

Parental Consent and Changing Abortion Attitudes: Examining Trends in California

Sonja Petek, Jennifer Paluch, Mark Baldassare¹

¹Public Policy Institute of California, 500 Washington St., Ste.600, San Francisco, CA
94111

Abstract

Since abortion was legalized in the U.S. through the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* court decision, most states have enacted restrictions limiting abortion, including parental notification or consent for a minor's abortion. In California, voters defeated parental notification ballot initiatives three times between 2005 and 2008. In later surveys however, two in three registered voters expressed support for a theoretical parental notification law. Using data collected as part of the Public Policy Institute of California's Statewide Survey, this paper seeks to understand the seeming contradiction between opinion and voting and to determine what predicts support for parental notification in theory and at the ballot box. We hypothesize that being Latino is a significant predictor of support for parental notification, which could affect future outcomes as California's demographics shift.

Key Words: California, abortion, parental notification, public opinion

1. Introduction

Numerous restrictions on access to abortion at the national and state level have been enacted since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* court decision. Presently, 34 states require parental involvement in a minor's decision to have an abortion: Most (20) require consent only; fewer (10) require notification only, while four require both notification and consent. Just three states and the District of Columbia allow minors to self-determine abortion services. Seven states (including California) have a restriction that is currently not in effect or enjoined, either permanently or temporarily, and six more states currently do not have any form of policy or law on the books (Guttmacher Institute 2010).

In 1987, the California State Legislature amended a 1953 state law (which allowed minors to receive the same medical procedures as adults without parental notification or consent) to require girls receiving abortions to obtain consent from a parent or a court. The 1987 law never took effect due to legal challenges and the California Supreme Court ultimately struck it down in 1997. Currently, the 1997 court decision stands, allowing minors to receive the same abortion services as adults without parental involvement. This includes services provided through state health programs, like Medi-Cal. (California Secretary of State, November 2008).

Table 1: Parental Notification Citizens' Initiatives in California (%)
(California Secretary of State, Statements of Vote)

	<i>2005: Proposition 73</i>	<i>2006: Proposition 85</i>	<i>2008: Proposition 4</i>
No vote	53	54	52
Yes vote	47	46	48

Proposition 4, the “Waiting Period and Parental Notification before Termination of Minor’s Pregnancy” was a November 2008 initiative constitutional amendment placed on the ballot through the citizens’ initiative process. Proposition 4 was defeated by a narrow 4-point margin (52% no, 48% yes) with deep divisions in the electorate. In 2005 and 2006, voters defeated similar measures by slightly larger margins (2005: 47% yes, 53% no; 2006: 46% yes, 54% no). Because of the solidly pro-choice leanings of Californians, the relatively narrow margins of defeat are somewhat surprising until subsequent surveys show that parental notification is a widely popular idea in theory. Even among groups that are normally staunch supporters of abortion rights, majorities favor parental notification. Four citizens’ initiatives that would have established parental notification requirements failed to qualify for the November 2010 ballot, but the continued attempts to qualify and pass a parental notification measure signal the importance some groups place on this issue.

We are motivated by prior work on abortion and public opinion trends over time to look deeper into this topic, yet find few studies examining parental notification specifically. In addition, the role of the initiative process—policymaking at the ballot box—is interesting to examine in this context. To understand what predicts individuals’ support for parental notification, we chose to examine the vote on Proposition 4, support for a theoretical parental notification law, and attitudes toward the government’s role in abortion policy in general. Unlike many other public policy issues, people tend to not only have an opinion about abortion, but those opinions tend to be stable over time, even as stable as party identification. It is also polarizing with most falling on either side of the debate and with very few undecided (Norrande and Wilcox 1999). This makes the sometimes contradictory preferences on parental notification particularly interesting. With general abortion attitudes as a backdrop, we are able to examine which demographic and political characteristics predict support for parental notification and how these characteristics might impact California’s future laws on the topic.

1.1 California Context

California is a diverse state home to more than 39 million residents, with non-Hispanic whites representing a minority—42 percent—of the state’s population. According to the California Department of Finance, more than 14.5 million Latino residents reside in California compared to about 16.4 million non-Hispanic whites. By about 2016, Latinos are expected to outnumber non-Hispanic whites in California; and by about 2042, Latinos are projected to become the racial/ethnic majority in the state (California Department of Finance). Using statewide demographic data coupled with PPIC Statewide Survey data we find that Latinos make up about 33 percent of the state’s adult population but only 18 percent of the registered voters most likely to turn out in elections. In contrast, whites constitute 46 percent of the state’s adult population but 66 percent of the state’s likely voters. Many Latino adults are not U.S. citizens and are thus ineligible to vote; only 34

percent of Latino adults are considered likely voters, compared to 73 percent of whites (PPIC 2010).

We can use basic cross tabular analysis of PPIC Statewide Survey questions to determine which variables could be expected to have the most influence on abortion attitudes in California. We find the groups of registered voters typically the most supportive of abortion rights in general are those who identify as Democrats, are politically liberal, more educated, more affluent, white, agnostic or mainline Protestant, and native-born.

PPIC surveys include a general question about whether the government should not interfere with a woman's access to abortion or whether the government should pass more laws restricting the availability of abortion. Over the past 10 years, survey results show that strong majorities of California registered voters prefer the government not interfere with access to abortion.

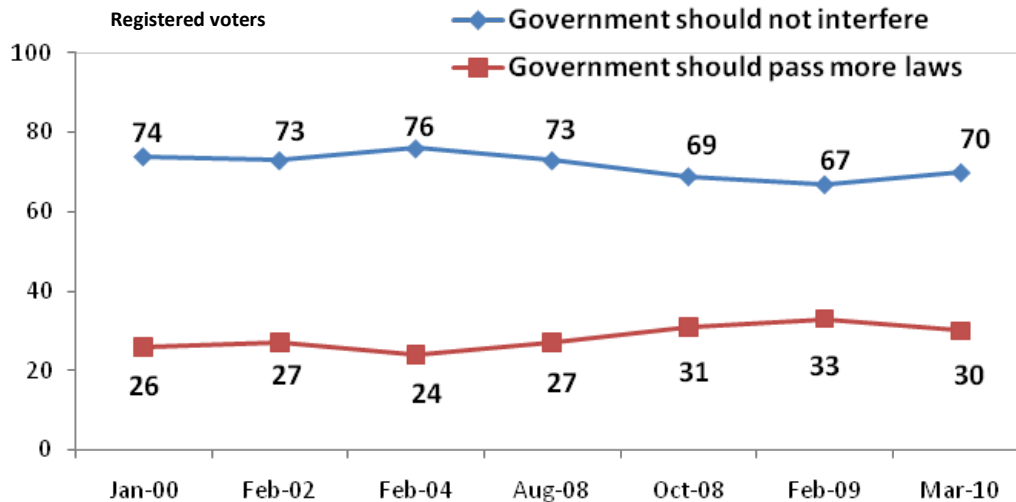


Figure 1: Preference for Government Involvement in Abortion

California's Latino and white populations differ substantially in their abortion policy preferences, however: In a February 2009 survey, majorities of registered voters in both groups oppose completely overturning the *Roe v. Wade* decision, but opposition to this complete sea change is weaker among Latinos (61%) than among whites (76%). When we look at this question by nativity we find that seven in 10 U.S.-born Latinos (70%) do not want *Roe v. Wade* overturned, but immigrant Latinos are more closely divided (48% overturn, 52% do not overturn). On the role of government, white registered voters are much more likely to say the government should not interfere with a woman's access to abortion than to say the government should pass more laws restricting the availability of abortion (73% to 27%), while Latino registered voters are divided (50% should not interfere to 50% should pass more laws). Sixty-five percent of U.S.-born Latinos say the government should not interfere, while 66 percent of immigrant Latinos say the government should impose more abortion restrictions. In asking generally about parental notification outside of an election and politicized debate, two in three registered voters expressed favor in February 2009 and March 2010. Across racial/ethnic groups, both Latinos and whites say they would favor a state law requiring parental notification, but this support is at very different levels (79% Latinos, 59% whites).

2. Public Opinion Literature

For a summary of public opinion on abortion attitudes, Shaw (2003) concludes there has not been a significant shift in Americans' support for abortion over the past three decades: National polling has, for the most part, shown majority support for the *Roe v. Wade* decision, although levels of support have varied. Yet there have been shifts in opinions about limiting access to abortion or at least making it somewhat more difficult to obtain. Among these limitations he discussed, there was strong support in the 1990s for requiring parental notification for a minor's abortion, but there is limited analysis on the deeper questions of the necessity for notification under various circumstances for a pregnant minor.

2.1 Demographic characteristics

Opinions on abortion in general are often associated with party affiliation, and political ideology as well as belief and practice in a religious tradition. Data from the General Social Survey (GSS) is typically used to explore the effect, if any, that age, race, religion, and gender have on abortion attitudes. Analysis is generally conducted using a six-item battery from the GSS, which measures support for abortion rights under certain circumstances (i.e. after rape or incest, if fetal deformities are present, if the woman is unmarried, etc.). A scale is constructed from least to most permissive.

2.1.1 Age

Studies on partisanship (Abramson 1976), electoral behavior (Butler and Stokes 1969), and basic values (Inglehart 1977) have shown younger people tend to be more liberal than older people and that generational replacement occurs when it comes to attitudes on certain issues. But Cook et al (1993) report that women who came of age during the Reagan years had lower levels of feminist consciousness than those who came of age during the 1960s and 1970s and took feminist positions for granted (suggesting they might be less supportive of feminist goals). This generational difference in attitudes toward abortion is also found in Strickler and Danigelis (2002), where after controlling for other factors, they find older people are more accepting of abortion.

2.1.2 Gender

There are differing ideas about the impact of gender on abortion attitudes. Strickler and Danigelis (2002) found that gender is generally unrelated to abortion views, similar to prior studies. Yet, Hertel and Russel (1999) found that men are slightly more likely than women to support abortion rights. But when workforce participation is taken into account, married working women are ultimately more pro-choice than married men. Overall, they found that compared to men, women may be more polarized on the issue of abortion. Furthermore, they found that women place more importance on the issue and provide more consistent attitudes than men.

2.1.3 Race/ethnicity

Earlier studies exploring race and abortion attitudes show strong differences between black and white communities (Combs and Welch 1982; Hall and Ferree 1986; Secret 1987). Relevant studies on race and abortion attitudes continue to confirm earlier studies that racial differences on abortion attitudes are declining (Wilcox 1990). It is only more recent studies that have been able to use religion and other demographic characteristics to analyze the factors contributing to variations in attitudes, debunking (in some cases) this racial divide. In using GSS data for analysis, Wilcox found that the introduction of religion variables has helped to explain away the racial differences. Specifically, what Wilcox finds is that it is not the case that blacks are becoming more supportive of abortion over time—rather he finds it is whites who are becoming less-supportive as the political climate shifts.

Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox (1993) found that young blacks are more supportive than any other black age group, while young whites are less supportive than older whites, pointing back to the generational differences in attitudes as the significant factor. Still, support among young blacks and whites for abortion in all cases is very similar, suggesting the documented racial differences are among the older cohorts (Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox 1993). Another GSS study on racial differences in abortion attitudes found, that after controlling for attitudes, blacks are more approving of abortion than are whites (Strickler and Danigelis 2002). Fewer studies explore the racial differences among abortion attitudes in the Latino community.

2.1.4 Religion

Abortion attitudes are often aligned with religious and moral attitudes. The Roman Catholic Church has historically condemned abortion, while some Protestant communities have supported abortion rights. Using the six-item GSS scale, Evans (2002) finds polarization between traditions over time: While mainline Protestants' and Catholics' views did not change much, evangelical Protestants' views became more conservative. He also finds that mainline Protestants have become increasingly polarized internally. He suggests that demographics do not alter abortion attitudes among evangelicals because their religious tradition is stricter and more defined by abortion (i.e. adherents are more likely to fall in line with the anti-abortion doctrine). Mainline Protestants, on the other hand, are more likely to subscribe to their own beliefs (which might vary depending on age, education, region, etc.).

Strickler and Danigelis (2002) used 1977-96 GSS data and found that being Catholic weakens slightly as a predictor of abortion attitudes over this time period, while religious fundamentalism and political liberalism increase in explanatory power. They find that the public is influenced more by the pro-life abortion framework than by the pro-choice perspective. More expectedly, respondents who are Catholic or fundamentalist are less approving of abortion, and remained significant in the authors' model, but they make special note that having a fundamentalist affiliation does not show a significant association after controlling for attitudes until the mid-1990s. Hertel and Russel (1999) in their work find that religious identity overall is the strongest predictor of abortion attitudes with the greatest cleavage between Christians and non-Christians rather than between types of Christians.

2.2 The Initiative Process

When public policy is made at the ballot box, public opinion plays an enormous role in shaping the debate. Many scholars debate whether initiatives and referenda “enhance or distort” public opinion. Arceneaux (2002) uses GSS data from 1975-98 to examine the responsiveness of public policy to public opinion in states with initiatives and referenda, using abortion and state-level attitudes about it as the test case. He finds that in the more pro-choice states, policy is less restrictive; this relationship is stronger and statistically significant in states with initiatives and referenda. He then tested his theory in states without initiatives to see if abortion policy would be different if they had initiatives. He found that it would and that the resulting policy would be more restrictive. From this, he concluded that when it concerns abortion policy, the presence of initiatives and referenda in a state ultimately lead to better policy representation of public opinion.

2.3 Parental Consent

States and their abortion restrictions vary widely but tend to reflect the level of activism within the state and the general public opinion preferences of its residents (Norrander and Wilcox 1999). Norrander and Wilcox (1999) find that not surprisingly, liberal states have liberal policies—Democratic legislatures are significantly more likely than Republican-dominated legislatures to pass liberal abortion policies—but beyond this, there are state specific dynamics that contribute to a state’s abortion statutes. The presence of a large Catholic population results in more conservative abortion policies for example, while the presence of women legislators result in more liberal policies.

Norrander and Wilcox (1999) find different patterns for parental consent laws, however, namely that public opinion has little influence on public policy in this area. Although majorities or pluralities in most states generally favor allowing adult women to receive abortions, majorities also support parental notification and consent. This is consistent with our survey findings in California. Norrander and Wilcox find that public ideology as a predictor for models explaining parental consent requirements is not so conclusive; that is to say states with generally more liberal public opinion are often more conservative when it comes to parental consent laws. They estimate that because parental consent is so widely popular with voters, even traditionally liberal states may enact these types of restrictions. They surmise that the influence public opinion has had on parental consent may be on how quickly states have enacted this type of restriction.

3. Data and Methods

To examine trends on abortion attitudes and analyze predictors on the vote on Proposition 4, we used data collected by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) as part of an ongoing series called the PPIC Statewide Survey. The Statewide Survey uses random digit dialing and includes multilingual interviewing. Abt SRBI conducts telephone interviewing for PPIC and assists with statistical weighting. Data from the U.S. Census, California Department of Finance, California Secretary of State, National Health Interview Survey, and American Community Survey are used for comparison with sample characteristics; sample data are weighted to account for any differences in demographics, party registration, and telephone service.

The data used to analyze general attitudes on parental notification and abortion are from a survey of 2,502 California adults conducted in February 2009. This survey includes 2,252 interviews conducted by landline telephone and 250 by cell phone. The AAPOR

Response Rate 1 (RR1) for the landline sample is 13.1 percent and the AAPOR Response Rate 2 (RR2) is 13.8 percent. For the cell phone sample, RR1 is 8.3 percent and RR2 is 8.6 percent. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 2 percent. For the 2,005 registered voters, it is +/- 2.5 percent. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results will be within 2.5 percentage points of what they would be if all registered voters in California were interviewed.

The data used to analyze the vote on Proposition 4 is from a special survey conducted by landline telephone in November 2008 with 2,003 Californians who said they voted in the November 4, 2008 presidential election. Data from PPIC Statewide Surveys and media exit polling and election statistics from the California Secretary of State were compared against the demographic characteristics of election voters in this survey sample; statistical weighting of the data to account for any demographic differences did not change any of the findings in this report significantly. The response rate for this survey using AAPOR RR1 was 12.8 percent and using AAPOR RR2 was 13.5 percent. The sampling error for the 2,003 voters was +/- 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

The rejection of Proposition 4 in 2008 was by no means unanimous. The group of yes voters was actually more unified in their reason for voting no, with 72 percent citing that a parent deserves to know if their daughter is having an abortion. Reasons for voting no were more varied with 38 percent saying women should have the right to choose abortion without consulting anyone, 15 percent citing child safety or availability of safe abortions as a reason, and 11 percent saying that some minors need protection from abusive family members. A greater percentage of yes voters than no voters also said they considered the outcome of the vote on Proposition 4 to be very important (50% to 42%). In looking at basic crosstabs of voting groups from the 2008 post-election voter survey, we find that the vast majority of strong Democrats voted no on Proposition 4, while the vast majority of strong Republicans voted yes. Similar patterns emerge on the political ideology scale. We also find differences between Latinos (most of whom voted yes) and others (most of whom voted no). Larger percentages of more affluent and more educated voters also rejected Proposition 4, while higher percentages of immigrants, evangelical Christians, Catholics, and older voters voted yes.

Table 2: Crosstabs for Vote on Proposition 4 (%)

		<i>Voted no</i>	<i>Voted yes</i>
All Voters		52	48
<i>Political party and strength of affiliation</i>	Strong Democrat	72	28
	Not very strong Democrat	53	47
	Independent	49	51
	Not very strong Republican	44	56
	Strong Republican	25	75
<i>Political ideology</i>	Very liberal	83	17
	Somewhat liberal	74	26
	Middle-of-the-road	53	47
	Somewhat conservative	31	69
	Very conservative	23	77
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>	Latinos	38	62
	White	55	45
<i>Gender</i>	Men	50	50
	Women	54	46
<i>Household income</i>	Under \$40,000	43	57
	\$40,000 to under \$80,000	50	50
	\$80,000 or more	59	41
<i>Age</i>	18-34	54	46
	35-54	55	45
	55 and older	49	51
<i>Education</i>	High school or less	39	61
	Some college	50	50
	College graduate	58	42
<i>Parent</i>	Yes	48	52
	No	54	46
<i>Nativity</i>	U.S.-born	55	45
	Immigrant	37	63
<i>Religion variables</i>	Evangelical Christian	25	75
	Catholic	40	60
	Mainline Protestant	57	43
	Other religions/agnostic	72	28

Note—PPIC Statewide Survey, December 2008, N=1,729 voters. Question: “Proposition 4 was called the “Waiting Period and Parental Notification before Termination of Minor’s Pregnancy Initiative Constitutional Amendment.” Did you vote (1) yes or (0) no on this measure?”

This divided vote is seemingly inconsistent with voters’ general views about the role of government on abortion. In the same survey, majorities of voters in nearly every political and demographic group said the government should not interfere with a woman’s access to abortion, including Latinos, older, less educated, and less affluent voters, immigrants, Catholics, and many Republicans and conservatives. Only strong Republicans (53%),

those who consider themselves very conservative ideologically (63%), and evangelicals (52%) said the government should pass more laws restricting the availability of abortion. In every group, the percentage saying the government should not interfere was much higher than the percentage voting no on Proposition 4.

The defeat of Proposition 4—although narrow—also seems inconsistent with Californians' views about a theoretical law requiring parental notification of a minor's abortion. In February 2009 (66%) and March 2010 (67%), two in three registered voters expressed support for the idea of parental notification, a far cry from the 48 percent of voters who supported Proposition 4 in the 2008 election. Not only do Californians overall support the idea of parental notification, but majorities of registered voters in nearly every political and demographic subgroup said they favored it in February 2009, just three months after voting down Proposition 4. The only groups who opposed this idea were strong Democrats (51%) and those who are very (65%) or somewhat (52%) liberal. And in every group, the percentage in the February 2009 survey saying they favored the idea was much higher than the percentage of voters in the 2008 post-election survey saying they voted yes on Proposition 4.

To better understand the seemingly contradictory views of Californians on the issue of parental notification, and to test our hypothesis that being Latino significantly predicts support for parental notification, we employed logistic regression analyses. To find out what factors significantly predicted support for Proposition 4 in the 2008 presidential election, we first set up a logistic regression using the vote on Proposition 4 as a dependent binary variable where "0" is a reported vote of no (a status quo vote) and "1" is a vote of yes (in favor of a parental notification law). Because abortion attitudes are traditionally associated with party identification and political ideology, we created an independent variable for political party (from strong Democrat to strong Republican) and another for self-reported political ideology (from very liberal to very conservative). For Latinos, we created a dummy variable with Latino as "1" and with our reference group of whites, Asians, blacks, and others as "0."

Literature has shown that gender influences abortion attitudes less than might be expected (Strickler and Danigelis 2002). We control for gender (0=men, 1=women), which we do not think will be significant. We also control for income (using a three-category scale from lower to upper income) and age (using a three-category scale from younger to older age). We expect opposition to Proposition 4 to be associated with higher education levels and include a three-category variable (from less to more educated). Given that this proposition involves children and parents, we include a parent variable (1=parents of children age 18 or under; 0=non-parents or parents of children over 18).

Among registered voters in PPIC Statewide Surveys, immigrant Latinos often express more conservative attitudes than native-born Latinos on social issues, particularly abortion. To control for immigration, we include a variable where "1" is for immigrant and "0" is for U.S.-born. In the sample, 51 percent of immigrants were Latino. Because a person must be a citizen to register to vote, the immigrants in this voter sample are self-reported naturalized citizens.

Religion and abortion attitudes are inextricably linked, especially because many consider abortion to be a moral issue. We created a dummy variable for evangelical Christians, one for Catholics, and one for mainline Protestants. The reference group ("0") for these dummy variables are people practicing other religions or those who consider themselves

non-religious or agnostic. We expect being evangelical and Catholic to significantly predict support, while we expect being mainline Protestant to be insignificant. A high percentage of California's Latinos practice Catholicism (64% in our voter survey), so it is also important to include Catholicism in the regression as a control.

4.1 Results

Being Latino is a significant predictor of support for Proposition 4. Because coefficients can be difficult to compare in a logistic regression, we discuss the odds ratio (exponentiation of the coefficients), which tells us the increase in the odds that someone voted yes for every increment of change in an independent variable. Being Latino increased the odds of voting yes by a factor of 1.6, but this is not the strongest predictor of support. Being an immigrant was significantly correlated, increasing the odds of voting yes by a larger factor of 2. Being evangelical was by far the strongest significant variable in the model, increasing the odds of voting yes by a factor of 3.9. Another religion variable, being Catholic was also strongly correlated with support, increasing the odds of voting yes by a factor of 2.2. Political ideology played a significant role: With each increment of change from left to right on the ideological scale, the odds of voting yes increased by a factor of 1.6. Other significant variables included political party and being a parent (both variables increased the odds by a factor of 1.4). A single variable— income—predicted support in the negative direction. As income rose, the odds of supporting Proposition 4 declined. We expected the same trend with education, but it was insignificant. Also insignificant were gender, age, and being a mainline Protestant.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Predicting Support for Proposition 4

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Political party and strength of affiliation	.308	.049	.000	1.361
Political ideology	.463	.063	.000	1.590
Latino	.460	.196	.019	1.585
Gender	-.204	.125	NS	.815
Income	-.410	.088	.000	.664
Age	.171	.099	NS	1.186
Education	.020	.087	NS	1.021
Parent	.352	.146	.016	1.422
Immigrant	.675	.188	.000	1.964
Evangelical	1.360	.183	.000	3.896
Catholic	.779	.168	.000	2.180
Mainline Protestant	.194	.175	NS	1.214
(Constant)	-2.981	.479	.000	.051
Chi-square	451.474			
-2 Log Likelihood	1609.62			
Pseudo R^2	.349			
<i>N</i>	1,489 voters			

Note—NS is not significant. Dependent variable: Voted yes (1) on Proposition 4.

In crosstabs, 33 percent of the voters who said the government should not interfere in a woman's access to abortion voted yes on Proposition 4. To better understand this finding, we run the regression again, this time adding the question about the government's role in abortion as an independent variable (1=government should pass more laws; 0=government should not interfere).

Table 4: Logistic Regression Predicting Support for Proposition 4 with Question about Government's Role in Abortion Policy

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Political party and strength of affiliation	.244	.053	.000	1.276
Political ideology	.329	.070	.000	1.390
Latino	.234	.210	NS	1.264
Gender	-.197	.135	NS	.821
Income	-.363	.095	.000	.695
Age	.206	.108	NS	1.228
Education	-.029	.094	NS	.971
Parent	.359	.158	.023	1.431
Immigrant	.757	.202	.000	2.132
Evangelical	1.086	.198	.000	2.962
Catholic	.612	.184	.001	1.844
Mainline Protestant	.240	.189	NS	1.271
Role of government in abortion policy	1.940	.186	.000	6.958
(Constant)	-2.914	.517	.000	.054
Chi-square	563.336			
-2 Log Likelihood	1403.63			
Pseudo R^2	.437			
<i>N</i>	1,421 voters			

Note—NS is not significant. Dependent variable: Voted yes (1) on Proposition 4.

The belief that the government should pass more laws restricting abortion is a significant and strong predictor of support for Proposition 4 (increasing the odds of voting yes by a factor of 7). After controlling for preferences about government involvement, we find that being Latino is no longer significant. In crosstabs, 42 percent of Latino voters said the government should not interfere with abortion access, while 58 percent said the government should pass more restrictive laws. It turns out these attitudes are more important factors in determining Latinos' votes than being Latino. This is not the case for other groups. When holding attitudes about the government's role on abortion constant, being evangelical, an immigrant, Catholic, or a parent are still significant predictors of support. In other words, regardless of how they view abortion policy *generally*, there is a greater propensity for evangelicals, immigrants, Catholics, and parents to support Proposition 4. Being further to the right on the ideology and party scales also remain significant when controlling for general attitudes about the role of government on abortion.

We know that in subsequent surveys, most Californians expressed favor for a theoretical law requiring parental notification. We also know that these types of measures have passed in other politically liberal states. What then explains the discrepancy between Californians' general attitudes on parental notification and voting behavior at the ballot box? Using the theoretical question about parental notification as the binary dependent variable (1=favor; 0=oppose), we ran a logistic regression using data from February 2009.

Table 5: Logistic Regression Predicting Support for Parental Notification

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Political party and strength of affiliation	.228	.049	.000	1.257
Political ideology	.475	.059	.000	1.608
Latino	.462	.170	.007	1.588
Gender	-.123	.122	NS	.884
Income	-.241	.084	.004	.786
Age	.104	.084	NS	1.110
Education	-.181	.085	.033	.835
Parent	.317	.130	.015	1.372
Immigrant	.654	.162	.000	1.924
Evangelical	1.401	.191	.000	4.061
Catholic	.765	.155	.000	2.150
Mainline Protestant	.369	.190	NS	1.446
(Constant)	-1.992	.417	.000	.136
Chi-square	412.612			
-2 Log Likelihood	1677.65			
Pseudo R^2	.309			
<i>N</i>	1,657 registered voters			

Note—NS is not significant. Dependent variable: Favored (1) parental notification in question, “Would you favor or oppose a state law requiring parental notification by the physician before a woman under age 18 can get an abortion?”

The same variables that were significant in predicting support for Proposition 4 were significant in predicting support for parental notification, except education, which was now significant in the negative direction. Before exploring why these groups did not tip the scales for Proposition 4, we ran a final regression, adding the role of government.

Table 6: Logistic Regression Predicting Support for Parental Notification with Question about Government’s Role in Abortion Policy

	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Political party and strength of affiliation	.161	.052	.002	1.175
Political ideology	.377	.061	.000	1.458
Latino	.339	.178	NS	1.403
Gender	-.142	.127	NS	.868
Income	-.172	.086	.047	.842
Age	.106	.088	NS	1.112
Education	-.147	.088	NS	.863
Parent	.206	.136	NS	1.229
Immigrant	.466	.169	.006	1.594
Evangelical	1.067	.201	.000	2.907
Catholic	.674	.163	.000	1.961
Mainline Protestant	.388	.197	.049	1.474
Role of government in abortion policy	1.516	.185	.000	4.556
(Constant)	-1.711	.431	.000	.181
Chi-square	476.666			
-2 Log Likelihood	1563.18			
Pseudo R^2	.359			
<i>N</i>	1,595 registered voters			

Note—NS is not significant. Dependent variable: Favored (1) parental notification in question, “Would you favor or oppose a state law requiring parental notification by the physician before a woman under age 18 can get an abortion?”

We again found that being Latino loses its significance when accounting for general abortion preferences. We also found in this theoretical case, holding general abortion attitudes constant, that being a parent is no longer significant in predicting support for parental notification. Being evangelical, Catholic, or an immigrant, and ideology and party remained significant, but at somewhat weaker levels. When controlling for general abortion attitudes, being mainline Protestant became significant, increasing the odds of supporting parental notification by a factor of 1.5.

5.1 Conclusions

Although Californians traditionally express “pro-choice” opinions on the issue of abortion, parental notification is a special case that is popular in theory and only failed by a narrow margin at the polls in 2008. Thirty-four other states, including some that are traditionally liberal like California, currently have a form of parental notification or consent and many of these regulations were enacted by voters at the ballot box. Our findings indicate that regardless of general attitudes about the government’s role in abortion policy (which most believe should be minimal), many groups are significantly correlated with support for parental notification, including evangelicals, Catholics, immigrants, and those who are further right on the party and ideology scales. Being Latino, although significantly correlated with support for Proposition 4 and for parental notification in general, becomes insignificant when controlling for general attitudes about the role of government in abortion policy.

Our findings point to two possibilities when trying to understand the difference between support for Proposition 4 and the much greater support for a theoretical parental notification law. First, the same groups that are significantly linked to support for the ballot measure are linked to support for the concept of parental notification. It could be the case that these groups were less mobilized in the 2008 election and had they been more motivated to vote, Proposition 4 would have passed. At the same time, the 2008 election had generated considerable enthusiasm among Democrats and liberals who were drawn to the polls to vote for Barack Obama (and in fact, there was an uptick in Democratic Party registration in California prior the election). Second, two of the groups that are significantly correlated with support for parental notification are traditionally underrepresented at the polls—Latinos and immigrants. California’s current electorate has a greater share of whites, voters age 45 and older, and voters who are more educated and more affluent than in the overall adult population (Baldassare 2006). Some immigrants, many of whom are Latino, are ineligible to vote because they are not citizens, so unless U.S. immigration policy changes in a way that allows more immigrants to become naturalized, the number of immigrants eligible to vote will not increase at a faster rate. Furthermore, many eligible Latinos do not vote or vote inconsistently and concerted efforts have been made by a number of public and private groups to increase participation rates among the state’s diverse population (Baldassare, 2006). Were Latinos and naturalized immigrants to turn out in representative numbers at the polls, parental notification might have a better chance of passing. This under-representation at the polls is apparent in our post-election survey of voters where Latinos make up 16 percent (45% of whom are immigrants) of the electorate and immigrants 14 percent (51% of whom are Latino), while they are a much larger share of those reporting that they are registered to vote (32% Latino, of whom 50% are immigrants; 33% immigrant, of whom 55% are Latino) in the February 2009 survey. Even if this trend continues, it’s likely that as the

Latino population grows in California, their share of the electorate will increase and could lead to a shift in abortion policy made at the ballot box.

Finally, the group that is the most strongly associated with support for both Proposition 4 and parental notification in general is evangelicals, followed closely by Catholics. Were these groups to mobilize for a general election (the way many did in 2004 in states with same-sex marriage initiatives on the ballot), it could turn the tide for parental notification. It is unclear whether Proposition 8 in 2008 (the measure to ban same-sex marriage) mobilized evangelical voters in California, or whether it would have given them any greater share of the vote in the face a populist tide of voters turning out for Barack Obama. Many groups that are traditionally associated with liberal abortion attitudes favor the idea of parental notification, but it is not clear whether these groups would actually vote for an abortion restriction. Given the significance of being a parent in predicting support for Proposition 4, if traditionally pro-choice groups were to allow for any type of restriction, it would probably be parental notification before something targeting the adult population, but this would need to be tested further.

There are several areas for further research. First, it would be worthwhile to look at a survey that had more than one type of restriction presented to respondents, along with the attitudinal question about the government's role. It might then be possible to understand whether parental notification is unique in its popularity, or whether other restrictions also resonate with voters (which could mean the strategy of "chipping away" at *Roe* might work for anti-choice proponents). Conducting a comparative analysis of other liberal states that enacted parental notification laws through the citizens' initiative process would also provide a deeper understanding of parental notification as a particular type of restriction, and it would be instructive to study a state that has had different types of abortion restrictions on the ballot. The factors contributing to the narrow margin on Proposition 4 could be exclusive to this measure because it concerns minors (especially given the popularity of parental notification in theory). Whether another type of restriction would be as close to success is unclear.

Finally, this paper did not address the influence of initiative campaigns and the political context on the vote outcome for Proposition 4. For example, the proponents of Proposition 4 officially dubbed the measure "Sarah's Law" after a 15-year-old girl who died from complications from an abortion. Planned Parenthood Affiliates filed a lawsuit challenging their use of "Sarah" because the girl was in a common law marriage, which was recognized in her state of Texas, and she would not have had to seek parental notification for her botched abortion. The effect of these types of campaign issues is unknown in our analysis.

References

- Abramson, Paul (1976). "Generational change and decline in party identification in America 1952-1974. *American Political Science Review* 70:469-78.
- Alan Guttmacher Institute (2010), "State Policies in Brief, An Overview in Minor's Consent" Law, available online at http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_PIMA.pdf.
- Arceneaux, K. (2002). "Direct Democracy and the Link between Public Opinion and State Abortion Policy." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 2(4): 372.
- Baldassare, M. (2006). "At Issue: California's Exclusive Electorate." Public Policy Institute of California.
- Butler, David, and Donald Stokes (1969). *Political Change in Britain*. New York, St. Martin.

- Combs, M., and S Welch (1982). "Blacks, Whites, and Attitudes Toward Abortion." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 46: 510-520.
- Cook, E. A., T. G. Jelen, C. Wilcox. (1993). "Generational Differences in Attitudes Toward Abortion." *American Politics Research* 21(1): 31-53.
- Evans, J. H. (2002). "Polarization in Abortion Attitudes in U.S. Religious Traditions, 1972-1998." *Sociological Forum* 17(3): 397-422.
- Hall, E., and M. Ferree (1986). "Race Differences in Abortion Attitudes." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50: 193-207.
- Hertel, B. R. and M. C. Russell (1999). "Examining the Absence of a Gender Effect on Abortion Attitudes: Is There Really No Difference?" *Sociological Inquiry* 69(3): 364-381.
- Inglehart, Ronald, (1977). *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Norrander, B. and C. Wilcox (1999). "Public Opinion and Policymaking in the States: The Case of Post-Roe Abortion Policy." *Policy Studies Journal* 27(4): 707.
- Public Policy Institute of California, "Just the Facts: Latino Likely Voters in California." September, 2010.
- Secret, P. (1987). "The Impact of Region on Racial Differences in Attitudes Toward Legal Abortion" *Journal of Black Studies* (17): 347-369.
- Shaw, G. M. (2003). "The Polls—Trends." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67(3): 407-429.
- State of California, Department of Finance, "Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000–2050". Sacramento, CA, July 2007.
- State of California, Secretary of State, "Voter Information Guide." November 2008.
- State of California, Secretary of State, "Statements of Vote." November 2005, November 2006, November 2008.
- Strickler, J. and N. L. Danigelis (2002). "Changing Frameworks in Attitudes toward Abortion." *Sociological Forum* 17(2): 187-201.
- Wilcox, C. (1990). "Race Differences in Abortion Attitudes: Some Additional Evidence." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54(2): 248-255.