

# Editorial: Proabortion versus antiabortion: Who is winning the debate?

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I must begin this editorial with full disclosure. On the issue of abortion, I am prochoice. I acknowledge that while a fetus, I was a prime candidate for an abortion. Under those conditions, one would think that I would become prolife. WRONG! That is another story for which there is no need for elaboration at this time. Rather, my prochoice position emerged from my experience in the arena of child welfare services. Like many social workers, I have seen unimaginable atrocities inflicted on unwanted babies. Like most prochoice advocates, I dislike the concept of abortion but do not disapprove of it. Rather than having governmental intervention prohibiting abortion, wouldn't it be nice if women would choose not to have an abortion? This, in fact, has become our current social trend.

I believe that the prolife movement is responsible for a profoundly important societal change. The following event proved to be the tipping point: During the early 1990s, a mediocre situation comedy titled *Murphy Brown* had ratings that were plummeting. As a result, the writers decided to have their title character, played by Candice Bergen, have a baby out of wedlock. The writers were correct. The audience for the program increased. Shortly after the fictional birth, Vice President Dan Quayle blasted the program. Here lies a critical paradox: Quayle was the most adamant and uncompromising prolife political leader within that time period. His speeches on the prolife position made some Republican candidates cringe (Bob Dole, in particular). His speech addressing *Murphy Brown* demonstrated that he opposed abortion and correspondingly he opposed out-of-wedlock births. This paradox had to be resolved for the prolife movement to gain political creditability.

From the “*Murphy Brown* and Dan Quayle incident” emerged a sociological gold mine. Here, we find a major societal paradigm shift. The prolife movement grew into a real prolife movement. They did not merely advocate the antiabortion perspective but they embraced the sanctity of the out-of-wedlock birth. We can monitor social change through the popular media. Unlike the past, out-of-wedlock births have become pervasive on situation comedies. We have seen out-of-wedlock births in *Boston Legal*, *Sex and the City*, *The Gilmore Girls*, *Reba*, *Last Man Standing*, and *Steven's Universe* (a cartoon show for children!). The key point is: People (including the prolife sector) no longer scorn the unmarried woman with a child. In some arenas, such births are celebrated. So what?!

The shift in our societal thinking about out-of-wedlock births has catapulted our society to reevaluate family values. Over the past few decades, the abortion rates have continued to decline. The abortion rates have declined **NOT** because of the “where life begins” debate, but rather because single parenthood became socially acceptable. Women are choosing birth over abortion **NOT** because they are forced by law, but rather because of free choice. The free choice to reject abortion emerged from the fact that female single parents are no longer subjected to scorn.

The acknowledgment of choice has flowed into other sectors of decision-making. There is a drop in teen pregnancy. I suspect that teenage girls are maturing in a new and different way. Like European teens, they are sexually active but they are not getting pregnant. If you're not pregnant, there is no need to have an abortion. The number of abortions

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has dropped; the number of teen pregnancies has dropped. This is a result of social change and not governmental intervention. Wow, I now see Adam Smith's invisible hand at work! Who is responsible for this paradigm shift? The prolife movement and I must stand and applaud their actions in this regard.