

---

Theses, Dissertations, and Projects

---

1988

## An Exploratory Study of Men in the Anti-Abortion Movement: A Project Based upon an Independent Investigation

Laura E. Sabatini  
*Smith College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Sabatini, Laura E., "An Exploratory Study of Men in the Anti-Abortion Movement: A Project Based upon an Independent Investigation" (1988). Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA.  
<https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses/2415>

This Masters Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Projects by an authorized administrator of Smith ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@smith.edu](mailto:scholarworks@smith.edu).

Laura E. Sabatini  
An Exploratory Study of Men  
in the Anti-Abortion Movement

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to examine the characteristics and possible motivations of male anti-abortion activists. Specifically, this study explored the following questions:

1. How is the intense dedication of these men to the anti-abortion movement related to their perceptions of current societal structures? Do they experience legalized abortion as a threat to their external world views?
2. How is their behavior related to them as individuals, with unique gender role ideology? Do they experience legalized abortion as a threat to their internal world views?
3. Is their behavior related to an internal character rigidity separate from apparent beliefs and values?
4. Are they as a group significantly less feminist than a normative sample of men?

The major findings that emerged from the sample of 20 adult male anti-abortion activists were: that there is support for the hypothesis that the men in the anti-abortion movement feel an external societal threat as well as an internal traditional role threat, and that legalized abortion is a major contributing factor to those perceived threats. There was not clear support for a threat based on rigid

internal character attributes distinct from apparent beliefs and values. Although they did not score significantly less feminist than a normative sample of men, they did hold traditional beliefs about sex roles. The subjects were as a group: white, married, middle-aged, well-educated and politically conservative. There was no support for the movement's self-image of pro-life.

The most consistent message that they expressed is that every part of society must be based on a belief in God. The majority revealed an intense opposition to situational ethics. They believed that people no longer have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong because they have turned away from God.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MEN  
IN THE ANTI-ABORTION MOVEMENT

A project based on an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Laura E. Sabatini

Smith College School for Social Work  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

1988

Dedicated to Chip Trebour, for his ever-present support and encouragement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| DEDICATION .....                               | ii  |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS .....                        | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES .....                           | iv  |
| CHAPTER  |     |
| I. INTRODUCTION .....                          | 1   |
| II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....             | 3   |
| III. METHODOLOGY .....                         | 29  |
| IV. FINDINGS .....                             | 38  |
| V. DISCUSSION .....                            | 59  |
| REFERENCES .....                               | 74  |
| APPENDIX A: INFORMANT AND SUBJECT LETTER ..... | 76  |
| APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM .....                 | 78  |
| APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE .....                | 79  |
| APPENDIX D: ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN SCALE ..... | 82  |
| APPENDIX E: RIGIDITY OF ATTITUDES SCALE .....  | 83  |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table   | Page |
|---|------|
| 1. Summary of Demographic Characteristics ..... | 40   |
| 2. Attitudes Toward Abortion .....              | 44   |

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

As the anti-abortion movement has evolved, men, particularly in certain areas of the mid-west, have become highly visible and active members in the anti-abortion movement. For example, the president of the largest national anti-abortion organization is a man and his wife is the chairperson of a large mid-western chapter. Anti-abortion activists receive extensive coverage by the media and the activities of the men often seem to dominate the reporting.

The dedication these men have to their cause seems surprisingly intense, particularly since abortion is an issue which more directly affects women. It is not uncommon for male activists to go to jail more than once for participating in illegal demonstrations, and to risk losing their jobs for the cause. It would appear that the activities of men in the anti-abortion movement constitute significant and meaningful social phenomena, which warrant further understanding.

Questions which can be explored about these phenomena include:

1. How is the intense dedication of these men to the anti-abortion movement related to their perceptions of current societal structures?



2. How is their behavior related to them as individuals with unique gender role ideology and personal values?
3. What are the effects of their activities on public policy?
4. Does participation in a national organization strengthen their influence on national public policy?

A study of men active in the anti-abortion movement can help us to gain some insight into these issues that may provide a basis for understanding the dynamics of similar groups and their members.

Currently there are no studies that focus on men who are active in the anti-abortion movement. Although there are three studies that look at abortion activists, one focuses exclusively on the women, while the other two do not delineate the results according to gender. Additionally, this investigator is aware of three studies of abortion attitudes of the general public whose findings support significant differences in abortion attitudes based on gender. One would think there might be gender specific issues for male activists. Relying upon interviews with men who are active in the anti-abortion movement this study seeks to explore these and related issues. This study also seeks to increase the social work profession's understanding of the dynamics of anti-abortion activists. Indeed, it behooves social workers to understand as much as possible about a group that has considerable influence in the shaping of the social policy of this country.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review addresses three areas of the abortion/anti-abortion issue: 1. the history of the abortion/anti-abortion movement; 2. studies on attitudes toward abortion; and 3. mass movements and activism. The history section includes a brief review of the practices and attitudes regarding abortion within the historical context of anti-abortion movements with special emphasis on the role of men. Findings of recent studies on predictors of attitudes towards abortion are summarized with the characteristics of anti-abortion activists contrasted with those of the general public. Additionally, there is a discussion of current studies that have found gender differences to be related to attitudes about abortion. The section on activism addresses the internal and external dynamics that may contribute to the beliefs and actions of male anti-abortionists.

#### History of the Abortion/Anti-Abortion Issue

The literature on the history of abortion leads one to believe that abortion has probably existed as long as sex has

resulted in pregnancy. Furthermore, far from being an issue surrounded by moral and political controversy, abortion appears to have been dealt with and used in a pragmatic fashion by early societies (Paige, 1983, p. 32). In addition to the use of abortion as a means to control the population, there is significant evidence from contemporary primitive societies that most current forms of contraception were used prior to resorting to an abortion (p. 33). The methods of inducing abortions are found in ancient folk medicine in many societies including those of the German, French and Eskimos of Greenland, who relied on methods ranging from potions taken orally to the use of a sharpened walrus rib (p. 33).

Prior to the Christian era there is almost no evidence of abortion being a moral issue. "The first recorded condemnation appears in ancient Jewish texts,...which state that nothing is supposed to interfere with the spilling of the male seed" (pp. 33-34). There is not, however, any link made between "sexuality with sin or abortion with murder" (p. 34).

During the Roman Empire abortion was common and there were no laws regulating its use, while, in fact the one law referring to abortion stated that the "child in the belly of its mother" was not a person (Luker, 1984, p. 12). Even after the beginning of the Christian era legal regulation of abortion in the Roman Empire was not concerned with abortion being murder, but rather the rights of the fathers (p. 12). The Christians were the first to "link sexuality with sin and

abortion with murder" (Paige, 1983, p. 34), but even those links were equivocal. Paige points out a significant development in the quality of the moral stance against abortion. While the Jews certainly condemned abortion they did not expect the woman to endanger her own life with a life threatening pregnancy, regardless of the moral circumstances of her impregnation. The Christians, however, not only condemned abortion, but used it to advance their negative views of women. They believe that women hold exclusive rights to the link between sexuality and sin (pp. 34-35). Paige quotes Tertullian, a third century Christian theologian, calling women "the devil's gateway and above all it seems right that we turn away from the sight of women" (p. 35).

Luker further supports the existence of this negative view of women by Christians. She reports that the first legal penalties for abortions in Christian Communities applied only to women who had abortions for pregnancies that were the results of adultery or prostitution (1984, p. 12). The men who committed adultery or had sex with a prostitute were merely victims of the sinfulness of women not the sinfulness of their own sexuality. Clearly women were the only ones who experienced that link between sin and sexuality and its concomitant punishment, not men.

The link between abortion and murder has also never been a clear cut one and as stated earlier did not appear until the Christian era. The stance of the church on abortion as

murder vacillated depending on the strength or weakness of the current Pope. Views ranged from abortion never being murder because the fetus does not have a soul, to it is only murder after quickening (when the woman can feel the fetus move inside her), to abortion is always murder (p. 35). In 1100 A.D. Ivo of Chartres condemned abortion stating that it was homicide only if performed on a formed embryo (Luker, 1984, p. 13). Fifty years later when writing canon law Gratian elaborated on Ivo of Charters' position and stated that an embryo was formed at forty days if it was a male and eighty days if a female, but if not certain about the sex of the embryo it would be considered female. This canon law continued for the next seven hundred years into nineteenth-century America that ignored early abortions and rarely prosecuted late abortions (Luker, 1984, p. 13-14).

In 1871, according to the American Medical Association, twenty percent of all pregnancies ended in abortion, while estimates since the legalization of abortion in 1973 suggest approximately twenty-five percent of pregnancies end in abortion (Luker, 1984, pp. 19-20). Even though the abortion rates have certainly fluctuated due to many circumstances, the literature provides little or no evidence that the legal status of abortion has had a significant influence on the rate.

Although the first American laws to regulate abortion were passed in 1821, they were not concerned with abortion itself but with the hazards of abortifacients that were being

administered and used (Paige, 1983, p. 38). The first law banning all abortions, which resulted in no convictions and was largely ignored, was in 1844 in Massachusetts in response to the death of an unmarried women due to a massive uterine infection from an attempted abortion (pp. 38-39). A small group of feminists sought to reverse this trend of limiting their reproductive rights, but quickly realized there were too few of them and the issues ran too deep for them to win so they abandoned their attempt (pp. 39-40).

The first anti-abortion movement occurred between 1850-1890 and was led by an elite group of male physicians "whose motives were more complicated than a desire to protect embryonic life" (Luker, 1984, p. 14). Paige, in fact, alleges that most of the evidence supports that their primary motives were "professional and pecuniary" (1983, p. 40). During this time physicians were not respected and were rarely used except by the wealthy. By opposing abortion except when administered by a licensed physician, they would be effectively putting midwives and folk doctors out of business. They sought not only to eliminate their competition but also to convince the public that the lay doctors were incompetent to practice medicine at any level (Luker, 1984, and Paige, 1983). The physicians were successful and by 1900 almost all the states had laws banning abortions at any stage unless the abortion was performed by a physician who assessed it as necessary to preserve the life of the mother (Paige, 1983, p. 42 and Luker, 1984, pp. 32-33).

From 1900 to about 1960 abortion remained a private concern between a woman and her doctor instead of a moral concern to the public. Luker has labeled this era as the "century of silence" (1984). The silence was broken as abortions became more public and physicians realized that they had drastically different interpretations of what "preserve the woman's life" meant. Activists on both sides of the issue prior to the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion were once again primarily male professionals. Many of the physician activists trying to legalize abortion were, as Luker alleges, interested in "securing legal backing for what they were already doing," (p. 78), while the anti-abortion activists were almost exclusively Catholic male professionals (p. 128).

These professional, Catholic men were primarily drawn into the movement because of the Beilenson bill of 1964 in California. The Beilenson bill did not make abortion legal on demand. It "permitted a physician to 'aid, assist, or attempt' an abortion if that abortion took place in an accredited hospital and the hospital's therapeutic abortion board determined that the pregnancy would 'gravely impair' the physical or mental health of the woman" (p. 88). These male, Catholic physicians were appalled by this bill and were distressed to learn that "the public was either unaware or unconcerned" (Luker, 1984, p. 130). Prior to the Beilenson bill they "made the mistake of assuming that other people's unwillingness to discuss abortion had been based on

fundamental values that approximated their own, values that were part of the ordinary fabric of social life...that embryonic life is sacred " (Luker, 1984, p. 129-130). In an attempt to halt the passage of the Beilenson Bill they tried to dissuade the bill's supporters by appealing to their basic values (p. 131). Their arguments and beliefs were not shared, however, and the bill passed in 1967.

These men were not only concerned for what they felt was the loss of innocent lives, but also the loss of the security inherent in believing that one is a member of a society that holds fundamental beliefs similar to one's own beliefs. Luker (1984) suggests that these activists that worked to both promote and stop the Beilenson Bill were:

...like the earliest activists from 1850-1890, many of whom were people who worked in situations where they were likely to encounter some aspect of the abortion debate; they were physicians, social workers, or people who counseled unmarried pregnant women. (p. 135)

Consequently, it was more likely that men would be activists because their careers were more likely to bring them in touch with the abortion issue. The relative dominance of males in the movement changed drastically once the Supreme Court made abortion an issue of national awareness in 1973.

On January 22, 1973 when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion, the anti-abortion movement developed into what we know it as today: "Predominantly women with high school educations, who were married, had four or more children, and were not employed outside of the home" (Luker, 1984, pp. 138-139). These women "were not active in PTA,



church groups, scouting and many had not even voted before" (p. 139). This influx seems to have been created by the same dynamics that brought the Catholic male professionals in to fight the Beilenson bill. The fact that their views of abortion were opposed to what the majority believed, created overwhelming and "deeply disturbing symbolic messages" that indicated a "frighteningly radical departure from traditional views" (Luker, 1984, p.140-141).

These women were shocked into awareness by the Supreme Court that their beliefs regarding the sacredness of the embryo and the values of society were in sharp contrast to their own. They could no longer feel secure with their minimal contact with the public sphere. Paige further elaborates that "Catholic laywomen were the backbone of the movement, while the strategy came from the men in the hierarchy of the church" (1983, p. 64). This means that although women made up the majority of those active in the Catholic Church anti-abortion movement, they were told what to do by men who were superiors in the church, because in the Catholic church positions of authority are almost exclusively held by men.

Even prior to the 1973 Supreme Court decision, the right-to-life organizations began to formalize. The most well known and influential anti-abortion organization, the National Right To Life Committee, was formed in June of 1970, having no overt ties with the Catholic Church (Paige, 1983, p. 82). All of the presidents of the NRLC have been

protestants and except for the current president, Dr. John Willke, they have been women. Marjory Mecklenberg, the second president who took office in 1973 took an unpopular stance, which eventually led to her leaving the office. Her controversial approaches were similar to pro-choice organizations such as Planned Parenthood. Mecklenberg promoted alternatives to abortion and wanted to distribute contraceptives to teens (Paige, 1983, p. 84).

In 1980 shortly after the National Right- to- Life Committee gained support of the Republican Party, Dr. John Willke became president (Paige, 1983, 115 and 118). Dr. Willke is described as being "less tolerant of differences of opinion" and was not trusted by the progressives in the organization (p. 118). Dr. Willke created and produced the well known sensationalistic slides, pamphlets and books, including the picture of aborted fetuses in a garbage can, through Hayes Publishing Company, which he owns. This connection of Dr. Willke with a publishing company suggests as the progressives in the movement also point out that Dr. Willke is in a position to make money from the movement and his motives for involvement may indeed be questionable (pp. 122-123).

While the ties have been cut to the Catholic Church, there are now ties to the New Right. Most of the current literature seems to agree that there is an affiliation between the anti-abortion movement and the New Right. The controversy, however, is over whether or not the New Right is

running the anti-abortion movement to meet their own political interests or whether the anti-abortion movement still maintains some sense of autonomy. Paige chronicles in detail the extent of the connection between the New Right and the anti-abortion movement.

Prior to the late 1970's, the anti-abortion stance was not a conservative issue. In fact, during the early 1960's conservatives from the South "favored abortion as a way to control promiscuous blacks" (Paige, 1983, p. 129). In the late 1970's Paul Weyrich, creator of the Heritage Foundation, an ultra conservative information and resource center, developed along with other men the idea of a "winning coalition" of the New Right. This "winning coalition" was to be made up of: anti-abortion organizations; fundamentalists; the Republican Party and the business community, who would all be dedicated to the goal of creating a "Christian Republic" (pp. 181). The concept of a Christian Republic is "God as lord and master of everything, including the political system" (Paige, 1983, pp. 174-175).

This group of men, which comprise the foundation of the New Right, did indeed create a coalition that would effectively achieve their goals (Paige, 1983). In addition to providing more funding to the anti-abortion movement, Weyrich brought them further into the conservative movement by reframing their position as pro-family instead of pro-life (pp. 134-193). Furthermore, Weyrich, Ed McAteer, a Bible salesman, and Howard Phillips, introduced the issue of

abortion in 1979 to the fundamentalist member of the coalition, Reverend Jerry Falwell (p. 155).

Although it is apparent that at least at some level the anti-abortion movement has been used extensively by the New Right for their political (and personal) interests, Paige suggests that abortion has "lost its usefulness to the New Right, Republicans and fundamentalists" and the anti-abortionists will probably go back to their roots, the Catholic Church" (1983, p. 239). This movement back to the Catholic Church, however, has not as yet occurred and as Paige notes, Dr. Willke has adopted New Right "analysis, tactics and political methodology" (p. 140).

Clearly, throughout history abortion has not been considered exclusively a women's issue; men have indeed been involved. While it is true that women make up the majority of the rank and file of the anti-abortion movement (Luker, 1984, p. 194, and Granberg, 1981, pp. 157-163), it seems naive to believe that the abortion issue is now a debate between women with different world views, as Luker does. To dismiss at this point, the significant impact that men have and are still making on the abortion debate is to ignore not only history, but to ignore the fact that abortion embodies a threat to the world views of men as well as women. Affiliation with the male dominated New Right by the anti-abortion movement is significant. It also is significant that the current president of the most powerful anti-abortion organization is male. This may indicate that men continue to

assert the most influence, as they did in both the earlier Christian era and when the organized movement was being run by the Catholic church and women were in the background.

### Attitudes Toward Abortion

The literature on characteristics and predictors of attitudes of those who are against abortion addresses primarily attitudes of the public in general with only a few studies delineating gender differences. According to Himmelstein's summation of the available data on activists, there are three studies on attitudes and characteristics of activists in the anti-abortion movement (1986, p. 3). Two of the three studies on activists do not even address gender differences and the one that does focuses exclusively on women activists. There are no studies that address male anti-abortion activists specifically. The studies on predictors of attitudes and characteristics of those who have anti-abortion views and the studies of those who become activists because of those views seem generally supportive of each other. The studies on attitudes that address gender differences (Finlay, 1981; Barnartt & Harris, 1982; and Weisman, Nathanson, Teitelbaum, Chase & King, 1986), do find differences between the overall predictors of attitudes and characteristics when gender is taken into account.

Granberg's 1980 study of abortion activists is comprised of the responses of members of the National Right-to-Life

Committee and the National Abortion Rights Action League to mailed questionnaires (Granberg, 1981, pp. 157-163). In this study Granberg found the important variables for anti-abortion activists to include:

1. Opposition to the ERA.
2. Opposition to sex education in the schools and birth control information for teens.
3. Identification of themselves as conservative
4. Opposition to government action to reduce differences between the rich and the poor.
5. A high rate of marriage (pp. 157-163).

Additionally Granberg found in an earlier 1978 study based on 1972 and 1975 national survey data of the general public that the strongest predictors of an anti-abortion attitude include a conservative or traditional approach to matters of personal morality, such as:

1. Favoring larger families.
2. Disapproval of premarital sex.
3. Making divorce more difficult.
4. Opposition to sex education and pornography.
5. Restriction of birth control information particularly to teenagers.

Blake and del Pinal found in their research of the general public that the key variable in predicting anti-abortion attitudes was a strong devotion to religious beliefs along with a high rate of church attendance (1980, pp. 29-

56). Granberg supports this conclusion in his study of anti-abortion activists by finding that nine out of ten NRLC members viewed religion as very important and attended church at least once a week (1981, pp. 157-163). While educational level used to be considered a good predictor of abortion attitudes, Blake and del Pinal found that since at least 1975 education has taken third place to religion and church attendance in being able to predict attitudes toward abortion (1981, pp. 29-56).

In their study based on findings from two independent National Opinion Research Center General Social Surveys from 1974 and 1975, Singh and Leahy found that religion and education were of primary importance in predicting abortion attitudes (1978). Higher rates of church attendance and lower levels of education were strong predictors of anti-abortion sentiment. They also found to be significant what Granberg would label as a conservative standpoint: opposition to sexual permissiveness and a commitment to a larger family size were of primary significance (1978). Himmelstein has elaborated on the importance of religious involvement as measured by church attendance. He found predictors such as education and conservatism that were found by studies such as Granberg's and Singh and Leahy's remain significant, but with some modification. He states that "when religious involvement is controlled, the effects of most other variables are reduced significantly, but controlling for these other variables does not diminish the

impact of religious involvement" (1986, p. 7). Although Himmelstein did not deny the significance of the other variables, he found that their influences were contingent upon how they related to religious involvement. For example, he states "if the highly educated or the young are more likely to favor abortion, it is largely because many years of schooling and youth are associated with low levels of religious involvement" (1986, p. 7).

Even though, like Himmelstein, Granberg found in his 1978 study that religiosity was a significant predictor, education proved to offer a considerable amount of insight into the variability of the significance of religion when Protestants and Catholics were considered separately. Specifically Granberg found that the:

education-abortion correlation was higher for Protestants than Catholics while the religious involvement-abortion correlations were higher for Catholics than Protestants, which taken together suggests that for Catholics opposition to abortion is derived from or centered in their religion, while Protestants derive their opposition elsewhere. (p. 420)

Granberg's 1978 study, therefore, does find religious involvement to be less important than previously believed: more important are those variables that he and Singh and Leahy find that suggest a conservative ideology.

The significance of a conservative or traditional ideology is further supported by Luker's study of female anti-abortion activists. The women in this study hold a conservative or traditional "world view" as Luker calls it, which includes the belief that men and women are created for



different roles in life. This view holds "that the world is inherently divided both emotionally and socially into a male sphere and a female sphere, with men being best suited to the public world of work, and women best suited to rear children, manage homes, and love and care for husbands" (Luker, 1984, pp. 160 and 163). In fact, they not only believe that "motherhood is the most fulfilling role that women can have," but that if they do not pursue it exclusively of other roles it can be "damaging to both men and women and to their children" (pp. 160-161).

The desire for extreme change by those in the anti-abortion movement is reflected in their intensity and dedication to their cause. According to Granberg's study, 85 percent of the NRLC are single-issue voters, with their single issue being their anti-abortion position (1981, pp. 157-163). Luker, however, says that "until very recently, pro-life voters have been single-issue (or bullet) voters, willing to vote for or against a candidate solely on the basis of that candidate's stand on abortion" (1984, p.224). This suggestion of change on the single issue matter is not explained and Luker offers no data to support it, nor is it found in any of the other current literature available to date. One possible explanation for Luker's finding that single issue voting has diminished for anti-abortion activists could be a result of her study being focused primarily on women, while the other studies look at both women and men together.

The intensity of these anti-abortion activists is further reflected by their strategies to oppose abortion. Tatalovich and Daynes describe a workshop the NRLC provided at their national convention in 1976, which was entitled "How to Disrupt an Abortion Clinic". Additionally, the authors point out, the NRLC is well known for its graphic slide presentation, which includes mangled fetuses (1981, pp. 147-175). Luker's findings illustrate a sense of desperation among her subjects when she discusses the use of violence with the women in the anti-abortion cause. She found several who said they would not use violence, but could understand how others might. Other women said, "even if lives were lost in violence directed at an abortion center, that loss would be outweighed, and justified, by the greater net saving of unborn lives" (Luker, 1984, p. 217).

Anti-abortion attitudes embody a great deal more than a right-to-life sentiment; in fact, anti-abortion activists are not pro-life. Members of the NRLC and the general public with anti-abortion views are not opposed to capital punishment, war and military spending (Granberg, 1981, pp. 157-163; and Granberg, 1978), and those who are anti-abortion are not more pro-life than those who are pro-choice (Blake & del Pinal, 1980, pp. 29-56). The debate over whether or not anti-abortion activists are indeed pro-life reveals significant gender differences within the anti-abortion movement.

### Attitudes Toward Abortion - Gender Differences

In a study of abortion attitudes of college students no correlation of opposition to the death penalty with anti-abortion sentiment was found for the men, while a significant correlation was found for the women (Finlay, 1981, p. 578). In addition to the gender differences of a pro-life attitude, there are other significant differences between men and women who have anti-abortion attitudes which will need to be explored with the anti-abortion activists.

Women are more in favor of legal abortion on demand for no specific reason, than men are. In the study of college students 72.8 percent of the females favored legalized abortion, while 59.1 percent of the males did (Finlay, 1981, p. 575). A study of obstetricians and gynecologists found that although the men in the study were more supportive of legalized abortion than men in the general public, they were still significantly more likely to have ethical reservations about first trimester abortions than their female colleagues. Support for this finding comes from 61 percent of the women and 41 percent of the men having no ethical reservations (Weisman, Nathanson, Teitelbaum, Chase, & King, 1986, p. 68).

Barnartt and Harris conclude in their study that the sex differences in abortion attitudes that are currently found are probably due to the ideological differences of men and women occurring at different points in time. For women they found the peak to have occurred in 1974, but for men they

believe their findings "suggest that the impact of the women's movement, the anti-abortion movement and other related issues were less salient in 1974 and had begun to be felt more strongly by 1977" (Barnartt & Harris, 1982, p. 330-331). This apparent differential experience by men encourages, in this investigator's opinion, an exploration of the type conducted in this study to further clarify the differential impact of the abortion movement on men and to explicate some of the other related issues.

Barnartt and Harris found that while there were few significant changes in the predictors of abortion attitudes for women since 1974, for men the importance of education decreased and sex role ideology and church attendance increased (1982, p. 324-329). As discussed earlier this increase in the importance of church attendance was found for those with anti-abortion attitudes as well as activists. This increase in the importance of church attendance for men and not women was also found in the study on college students (Finlay, 1981, p. 578). Other significant changes in predictors of abortion attitudes in men that did not occur with women are age and marital status with older and never married men more likely to be for legal abortion (Barnartt & Harris, 1982, p.328). Additionally, the importance of children continues to be a weak predictor for men and a strong one for women. Both men and women with anti-abortion attitudes hold strong traditional and non-permissive sexual attitudes (Finlay, 1981, p. 577-579).

In her work, Finlay, takes the findings of gender differences and begins to identify some of the feelings that motivate women and men to have the attitudes they do about abortion. Finlay (1981) states that:

Males who oppose abortion are perhaps the ones who would take what Mauss described as a 'Comstock mentality' on the abortion issue: 'That is, a punitiveness toward female sexuality, which is manifested in pregnancy, is expressed through the denial to the woman of the option of abortion'.(p. 580)

Additionally Finlay (1981) concluded that her findings supported the idea that:

Women are defining abortion more in terms of humanitarian concerns than were men: Humanitarian attitudes lead one to consider not only the rights and welfare of the fetus, but also the rights and welfare of the woman who is experiencing an unwanted pregnancy. (p. 580)

In this investigator's opinion, Finlay's conclusions begin to address more specifically the possible underlying causes for gender differences and behavior in anti-abortion sentiments suggested previously by Barnartt and Harris.

In summary, the characteristics and predictors of anti-abortion activists and the general public with anti-abortion views basically are the same. The most significant characteristics and predictors include: 1. conservative or traditional ideology; 2. religiosity and church attendance; and 3. educational level. Although these categories or labels seem to be fairly accurate, without further inquiry they provide one with a limited understanding of how abortion is defined and experienced by those who are anti-abortion.

Conservative or traditional ideology appears to provide the most insight into what motivates one to be against abortion because it has been defined more specifically, and it has been operationalized in more detail. For the man who favors larger families, disapproves of premarital sex, and opposes sex education, legalized abortion is anti-family and certainly poses a definite threat to those positions. The religiosity variable which has been operationalized by simply measuring frequency of church attendance, provides little information beyond predicting or labeling. Furthermore, Granberg refers to an anti-abortion motivation that is "derived from or centered in their religion" (1978, p. 420).

The relationship of religiosity to anti-abortion beliefs may indicate that someone who goes to church at least every week is more of a moralist and values human life more than the less devout. This is not necessarily true, however, and religiosity needs to be explored more fully. While religiosity and conservative or traditional ideology are most often presented as two separate variables, this investigator's belief is that particularly for men they represent the same concept. Stated differently those who are anti-abortion are not only religious, but also dedicated to a traditional or conservative approach to morality, the family and perhaps even politics in general.

To summarize further, the importance of a traditional or conservative ideology is also supported by the studies that delineate gender differences. For men, conservative sex role

ideology and increased church attendance have become better predictors of anti-abortion beliefs, while they have not changed for women. Furthermore, unlike women, importance of children was a weak predictor, but as true for women, anti-abortion males held strong traditional and non-permissive sexual attitudes. Barnartt and Harris suggest that these differences indicate that the ideological impact of abortion occurred for women and men at different times. It is also possible that the ideological impact may be experienced differently by men. It has been suggested that these gender differences may indicate some motivations for men to have anti-abortion beliefs that are different than those of women. Finlay suggests that men may be expressing a "punitiveness toward female sexuality" (1981, p. 580) and are significantly less motivated by humanitarian concerns (1981, p. 580). These variables of religiosity and traditional and conservative world views will all be explored in more detail in the present study.

#### Mass Movements and Activism

Mancur Olson Jr., a professor of economics at Harvard, provides a beginning understanding of what to explore in a mass movement, such as the anti-abortion movement, when he speaks of both the internal and external dynamics that co-exist in individuals that are drawn to mass movements. Olson (1965) states:

The adherents of "mass movements" are usually explained in terms of their "alienation" from society. This alienation produces a psychological disturbance or disequilibrium. The support for "mass movements" can accordingly be explained mainly in psychological terms, though the psychological disturbances are in turn related to the various characteristics of the social structure. A fanatic devotion to an ideology or leader is common in mass movements, and many of these movements are often said to be on the "lunatic fringe". This sort of lobby is more common in periods of revolution and upheaval, and in unstable countries. (p.162)

In this passage Olson would appear to refer to both internal and external dynamics that were addressed in the introduction: 1. how is the intense dedication of these men in the anti-abortion movement related to their perception of current societal structures (external); and 2. how is their behavior related to them as unique individuals (internal).

Let us consider how the behavior of the men in the anti-abortion movement is related to their perceptions of current societal structures. Is our society in a period of revolution or upheaval? As of 1980 only 17 percent of the families in the United States were traditional ones with the father earning the income and the mother at home raising the two children (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 55). Petchesky says that during the 1970's abortion came to represent more than a "murdered fetus" to feminists and for non-feminists it came to represent the "emancipated woman" (1984, pp. 241-285). As discussed earlier, findings of the different studies do agree that abortion represents more than a desire to save lives by the anti-abortion activists.

What is not clear is whether abortion represents the "emancipated women". If abortion does represent a change in



women's potential roles, what exactly does that mean to members of both sides of the debate? There appears to be a consensus on both sides that our society is in a period of upheaval, but there is a disagreement on whether the upheaval is positive or negative. Feminists, such as Petchesky, believe that the motives to preserve the traditional nuclear family and the associated traditional roles are primary driving forces of the anti-abortion movement.

The president of the NRLC, Dr. Willke, is quoted in response to accusations about fire bombings and the harassment of abortion clinics:

It is they who are doing violence to our beloved nation by their systematic undermining of the basic unit of our society, the family...They do violence to marriage by helping remove the right of a husband to protect the life of the child he has fathered in his wife's womb. (Petchesky, 1984, pp. 262-263)

Dr. Willke not only clearly states that abortion is a threat to "the family", which his organization is attempting to reestablish, he explicitly stresses the threat that abortion presents to the traditional role of the father in the family when he speaks of protecting the child in the womb. Like Olson, Willke suggests that there is a threat to activists on a basic internal level, a diminution of their personal power.

Werner found in his research on activism in the abortion movements that anti-abortion activists had a higher attitude-activism correlation than pro-abortion activists and women had a higher attitude-activism correlation than men on both

sides of the debate (1978, pp. 1375-1388). These findings suggest that abortion may represent a threat to external and internal security, which leads to more overt action. The findings also suggest that the men who are active in the anti-abortion movement may feel this negativity and intensity even more acutely than other men.

Reviewing this literature on activism, it is suggested that the dedication of men active in the anti-abortion movement encompasses a concern for the external state of our society and a concern for internal issues, such as how they feel about themselves and the possibility of their changing roles. There may be as Himmelstein suggests, an "assessment of both one's personal condition and the condition of society as a whole" (1986, p. 12). Himmelstein found that among the anti-abortion activists there is a "personal conservatism, a concern with constraint, limits, and controls on human drives within the intimate sphere of life" (1986, p. 9). This indicates a sense of self or "personal condition" that is quite dependent on outside controls and little faith that individual internal controls can continue to make one feel safe and comfortable within society. In her work, Luker studies women and develops an understanding of the internal and external dynamics that exist for women in the anti-abortion movement. She discusses how abortion is not only a threat to the world views of women, but is more specifically a threat to the security they have found in traditional roles (Luker, 1984, pp. 1-256). This needs to be explored for men to determine if similar dynamics prevail.

### Summary of the Review of the Literature

The three areas of the abortion/anti-abortion issue that were presented in this review are: 1. its history; 2. attitudes toward abortion; and 3. mass movements and activism. The review of those three facets of the abortion/anti-abortion issue reveals many areas of interest that can be further investigated and better understood through a study of a sample of men active in the anti-abortion movement.

Specifically, the literature cites three characteristics traditionally associated with anti-abortion attitudes: 1. personal conservative or traditional ideology; 2. religiosity, operationalized as frequency of church attendance; and 3. lower levels of education. Additionally the literature suggests such anti-abortion attitudes are not necessarily pro-life. Finally, the works on activism in general suggest that individuals who may become activist may also perceive a threat to the structure of society as they value it. They may also feel personally or internally threatened by changes in general and changes in sex roles in particular. These variables are explored in the study of males active in the anti-abortion movement in a large mid-western city.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory study of the characteristics and attitudes of a sample of men who are activists in the anti-abortion movement. The selection of an exploratory research design is appropriate since to date there are no published research studies that focus specifically on men in the anti-abortion movement. Moreover, this investigator is aware of only three studies of predictors of abortion attitudes among the general public that delineate findings based on gender. These studies strongly suggest that there are significant gender differences in how men and women feel about the issue of abortion, but they do not articulate those differences.

Furthermore, this study seeks to identify demographic characteristics of the activist male subgroup to determine ways in which it is similar to or different from males in general studies on abortion attitudes. The research on abortion attitudes and activism suggests that the issue is a dynamic one that must include a variety of interpretations based on a combination of individual and societal factors. Thus, the goals of this study are to: gain a beginning understanding of what abortion subjectively means to activist

men; how it is experienced by them; what influences their attitudes; and in what ways these findings are similar and or different to the findings of women activists. An exploratory design was chosen as the best means for obtaining such preliminary data.

### Design

This exploratory research design was developed to investigate the following six sets of variables:

1. demographics;
2. family history and current family roles;
3. perception of society;
4. intensity of commitment to the anti-abortion movement;
5. attitudes toward women and their changing roles;
- and 6. rigidity of attitudes regarding personal habits.

The six variables have been chosen to clarify characteristics of the sample and to tap into the world views held by these men. Specifically, in this study, world views are operationalized as having two components:

1. internal world views, which include personal values and attitudes toward sex roles;
- and 2. external world views, which include ideas regarding the state of society and it's structure.

Understanding the subjects' world views is important since one of the most significant findings in Luker's research study of women activists is that these anti-abortion activists have a particular world view that is threatened by legalized abortion (Luker, 1984).

In addition to exploring attitudes and characteristics of the sample, two hypothesis were advanced: 1. subjects would score higher than a normative sample on a standardized measure of rigidity reflecting rigidity of attitudes regarding personal habits; and 2. subjects would score less feminist than a normative sample on a standardized attitudes toward women measure. These hypotheses are extracted from the literature (Luker), and from the investigator's own thinking about the issue. All of these factors are best explored initially through an exploratory design that utilizes structured and semi-structured formats that should allow the most significant data to emerge. This approach is expected to also result in the identification of areas for future empirical research.

#### Sample

The sample consists of men over the age of eighteen, who are anti-abortion activists in a large mid-western city. The goal is to obtain a sample of men who maintain a high intensity of dedication to and involvement with the anti-abortion movement. Activism is operationalized to include the minimum criterion that the subjects participate in some form of public anti-abortion activity on at least a monthly basis within the past year. Their activism could take a variety of forms including grassroots and political work.

The sample was generated through letter and phone contacts with leaders of local anti-abortion organizations and movements and individuals. (Appendix A - Letters). When the study began, the investigator was not aware of the range of characteristics of the men in the anti-abortion movement. Quota sampling could not be implemented and thus a significant degree of representativeness cannot be insured. One way the problem of representativeness was addressed was to send letters to all of the anti-abortion organizations and movements known in the community, which included the most mainstream right-to-life, as well as political action committees and church groups.

Letters were also sent to individuals who had written anti-abortion letters to the editor in the local paper; this allowed contact with activists who may have otherwise been screened out as less desirable by the organizations' leaders who provided the referrals. Finally, as the sampling process progressed, each group tried to insure that the investigator had a representative sample. For example, a "leader" of an informal group of anti-abortion activists, who would be considered the most far right and extreme, called the investigator after hearing about the study with names to include in the sample. Confidentiality was assured to all respondents. (Appendix B - Informed Consent Form). Even though the above sampling procedures were used, the study is an exploratory one with a small sample. Generalizations to other populations are not feasible.

### Data Collection

Once letters were sent and names of potential subjects were received, the investigator scheduled interviews. The method of data collection consisted of in-person, semi-structured interviews that lasted from an hour and a half to two hours. The investigator took notes and tape recorded the semi-structured interviews. Following the interview, the subjects were asked to respond in writing to two Likert-type standardized instruments, the Attitudes Toward Women scale (Spence, Helmreich and Stapp, 1972), and the Rigidity of Attitudes Regarding Personal Habits scale (Meresko, Rubin, Shontz and Morrow, 1954).

### Measurement

The primary portion of the interview consisted of an open ended questionnaire developed by the investigator that addressed the following five areas of interest:

1. demographics;
2. family background and current family;
3. perception of society;
4. intensity of commitment to the anti-abortion movement and;
5. attitudes toward women.

(Appendix C - Questionnaire). The section on family included the subjects' memories and thoughts on their families of origin and their current families, focusing primarily on sex role behavior. The material focusing on perception of society included questions regarding the subjects'



perceptions and feelings about how society is structured, where it's mores are headed and how the subjects' feel society should be. The subjects' ideas on how society views them and their anti-abortion behavior were also explored.

Intensity of commitment to the anti-abortion movement was explored by questions that focused on how they became involved in the anti-abortion movement, the degree to which their involvement in the anti-abortion movement overlapped into other areas of their lives and how they view themselves and their activities. The material concentrating on attitudes toward women included questions regarding significant women who are or have been in the subjects' lives as well as their general attitudes about the roles of women and men. The four variables of family, society, intensity of commitment, and attitudes toward women also include a study of the subjects' perceptions of the effects legalized abortion has had on these variables.

The Attitudes Toward Women scale was developed by Spence, Helmreich and Stapp (1972) and tests attitudes toward women and their roles in society. (Appendix D- Attitudes Toward Women Scale). It has 15 items that are responded to using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly". This scale began as a 55 item measurement that has been developed into 25 and 15 item versions. The 25 item version was standardized on 241 female and 286 male introductory psychology students and their parents. It was shortened to the 15 item version, used in

this study, that has a correlation of .91 with the original 55 item scale. This scale was selected to help provide a more standardized measure of what these male activists do indeed think are appropriate behaviors and roles for women. Since it is possible that they may be reluctant to voice fully their more conservative or traditional opinions about women's and men's changing roles, this investigator thought a brief standardized instrument, such as the 15 item one chosen, could be helpful in addition to the interview questions about women and sex roles.

The Rigidity of Attitudes Regarding Personal Habits (RAPH) scale was developed by Meresko, Rubin, Shontz and Morrow (1954). (Appendix E- RAPH Scale). It is a 20 item 6-point Likert-type scale "designed to measure rigidity as manifested by attitudes concerning personal habits. The authors define psychological rigidity as a person's resistance or lack of readiness to be influenced by motivationally relevant stimulation in such a way as to adjust to his environment as effectively as his behavior-repertoire permits" (Meresko, Rubin, Shontz, and Morrow, 1954, p. 89). The scale was standardized on a group of 60 undergraduate college students, otherwise undescribed. This scale was chosen to provide a more specific weighting of the presence of this psychological factor. Additionally, the RAPH scale could shed light on Himmelstein's suggestion that anti-abortion activists have a strong "personal conservatism, a concern with constraint, limits, and control on human

drives within the intimate sphere of life" (1986, p. 9) that indicate that they could feel quite dependent upon clear controls from society.

### Data Analysis

The strategy for analyzing the data for this study is designed and undertaken to fulfill the goals of an exploratory research design, which are to define characteristics of a sample and to help define areas for future research. Data from the open-ended questionnaire are analyzed descriptively and qualitatively to describe the sample. This is done by summarizing demographic data and through analysis of major themes. The data is further analyzed by focusing separately on the areas of interest that emerged in the five categories of: 1. demographics; 2. family background and current family; 3. perception of society; 4. intensity of commitment to the anti-abortion movement; and 5. attitudes toward women.

The data from the Attitudes Toward Women Scale and the Rigidity of Attitudes Regarding Personal Habits scale are analyzed to further describe the sample. The means, ranges and standard deviations are calculated for both standardized measures and a T-statistic is calculated for the Attitudes Toward Women scale. Additionally, some specific questions from the standardized measures are examined to further describe the results and meanings of the measures as well as

to discuss their possible relevance to the other findings of the study from the open-ended questionnaire. Although attempts were made to examine the data in various ways, no significant sub-groups emerged from either one of the standardized measures or from other modes of analysis. Finally, narrative data are presented to exemplify and illustrate the findings.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This exploratory research project was developed to study a sample of men who are activists in the anti-abortion movement. The findings reflect data that emerged from twenty interviews consisting of open-ended questions in the following six categories: 1. demographics; 2. family history and current family; 3. perception of society; 4. attitudes toward women; 5. intensity of involvement in the anti-abortion movement; and 6. rigidity of attitudes regarding personal habits. Responses to two standardized instruments are also analyzed.

The findings support the hypothesis that the men in the anti-abortion movement feel an external societal threat as well as an internal traditional role threat and that legalized abortion is a major factor contributing to those perceived threats. There was not, however, clear support for a threat based on rigid internal character attributes distinct from apparent beliefs and values. Also, the male anti-abortion activists sampled did not score significantly less feminist than a normative sample of male college freshmen in 1973.

Twenty subjects were contacted from a pool of approximately thirty-five that were generated from six sources. The twenty subjects contacted were selected from all six sources and all agreed to be interviewed. All twenty of the subjects completed the semi-structured interview and the scale measuring attitudes toward women and nineteen completed the scale measuring rigidity of attitudes regarding personal habits. The data gathered in this study is presented in the following six categories: 1. demographics; 2. family background and current family; 3. perceptions of society; 4. intensity of commitment to the anti-abortion movement; 5. attitudes toward women and sex roles; and 6. rigidity of attitudes.

#### Demographics

The twenty subjects that were interviewed were as a group: white, married, middle-aged, and well-educated. Additionally, they held highly traditional beliefs about sex roles and were found to be politically conservative. Overall, the clearest message that the men in the anti-abortion movement expressed is that every part of society must be based on a belief in God, and that people no longer have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong because they have turned away from God. Indeed, an understanding of what is right and wrong as defined by God is fundamental to the success of all of society according to these men and they

consistently expressed opposition to situational ethics. The findings do not support the anti-abortion movement's self-image of pro-life. The majority of the subjects, 80%, are for capital punishment, while 70% are for maintaining or increasing the current level of military spending.

Table 1 summarizes the major demographic characteristics of the sample of 20 subjects.

TABLE 1  
Demographic Characteristics

|                            | <u>MEAN</u> | <u>MODE</u> | <u>RANGE</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| AGE OF SUBJECT             | 45.75       |             | 22-75        |
| AGE OF WIFE                | 45.57       |             | 27-71        |
| LENGTH OF MARRIAGE         | 21.26       |             | 1-50         |
| CHURCH ATTENDANCE PER WEEK | 2.45        | 1           | 1-7          |
| NUMBER OF CHILDREN         | 3.65        | 4           | 0-9          |
| SUB. NO. OF SIBLINGS       | 4.8         | 3           | 2-12         |

In addition to the data presented in table 1, it is important to note that of the twenty men sampled, one was unmarried with no children, one was divorced, one was separated from his wife (not legally), and one married man and his wife had not yet had any children, but planned to at a later date.

Of additional interest are the data regarding religion and levels of education attained by both the men sampled and their wives. While 60% (12) of the sample were Catholic, 40% (8) were Protestant. Of the Protestants, 20% (4) were Presbyterians, 15% (3) were Fundamentalist, and 5% (1) were

non-denominational.

The data gathered for highest level of education attained revealed husbands who were better educated than their wives. Of the men sampled 85% (17) had attained at least an undergraduate degree and 45% (9) of the men sampled had not only completed an undergraduate program, but had attained graduate degrees. Of the wives, 47% (9) completed an undergraduate degree and 5% (1) had completed a graduate degree. Of the remaining 47% (10) all had at least completed high school.

The fact that the wives were on average considerably less educated than their husbands is probably a reflection of the subjects' common belief in traditional sex roles, and it may also be due to the less frequent encouragement and acceptance of women pursuing careers when these women were of high school and college age. Another possible explanation is that the chances of these anti-abortion men finding wives with their shared traditional sex role ideology is probably less likely among women with graduate degrees, regardless of the woman's age.

Many may say that the high level of education found in the men sampled is an example of the sample's low generalizability, based on a self-selection process by the organizations' leaders, who provided referrals in an attempt to make their movement "look good". This investigator, however, believes the perception of men in the anti-abortion movement as being uneducated is more likely based on



unfounded stereotypical thinking about the anti-abortion movement.

At least 25% (5) of the sample was comprised of activists noted as less desirable by the more mainstream of the movement, because their "extremism" (acceptance of breaking the law and violence) was embarrassing or in one case the subject had some mental health problems. Indeed, among those noted as less mainstream were the two least educated of the sample, those with high school degrees, but two had undergraduate degrees and one had a graduate degree. It appears that the most extreme of the movement may be on the average less educated than the rest of the movement; they are not, however, poorly educated. Available evidence does not suggest to the investigator that the majority of the movement is made up of this more extreme faction. Indeed, this study's finding of male anti-abortion activists being well-educated replicates the two previous anti-abortion movements that consisted of well educated males. This is, however, unlike studies of the recent anti-abortion movement which have found low levels of education to be a strong predictor, particularly for women.

Of the data presented in table 1, the mean age of 45.74 of the men sampled, is noteworthy. This mean age may indicate that men who are activists in the anti-abortion movement are at least in part drawn to the movement because they are heavily vested in traditional sex roles and view abortion as a threat to those traditional values. Indeed,

unlike their younger counterparts, these men and the women their age, would have been raised in the earliest days of the influence of the women's movement and may have been taught to accept traditional definitions of the family and sex roles. These men may be more interested in the traditional sex roles and less comfortable with changing what is so familiar.

Data on pro-life questions revealed that the male, anti-abortion activists in this sample are not pro-life. Specifically 80% (16) were for capital punishment, while 45% (9) were for an increase in military spending and 24% (5) were for maintaining the current level of military spending.

The findings of support for capital punishment and increased or maintained levels of military spending also provide data to indicate a politically conservative stance by most of the subjects. Additionally, 50% (10) of the subjects indicated that they were directly involved with local and or national conservative politics.

Table 2 summarizes the attitudes toward abortion in eight different circumstances of the sample of 20 subjects.

TABLE 2  
Attitudes Toward Abortion

| <u>Should a legal abortions be available if ...</u>                                   |            |           |
|---|------------|-----------|
|   | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> |
| 1. There is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby.                            |            | 100%      |
| 2. The woman is married and does not want any more children.                          |            | 100%      |
| 3. The woman wants an abortion, her husband disapproves.                              |            | 100%      |
| 4. The family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children.              |            | 100%      |
| 5. The pregnancy is a result of a rape.   |            | 100%      |
| 6. The woman is an unmarried 25-year-old.   |            | 100%      |
| 7. The "woman" is an unmarried 14-year-old.   |            | 100%      |
| 8. There is a strong chance that the woman's life may be endangered by the pregnancy. | 55%(11)    | 40%(8)    |

This table shows that the subjects were in complete agreement with the first seven statements and unanimously opposed legalized abortions under those seven circumstances. While one subject chose not to answer question eight, a few of the ones who still opposed legalized abortion if the mother's life was in danger defended their no answers by making a note on the questionnaire that there were too few cases of the mother's life "truly" being in danger to warrant the need for abortion to be legal in those instances. This argument supports a similar finding by Luker's study when some in her sample supported violence and the loss of lives because even more unborn lives would be saved (1984, p. 217).

### Family Background and Current Family

Most subjects came from intact families with 2-12 children. The work history of the subjects' mothers and wives reveals women who are heavily invested in traditional sex role ideology. Of the mothers 50% (10) have never worked, while 20% (4) worked full or part-time before having children and 15% (3) worked full or part-time after their children were grown. Additionally, 15% (3) worked part-time or infrequently while the children were young and 10% (2) worked full-time while their children were young. It is interesting to note that the two mothers who did work full-time while their children were still young only did so to support their families because their husbands had died. A majority of the wives 84% (16) worked prior to having their children and most 74% (14) gave up full-time jobs once their children were born. Only 5% (1) has never worked and of the 10% (2) who currently work, they are employed part-time.

Fifty percent (10) of the subjects' mothers never worked as opposed to only 5% (1) of their wives never working. This difference between their wives' and mothers' work habits is probably a reflection of what was more acceptable in those different generations. Further inspection of the data reveals that even though the times may have changed and it is now more acceptable for women to work, the wives of the men sampled still maintain traditional sex roles. Specifically, 74% (14) of the wives gave up full-time jobs and 10% (2) gave

up part-time jobs to be full-time wives and mothers. Further exemplifying the wives' traditional sex roles is the fact that of the two wives who do currently work, one works part-time only while the children are in school and the other works part-time because the children are grown and out of the home.

In addition to their mothers' and wives' work histories supporting a strong foundation in and continued allegiance to traditional sex roles, their current relationships with their families of origin further illustrate traditional family values. Sixty-five percent (13) of the subjects' parents live in town, and the remaining 15% (3) parents are deceased. Of the 65% whose parents are still living and are in town, all see their parents at least once a week.

Even though most of the men interviewed were optimistic about the changes they could make through the anti-abortion movement, 90% (18) think the average American family is on the decline or in need of serious restoration, and 50% of those 18 do not believe that most Americans agree with them that the American Family needs to change. All but one of the 18 thinks their families have not been affected by this decline and state in their words that the average American Family is "decaying and under-seige" because:

Christendom is dead and society has a self-actualized orientation.

What values are right as a society are being fractured because of a disdain for Judeo-Christian values and have made adultery and non-heterosexual life-styles common.

Society is more materialistic, forgetting God so can't see the light that the country is being taken over by humanism.

The decline is highly correlated to working mothers; women are dominating families and matriarchies are a problem.

Families are threatened by the demands of the economy, but many want to live better than they need to.

Society has departed from what God intended, because women are pursuing careers.

The data presented in both numerical and narrative form reveal tremendous support for the hypothesis that these male anti-abortion activists' experience a threat to their internal and external world views, a male centered family and God centered society. Moreover, they unanimously agreed that legalized abortion did have a negative affect on the American family, giving support for the idea that they are defending a world view as well as the right-to-life.

#### Perceptions of Society

The findings that emerged when the men were questioned about their perceptions of society in general revealed further support for the hypothesis that they experience a threat to their external world views and legalized abortion was a major component of the threatening force that exists. The subjects almost unanimously agreed, 95% (19), that legalized abortion has had negative effects on many or all areas of society. The one subject who did not agree specified that legalized abortion is not what has brought about the decay of society when he said:

It is just a part of the general trend of this country

becoming pluralistic, humanistic and materialistic. Since there is less of a relationship with God there is a loss of the value system that religion provides, so one can go either way on a decision.

The comments from the remaining 95% of those sampled did not actually sound very different. They all agreed that abortion was a "corrosive force affecting all areas of society". One subject stated that "there is a moral and ethical breakdown of the political system because of a failure to adopt a Judeo-Christian value system of right and wrong". While another said "that all areas of society are being purposefully taken over by socialism, which is leading toward globalism, which would be dangerous for the U.S. because we are the most affluent so we have the most to lose."

There was also strong support for the proposed existence of intense feelings of the subjects' values and beliefs being threatened. This support is based on their responses to the question of whether or not they think the majority of Americans support or oppose their efforts in the anti-abortion movement. While 45% (9) believe that the majority of Americans are opposed to the anti-abortion movement, 20% (4) think that most people do not care, and 15% (3) think that half are for them and half are against. Only 20% (4) of the men interviewed felt that the majority of Americans were in support of the anti-abortion movement. One subject who felt that the majority of Americans are for the anti-abortion movement commented that "most people think that the husband and parents should protect life in the womb." This

quote illustrates the subject's feeling that being against the anti-abortion movement also means that one is also against the rights of the husband to fulfill his proper role and other traditional roles and values.

Moreover, there were two unexpected findings that lend support to the hypothesis that these men feel that their values and beliefs are threatened by the state of society. Of the men sampled 50% (10) owned and operated their own businesses and 15% (3) of the men did home schooling for their children (their children had never attended any public or private school system). It is possible that owning one's own business may be an indication that one is more comfortable in a work environment where they may have a higher degree of control, and their values and beliefs can be expressed more easily. Since the 50% who owned and operated their own businesses were not exclusively those with graduate degrees, the meaning of this finding is probably worth further study. Of the three men who did home schooling, two of them were from the most extreme faction of the movement. They were fundamentalist and the least educated and in all probability the ones who would be in the position to feel the most threatened by the changes in society.



### Intensity of Commitment to the Anti-Abortion Movement

The data revealed male anti-abortion activists who were intensely dedicated to a cause and chose to have it overlap significantly into other areas of their lives. They also chose to maintain their intensity of commitment over a considerable number of years even though there were sometimes negative personal results. While 75% (15) of the sample became involved in the anti-abortion movement following the Supreme Court decision in 1973 legalizing abortion, the mean number of years of involvement in the movement was 10.05, with a range of 1-20 years.

Their dedication to the anti-abortion movement clearly overlapped into their family and work lives, but somewhat less significantly into their friendships. Sixty-eight percent (13) of their wives were also active in the movement and 47% (8) had children who were active. Furthermore, 85% (17) of the men talk about their anti-abortion work and beliefs at work. While 35% (7) of the men said that most or all of their friends were anti-abortion activists, 15% (3) said half of their friends were and 50% (10) said most or none of their friends were not anti-abortion activists.

This dedication to the anti-abortion movement does not appear to wane even when the subjects are confronted with different and or negative treatment by others. While 75% (15) said they do think they are related to differently because of their anti-abortion activism, 40% (8) of that

group think that most of the treatment is negative. Overall, 30% (6) of the subjects experience both negative and positive treatment as a result of their activism. Although the rest of the sample said they had not noticed any difference in how people related to them because of their anti-abortion activism, a few commented that they did not really think they would see it even if it was there.

As an additional measure of the degree of these mens' intensity of commitment to the anti-abortion movement, they were asked if there were any other issues that were more important or as important as the abortion issue. Half of the subjects, 50% (10) said there was an issue more important than the abortion issue and all but one agreed that one issue was a belief in God. The other subject said that taking care of the less fortunate was the most important issue and an unborn baby was a member of the less fortunate. Additionally the subjects were asked what other issues they felt were important. Pornography was mentioned by 35% (7), homosexuality by 25% (5), drugs and alcohol by 20% (4), promiscuous or premarital sex by 10% (2), and poverty and homelessness by 10% (2). The other issues mentioned included: denial of sin, moral deterioration, possibility of war, divorce, education, who controls the money, teaching evolution and education, the government, the deficit, the arms build up, and child abuse.

Although only 50% (10) of the subjects directly stated that a belief in God was more important than the abortion

issue, of the remaining subjects, 80% (8) stated at some time during the interview that a belief in God was fundamental to the success of any society. Many also expressed a belief that the U.S. needed to get back to "the natural plan, the plan of God and adhere to biblical morality". As one subject said we need to accept that we are "the brotherhood of man and God is father". Clearly the majority of these men in the anti-abortion movement 90% (18), have more on their agenda than a right-to-life. They also have a desire for a society structured around very fundamentalist values.

#### Attitudes Toward Women and Sex Roles

The questions regarding the subjects' attitudes toward women and their views of appropriate sex roles revealed men who maintain narrowly defined, rigid, and they would add, "natural" views about what women and men are meant to be and do in this society. The questions also revealed some inconsistency in their responses, which may in part be accounted for by the influence of the sex and youthful presentation of the investigator. Although 95% (19) said that they do agree that women's roles have changed or expanded, and only 21% (4) of those thought those changing roles for women were a problem, 95% (19) said that the role of being a mother should come first for all women and only women should be primary caretakers of the children. In their words:

God has built a system called the family, where the woman takes care of the children and the man takes care of the family.

God has built an instinct into the woman to want to have security that a man can provide.

Women and their bodies were made for bearing children, and it is wrong to think that women have a right to not be pregnant.

Besides women can't really have the same freedom as men.

The subjects view working women as "undermining God's plan" or "looking away from God," which they have stated is a problem. So it appears possible that 21% (4) answered honestly to the question of changing roles for women being a problem, while many of the rest may have felt it was more important to appear likable to the young, obviously career-oriented, female investigator.

Moreover, in response to the question of if they thought more women working was making it harder for men to get jobs, 83% (15) agreed. Of those 15, 53% (8) said it was not a problem and 40% (6) said that it was a problem. One subject who did not think that more women working was a problem for men commented that "unemployment was not a problem for men, only a problem among just teens and blacks". Another subject who did think more women working was a problem said:

We will always have inflation and unemployment and there are going to be limited jobs. It's a problem that more women are working outside of the home. It's hard to show society that we can't adjust to everything - it's not nice to fool mother nature.

The subjects unanimously agreed that abortion is not a "woman's issue" it is a "human issue". While most (65%) felt women had equal talents to offer and an equal degree of

obligation to the anti-abortion movement, 35% (7) felt that men were either more important or had some talents to offer the anti-abortion movement that a woman could not. Some felt that "since men are spiritual leaders of households and government, it's the duty of men to promote what is most helpful and profitable for society". Other men stressed that "we live in a world that is still largely run by men and there are advantages to a man on man conversation".

Abortion, therefore, according to these anti-abortion activists is an issue that should concern everyone, and according to some should be even more of a concern for men.

The 15-item version of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence, Helmreich and Stapp, 1972) tests attitudes toward women and their roles in society. The test was completed by 90% (18) of the subjects. The range of scores possible was 0-45, with higher scores indicating higher levels of feminist attitudes. The weighted mean for the normative sample of male college students in 1973 on the 25-item version was 26.88. The mean for this study's sample of male anti-abortion activists was 24.66 with a range of scores of 15-36 and a standard deviation of 5.44.

The t test between the 25-item version responded to by the normative sample and this study's 15-item version responded to by this study's sample, produced an adjusted t-test score of 1.33. This t value of 1.33 was not found to be statistically significant. It is important, however, to question the applicability of this test today. A sample of

male college freshmen from 1973 may not be very representative of adult males in 1988. Although no significant subgroups emerged, subject by subject analysis revealed one trend of interest. The men who scored the lowest and were thus rated the least feminist were also members of the most extreme faction of the anti-abortion movement that agrees with violence and appear most vested in traditional sex roles.

Of particular interest were the subjects' responses to two specific questions where they were unanimously anti-feminist. In response to the question that "it is insulting to women to have the 'obey' clause remain in the marriage service," 85% (17) strongly or mildly disagreed. In response to the question of "women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers", 80% (16) strongly or mildly agreed. These two questions revealed the most significant anti-feminist attitudes in this study's sample. They are also questions that deal specifically with beliefs about sex roles, where once again these anti-abortion men revealed themselves as quite traditional.

#### Rigidity of Attitudes

The Rigidity of Attitudes Regarding Personal Habits scale (Meresko, Rubin, Shontz and Morrow, 1954), was completed by 95% (19) of the subjects and does not appear to support the hypothesis that male anti-abortion activists are

in part motivated to be activists in response to an internal character rigidity, separate from apparent beliefs and values. The range of scores possible were 0-120 with higher scores indicating higher levels of rigidity. The mean score of the male anti-abortion activists in this study's sample was 34.3, the median was 41.5, it was bi-modal with scores of 33 and 42, and the range of scores was 15-57.

There is not sufficient normative sample data available in the original document to make a comparison to this study's sample. Upon inspection of the data no significant subgroups emerged. It is highly possible that an insignificant degree of rigidity was found due to the subjects attempts to not appear rigid. Some made nervous comments during the interviews, particularly during the administering of the standardized instruments that the investigator was "setting them up". And one man put a note at the bottom of his two completed standardized instruments saying, "I suppose I sound pretty disagreeable". For the most part, these men appeared to want the investigator to find them likable.

There were some questions on the rigidity scale on which they should have scored consistently rigid based on their answers to the open-ended questions, but they did not. Two examples are questions, which received the most consistently rigid scores among the sample, but not to nearly the degree one would have expected given their earlier comments. In response to the question, "It's a good idea to have a strong point of view about things because that makes it easier to

decide what's wrong or right", 55% (11) of the subjects slightly to strongly agreed and 45% (8) slightly to strongly disagreed. In response to the other question of "every person should live by a few good and unchanging rules of conduct; that way he can never go wrong", 40% (8) of the subjects slightly to strongly agreed and 60% (11) slightly to strongly disagreed. Although the rigidity scores on those two questions appear to be somewhat lower than what would have been expected, they are the questions that received the most rigid responses and most closely relate to the sample's expressed allegiance to right and wrong values and roles as they believe dictated by God.

#### Summary

The findings provide a high degree of support for the hypothesis that men in the anti-abortion movement do experience a threat to their internal and external world views, and that abortion is perceived as a major component of that threat. The men anti-abortion activists are heavily vested in traditional sex roles and traditional family values, as well as possess traditional and conservative beliefs about societal structure. They believe that these internal and external world views are negatively affected by legalized abortion and need to be defended. There was no support for the hypothesis that these men were also reacting to an internal threat based on character rigidity separate



from apparent beliefs and values. Although the subjects did not score significantly less feminist than the normative sample, this does not appear to indicate that the subjects are not sexist. Indeed, the very low scores (less feminist) produced by both groups may suggest that both the normative sample of male freshmen college students in 1973 and this sample of male anti-abortion activists are both sexist groups.

The findings did not provide evidence of these male anti-abortion activists being motivated by a right-to-life sentiment. The findings did, however, find consistent support for a motivation possibly being based on a desire to protect internal and external world views, which these men feel have been determined as right by God. The study also supports work by Granberg, Singh and Leahy, and Blake and del Pinal, who found a traditional and conservative ideology, religiosity, and education to be strong predictors of anti-abortion sentiments.

These male anti-abortion activists most clearly characterized themselves as a group that has little tolerance for ambiguity. They repeatedly denounced secular humanism for its' teaching of situational ethics and had similar responses to a question about their parents' influences on their anti-abortion beliefs. As one subject stated, "My parents didn't influence me directly, but they raised me morally. They were people who believed that there are absolutes and that there are unchanging rights and wrongs that don't change by situation".

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This study has provided a profile of the men active in the anti-abortion movement, as well as a beginning understanding of the motives of their activism. This study's sample revealed men who were white, married, middle-aged and well-educated. Additionally the findings support the hypothesis that the men in the anti-abortion movement feel an external societal threat as well as an internal traditional role threat and that legalized abortion is a major factor in those perceived threats.

The findings will be discussed in the context of the literature reviewed by this study, and under the following three categories: 1. history of the abortion/anti-abortion issue; 2. attitudes toward abortion; and 3. mass movements and activism. Additionally, the limitations of this study, the possible areas for future research, and the implications for the field of social work will be presented.

### History of the Abortion/Anti-Abortion Issue

While in many ways this study's sample confirms findings from the earlier literature on men in the anti-abortion movement, it also reveals some additional information. The sample consisted of men who were well-educated like their predecessors, although fewer (15%) were physicians who had been drawn to the movement in the same way as the earlier male activists.

Let us consider a possible reason why men anti-abortion activists appear to be maintaining their high levels of education, even though the majority are no longer physicians as in the past. Since the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion and the adoption of the anti-abortion movement by the New Right in the late 1970's, abortion has become a highly political issue. Like the medical field, the political field tends to be made up of well-educated men. It is possible, therefore, that as the anti-abortion movement moved into the political realm, its very political focus made it attractive to well educated, conservative men.

This study found substantial support for significant ties between the New Right and the anti-abortion movement as the literature suggested. Many of the subjects (45%) revealed activism that took the form of running for local political offices on anti-abortion platforms. Like the New Right, these men described a hope to infiltrate the Republican Party to the extent that they could move it

significantly farther to the right. Furthermore, despite evidence of high levels of formal connections between the New Right and the anti-abortion movement, this study's sample was clearly dedicated to the creation of a Christian Republic as described by the New Right as their foundation. One subject whose activism was almost exclusively political responded with the following quote by Alan Garcia when asked why he was dedicated and remained dedicated to the anti-abortion movement:

You cannot have politics without religion, or commitment to human beings without spiritual transcendence. If you do not believe in God, politics is nothing but materialism, triviality and selfishness. It is only when you believe in the transcendence of the spirit in another life, that you can dedicate yourself without fear, knowing that later you will have to bear witness of what you are doing now; it is only when you believe in God that you can be a true politician.

#### Attitudes Toward Abortion

This study's findings provided overwhelming support for findings by Granberg and Singh and Leahy that those with anti-abortion attitudes had conservative or traditional approaches to matters of personal morality. Examples of this are: favoring larger families, disapproval of pre-marital sex, disapproval of divorce, opposition to sex education and pornography and restriction of birth control information for teens (Granberg, 1978). Also, like Granberg, this study found a high rate of marriage among anti-abortion activists. Additionally, this study confirmed the significance of church

attendance as a predictor of anti-abortion attitudes, as was found by Blake and del Pinal and Granberg. Prior to 1975 the research found that low levels of education were strong predictors of anti-abortion attitudes, however, since then the research agrees that education is now a weak predictor. This study's finding of male anti-abortion activists being well-educated suggests that at least low levels of education are not necessarily associated with anti-abortion activism. This study was unable to find evidence of a pro-life sentiment among the male anti-abortion activists, which was also the case with all previous research of abortion attitudes among activists and non activists reviewed by this study.

Although the average educational level found by Luker's sample of female anti-abortion activists is much lower than the average educational level found in this study's sample of male anti-abortion activists, that is where the differences appear to end. Like Luker's female anti-abortion activists, male anti-abortion activists in this sample were heavily invested in traditional and conservative world views that they feel are being threatened. They agree that men and women are intrinsically different and that "men are best suited to the public world of work and women are best suited to rear children, manage homes, and love and care for husbands" (Luker, 1984, p. 160). Also like the women in Luker's study, the men anti-abortion activists in this study expressed an intense dedication to a moral code, which Luker

describes as:

For them, is a straightforward and unambiguous set of rules that specify what is moral behavior...and that these rules originate in a Divine Plane, which they see as transcendent principles, eternally valid regardless of time, cultural setting, and individual belief. (1984, p. 174)

Finally, similar to Luker's findings, some of the men, but not a majority, supported the use of violence as acceptable in the fight against legal abortion. Many of those men also supported breaking the law, such as participating in sit-ins, as acceptable activism.

While the above similarities of attitudes between genders exists, this study also found support for anti-abortion research to separate its findings based on gender. In Finlay's research she found women with anti-abortion attitudes to be pro-life and did not find a pro-life sentiment among the men. This study, also did not find men anti-abortion activists to have pro-life attitudes.

Barnartt and Harris' research suggested that men and women have differentially experienced the abortion movement because of the impact of the womens movement being felt more acutely by the men at a later date than the women. This study's finding of male anti-abortion activists being intensely dedicated to rigid traditional sex roles and opposed to the ambiguity that the womens movement has encouraged in sex role ideology, supports the need for further research regarding the differential impact of the womens movement on women and men.

Although this study has found inconclusive support for a Comstock Mentality, which as previously defined is "a punitiveness toward female sexuality, which is manifested in pregnancy, (and) is expressed through the denial to the woman of the option of abortion" (Finlay, 1981, p. 580), there was enough evidence to encourage future research in that area. Specifically, 40% (8) of the subjects opposed legalized abortion for a woman if her life was endangered by the pregnancy. A few of those with oppositional views commented that there were too few cases of this actually happening to matter enough to make abortion legal. Further, one might say that the rigid sex role ideology of male anti-abortion activists is based on women being valued almost exclusively on the "viability of their ovaries" (Atwood, 1985). They believe it is wrong "to have the mentality that women have the right to not be pregnant". Their beliefs are punitive toward women with a disregard for their welfare.

In regard to Granberg's suggestion that the anti-abortion activists are motivated by something "derived or centered in their religion" (1978, p. 420), support was found for a belief and allegiance to traditional and conservative ideology centered in their religion. Specifically, the male anti-abortion activists maintained that their traditional and conservative sex roles and societal ideologies were dictated by God. Therefore, they are the ones who define their religiosity as being based on conservative and traditional beliefs, and not by frequency of church attendance.

Most of the studies reported in the literature review did not operationalize religiosity beyond frequency of church attendance. This study's finding of a lack of a pro-life sentiment, as well as the additional finding of male activists being intolerant of ambiguity in the definitions of right and wrong, illustrates the importance of operationalizing religiosity using additional indicators. High levels of religiosity found among anti-abortion activists probably indicates more than a mere interest on behalf of the subject to attend church once a week. One might assume that the heightened morality and religiosity of anti-abortion activists would produce a higher tolerance for difference and an increased reverence for human life. This study, as well as the other studies reviewed in the literature review, provide no support for increased tolerance for difference, or a greater reverence for human life. The studies found support for capital punishment, maintaining or increasing military spending levels and an allegiance to conservative values and sex role ideology.

Finally, the overwhelming support for the significance of a traditional and conservative ideology found in the research and this study, as well as a lack of support for the significance of a pro-life sentiment, may indicate a motivation to be in the anti-abortion movement on the part of men as based on a desire to maintain or reestablish traditional sex role and family ideology, rather than to advocate for human life.



### Mass Movements and Activism

This study suggests that male anti-abortion activists did experience society to be in a state of upheaval. Most of the men sampled felt that the family and certain other aspects of society are changing for the worse. Moreover, an internal threat was experienced by most of the subjects. They believed that few families were like theirs or wanted to be like theirs. Only 20% (4) thought that the majority of Americans were in support of the anti-abortion movement. Clearly, these male anti-abortion activists do not experience the security of being members of a majority. These findings support Olson's and Himmelstein's theories that members of mass movements are motivated by both internal and external forces.

In further support of a perceived internal world view threat (i.e. gender roles), as Petchesky suggests, there is evidence that abortion represents a potential change in women's roles (1984, p. 241-285). Among male anti-abortion activists these expanded roles go against what God has intended, and they believe that all women need to put the role of mother above all others.

To summarize, this study's sample of male anti-abortion activists were well educated like their predecessors. Significant ties to the New Right were revealed as suggested in the literature. Also as indicated in previous studies, a conservative and traditional ideology and a high rate of

church attendance were found to be strong predictors of anti-abortion beliefs. Furthermore, there was no evidence of a right-to-life sentiment among the men sampled. Support was found for operationalizing religiosity beyond frequency of church attendance. Finally, this study's sample experienced a threat to their internal and external world views as the literature on women anti-abortion activists reported and as the literature on activism in general suggested.

#### Limitations of This Study

There are many limitations of this study, as might be expected from its exploratory design. The small sample size, as well as the inability to implement quota sampling does not guarantee that these male anti-abortion activists are representative of the population of male anti-abortion activists and this prevents generalizations from being made. Therefore, this study did find a high level of support for the hypothesis that men in the anti-abortion movement feel an external societal threat (i.e. abortion may be a threat to the institution of family). They also view abortion as an internal traditional role threat (i.e. it may be a threat to their beliefs about gender roles). We do not know for certain if these findings are characteristic of most male anti-abortion activists. The demographic characteristics of the white, middle-aged and well-educated men in this study may not be representative of male anti-abortionists in

general. Furthermore, this exploratory design did not allow for control of confounding variables that may have influenced responses, nor did it allow for an exact understanding of the influences the many variables could have had on each other.

In addition to these limitations, it is possible that the sex and youthful presentation of the investigator had an influence on the subjects' responses. It appeared to the investigator that the subjects at times made conscious efforts to not express or to only partially express views or beliefs with which they thought the investigator would strongly disagree. Most of the subjects appeared to want to be liked by the investigator, as perhaps indicated by the inconsistencies in their responses between the standardized measures and the open ended questionnaire. Overall, the subjects seemed more consistent in their responses to the open-ended questionnaire, which also had the benefit of allowing the investigator to probe and question further responses.

Finally, although there are many benefits to an exploratory research design such as, the richness and quantity of the data produced, and the possibility of serendipitous findings, those benefits also increase the possibility of bias in the interpretation of all the information generated.

### Areas For Future Research

Several areas for future research were suggested previously: 1. the potential existence of a Comstock Mentality, which is a punitiveness toward females, among the male anti-abortion activists; 2. a motivation to be an anti-abortion activist that may be based on a desire to maintain or reestablish a traditional sex role and family ideology; and 3. the possibility that women and men experience the abortion issue differently because of a differential impact of the womens movement on women and men.

Still other areas of future research appear worth pursuing. The politicalization of the abortion issue, combined with the high levels of education maintained by male anti-abortion activists, indicates the merit of further research into the characteristics of men in the anti-abortion movement. This type of research could provide more insight into the degree to which men are controlling the anti-abortion movement. Perhaps, the influx of women into the anti-abortion movement in 1973, just created larger troops to follow the male leaders.

Finding the sample of male anti-abortion to be white provides further support for the need of this type of research. The comment by one subject that "men did not have a problem with unemployment, just teens and blacks", indicates the need for research into the possibility of racism among anti-abortion activists, despite their constant

comparisons of abortion to slavery.

And finally, the consistent and intense dedication to a traditional and conservative ideology that does not allow for ambiguity or situational ethics, found among the male anti-abortion activists in this study, needs to be investigated further. The subjects' overwhelming dedication to a black and white orientation to life indicates that there is still something in the area of rigidity of orientation that this study was unable to uncover that needs to be studied further.

#### Implications for the Field of Social Work

This exploratory study's contributions to the field of social work are in the areas of clinical practice and social policy. Clinically, this study draws attention to treatment issues for children, adults, families and couples. Also, in regard to social policy and advocacy in general, this study will help to better inform the social worker of the myriad of consequences that can result from various legislation supported by anti-abortionists.

Perhaps the most urgent of clinical issues to address is what is happening to the children of these rigid anti-abortion fathers. These children are growing up in an environment whose only response to sex education is "wait until you are married". They are denied parental permission for participation in any school sponsored sex education. Thus, they have very limited information regarding

contraception.

Upon reflection of the life circumstances of these children it appears highly probable that social workers at agencies such as Planned Parenthood will be seeing young pregnant women from these anti-abortion families. The young women may become pregnant out of rebelliousness against rigid parents or maybe just out of plain ignorance. Whatever the circumstances, these young women will be experiencing tremendous conflict. A knowledge of the beliefs and values of anti-abortion families will be invaluable to the social worker who is attempting to understand and work with one of these young pregnant women.

The social worker who is treating individual adults, families, and couples, which include a male anti-abortionist, will be tremendously better prepared with some knowledge of the many characteristics of male anti-abortion activists. The therapist equipped with some understanding of anti-abortionists may be able to formulate better questions to get at what is most relevant.

Since male anti-abortion activists in general, are quite verbal in denouncing the helpfulness of therapy or counseling, seeing them as individuals is probably rare. However, as societal norms continue to loosen and give way to further ambiguity and these families become even more of a minority, seeing their wives and or children will probably become more common. If the man does join his family or wife in treatment, the social worker may want to modify how he or

she conducts the interview. For example, a husband or father in these patriarchal families may need to be addressed first in an interview if he is to be successfully engaged in treatment.

It is the responsibility of social workers to inform the public and policy makers of all of the implications of anti-abortion backed legislation. For example, many states have been confronted with anti-abortion legislation that requires parental permission for prescription contraceptives for those under 18. On the surface it is obvious that this will eliminate the most effective means of contraception (except abstinence) to most young people. Also of significance and easily overlooked, is that this legislation promotes a punitiveness toward female sexuality, with no mention of male sexuality. The birth control pill is the only contraceptive that is prescribed and it is only prescribed to women. The message this legislation promotes is that a young woman's sexuality needs to be monitored, not a young man's. And that it is particularly important to monitor a young woman's sexuality if she is attempting to take a contraceptive that will provide her with almost complete control of her reproduction.

Finally, the elimination of government funding for abortions, which is the result of anti-abortion legislation, has created a situation where a legal and needed service is basically being denied to low income women. This situation is a call to social workers to advocate for these women. The

Social Worker Code of Ethics speaks to this responsibility of social workers to be advocates. The following quotes apply not only to low income women, and women under 18, but to all women, because all women are affected by anti-abortion legislation.

The social worker should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination...

The social worker should act to ensure that all persons have access to the resources, services, and opportunities which they require.

The social worker should act to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, with special regard for disadvantaged or oppressed groups and persons. (p. 9)



## REFERENCES

- Atwood, M. (1985). The handmaid's tail. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Barnartt, S. N., & Harris, R. J. (1982). Recent changes in predictors of abortion attitudes. Sociology and Social Research, 3(66), 320-334.
- Blake, J., & del Pinal, J. (1980). Predicting polar attitudes toward abortion in the U.S. In James Tunstead (Ed.), Abortion parley (pp. 29-56). New York: Andrews and McMeel, Inc.
- Durham, M. (1986). Class, conservatism and the anti-abortion movement: A review essay. Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 31, 167-182.
- Eisenstein, Z. (1983). The state, the patriarchal family, and working mothers. In Irene Diamond (Ed.), Families, politics, and public policy. (pp. 41-58). New York: Longman Inc.
- Finlay, B. (1981). Sex differences in correlates of abortion attitudes among college students. Journal of Marriage and the Family, August, 571-582.
- Granberg, D. (1981). The abortion activists. Family Planning Perspectives, 13(4), 157-163.
- Granberg, D. (1978). Pro-life or reflection of conservative ideology? An analysis of opposition to legalized abortion. Sociology and Social Research, 62(3), 414-427.
- Himmelstein, J. L. (1986). The social basis of anti-feminism: Religious networks and culture. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 25(1), 1-15.
- Luker, K. (1984). Abortion and the politics of motherhood. California: University of California Press.

- Merersko, R., Rubin, M., Shontz, F.C., & Morrow, W.R. (1954). R Rigidity of attitudes regarding personal habits and its ideological correlates. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 49, 89-93.
- National Association of Social Workers, Code of Ethics.
- Olson, M., Jr. (1965). The logic of collective action public goods and the theory of groups. Harvard University Press.
- Paige, C. (1983). The right to lifers. New York: Summit Books.
- Petchesky, R. P. (1984). Abortion and woman's choice: The state, sexuality and reproductive freedom. New York: Longman Inc.
- Singh, K. B., & Leahy, P. J. (1978). Contextual and ideological dimensions of attitudes toward discretionary abortion. Demography, 15(3), 381-388.
- Spence, J., & Helmreich, R. (1972). The attitudes toward women scale: An objective instrument to measure attitudes towards the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. Catalogue of Selected Documents in Psychology, 2, 66-67.
- Tatalovich, R., & Daynes, B. W. (1981). The politics of abortion a study of community conflict in public policy making. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Werner, P. D. (1978). Personality and attitude-activism correspondence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36(12), 1375-1390.
- Weisman, C. S., Nathanson, C. A., Teitelbaum, M. A., Chase, G. A., & King, T. M. (1986). Abortion attitudes and performance among male and female obstetrician-gynecologists. Family Planning Perspectives, 18(2), 67-73.

APPENDIX A  
INFORMANT LETTER

January 29, 1988

Laura Sabatini  
Central Psychiatric Clinic  
ML 539, 3259 Elland Avenue  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45267

Informant

Dear Informant:

I am a graduate student in Clinical Social Work at Smith College and I am currently working on my thesis in Cincinnati. For my thesis I am interviewing men who are activists in the pro-life movement. Specifically I would like to develop an understanding of how and why men become involved in and remain active in the pro-life movement.

While the literature addresses women's involvement in the movement, there are currently no studies that look at men who are active in the movement. There are, however, a number of studies that suggest that there are significant differences based on gender and that while we have explored women in the movement, we also need to begin gaining a better understanding of the men who are active.

I have been talking to different people in the community and they felt that your organization might be helpful in connecting me with men who would be willing to assist me with my project by agreeing to be interviewed. I am most interested in the men who are very active in the movement and who have thought a great deal about the abortion issue. The interviews would, of course, be anonymous and confidential. I anticipate they would last approximately an hour and a half to two hours.

I have thought of two ways that you may want to connect me with these men. The first option is by giving me the names and addresses of men you feel would be interested and I could contact them with a letter. The second option is to have me come to one of your meetings to briefly explain my project, to answer questions, and to speak directly to the men who are interested in volunteering to participate. There may also be some other options that you prefer.

I will be giving you a call in a few days so that we can discuss this in more detail. Your help and time are greatly appreciated. For additional references about my work you are welcome to contact my thesis advisor Joanne Lindy, Ph.d. at 872-5854. You will also find a brief statement from her enclosed.

Sincerely,

## SUBJECT LETTER

February 2, 1988

Laura Sabatini  
Central Psychiatric Clinic  
ML 539, 3259 Elland Avenue  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45267

Subject

Dear Subject:

I am a graduate student in Clinical Social Work at Smith College and I am currently working on my thesis in Cincinnati. For my thesis I am interviewing men who are activists in the pro-life movement. Specifically I would like to develop an understanding of how and why men become involved in and remain active in the pro-life movement.

While the literature addresses women's involvement in the movement, there are currently no studies that look at men who are active in the movement. There are, however, a number of studies that suggest that there are significant differences based on gender and that while we have explored women in the movement, we also need to begin gaining a better understanding of the men who are active.

By following the pro-life movement closely in the newspaper as well as talking to various people in the community, I have come across your name. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to assist me with my project by agreeing to be interviewed and if possible to refer me to other men who would be appropriate for my project and who may also be willing to be interviewed. I am most interested in the men who are very active in the movement and who have thought a great deal about the abortion issue. The interviews would, of course, be anonymous and confidential. I anticipate they would last approximately an hour and a half to two hours.

I will be giving you a call in a few days so that we can discuss my project and your possible participation in it in more detail. Your help and time are greatly appreciated. For additional references about my work you are welcome to contact my thesis advisor Joanne Lindy, Ph.d. at 872-5854. You will also find a brief statement from her enclosed.

Sincerely,

Laura Sabatini  
Daytime phone 872-5870

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am conducting a study of men who are active in the pro-life movement. In order to gain a better understanding of why men become and remain active in the movement you are being asked to agree to being interviewed. The interview consists of questions you will be asked verbally. Additionally, you will be asked to respond briefly in writing to a short questionnaire.

There will be no financial benefits to you, and no other benefits anticipated, other than perhaps the feeling that you have contributed to the further understanding of the pro-life movement.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be protected by coding the information. The information given by you will be used only in a way that cannot be identified with you.

Your cooperation is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any individual question. You may also change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT



APPENDIX C  
QUESTIONNAIRE

DEMOGRAPHICS

|                                |                             |       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Education:                     | Wife's Education:           |       |
| Age:                           | Wife's Age:                 |       |
| Marital Status:                | Ever Divorced:              | Wife: |
| Religion raised:               | Current Religion:           |       |
| Wife religion raised:          | Current Religion Wife:      |       |
| Church Attendance:             | Wife's:                     |       |
| Number of Children:            | Desired Number of Children: |       |
| Wife's desired number:         |                             |       |
| Place Raised: rural/urban      | Current Residence:          |       |
| rural/urban                    |                             |       |
| Wife place raised: rural/urban |                             |       |
| Age at Marriage:               | Wife's age at Marriage:     |       |

INTENSITY OF COMMITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

-How did you become involved in the movement? When was that?

-Did you start out as dedicated as you are now or has your level of involvement changed over time?

-Is your wife involved? Children? In what ways? How many hours per week?

-How many of your friends would you say are also involved in the pro-life movement? Co-workers?

-Do you talk about your pro-life work at your job? YES/NO

-How do you think your employer and co-workers feel about that?

-Do you think anyone treats you differently once they find out about your dedication to the pro-life movement? YES/NO

-To sum up how do you see yourself and what you're doing in the pro-life movement?

FAMILY AND BACKGROUND

Number of children in family of origin:

Place of birth order:

-Sometimes it's helpful to explore someones earlier life experiences in order to gain a better understanding of where they are now. Do you think your mother and father or other significant family members directly or implicitly helped develop the views you have now on abortion? AGREE/DISAGREE

-Has anyone in your family been an activist in the abortion movement or any other movements? yes/no

-How would you describe your family? Who was responsible for what? Parents and siblings.

-How would you describe your relationship now with your

parents and siblings?

How often do you see them, talk to them?

-Wives' family?

-Length of Current Marriage:

-How would you describe your marriage and family now?

-Who is responsible for what?

-Has that ever been different?

-Could you ever imagine it changing?

-Does or has your wife ever worked outside of the home? Full or part time?

-Could you ever imagine that changing?

-When you retire? When the children move out?

-How would you describe the average American family?

-Do you think it is similar or different to your family?

yes/no

-How do you think families should be?

-How do you think most people think families should be?

-Do you think abortion has affected marriages and families?

yes/no In what ways?

-Do you think it will affect them in the future? yes/no

-Do you think there are any other issues more important or as important as abortion? yes/no

-Any other issues that come close? yes/no

### SOCIETY

-You've given me a good idea of how you see the American family, how would you describe other parts of our society such as education, religion, politics, law enforcement and safety, or the work world?

-If you could make your fantasies realities how would you change these other parts of our society? What do you think would be the ideal way they should be?

-Do you think abortion has affected the state of these parts of our society? yes/no In what ways?

-How do you think most people in American feel about the work you've been doing on abortion?

-Why do you think people feel that way?

-Why do you think some people want abortion on demand to be legal?

### CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN AND MEN

-Some people think that women's roles are changing or that they have more role options available. Would you agree or disagree? What are your thoughts on that?

-Do you think abortion has influenced these changes? yes/no What else do you think has been significantly influential?

-Do you think these changes have affected men's roles in general? yes/no?

-Have you felt any of this personally? yes/no

-Some people think more women working has made it more difficult for men to get jobs. Would you agree or disagree with that. What are your thoughts on that?

-A lot of the studies and papers I have read say that abortion is a "womans issue". Would you agree or disagree with that? They also say that the majority of those who are activists on either side are women. What are your thoughts and feelings on that?

-If you don't think it's exclusively a womans issue, in what ways do you think it might be a "mans issue" or in what ways do you think it raises concerns for men specifically?

-Do you think ther are any qualities you bring to the movement that are special and different that only a man could offer, or offer better?

Please answer yes or no if you think it should be possible for a woman to obtain a legal abortion if...

- A. There is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby  
yes or no
- B. The woman is married and doesn't want any more children  
yes or no
- C. The woman wants an abortion; her husband disapproves  
yes or no
- D. The family has a very low income and cannot afford any  
more children yes or no
- E. The pregnancy is a result of a rape yes or no
- F. The woman is an unmarried 25-year-old yes or no
- G. The "woman" is an unmarried 14-year-old yes or no
- H. There is a strong chance that the woman's life may be  
endangered by the pregnancy yes or no

Please answer whether you are for or against the following...

- A. Capital punishment for adults for or against
- B. Capital punishment for minors for or against
- C. Decrease in spending on the military and armaments for  
or against
- D. Increase in spending on the military and armaments for  
or against



## APPENDIX D

## ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN SCALE

Please express your feelings about the following statements by indicating whether you:

A - Agree      B - Agree      C - Disagree      D - Disagree  
 Strongly      Mildly      Mildly      Strongly

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ It is insulting to women to have the "obey" clause remain in the marriage service.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ A woman should be as free as a man to propose marriage.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ A woman should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ It is ridiculous for a woman to run a locomotive and for a man to darn socks.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Women should be given equal opportunity with men for apprenticeship in various trades.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of the children.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Economic and social freedom is worth far more to women than acceptance of the ideal of feminity which has been set up by men.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted.

## APPENDIX E

## RIGIDITY OF ATTITUDES REGARDING PERSONAL HABITS SCALE

Please express your feelings about the following statements by indicating whether you:

- A - Agree Strongly      B - Agree      C - Agree Slightly  
D - Disagree Strongly      E - Disagree      F - Disagree Slightly

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I rather like the idea of having friends drop in unexpectedly at odd hours.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I dislike doing anything just on the spur of the moment.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't much like the kind of painting that doesn't tell a story or doesn't portray something in a clear, unambiguous fashion.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Few things are more upsetting than a sudden unexpected change of plans.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ A self-respecting person should never permit himself to relax his vigilance over personal habits; seemingly minor lapses can easily grow into complete breakdown of self-discipline.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ In whatever one does, the "tried and true" ways are always the best.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I never start anything I can't finish.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ It's a good idea to have a strong point of view about things because that makes it easier to decide what's wrong or right.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The rules of logic are the rules of life.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ If I had a new car, I'd always keep it nicely cleaned and polished.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ "A place for everything and everything in its place" is a pretty good motto to live by.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ The best way to enjoy a vacation is to plan every detail carefully before you leave.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Once a person starts going off his budget, even by small amounts, he's on the road to financial difficulty.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I rather like the idea of having my meals at odd hours and of going to bed when the mood strikes me.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ One of the major aims of education should be to give us a few simple rules of behavior to apply in every situation.

16. \_\_\_\_\_ The biggest advantage man possesses over lower animals is his ability to regulate himself and live by definite and unchanging rules of conduct.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ A person who seldom changes his mind can usually be depended upon to have sound and reliable judgment on matters of importance.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Once a person makes up his mind about something he should stick to his conclusion instead of repeatedly rehashing the question.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Every person should live by a few good and unchanging rules of conduct; that way he can never go wrong.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ The only way to make sure that things get done right is to set up a definite and fixed schedule and never depart from it.