

Public Opinion on Prostitution:
Trends, Comparisons, and Models

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Introduction

Since the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s, sexual attitudes have undergone complex and varied changes (Smith, 1990; 1994; 1996). Rather than uniformly moving in a permissive direction, the public views on sexual morality have moved in different directions, at different rates, and during different periods. For example, approval of premarital sex increased from the 1960s to the early 1980s and has showed little variation since, favorable views of homosexual sex grew only in the 1990s, and acceptance of extramarital sex actually declined over the last three decades. In addition, attitudes vary considerably from topic to topic. For example, while only 24% consider premarital sex "always wrong," 70% consider it such if it involves teenagers.

Thus, to understand how sexual morality in general has changed and what is approved of or rejected, one must specifically examine all facets. One important aspect about which little is known is public attitudes towards prostitution. While selling sex may be the world's oldest profession, research on public opinion regarding the practice and the laws regulating it are sparse (Weitzer, 1991; see also Milman, 1980). To help fill this void, this paper examines 1) attitudes toward prostitution, 2) trends in attitudes, 3) how evaluations of prostitution and prostitutes compare to other activities and groups, and 4) what socio-demographic factors shape attitudes towards the selling of sex.

Attitudes towards Prostitution

The public has generally been opposed to prostitution. First, over the last 20 years the public has typically rejected legalizing or decriminalizing prostitution (Tables 1 and 2). However, the level of support has varied considerably depending on how the issue is presented to the public. Support is greater when 1) positive rationales are presented (e.g. "to help reduce the spread of AIDS"), 2) the scope of prostitution is limited (e.g. "under certain restrictions," "limited...to just one district in any city or town"), 3) potential negatives are discounted (e.g. "health risks minimized" and between "consenting adults"), and 4) partial approval is permitted (e.g. "agree partly," "allowed, but regulated by law"). Support is reduced when 1) it's scope is not limited (e.g. "legalizing prostitution throughout the United States") and 2) it is described as coming close to the respondent (e.g. "in your state"). When one or more of the enhancing situations apply, support is typically about 40-55%. Questions with no enhancers or a negative factor mentioned usually find about 22-29% approving of prostitution's legalization.

Second, a plurality of the public (38-49%) considers prostitution to be a major problem although almost as many (31-36%) rate it as only a minor problem (Table 2). Similarly, a plurality (42-47%) says that it is "very important" that laws against prostitution are strictly enforced while another fifth find this "fairly important" (Table 2).

Third, few see prostitution as beneficial to the country. 60-64% say it is "never justified" and the percent considering it "harmful" outnumbers the share feeling it is "helpful" by from 5 to 17-to-1 (Table 2).

Fourth, in terms of how the law treats prostitution, most people favor the status quo. Only 12% think that prostitutes are treated unfairly by the law and another 16-23% think they are treated too leniently (Table 2). As for their customers, two quite different questions each found about half supporting the publication of the identities of "johns" (Table 1).

Trends

Available time series concerning prostitution are limited in terms of the number of trends, the span of years covered by most trends, and the number of observations per trend (Table 1). Approval of prostitution seems to have increased modestly in the 1970s. Then, support for prostitution generally declined in the 1980s and 1990s, except for one series showing an increase between 1981 and 1990 from 36% to 40% saying prostitution is sometimes justified.

Compared to What

In numerous surveys during the last 30 years prostitution or prostitutes have been implicitly compared to other activities and types of people. Table 3 summarizes the most frequent comparisons. While the position of the selling of sex vis a vis other behaviors depends on the date of the survey, the exact way the targets being evaluated are described, and the basis of the evaluation, the general standing of prostitution can be ascertained from these comparisons. Overall, prostitution is considered

- 1) more negatively than: abortion, adult, heterosexual sex, and gambling.
- 2) more positively than: atheism, extramarital sex, pornography, and youthful sex (by a slight margin).
- 3) sometimes more negatively and other times more positively than the following:
 - a) Alcohol - more negatively than social drinking, but more positively than alcoholism.
 - b) Drugs - more negatively than as a topic for school discussion and for the private use of marijuana, but generally more positively than soft or hard drug use and especially more positive than drug addiction.
 - c) Homosexuality - more positively, except in the earliest years.

d) Smoking - more negatively as a subject for school discussion and object for law enforcement, but more positively in that smoking is seen as a greater problem.

Among the many other comparisons prostitution/a prostitute is considered as less serious/wrong/harmful than a polluting factory, members of the American Communist party, hippies, welfare cheats, tax cheats, sexual harassers, having a child outside of marriage, riding a motorcycle without a helmet, illegal campaign contributions, drunk driving, and crooked lawyers. It is considered more serious/wrong/harmful than student demonstrators, working mothers, students more interested in sports than studies, divorce, keeping found money, interracial marriages, civil rights protests, euthanasia, and beatniks.

Second, a major study that had people evaluate the seriousness of a large number of crimes showed that on average people considered prostitution to be a minor crime (Wolfgang, et al., 1985). As the selective crimes reported in Table 4 indicate, a murder during a robbery is rated as over 20 times as serious and a simple assault or a mugging without physical harm are considered about 3 times as serious as being a prostitute. Table 4 also indicates that both pimping and running a house of prostitution are rated about 3 times as serious as being a prostitute (and thus about as serious as a simple assault or minor robbery). Engaging in prostitution is considered about as serious as minor shoplifting. Being the customer of a prostitute is rated as being a slightly less serious crime than being the seller.

In general, this indicates that the evaluation of prostitution/prostitutes is in the middle range of approval compared to other suspect practices and groups. First, in the sexual realm prostitution is more critically viewed than adult, heterosexual sex and homosexual sex (since the mid-1970s) and seen more favorably than extramarital sex, pornography, or youthful sex (by a slight margin). Thus, while most people have negative feelings towards the selling of sex, it is considered as one vice among many and is not as a target of particular condemnation. Second, in the criminal realm, prostitution is considered a petty crime, roughly comparable to shoplifting. Running prostitution (operating a house of prostitution and pimping) is considered much more serious a crime than the selling of sex by an individual sex worker and that in turn is thought of as slightly more serious than being a customer of a prostitute.

Correlates of Attitudes towards Prostitution

The literatures on sexual attitudes in general (Cutler, 1985; Klassen, Williams, and Levitt, 1989; McClosky and Brill, 1983; Posner, 1992; Reiss, 1980; Reiss, Anderson, and Sponaugle, 1980; Smith, 1994) and prostitution in particular (Barry, 1995; Davis, 1993; Miller, 1993; Milman, 1980; Rist, Haggerty, and Gibbons, 1994; Weitzer, 1991) indicate that support for prostitution will be greater among 1) the following demographic groups: men, members of

more recent cohorts, the unmarried, Blacks, the better educated, and those from cosmopolitan regions and communities, 2) the secular and religiously liberal, 3) those with permissive attitudes towards other sexual activities, 4) those with permissive lifestyles such as the acceptance of drugs and alcohol, 5) those less for strict law enforcement, 6) those against government regulations, 7) civil libertarians, and 8) feminists.¹

With only a few exceptions the bivariate analysis in Table 5, substantiates these expectations. It analyzes results from the 1996 General Social Survey (GSS), an in-person, full-probability sample of adults living in households (Davis and Smith, 1996). The GSS item, already introduced in Table 2, asks:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

There is nothing inherently wrong with prostitution, so long as the health risks can be minimized. If consenting adults agree to exchange money for sex, that's their business.

First, looking at the demographics indicates that prostitution is more accepted by men, the better educated, the unmarried,² and those from more cosmopolitan areas (metropolitan areas and the so-called bi-coastal regions (New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and Pacific)). Approval does not vary by age/cohort, race, or income. Second, on the religious dimension approval is higher among those who attend church less often, reject the divine inspiration of the Bible, belong to theologically liberal denominations, and have no religion or a weak attachment to a religion. Third, greater acceptance of premarital sex, teenage sex, extramarital sex, homosexual sex, and pornography are all related to approval of prostitution as is having seen an x-rated film in the last year. Fourth, prostitution is more supported by those with liberal values and permissive lifestyles. It is more backed by those self-identifying as politically liberal, those feeling that it is more important for a child to think for oneself than to obey his or her

¹The National Organization for Women called for the decriminalization of prostitution in the 1970s. But then a strong movement developed within feminism that condemned pornography and prostitution as exploiting women. On discussion of the relationship of feminism to commercial sex see Alexander, 1987; Basow and Campanile, 1990; Cowan, Case, and Stahly, 1989; McIntosh, 1996; Shrage, 1994; Smith, 1987.

²Among the married prostitution is more accepted by men in less than very happy marriage (Married Men who are Very Happy with their Marriage = 38.5% approve of prostitution vs. Married Men who are Not Very Happy = 55.3%, prob. = .001). Among married women, approval of prostitution does not vary by marital happiness (Very Happy = 27.5% approving; Not Very Happy = 23.6% approving).

parents, those who favor the legalization of marijuana, and those who go to bars. Fifth, those who favor more lenient courts and who oppose capital punishment are more supportive of prostitution. Sixth, attitudes regarding government regulation have only weak and variable relationships towards prostitution. Five of nine comparisons are not statistically significant and among the weak significant relationships two indicate that the pro-government group is more pro-prostitution and two indicated the opposite. Seventh, backing free speech for politically and socially deviant groups is associated with support for prostitution, but fears of having privacy compromised by a government data bank has only a very weak connection. Eighth, those who favor political equality and non-traditional gender roles for women are more supportive of prostitution. This is true for both men and women.³

Multivariate Models

Table 6 presents 10 multivariate, multi-regression models involved attitudes towards prostitution. Because of complex sub-setting of variables across different forms of the GSS (see Davis and Smith, 1996 for details) and other item-level non-response, it is not possible to enter all variables into one equation and the sample size varies across models.

Model1 is the basic demographic model. It indicates that approval of prostitution is greater among non-Blacks, men, non-rural residents, bi-coastal residents, and the better educated. Prostitution attitudes do not vary by age/cohort and does not differ between big cities and suburbs.

Models2-8 separately look at the seven different hypothesized factors described above in the bivariate analysis. Each set of variables are added to the demographics in Model1. In discussing these, attention will focus on the added variables, not the relationships between the demographics and approval of prostitution. Model2 shows that those who attend church infrequently and those rejecting the divine-inspiration of the Bible are more approving. Theological orientation of ones denomination and self-perceived religiousness are not independently related. Model3 indicates that all measures of sexual permissiveness (approval of various sexual behaviors, supporting the availability of pornography, and having seen an x-rated movie) are related to accepting prostitution. Model4 shows that liberal/non-traditional beliefs are associated with approving of prostitution. Specifically, approval is great among political liberals, those supporting the legalization of marijuana, and those favoring independence vs. obedience in children. Model5 indicates

³Men and women were looked at separately to see if feminist women were less supportive of allowing prostitution than non-feminist women. This was not the case. For both genders more feminist attitudes were associated with more support for prostitution.

that an anti-law-and-order stance is slightly related to accepting prostitution. Model6 confirms the bivariate analysis that found little connection between general opposition to government and views on the selling of sex. Model7 substantiates that civil libertarians are more approving of prostitution than others are. Finally, Model8 indicates that feminists on both family and political issues are more in favor of allowing prostitution.

Models9 and 10 include both the demographics and a range of variables from the seven factors separately analyzed in Models2-8. These models both find that approval of prostitution is greater among men, Blacks, and older respondents. Marital status, place of residence, and education are not related, although the greater approval of the better educated remains marginally significant in Model9. Religion is also a factor, but only infrequent church attendance remains a significant predictor. General sexual permissiveness is a strong predictor either alone (in Model9) or along with support for legalizing pornography (in Model10). Likewise, support of legalizing marijuana (in Model10) is associated with accepting prostitution. Also, marginally significant are greater support among frequent bar attenders (Model9) and favoring independent thinking in children (Model10). Attitudes toward feminism (Model9), civil liberties (Models9&10), government regulation (Models9&10), enforcing laws (Models9&10), and political liberalism (Models9&10) are not related.

The attitudinal predictors of allowing prostitution indicate that support mostly comes from 1) low religious involvement and approval of sexual permissiveness and 2) a permissive or pleasure-oriented viewpoint towards aspects of life (drugs and alcohol). That is, acceptance of prostitution is associated with a non-Puritanical perspective on life. There is also some evidence that individual choice is an element. This is not only part of the first two dimensions, but probably an ingredient in the association between favoring independent thinking in children and allowing prostitution. General political liberalism, support for civil liberties, and attitudes towards government regulation and law enforcement have no direct, independent affect on the acceptance of selling sex. Likewise, feminism is not related. This may in part be due to the off-setting tendencies of the initially dominant decriminalization viewpoint vs. the later exploitation perspective.

The demographic predictors of allowing prostitution indicate that men (the primary consumers) are more approving than women (the primary suppliers). The initial relationship is considerably reduced because men tend to be both less religious and more sexually permissive, so gender works through these intervening variables (see Models2,3,9&10). But these and other attitudes do not explain the entire gender difference. This may relate to the differential rate at which men and women engage in prostitution with many more men having been buyers than women having been

sellers (Smith, 1996).⁴

In addition, there is more support among Blacks than among non-Blacks. This is counter to the initial bivariate association, which showed no racial differences (Table 5), and the relationship in the demographic model (Table 6 -Modell), which showed greater support among non-Blacks. It appears that the religious and political ideologies of Blacks were suppressing a relationship that was revealed once they were controlled for.

Finally, age/cohort showed a changeable association. There was no difference in the bivariate and basic, demographic models and counter to expectations, the association that emerged in the final models indicated that older adults were more likely to support prostitution. The relationship emerges when religion, sexual morality, or feminism are controlled for. This may be the double-standard phenomenon noted by Kinsey. Prostitution may be more acceptable when pre-marital sex is less acceptable. That is, it maybe seen as a "necessary evil" to both satisfy the needs of young men and protect the virtue of (most) young women. This double standard may be more prevalent among members of earlier cohorts.

Conclusion

Most Americans are opposed to prostitution, although when presented in a relatively favorable light, as does the GSS item, approval of the selling of sex can approach a majority. Compared to other sexual behaviors, crimes, and various suspect and deviant activities, prostitution is typically seen as a minor vice. Approval probably increased modestly during the 1970s only to decline in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Prostitution is most opposed by those holding traditional religious beliefs and those against a pleasure-oriented perspective towards sex and drugs. Views on general government regulation or political ideology do not play a role except in conjunction with religious beliefs and attitudes towards sexual permissiveness. Likewise, feminism has no net independent impact on attitudes towards the selling of sex. The dominant perspective shaping attitudes towards prostitution is not libertarianism or individualism, but Puritanism.

⁴In the 1991-1996 GSSs 16.9% of men and 1.6% of women said they "ever had sex with a person you paid or who paid you for sex." Of the men who had participated in paid sell 72.6% approved of prostitution as opposed to only 44.2% of non-participants (prob. = .000). 100% of women who had engaged in commercial sex approved vs. 30.0% of those who had not participated (prob. = .000). However, since the number of women ever having engaged in paid sex was only 14, these figures can not be given great weight.

Table 1

Trends in Attitudes towards Prostitution

Harris: America has many different types of people in it. But we would like to know whether you think each of these different types of people is more helpful or more harmful to American life, or don't they help or harm things much one way or the other?

Prostitutes

	Harmful	No Difference	Helpful	Don't Know	
9/1965	70%	26	4	---	(1250)
9/1969	68.0%	18.3	6.3	7.4	(1886)
8/1970	56.6%	28.1	9.0	6.4	(3940) ^a

^aFigures were separately reported for men and women. This is the average of those separate figures.

Harris: Now let me ask you which, in your personal judgment, is worse, if you could only choose ONE?

- a) A factory that evades antipollution laws
- b) A house of prostitution
- c) Not sure

	Factory	Prostitution	Not sure	
5/1969	44.6%	41.0	14.4	(1570)
3/1971	50%	37	13	(1600)

Harris: Let me ask you about different types of people in this country. For each, tell me if you feel they do more good than harm, more harm than good or are neither helpful nor harmful to the country?

Prostitutes

	Harmful	No Difference	Helpful	Don't Know	
8/1973	46.2%	36.9	9.9	7.0	(1531)
1/1975	44.3%	40.8	7.4	7.4	(1542)

Table 1 (continued)

Roper: Now I'm going to name a few things people have said are problems in our society today. For each one I'd like to know whether you think it is a major problem, a minor problem, or really not a problem.

Prostitution

	Major Problem	Minor Problem	Not a Problem	Don't Know	
2/1974	38%	31	16	15	(1940)
2/1975	39%	36	16	9	(2003)
2/1976	44%	31	14	11	(2009)
4/1978	44%	35	18	8	(2002)
2/1980	49%	33	12	6	(2001)

Roper: Our system of justice was set up to provide equal justice for all, but it has been said that certain types of people do not get fair treatment before the law. Here are some of them.

Would you call off any that you think are not apt to be treated fairly by the law?

Are there any on that list you think the courts are too lenient with?

Prostitutes

	Not Treated Fairly	Too Lenient	
7/1976	12%	16%	(2002)
7/1987	12%	23%	(1997)

Harris: ...Please tell me which of the phrases on this card describes how you feel that activity should be treated--should it be left to the individual, should it be allowed, but regulated by law, or should it be totally forbidden by law?

Engaging in prostitution

	Left to Individual	Allowed, but Regulated	Totally Forbidden	Not Sure	
11-12/1978	35%	24	37	4	(1513)
1-2/1990	22%	31	46	1	(2254)

Table 1 (continued)

Roper: Of course we have all kinds of laws in our country that apply to a wide range of behavior and activities. The importance to our society of the strict enforcement of these laws may vary. Here is a list of just a few different kinds of laws. Would you read down that list and for each one tell me how important to society you feel it is that those laws be strictly enforced--very important, fairly important, not very important, or not at all important?

Laws prohibiting prostitution

	Very Important	Fairly Important	Not Very Important	Not at All Important	Don't Know	
3/1979	42%	23	18	14	4	(2004)
3/1981	42%	23	19	14	3	(2000)
3/1983	47%	22	10	10	3	(2000)

Gallup: Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card...point 1 = never justified through point 10 = always justified.

Prostitution

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	DK	
4-6/1981	64%	6	6	4	9	2	3	2	1	2	2	(2325)
5-6/1990	60%	7	8	5	9	4	2	1	1	2	1	(1827)

Table 2

Attitudes towards Prostitution

A. Legalization of Prostitution

	7/77	5-6/78	2/82	10/83	9/85	8-9/91	2-5/96	5/96
For	29-49	47	29	7-53	23	40	45	26
Against	45	30	63	43	72	55	52	70
Don't Know	6	23	8	4	6	5	2	3
	(1044)	(1993)	(----)	(1200)	(1014)	(1216)	(1399)	(1019)

Wordings:

Yankelovich: I'm going to read you a list of statements and I'd like you to tell me for each one whether you agree strongly, agree partly, or disagree with the statement.
It would be better if they legalized prostitution and limited it to just one district in any city or town. (20% agree strongly and 29% agree partly) (7/1977)

CLS: In dealing with prostitution, the government should: 1) License and regulate it, 2) Arrest or fine the people who have anything to do with it, 3) Neither, 4) Undecided? (5-6/1978)

Audits & Surveys: Would you favor or oppose legalizing prostitution throughout the United States? (2/1982)

Audits & Surveys: Which of the following best describes your feelings about prostitution in the U.S.?
It should be illegal, it should be legal under certain restrictions, there should be no laws against prostitution. (7% no laws and 46% legal under certain restrictions) (10/1983)

Yankelovich: Now I'd like to know how you feel about a number of important issues that face the country. Do you favor or oppose: The Legalization of prostitution. (9/1985)

Gallup: Some people feel that in order to help reduce the spread of AIDS, prostitution should be made legal and regulated by the government. Do you agree or disagree? (8-9/1991)

GSS: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
There is nothing inherently wrong with prostitution, so long as the health risks can be minimized. If consenting adults agree to exchange money for sex, that's their business. (2-5/1996)

Table 2 (continued)

Gallup: In your opinion, should prostitution involving adults aged 18 years of age and older be legal or illegal in your state? (5/1996)

B. Naming the Customers of Prostitutes

Harris: I am going to read you a list of different types of information that a newspaper might have. For each I would like you to tell me whether you would consider the publishing of this information to be an invasion of privacy or not.

The names of men who have been arrested for soliciting prostitutes.

	Invasion of Privacy	Not an Invasion of Privacy	Not Sure	
11/78	48.7%	47.3	3.9	(1509)

PSRA: Do you think men who are convicted of soliciting prostitutes should have their names and picture in the news so everyone would know, or don't you think this is a good idea?

	Should Have	Not a Good Idea	Don't Know	
1/1995	50%	45	5	(753)

Table 3

Comparing Prostitution to Other Activities

A. Homosexuality

Compared to...	Question	Year	Difference ^a
Homosexuals	#1	1965	+3
Homosexuals	#1	1969	+1
Homosexuals	#1	1970	+3
Homosexuals	#2	1973	+4
Homosexuals	#4	1976	-4
Homosexuals	#4	1987	-9
Discuss Homosexuality in Schools	#5	1977	-3
Discuss Homosexuality in Schools	#6	1977	+2
Homosexuals	#7	1977	-14
Homosexuals	#8	1978	-17
Homosexuals	#8	1990	-19
Homosexuals	#10	1981	-2
Homosexuals	#10	1990	-10
Politician is a Homosexual	#11	1989	-11

B. Drug Usage

Compared to...

Drug Addiction/ Use of Marijuana	#3	1974	+52/+29
Drug Addiction/ Use of Marijuana	#3	1975	+49/+22
Drug Addiction/ Use of Marijuana	#3	1976	+49/+17
Drug Addiction/ Use of Marijuana	#3	1978	+46/+14
Drug Addiction/ Use of Marijuana	#3	1980	+44/+21
Discuss the Use of Drugs in School	#5	1977	-19
Discuss the Use of Drugs in School	#6	1977	-5
Use of Hard Drugs/ Use of Marijuana	#7	1977	+26/-10
Smoking Marijuana in a Private Residence	#8	1978	-8
Smoking Marijuana in a Private Residence	#8	1990	+2
Use of Marijuana	#9	1979	+11

Table 3 (continued)

Compared to...	Question	Year	Difference
Use of Marijuana	#9	1981	+16
Use of Marijuana	#9	1983	+16
Taking Marijuana or Hashish	#10	1981	+4
Taking Marijuana or Hashish	#10	1990	+13
C. Abortion			
Abortion	#5	1977	-6
Abortion	#6	1977	-6
Having an Abortion	#8	1978	-16
Having an Abortion	#8	1990	-25
Abortion	#10	1981	-22
Abortion	#10	1990	-27
D. Extra-marital Sex			
Compared to...			
Infidelity among Men and Women	#7	1977	+15
Men/Women having an Affair	#10	1981	+2
Men/Women having an Affair	#10	1990	+12
Politician having an Extra-marital Affair	#11	1989	-16
E. Alcohol Usage			
Compared to...			
Social Drinking/ Alcoholism	#3	1974	-8/+40
Social Drinking/ Alcoholism	#3	1975	-9/+40
Social Drinking/ Alcoholism	#3	1976	-14/+40
Social Drinking/ Alcoholism	#3	1978	-13/+38
Social Drinking/ Alcoholism	#3	1980	-13/+33
Discuss Drinking Alcohol in School	#5	1977	-20
Discuss Drinking Alcohol in School	#6	1977	-5
Getting Drunk	#7	1977	-9

Table 3 (continued)

Compared to...	Questions	Year	Difference
Drunkenness	#12	1991	+19
F. Youthful Sex			
Sexual Relations among Teenagers	#7	1977	+2
Heterosexual Relations between Unmarried Adults	#8	1978	-24
Sex under the Age of Consent	#10	1981	0
Sex under the Age of Consent	#10	1990	+3
G. Smoking			
Cigarette Smoking	#3	1974	+13
Cigarette Smoking	#3	1975	+8
Cigarette Smoking	#3	1976	+17
Cigarette Smoking	#3	1978	+18
Cigarette Smoking	#3	1980	+10
Discuss Smoking in School	#5	1977	-22
Discuss Smoking in School	#6	1977	-16
Smoking in Public Places	#9	1979	-7
Smoking in Public Places	#9	1981	-6
Smoking in Public Places	#9	1983	-7
H. Gambling			
Compared to...			
Gambling	#3	1974	-7
Gambling	#3	1975	-3
Gambling	#3	1976	-5
Gambling	#3	1978	-9
Gambling	#3	1980	-10

Table 3 (continued)

Compared to...	Question	Year	Difference
I. Pornography			
Porn in Movies	#7	1977	+3
Selling Porn. Magazines and Films in Bookstores	#8	1978	+7
J. Adult, Heterosexual Sex			
Couples living together	#7	1977	-17
Unmarried adults	#8	1978	-24

^aA minus sign indicates that prostitution was rated more negatively than the reference activity and a plus sign that it was rated more positively. For example, in Question #1 in 1969, Homosexuals were considered more harmful than helpful by 69% and Prostitutes by 66%, so Prostitutes were rated more positively by 3 percentage points (69 - 66).

Questions:

1. Harris: America has many different types of people in it. But we would like to know whether you think each of these different types of people is more helpful or more harmful to American life, or don't they help or harm things much one way or the other? (1965, 69, 70)

2. Harris: Let me ask you about different types of people in this country. For each, tell me if you feel they do more good than harm, more harm than good or are neither helpful nor harmful to the country? (1973)

3. Roper: No I'm going to name a few things people have said are problems in our society today. For each one I'd like to know whether you think it is a major problem, a minor problem, or really not a problem. (1974, 75, 76, 78, 80)

4. Roper: Our system of justice was set up to provide equal justice for all, but it has been said that certain types of people do not get fair treatment before the law. Here are some of them. Would you call off any that you think are most apt to be treated fairly by the law? Are there any on that list you think the courts are too lenient with? (1976, 87)

5. Yankelevich: Do you think it is right or wrong for subjects such as _____ to be discussed freely and openly with pre-high school students? (1977)

Table 3 (continued)

6. Yankelovich: Do you think it is right or wrong for subjects such as _____ to be discussed freely and openly with high school students? (1977)

7. Yankelovich: Which of the following activities do you feel are morally wrong from your own personal point-of-view and which do you feel are not a moral issue? (1977)

8. Harris: ...Please tell me which of the phrases on this card describes how you feel that activity should be treated--should it be left to the individual, should it be allowed, but regulated by law, or should it be totally forbidden by law? (1978,90)

9. Roper: Of course we have all kinds of laws in our country that apply to a wide range of behavior and activities. The importance to our society of the strict enforcement of these laws may vary. Here is a list of just a few different kinds of laws. Would you read down that list and for each one tell me how important to society you feel it is that those laws be strictly enforced--very important, fairly important, not very important, or not at all important? (1979,81,83)

10. Gallup: Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card...point 1 = never justified through point 10 = always justified. (1981,90)

11. Black: Four U.S. Congressmen face ethics investigations in sex-related complaints. Which of the following would prevent you from voting for a candidate whose politics you otherwise liked? Would you vote for a candidate who... (1989)

12. Yankelovich: Do you think it would deter crime in your community of police officers spent more time dealing with... (1991)

Table 4

Severity of Crimes

A person robs a victim at gunpoint. The victim struggles and is shot to death	43.2
A person robs a victim of \$1,000 at gunpoint. The victim is wounded and requires hospitalization.	21.0
A person robs a victim of \$10 at gunpoint. The victim is wounded and requires hospitalization.	17.9
A person robs a victim of \$1,000 at gunpoint. The victim is wounded and requires treatment by a doctor, but not hospitalization.	15.7
A person threatens to harm a victim unless the victim gives him money. The victim gives him \$1,000 and is not harmed.	10.3
A person robs a person of \$1,000 at gunpoint. No physical harm occurs.	9.4
A person, using force, robs a victim of \$10. The victim is hurt and requires treatment, but not hospitalization.	6.7
A person gets customers for a prostitute.	6.4
A person beats a victim with his fists. The victim requires treatment by a doctor, but not hospitalization.	6.2
A person runs a prostitution racket.	6.1
A person, using force, robs a victim of \$10. No physical harm occurs.	
A person steals \$10 worth of merchandise from the counter of a department store.	2.2
A woman engages in prostitution.	2.1
A person steals property worth \$10 from outside a building.	1.7
A person is a customer in a house of prostitution.	1.6
A person breaks into a parking meter and steals \$10 worth of nickels.	1.6

Source: Wolfgang, et al., 1985.

Table 5

Bivariate Correlates of Attitudes towards Prostitution

A. Demographics

Variable (High value)	r	Prob.	Pro-Prostitution
Gender (Female)	.220	.000	Males
Age (Older)	.040	.134	ND
Marital Status	--- ^a	.000	Not Married
Race	---	.614	ND
Years @ School (20)	-.107	.000	College-educated
Income (\$75,000+)	-.049	.351	ND
Region	---	.003	Bi-coastal
Region Raised in	---	.003	Bi-coastal
Size of Place (Rural)	-.061	.001	Suburbs
Place raised	---	.009	Not on Farm

B. Religion

Attend Church (Weekly+)	.344	.000	Never
Bible (Fables, etc.)	-.351	.000	Fables
Theology (Liberal)	-.283	.000	Liberal
Religion	---	.000	No Religion
Religiousness (None)	-.300	.000	None

C. Sexual Attitudes

Premarital sex (Not Wrong at All)	-.417	.000	Not Wrong at All
Teenage sex (Not wrong at All)	-.313	.000	Not Wrong at All
Extramarital sex (Not wrong at All)	-.305	.000	Not Wrong at All
Homosexual sex (Not wrong at All)	-.313	.000	Not Wrong at All
Sexual Permissive scale (Permissive)	-.432	.000	Permissive
Pornography (Legal)	-.370	.000	Legal
X-rated Film (Not Seen)	.258	.000	Seen

D. Liberal/Permissive Life Styles and Values

Legalize Marijuana (No)	.304	.000	Yes
Visit Bar (Never)	.211	.000	Daily
Child Obeys (5th Rank)	-.198	.000	Obeys Ranked First
Child Think for Self (5th Rank)	.151	.000	Think Ranked Last
Political Ideology (Extreme Conservative)	.145	.000	Liberal

Table 5 (continued)

E. Law and Order

Courts (Be Tougher) Law or Conscience	.084	.031	Too Tough Now
(Conscience)	-.118	.000	Follow Conscience

F. Government and Government Regulation

Confidence in Executive (Hardly Any)	.011	.165	ND
Confidence in Congress (Hardly Any)	.017	.061	ND
Power of Fed. Govt. (Far too Little)	-.012	.475	ND
Taxes and Spending (Spend Social Wel.)	.031	.027	Reduce taxes
Cut Govt. Spending (Strong Against)	.038	.009	In favor of
Taxes (Too Low)	.051	.247	ND
Less Reg. of Business (Strongly Against)	.049	.022	Strongly For
Govt. Involvement (Too Much)	.014	.043	Govt. Do More
Anti-Govt. Scale (Pro-Government)	.036	.222	ND

G. Civil Liberties

Govt. Data Bank (Not Threat to Privacy)	.031	.000	Very Serious
2-item Scale (Restrict)	.203	.000	Free Speech
15-item Scale (Restrict)	.258	.000	Free Speech

H. Feminism

Family Scale (Modern)	-.101	.002	Modern Role
Political Scale (Modern)	-.135	.000	Modern Role

*Not: Pearson's r is reported for nominal variables.

ND=No statistically significant differences across groups.

Scales:

Feminism and Family: a four-item, additive scale (FEHELP+FEFAM+
FEPRESCH+FECHLD) that runs from a score of 4 for someone who
takes the traditional position that women should stay in the
home and raise the children on all items to a score of 16 for
someone who takes the modern position on each.

Table 5 (continued)

Feminism and Politics: A three-item, additive scale (FEPRES+FEPOL+

FEHOME) that runs from a score of 3 for someone who is opposed to women in politics on all items to a score of 6 for someone who favors women in politics on each item.

Civil Liberties, Two-Items: Runs from 2 for someone who is in favor of letting a revolutionary speak and publish a book (REVSPEAK+REVPUB) to a score of 8 for someone who is opposed to both activities.

Civil Liberties, 15-Items: Runs from 5 for someone who is in favor of letting a Communist, militarist, homosexual, atheist, and racist speak, have a book in a library, and teach in college (COLRAC+COLMIL+COLHOMO+COLATH+COLCOM+LIBRAC+LIBMIL+LIBHOMO+LIBATH+LIBCOM+SPKRAC+SPKMIL+SPKHOMO+SPKATH+SPKCOM) to a score of 30 for someone who opposes each.

Anti-Government: a four-item, additive scale that runs from 4.5 for someone who is against more government (e.g. against more spending, power, and regulations) to 19.5 for someone who is for more government for each item (TAXSPEND+LESSREG+CUTGOVT+GOVTPOW).

Sexual Permissiveness: a four-item, additive and imputed scale that runs from 4 for someone who thinks premarital, teenage, extramarital, and homosexual sex (PREMARSX+TEENSEX+XMARSEX+HOMOSEX) are always wrong to 16 for someone who thinks they are not wrong at all. Because these items were not all asked on the same ballots, a general sexual permissiveness score was estimated based on the sub-sets that appeared together.

Table 6

Multivariate Correlates of Attitudes towards Prostitution

(Standardized Coefficient/Prob.)

Variables (High)	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4
Race (Black)	.062/.019	-.031/.331	.011/.722	-.008/.810
Sex (Female)	.218/.000	.136/.000	.144/.000	.227/.000
Age/Cohort (Older)	.005/.837	-.069/.035	-.090/.004	.004/.890
Marital (Not Married)	-.131/.000	-.026/.425	-.059/.055	-.067/.032
Size of Place				
Big City	.002/.940	-.017/.625	.028/.409	-.018/.602
Rural	.071/.018	.027/.469	.073/.033	.067/.055
Region				
Northeast	-.063/.022	-.059/.083	-.023/.464	-.038/.231
West	-.066/.015	-.037/.266	.021/.505	.011/.723
Education (More)	-.081/.002	-.078/.022	-.071/.020	-.054/.089
Attend (Weekly+)	----	.205/.000	----	----
Theology (Liberal)	----	-.030/.425	----	----
Religiousness (None)	----	-.073/.092	----	----
Bible (Fables)	----	-.171/.000	----	----
Sex. Permissive (Perm.)	----	----	-.289/.000	----
Pornography (Legal)	----	----	-.192/.000	----
X-rated Movie (Not Seen)	----	----	.116/.000	----
Pol. Ideology (Ex. Con.)	----	----	----	.074/.019
Legalize Marijuana (No)	----	----	----	.230/.000
Visit Bar (Never)	----	----	----	----
Child Obeys (5th Rank)	----	----	----	.142/.000
Child Thnks Self (5th)	----	----	----	.063/.044
Law/Conscience (Con.)	----	----	----	----
Courts (Be Tougher)	----	----	----	----
Anti-Gov Scale (Pro-Gov)	----	----	----	----
2-item Civ Lib (Restrct)	----	----	----	----
15item Civ Lib (Restrct)	----	----	----	----
Fem Family Scale (Mod.)	----	----	----	----
Fem Pol. Scale (Mod.)	----	----	----	----
R ²	.084	.193	.270	.181
N	1395	832	843	907

Table 6 (continued)

Variables (High)	Model5	Model6	Model7	Model8
Race (Black)	.064/.026	.029/.312	.088/.013	.054/.090
Sex (Female)	.197/.000	.192/.000	.164/.000	.227/.000
Age/Cohort (Older)	-.024/.399	-.011/.698	-.057/.114	-.095/.005
Marital (Not Married)	-.096/.001	-.120/.000	-.098/.006	-.117/.000
Size of Place				
Big City	-.012/.694	.022/.946	.022/.565	-.008/.810
Rural	.074/.024	.073/.026	.049/.235	.081/.027
Region				
Northeast	-.065/.029	-.054/.069	.000/.999	-.091/.006
West	-.048/.104	-.071/.017	-.101/.005	-.087/.009
Education (More)	-.053/.069	-.072/.012	.085/.023	-.074/.024
Attend (Weekly+)	----	----	----	----
Theology (Liberal)	----	----	----	----
Religiousness (None)	----	----	----	----
Bible (Fables)	----	----	----	----
Sex. Permissive (Perm.)	----	----	----	----
Pornography (Legal)	----	----	----	----
X-rated Movie (Not Seen)	----	----	----	----
Pol. Ideology (Ex. Con.)	----	----	----	----
Legalize Marijuana (No)	----	----	----	----
Visit Bar (Never)	----	----	----	----
Child Obeys (5th Rank)	----	----	----	----
Child Thnks Self (5th)	----	----	----	----
Law/Conscience (Con.)	-.057/.048	----	----	----
Courts (Be Tougher)	-.056/.049	----	----	----
Anti-Gov Scale (Pro-Gov)	----	.011/.698	----	----
2-item Civ Lib (Restrct)	----	----	.162/.000	----
15item Civ Lib (Restrct)	----	----	.170/.000	----
Fem Family Scale (Mod.)	----	----	----	-.072/.046
Fem Pol. Scale (Mod.)	----	----	----	-.117/.002
R ²	.074	.066	.134	.110
N	1200	1199	756	925

Table 6 (continued)

Variables (High)	Model9	Model10
Race (Black)	-.119/.001	-.075/.034
Sex (Female)	.078/.039	.107/.004
Age/Cohort (Older)	-.157/.000	-.092/.014
Marital (Not Married)	.041/.276	.000/.981
Size of Place		
Big City	-.022/.586	-.000/.998
Rural	-.018/.666	.060/.123
Region		
Northeast	-.030/.432	-.000/.997
West	-.065/.089	.036/.320
Education (More)	-.074/.067	-.051/.171
Attend (Weekly+)	.118/.013	.140/.003
Theology (Liberal)	-.043/.309	-.072/.068
Religiousness (None)	-.076/.125	-.072/.134
Bible (Fables)	-.071/.108	----
Sex. Permissive (Perm.)	-.275/.000	-.138/.001
Pornography (Legal)	----	-.173/.000
X-rated Movie (Not Seen)	----	.046/.228
Pol. Ideology (Ex. Con.)	.001/.970	-.025/.497
Legalize Marijuana (No)	----	.155/.000
Visit Bar (Never)	.074/.059	----
Child Obeys (5th Rank)	----	-.057/.134
Child Thnks Self (5th)	----	.069/.057
Law/Conscience (Con.)	-.029/.443	.046/.210
Courts (Be Tougher)	----	----
Anti-Gov Scale (Pro-Gov)	.020/.597	.050/.156
2-item Civ Lib (Restrct)	.021/.597	.044/.237
15item Civ Lib (Restrct)	----	----
Fem Family Scale (Mod.)	-.002/.957	----
Fem Pol. Scale (Mod.)	-.003/.947	----
R ²	.252	.295
N	631	643

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