

Debating Abortion, Deliberative Reciprocity and Parliamentary Advocacy

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An influential model of deliberative democracy advances a principle of reciprocity as a norm of democratic debate on morally controversial issues. This norm is at odds with behaviour that has been observed in political campaigning and policy making where advocates of competing positions talk past one another. Does this inconsistency stem from a contrast between the normative and empirical or from not considering empirically plausible practices of democratic debate in which reciprocity might be respected? One such practice is free votes on conscience issues in the UK parliament. This article examines six second reading debates in the UK House of Commons on abortion legislation to assess whether, in favourable circumstances, political debate is consistent with reciprocity. Utilising computer-aided text analysis, via the Alceste program, it finds no gross departure from the norm of reciprocity, suitably operationalised, but neither does it find complete conformity to the norm of reciprocity. Because advocacy is an important component of political representation, deliberative norms are qualified in practice.

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According to theorists of deliberative democracy, democratic politics ought not to be thought of as a pluralistic competition of interests or a mere aggregation of preferences but as a process of public reasoning governed by norms (see, for example, Bohman and Rehg, 1997; Dryzek, 2000; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; 2004). In one influential version of this theory, a political association satisfying the requirements of deliberative democracy is said to be one in which members of the association are disposed to seek fair terms of cooperation with one another (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996, p. 53). Fairness is especially important when issues involve persistent moral disagreement, such that consensus cannot be expected, an obvious example of which is abortion policy. If public reasoning cannot be expected to produce a consensus, fairness still imposes obligations of civility on those debating with one another about legislation.

Yet how is such fairness to be specified? In answer to this question, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson advance a principle of reciprocity (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996, p. 55), which itself can be understood as involving three further elements. The first is that the reasons political actors advance in favour of their preferred policy should aim to be as widely acceptable as possible. As Gutmann and Thompson (2004, p. 7) say, '[c]itizens and their representatives should try to find justifications that minimize their differences with their opponents'. If this principle is followed in political decision making, legitimacy will be promoted, hard choices made more acceptable, public-spiritedness promoted, mutual respect maintained and mistakes corrected (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004, pp. 10–2). Reciprocal reasoning about ethically controversial questions acknowledges the moral status of those who hold a different position (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004, p. 85) and within representative systems such reason giving fosters the values of publicity and accountability.



A second element of reciprocity is the bringing together of partial understandings. According to Gutmann and Thompson (2004, p. 29), by 'their nature, reasonable differences contain partial understandings' of which each 'alone is likely to be mistaken if taken comprehensively, all together are likely to be incoherent if taken completely, but all together are likely to be instructive if taken partially'. Implicit in this conception of public deliberation is a dimensional analysis. Moral problems are complex and contain different dimensions of evaluation. Different understandings of these issues are likely to focus on only a sub-set of all relevant considerations, and while we cannot simply amalgamate understandings, we need to consider the contribution that each can make to the whole problem.

The third element of reciprocity is the view that 'citizens should accept the broader implications of the principles presupposed by their moral position', so that for example anyone opposed to abortion ought to be in favour of adequate programmes of financial support to promote the well-being of children (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004, p. 82). Reciprocity imposes a consistency requirement on moral reasoning. Those who are 'pro-life' in respect of abortion ought to support public programmes that maintain life and human flourishing across the different domains of public policy.

These normative claims of wide acceptability, the bringing together of partial understandings and consistency in respect of broader implications, are strong in themselves, but they are even stronger when considered in the light of empirical findings about the behaviour and practices of representative politics. Empirical studies of party campaigning, as well as accounts of the policy process, stress the extent to which policy discussion involves representatives talking past one another in ways that fail to correspond to the norm of reciprocity. Three bodies of analysis stand out in this regard.

The first is the work of the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) (Budge *et al.*, 2001). The basic insight of the CMP is that political campaigning takes place by parties placing relative emphasis upon some issues and themes and not others. Because parties 'own' various issues, they do not take up a simple for or against position on matters of public policy, but instead stress certain themes in relation to matters on which they think they have the political advantage. For example, if a party wishes to place emphasis upon defence policy, it will stress in its manifesto such themes as the need to maintain military expenditure, modernise the armed forces and uphold treaty obligations. Conversely, if a party wishes to downplay defence policy, it will stress the importance of peaceful means of resolving international disputes or the desirability of countries joining in negotiations with hostile countries (Budge *et al.*, 2001, p. 222).

The second body of relevant work is William Riker's (1996) account of campaigning in the ratification of the US Constitution.¹ Although developed independently of the CMP project, it is consistent with the CMP method (McLean, 2006, pp. 130–1) and it finds that in the public debates about ratification, partisans stressed different themes. Federalists emphasised the crisis for the Union in the event of a failure of ratification, the need to defend the Constitution, the dangers of populist legislatures and the success of the federalist campaign. Anti-federalists stressed the dangers to liberty inherent in centralising government with a concomitant emphasis upon the threat to the states in consolidation (Riker, 1996, p. 253). For Riker these patterns of rhetoric were to be understood in terms of his dominance and dispersion principles. When one side has the advantage in an issue in terms

of popular support, the dominance principle suggests that the other side will ignore that issue. When neither side has an advantage, the dispersion principle suggests that both sides will abandon that issue (Riker, 1996, pp. 99–125). In consequence, political parties talk past one another.

The third body of work identifying lack of mutual engagement concerns advocacy coalitions in policy making (Sabatier, 1987; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). On this account, deliberation about public policy takes place in policy networks or communities and typically involves long-standing coalitions of actors, who are held together by core beliefs in terms of which particular policy proposals are evaluated. At the deep core are beliefs about human nature, the character of society and the role of politics. At the near core stand fundamental ideological assumptions about the appropriate choice of policy instruments, for example the use of markets versus other means of achieving public goals. At the periphery stand beliefs about such matters as implementation or the details of legislation. However, rather than policy deliberation opening up decision premises to scrutiny, it is these decision premises that shape whether or not policy measures are to be supported. Partisans talk past one another, and only the existence of a neutral apolitical forum provides the chance to bring competing views together (Sabatier, 1987, pp. 679–80; compare Weale, 1992, for some illustrations).

Putting the claims of deliberative democratic theory alongside these empirical findings, we have a seeming contradiction. On the one side, we have an influential body of deliberative theory containing claims about the norms that should govern politics. On the other side, we have behavioural studies that suggest generalisations about the way policy deliberation and discussion take place which underline the extent to which practice is at odds with these norms. Can we reconcile these competing perspectives? One obvious form of reconciliation would be to stress the extent to which the claims of deliberative democratic theory are normative or prescriptive while the behavioural evidence is empirical. There is always a gap between 'is' and 'ought'. Indeed, the opposition one finds in the work of some deliberative theorists to so-called aggregative accounts of democracy rests in part upon scepticism about the capacity of electoral competition to deliver accountability and publicly orientated deliberation. For example, John Dryzek (2001, pp. 653–4) notes of electoral campaigns that 'deliberation often has to be subordinated to strategy in the interests of winning', an account that would be entirely compatible with the CMP/Riker view of campaigning. Similarly, Gutmann and Thompson (2004, p. 49) draw attention to the distortion in public discourse induced by inequalities in campaign financing in the US.

Yet a wide, persistent and inexplicable gap between the norms of deliberative democracy and the practices of democratic politics would be troubling both empirically and normatively. Although deliberative democracy is an aspirational ideal, it should be possible to identify practices and institutions that to some extent conform to the principle of reciprocity. Gutmann and Thompson themselves draw upon a UK House of Commons debate about health care rationing to illustrate how deliberative norms are sometimes embodied in discussions on public policy (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004, ch. 3). So rather than contrasting the normative and the empirical, an alternative approach is to consider the range of variation in the empirical cases and to ask under what conditions we might expect

institutions of policy debate to be most likely to embody deliberative norms. When might political deliberation of a reciprocal sort take place in the making of public decisions? Where might we look for conditions consistent with the requirement that the parties to a disagreement engage with one another's point of view?

No actual political practice is likely to meet the high standards of deliberative reciprocity. However, legislative debates among parliamentarians when no party discipline is enforced, as in second reading debates in free votes on matters of conscience in the UK parliament, might be expected, *a priori*, to come closer than many other alternatives to matching those standards. Although the distinction between conscience and non-conscience issues is not clear-cut and may change over time (Jones, 1995), what are usually called conscience debates in the UK parliament coincide in large measure with the sorts of issues that Gutmann and Thompson identify as matters of moral disagreement. Conscience issues are treated as matters for a free vote in parliament in part because opinions on how to resolve them cut across party lines and are of special significance to parliamentarians as individuals. They almost invariably arise as a result of private members' bills. The absence of a party whip on such votes means that MPs are not forced into voting in a way that may override their considered view of the matter at hand. Moreover, MPs, as a group, are used to formulating and confidently expressing their views, so that we have reason to expect elaborated reasoning and policy argumentation in their debates. This is not to say that free votes on matters of conscience are untainted by partisan affiliation. Indeed, party affiliation has been shown on a number of issues to be an important predictor of vote (Cowley, 1998, p. 188; Hibbing and Marsh, 1987; Marsh and Read, 1988, ch. 5). But if we are looking for the *closest* approximation of the institutional and normative setting for deliberative practice, involving reciprocal reasoning, we have as good a chance as we can reasonably expect of finding it in these sorts of debates.

Such debates are typically preceded by many months of more general public discussion, in which the relevant considerations are elaborated by the media and interest groups (Cowley, 1998, p. 190; Marsh and Chambers, 1981, ch. 2 and pp. 189–92). Abortion debates are heavily lobbied by partisan groups. All the bills leading to the second reading debates we have examined led to extensive mobilisation on both sides (see, for example, Lovenduski, 1986). MPs speaking in these debates often see themselves as advocating views in line with those of groups whose opinions and values they share. In this respect they are acting the role of what Jane Mansbridge (2003) has called 'surrogate' representative, that is to say representation by an elected official with whom particular groups of citizens have no direct electoral connection, but who nonetheless articulates the point of view of those citizens, an issue to which we return in our conclusions.

Methods of Analysis

Given these conditions, how far do debates leading to free votes on moral issues exhibit the principle of reciprocity that Gutmann and Thompson advance? To examine this issue we consider six debates on abortion law conducted in the House of Commons between 1966 and 1988. Abortion is a prime example of a policy question on which there is persistent moral disagreement, and is used as such as a running example by Gutmann and Thompson themselves.

Table 1: Commons Debates included in Analysis

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Type of debate</i> | <i>Initiator</i> | <i>Party</i> | <i>Government</i> |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 22 July 1966 | Second Reading | Steel | Liberal | Labour (Wilson) |
| 13 Feb. 1970 | Second Reading | Irvine | Conservative | Labour (Wilson) |
| 7 Feb. 1975 | Second Reading | White | Labour | Labour (Wilson) |
| 25 Feb. 1977 | Second Reading | Benyon | Conservative | Labour (Callaghan) |
| 13 July 1979 | Second Reading | Corrie | Conservative | Conservative (Thatcher) |
| 22 Jan. 1988 | Second Reading | Alton | Liberal Democrat | Conservative (Thatcher) |

Table 1 provides a listing of the relevant debates, beginning with the 1966 debate on the Steel bill, the formative debate for contemporary UK policy on abortion. Since those opposed to a liberal abortion policy have tried on a number of occasions to make the law more restrictive, we can observe the evolution of the debate over time, rather than focusing upon one particular parliamentary occasion, and we examine five subsequent debates that sought to reform the law in a more restrictive direction.² Our aim in selecting these debates is not to assess how far institutions and political culture induce deliberative quality, although that is an important enterprise in itself (Steiner *et al.*, 2004). Rather, we are concerned to explore whether there are conditions in which reciprocal argumentation exists, even where there are disagreements on moral and political questions. We control for the type of debate by considering only second reading debates on private members' bills, although we have also conducted a similar analysis (not reported here) on the debates amending abortion provisions as part of the government's legislation on human fertilisation and embryology in 1990 in which we find consistent results.

Our approach is to analyse these debates using automated content analysis, an approach that is receiving increasing attention according to a number of different applications (see Bara, 2001a; 2001b; 2006; Bara, Weale and Bicquelet, 2007; Laver and Garry, 2000; Laver *et al.*, 2003; Proksch and Slapin, 2010; Schonhardt-Bailey, 2005; 2006; 2008a; 2008b). We use the procedures contained in the Alceste program (see Reinert, 2005 and Appendix S1 for a more detailed discussion). Alceste does not require the researcher to specify a dictionary, but instead uses its own dictionary to search for the co-occurrence of those content words (like 'abortion') that give meaning to a text, discarding function words that serve a purely grammatical purpose (for example, 'that'). Analysis is conducted on a gauged sentence, a unit of expression that has grammatical and lexical coherence and in which propositions are advanced. Alceste groups these sentences together with one another according to a measure of distance, a measure that has statistical properties similar to the χ^2 measure of statistical significance but where the value calculated is treated as a metric of distance. Initially, two groups of sentences are separated comprising the greatest measure of difference, and each of these classes is further separated to the point where no major partitionings would be justified because resulting classes would be too close. Sentences are therefore grouped into classes and each class can be thought of as a dimension of debate, in the sense that specific words are associated with that class to a greater or lesser degree. Alceste should be regarded as an exploratory tool rather than a method of hypothesis

testing. Hypothesis testing in relation to parliamentary debates is difficult, because it is not clear what a null hypothesis would be, since speaker interactions are not logically independent events, but occur in conformity with the patterns of argumentation available within political culture more broadly.

Alceste does not substitute for the substantive interpretation of meaning by a competent language speaker, but enables such speakers to explore the structural characteristics of a debate relevant to theories that impose normative requirements on deliberation. The identification of the classes into which the sentences in the debate fall is a purely statistical matter, relying solely upon the formal properties of the co-occurrence of key terms in the debate, but the content of the characteristic sentences associated with each class allows a competent language speaker to give a substantive interpretation to these statistically defined categories.

Alceste also conducts a correspondence analysis. Correspondence analysis is an exploratory statistical technique providing a simultaneous analysis of rows and columns in a two-way data table (Greenacre, 1994) and it is one of a wide family of such techniques (Nishisato, 2007, ch. 3). It provides a two-dimensional plot of multidimensional data in such a way as to account maximally for the variance in the data. In the case of textual data, this two-dimensional plot combines the terms most typical of a class of sentences together with a plot of the location of individual speakers thought of as occupying a linguistic space defined by their use of terms. Such an analysis is central to our research question. If speakers on different sides of the debate are clustered around the same groups of sentences, we have evidence of a necessary condition of reciprocal engagement. By contrast, if speakers on different sides are disproportionately associated with particular themes, we have evidence of a debate in which participants talk past one another.

The 1966 Debate

We begin the analysis with a discussion of the second reading debate of 22 July 1966 on the private members' bill introduced by David Steel, which led to the 1967 legislation determining subsequent public policy. Before 1967 abortion was governed by the Offences against the Person Act of 1861, which made it a criminal offence to use any unlawful substance or instrument to secure a miscarriage. However, because the Act did not define what an unlawful substance or instrument might be, the law developed through a series of cases, the most important of which was that of *Bourne* in 1938, in which a judge directed the jury that a medical practitioner would be acting lawfully if he was convinced that without an abortion the woman would be seriously harmed either physically or mentally. As case law, this left the conditions unclear as to when an abortion could be lawfully undertaken. The Steel bill, therefore, could be understood as an attempt to specify more precisely in statute the conditions under which an abortion would be lawful. The bill gave statutory effect to the case law defence, added a condition that permitted abortion when the social circumstances of the mother were adverse, specified that the need for the operation should be certified by two medical practitioners, and imposed a 28-week term on permissible abortions.

For the 1966 debate, the descending hierarchical classification in Alceste identifies five dimensions of the debate, which broadly fall into two classes: substantive and procedural. Table 2 gives a listing and interpretation of the dimensions, together with a sample of

Table 2: Classes of Argument in 1966 Debate (the First Ten χ^2 Values, Key Words in Bold)**Class 1: The Grounds of Legislation (15%)**

Jenkins, $\chi^2 = 64$: I deal, first, with the provision in **clause 1, l, b**, that a **pregnancy** may be terminated where there is a **substantial risk** that if the **child** were born it would **suffer** from such **physical or mental abnormalities** as to be **seriously handicapped**.

McNamara, $\chi^2 = 56$: nor should one forget that **under this clause** many a **normal child** may be sacrificed in order to **avoid the risk of bearing a handicapped child**. it is too high a **risk to run** and it is too high a price to pay. **subsection, l, c**, contains the **phrases** capacity as a **mother** and **severely overstrained**.

Hobson, $\chi^2 = 52$: **subsection b**, deals with the **question** of the **possible risk** that a **child** may be **born** subject to a **physical or mental abnormality** and may be **seriously handicapped**.

Stevas, $\chi^2 = 52$: **subsection, 2**, is very **different**. it provides for abortion if there is a **substantial risk** that the **child** may **suffer** from **physical or mental abnormalities** so as to be **seriously handicapped**.

Lyons, $\chi^2 = 51$: **clause 1, l, fc**, is particularly welcome. it permits the **termination** of **pregnancy** when there is **substantial risk** of a **child** emerging with **serious physical and mental abnormalities**.

Steel, $\chi^2 = 45$: would involve **serious risk** to the life or of **grave injury to health**, whether **physical or mental**, of the **pregnant mother**, whether before, at or after the **birth** of the **child**;

Lyons, $\chi^2 = 45$: it is also **unlawful to terminate** where the **mother** has **suffered rubella german measles in early pregnancy**, yet the **deformity** rate from such **pregnancies** is said to be **30 per cent**.

Jenkins, $\chi^2 = 45$: where/the **continuance** of the **pregnancy** would involve **serious risk** to the life or of **grave injury to the health**, whether **physical or mental**, of the **pregnant woman**.

Wells, $\chi^2 = 41$: one of the fundamental objections to the **clause** is that it makes doctors arbiters not of **medical** questions, but of social ones. **paragraph, d**, **states**: that the **pregnant woman** is a **defective or became pregnant while under the age of sixteen or became pregnant as a result of rape**.

Hobson, $\chi^2 = 41$: if, however, the reason is given that there is a strong **possibility** that the **mother** being a **defective** may **suffer serious consequences** as a **result** of having the **child**, why cannot she be dealt with **under paragraph, a**?

Class 2: The Rhetoric of Debate (10%)

Stevas, $\chi^2 = 83$: and **learned member** for **walsall, north, mr. william wells**, who **moved** the amendment, and, in **particular**, my **hon. friend** the **member** for **birmingham, edgbaston, mrs. knight**, who **spoke** very **movingly**. after all, a woman has much more **right to speak** in this debate than has any other **hon.**

Dunwoody, $\chi^2 = 76$: the **hon. member** for **roxburgh, selkirk** and **peebles, mr. david steel**, **said** that he had no children of his own and remarks were **made** by my **hon. and learned friend** the **member** for **walsall, north** about how he might **feel** if he had a **daughter**.

Short, $\chi^2 = 65$: **friend** the **member** for **bradford, east, mr. edward lyons**, on his **maiden speech**. as the **hon. member** for **stratford on avon, mr. maude**, **said**, it was a difficult occasion on which to **make a maiden speech**, and my **hon. friend** acquitted himself **extremely well**.

McNamara, $\chi^2 = 59$: I only **made** the **point** because of what the **hon. member** for **roxburgh, selkirk** and **peebles, mr. david steel**, **said** in **moving** the second reading.

Table 2: *Continued*

Stevas, $\chi^2 = 54$: **member**. I hope, **mr. speaker**, that **the hon. lady the member** for wolverhampton, **north east**, **mrs. renee short**, will catch your **eye** when I have **concluded**. at the outset, I **want to make** my own **position plain**. I am not a **member** of a cabal, as the hon. **member** for pontypool, **mr.**

Pannell, $\chi^2 = 53$: I do not **think** that the **right hon. and learned** gentleman is stating the **position fairly**. my **hon. friend the member** for **falmouth and camborne, dr. john dunwoody**, did not **want to solve** social and **economic** problems. he **wanted to solve**, as a doctor, the impact of a social or **economic** problem upon his patient.

Stevas, $\chi^2 = 53$: **member** for **roxburgh, selkirk and peebles, mr. david steel**, on the **manner** in which he **introduced** the bill, which he did with extraordinary moderation and skill, and I should also like to **congratulate the hon.**

Vickers, $\chi^2 = 50$: she is **anxious** not to **create** further problems for herself. I am glad that the **hon. and learned member** for **walsall, north, mr. william wells**, has returned to the chamber, because I did not **think** that he **made** a very good case for his **point** of view.

Vickers, $\chi^2 = 48$: I have **pleasure** in supporting the bill, and I **congratulate the hon. member** for **roxburgh, selkirk and peebles, mr. david steel**, on the way in which he **introduced** it.

Speaker, $\chi^2 = 46$: before I **call the hon. member** for **roxburgh, selkirk and peebles, mr. david steel**, to **move** the second reading of the bill, may I **make** an announcement. so far, 32 **right hon. and hon. members** seek to catch my **eye** in this debate. **members** can help each other and help the case for and against the bill by **speaking briefly**.

Class 3: The Sanctity of Life (7%)

Stevas, $\chi^2 = 89$: of **course**, there is scope for **argument** about when the right to **life begins**, but it is of **profound** significance that modern microbiology has confirmed the assertions of **theologians** that **human** life is **fully** present from the moment of **conception** and there is no **qualitative difference** between the **embryo** and the born child.

Knight, $\chi^2 = 66$: should they be put down, too? hon. members: oh. it is an **utterly** inhuman **doctrine**, yet it would be a **perfectly logical** next step after this bill. once we accept that it is **lawful to kill a human** being because it **causes** inconvenience, where do we **end? society**, or at any **rate** the majority in this house, has already conceded that the **life** of a convicted **murderer** shall be preserved.

Knight, $\chi^2 = 63$: I have **seen** plenty of **spastics** who **appear** to be thoroughly **enjoying life**. there is something **utterly** repugnant to me here, because it so **reminds** me of hitler's **conception** of a race of **perfect** physical specimens.

Wells, $\chi^2 = 53$: I am told I may be **wrong**: I know no medicine that three **weeks** after **conception** the **embryo** has a **heart** which beats. this **seems** to be as **clear** a case of the existence of an **independent human life** as it is possible to have.

Abse, $\chi^2 = 52$: every **failure** that we make to plan so that every **life** can **live** out its **full potentiality** within its puny transient span is a defeat, just as every hanging of a **murderer** or traitor is a defeat for the **community**,

Stevas, $\chi^2 = 52$: there is only a **difference of development**. the **embryo** has a **life** of its own and has the **full potentiality** of becoming a **human** being. therefore, it cannot be treated as **mere** animal matter to be excised from the **womb** and thrown aside and discarded in a dustbin or incinerator.

Table 2: *Continued*

Dunwoody, $\chi^2 = 48$: I take it further than that and think of the **community** as a whole. if one **looks** at it in that **light**, one can **see** that far from undermining respect for the **sanctity of human life** this bill could enhance respect for **human life** in the **fullest sense**, of the phrase.

Wells, $\chi^2 = 40$: if one **looks** at clause 1, 1, 6, c and d, of the bill, it is **perfectly clear** that this **argument** is justified. the very, wording of paragraph, b, makes it **clear** that if the clause becomes law there will be a number of **embryos** capable of **development** and with a **chance** of **developing** into healthy **human beings** which will be **destroyed**.

Knight, $\chi^2 = 40$: there is something very **wrong** indeed about this. **babies** are not like **bad** teeth to be jerked out just because they **cause** suffering. an **unborn baby** is a **baby** nevertheless. would the sponsors of the bill think it right to **kill** a **baby** they can **see?** of **course** they would not.

Wells, $\chi^2 = 37$: the bill draws in its provisions a sharp **distinction** between the born and the **unborn** child. hon. members, who would recoil with horror at the **destruction** of a **live baby**, are **perfectly** willing and anxious to **legalise** the **destruction** of **embryos**.

Class 4: The Character of Procedure (20%)

Jenkins, $\chi^2 = 66$: but while the **government's collective attitude** must **remain** one of **neutrality**, we should be **glad** to **give drafting** assistance should the **house decide** to **give** the **bill** a **second reading** and should such assistance be necessary or **desirable** either before the **committee stage** or between the **committee** and the report **stages**.

Owen, $\chi^2 = 43$: I **support** the plea for this **measure** to be **given government** time. obviously there should be a **free vote**, but **leaving** such **bills** to the vagaries and difficulties of **private members'** time means that a **government** is shirking this **responsibility**.

Speaker, $\chi^2 = 42$: this **debate** cuts across **party lines**, so I shall endeavour to balance the **debate**, not as between **parties**, but as between **supporters** and **opponents** of the **bill**, and also those who **give qualified support** or **qualified opposition**.

Steel, $\chi^2 = 38$: in **conclusion**, I want to **deal** with two **opposite views** on the **bill**. the first is the **attitude** of the **roman catholic church**. I **entirely respect** the doctrine and **beliefs** of that **church** in this **matter**, but I would point out that the doctrine of the **church** is not **necessarily** permanent.

Vickers, $\chi^2 = 37$: I **agree** with the **sponsor** that it is wrong that these **matters** of **great importance** should be **left entirely** to **private** members. so much depends on the **vote today**. I **hope** that there will be very **strong support** for the **bill** and that it can go to **committee** for **detailed** discussion.

Abse, $\chi^2 = 37$: if they do not **allow** this **second reading** because they **hold** particularly religious **views**. this **debate** should be **voted** upon and I **hope** that the **bill** will be **given a second reading**.

Steel, $\chi^2 = 33$: it **remains** my **view** that it is unfortunate that the practice in the **house** is for **controversial** social **issues** of this kind: **issues** such as the **abolition** of **capital punishment** to be **left entirely** to **private** members to bring forward.

Steel, $\chi^2 = 30$: it is in that spirit that I have **approached** the **drafting** of the **bill**, and I **hope** that the **house**.

Table 2: *Continued*

Maude, $\chi^2 = 30$: having said all that, and having shown, I **hope**, that I want to look at the **implications** of the **bill** impartially, I **hope** that the **house** will **decide** to **give** the **measure** a **second reading** so that the **matters** that I have **raised** can be discussed more carefully in **committee**.

Hobson, $\chi^2 = 30$: this is not only a **private** member's **bill**, but it is one of those private members' bills on which we all **agree** that there should be no **party view**.

Class 5: The Operation of Current Law (47%)

Steel, $\chi^2 = 35$: the fourth **category** comprises those which are **illegal** but have a **covering** of **legality**, those where the **patient**, because of her financial **circumstances**, is **able** to **find** or be directed to medical **practitioners** or **psychiatrists** who will **sign** the **necessary** certificates to **cover** the **existing law** on payment of a fee of perhaps 100 or 200 guineas and have the **operation carried out** in adequate **circumstances**.

Steel, $\chi^2 = 32$: estimates of the **number** of **illegal operations carried out** each **year** vary tremendously. I should not like to assert any particular figure, but a **recent survey carried out** and published only **last week** by the **national opinion polls** on behalf of the **abortion law reform association** assessed that, at a minimum, about 40,

Short, $\chi^2 = 27$: of course, there has been variation in the figures put forward since, but the most **recent national opinion poll**, which, **significantly**, was **carried out** among **women** and it is **women** who have babies and it is **women** who have **abortions, legal** and **illegal**,

Jenkins, $\chi^2 = 26$: how can anyone **believe** otherwise when perhaps as many as 100,000 **illegal operations a year take place**, that the **present law** has **shown** itself quite unable to deal with the **problem?**

Owen, $\chi^2 = 24$: we know that we shall not **stop** back **street abortion**, but there is a feeling in the medical **profession** that many **women** are stopped from **going** to their **doctors** to **discuss** their pregnancies because of the **present legal situation**.

Wells, $\chi^2 = 23$: catholic **nurses** cannot help that because all the **abortions** that are **carried out** in **hospitals** at **present** have been certified by **doctors** as being **necessary** for the health of the **patients**, and **nurses** are there, whether they are catholics or otherwise,

Steel, $\chi^2 = 20$: she had had an **illegal operation** which had been **performed** by another **doctor** who later committed suicide. in a **case reported** in the evening standard, a 24 **year** old woman was **found** dying in a north london **street**, after having had an **abortion**.

Abse, $\chi^2 = 19$: there is not the same reaction when one **suggests** that **action** should be **taken** by **way** of an **abortion** which many **women** regard as an **assault** upon their femininity.

Dunwoody, $\chi^2 = 17$: admittedly the position at the **moment depends** mainly on **case law**. this bill **proposes** to **change** the boundary between **legal** and **illegal abortion**, but we shall still have **legal abortion** and there will still be **circumstances** in which **abortion** will be **illegal**.

Steel, $\chi^2 = 16$: in 1934, there was the first resolution on the **subject**, passed by a substantial body of **people** at the **conference** of the **women's co operative** guilds. in 1935, the **national council** of **women** added their support, and in the same **year** the **abortion law reform association** was founded.

characteristic sentences that are found in the classes as defined by the ten sentences with the ten highest χ^2 values. The key terms on which the classes are defined are identified in bold. It is by reference to these characteristic sentences that it is possible to place an interpretation on each class as a dimension of debate. The table also identifies the parliamentary speakers who are statistically associated with the sentences that make up the class, and who are identified under the ICUs (initial context units, see Appendix S1) of the tables.

Class 1, comprising some 15 per cent of the analysed sentences, reflects the fact that the debate is a legislative one. It is taken up with statements about what the bill proposes and in particular with the way in which the existing case law was to be incorporated into statute. It is not surprising that both David Steel, the proposer of the bill, and Roy Jenkins, the home secretary of the time who facilitated its passage, are frequent contributors to this class of sentences. However, the class also includes sentences from opponents of the legislation, who pick up elements of the proposed legislation with which they disagree or draw attention to what they see as the untoward effects of the legislation. Norman St John Stevas, for example, draws attention to the bill's provision that abortion should be allowed if there is a substantial health risk to the child, and Kevin McNamara, another opponent, makes the point that the provision allowing abortion in the case of a risk of child handicap will have the result that normal foetuses will also be aborted.

Class 2 contains sentences that are characteristic of the rhetoric of advocacy in the House of Commons, in which members congratulate, encourage or criticise other participants for their contributions. Such interventions are a feature of all House of Commons debates, and in the particular case of the present debate are also marked by the congratulations to David Steel, as a relatively new member of the House, for the way in which he introduced the debate and to Edward Lyons, for whom it was his maiden speech and for whom a number of speakers invoke the regular formulae of congratulation.

Class 3 is the one that focuses most explicitly on the core ethical issues. It can be interpreted as concerned with the meaning and implications of the sanctity of life. It is a tightly defined cluster in the sense that the sentences it contains are largely used by opponents of the bill to state the principled grounds upon which they base their objections. An interesting exception in this regard is Leo Abse, who voted in favour of the bill, but who made it clear that it caused him great problems of conscience to do so, and who in subsequent debates took up a more restrictionist position. Of the other supporters of the bill, the main ones to use vocabulary from this class are John Dunwoody and Roy Jenkins, who do not make counter-assertions of principle, but raise the question as to whether the sanctity of life really does forbid or restrict abortion when there are good grounds.

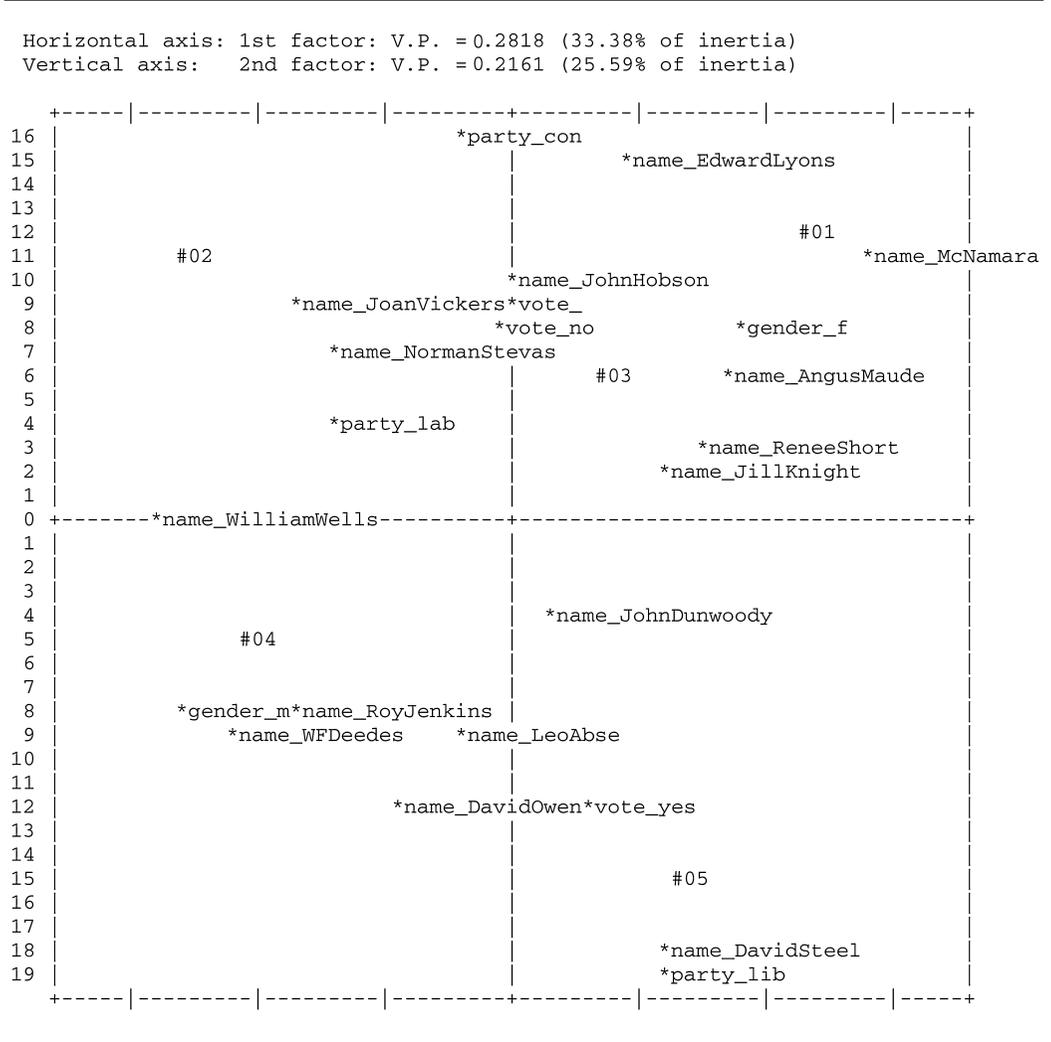
Class 4 is more heterogeneous. The Steel bill was introduced as a private members' bill, but it was given drafting assistance by the Labour government. Steel himself argues that such matters should not be dealt with by private members' legislation. Conversely, the home secretary, Roy Jenkins, defends the procedure, but also defends the right of the government to lend assistance, saying that, although the government should retain a position of neutrality, it would be right for the government to provide support if this was necessary to give expression to the will of the House of Commons. Similarly issues of neutrality and impartiality are raised in connection with Catholic members of the House and the extent to which religious convictions should shape the debate.

By far the largest proportion of sentences (47 per cent), however, are found in class 5, in which speakers focus upon the issue of the uncertain operation of the prevailing law and the difficulties to which it gives rise. In particular, the uncertain operation of the law is seen to pose risks to women seeking abortions who may be forced into illegal ('back-street') procedures that are inherently risky. These were the principal arguments used by Steel himself, who sought to frame the debate in those terms. Nor is it surprising to find those in favour of the legislation disproportionately located within this class. Some of those opposed to the legislation also employ vocabulary within this class, but they focus on difficulties faced by medical staff opposed to abortion both in relation to any operations that had been performed and in relation to those that would be performed under the new law. This is also the class in which the references to public opinion are largely to be found. Moreover, Steel's success in framing the issue in terms of health and social policy is evidenced by the large number of sentences falling within this class, as well as the fact that the χ^2 values of the sentences are rather low, suggesting that the sentences in this class do not stand out against the general background of the debate.

We can further examine the relationship among the classes through a correspondence analysis, which projects on to two principal axes the variation of vocabulary used across the debate. The measure of variance used is the proportion of inertia explained, where inertia is measured as the sum of distances of each occurrence of a word from the overall frequency. The proportion of variance explained by the analysis is nearly 59 per cent. Figure 1 gives the relevant graph, and may be interpreted as follows. The first principal axis represents the difference between the procedural and the substantive aspects of the debate, with classes 2 and 4 on one side and classes 1, 3 and 5 on the other. The second axis maps the substantive division of opinion between those stressing the sanctity of life and those stressing the adverse consequences of the uncertain operation of the present law. Since a correspondence analysis also maps speakers on to the same space as the vocabulary, it is not surprising to find those who vote against the bill close to class 3 and those who vote in favour near class 5. Nor is it surprising to see Roy Jenkins mapped near the class concerned with the legislative procedure and David Steel mapped near the uncertain operation of the prevailing law.

How far are these results consistent with a principle of reciprocity in debate rather than a practice of partisans talking past one another? In the strongest version of the thesis that partisans talk past one another, namely that given by Riker's (1996, pp. 99–125) dominance and dispersion principles, either one side dominates and its opponents vacate a dimension or both sides disperse. In the case of the 1966 debate, the two classes of sentences that come closest to fitting this pattern are concerned with the sanctity of life and the harmful social or health consequences of the operation of the prevailing law. Although liberals are found engaging with the issue of the sanctity of life and its implications for public policy, they are not the characteristic users of sentences in this class, which is predominantly one that restrictionists occupy. Conversely, from the beginning, proponents of the liberal position state their case in terms of reforms to existing practices, rather than on grounds of straight moral principle. When it comes to the social grounds for lawful abortion, the argument is phrased in terms of the stress and demands on the mother, rather than in terms of an abstract right. In other words, the argument is not that there is a general right to choice that is

Figure 1: Correspondence Analysis of 1966 Debate



appropriately exercised in some circumstances, but rather that there are circumstances that would justify a termination and in those circumstances the mother ought to be allowed the choice. The general moral issue is always related to the workings of medical and social practices.

Despite these differences of emphasis, there is evidence of attempts by opponents to engage with one another’s position and to find some common civic ground upon which the decision can be made widely acceptable. The policy divide is not a divide on pure principle, since no-one advocates a position in which abortion should be made illegal under all circumstances. For example, no speaker questions the view that abortion ought to be legally permissible in cases of rape. Similarly, the self-identified Roman Catholics who speak

in the debate say that they are not speaking from a distinctively religious position, and in that respect they seek to take up a civic position that should be acceptable to non-Catholics.

How far does the debate satisfy the principle that partial understandings on an issue can be interpreted as instructive in their own terms even if they do not add up to a single coherent understanding? The correspondence analysis provides us with some insight on this question. Since the correspondence analysis seeks to represent a multidimensional debate in terms of two principal components, the proportion of variance that remains unexplained can be understood as a measure of the sophistication and complexity of the debate. Where variance explained is relatively low, there are complexities expressed in the details that cannot be captured in a reduced number of dimensions, a point to which we return in looking at subsequent debates.

The third element of reciprocity is the claim that participants argue from shared premises to broader conclusions. There are some people who speak in accordance with the broader implications principle, of whom the most notable is Leo Abse. Abse had been a leading opponent of capital punishment, and although he eventually voted in favour of the second reading on the Steel bill, it is clear from his speech that he is troubled by abortion on the grounds that his opposition to capital punishment is a 'pro-life' position. Yet, with the exception of Abse, very few speakers argue from the broader implications of positions that they adopt on other issues. The conception of moral argument in which judgements in particular cases are related to general principles (so that, for example, those opposed to abortion should favour childcare programmes and those opposed to capital punishment should oppose abortion) is not by and large a pattern found in the debate.

In summary, the 1966 debate is one in which there are some features of reciprocity and some features of advocates talking past one another. To the extent to which any one side 'owns' certain dimensions, those favouring a restrictionist position own the sanctity of life dimension, but they are counterbalanced by the liberals who occupy the dimension that stresses the social and health consequences of the inadequate state of the law. However, these disagreements take place within a broader acceptance of the need to clarify in statute the uncertain principles that have emerged from precedent.

Debating Abortion 1970 to 1988

Between 1970 and 1988 there were five main second reading debates in the House of Commons, each of which was initiated by a private members' bill aiming to restrict the operation of the Act in various respects. Table 3 summarises the main provisions of each bill, and gives the classes of debate identified through the Alceste analysis.

Each of these debates contains at least one dimension that is procedural in character. In particular, a separate dimension containing the rhetoric of advocacy is always to be found. In addition in 1975 and 1977 issues of parliamentary procedure are also important, because in both cases the proposers of the bill came under pressure to remit the matter to a select committee. Leaving aside these procedural dimensions, the content of the substantive dimensions is defined by the character of the measures that are being proposed. In the 1970 debate the focus is on three dimensions arising from the effects of the 1967 legislation, in particular the health and psychological risks associated with abortion and the growth of private abortion clinics. Statistical trends and patterns of legislation internationally are also

Table 3: Outline of Bills 1970 to 1988

| <i>Bill</i> | <i>Main contents</i> | <i>Alceste classes</i> |
|----------------|---|--|
| Irvine 1970 | Tightens regulation of doctors entitled to perform abortions to require qualified gynaecologist from NHS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operation of the law 2. Death rates and complications 3. Rhetoric of advocacy 4. The NHS and private clinics |
| White 1975 | Closer regulation of private clinics Change in balance of risks test | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The NHS and private clinics 2. Procedure of proposed legislation 3. Rhetoric of advocacy 4. Health risks, trends and moral aspects |
| Benyon 1977 | Closer regulation of private clinics Requirement that medical practitioners be of five years' standing Reduction of term limits | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The rhetoric of advocacy 2. Procedure of proposed legislation 3. Content of legislation 4. Health risks, trends and moral aspects |
| Corrie 1979 | Change in criteria to be met for abortion Reduction of term limit to 20 weeks Strengthening of protection for conscientious objections of medical staff Facilities for counselling Prevention of damage to foetus | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The rhetoric of advocacy 2. Health risks, trends and moral aspects 3. Term limits |
| Alton 1988 | Reduction of term limits from 28 to 18 weeks | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moral characterisation of abortion 2. Term limits 3. Procedure and rhetoric of advocacy |

important items of debate. There is virtually no discussion of the sanctity of life or the balance of welfare between mother and child. This pattern continues in the debates of 1975, 1977 and 1979. In these latter debates there are some sentences that focus upon the core moral facets of the debate, but they do not define a class of their own.

A large change comes in 1988 with the Alton bill. In that case there is one well-defined class of sentences concerned with the core ethical appraisals of abortion. Table 4 provides a sample, taken from the sentences with the highest χ^2 measure in the class. In these exchanges, there is a clear pattern of argumentation occurring, with restrictionists highlighting the potential for development of disabled children, while liberals stress the difficulties for parents in looking after a disabled child, as well as the complications of carrying a damaged foetus to term. One obvious reason for the clear emergence of this class is the character of the proposed legislation itself. A reduction in term limits from 28 weeks to 18 weeks was seen to have implications for the operation of pre-natal screening facilities, particularly as it might have meant a 16-week limit in practice, with clinicians making allowance for wrongly estimated pregnancy periods. Also, the strong assertion of the sanctity of life theme reflects a change in the composition of those advocating the measure, including Alton, Widdecombe and Dicks, none of whom participated in the debates of the 1970s because they were not members of the House at the time.

Table 4: The Moral Core of the 1988 Debate (the First Ten χ^2 Values, Key Words in Bold)

- Alton, $\chi^2 = 44$: **men** must, of **course**, **approach** the debate with **humility** and sensitivity. we rarely have to **suffer** the practical **day to day experience** of an **unwanted child**. we rarely **hear** about **unmarried fathers**, only about **unmarried mothers**. we do not **hear** about **men** having illegitimate **children**, only women, and how often **men** smugly **talk** about fallen women.
- Short, $\chi^2 = 36$: I suggest that **men** should **approach** this question with **humility** because the women **bear** the **consequences**. there is all this **talk** of **care** and **love** for **disabled children**.
- Thurnham, $\chi^2 = 34$: the bill lacks **compassion**. why should **mothers** be **forced to carry a child** with **spina bifida**, when 70 per cent, of such **children die** in agony before five, and have to be sedated because of their **pain**? must **mothers** be **forced to go on** with such pregnancies?
- Gordon, $\chi^2 = 34$: that **old man told** me that he had for many years been **looking** after his **handicapped** son of 35, who is **mentally disabled**. the **father** was bitter and **told** how his **wife** had **died** in her fifties; he put that down to the **strain** of **looking** after their **handicapped child**.
- Widdecombe, $\chi^2 = 31$: one is cherished while its **life** is **fought over**, and all the medical **resources** in the country are poured **into** saving it and its **parents** desperately **want** it to **live**, while the other is wilfully **destroyed**,
- Gordon, $\chi^2 = 31$: we have all **heard** about the pre 1967 **period** and the gin, hot baths, quinine **pills**, knitting needles and soap suds. we **know** that the **best doctors** those who were **caring** and **kind** were often **criminalised** and struck off the register.
- Paisley, $\chi^2 = 31$: but we are **talking** about a **child** a **real person** who is being **destroyed**. that a **child** should be **destroyed** within the **mother's womb** in that way is something about which we must righteously protest.
- Moonie, $\chi^2 = 28$: she just **knew** that she **wanted to go** back to a **normal life** and that she did not **want to bear a child**, and she did not. the other **woman** was in her early 40 s with a large number of **children**.
- MacKay, $\chi^2 = 27$: and **know** that there is a one in four **chance** that that **child** might also be **grossly disabled**.
- Wigley, $\chi^2 = 26$: how does he **advise** the **mother** when the **choices** are either to have a **disabled child** with whom they cannot **cope** or to have a **child** who will **suffer** so much that they are not willing to see such **suffering**?

The analysis shows those MPs for whom the content of their speeches is most characteristically associated with this class of sentences. Of the seven individuals identified in this way, three voted for the bill (Dicks $\chi^2 = 31.52$, Knight $\chi^2 = 2.53$ and Paisley $\chi^2 = 3.16$) and four voted against (Gordon $\chi^2 = 40.38$, Moonie $\chi^2 = 4.10$, Sheerman $\chi^2 = 9.98$ and Thurnham $\chi^2 = 3.54$). This does not mean that other proponents of the bill entirely ignored the vocabulary of the sanctity of life, but rather that the other points that they made associated them more closely with other classes of sentence. There is, then, statistical evidence of mutual engagement on related themes by those speaking on different sides of the debate. An important feature of this mutual engagement, however, is that although there is no talking past one another in the strong sense in which a dimension of debate is dominated by one side and abandoned by the other, the parliamentary adversaries seek to characterise the issues involved in different ways.

Although such mutual engagement is clearly marked in class 1 in 1988, it is also to be found in the earlier debates, though to a less obvious degree. For example, the 1970 and 1975 debates concerned the operation of private clinics, women from abroad coming to the UK for abortions and trends in the number of legal and illegal abortions. Much of the argument takes the form of disputing trends and figures, with David Steel in particular contesting the statistical basis upon which restrictionists argued their case. Similarly, Renée Short consistently argues throughout the 1970s debates that the growth of private abortion clinics shows the need to make National Health Service facilities more freely available.

One way of assessing the extent of mutual engagement by speakers is to collapse the six debates into one, and treat them as an integrated debate. We can think of this integrated debate as representing the dialogue among representatives over an extended period of time, akin to Karl Popper's (1972, p. 107) notion of 'the state of a discussion' in relation to a particular problem or issue. We can then see what classes of debate emerge as the most general ones. We can also label the speakers by the date of the debate in which they speak, and this will enable us to assess not only which dimensions speakers address, but also the extent to which their contributions to the debates are close to one over time. Thus, through our correspondence analysis, we can assess how far the same speaker at different times takes up different themes. How far, for example, is the David Steel who speaks in the 1966 debate similar to the David Steel who speaks in the debates from the 1970s or the 1988 debate?

From this point of view, speakers will be non-engaged if they stand pat on a particular point of view expressed through characteristic sentences. In such a case, they would, in effect, be broadcasting the same message without regard to context or countervailing arguments. By contrast, if speakers follow the debate, taking up different themes even though they might not give those themes the same interpretation, then we have some reason to believe that they are at least seeking to address the issues that are emerging in the debate. Thus, if the David Steel of 1966 is mapped close to the David Steel of 1970 or 1975, there would be evidence that he was not engaging with the arguments of opponents, whereas if the focus of his vocabulary moves, then there would be evidence of such engagement.

Table 5 reports the results of a classification of all six debates regarded as one integrated debate. It shows that there are six broad classes of sentences, three of them procedural in character and three of them substantive.

If we turn to the correspondence analysis, we can see in Figure 2 the structure of the integrated debate. A number of features stand out. First, the discursive space is divided into a broad distinction between the procedural and the substantive vocabulary. The three procedural classes are on the left, and the three substantive classes on the right. Within the substantive classes there is a division between class 1, which picks up the sanctity of life and other core moral issues on the one hand, and classes 2 and 3 on the other. Class 2 is concerned with the provision of medical facilities and class 3 with the broader consequences of abortion policy.

The disposition of speakers to engage with one another on common themes can be seen by the extent to which speakers from different sides of the debate nevertheless cluster around particular themes. Restrictionist speakers are found in class 1, including St John Stevas in 1966, Ann Widdecombe in 1988, Leo Abse in 1966 and 1979 and Dame Jill

Table 5: Classes of Integrated Debate

| <i>Class of sentences</i> | <i>Main themes in class</i> |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Moral concerns | Sanctity and value of life Moral status of child Effects of disability Unwanted pregnancy, strain on families |
| 2. Operation of medical facilities | Permits and licensing Operation of medical facilities |
| 3. Effects of 1967 legislation | Estimates of number of abortions, including illegal Legal status of abortion Some polling evidence |
| 4. Rhetoric of debate and procedure | Congratulations or criticism of other speakers Character of procedure |
| 5. Role of committees and reports | Reference to committees of inquiry Reference to parliamentary committees |
| 6. Reflections on debate | Character of debate Role of parliament |

Knight in 1966 and 1988. Equally, however, liberals are also found clustered around the same centroid, including David Steel in 1988, Teresa Gorman in 1988 and Renée Short in 1966. The changing prevalence of speakers from year to year within the region of class 1 is further evidence of the changing focus of the debate over time. Speakers are responding to the topic of debate and the points being made by their opponents.

Such discursive changes can be further observed by considering the clustering of speakers around classes 2 and 3. The debates that are being reflected in these classes are largely the ones from the 1970s, when critics of the 1967 Act focused upon what they saw as its untoward consequences in the growth of private clinics, the trend for women from countries abroad with less liberal legislation to seek abortions in Britain, and the conscientious difficulties faced by some NHS staff. Leading restrictionists, like Bernard Braine, Bryant Irvine and Leo Abse, are clustered around these classes, but so are leading liberals. Steel's engagement with these themes can be seen from his position in 1970, 1975 and 1977, as can that of Renée Short in the same years. In short, speakers do not simply stand pat on the arguments that they develop in earlier debates, but they develop arguments that seek to engage with their opponents. Does this mean that the speakers in the debate are respecting reciprocity?

Respecting Reciprocity?

The correspondence analysis suggests that on occasions, as in 1966, partisans will have a tendency to stress different themes. However, over time, themes attract partisans from opposing sides. In the parliamentary context, this is less surprising than inferences drawn from campaigning might imply. There are institutional norms and rules that impose relevance upon contributions to debates, even in debates as wide-ranging as conscience

votes in the House of Commons. Riker (1996, p. 76) pointed out that political campaigns are not like school debates or courtroom disputes, because in campaigns there is no-one to keep the disputants focused on a predetermined subject. In parliamentary debates the opposite applies. Rules of relevance imposed by the House are reinforced in the case of legislative debates by the fact that legislative proposals, and in particular the proposals to reform the 1967 Act, focused upon specific measures and issues. Thus, if there is a proposal to tighten the regulation of medical professionals in the provision of abortion, then speakers in the debate, to be credible, have to address that proposal.

Another reason why issues are not simply 'owned' by one side rather than another is that issues evolve over time. For example, in 1966 the argument could be credibly mounted that the then prevalent law was not only a cause of human misery but also an incentive to criminal behaviour as the desperate sought to end unwanted pregnancies by means of illegal abortions. By the 1970s, the growth of private clinics operating formally within the law but (as the restrictionists saw it) violating its spirit, provided new evidence in terms of which the restrictionist case could be argued. Over time, as proponents of competing positions reflect upon the issues, we might expect them to develop replies to the propositions advanced by their opponents, so that across a range of issues there is an equilibrium of debate that emerges, with each side offering its best reply to the arguments of the other side.

However, the fact that speakers engage with one another on themes that are relevant to the debate does not mean that they engage in the same way or with the same purpose. Speakers from different sides of the debate may address the same issues (use sentences that occur in the same class as their opponents), but they characterise those issues in different ways. Liberals, for example, do not dissent from the principle of the sanctity of life. Rather, they raise questions about the implications of that principle and the extent to which it can support a restrictionist position. They argue that other values come into play, including compassion for those who have to care for the severely disabled and respect for their right to make personal choices in difficult situations.

Further illustration of this process is found in class 1 in the 1970 debate, which concerned the operation of medical facilities for abortion. The operation of medical facilities is a reference point for both sides of the debate, but the way in which they operate is characterised differently by those on different sides of the debate. For restrictionists, the way in which the private clinics were operating constituted a breach of the law or at least an exploitation of loopholes in the law (leading some speakers to call them a 'racket'). For the opponents, tightening up regulation constituted an unjustified restriction on access, in a situation in which the NHS hospitals could not manage the demands upon them. Each side seeks to characterise the same situation in ways that are consistent with their own point of view, acknowledging that the class of issues itself cannot be ignored.

How far, then, do the debates conform to the three principles of reciprocity that Gutmann and Thompson prescribe, and what is the significance of any departures?

Wide acceptability is a general feature of the debates, at least up until 1988. Thus, when restrictionists appeal to the sanctity of life, they do not take themselves to be appealing to a controversial moral position, but to a value that is at the core of civilised societies. Similarly, they do not generally adopt an absolutist stand on abortion, but accept that there are circumstances in which abortion would be morally permissible, for example in cases of

rape, under-age sex or severe disability. On occasions they are also quite explicit that, although their position is often motivated by religious convictions, others who do not share their faith take a similar position and that the law has to be made in the light of the agreed moral sense of the community. Their strategy in the 1970s is not to question the principles of the 1967 legislation, but to question its implementation, though of course their critics argued that to implement the Act in the way that restrictionists favour would render the substance of the Act nugatory. The 1988 debate marks a departure from this pattern, because there are at least three speakers on the restrictionist side who, if not strictly absolutist, are clear that they would permit abortion only in extreme circumstances. A different departure from wide acceptability is found in the strong assertions of Maureen Colquhoun in the 1970s that men have no moral standing in the debate, because it is an issue solely for women.

With these exceptions, however, the debate is one conducted according to the principle of wide acceptability in the sense that considerations are advanced that are supposed to have relevance to anyone of goodwill, rather than being the property of one side or another. The differences between the two sides emerge in the way that these considerations are interpreted and the relative weight that is placed upon those considerations. When liberals question the implications of the sanctity of life, or restrictionists point to an increase in the number of abortions relative to live births, each side is offering a qualification or reply to a consideration that has some force of its own. Similarly, when liberals point to the burdens of bringing up a severely disabled child or restrictionists point out that abortion is not just another form of birth control, they are offering an account of the weight that different considerations should have in a responsible judgement.

Such differences in interpretation limit the extent to which the debate conforms to the principle that partial judgements when pooled may contribute something valuable, the second requirement of reciprocity. Differences of opinion reflect partialities of judgement. This partiality is not simply a matter of different speakers focusing upon different aspects of a complex question, but also a matter of placing a different interpretation upon matters that are commonly agreed to be important. Moreover, institutional rules of debate limit the extent to which partial understandings can be made coherent. As we noted in relation to the 1966 debate, a relatively low inertia score in the correspondence analysis exemplifies a situation in which a complex set of partial understandings are articulated, the total effect of which cannot easily be reduced to two dimensions of representation. By contrast with the 1966 debate, subsequent measures of inertia increase and in effect become 100 per cent in 1979 and 1988. In short, the debate is being simplified to two dimensions. Yet attempts at reform of an existing law, rather than its outright abolition, are bound to involve a phenomenon of this sort, since reformers can only focus on a limited number of issue dimensions in any one attempt at change. The contraction of issue dimensions is in part an institutionally induced effect.

The third principle of reciprocity was that speakers should acknowledge the broader implications of principles that they advance. In our parliamentary debates, this occurs infrequently. For example, liberals do not claim that restrictionists should acknowledge that their position carries broader implications, for example in the form of better childcare. Short's characterisation in 1977 of the negative implications for civil rights of the proposed

measures might be interpreted as such a form of argument, but it could equally be construed as a way to re-describe the measures in negative evaluative terms. From the other side, there are occasional attempts at an argument from consistency of principle. For example, at different times, both Abse and Clark argue that there is an inconsistency in being opposed to capital punishment and simultaneously taking a strong liberal position on abortion. However, this argument is not central in statistical terms, and it would be difficult to interpret the outcomes of the debate as turning on such moves.

In part, no doubt, the absence of this form of argument reflects the strong restrictions of relevance in the process of parliamentary debate. It is difficult to persuade people into drawing out the broad implications of principles that they hold, when the discussion of particular topics is governed by rules of relevance. Such rules of relevance mean that discussion is not open-ended but has to be germane to issues under consideration. However, there is perhaps another reason why the broader implications principle is of less application than one might think. Patterns of political argument in parliament tend not to be deductive but dialectical. As J. R. Lucas (1966, p. 22) once explained: in a deductive argument the typical connective is 'therefore'; in a dialectical argument it is 'but'. Consider, as an example of this point, the claim that if one is 'pro-life' in respect of capital punishment, then one should be 'pro-life' in respect of abortion. Liberals counter this claim by distinguishing the cases and arguing that the welfare or rights of the mother mean that there are considerations in the abortion argument that do not apply in the case of capital punishment. Conversely, there is no one-to-one relationship between being restrictionist on abortion and being opposed to capital punishment. Abse was opposed to capital punishment; Widdecombe in favour. Each used chains of reasoning that were internally consistent, but incompatible in assumption with the other.

Conclusions

Our principal conclusion is that in UK parliamentary debates on abortion there is not the gross departure from reciprocity that would be implied by the phenomenon of partisans talking past one another in the way that has been alleged of campaigns or advocacy coalitions. On the other hand, there is not a straightforward conformity to the principles of reciprocity that some deliberative democrats have proposed. What implications does this have for our understanding of the role and value of deliberative democracy? Are we here confronted with a gap between 'is' and 'ought' that needs to be closed, or are there features of the parliamentary debate that reveal the limitations of a deliberative approach?

Here we need to consider the concept of representation and the role that political representatives play in democratic debate. As we have already noted, abortion debates are ones around which there is significant pressure-group lobbying as highlighted by Joni Lovenduski (1986). All the bills leading to the second reading debates we have examined led to extensive mobilisation on both sides. MPs speaking in these debates often see themselves as advocating views in line with groups whose opinions and values they share. Advocacy is tied to Jane Mansbridge's (2003) concept of 'surrogate' representative, in which representatives respond to the concerns of citizens with whom they have no electoral connection. Faithful surrogate representation requires that the task of advocacy be taken seriously.

Taking the advocacy role seriously limits the extent to which representatives can respect the principles of reciprocity. The reason for this is similar to that offered by Hannah Pitkin in the case of the delegate concept of representation. A delegate goes to a meeting to state a position and register a vote, not to be influenced by the debate (Pitkin, 1967, p. 151). Although surrogate representatives are not delegates, in relation to the practice of advocacy the logic of their role is similar. Reciprocity implies a willingness to concede a point at issue, if a relevant reason for concession is stated in the debate. Advocacy, by contrast, implies a determination to respond to a point that might seem to threaten one's position. Advocates do not need to be uncompromising, but they do have to maintain their side of the argument. Indeed, a dialectical conception of political argument will not work unless representatives are prepared to reply vigorously to their opponents.

Advocacy democracy can share with deliberative democracy the idea that there is more to politics than the aggregation of preferences or the reconciliation of interests. Advocacy contributes to the process of public reasoning, but the conception of public reasoning is more adversarial than is found in models of deliberative democracy and in the limit will incline to Chantal Mouffe's (2000) agonistic conception of political debate. Whether in terms of justifiable political values this poses more problems for the principles of deliberative democracy than for the practice of political representation is, of course, a large and distinct question.

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Notes

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- 1 It has been put to us that Riker's work should not be a point of reference, given Mackie's (2003) critique. Leaving aside any doubts we have about the extent and validity of this critique, it should be noted that Riker's posthumously published work on campaigning was not subject to Mackie's critique.
- 2 We have avoided terming the opposing points of view 'liberal' versus 'conservative', because not all of those who favour strong restrictions on abortion are conservative in a general sense. Instead, we use the terms 'liberal' and 'restrictionist', bearing in mind that these names define a spectrum between which views as to the degree of restriction can vary (Bara, Weale and Bicquelet, 2007; p. 583).

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Supporting Information

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Appendix S1: Methods of Analysis

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