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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

BY ARTHUR B. SHOSTAK AND GARY McLOUTH,
WITH LYNN SENG

New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984

Reviewed by:

JONATHAN RABINOWITZ

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This book addresses the topic of men's feelings and responses to their sex partner having an abortion. This topic, as the authors effectively substantiate, has heretofore received little attention in the literature and is of great social importance. The experiences of the men interviewed for this study bears out the authors' contention that for many men the abortion experience is very painful, leaves scars and is a source of much ambivalence and confusion. The book moves from identifying the lack of attention given to men in the abortion experience, to suggesting possible remedies to this problem, making it more than just a study of men involved in abortions. The book is clearly written, well documented and organized. Although it is a book with obvious sex appeal to the masses and is very readable, it does not appear to be lacking in scholarship. The authors state several times the limitations of their findings and are cautious in generalizing.

After reviewing the limited literature the authors set out to gather data from six target groups; 1. 1,000 men who accompanied their sex partners to an abortion were asked by staffers of 30 abortion clinics (out of 300 clinics invited to participate in this project) to complete a questionnaire. 2. Men who do not accompany their female partners were recruited via media and public forum appeals, and notices placed in men's movement newsletters. This brought forward an

additional 18 participants who completed the questionnaire. 3. Men who would discuss the aftermath of an abortion were located through phone numbers they provided on their questionnaires. Seventy-five such men (out of the 1,000) were interviewed by phone or in person. 4. Abortion clinic representatives were asked to "guesstimate" the percentage of women who are accompanied by their sex partners, of men who request counseling, and other statistics not routinely kept. The clinics were also asked to describe the services they provide for men and any future plans that they had in serving males. 5. In-depth interviews were conducted with clinic counselors. Five counselors supplemented their interviews by writing essays which were included in this volume. 6. Pro-choice and anti-abortion leaders were interviewed and prepared profiles of their actions, attitudes and values. This study spanned approximately two years.

The instrument constructed for this study that was used to interview the 1,000 respondents is included as an appendix to the book which facilitates replication of this study. A "methodological evaluation" of the study is presented as an appendix written by Joan Spade who completed the data analysis for this study.

In addition to providing the quantitative data the authors include vignettes throughout to shed light on the aspect of the experience they are discussing. Also of interest are the appendixes. One deals with men's responses to mastectomy, another is a proposal for a video tape and brochure geared to men in the waiting room. Another provides the results of the feedback questionnaire given to 521 men who participated in an abortion counseling program at abortion clinics.

"Men and Abortions" is a study of men's reactions to abortions primarily through data gathered about men who accompanied their sex partners to the abortion clinic. The authors identify this lack of attention to men and abortions as a social problem and make suggestions towards facilitating greater involvement by men. The book's readability and scholarship make it a volume of interest and value to profes-

sional, laymen, and men and women who contemplate abortion.

The authors have made a significant contribution to the literature with this exploratory/descriptive study. The study has implications for policy and practice as it helps to understand the role of men in abortions as a population who are also in need. The book is not a how-to-counsel-men guide, but rather a strong argument for the need to pay increased attention to men, who have traditionally received little attention, when their partners were having an abortion.