

Anti-Abortion Activism in the UK

This beautifully written and carefully researched book deepens our understanding of the different positions in the debate about abortion, presenting them as coherent but clashing moral stances. This is sociology of religion at its best – a timely reminder of why it is so important.

–Linda Woodhead, F. D. Maurice Chair in Moral and Social Theology, King's College London

In this book Pam Lowe and Sarah-Jane Page have produced a compelling exploration of anti-abortion activism in the UK. Combining expertise from the fields of the sociology of reproductive health and the sociology of religion, Lowe and Page begin with a superbly detailed historical background of abortion law in the UK, this is followed by findings generated by lengthy primary research. The end result is a unique, richly layered insight into those who ascribe to anti-abortion positions that will be of interest to academics, students, faith communities, activists and the public at large.

–Dr Fiona Bloomer, Senior Lecturer, Social Policy,
Ulster University

The conceptual innovation in Pam Lowe and Sarah-Jane Page's analysis of anti-abortion presence outside abortion clinics in the UK as lived religiosity makes fascinating reading. It is detailed, insightful and thought-provoking.

–Dr Barbara Baird, Women's and Gender Studies,
Flinders University, South Australia

Anti-abortion ideology is often cloaked in claims to objectivity, whether it be through invoking claims of scientific rationality or moral absolutism. In their book, Pam Lowe and Sarah-Jane Page combine the fields of the sociology of religion and reproductive health with 5 years of fieldwork amongst activists to return us to the central role religion plays in the motivations, worldviews, and actions of anti-abortionists. Their book provides both an overview of the politics of abortion in Britain and new and fresh insights, and thus will be of interest to students, specialists, and anyone with an interest in British abortion or religious cultures.

–Dr Erica Millar, Department of Social Inquiry,
La Trobe University, Australia

Anti-Abortion Activism in the UK is a must read for any scholar, student or person interested in understanding the intractability of the contemporary conflict over abortion. Although modern activists package their opposition to abortion in secular paper to gain political traction with a public that largely views religion as a private matter, Lowe and Page's meticulously researched, five-year ethnographic study reveals that the heart of the conflict is profoundly religious. *Anti-Abortion Activism in the UK* illuminates the degree to which anti-abortion activism is moored to a distinct worldview where the relationship between activists' lived religion and opposition to abortion is inseparable. Drawing on multiple sources of data, Lowe and Page brilliantly demonstrate that an ultra-sacrificial construction of motherhood is centered as both sacred and profane in this worldview, which gives abortion opponents meaning and an indefatigable edge in their activism over both time and space.

–Alesha E. Doan, Professor, Women,
Gender & Sexuality Studies, School of Public Affairs &
Administration University of Kansas

Although this book is primarily UK focused; I implore US readers not to let this deter you as there is a great deal to be learned. Lowe and Page provide a brilliantly original and sharply-focused articulation of this activism as an invocation of 'lived religion', which is ritualized in the public zone outside of reproductive health clinics. The authors also stress the importance of recognizing national contexts. This contextualization offers potentially new and productive ways of seeing and conceptualizing that which is familiar. I also want to commend Lowe and Page for their clear and highly comprehensible writing style. No terse overly-academic language here. This makes the book an invaluable and appealing read for multiple audiences, including academics, students, activists, policy-makers, and the interested public.

–Shoshanna Ehrlich, JD Professor Women's, Gender, and
Sexuality Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston

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Anti-Abortion Activism in the UK: Ultra-sacrificial Motherhood, Religion and Reproductive Rights in the Public Sphere

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Abbreviations

40DFL	40 Days for Life
ALRA	Abortion Law Reform Association
ARCH	Abortion Recovery Care and Helpline
BMA	British Medical Association
BPAS	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
CBR	Centre for Bioethical Reform UK
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CofE	Church of England
CPC	Crisis Pregnancy Centre
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GCN	Good Counsel Network
HOGPI	Helpers of God's Precious Infants
MFL	March for Life
NHS	National Health Service
NI	Northern Ireland
NILT	Northern Ireland Life and Times
OAPA	1861 Offences against the Person Act
PAS	Post-abortion Syndrome
PASE	Post Abortion Support for Everyone
PSPO	Public Spaces Protection Order
SPUC	Society for the Protection of Unborn Children
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
UPAA	Ulster Pregnancy Advisory Association

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About the Authors

Pam Lowe is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Policy at Aston University. She has researched and written extensively in the area of women's reproductive and sexual health, with a particular interest in pregnancy, abortion and early parenting. This includes her work published in her monograph *Reproductive health and maternal sacrifice: women, choice and responsibility* (Palgrave). Recently she has worked on a number of projects including the sexual health of online sex workers and understandings of risk surrounding mental health in the perinatal period. This book emerges from a longitudinal ethnographic study of abortion debates in public spaces.

Sarah-Jane Page is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Aston University. Her research focuses on religion and its interaction with sexuality and gender issues. She has specifically worked on projects examining religion, youth and sexuality and women priests in the Church of England. She has published three monographs, *Religious and sexual identities* (Ashgate; with A.K.T Yip); *Understanding young Buddhists* (Brill; with A.K.T. Yip) and *Religion and sexualities* (Routledge; with H. Shipley). She has worked closely with Pam Lowe over a number of years, undertaking the research for this book.