



Abortion's Impact on Society 1/18/2003

A striking look at how abortion has damaged the face of America.

After nearly 30 years, abortion has had a phenomenal impact on society. "Decriminalized" abortion has liberated women, advocates argue. But are they really better off because of the U.S. Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision? And how has abortion affected the lives of men? Actually, unrestricted abortion has cheapened human life, thus affecting all aspects of American society.

Impact on Women

Advocates claimed abortion would bring women "freedom" and "empowerment." Sadly, the opposite has occurred. Instead of freeing women from male exploitation, abortion has made them more vulnerable—playing into the hands of men who seek sex without marriage.

Columnist Jeff Jacoby discusses abortion's impact on male-female relationships:

It has corrupted romance and sexuality. In the ancient times before Roe, the price of an unwanted pregnancy could be terrifyingly high. That gave unmarried women a powerful incentive to be careful—to reserve themselves for men whom they knew to be worthy. Sometimes worthiness could be proven only by walking down a church aisle; if not that, it often required at least courtship, love and commitment.

But after Roe, an unwanted pregnancy became little more than a nuisance. To undo it, you had only to see an abortionist. So why be careful? Why hold back? There was no longer a need to wait for that aisle walk—or even for commitment. ... For men who wanted sex without strings, without having to make promises, without having to go through the rituals of romance, Roe was a godsend. And if she has a baby? Hey, that's her problem. She could have gotten an abortion.

In the past, fear and respect have motivated people to make responsible sexual choices. But since Roe divided sex from reproduction, people stopped being responsible for the consequences of their actions. Exercising so-called "equality," women began engaging in sex with little discretion. When women inevitably became pregnant, abortionists were waiting.

Impact on Men

While abortion has degraded women, it has also negatively influenced men. Some laugh at the idea of men being "victims" of abortion. But counselor and author Steve Arterburn understands the psychological conflict and its ramifications. He pressured his girlfriend into having an abortion after getting her pregnant during his first year of college.

"I had selfishly destroyed a human life because I didn't want to be inconvenienced," he explained. "I'm one of the thousands of abortion fathers who have also gone through this ordeal. In my case, it resulted in 80 ulcers eating at my stomach, intestines and colon. The pain was

excruciating and made worse by the knowledge that it was a result of my secret sin.”

Just as abortion demands that women violate their natural inclination to nurture, it forces men to reject their role as provider and protector. The new life should motivate the man to embrace new levels of responsibility. Instead, he acts against his instincts, destroying what he should most vehemently defend—his own child.

Indeed, if a man would ask his girlfriend to commit this act of violence against a child, what's to keep him from inflicting violence on her? A glaring example is a case in which a Washington, D.C., man was charged with assaulting his girlfriend. The man admitted that he beat her outside the abortion clinic when she changed her mind about going through with the procedure. Another instance occurred when a man hired three assailants to beat his girlfriend for the purpose of killing her unborn child. The attack occurred one day before the woman was expected to deliver.

The increasing rates of domestic violence since Roe further illustrate this point:

- Approximately 1.9 million women are physically assaulted annually in the United States, a conservative estimate based on reporting. Experts estimate the actual incidence of partner violence is closer to 4 million annually.
- Women annually reported about 500,000 rapes or sexual assaults. Friends or acquaintances of the victims committed more than half of these crimes.
- In 1972, there were 60,000 [reported] child-abuse incidents. Four years later, the number passed the half million mark. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, slightly fewer than 1 million children were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and neglect in 1997.

Abortion and Crime

Today, 52 percent of U.S. women obtaining abortions are younger than 25. Although two-thirds are unmarried, more than half are already mothers. Moreover, 47 percent have already had at least one abortion. These women soon learn that abortion hurts, rather than helps, them.

Sydna Massé, who founded Ramah International, a post-abortion ministry, also works with Prison Fellowship. The connection between these ministries makes sense. The emotional impact of abortion often drives women to destructive, sometimes criminal, behavior. For example, in one Michigan prison ministry, 77 of the 100 women were post-abortive.

Moreover, Colorado is pressed for room for its growing female prison population. Since 1989, the number of women entering the state prison has risen 200 percent, according to the Colorado Department of Corrections. Furthermore, the women's national prison population has nearly doubled since 1990—from 39,054 to 75,241—

according to 1998 statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice. Among minors, the female juvenile crime arrest rate increased nearly 42 percent between 1990 and 1997.

If only one-third of those who have been aborted were available to start work on their 18th birthday, the demise of Social Security would be put off for decades. By the time the baby boom begins to retire in 2010, there would have been an additional 10 million workers ready to shoulder the burden of paying for Social Security.

Law-school professor John Donohue and economist Steven Levitt released a controversial—and, some say, even discriminatory—study in 1999. In short, they claim that legalized abortion has reduced the crime rate. They base this assumption on the opinion that “unwanted” children are more likely to commit crimes, and abortion prevents “unwanted” children from being born. They used overall decreased crime rates and increased abortion rates to support their assumption.

If Donohue’s and Levitt’s theory were true, then those born after 1973 would be less likely to commit crime. However, the opposite is true. The majority of delinquency cases involve teens aged 15 to 17. Youth born between 1973 and 1979, the period during which abortion increased most dramatically, reached ages 15 to 17 during 1988 to 1996. Delinquency cases increased significantly from 1988 and the following years. Furthermore, according to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics, the murder rate among 14- to 17-year-olds in 1993 was 3.6 times that of children born between 1966 and 1970. Lastly, girl gangs have grown significantly in recent years. According to a Chicago Crime Commission report, between 16,000 and 20,000 female gang members and associates reside in the Chicago area alone. Seeing the value of life disrespected in their generation negatively skews the outlook of youth.

Far-Reaching Effects

Initially, abortion-on-demand cheapened the life of the unborn child, but the downslide did not stop there. *Roe v. Wade* placed America on the edge of a slippery slope. And one does not have to be an expert to see how far we’ve fallen since 1973.

For some, abortion has become simply a form of birth control. Theresa Flores is not sure how many abortions she has had—she thinks nine. After her first abortion around the age of 15, she continued having unprotected sex with her boyfriend. Over the next few years, the abortions continued. “I basically used abortion as a form of birth control,” she admitted.

In 1973, Dr. Francis Schaeffer predicted that abortion would be the first step in a downward spiral:

Of all the subjects relating to the erosion of the sanctity of human life, abortion is the keystone. It is the first and crucial issue that has been overwhelming in changing attitudes toward the value of life in general ... Since life is being destroyed before birth, why not tamper with it on the other end? Will a society which has assumed the right to kill infants in the womb ... have difficulty in assuming the right to kill other human beings?

By the time the peak of the baby boom reaches retirement age, the number of abortions since *Roe v. Wade* will equal the number of births in the baby boom.

One only needs to look at recent headlines to see how Schaeffer’s prediction has come true: From the advancement of the “Right to Die” movement to Princeton bioethicist Peter Singer, who openly advocates infanticide up to 28 days after birth. “Killing a defective infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person,” Singer argued in his 1979 book *Practical Ethics*. “Sometimes it is not wrong at all.”

Today, if their child is born with a congenital defect, parents in some states can sue their doctor for “wrongful birth” if he does not recommend abortion. For example, in New Jersey, Deborah Campano and her now ex-husband Michael Imbergamo won a suit against Dr. James Delahunty, to the tune of \$1.85 million. Campano said she would have aborted her son Michael if she knew he had Down syndrome.

“What we’re dealing with here is the promotion of eugenics as a birth policy whereby doctors are sued for not weeding out the ‘unfit,’” said Clark Forsythe, president of Americans United for Life.

While 27 states allow “wrongful-birth” suits, in 1999, three other states ruled them invalid. In *Taylor v. Kurapati*, the Michigan Court of Appeals stated that recovery in wrongful-birth suits depends on the “unseemly spectacle” of parents disparaging their children’s worth in court, and awarding damages would contradict the presumptive value of every human life. The National Down Syndrome Congress filed a brief in the Georgia case stating that the parents’ claim for damages “presupposes that the life of a child with Down syndrome is less valuable than no life at all.”

Now, the mentality that life does not inherently have value has reached into the lives of other vulnerable members of our society. As health care costs rise, the elderly have become targets. They find themselves pressured to accept euthanasia so they will not be too much of a “burden” on society.

Abandoned Generation

“[T]here is another group of children who have been overlooked in the [abortion] debate ... the children now 10 or 15 or even 20 years old who have had it drummed into them by TV, radio and magazines,” writes Peggy Noonan, former speechwriter for President Reagan and author of *What I Saw at the Revolution* and *The Case Against Hillary*. “Is it too much to see a connection between the abortion culture in which these young people came of age and the moral dullness they are accused of displaying?”

This disrespect for life has had a profound effect on teens: Melissa Drexler was a teenager who managed to hide her pregnancy to full term. She gave birth in a toilet stall and then allegedly choked or suffocated her 6-lb., 6-oz. son. Minutes later, she returned to the floor of her high school formal dance in Aberdeen Township, New Jersey, where she ate salad and danced with her boyfriend.

The epidemic of baby abandonment, or “dumping,” is growing. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the number of babies found abandoned in public places increased from 65 to 105 between 1991 and 1998. Of those, eight were found dead in 1991, and 33 were found dead in 1998. Further, the number of children abandoned at hospitals grew from 22,000 in 1991 to more than 31,000 in 1998. During this same time period, teenage pregnancies and abortions were both *dropping*. Maureen Hogan, president of Adopt America, blames the pervasive “just-get-rid-of-it mentality.”

As a result of this epidemic, many ministries have blossomed:

- In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Gigi Kelly started Baskets for Babies. Volunteer families avail themselves to desperate women who can leave their babies literally on their doorsteps. Now 608 families leave their porch lights lit, with baskets waiting.
- In Houston, Texas, billboards—including a hotline, 1-800-904-SAVE—plead “Don’t Abandon Your Baby!” The signs urge women to leave their babies at fire stations or hospitals.
- In Mobile, Alabama, after a rash of baby dumpings, television reporter Jodie Brooks met with social workers and hospital administrators. They started A Secret Safe Place for Newborns.
- In Yucaipa, California, Debi Faris started the Garden of Angels in 1996, a cemetery for dead abandoned babies. She names the infants and gives them decent burials.
- In Westbury, New York, the A.M.T. Children of Hope Foundation Infant Burial Inc. purchased a section of Holy Rood Cemetery where volunteers lay abandoned newborns to rest. The infants receive names, all with the surname Hope, and paramedics, police officers and others

attend the funeral procession led by a motorcade. The group also provides a helpline for parents at risk for abandoning their infants (516-679-1111).

Germany has experienced the same problem, although its abortion rate among teens aged 15 to 19 is 3.6 per 1,000, compared to 29.2 per 1,000 in the United States. In Hamburg, women may leave their babies in a social services center. They have eight weeks to return for the child before he becomes available for adoption.

State governments are also getting involved. In September 1999, Texas was the first to

decriminalize baby dumping. Twenty-three other states are considering similar legislation. These bills protect women from prosecution if they leave their babies at a hospital or fire station. Expectedly, this policy has created controversy. Opponents say it encourages irresponsibility; prevents adoptive parents from knowing infants' medical histories; robs parental rights from fathers; and ignores mothers' well being. Supporters say the law helps save babies.

The Church's Response

Undoubtedly, abortion grieves the heart of God. Considering this, the church should be abortion's most vocal opponent. However, the church has been unable to reach a consensus on this issue.

Even in the years leading up to *Roe*, the church was in conflict. Surprisingly, some clergy even helped lead pro-abortion forces in the 1960s. The Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion in New York helped 100,000 women receive abortions before they were legal.

Theologian and philosopher Dr. Francis Schaeffer writes:

In general, the denominations which hold to the historical Bible-believing position have taken a public stand against abortion. If you are in a denomination which supports abortion, consider what is your responsibility. ... [Y]our name is being used to support a low view of human life.

Simply condemning abortion is not enough. The Church has a responsibility to show the love of Christ to these women who are in desperate situations, and therefore, it is uniquely positioned to provide a solution to the abortion problem in America and the world.

Many churches have established and/or supported pregnancy resource centers (PRCs) within their communities. About 3,000 operate nationwide. Some provide counseling within the church itself and even help provide every form of assistance and support women need, from the physical and financial to the emotional and spiritual.

Bethany Christian Services has 64 chapters across the nation and volunteers around the world. With a toll-free hotline (1-800-Bethany), it provides training for parenting and connects birth mothers with couples seeking adoption. Another group, Care Net, is a Christian, pro-life network of PRCs and churches, with 450 centers nationwide. It helps women locate PRCs in their area. Also, it provides free pregnancy tests, confidential peer support, baby and maternity items, and support groups for parenting, birthing or post-abortion distress. Care Net's hotline is 1-800-395-HELP.

Churches on Abortion

While the views of individual pastors and congregations vary, most denominations have adopted formal positions on abortion.

Roman Catholic Church—Vatican II's "Church in the Modern World" held in 1965 that "life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: Abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes."

Episcopal Church—A 1994 resolution expressed "unequivocal opposition" to actions that "abridge the right of a woman to reach an informed decision about the termination of her pregnancy" or that "limit access" to safe abortions.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—In 1990, the church accepted abortion as a "last resort" in cases of extreme fetal abnormality, rape, incest or threat to the mother's life. Otherwise, the church "neither supports nor opposes" laws against abortion.

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod—The Missouri synod has "consistently taken a strong position in support of human life and in opposition to willful abortion."

Southern Baptist Convention—In 1976, Southern Baptists opposed abortion as a means of birth control and in 1980 backed anti-abortion legislation and a constitutional amendment to protect life from the moment of conception.

American Baptist Churches—In 1994, the denomination said it "acknowledges diversity" among members but took no official stand.

United Methodist Church—The 1996 "Book of Discipline" supports abortion rights, but adds words on the "sanctity of unborn life" and rejects abortion as a "means of birth control [or] gender selection."

United Church of Christ—The church has strongly supported legal abortion since 1971. It opposed the 1996 partial-birth abortion ban and supports federal funding for abortion in all health legislation.

Presbyterian Church (USA)—The church has accepted "personal choice" in abortion, but in 1992, added that tradition also provides a basis for the "preservation of the lives of the unborn." In 1997, the church expressed "grave moral concern" over partial-birth abortion.

Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)—Respecting the sanctity of human life, PCA defines abortion as the intentional killing of an unborn child and upholds that Scripture affirms the personhood of the unborn; thus, the Sixth Commandment prohibits the shedding of innocent blood.

Orthodox churches—The Orthodox Christian denominations oppose abortion and support restrictive legislation.

Mennonite Church—It recognizes that "abortion violates the Biblical principles of the sanctity and value of human life," yet does not desire to "legislate morality for society."

Sadly, CPCs come under attack from pro-abortionists. In 1999, when support for CPCs grew among legislators and presidential candidates, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) resurrected a smear campaign against CPCs. NARAL claimed the clinics lied about providing medical services. However, many CPCs are medical clinics.

For example, Choices Medical Clinic in Wichita, Kansas—next to the infamous abortionist George Tiller—offers physician examinations, pregnancy testing and obstetrician ultrasound examinations.

Opponents also claim PRCs lie to women. One "lie," they say, is that a woman's intestines can be sucked out during an abortion. But that is not a lie. California abortionist Bruce Steir pleaded guilty to manslaughter for killing a patient when he punctured her uterus and pulled her intestine

through the hole. Despite opposition, PRCs continue to meet women's real needs with compassion.

Looking Ahead

Our Founding Fathers created a nation based on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. "Switch the order of these three fundamental human rights—Putting happiness before liberty or liberty before life—and you end up with moral chaos and social anarchy," wrote Steve Forbes, successful businessman and former U.S. presidential candidate.

Americans must ask: Do we wish to leave the abortion mentality to future generations? Is our country better off because of Roe? Today America stands at a crossroad. The choice is clear. God extolled the Israelites: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30: 19, NKJV). The time has come to choose life—for the unborn and also for our entire society.

Concerned Women for America
1015 Fifteenth St. N.W., Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005
Phone: (202) 488-7000
Fax: (202) 488-0806
Web: www.cwfa.org
E-mail: mail@cwfa.org