

Interpreting the Pro-Life Movement: Recurrent Themes and Recent Trends

Keith Cassidy

THE FACT THAT CONTROVERSY ABOUT the nature and value of human life has been a major and recurrent element in the social and political conflicts in the United States, at least since the 1973 decision in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, is hardly disputable. The various manifestations of that controversy—debates about abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and assisted suicide—are of considerable significance in understanding recent American history, and it is therefore not surprising that a huge literature exists dealing with abortion, as well as a lesser but still substantial one on euthanasia and related topics. What of the contending social movements which have kept these issues in the public arena?

It is here that we encounter a puzzle. While there is a large and growing literature on the pro-life movement, the literature on its opposition, the pro-choice and pro-euthanasia movements, is much more limited.ⁱ Why this disparity of attention? Several reasons are possible. For one thing, the pro-life movement has been arguably a far larger, grassroots phenomenon which has mobilized the energies of millions of Americans.ⁱⁱ Further, since the pro-life movement has been fighting for 25 years to change the *status quo*, it has of necessity been more proactive than its opponents and consequently more visible. Still, the disparity is so great that there is clearly something else at work.

That something, I would suggest, is the fact that the communities most likely to describe and interpret social movements—journalists and academics—are far from neutral on the issues under dispute, and not even divided into roughly equal contending camps. Overwhelmingly they are pro-choice, and this colors not only what they say when they write but, even more fundamentally, what they write about.ⁱⁱⁱ The value commitments of both journalists and academics predispose them to see the pro-life movement as problematic in a way that the pro-choice movement is not, and hence in need of explanation and interpretation. The dispropor-

tionate attention paid to the pro-life movement is in large measure a product of the world-view dominant among those who, by vocation, interpret public affairs: to be pro-choice on abortion sounds so reasonable and natural that it requires little reflection, while opposition to abortion seems so clearly wrongheaded that an explanation for it seems necessary.

This attitude in turn powerfully affects the questions asked about the pro-life movement and the answers given.

These predispositions—biases—of the great majority of social commentators are not likely to be corrected by contact with those of a different view. Pro-choice academics and journalists rarely encounter pro-lifers as colleagues in their work. They are seen as “other,” and to them can be ascribed a number of negative traits. They are dismissed as religious fanatics, with little prospect of having to be encountered at a department meeting or a social function. There is no suggestion here of conscious bias, but only of the not so unusual human tendency to see as either fools or knaves people with whom you disagree and with whom you rarely have contact as social equals.^{iv} One way of describing the process at work is to speak of “social distance.” It is this process which accounts for the fact that so much of the literature on the right-to-life movement sees it as deviant or pathological. While not true of all of the literature, it is an undercurrent in much of it. Because so many researchers have begun with the assumption that the pro-life movement is marginal to American society, it is hardly surprising that so many of them reach that conclusion.

Another factor shaping the treatment of the movement has been the disciplinary backgrounds of the academics studying it: overwhelmingly they are sociologists, anthropologists, or political scientists. In consequence, most of those writing about it have tended to reflect the strengths and weaknesses of those fields. A conscious use of theory, particularly social movement theory, and a heavy reliance on opinion polling data have typified this research. One striking feature has been the absence of a good sense of change over time. In fact, it is precisely this weakness which has drawn the attention of the most astute sociological observer of the pro-life movement, James R. Kelly, who notes the admission of the leaders in the field of social movement theory that “we know compara-

tively little about the dynamics of collective action over time.”^v

Many of the works reviewed here have the same interpretive themes. They see the movement as narrowly anti-abortion, and not more broadly pro-life. They argue that its opposition to abortion is rooted in other cultural interests, such as the defense of a conservative sexual morality or traditional gender roles. It is frequently characterized as a “right wing” movement, sometimes specifically as a part of the “New Right.” Some see the crusade against abortion as largely symbolic, while others see substantive interests at stake, but in either case it is not “really” a defense of unborn life but only a façade—whether consciously or not—for other interests. Characteristically they stress the role of religion in the pro-life movement and often see it as a creation of the Catholic Church. These works tend to downplay or ignore the religious and political diversity of the movement, finding in it a single set of motives and a membership derived from a limited range of groups.

Early in the history of the movement several book-length journalistic accounts of it appeared. Andrew Merton’s 1981 *Enemies of Choice: The Right to Life Movement and Its Threat to Abortion* voiced several themes which even that early had become staples in the interpretation of the movement. While there was “no doubt” that pro-lifers were sincere in believing abortion to be murder, it was “likely that they have other motives—perhaps hidden even from themselves—which drive them....” For one thing, they “are appalled by what they see as the rampant sexuality of today’s society, and...they view the outlawing of abortion as a means of restoring a more repressive sexual climate.” Secondly, “most oppose the gains of the feminist movement....They openly yearn for a return of women to the traditional role of wife and mother—something that is not likely to happen as long as abortion remains easily available.” Merton added that “there are also considerable elements in the movement which are anti-democratic, anti-intellectual, and anti-humanist....”^{vi} This is in keeping with his earlier declaration that “most anti-abortionists, whether Catholic or Protestant, are fundamentalists.”^{vii} However, Merton later argues that “the struggle over abortion is not primarily a religious struggle. It is a class struggle.” By this he means that pro-lifers were members of the middle and lower middle classes, hostile to the ruling

elite of “the Kennedys, the Rockefellers, the Fords,” and were loyal to traditional values.^{viii}

Merton’s account is relatively short and has a limited account of the movement’s history. While it is based on a number of interviews, he brought to them a firm set of presuppositions which guided his conclusions. The sociologist James Kelly re-analyzed his taped interviews and described the process as one of turning “liberals into fascists”^{ix}.

Another early work on the movement, Connie Paige’s 1983 *The Right to Lifers: Who They Are, How They Operate, Where They Get Their Money*, is a more substantial account. Her dislike of the movement is obvious but less blatant than Merton’s, and she makes some real efforts to be fair. This leads to a curious tension in the book, whose criticisms are sometimes quickly modified by concessions that right-to-lifers were indeed correct on important points. While the movement is sometimes spoken of as a single entity, significant divisions within it are recognized. She sees it as originally an offshoot of the Catholic Church, declaring that “the Roman Catholic Church created the right-to-life movement.”^x She attributes opposition to abortion to concerns about sexual conduct and to a desire by the Church to retain its power.^{xi} A major weakness of the book is its failure to understand that the movement was not, in fact, a simple creation of the Church but in many cases arose from the activity of individuals. Nor does it explain why so many members of the laity became passionately devoted to the cause.

Crucial to the book is the connection of the movement to the New Right: “Although many within the right-to-life movement remained uncertain about or unsympathetic to the rest of the New Right program, they would allow its leadership to call the shots.”^{xii} The two appendices, one on “The New Right’s Money Tree” that lists donors to “new right causes,” the other a lengthy inventory of “Fundamentalist Donors” (a term which she uses interchangeably with “evangelical”) seem intended to create the impression of a vast right-wing conspiracy of which right-to-life is a part. This is undercut, however, by Paige’s clear account of the tensions between the pro-life movement and the New Right. The book does not present a clear and coherent theory of the emergence of the movement, and its attempts to force it into a framework of the New Right

have only limited success, but it is still a mine of useful information on the events of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Also appearing in the late 1970s and early 1980s were a series of articles by the sociologist Donald Granberg and his research associates. They were based both on national public opinion data and on surveys mailed to members of pro-life and pro-choice groups. Granberg stressed two main themes in this literature: first, that pro-lifers were not truly pro-life but rather held views on capital punishment, war, and so on, inconsistent with a true pro-life orientation. Secondly, the real source of anti-abortion activism was moral conservatism.^{xiii} While Granberg's data was, and is, of considerable value, his conclusions are questionable. In order to prove that pro-lifers were not really pro-life, he listed a series of issues as tests of consistency: however, there is no reason to believe that this is reflective of anything other than Granberg's ideological preferences. Thus, the failure of pro-lifers to oppose military spending or to support lower highway speed limits is held to count against pro-life consistency. Intriguingly, his data showed that on the issue of capital punishment pro-life activists were significantly more likely than members of the general public to oppose it; however, he does not list this as a sign of consistency.^{xiv} The creation of consistency tests for pro-lifers has been a staple theme in critical comment on the movement: implicit in it is the assumption that pro-lifers need to be certified as sincere by their social betters. It is hard to recall media comment which calls into question the sincerity of those opponents of capital punishment or supporters of animal rights who are also pro-choice on abortion.^{xv}

That pro-lifers are motivated by a fear of changes in women's roles has been a recurrent theme. One version of it sees the movement as misogynist and repressive. As Susan Faludi argued, "So often in the battle over the fetus's 'right to life' in the 1980s, the patriarch's eclipsed ability to make the family decisions figured as a bitter subtext, the unspoken but pressing agenda of the anti-abortion campaign."^{xvi}

The argument that the pro-life movement is male-dominated and misogynist has several interpretive problems, not least of which is the large number of women in its leadership ranks. The most influential of all interpretations takes a very different line while still maintaining that the

movement is fundamentally devoted to the defense of traditional gender roles. More than fifteen years after its appearance, Kristin Luker's *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* continues to shape perceptions of the movement. Exhaustively researched and clearly written, it offers as a central thesis the proposition that "*the abortion debate is emotionally charged because new political constituencies—primarily women—have vested social interests in whether the embryo is defined as a baby or as a fetus*. Although both sides can fairly claim to be altruistic..., their involvements also reflect personal vested interests."^{xvii} Luker claims that the abortion debate is primarily one between women with different life experiences: pro-choicers are better educated, more likely to work outside the home, and less likely to see motherhood as a defining characteristic of their lives than their pro-life opponents. Their different backgrounds and life experiences predispose them to different worldviews, and it is through these that the abortion issue is evaluated. For pro-life women the defense of the fetus is a defense of the value of their own lives: the acceptance of abortion will degrade the value of motherhood, an institution central to their self definition. Hence, pro-life activism is both a symbolic defense of their own values and a defense of a real material interest. Luker is thus able to be sympathetic to pro-lifers but is ultimately dismissive of them: far from being the disinterested defenders of the most vulnerable members of society, they are in reality protecting their own situation in life and validating the choices they have made.

A similar analysis to Luker's can be found in Faye Ginsburg's *Contested Lives*, a study of the abortion conflict in Fargo, North Dakota. Speaking of pro-lifers she says

In their view, social changes that could be interpreted as casting reproduction and childbearing as a liability are anti-woman. Abortion is thus a condensed symbol for the devaluation of motherhood, and the central attribute assigned to it in this culture.... Abortion represents, in addition, a threat to the social guarantees that a woman with children will be supported by the child's father.... In this conflict, then, one sees a struggle taking place over the meaning attached to reproduction and its place in American culture.^{xviii}

That the pro-life movement is the defense—both symbolic and actual—of a

social status is a common theme, though none of the other studies promoting it have achieved the prominence of Luker's and Ginsburg's.^{xix}

Several scholars have been more aware of the complexity of the pro-life movement and have approached it more objectively. Mary Jo Neitz argued that it contained two very different orientations: one "pro-life," espoused by more elite members of the Church, that links abortion to "liberal peace and justice issues," the other "pro-family," advocated by the "masses of the right-to-life movement."^{xx} A much more substantial account is Michael Cuneo's *Catholics Against the Church*, which although it is a study of the pro-life movement in Canada, provides significant insights into the American movement. Cuneo argues that the movement has, in fact, three components: those for whom abortion is an issue of civil rights and equal protection of the law for the unborn; those whom he calls "family heritage activists," who see in abortion a threat to traditional family values; and those who he calls "revivalist Catholics," who link it to a struggle over the nature of the Church.^{xxi} Cuneo is sharply critical of Luker's "monocausality" respecting the movement and suggests that her thesis "perhaps conceals an ideological bias. In locating the roots of anti-abortionism in the sociocultural circumstances of activists, it seems to imply that the question of abortion itself cannot or should not carry sufficient moral weight to arouse people to activism."^{xxii}

A scholar of particular significance is the sociologist James Kelly. His numerous articles, over nearly two decades, provide a shrewd and sympathetic (although not uncritical) analysis of changing trends, both in the abortion debate and in the pro-life movement. He is clearly aware of the complexity of the movement and the tensions within it. He astutely notes and refutes the claims that it is simply a Catholic operation and that it can be readily dismissed as a reactionary force. For Kelly a central theme is the struggle within the movement between the tendencies to be only an anti-abortion movement or to be a wider pro-life movement, linked to issues of peace and justice. Clearly sympathetic to the latter tendency, he has in recent years described the involvement of some pro-lifers in the "common ground" movement, in which they join with pro-choice supporters in a dialogue to find areas of agreement and common action.^{xxiii} As a social scientist, Kelly is ideally positioned to both

understand and to criticize the limitations of most social science research on the topic. As a scholar who has conducted numerous interviews with pro-lifers and who has followed the movement's literature and activities, he brings a wealth of information and insight to his writings, which form an indispensable resource for anyone studying the topic.^{xxiv}

Another sociologist who has paid considerable attention to the movement and who is, like Kelly, a sympathetic but not uncritical observer is James Davison Hunter. A central theme in his writing on the subject is to locate the contending parties to the abortion dispute within the parameters of a "culture war" over America's fundamental values. His analyses of public opinion are invaluable, both on the abortion issue and on the movements mobilized around the topic, as is his account of the rhetoric employed by each side.^{xxv}

Many of the works mentioned so far make extensive use of social movement theory. It is worth mentioning that a large and sometimes impressive literature dealing with social movements has arisen over the last four decades, with a significant maturation of the field occurring in recent years. These works offer students of the pro-life movement a number of suggestions for research and lines of analysis.^{xxvi} Over the years several of these works have used the pro-life movement to illustrate their larger theoretical conclusions. The pitfalls of this approach were apparent as early as 1975 when an early attempt by Armand Mauss to apply social movement theory led to the prediction of the "fragmentation and eventual demise" of the pro-life movement, with the last section of the chapter speaking somewhat prematurely of "the legacy of the abortion movements."^{xxvii}

More useful was Peter Leahy's early study of the movement, which contained some valuable insights into the rise and fall of support for the cause.^{xxviii} A widely cited study by John McCarthy, which focused on the "social infrastructures" available to social movements, saw the church structures—particularly the Catholic Church—available to pro-lifers as the key to their greater degree of grass-roots organization.^{xxix} While McCarthy correctly identified the pro-life movement as far more "grass roots" than its opposition, his stress on the Church as a resource for the movement was greatly exaggerated. The cross-national comparison of

pro-life groups has also drawn some attention, with useful comparisons of the United States both with Britain and Canada.^{xxx} One work, Dallas Blanchard's *The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiery Protest*, attempts an overview account of the movement from a social movement theory perspective but fails to advance our knowledge of the topic.^{xxx} It is marked by a deep-seated and open hostility and can fairly be described as superficial.^{xxxii} The same hostility is evident in Victoria Johnson's study of Operation Rescue, where she insists that pro-life is a "countermovement," not a movement. While such a distinction can be legitimately argued, Johnson does so on the extraordinary grounds that social movements "challenge groups higher up in the stratification hierarchy, while countermovements are oriented against changes from below."^{xxxiii} The notion that the pro-life movement represents the elite and has easy access to wealth and power will be a revelation to its members. While social movement theory has uses for understanding the pro-life movement, many of its practitioners have been as susceptible to interpretations arising from bias as any other group of interpreters.

In the past few years a number of books have appeared dealing with the abortion controversy. They are a fascinating mix, with some repeating older and polemical themes while others break new ground. Leslie Reagan's *When Abortion Was a Crime* gives an account of the period from the passage of the restrictive laws of the nineteenth century to their repeal. Although a book with significant strengths, it fails utterly to understand the nature of the pro-life movement, portraying it as "a backlash in reaction to the expansion of women's reproductive rights and sexual freedom" and connected to a "New Right ...conservative political agenda hostile to feminism, sexual freedom, freedom of speech and religion, and civil rights."^{xxxiv} No advance over Merton's early interpretation is visible here.

Another book with a wide scope—Donald Critchlow's *Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion, and the Federal Government in Modern America*—provides a very useful framework within which the movement can be understood. Far from regarding it as a marginal or deviant phenomenon, he sees it as a legitimate participant in the public

debate. He makes it clear that the pro-life movement, while often Catholic in composition, was not solely so, and included a number of members of other religious traditions. He notes as well that “Although the institutionalized Catholic Church supported the anti-abortion movement as it grew in the mid-1960’s, groups emerged on the local level, often without official endorsement by the church hierarchy.”^{xxxv} Critchlow offers heavily qualified support to Hunter’s theory of a “culture war” over abortion by suggesting that, while the “concept ‘culture war’ exaggerates the political differences within the American polity, the term captures the nature of the polarized debate over abortion and gender-related issues in contemporary America.”^{xxxvi}

A promising work, but one with some significant limitations, is Kerry Jacoby’s *Souls, Bodies, Spirits: The Drive to Abolish Abortion since 1973*. Originally a doctoral thesis in political science, it brings to bear on the movement the theoretical apparatus derived from social movement theory. Some of her insights are sharp, and her criticism of Dallas Blanchard’s approach is particularly good. Her recognition of the complexity of the issue, which she describes as “not a single issue at all,” and her desire to go beyond the “caricature” of the pro-life movement so often encountered, are commendable.^{xxxvii} Her division of the history of the movement into three phases in which it was successively a “moral crusade” in the 1970s, then a “social movement” in the 1980s, and then in the late 1980s and 90s an “adjunct phenomenon to religious revivalism” is less useful and seems forced.^{xxxviii} She ignores the years before 1973, apparently unaware of the crucial role of the decisions taken in that period.

The direct action wing of the movement, best known to the public in the form of Operation Rescue, has long had limited, and usually unsympathetic, coverage.^{xxxix} In *Wrath of Angels: The American Abortion War* James Risen and Judy Thomas, both journalists, have shed considerable light on this topic.^{xl} Their research was extensive—more than two hundred interviews—and they brought to their work good journalistic instincts. The writing is vivid, and there are a number of acute insights into the personalities involved.

A major contribution of the book is to make clear to the public that

the roots of pro-life direct action lie not with Operation Rescue and Randall Terry, but rather with John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe and others who came out of the anti-war movement of the 1960s. They go on to discuss other exponents of direct action, such as Joe Scheidler, and they set out clearly the background to the emergence of Operation Rescue. They then trace that group's rise and decline and argue that the anti-abortion violence of the 1990s was a product of Operation Rescue's failure. The book's greatest weakness is its willingness to accept at face value the claim of some of the proponents of direct action that they constitute the real pro-life movement. The exclusive focus on this wing means that the mainstream institutional pro-life movement, as represented by the National Right to Life Committee, is largely ignored. It means as well that they treat the demise of Operation Rescue as the demise of the pro-life movement: "The violence of the 1990s spelled the end of anti-abortion activism as a significant political and cultural force in American society."^{xli} The continued presence of abortion as a political issue in the 2000 Presidential election makes that reported demise particularly unconvincing.

The most impressive of the recent books on the pro-life movement is Cynthia Gorney's *Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars*.^{xlii} Asked by *The Washington Post* to write an article on the background to the Supreme Court's 1989 *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* decision, she went to Missouri where the case originated. Struck by the inadequacy of the literature on the abortion controversy, she undertook a lengthy examination of both the pro-life and pro-choice movements in that state. After five hundred interviews and the examination of numerous archival holdings and of a large published literature, she came to understand both sides with a breadth, depth, and sympathy never before achieved.

The choice of Missouri was excellent since it has had a major influence on national developments and its opposing movements accurately reflect national trends. She chose to tell the story through the eyes of individuals: Judith Widdicombe, a pro-choice nurse who founded an abortion clinic (the Reproductive Health Services which acted as plaintiff in the *Webster* case) and on the pro-life side, first Dr. Matt

Backer and then, at greater length, Sam Lee. Switching from one side to the other, she gives a detailed account of events in Missouri while stopping every once in a while to recount national developments. What is most striking about this book is the author's ability to set out, clearly and convincingly, the arguments of both sides. To a quite extraordinary degree she gets inside the minds of the adversaries: their arguments are not caricatured but presented as well as any partisan could. She is alert to conflicts within the movements as well as between them. In short this account, while not a scholarly one, does a far better job of making the actions, thoughts, and passions of the adversaries comprehensible than any other. It will not substitute for a true national history of either movement, but it represents a splendid resource for the writing of one.

As we look at 25 years of accounts of the pro-life movement, we are struck by several features of the literature. One is the frequent death notices, from Mauss's in 1975 to Risen and Thomas's in 1998. What these betray is a continued failure to realize that the pro-life movement is not a temporary reaction to a passing issue but rather represents a deep-seated belief by a large section of the public that human life—of anyone, at any time—is unique, invaluable, and sacred. The abortion issue is but one manifestation of the conflict generated when this belief is challenged, as the growing debate over euthanasia testifies.

This points to another characteristic: the movement's longstanding opposition to various forms of euthanasia tends to be ignored by those who wish to see it solely in terms of abortion. Seeing it that way, of course, permits theories to be advanced that the movement is "really" about motherhood, or the preservation of traditional sexual morals, or the subordination of women. As well, the presence from the beginning of pro-lifers who are clearly on the "left" politically has been ignored by those who wish to see it solely as a "right wing" movement.

That the movement is a longstanding, mainstream player in American political and social life would not be guessed solely by reading much of the literature on it. The distorted view of reality much of this literature advances is a testament to the power of personal bias to shape social research. Fortunately much of the recent literature points to a more mature understanding. Critchlow and Gorney, and to a lesser extent

Jacoby as well as Risen and Thomas, represent significant additions to our knowledge. It should not be forgotten, however, that an alternative to the conventional—and wrong—wisdom has long existed. The work of James Kelly and others has for nearly twenty years offered an alternative. The decision for so long to ignore that alternative view represents not so much a failure of social science as of social scientists.

NOTES

i. Suzanne Staggenborg, *The Pro-Choice Movement: Organization and Activism in the Abortion Conflict* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991) is a full length scholarly study of the pro-choice movement; a compendious survey of the movement to legalize contraception and abortion, heavily focused on legal affairs, is David Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality: The Right to Privacy and the Making of Roe v. Wade* (New York: Macmillan, 1994). See also Nanette J. Davis, *From Crime to Choice: The Transformation of Abortion in America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985). An account of the right-to-die movement is found in Peter G. Filene, *In the Arms of Others* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999).

ii. Theda Skocpol, “The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy,” *Social Science History* 21/4 (Winter 1997) comments on the fact that the National Right to Life Committee is one of the few organizations created in recent years to have the “federal” structure of local, state, and national organizations, in contrast to those groups which are New York- or Washington-based lobbying groups which rely on a mailing list membership. It is also on her list of organizations which have succeeded in recruiting at least 1% of the population as members. No pro-choice group is on the list. John D. McCarthy, “Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Mobilization: Infrastructure Deficits and New Technologies” in *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*, ed. Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987), p. 53, notes: “It can be safely said that pro-life is more dense in numbers, more grass-roots in nature, more variegated in organizational form, and more widely populated with single-issue groups than is pro-choice.”

iii. The issue of media bias has long been a source of concern to pro-lifers. That their concern had a basis in fact was confirmed by David Shaw in a series of articles in *The Los Angeles Times*, July 1-4, 1990. James Davison Hunter,

“Partisanship and the Abortion Controversy,” *Society* 34/5 (July/Aug 1997) observes “Through the 1970s and 1980s, the professions of history, psychology, and sociology became fully committed subsidiaries of the pro-choice establishment.” See also the comments in James R. Kelly, “Seeking a Sociologically Correct Name for Abortion Opponents,” in *Abortion Politics in the United States and Canada*, ed. Ted G. Jelen and Marthe A. Chandler (Westport: Praeger, 1994).

iv. Carole Joffe offers an interesting confirmation of this point. In a review of Kristin Luker’s *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (discussed below), she states: “Given that most academics have little firsthand knowledge of this group, and tend to be biased against them, it is a powerful revelation to see these “others” emerge as compassionate human beings....” Carole Joffe, “The Meaning of the Abortion Conflict,” *Contemporary Sociology* 14/1 (January 1985) 27.

v. Kelly, “Sociologically Correct,” p. 18.

vi. Andrew Merton, *Enemies of Choice: The Right to Life Movement and Its Threat to Abortion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981) pp. 8-9.

vii. Merton, *Enemies*, p. 6.

viii. Merton, *Enemies*, p. 31.

ix. James R. Kelly, “Turning Liberals Into Fascists: A Case Study in the Distortion of the Right to Life Movement,” *Fidelity* (July/August, 1987).

x. Connie Paige, *The Right to Lifers: Who They Are, How They Operate, Where They Get Their Money* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 51

xi. Paige, *Right to Lifers*, pp. 30, 53.

xii. Paige, *Right to Lifers*, p. 32.

xiii. Donald Granberg, “Pro-Life or Reflection of Conservative Ideology? An Analysis of Opposition to Legalized Abortion,” *Sociology and Social Research* 62/3 (April 1978); “Comparison of Pro-Choice and Pro-Life Activists: Their Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs,” *Population and Environment* 5/2 (1982); “The Abortion Activists,” *Family Planning Perspectives* 13/4 (July/August 1981); Donald Granberg and Donald Denney, “The Coathanger and the Rose,” *Society* (May/June 1982).

xiv. Granberg and Denney, "The Coathanger and the Rose," pp. 44-45.

xv. This point has been discussed very effectively in James R. Kelly, "AIDS and the Death Penalty as Consistency Tests for the Pro-life Movement," *America* (26 September 1987).

xvi. Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991), p. 403. A similar refrain can be heard from Marilyn French, *The War Against Women* (New York: Summit Books, 1992), p. 90: "The real motivation of the campaign to criminalize abortion is to establish the principles that women's bodies belong to the state and that women bear the responsibility for sex."

xvii. Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), p. 7. Italics in the original.

xviii. Faye D. Ginsburg, *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), p.7.

19. Stephen L. Markson, "The Roots of Contemporary Anti-Abortion Activism" in *Perspectives on Abortion*, ed. Paul Sachdev (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1985), p. 41 declares that "the crusade against abortion has come to represent to its participants the defense of traditional conceptions of morality and conventional values against the threat posed not simply by the legality of abortion but also by the normative realignment in American culture that was its forerunner." See also Peter J. Leahy, David A. Snow and Steven K. Worden, "The Antiabortion Movement and Symbolic Crusades: Reappraisal of a Popular Theory," *Alternative Lifestyles* 6/1 (Fall 1983); Amy Fried, "Abortion Politics As Symbolic Politics: An Investigation Into Belief Systems," *Social Science Quarterly* 69/1 (March 1988).

xx. Mary Jo Neitz, "Family, State, and God: Ideologies of the Right-to-Life Movement," *Sociological Analysis* 42/3 (1981).

xxi. Michael W. Cuneo, *Catholics Against the Church: Anti-Abortion Protest in Toronto, 1969-1985* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). More recently Cuneo has focused on the latter group in the United States. See his *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 59-79

xxii. Cuneo, *Catholics*, p. 82.

xxiii. Information on the Search for Common Ground “Network for Life and Choice” can be found at: <http://www.sfcg.org/networkm.htm>.

xxiv. Kelly, “Sociologically Correct”; Kelly, “Liberals Into Fascists”; James R. Kelly, “Beyond the Stereotypes: Interviews with Right to Life Pioneers,” *Commonweal*, 20 November 1981; “Toward Complexity: The Right to Life Movement,” *Research in the Social Study of Religion*, no. 1 (1989); “Learning and Teaching Consistency: Catholics and the Right-To-Life Movement” in *The Catholic Church and the Politics of Abortion: A View From the States*, ed. Timothy A. Byrnes and Mary C. Segers (Boulder, 1992); “Beyond Some Stereotypes: An Empirical Study of Some Right-to-Life Activists” in *Proceedings of Association for the Sociology of Religion 1981* (n.d.); “Truth, Not Truce: ‘Common Ground’ on Abortion, a Movement Within Both Movements,” *Virginia Review of Sociology* 2 (1995); “AIDS and the Death Penalty”; “Consistency and Common Ground in the Post-Casey Abortion Era,” in *The Politics of Abortion in the American States*, ed. Mary C. Segers and Timothy Byrne (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1995); “The Vanishing Middle in Abortion Politics,” *The Christian Century* (August 1988); “Ecumenism and Abortion: A Case Study of Pluralism, Privatization and the Public Conscience,” *Review of Religious Research* 30/3 (March 1989); “Pro-Life and Pro-Choice After Reagan-Bush,” *America* (30 January 1993); “A Political Challenge to the Pro-life Movement,” *Commonweal* (23 November 1990); “Abortion: What Americans Really Think and the Catholic Challenge,” *America* (2 November 1991); “Common Ground for Pro-Life and Pro-Choice: Joining Forces to Challenge New Jersey Family Cap,” *America* 180/2 (23 January 1999); “Why Republican and New Democrat Welfare Changes Need Legal Abortion,” *America* 173 (6 January 1996); “A Dispatch From the Abortion Wars: Reflections on ‘Common Ground’,” *America* 171 (17 September 1994); “Abortion Politics: The Last Decades, the Next Three Decades and the 1992 Elections,” *America* 167 (11 July 1992); “The Koop Report and a Better Politics of Abortion,” *America* 162 (2 June 1990); “Beyond Slogans: An Abortion Ethic for Women and the Unborn,” *The Christian Century* 107 (21 February 1990).

xxv. James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); *Before the Shooting Begins: Searching for Democracy in America’s Culture War* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); “What Americans Really Think About Abortion,” *First Things*, June/July 1992. For a critique of the “culture war” thesis, see Michele Dillon, “The American Abortion Debate: Culture War or Normal Discourse?” *Virginia Review of Sociology* 2 (1995).

xxvi. Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson, eds., *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy, eds., *Social Movements in an Organizational Society: Collected Essays* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987); Anne N. Costain and Andrew S. McFarland, eds., *Social Movements and American Political Institutions* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); David S. Meyer and Sidney Tarrow, eds., *The Social Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997); Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996); Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994).

xxvii. Armand L. Mauss, *Social Problems As Social Movements* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1975), p. 471.

xxviii. Peter James Leahy, "The Anti-Abortion Movement: Testing A Theory of the Rise and Fall of Social Movements" (Doctoral Dissertation, Syracuse University, 1975).

xxix. McCarthy, "Pro-Life and Pro-Choice."

xxx. J. Christopher Soper, "Political Structures and Interest Group Activism: A Comparison of the British and American Pro-Life Movements," *Social Science Journal* 31/3 (1994); David S. Meyer and Suzanne Staggenborg, "Countermovement Dynamics in Federal Systems: A Comparison of Abortion Politics in Canada and the United States," *Research in Political Sociology* 8 (1998).

xxxi. Dallas A. Blanchard, *The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiery Protest* (New York: Twayne, 1994).

xxxii. Indeed one expert in the field described it as such; see Clyde Wilcox, review of *The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiery Protest*, by Dallas A. Blanchard, in *Social Forces* 74/4 (June 1996). Blanchard's reference work on the movement, *The Anti-Abortion Movement: References and Resources* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1996) is also of limited use. The work he co-authored on the clinic bombings in Florida is of more value: Dallas A. Blanchard and Terry J. Prewitt, *Religious Violence and Abortion: The Gideon Project* (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1993).

xxxiii. Victoria Johnson, "The Strategic Determinants of a Countermovement: The Emergence and Impact of Operation Rescue Blockades" in *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*, ed. Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), p. 241.

xxxiv. Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion Was A Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997), p. 248.

xxxv. Donald T. Critchlow, *Intended Consequences: Birth Control, Abortion, and the Federal Government in Modern America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), p. 138, 137.

xxxvi. Critchlow (1999), p. 8.

xxxvii. Kerry N. Jacoby, *Souls, Bodies, Spirits: The Drive to Abolish Abortion Since 1973* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), pp. xiii-xiv.

xxxviii. Jacoby, *Souls, Bodies, Spirits*, p. xiv.

xxxix. See, for example, Marian Faux, *Crusaders: Voices From the Abortion Front* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1990). For a scholarly account see Faye Ginsburg, "Saving America's Souls: Operation Rescue's Crusade Against Abortion" in *Fundamentalism and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militance*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993). This literature is discussed in Keith M. Cassidy, "Pro-Life Direct Action Campaigns: A Survey of Scholarly and Media Interpretations" in *Life and Learning VI: Proceedings of Sixth University Faculty for Life Conference in Georgetown University June 1996*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: University Faculty for Life, 1997), pp. 235-44.

xl. James Risen and Judy L. Thomas, *Wrath of Angels: The American Abortion War* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

xli. Risen and Thomas, *Wrath*, p. 273.

xlii. Cynthia Gorney, *Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

Although the pro-life movement failed to prevent the legalization of abortion, it has succeeded and continues to succeed on accomplishing the goals of 1960s liberal activism. According to Hughes, 1960s social movements, like the anti-war protest, "against great odds, opposed the government and revealed the immorality of an American institution" (543). Interpreting the Pro-Life Movement: Recurrent Themes and Recent Trends. By Keith Cassidy. Friends and Foes: Media, Politics, and Tactics in the Abortion War. The pro-life movement transfers the financial burden of prevented constitutional rights onto the poor. Research shows that being denied an abortion makes you four times more likely to live under the poverty line and that women who are refused abortions are more likely to report struggling to pay for basic expenses even several years later. We've been conditioned to believe that the pro-life movement protects individual religious beliefs, but it was never about religion. The movement doesn't reflect people's religious beliefs, it created them. Fans were quick to point out that influencer Audrey Peters' recent job posting was extremely "unethical." In The Know. YouTubers face backlash after throwing 'biggest baby shower' ever: 'Disgusting'. Not only did the pro-life movement teach about public rights arguments, but battles over abortion forced the movement to frequently claim expansive free-speech rights. Most notably, pro-life groups fought legal and legislative battles to defend their right to protest at abortion clinics and health care facilities many times between the late 1980s and 2000s. These Conservative Christian groups are not just using these precedents when it serves them: They have also been supporting free speech cases when abortion is not directly involved. For example, many defended the student who was suspended for holding a "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" banner at an Alaska school event in Morse v. Frederick in 2007. Pro-life advocates interpreted his findings as evidence that abortion is wrong, even though Reid was studying fetuses in their third trimester, which account for only a tiny fraction of abortions, he said. "It clearly resonated with them because they had a preconceived notion of what that science means." "The pro-life movement has always been a movement aimed at cultivating the moral imagination so people can understand why we should care about human beings in the womb," said Snead, the Notre Dame professor. "Science has been used, for a long time, as a bridge to that moral imagination." In a recent promotional video for the Charlotte Lozier Institute, Republican legislators spoke warmly about how data helps make the case for limiting abortion.