

# The established views on abortion

[Family](#), [Abortion](#)



There are many different views on abortion therefore making it a very controversial subject to discuss. The two main views on abortion are the “pro-choice” view and the “pro-life” view as publicised in the article “Abortion: A Moderate View” written by L W. Sumner.

These established views are either for or against abortion although they do not take into consideration the many different factors regarding abortion. The article helps define the similarity and differences in the established views and explain the many flaws both these views have in today’s society. Along with the established views Sumner describes the moderate view and its purpose in society. The established views on abortion are the two most commonly used views.

The “pro-Choice” position is the liberal view on abortion which states that abortion is not immoral. This view claims that a fetus has no moral standing. Moral standing applies to anything that is not an item and has some established moral rights and cannot be wronged ( Sumner, 1992). The liberal view compares abortion to contraception stating that they have the same justification therefore the choice of abortion is left to a women’s discretion. The opposing view would be the “pro-life” view. This conservative view believes that a fetus does have moral standing throughout all stages of pregnancy therefore making abortion morally wrong. The article continues to state that since a fetus does have moral standings, an abortion is as equally justified to infanticide and homicide, therefore women does not have the discretion to seek an abortion.

Although these views have two very different concepts they have some similarities. Both established views leave out two important factors one may consider when choosing abortion. One factor both these views disregard is the timing of the abortion. The established views commit to the idea that the moral standing of the fetus is the same throughout the pregnancy. They do not take into consideration the growth and changes that occur during pregnancy. Another similarity these views share are the significant reason one may state in choosing abortion. Both views ignore the explanations for why a mother may choose an abortion. The conservative view believes there is not significant reason for choosing an abortion and the liberal view believes one does not need a significant reason for choosing an abortion. Both these views agree that when and why an abortion is performed is irrelevant because a fetus either has full moral standing or doesn't. These established views have many flaws in a Western democracy. A Moderate abortion takes into consideration the time and grounds, that determine the choice of an abortion. These are the two factors that the established views do not acknowledge.

The public agrees in the importance of the timing of the abortion and the grounds in which an abortion may take place. When considering the timing, most people tend not to be bothered by women who choose abortion at the very early stages of pregnancy although they have trouble agreeing with abortion in the later stages of pregnancy. The established views state that a fetus either has moral status or it doesn't, which is a flaw according to Sumner. Another flaw in the established views is the ignorance in considering grounds of the situation. Sumner explains that the grounds for

those who consider abortion has been divided into four categories; therapeutic (when the mother's health or life is in risk due to the pregnancy), eugenic (the fetus is in risk of deformity), humanitarian (pregnancy is forced upon due to rape or incest) and socioeconomic (poverty, desertion, family size etc.) (Sumner, 1992). These are all important issues in a Western democracy. These are the factors that the public considers when deciding whether or not an abortion is acceptable. Since the established views do not acknowledge these at all, Sumner states that these are to be seen as flaws. A moderate view is a much more complex view that attempts to consider all factors when talking about abortion. It uses both the established views to create a positive outlook on abortion. The moderate view examines sentient, the ability to feel pain or pleasure in relation to the developmental stages during pregnancy.

It states that a fetus acquires moral standing once it is able to feel pain or pleasure. This is said to be somewhere around the second trimester. After the threshold, abortion is equal to infanticide because both of these cases are preventing the existence of a being with moral standing. By stating a point in pregnancy when a fetus attains moral status, one is simply putting a time limit when an abortion can be considered morally wrong. The liberal view of abortion is now appropriate for early (prethreshold) abortions. A moderate policy must also include the grounds for abortion. The humanitarian and socioeconomic grounds are situations that are evident in the beginning of the pregnancy, thus making an abortion okay in the prethreshold stages. The therapeutic and eugenic grounds are ones that can develop later in the pregnancy, therefore a moderate policy must consider

these grounds for post-threshold abortions. This could state that the conservative view is appropriate for late (post-threshold) abortions. To conclude, a moderate view is one that sets an equal ground between the two established views. It's a view that sets a line between early and late abortions with a permissive policy for both and takes into consideration both therapeutic and eugenic grounds.

A utilitarian, one whose decisions are based on what outcome will create the greatest amount of good for the larger population and minimize pain and suffering would agree with the moderate view. When looking at the factor of time and moral status, the moderate view created a policy that would satisfy the greater good. Most people believe that getting an abortion before the second trimester, is just as equivalent to a contraception device since the fetus is still very tiny sing sell. During the growth process the fetus becomes a medium size, multi complex celled organism and the public views this as wrong (Sumner, 1992). Therefore most would agree that a fetus does not attain moral status until about the second trimester giving many people the ability to freely choose an abortion. Also, when looking at the therapeutic and eugenic grounds a utilitarian would agree that this minimizes the amount of pain and suffering which results in producing greater good. If a pregnant woman continues to provide for the fetus, then she is putting herself in serious risk. Although a fetus may have moral status at this point, a utilitarian would say that the mother's life is more important.

This is simply because the fetus has had no communication yet, no achievements, no relationships etc. whereas the mother has achieved more,

and by taking away her life this will inflict much pain on the infant and others who are important to her. Also, when looking at eugenic grounds, a utilitarian would agree that this abortion is justifiable because one must look at the trouble and pain the infant will have to experience throughout its life along with the terrible burden of the mother who has to come to terms with a child that she knows is deformed. The established view and the moderate view are not the only views on abortion. In the article “ Why Abortion is Immoral” by Donald Marquis we are exposed to other aspects and views on abortion. In fact, Marquis view on abortion differs significantly from Sumner’s moderate view. Marquis believes that killing a fetus deprives one of a deserving future therefore making it a moral crime. Unlike Sumner who takes into account the moral status of the fetus, Marquis focuses more on the feature of the fetus that will be taken away therefore making it wrong. The article explains two main points, the desire view and the discontinuation view. The desire view, explains that it’s wrong to kill because we all have the desire to live. The second view, discontinuation, explains that by taking away the life of a fetus one is discontinuing good experiences ( Marquis, 1999). Sumner would argue by stating that in the early stages of pregnancy a fetus does not have the ability to feel, therefore these theories do not apply. Marquis would continue by explaining that it’s not what the fetus can feel in the womb it’s the future experiences and future desire to live that abortion is taking away from it which makes it immoral.

Another view that differs from that of Sumner and Marquis is that of Mary Anne Warren as discussed in the article “ On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion”. Warrens focus is on what gives a human the title of a person. In

the article she explains there are five characteristics that define a person as a person. Warren would argue Sumner by explaining that these characteristics do not apply to a fetus therefore abortion is not immoral. Sumner would agree with some of Warren's characteristics, as stated that there is a time during abortion where a fetus attains moral standings, therefore stating a fetus is giving the title of a person. Sumner could argue that these aren't the only characteristics when choosing abortion and the one must also consider the grounds. Out of all the views discussed, Sumner's moderate view on abortion is more plausible view in today's society.

There are many factors that one has to consider when choosing abortion and the moderate view is one that can easily be accepted by the majority.

Abortion has unfortunately become a more commonly known procedure in today's society. The act of sex is an average activity in society today compared to how it was viewed 100 years ago. There are a larger number of young adults who engage in sexual activity, which has been a result to the significant increasing rates in teen pregnancy. This is an example of when the socioeconomic ground can be taken into consideration.

Also with our technology advancements we are able to diagnose a child with a disability during the pregnancy. This may be a reason why a mother may choose an abortion, for she does not want to watch a child suffer in society today. There are many changes in today's culture, which affect one's decision in having children and the moderate view is definitely one that most would agree with.

## Reference

Warren, Mary Anne, “ On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” in *Morality and Practice*, 3rd ed., edited by James Sterba, pp. 150-160. 1991 Wadsworth

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