

The Abortion Social Movement: Balance of Power and Trends



Chris Pruitt

PLSC/SOC 497

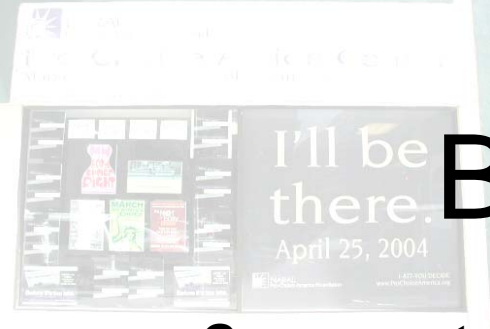
Spring 2004





Brief History

- While the most relevant developments have occurred in the last 50 years, state laws concerning abortion date back to 1821.
- Illegal abortions were still frequent, although the number declined as the Comstock law was passed, which essentially banned birth control devices and information.
- Important events leading to legalization:
 - Women's Rights organizations begin to address abortion
 - Reversal of the American Medical Association's anti-abortion stance (1960)
 - *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965)
- *Roe v. Wade* (1973): anti-abortion laws are ruled *unconstitutional*, in violation of the 14th amendment.
- Legalizes first trimester abortions in all cases.



Brief History, cont...

- **Groups materialized and rallied around both sides, with the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) being formed immediately after the decision and forming a backbone of the pro-life movement.**
- **The decision also served to politicize the conflict, with Democrats generally taking a pro-choice stance and Republicans adding a pro-choice plank to their party platform in 1980.**
- **Hyde Amendment (1977), attached to an appropriations bill, banned government-funded abortions.**
- **In 1983, the Supreme Court upheld *Roe v. Wade* by striking down a number of state and local restrictions on access to abortion services.**
- **In July 1989, the Supreme Court upheld provisions of a Missouri anti-abortion statute in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*.**
- **1990's: Partial birth abortion.**



Previous Research

- **Susan Staggenborg, The Pro-Choice Movement**
 - Identifies a number of major events and factors that lead to growth on both sides of the issue.
 - 5 periods: Before *Roe v. Wade*, *Roe v. Wade*, Hyde Amendment, *Akron v. Planned Parenthood*, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*.
 - Other important factors: internal factors, effects from other organizations



Previous Research, cont...

Years	Major Event	Changes
Before 1973	Abortion illegal	Prochoice movement begins to expands slowly.
1973-1976	<i>Roe v. Wade</i>	Prochoice movement grows, Pro-life movement rapidly expands.
1976-1983	Hyde amendment passed	Pro-choice groups rapidly grow, Reproductive Rights (multi-issue) groups formed.
1983-1989	<i>Akron v. Planned Parenthood</i>	Pro-choice movement grows, rapid Pro-life expansion
1989, 1990's	<i>Webster v. Reproductive Health Services</i>	Rapid pro-choice expansion, "battle intensifies"



Previous Research, cont...

- Singh and Lumsden, Minkoff, McCarthy:
Organizational ecology perspective
 - Generally, a movement expands slowly, expands quicker as it becomes “legitimized” and resources become available, levels off when the density reaches a population limit, and may eventually decline as groups compete for resources
- Political Opportunity: McCammon, Baumgartner and Leech, Soule et al.



NARAL
Pro-Choice

Hypothesis

- This research will look at the founding rates of both pro-life and pro-choice groups and:
 - Staggenborg's five periods
 - likelihood of founding compared to the density of the previous year (resources)
 - major court cases, Congressional hearings addressing abortion, and relevant Congressional Quarterly articles
 - New York Times articles about abortion
 - Public opinion
 - Abortion rates

Hypothesis cont...

- I hypothesize that the abortion social movement will follow a pattern much like the one described by Singh, Lumdsen, and other organizational ecologists. Furthermore, because most abortion groups seek to change public policy, I believe that both pro-life and pro-choice groups will be affected by political opportunity. Finally, I believe that major events, such as the four events cited by Staggenborg, will strongly influence founding rates.

Methods and Data

- Founding rates were compiled using The Encyclopedia of Associations online edition.
 - published yearly, since 1965, and contains descriptions of a number of types of organizations
 - Keywords: “abortion” “reproductive rights”
 - 116 groups were found, all relevant
 - Groups were split according to:
 - Pro-choice, Pro-life or neutral (only one entry)
 - Founding date, 26 had no date (as listed in description or on web-site)
 - Whether the group engages in advocacy related activities, clinical, or both
 - Whether the group was single or multi focused

Methods and Data

- Measures of the number of Congressional hearings and Congressional Quarterly articles were compiled using databases from the *Policy Agendas* project.
- “Major Court Cases” adapted from data found in Understanding the New Politics of Abortion, by Malcolm Goggin.
 - Includes cases all Supreme Court cases and other federal cases that set precedent

Methods and Data

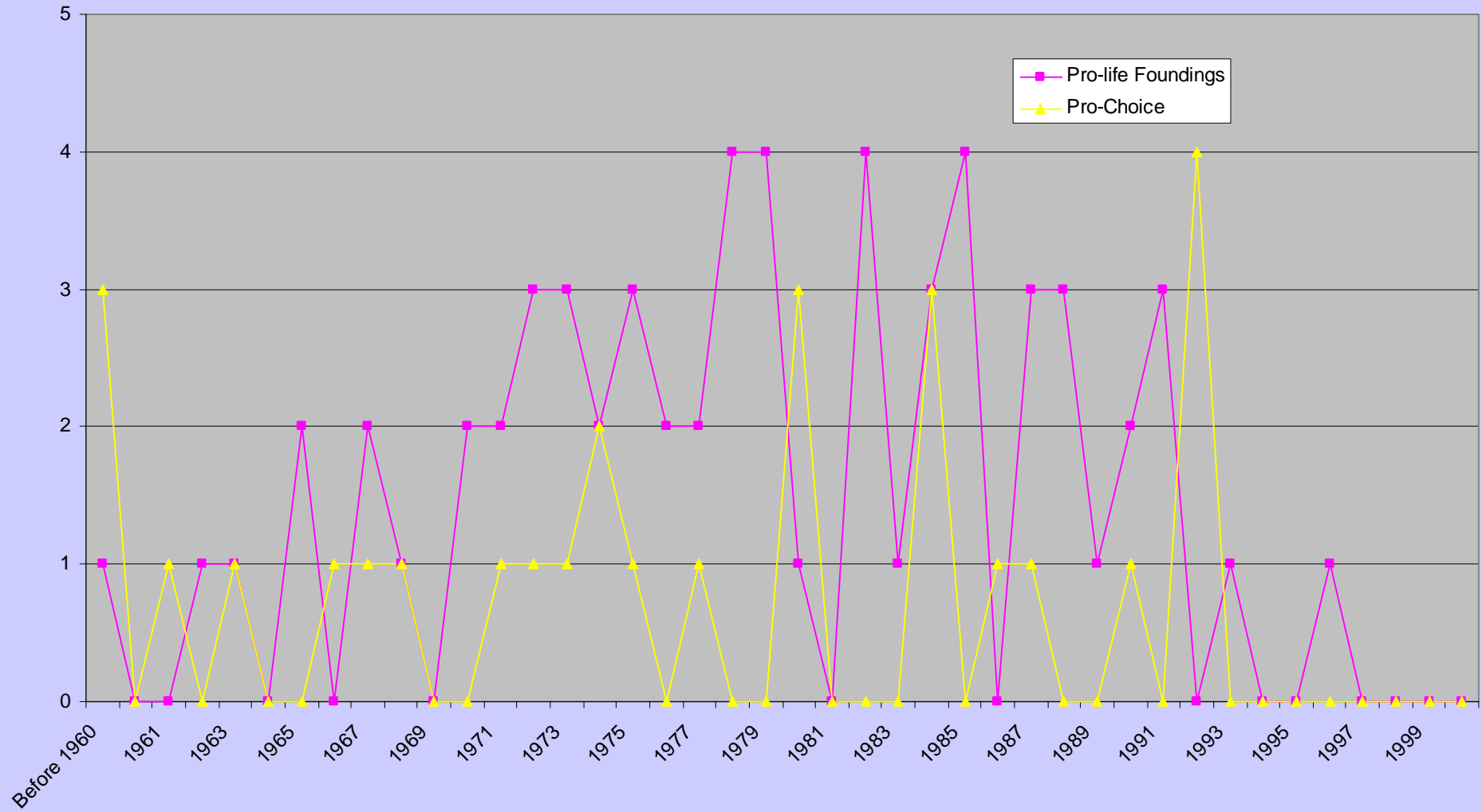
- *The New York Times Historical Database* was used to produce a count of the same keywords (abortion, reproductive rights) for each of the years included in the study.
 - Only articles with citation or abstract containing a keyword were used
- Public opinion survey data was taken from Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind, by Bardes and Oldendick, and Public Opinion about Abortion by Ladd and Everitt.

Methods and Data

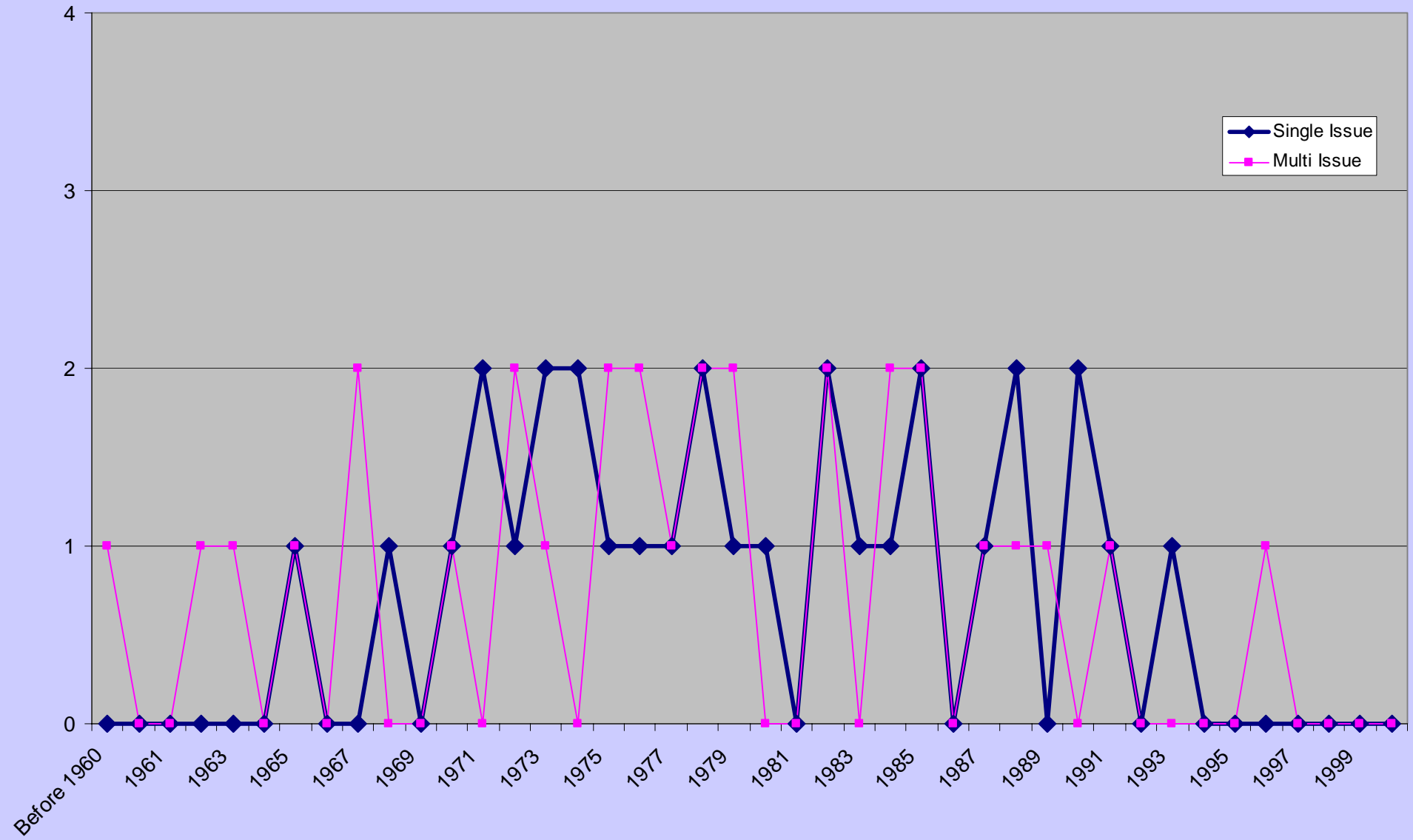
- Survey data included a Gallup poll time series from 1975-1999, and GSS data from 1965-1998.
- the annual account of abortions was obtained from a National Right to Life Council publication. The data was originally compiled by the Alan Guttmacher institute (an affiliate of Planned Parenthood) and is seen by both pro-life and pro-choice groups as a fairly accurate count of abortions.

Results

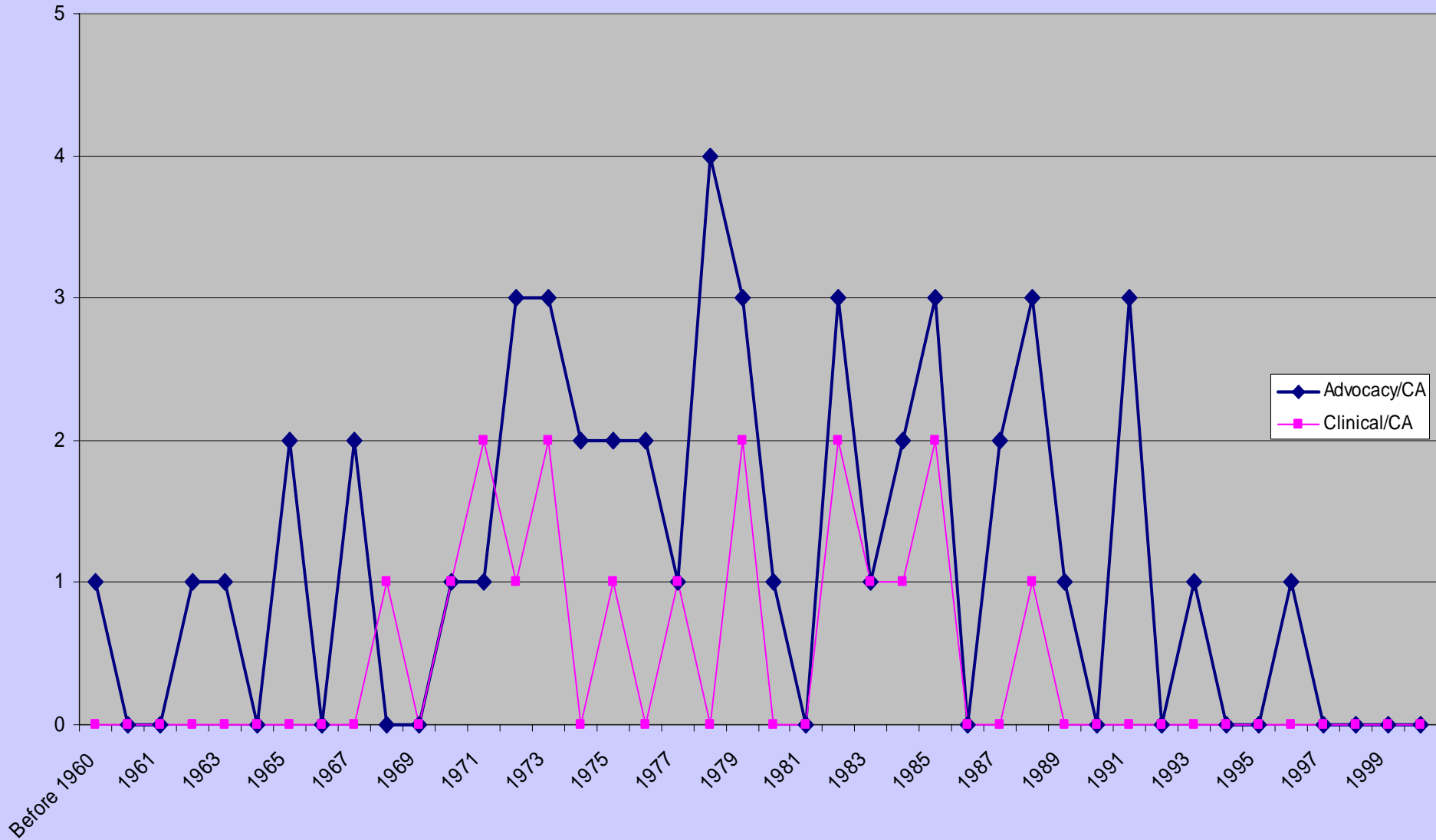
Foundings: Abortion Text Search



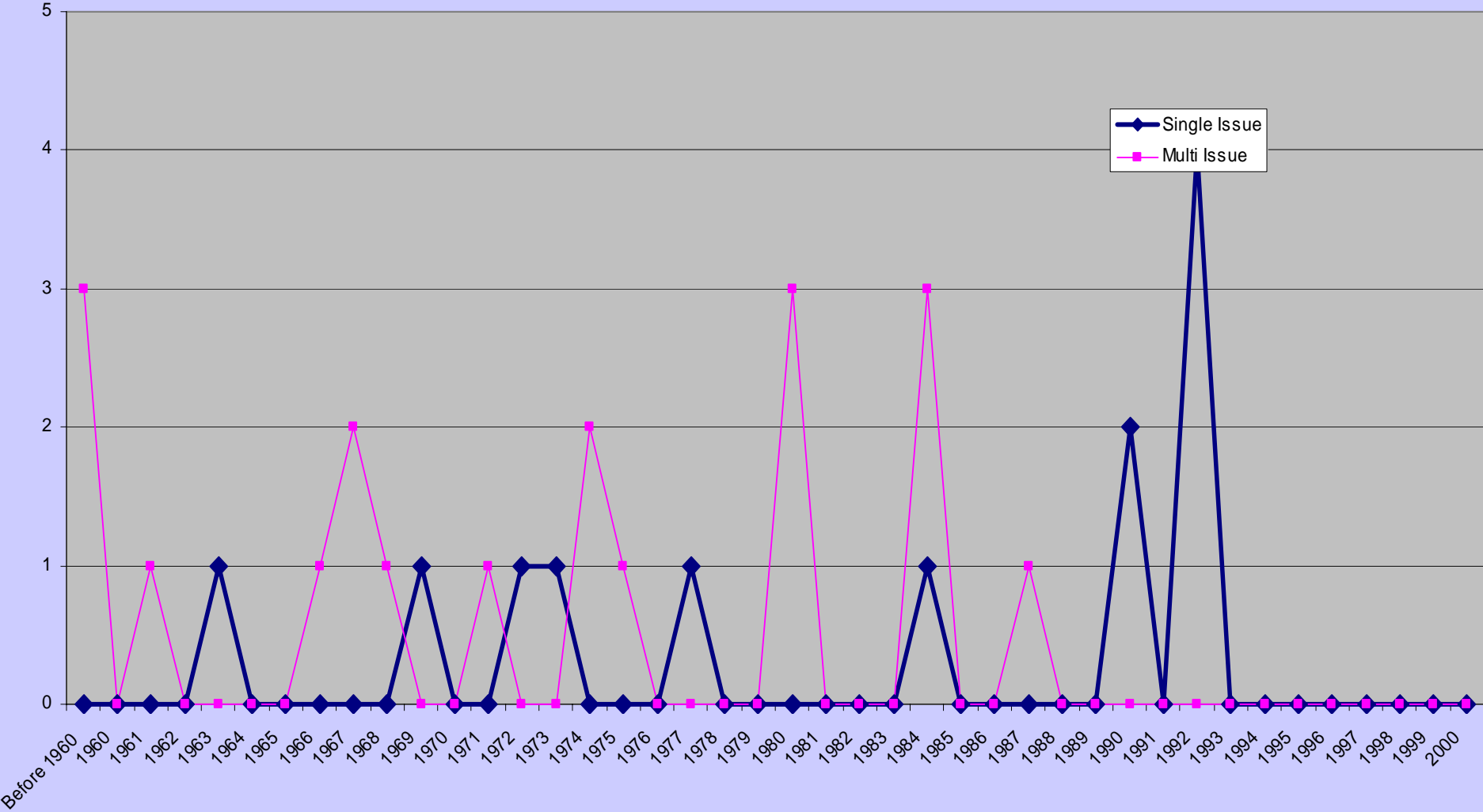
Pro-life movement, Single vs. Multi Issue



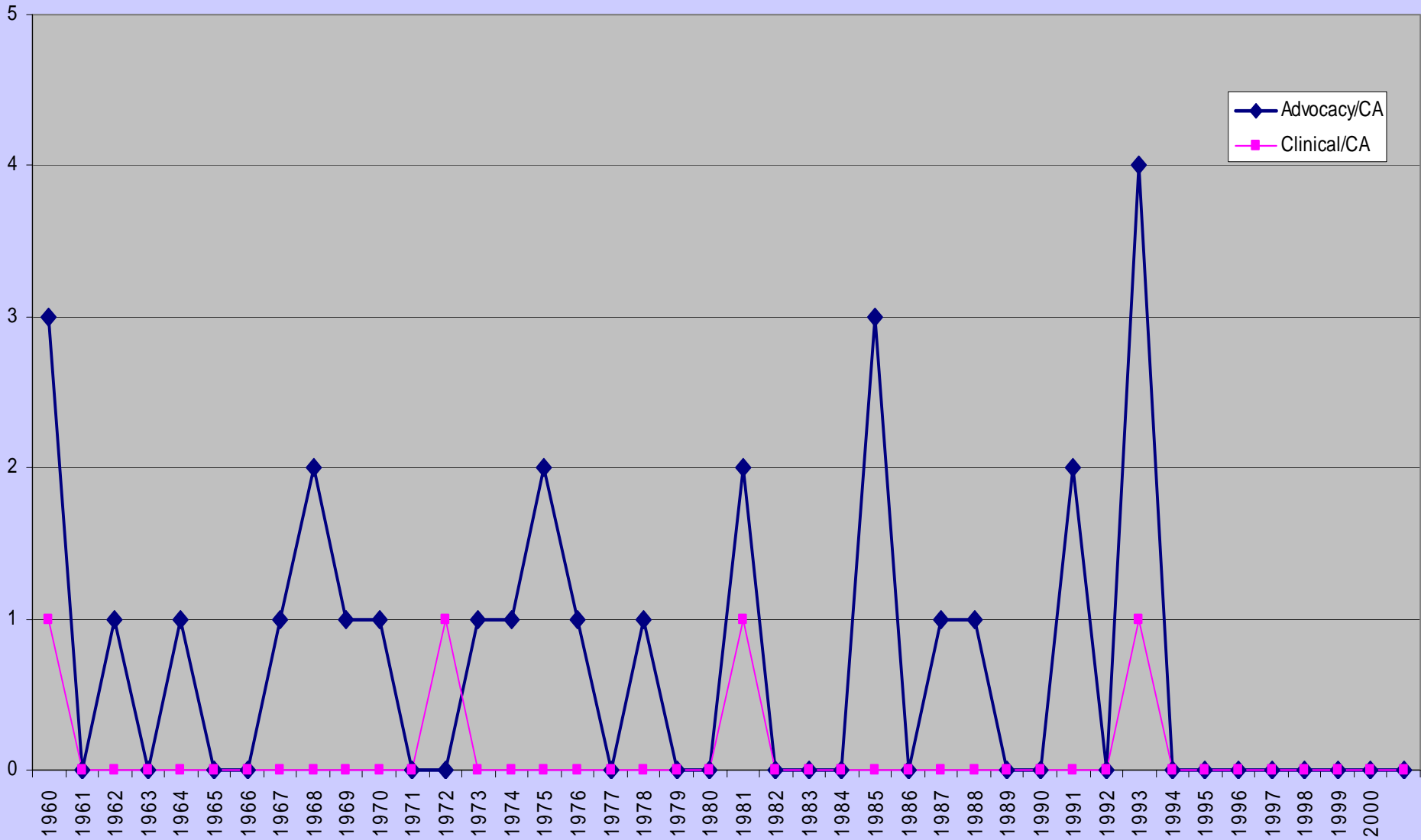
Pro-life Organizations: Advocacy vs. Clinical activities



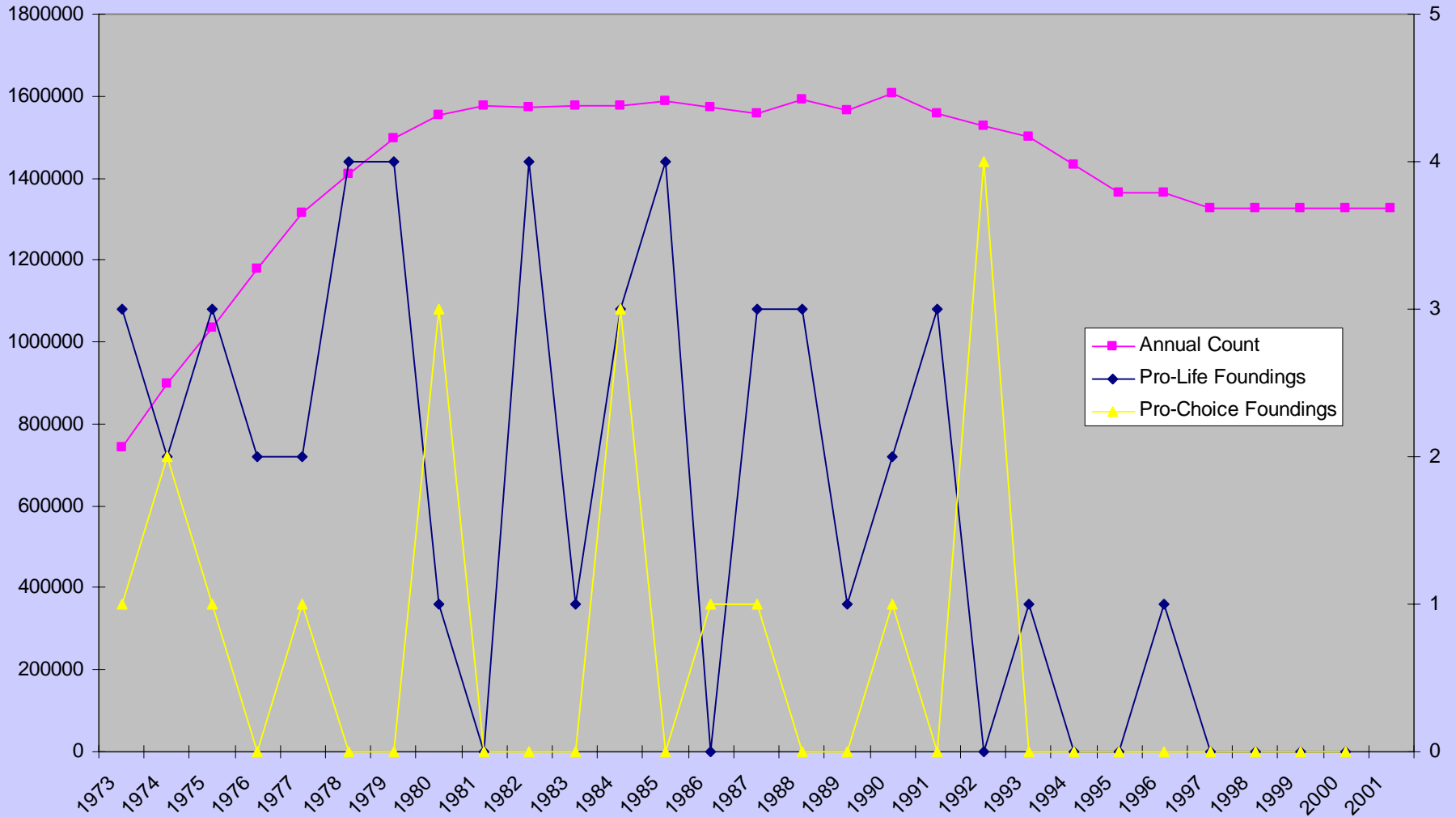
Pro-choice groups: Single Issue vs. Multi Issue



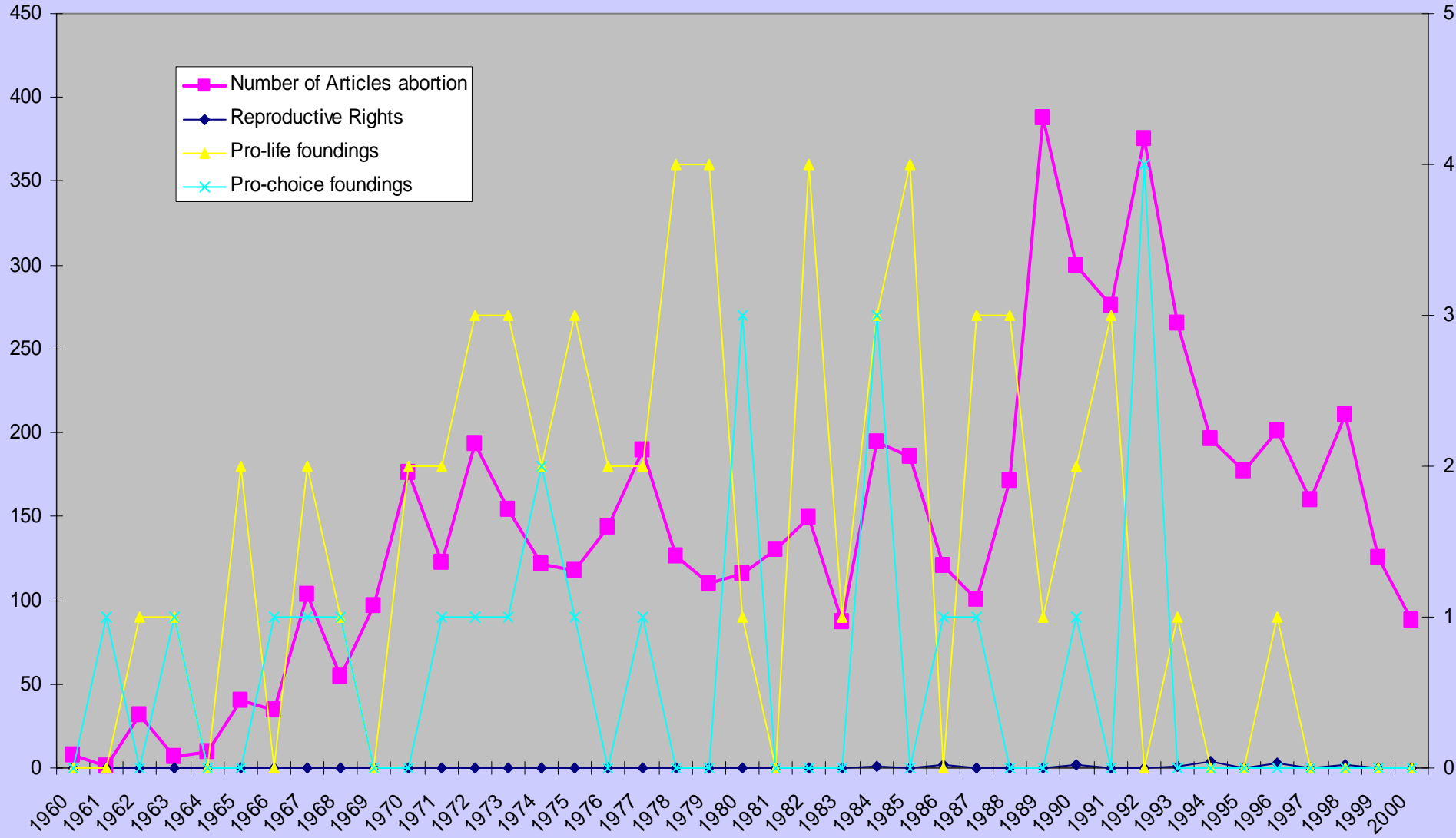
Pro-choice Groups: Advocacy vs. Clinical



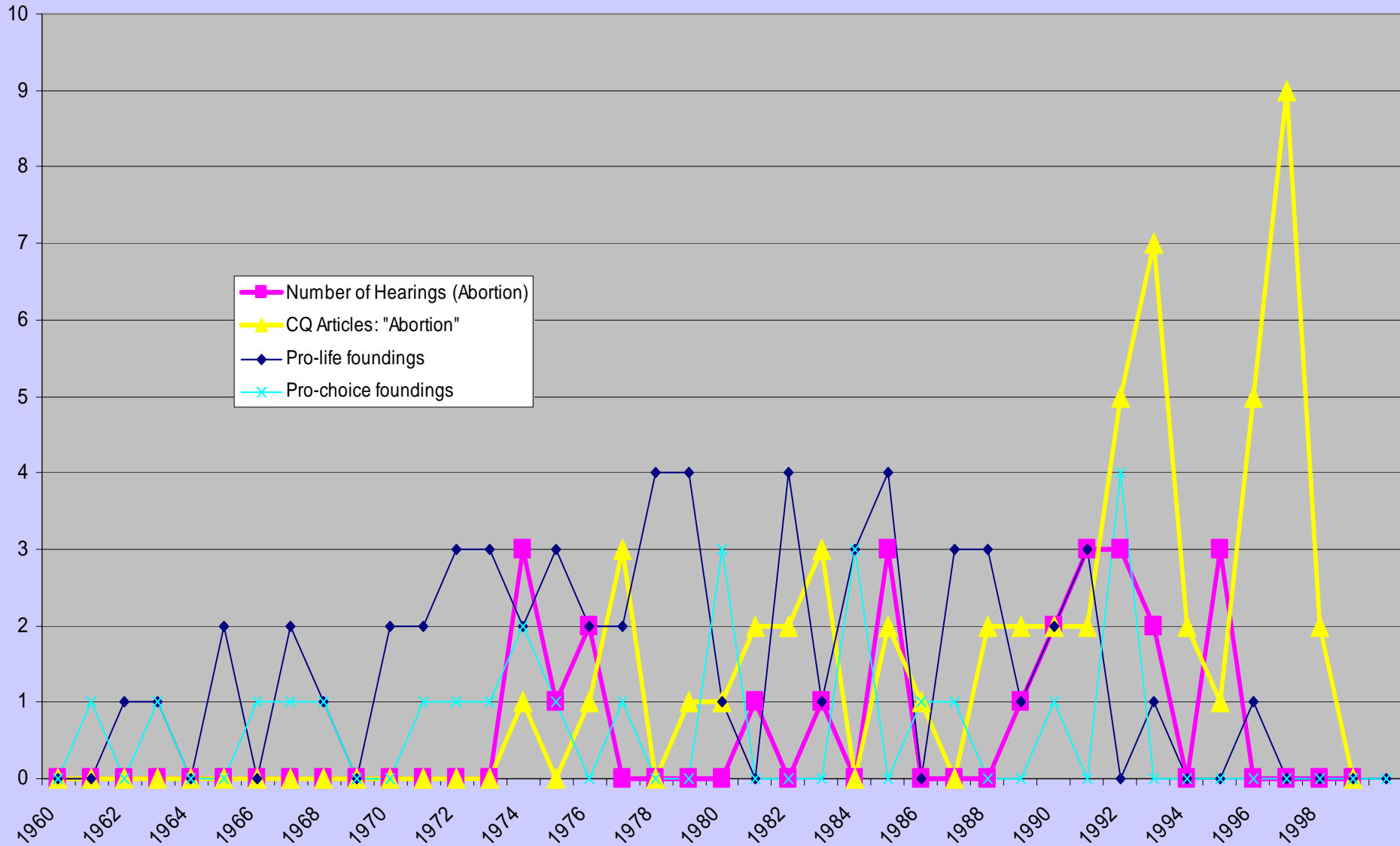
Abortion rate and Founding Rates



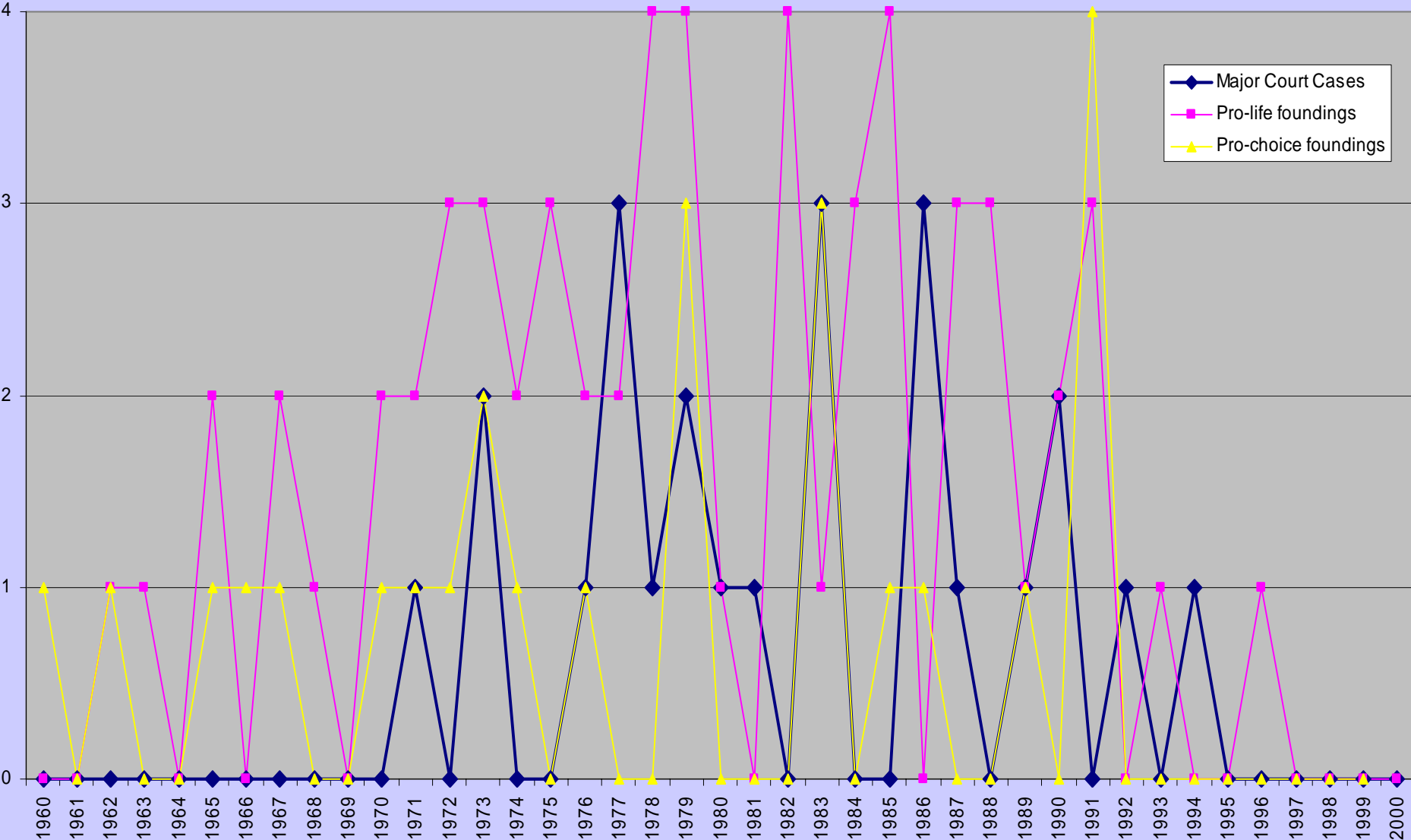
Abortion related articles and founding rates



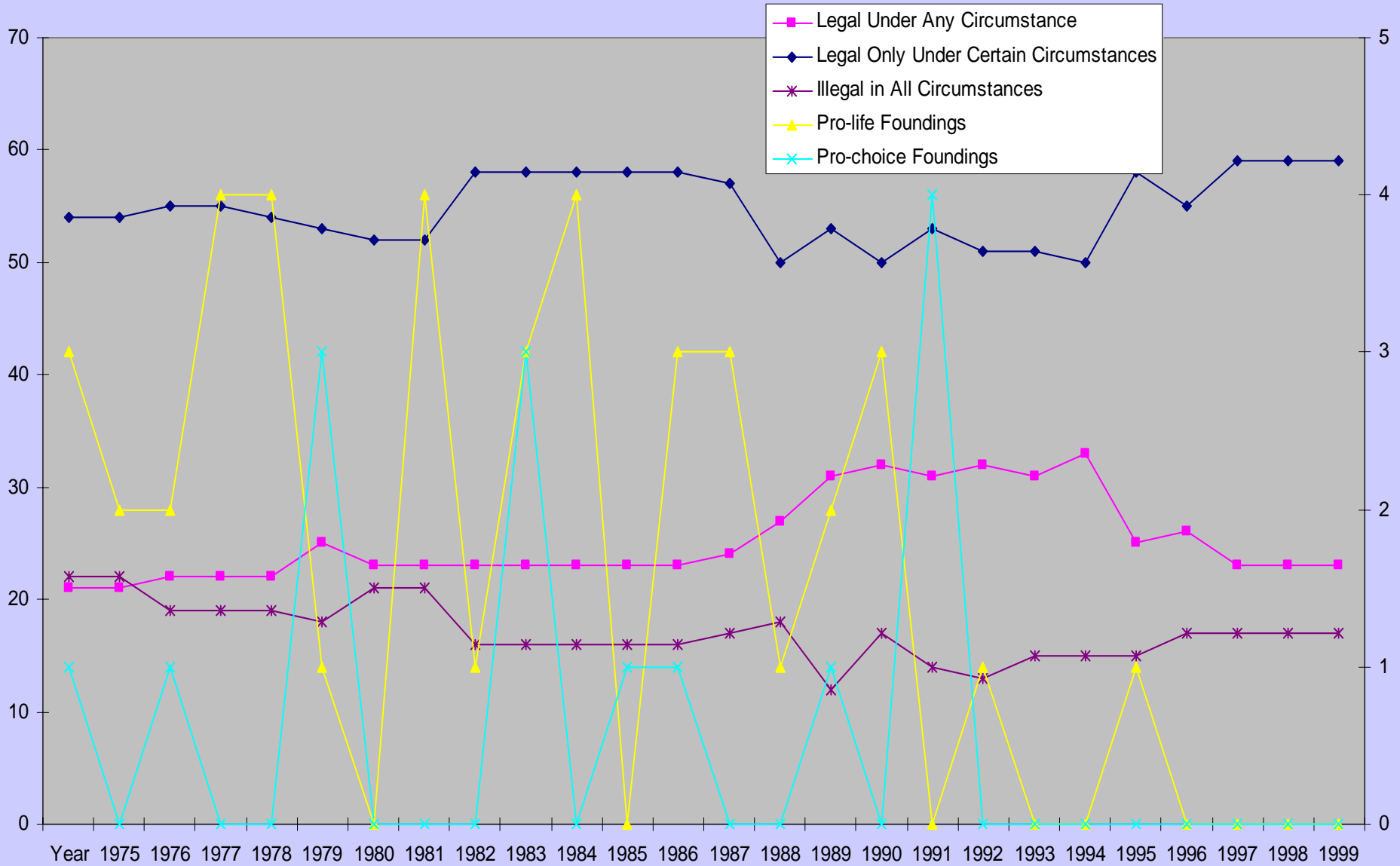
Government Attention and founding rates



Major Court Cases and founding rates

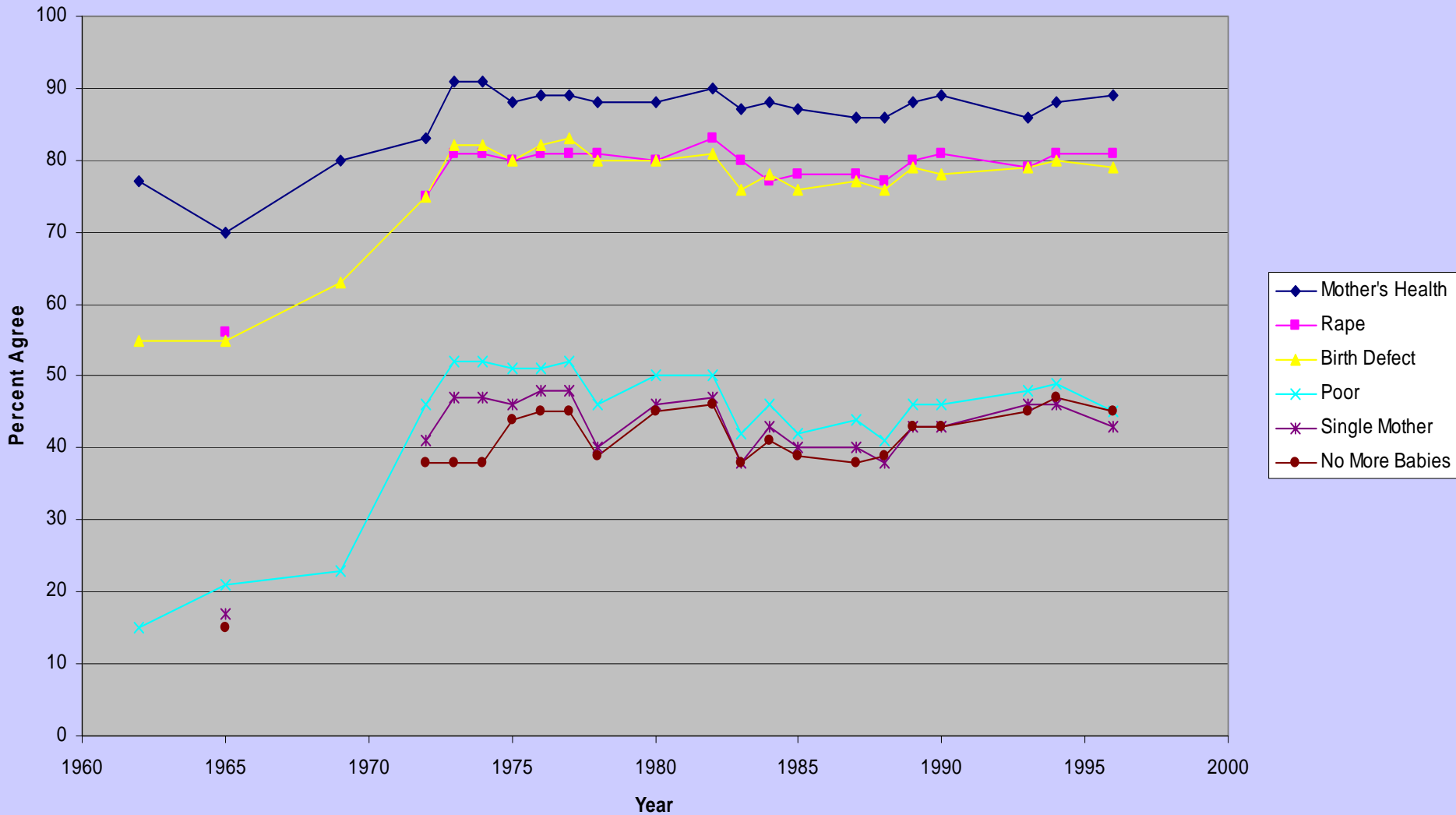


Public Opinion and Founding Rate



Public Opinion, cont...

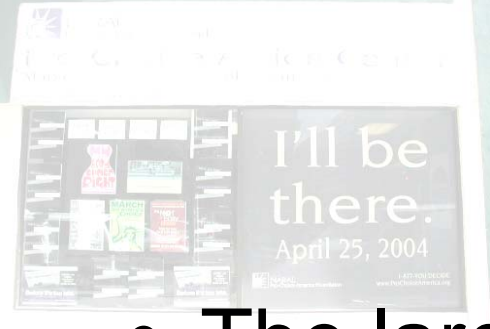
Abortion Should Be Legal Under these Circumstances



Independent Variables	Pro-life findings (R =)	Pro-choice findings	Pro-life (Advocacy)	Pro-choice (advocacy)	Pro-life (single-issue)	Pro-choice (single)
Annual Abortion Rate (1973-2000)	-0.0274	-0.0369				
NY Times Annual Count	0.144	0.1743				
Congressional Hearings	0.0813	0.1423	0.0797	0.1773		
Congressional Quarterly Articles	-0.173	-0.0411	-0.1527	-0.046		
Major Court Cases	0.0843	-0.0411	-0.1577	-0.046		
Density (Pro-life)	-0.1069	-0.056				
Density (Pro-choice)	-0.1212	-0.0885				
"Abortion should always be legal"	-0.3327	0.0949				
"Abortion should sometimes be legal"	0.0058	0.0169				
"Abortion should always be illegal"	0.3203	-0.1954				
Major Events (Staggenborg)	0.3799	-0.1765			0.4214	0.0711
Major Events after 1973	0.3670	-0.1781			0.4184	0.1068

Conclusions

- The largest correlations were found with public opinion and Staggenborg's measure of major events.
- Public opinion, three explanations:
 - Correlation could be a result of groups affecting public opinion
 - Groups are founded due to demand
 - Both public opinion and founding rates are responding to major events, or a third variable





Conclusions cont...

- Major events:
 - Pro-life groups strongly react to events
 - Pro-choice groups slower to react
 - Some literature has labeled the pro-choice movement as “being complacent”

Future Research

- Compare founding rates with a reliable measure of the Women's Rights movement, and the "Religious Right"
 - Will test the theory of resource mobilization
- Create a better data set using hard-copies of each edition of the Encyclopedia of Associations
 - Account for organization mortality
 - More accurate measure of density