of city size for Catholics.

5. Recent polls show that most Americans now see the two-child family as ideal. And Westoff, after a careful examination of fertility trends over the past 50 years, concludes that there is little or no evidence of a return to the three- or four-child family as normative. Rather, he sees it as more probable that U.S. fertility levels will stabilize at or below the two-child level. See Charles F. Westoff, "Some speculations on the future of marriage and fertility," *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 10, No. 2, March/April, 1978, pp. 79–83.

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