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The “Heated Debates” Survey: How Connecting Issues Have an Impact on Opposition to Violence

Rachel M. MacNair

ABSTRACT: Do people rate the consistent life ethic as making them more likely to oppose death-causing practices? Do they similarly rate the idea that killing is traumatic? An online survey offered these as two of five arguments connecting abortion, capital punishment, and war when asking respondents to rate the impact of each argument on each issue. Consistency and trauma were rated as moving toward opposition on practices that the respondents favored, but primarily with respondents who opposed one practice but favored the other. Those who favored both were less impressed. An argument favoring abortion to deter crime by eliminating future criminals also moved people who favored abortion availability toward opposing abortion. Consistency and trauma are two arguments that can strengthen the case against each form of socially-approved killing, but most strongly in those who already oppose one form and can therefore be encouraged to apply those arguments to other forms.

THERE ARE TWO RESEARCH QUESTIONS for this quantitative study. The first is: how do people who are not already persuaded rate the persuasiveness of the concept of the consistent life ethic, as compared to other arguments connecting issues of violence? The second is: how do people rate the impact of the concept that the act of killing is traumatic on their position on issues involving killing? The research literature on the consistent life ethic or on connecting different issues involving killing deals entirely with those who already are or are not persuaded and investigates their differing characteristics. The literature on the idea that killing human beings can be an etiological stressor causing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other post-trauma reactions is almost entirely an attempt to establish whether this

is the case, and if so, what the implications might be. In both cases, there has been strong speculation, based on informal observations, that these two ideas have persuasive ability to move people toward greater opposition to killing of human beings under what are now socially-approved circumstances. This study is an attempt to offer some empirical evidence as to whether or not this is the case.

Several studies have focused on how positions on the two issues of abortion and the death penalty combine. They divide people into the four possible groups: those favoring both, those opposing both, and those favoring one of them but opposing the other. Claggett & Schafer¹ analyzed a public opinion survey in order to divide different demographic groups into those four categorizations and to ascertain percentages of each. Kimberly Cook² wrote a book in which she reported on extensive interviews with people in each of the four categories in order to get insight on their reasoning. However, these results are not representative of their respective groups as a whole. Her findings on the group favoring abortion availability and opposing the death penalty are used as one of the arguments (#4) to connect issues that will serve as one of the three contrasts to the two of interest for the current study. Johnson & Tamney³ were more narrowly focused by studying the capital punishment positions of abortion opponents. They divided the “inconsistent” (those who oppose abortion but favored the death penalty) and the “consistent” (those who oppose both). They found the inconsistent to be more traditional and more concerned with sexual morality.

¹ W.J.M. Claggett and B.E. Schafer, “Life and Death as Public Policy: Capital Punishment and Abortion in American Public Opinion,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 3 (1991): 32-52.

² Kimberly J. Cook, *Divided Passions: Public Opinions on Abortion and the Death Penalty* (Boston MA: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1998); see also her “A Passion to Punish: Abortion Opponents Who Favor the Death Penalty,” *Justice Quarterly* 15 (1998): 329-56.

³ S.D. Johnson & J.B. Tamney, “Factors Related to Inconsistent Life-Views,” *Review of Religious Research* 30 (1988): 40-46.

Adding war and euthanasia as issues that are connected, Lester, Hadley, and Lucas⁴ tested students on personality differences. They found small differences on war and euthanasia, but none on capital punishment or abortion. An unpublished paper⁵ looked at the specific personality variable of Machiavellianism as first defined by Christie & Geiss⁶ and considered the scores of the different abortion/death penalty groupings. Those who oppose both abortion and the death penalty had the lowest Machiavellianism scores; those who favored both had the highest scores; and each of the two groups who favored one and opposed the other had similar scores that were in between the other two.

Edith Bogue⁷ covered the complications of American public opinion as shown in the General Social Surveys. She concluded that while few people hold to opposition to all the forms of killing of human beings, few people endorse them all either, and opinion is shifting toward opposition in several of the areas.

Much of the quantitative literature that includes the four issues of abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and war considers how they divide. Factor analyses on life-and-death positions uniformly have a two-factor solution: abortion and euthanasia (with assisted suicide, other suicide, and refusal of treatment) go in one factor, and capital punishment with military positions (war, arms build-up, military

⁴ David Lester, Richard A. Hadley, & William A. Lucas, "Personality and a Pro-death Attitude," *Personality and Individual Differences* 11 (1990): 1183-85.

⁵ Rachel M. MacNair, "The Relationship of the Machiavellian Personality, Sense of Coherence, and Ethics," paper presented on 1 March 2008 at the Mid-Year Research Conference on Religion & Spirituality, hosted by Division 36 (Psychology of Religion and Spirituality) of the American Psychological Association.

⁶ R. Christie & F. Geis, *Studies in Machiavellianism* (New York NY: Academic Press, 1970).

⁷ Edith Bogue, "Does the Seamless Garment Fit? American Public Opinion" in *Consistently Opposing Killing: From Abortion to Assisted Suicide, the Death Penalty, and War*, ed. R.M. MacNair & S.J. Zunes (Westport CT: Praeger, 2008), ch. 10, pp. 73-86.

spending) in the other.⁸ This tracks well with current political divisions.

Based on this literature, MacNair⁹ conducted two large studies to address points that arose. The first was a paper-and-pencil format with a variety of populations (n = 464) that primarily offered Likert-style questions on the connections between abortion and the death penalty only, along with asking respondents for a short answer on what connections or differences they perceived. The second study was an on-line survey with snowball technique recruitment (n = 699). Respondents were asked about what were the connections and what were the differences for each possible combination of abortion, death penalty, war, and euthanasia; there are six ways of putting those into pairs, so six sets of answers were solicited.

One of the findings of these two studies that is pertinent to the current investigation is that people who were in opposition on both issues were the most likely to see the issues as connected, and did so by large majorities. Those who favored both were the least likely to see them as connected. Those who favored one and opposed the other were in the middle in terms of the percentage that saw them as connected.

Another of the relevant findings is that for those who did endorse the issues as connected, a substantial majority (about two-thirds overall) when responding to an open-ended question with a short answer gave variations on the theme of killing, causing death, and violence. This suggests that combining the issues does bring to mind for many the aspect of the issue that opponents are most interested in conveying.

The two-factor model of the previous literature was confirmed

⁸ David G. Beswick, "Attitudes to Taking Human Life," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 6 (1970): 120-30; J.S. Cleghorn, "Respect for Life: Research Notes on Cardinal Bernardin's 'Seamless Garment'," *Review of Religious Research* 28 (1986): 129-42; Richard A. Kalish, "Some Variables in Death Attitudes," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 59 (1963): 137-45.

⁹ Rachel M. MacNair, "Perceptions of Connections" in "Consistently Opposing Killing: From Abortion to Assisted Suicide, the Death Penalty, and War," ed. R.M. MacNair & S.J. Zunes (Westport CT: Praeger, 2008), ch. 11, pp. 87-101.

inasmuch as the two pairs (war with death penalty and abortion with euthanasia) were the only two that were endorsed as connected by a majority of the entire set of respondents.

Participants were also asked to rate themselves on a liberal/conservative continuum. Unsurprisingly, when this was applied to the four different groups for favoring and opposing abortion and the death penalty, results showed that those who favor abortion and oppose the death penalty tended toward the liberal end of the spectrum and those who opposed abortion and favored the death penalty tended toward the conservative end. Those that favored both or opposed both, however, were much more distributed over the spectrum, with a mean score coming out in the middle. Notably, those who opposed both were more likely to opt out of the spectrum altogether, as about a quarter of them selected “other.”

As for the concept that killing human beings can be traumatic to those who do it, most of the research literature is consolidated in the book *Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress: The Psychological Consequences of Killing*.¹⁰ Those who engaged in socially-approved killing that are covered in this book include combat veterans, people who carry out executions, police who shoot in the line of duty, and abortion staff. The current state of quantitative studies strongly suggest that killing is not only a possible etiological stressor, but that it may lead to more severe post-trauma symptoms than other forms of traumatization do. This is an area that still requires considerably more research for its development, but the current study serves as part of its development by addressing the question of public perceptions involving the concept when applied to issues that involve such killing.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was preliminarily pilot-tested for needed revisions, and then

¹⁰ Rachel M. MacNair, *Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress: The Psychological Consequences of Killing* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2002).

put on-line on the Survey Methods webpage. Recruitment of respondents was by a snowball email request technique. Several listserves, primarily with people active on one or many of the issues, were sent notifications with a link to the survey site and a request that people send this on to other individuals and listserves that might find it of interest. It was stressed in the message that people of varying views were being sought, and the listserves included those active on different sides of the issues. Recruitment continued from July 2008 to February 2009, a period high in advocacy interest because of being during the election and immediately post-election. This effort resulted in 352 respondents.

After completing demographic questions, respondents were asked their position on three issues. Previous experience had shown that respondents object to being given only two options, and there is also an advantage in being able to measure a middle position between the two extremes. Therefore, for each issue, respondents were given three options, in which the first was a matter of favoring the practice, the third was a clear-cut opposition to the practice, and the second was a middle position between the other two. For categorizing people into groups, however, those with a middle position were included with those that supported the practice as one group so that those that entirely opposed the practice would be in the other.

The positions to select as closest to respondent's position on abortion were pro-choice, middle ground, and pro-life. The positions on the death penalty were in the form of statements: it should be done more often; it should be done only with strict safeguards; I oppose it in all cases. The positions on war were also in the form of statements, all of which focused on the contemporary war at the time, the American war in Iraq. The first was "I supported the war from the start, and still do." The middle ground was taken up by two statements: "I was for it when it started, but no more (or I'm no longer sure)" and "I was against it when it started, but now support the war." The final position was "I opposed the war from the start, and still do."

Experience from past studies shows that abortion and the death

penalty have the advantage that people are quite clear what their positions on these issues are, and can therefore relatively easily categorize themselves. In the case of euthanasia, many have not been clear, or have even indicated confusion as to what it was. In the case of war, a simple expression of a position on war in general will find the vast majority favoring some and opposing others, with the number of those opposing all or favoring all both being too small to be statistically useful. Therefore, when one is getting someone's positions on war, it is more helpful to be more specific, such as asking for a position on a specific war. The timing of this survey provided an opportunity to use a war that was prominent in the news and so would make sense to respondents as something to ask about.

As part of the demographic portion, respondents were asked to rate themselves along a liberal/conservative continuum, in which as an arbitrary assignment lower numbers would be more toward the liberal and higher numbers more toward the conservative. The continuum was: radical, liberal, moderate, conservative, and ultra-conservative. An option of "other" was supplied for those who wished to opt out of the spectrum altogether.

Participants were then offered five different arguments that connected issues (in different variations of favoring and opposing). For each of these arguments, respondents were asked what impact the argument had on each of the three issues of abortion, death penalty, and war. For each, the options in Likert format were: (1) much more likely to favor; (2) somewhat more likely to favor; (3) no effect; (4) somewhat more likely to oppose; and (5) much more likely to oppose. Unsurprisingly, most people answered (3) – no effect – on each of the responses, inasmuch as people are not generally persuaded of anything by one paragraph on one occasion. Enough people did indicate a greater degree of favoring or opposing, however, to allow for meaningful results. For interpretation, any number above (3) indicates a tendency to move toward opposing, and any number below (3) indicates a tendency to move toward favoring.

The wording of the five arguments is given below. In all cases, the

wording was taken from advocates of the views in order to give the fairest presentation. The word in brackets is the label for the argument in the ensuing results and discussion.

Argument #1 – Consistent Life Ethic [Consistency]

The consistent life ethic is made up of peace movement people who oppose abortion and pro-lifers who oppose war and the death penalty. The idea is that being consistent in opposing the killing of human beings across the board is the right thing to do, and also that it makes a more persuasive case than opposition to just one of the issues. The statement of purpose for the group Consistent Life is: “We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today’s world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment, and euthanasia. We believe that these issues are linked under a ‘consistent ethic of life.’ We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.”

Argument #2 – Defending the Innocent [Defense]

The Death Penalty is the ultimate punishment for deliberately taking another *innocent* person’s life. I don’t care if it deters the crime or not. I care that the murderer pays the price. Wars, unfortunately, have to be fought because there are powerful and evil people out there in the world who do evil and horrible things to other *innocent* people. These people must be stopped and War is often the tool to stop them. Evil people often don’t sincerely participate in or care about diplomacy. Abortion, on the other hand, is the deliberate killing of an unborn *innocent* human being. My stand on all three issues is clearly one of protecting the innocent. It isn’t that complicated.

Argument #3 – Crime Prevention [Crime]

I believe abortion is wrong. However, I also believe it has been the most effective crime deterrent in our time, much more effective than the death penalty. Ever since *Roe vs. Wade*, for every one person executed under the death penalty, approximately 45,000 abortions take place in

America, a large percentage to poor single mothers most likely to bear criminals, stopping the criminals before they start. The Right often justifies the death penalty by appealing to its reduction of crime as a deterrent. Applied in the same way, could this argument “loosely” apply to abortion as well? So you’re on the jury, a statistical distribution has been suggested for the application of the death penalty in order to stop crime before it starts—am I talking about the statistical chance of a murderer killing again, or am I talking about the statistical chance of an unwanted (poor, inner-city) baby killing in the future? Does the death penalty work as a deterrent? Well, abortion did...and so does the death penalty when applied to lesser crimes than murder.

Argument #4 – Choice [Choice]

I found when I asked people who were pro-choice and opposed the death penalty and war how the positions were connected, they came up with the following ideas: the government and its flawed legal system should not interfere with life- and death-decisions; a concern for the societally disadvantaged, which includes war victims, those on death row, and women in poverty with crisis pregnancies; an anti-control attitude and disdain for punitiveness; and a concern for personal autonomy.

Argument #5 - Killing as Trauma [Trauma]

You may have heard of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a set of very severe mental symptoms people might get from being victimized by violence. More recently, the idea has gained support that not merely being a victim, but engaging in the act of killing someone could be a trauma that could cause PTSD symptoms. There is some evidence that killing in combat adds trauma on top of the combat itself. There is also evidence that people who carry out executions and people who perform abortions show signs of some of these severe post-trauma symptoms.

Because this is the first known study that takes this approach, results are exploratory. There are too many comparisons proposed to allow for

proper significance testing based on specific hypotheses, with patterns of answers being the results of interest. There is a prediction that respondents will rate the Consistency argument and the Trauma argument as leading toward opposition on abortion, death penalty, and war more than the Defense, Crime, and Choice arguments. There is also a prediction that the pattern of distribution with the liberal/conservative continuum will replicate previous literature.

RESULTS

Description of Respondents

The sample size was 352. There were 161 female and 162 male with the remainder not indicating, and thus roughly an even gender split. Ages ranged from 11-99, with a mean of 48.8 and standard deviation of 16.85. Respondents varied well on politics and religion, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 352)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Politics		
Democrat	96	27.3
Republican	67	19.0
Independent	72	20.5
Third-Party	15	4.3
Religion		
Catholic	141	40.1
Protestant and Other Christian	85	24.1
Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Other	30	8.6
Undefined Spirituality	33	9.4
Atheist/Agnostic/Don't Think	25	7.1

Note: the percentages do not add up to 100% because not all respondents answered the questions.

Impact of Arguments

The primary research questions are whether people who are not already persuaded rate the Consistency and/or Trauma arguments as moving them toward more opposition. Using the same set of four groups as in previous literature—favoring both, opposing both, and both ways of favoring one while opposing the other—the means of those who favor the death penalty are reported for their impact on views of the death penalty, and the means of those who favor abortion availability are reported for their impact on views of abortion. Scores above (3) mean some motion toward opposing the practice, and scores below three mean some motion toward favoring it.

Table 2: Impact Scores on Death Penalty and Abortion for Groups that Favor Each

	<u>+dp / +ab</u> (n = 41) <u>M</u>	<u>+dp / - ab</u> (n = 68) <u>M</u>	<u>- dp / +ab</u> (n = 92) <u>M</u>
Death Penalty			
Consistency	2.98	3.16	
Defense	2.73	2.75	
Crime	2.81	2.88	
Choice	2.73	2.91	
Trauma	2.89	3.20	
Abortion			
Consistency			3.21
Defense			3.03
Crime			3.09
Choice			2.88
Trauma			3.27

Note. + means favoring; - means opposing; dp is death penalty position; ab is abortion position.

The pattern is clear: those who favor both abortion availability and the death penalty are unimpressed with the anti-execution arguments, and the move toward opposition on abortion with the anti-abortion arguments is slight. The pro-life group that favors the death penalty, however, shows a clear pattern of moving toward opposition to the death penalty with the Consistency and Trauma arguments only, while the pro-choice group that opposes the death penalty shows a similar pattern. In short, the “seamless shroud” position is less impressed with either the consistent life ethic or the idea that killing is traumatic to those who do it. Those who have a mixture of favoring and opposing rate both arguments as more likely to move them toward opposition on the issue where they currently favor the practice.

There is an unexpected finding here that is interesting, in that opposition to abortion is at its highest rating of all in the group that favors abortion availability as well as the death penalty using the Crime argument—despite that argument being a pro-abortion argument! The assertion that abortion of many children is a deterrent to later crime seems to be counter-productive with people who already favor abortion availability. Table 3 shows the results for abortion and war.

Table 3: Impact Scores on War and Abortion for Groups that Favor Each

	<u>+war / +ab</u> (n = 28) <u>M</u>	<u>+war / - ab</u> (n = 96) <u>M</u>	<u>- war / +ab</u> (n = 105) <u>M</u>
War			
Consistency	2.93	3.30	
Defense	2.78	2.74	
Crime	2.80	3.07	
Choice	2.84	3.09	
Trauma	3.04	3.24	
Abortion			
Consistency	3.18		3.17
Defense	3.07		3.03
Crime	3.24		3.13

Choice	2.92	2.90
Trauma	3.04	3.24

Note. + means favoring; - means opposing; war is war position; ab is abortion position.

The pattern here is very similar; the Crime argument is still counter-productive on abortion. Otherwise, as with the death penalty, the members of the group that favor both are generally unimpressed with anti-war arguments on war while the proliferers who favor the Iraq war at some level do move more clearly toward opposition with both the Consistency and Trauma arguments. The same pattern almost applies on abortion, except here, the group that favors the war at some level is about as likely as the group that opposes it to move toward opposition to abortion with the Consistency argument; they are less impressed with the Trauma argument.

To summarize overall, then, the “consistent life ethic” and “trauma of killing” tend to get ratings moving toward opposition among those who favor one issue and oppose the other, and are not as likely to do so among those that favor both. The Defense and Choice arguments are weak among those who do not already agree with their positions. The Crime argument, as worded here, seems to be counter-productive for abortion availability even among those who already favor such availability.

Liberal-Conservative Spectrum

The question was whether the self-ratings on a liberal/conservative continuum replicate previous findings.¹¹ As before, people were divided into four groups on the basis of their position on abortion and the death penalty, with those who favored both, those who opposed both, and the two ways of favoring one and opposing the other. The five-point spectrum had ratings of (1) as radical, (2) as liberal, (3) as moderate, (4)

¹¹ See MacNair (2008).

as conservative, and (5) as ultra-conservative; those who answered “other” were not counted for purposes of deriving a mean score for each group, since they are not on the continuum.

The group of people who favored the death penalty and opposed abortion did, as would be suggested by previous literature,¹² have the highest mean score, namely, 3.83, toward the more conservative; only 2 out of 70 self-designated as liberal, with 17 as moderate and 41 as either conservative or ultra-conservative. Indeed, in the “ultra-conservative” category, 11 out of 12 who selected this option were in this group. The one remaining ultra-conservative was in the group that opposed both the death penalty and abortion.

The group that was mixed in the opposite direction, by opposing the death penalty and favoring abortion availability, also replicated previous results by accounting themselves more toward the liberal side of the spectrum, having the lowest mean score of the four groups, 2.13. Only two of them listed themselves as conservative, with 40 out of 96 as liberal, 16 as radical, and 22 as moderate. The difference between these two groups on their liberal-conservative continuum scores was highly significant according to a t-test, $p < .001$.

Also as before, the two groups that favored both or opposed both had mean scores in the middle—opponents with 2.66, proponents with 2.86. Their distributions were also more spread out among the categories. The difference between the two was not at all significant, $p = .384$.

Also, as before, the group that opposed both had about a quarter (25.2%) who opted out by selecting the “other” category, while the other three groups ranged from 14.3 to 16.7% who did so. Put another way, almost half (46.8%) of those who selected the “other” category were in the group that opposed both abortion and the death penalty. People who do not fit the popular media’s understanding of the left/right dichotomy are more likely than others to opt out of it entirely.

¹² See Cook (2008) and MacNair (2008).

DISCUSSION

It has been a common complaint that the consistent life ethic weakens the case against its constituent issues by combining them together. Proponents in both the pro-life and the peace movements have accused the consistent life ethic philosophy of being a way of watering down their issues. Proponents of the ethic have responded that, to the contrary, across-the-board consistency strengthens the advocacy of all issues. This exploratory study provides some empirical support for that contention, in that immediate cross-sectional ratings showed a tendency toward more opposition to abortion and war when the concept is presented in a one-paragraph format.

This was not a comparison of arguments on one issue—say, a set of arguments against abortion—to ascertain which among them might be the most effective. That would have been an entirely different study, one that considered what are the most and least effective arguments for making a specific case.

That would also be a very difficult thing to ascertain, inasmuch as people are rarely convinced on any point on the basis of a one-paragraph description. The wording of any one paragraph can also have an inordinate amount of influence separate from the point actually being made. Variations in how friendly or aggressive, how polite or how dogmatic the presentation of the point is can have an influence such that different ratings would have occurred had the same point been made in a different manner. Such variations may have had an influence in this instance.

The severe limitations of a one-paragraph description on just one occasion have all the normal problems of cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal research. Rating an impact as being “more likely” to favor or oppose also falls far short of actually being convincing, as would be expected for such a skimpy description of the argument. After all, most people did answer “no effect” on each of the questions. Long-term persuasiveness is an entirely different question, reserved for a study that could at the least be done over the course of at least weeks or months.

The Crime argument is a variation of one that created quite a stir in

academia and the popular media, a study arguing that the legalization of abortion was responsible for the contemporary drop in crime rates.¹³ Pro-lifers naturally had many counter-arguments to make to the thesis itself, but the current study suggests the possibility that the argument was actually counter-productive. People who favor abortion availability (especially those who also favored the death penalty) seemed to have a strong reaction, giving one of the highest scores of moving toward opposition to abortion as was present among those whose position was to favor its availability.

As for the nature of Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress as an argument against the relevant forms of violence, to most people this will be something of a new idea. Unlike the consistent life ethic, there has been no major public forum in which this argument is frequently made, nor any organization dedicated to educating about this point specifically. Only as it has been subsumed under the consistent life ethic has it gained much by way of public advocacy; most of the work on it has remained confined to scholarly circles. Therefore, it is valuable to have this empirical evidence that many people who favor a practice rate their likelihood of opposing that practice to be greater upon consideration that it may be traumatizing to those who must carry it out.

Yet among the most interesting of the findings is that the impact of moving toward opposition varies not by positions on solitary issues, but on how the positions combine. People who favor both practices tend not to be impressed with the arguments of the consistent life ethic or of killing as trauma, while people who favor one and oppose the other do tend to be more impressed with both those arguments. In the case of the consistency argument, this makes sense in that those who favor both forms of violence are practicing a different form of consistency, one that believes that violence is a legitimate and effective way to solve problems. It is when a person has been convinced against one form of

¹³ John J. Donahue & Steven D. Levitt, "The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 116/2 (2001): 379-420.

violent practice that the case for consistency against other forms of violence has greater impact. Similarly, those who have considered violence as problematic in some way and are therefore amenable to the argument that those practicing that violence are traumatized by doing so are more likely to apply that insight to other practices for which they had not previously had opposition. This finding may have practical applicability in terms of prioritizing resources for those wishing to have maximum societal impact.

Yet another limitation of this study is that it considered only three major issues. In Edith Bogue's work from the General Social Surveys, she reflected on a wide variety of life-and-death issues. Though displeased with how few people were consistently opposed to death-causing practices as a whole, she also found few that were in favor of all such practices across the board, once a larger number of issues were taken into account. Perhaps either the Consistency argument or the Trauma argument will have more impact if it can find the issue upon which a specific person or group does oppose violence as a problem-solving technique, rather than selecting out a specific two or three issues on which they do not.

Persuasiveness and stable changes in attitudes and behavior will always require far more than one paragraph of argument can allow for. The literature on persuasion is quite rich, since there are several for-profit groups as well as social issue advocacy groups that take a keen interest in it. Nevertheless, this study does provide evidence for the contention that the two arguments of the consistent life ethic and of killing as being traumatic to those who do it are can be effective with some individuals and groups, particularly those who do already have a concern against at least some form of violence.