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**From Jezebel to Snow White:  
The shifting representations of women in Canadian anti-abortion discourse**

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“We are being asked to be accomplices in this medieval act of barbarism, forcing our doctors and nurses to commit murder... so a handful of cheap, third-rate tramps (and also some good women) can escape the consequences of their actions.”

~Joe Borowski, Canada, 1977 (Morton, 1992: 142)

“What does it say about the college coed Susan Fluke who goes before a congressional committee and essentially says that she must be paid to have sex, what does that make her? It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute. She wants to be paid to have sex....So Miss Fluke, and the rest of you Feminazis, here’s the deal. If we are going to pay for your contraceptives, and thus pay for you to have sex. We want something for it. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch.”

~Rush Limbaugh, US, Feb 29 and Mar 1, 2012

“Abortion providers are the wicked witch in a fairy tale, holding a bright, shiny apple... In short, [abortion] is a malicious lie, pushed at the cost of babies' lives and women's health—but it's attractive nonetheless, all in an anxious moment.”

~ProWomanProLife, Canada, 2009 (PWPL April, 2009)

From a very young age, we’re taught some fairly paradoxical lessons about the importance of words. On one hand, we’re told to mind our p’s and q’s, not to yell at our brothers and sisters, to say thank you. But more often than not, we’re told that words don’t really matter. We’re instructed that we shouldn’t be scared by stories – they’re just make-believe, they’re just in our heads – even though every child knows that stories can feel more real and bubble away in the stomach much longer than everyday experiences. We’re encouraged to repeat, time and time again, that only sticks and stones can break our bones – even though every kid knows that it’s often easier to cast a broken bone than fix the damage words sometimes do. Is it any wonder then, that many of the old colloquialisms of adulthood take this basic denial of the importance of words and supplement it with a healthy dose of cynicism – telling us that talk is cheap, that it isn’t worth putting much value on words, and that you’re somehow overly sensitive or weak if you get too riled up over the words people use or the ‘jokes’ they tell.

But words do matter. And they matter politically. For the ancient Greeks, the very essence of politics was to speak. Many of them understood – as do contemporary thinkers such as Judith Butler, George Lakoff, Catharine MacKinnon, Michel Foucault and Sherene Razack – that the ways in which we talk have significant impacts on the subjectivities, identities and values we interiorize and perform everywhere from the the-personal-is-the-political micro register to the macro level of formal electoral politics. We therefore believe that understanding the specific rhetorical strategies and discursive patterns surrounding certain political issues – and the ways these vary over time and across location – is a crucial task for engaged, critical feminist thought and praxis. Because the stories a society tells – and the way they represent different social practices – are often the soil from which specific political policies and legal decision grow.

In this article we take words seriously by investigating the narrative structure of contemporary anti-abortion political discourse. We believe that it matters a great deal whether anti-abortion discourse represents women seeking an abortion (or contraception) as third-rate tramps, jezebels and sluts who are authors of their

own sin – or whether they present them as innocent Snow Whites, tempted by the wicked witches of the ‘abortion industry’. Social critics with a strong background in feminist literary analysis would, of course, rightly point out that both stories might be viewed as equally paternalistic and patriarchal. But this should not obscure another reality – that whatever their similarities at one level, these two narratives are likely to be interpreted very differently by, and have very different effects on, the general voting public.

In some ways, the assertion that we should investigate the stories told by contemporary anti-abortion discourse would seem to require little justification. During the 2012 Republican presidential primary debate, abortion and reproductive rights have, once again, become a defining theme in US political discourse. Whether in the form of Rush Limbaugh’s astoundingly misogynist attack on Sandra Fluke or Rick Santorum’s rise as the central conservative contender to Romney (Santorum’s stance is that abortion should not be permitted even in the case of rape), an increasingly polemical and vociferous version of American anti-abortion discourse seems to be more and more prevalent in even ‘mainstream’ political debate. This talk, moreover, has been accompanied by a lot of walk. With more than 29 of 50 governors being considered staunchly anti-abortion (New York Times Jan 21, 2011), the anti-abortion movement is gaining much political influence throughout the U.S – evidenced by the fact that in only the first eight months of 2011, sixty-one anti-abortion laws were enacted, nearly triple the number in all of 2010, and more than double the previous record of 28 set in 1997 (New York Times Sept 24, 2011). Capturing the reigning sentiment in many states, Michael Gonidakis (Executive Director of Ohio Right to Life) boasted “we’ve got a pro-life governor and a pro-life speaker. Our government is now pro-life from top to bottom” (New York Times, Jan 21 2011).

In this article, however, we are not primarily concerned with the US case (although the US forms an important backdrop and we believe that the case we examine offers insights into the possible future of American anti-abortion discourse). Rather, the primary focus is the nature of anti-abortion discourse in Canada. As usual, however, the US context is a crucial one for Canadian politics. Academic examinations of the anti-abortion movement in Canada have, for example, tended to accept the American portrait of the anti-abortion movement as highly visible, overtly religious, focused on legislative change, fetal-centric in their arguments and largely ‘anti-woman’ in their tone - and have found evidence of this in the anti-abortion activists of the 1970s and 1980s in Canada (see, for example, Cuneo, 1985; Brodie, Gavigan and Jenson 1992; Dubinsky, 1985). Since this type of public anti-abortion activism has become much less evident in Canada since the 1988 Supreme Court of Canada decision struck down the existing laws regulating abortion, the comparative context has encouraged most observers to assume that Canada is a relative calm harbor - devoid of the hurricane of highly polarizing rhetorical discourse in the US. The fact that even Canada’s current conservative Prime Minister stated last year that his government would never support legislation restricting abortion has been taken by many as further proof that neither the political discourse or the policies around abortion in Canada are worthy of much attention (CBC News April 21, 2011; Sept 28, 2011).

This lack of interest is mirrored by the academic literature. There have been virtually no books published on abortion politics in Canada in the last 15 years. In its more than 40 years of publishing, the flagship journal of the Canadian Political Science Association (the *CJPS*) has published only one research article with the word ‘abortion’ in its title or keywords and no articles analyzing the political discourse surrounding the abortion debate. Given the continued salience of abortion politics in the US, it is perhaps even more surprisingly that in its more than 100 year history, the American Political Science Association’s flagship journal (the *APSR*) has never published an article with abortion in its title or keywords. In its 35 year existence, even *Signs* has only published four articles with the word ‘abortion’ in its title (Glimartin and White, 2011; Fuszara, 1991; Lake, 1986; Hayler, 1979). Of these four, none offer an up to date examinations of anti-abortion discourse in North America.

Is this relative silence justified? We believe that it is not. In fact, our quantitative and qualitative study of contemporary anti-abortion discourse in Canada reveals that rather than surrendering the fight, resigning themselves to the status quo, or (conversely) employing the hyper-partisan and sensationalist language and tactics of their American anti-abortion allies, the Canadian anti-abortion movement has devoted itself to developing new rhetorical techniques that, although less aggressive and obvious than those used by American (and earlier generations of Canadian) activists, are no less strategic and sophisticated. In fact, we have found

that the anti-abortion movement in Canada has developed a very different discourse – one that avoids employing an ‘anti-woman’ tone and instead tries to frame itself as pro-woman and even pro-choice.

We believe that mapping these new developments is an important task in itself, since this will bring to light significant and largely overlooked changes in the discursive politics of abortion policy that we believe may ultimately play an important role in reframing future debates and possibly shaping future policy in Canada. Moreover, we believe that the Canadian case might hold some important insights for the US. For the Canadian strategy is one that the US anti-abortion movement might increasingly follow in the coming years. Especially if, as we believe, it demonstrates broader ideological patterns at work in contemporary political discourse – for example, the ways that contemporary ‘conservative’ political discourse is increasingly employing explicit arguments, principles, and narratives that have traditionally been associated with progressive feminist, pro-women and pro-choice movements.

There are, of course, many different types of discursive strategies of persuasion. Elsewhere, we have shown that the Canadian anti-abortion movement is increasingly downplaying traditional ‘fetal-centric’ arguments that position the woman as a criminal and are instead implementing new explicit arguments into its larger discourse that draw on (but obviously redefine) familiar tropes of progressive feminist positions (article under review). But explicit argumentation is only one mode of persuasion. In fact, often it is the more implicit forms of discursive persuasion (narratives, stereotypes, subtle ad hominem attacks, dogwhistling, etc) that are the most effective – precisely because they influence the audience in a way that does not always register on the level of consciousness (Westen 2007). Given space constraints, in this article our objective is to demonstrate how the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion movement is employing several of these more implicit modes of rhetorical persuasion (in particular, the use of ‘metaphorical tone’ and villain-victim-hero narratives) to develop an alternative anti-abortion discourse that is departs substantially from both the historical Canadian, and the dominant contemporary US, versions.

We begin this article by briefly outlining our general theoretical and methodological approach. In section 2, we examine in detail the metaphorical tone of contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse before turning, in section 3, to the dominant narratives this discourse employs. We conclude the article in section 4 by offering some preliminary thoughts about the implications our analysis offers for feminist responses to this type of anti-abortion discourse.

## **1. Methodology**

At its most general level, our analysis starts from the belief, shared by social theorists as disparate as Aristotle, Judith Butler, Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, Catharine MacKinnon, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, Chandra Mohanty and William Connolly, that public, political discourse holds the ability to both mould political subjectivities and influence political behavior. In this sense, discursive representations (re)produce (and are reproduced by) subjectivity. Language is not a neutral medium that is merely used and received by the subject. Rather, it is a medium that both reflects current distributions of power and holds the ability to re-codify power relations, identity, and behaviors. In light of the importance of the juridical sphere for abortion politics, it is relevant that a variety of prominent legal theorists argue that these long-term patterns of discourse can shape the political and common sense context so strongly that it can even have an important influence on judicial decisions (Dworkin 1986, 1996; Ackerman, 1991; Sunstein, 1993). Moreover, it is not simply esoteric academic theorists who hold this perspective. For some of the most influential political and communications advisors in North American politics (for example Lee Atwater, Frank Luntz, Drew Westen) also believe that broad philosophical, narrative and other rhetorical shifts in public discourse about certain issues can have significant political and legal consequences.

As mentioned above, in a previous study we found that the explicit strategies of argumentation of contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse have changed dramatically from that of the previous generation (in Canada) as well as that of the dominant contemporary strain in the US. In this study, our aim was to determine whether a similar shift has also taken place in the implicit modes of persuasion employed. There are, of course, many types of ‘implicit’ modes of rhetorical persuasion - ranging from emotive metaphorical toning; to narrativization; to priming and mobilizing network associations; to subtly referencing and resonating with certain culturally embedded values. Given space constraints, in this article we will focus on two of the main

types: first, the ‘metaphorical tone’ of the overall discourse, and second, the specific dominant narratives employed and the main representations of women embodied by these narratives.

What do we mean by ‘metaphorical tone’ and dominant narratives? We will discuss each of these terms in detail in sections 2 and 3 respectively. Here, however, we want to briefly outline our discursive dataset and what tools we used to analyze it.

Obviously, the findings of any discourse analysis are only as strong as the representativeness of the raw discourse analyzed. As such, for this study we created a wide and deep discursive data set, drawn from three distinct ‘sites’ of political discourse that together capture a diverse cross-section of the most influential contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse. The first site is the Canadian blog ProWomanProLife (PWPL) – a blog composed of nine Canadian women from “different walks of life (medicine, psychology, actuarial science, journalism, and public policy), different religions (or no religion at all), have never been vocal or activist on abortion before, do not represent any larger group, and do not currently receive funding from any larger group” and who thus represent “a spectrum of nuanced pro-woman and pro-life views” (PWPL, Dec 14, 2007). Why a blog? Because blogging is both an increasingly influential mode of activist communication and a mode that allows individuals to express their views without an overlaying organizational ‘spin’. Why PWPL? Because it is both an important site of discourse itself and because it is a reliably representative exemplar of influential anti-abortion discourse. It is by far the most visible anti-abortion blog in Canada (it won fifth place in the general politics category at the 2009 Canadian Blog Awards); it is regularly referenced in the mainstream media; it has large set of blog entries (as of December 2010, it held over 2500 entries) and its founder is also the manager of research and communications at the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada (Canada’s pre-eminent socially conservative think tank, funded by Focus on the Family Canada). Our data set therefore includes all abortion-related blog entries on this site from December 2007 to December 2010.

The second site of discourse consists of the websites of 4 of the major anti-abortion organizations in Canada. Organizational discourse is an important site of analysis since its discourse is officially vetted by organizations that are the main actors managing coordinated anti-abortion organizing and campaigning in Canada – and their websites are increasingly their primary means of communication with the public. Consequently we examined the public websites of four of the most influential anti-abortion organizations across English speaking Canada (Alliance for Life Ontario, Life Canada, Toronto-Right-to-Life and Signal Hill). The entirety of each of these anti-abortion websites (as of May 2010) was analyzed, including mission statements, advertising campaigns, video postings, newsletters, press releases and links provided for women to acquire more information on unplanned pregnancies.

Finally, if the blogs and organizational websites allowed us to sample the discourse of both individuals and civil society organizations, the third site of discourse analyzed was the overtly political realm. Here we examined the anti-abortion discourse of four outspoken anti-abortion Members of Parliament (MPs) – Maurice Vellacott, Rod Bruinooge, Ken Epp and Paul Szabo – as this group embodies significant geographical spread (they represent ridings in Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Mississauga respectively); because they represent two of the three main federal political parties (the Conservatives and Liberals); and because all four MPs have consistently been outspoken on this issue. As with the blogs, we analyzed all of their abortion related discourse (including material posted on their website) between December 2007 and December 2010.

In total, this left us with 401 unique discursive artifacts, in a variety of media, formats and lengths. How did we analyze these cases? We will discuss the particularities of the analysis in the following two sections. In general, however, our interpretive approach follows critical discourse analysis theorists such as Fairclough (Fairclough 2001), and Wodak and Meyer (Wodak and Meyer 2009) who suggest that close qualitative interpretations of well chosen samples of relevant discourses allow the researcher to identify a variety of thematic and rhetorical patterns that are often impossible to identify through automated content analysis. However, we also appreciate the value that quantitative analysis can provide. For although it cannot replace qualitative methods, quantitatively measuring the frequency of occurrence of various rhetorical strategies (as well as other relationships between them) can help establish the relative importance of these strategies to a discourse overall. In this study we therefore employed a rigorous ‘mixed method’ approach that allowed us to undertake a detailed and manual qualitative interpretation and coding of every case while also permitting us to quantitatively track the overall patterns revealed by our qualitative interpretations. In our study, we used the

software QDA Miner to facilitate this process and in the end, all 401 cases were analytically dissected and coded according to a variety of questions and categories (developed by us as a result of a prior round of preliminary analysis) designed to track the rhetorical strategies we were most interested in investigating. For the purpose of this article, most important is the fact that we analyzed every case both for its metaphorical tone (discussed in section 2) and for the various narrative representations (to be discussed in section 3). As such, it is to these we now turn.

## **2. Metaphorical Tone: Strict Father or Nurturant Parent?**

George Lakoff is a cognitive scientist whose work over the last decade and a half has focused largely on unpacking the dominant – but often implicit – metaphors that he believes structure much of our everyday political discourse (Lakoff 2009, 2002, 1990; Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). According to Lakoff's theory, our political 'worldviews' are largely shaped by a set of metaphors that determine how we understand and evaluate political options. At the heart of Lakoff's perspective is the contention that there are two ideal-type ur-metaphors (the Strict Father and the Nurturant Parent) whose characteristics Lakoff believes to help explain the coherence of, and difference between, conservative and liberal political mindsets.

In many ways, the core of the Strict Father metaphorical mindset is its championing of a punitive sensibility. According to Lakoff, this mindset views the world as a place where individuals need strict rules, rewards and punishment to ensure that there are sufficient incentives for people to cultivate self-discipline, self-reliance and a deep respect for legitimate authority (often as outlined in an authoritative religious tradition or text) (Lakoff 2002, 66). In this context, the idea of 'character' and 'moral strength' are given extremely high value and individuals who fail to make choices in line with this value framework are seen to be entirely responsible for their actions. Strong authority and consistent and often harsh punishment is thus seen as both morally sanctioned and instrumentally necessary. Lakoff further suggests that the Strict Father perspective also tends to highly value 'traditional' gender roles as the 'father knows best' attitude mirrors the larger belief in the importance of authority.

Lakoff argues that the strict father mentality almost always leads to a very strong stand against abortion (viewing it both as murder and as unnatural/undermining traditional gender roles). Perhaps most importantly for our project, the strict father worldview tends to 'blame' women seeking an abortion as having brought it on themselves and usually portrays these women according to one of two stereotypes. One is the irresponsible and promiscuous stereotype – where the woman is viewed to have taken actions which have demonstrated "a moral weakness, a lack of self-discipline, a form of immoral behavior" and is thus portrayed someone who "deserves punishment" because "she has to be responsible for the consequences of her actions" (Lakoff 2002, 267). The second stereotype is that of the selfish career woman who decides that her interest in a career is more important than her 'child' – and thus needs to be coerced by legislation to make the morally sanctioned traditional choice. (Lakoff 2002, 268).

In contrast, Lakoff suggests that the Nurturant Parent mentality assumes that individuals develop best by positively interacting with their community and being nurtured. "Support and protection are part of nurturance", and parents require strength, courage and patience to create the open, two-way and mutually respectful communication" that is the environment that allows for healthy self-exploration and self-growth. (Lakoff 2002, 108-9) Crucially, the nurturant parent model not only assumes that individuals will require some (sometime significant) support from the larger community and believes that sometimes individuals will, through no real fault of their own, find themselves in situations or make choices that are not ideal, but for which they should not be harshly punished. Rather, in these situations, the nurturant parent model believes that society and other individuals should respond with "maximal empathy" and seek to help those individuals (Lakoff 2002, 112). Lakoff therefore argues that the nurturant parent model almost always leads to support for abortion. On the nurturant parent view, not only are women mature individuals with a right to make choices on the basis of their own moral and political views. It is also the case that sometimes people make choices whose consequences are not what they wanted - and punishing those people or making them 'pay' a price for their actions doesn't make things better for anyone.

We find Lakoff's approach very useful. His rendition of the strict father worldview, does describe the traditional tone of anti-abortion discourse in the US. However, there are several slight qualifications and

revisions we believe are required for his framework to be helpful in this study. First, we are not convinced by some of Lakoff's more ambitious claims about how accurate his findings are across different cultural and temporal contexts, nor do we subscribe to his beliefs that some of these metaphors are hard wired into the brain. Second, we find the gendered component of his analysis to be surprisingly lacking (despite the obviously gendered nature of strict father vs nurturant 'parent' dichotomy – where the nurturant parent clearly plays on the stereotypical mother role, he spends little energy exploring the implications of this and in fact de-genders it by describing that position as the nurturant 'parent'). Third, we prefer to talk about the 'strict father/nurturant parent' aggregates he describes more as a 'metaphorical tone' (which we view as the overall 'tone' or 'sensitivity' of a political mindset as evidenced and communicated by the metaphors, analogies, and emotive language it employs) rather than an ur-metaphor per se. Finally, in the context of our study, we do not want to use the 'strict father/nurturant parent' tones as a tool to distinguish 'conservatives' from 'liberals'. For although Lakoff tends to suggest that a strict father tone is the only one that leads to an anti-abortion position, we believe otherwise. We test how far the traditional strict father metaphorical tone is present in contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse. If a 'strict father' tone is the dominant metaphorical tone in contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse, this will show that that Canadian discourse continues to employ at least one important rhetorical strategy in ways that are very similar to the dominant US (and older generation of Canadian) model. In contrast, if the Strict Father tone is not strongly present, it will suggest that something quite different is taking place in Canada.

With these provisos in place, we analyzed and coded each of the 401 cases to determine whether a metaphorical tone existed, and if it did, whether it fell into the strict father or nurturant parent version.

So what did we find? Unsurprisingly, we did find evidence of an enduring strict father tone in contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse. The *Toronto Right to Life* website, for example, explicitly takes on this tone stating that abortion makes "pre-marital sex feasible by apparently taking the possibility of consequences out of sex and taking responsibility with it" (Toronto Right to Life, 2004). Echoing the same sentiment blogger Tanya Zaleski writes, "Don't want lung cancer? Quit smoking. Don't want to be obese? Eat sensibly and exercise. Don't want to be pregnant? ... refrain from having sex outside a committed relationship!" (PWPL May 20, 2008). PWPL blogger Brigitte Pellerin writes, "I wish we'd stop lying to ourselves. Late-term abortions do happen, and they shouldn't. At least not as 'lifestyle' reasons" (PWPL March 18, 2008). Veronique Bergeron echoes her colleague's sentiments when discussing the case of Julie, a pro-choice blogger who when faced with a pessimistic pre-natal diagnosis, decided to end their pregnancy. In response to Julie's admission that it was a difficult decision Bergeron blogs, "No Kidding... That feeling of distress, could it possibly be your conscience telling you that terminating a disabled life was likely a selfish decision based on your needs rather than compassion for the child?" (PWPL Feb 23, 2008).

All these examples embody the strict father demand that individuals 'take responsibility' for their actions and the sense that making someone live with a consequence they do not want is morally and politically justified. The degree to which these comments employ the two stereotypes Lakoff identified (promiscuous girl/selfish career woman) is also notable. Moreover, these exemplars are not complete outliers. In fact, 17.2% of the 401 cases analyzed embodied elements of a strict father tone (see appendix A). As such, it is clear that this tone still exists in contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse to some degree.

However, this is far from the whole story. 17.2% is a relatively small percentage and it means that almost 83% of cases did not embody a strict father tone. This is a ratio that would almost certainly be reversed were we to do a similar study of American anti-abortion discourse. Second, as we will discuss in more detail in the narrative section, the 'target' of this strict father gaze has shifted significantly. For a closer analysis revealed that in only 6.5% of cases was the strict father tone directed at the pregnant women considering an abortion. Which in turn suggests that nearly 94% of cases did not target the pregnant women with a strict father tone. Finally, in what was perhaps the most surprising part of our analysis (especially given Lakoff's assumption that nurturant parent mindset = pro choice position and vice versa) we found that 32.6% of all cases actually embodied a nurturant parent tone despite being anti-abortion in their position. In other words, far from being a logical impossibility (as Lakoff suggests), the nurturant parent tone is almost twice as dominant in Canadian anti-abortion discourse as is the strict father tone – and more than 5 times more frequent if we compare it to the percentage of cases with a strict father tone directed specifically at pregnant women. This,

then, suggests that contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse is very different than that of the previous generation in Canada, or the contemporary movement in the US.

How is this possible? What does an anti-abortion position defined by a nurturant parent tone look like? We explore this in the following section by unpacking the dominant narrative structures of contemporary anti-abortion discourse in Canada.

### **3. From Jezebel to Snow White: narratives in action**

There are many different ways to understand narratives and their importance. At a general level, we follow Fiske when he suggests that studying narratives allows us to “understand how people make sense of the world” (Fiske 1982, 115). For narratives are one of the primary ways (and often a more influential way than processes of conscious debate or evaluation) that we humans make sense of our experiences and preferences. There are, of course, many different methods and angles from which to investigate narratives. Since we are interested in tracing dominant narratives and the ways that ‘most people’ would tend to interpret and interiorize these narratives (rather than, for example, exploring the multiple and often conflicting interpretive possibilities that every text embodies), for the purposes of this project we sought to develop a straightforward approach designed to identify the ways in which anti-abortion discourses reproduce and resonate with the typical (indeed often stereotypical and archetypal) plots and character representations of the deeply historically and culturally embedded narratives that define our social and political context.

Here the work of Drew Westen is helpful. A political psychologist who has spent his career examining the psychological effects of various communication practices, Westen argues that political discourse is often framed by a “narrative” or “story” – and that this narrative frame almost always encourages the audience to accept a certain worldview, replete with a series of principles, preferences and beliefs. In Westen’s view, a politically relevant narrative is “a coherent story [that] has... a protagonist, a problem that sets up what will be the central plot or story line, obstacles that stand in the way, often a clash between the protagonists trying to solve the problem and those who stand in their way or fail to help, and a denouement, in which the problem is ultimately resolved” (Westen 2007, 146). For Westen, the reason narratives are so politically relevant is because they almost always include implicit lessons we can sense, even if we don’t realize it. In Westen’s words, “most stories - and all that try to teach a lesson, as political stories do - have a moral. Many stories are complex with subplots and submorals. But in general, they follow a similar and recognizable structure that gives them their rhetorical power” (Westen 2007, 146).

This last point is a crucial one. For as Westen (and many literary theorists before him) notes, the power of many narratives comes from the fact that they reproduce predictable plots and often rely on immediately recognizable stock characters that communicate the basic moral lesson to the audience almost instantaneously. It is thus unsurprising that most political narratives are structurally similar to a typical Hollywood blockbusters or childhood fairytales. The story generally revolves around three main characters: the victim who needs to be rescued, the hero who rescues the victim, and the villain who harms the victim and stands in the way of the hero. Given its prevalence, this structure is intuitively recognizable to anyone raised in Western culture – as is the fact that the hero usually represents what the political discourse wants to promote; that the villain represents what the discourse *cannot* accept; and that the victim is the device that gives nobility, honour, emotional resonance and moral worth to the quest

A political narrative thus need not have an explicit moral outlined at the end. Rather it is often simply through the presentation of the characters and the accompanying plot of the narrative that the discourse’s implicit argumentation is made. Since we have seen these structures and stock characters so many times, we can anticipate and recognize the implicit lesson in a story even if we only hear or see a fragment of the plot. In fact, we can often intuit the moral arc from even just a brief view of one or two of the main characters. For the very ‘role’ they are assigned already triggers our expectations about the plot to come – and thus leads us to the moral conclusion even if the plot itself is never outlined. In other words, social values are cultivated not only both through the unfolding of the plot of a narrative, but sometimes even more so through the moralized representations of characters. For the very nature of the stereotyped character roles hold within it the narrative plot that will then unfold as expected. In this sense, narratives and the stereotyped character roles they often employ are a primary implicit mechanism through which cultural-ideological systems are naturalized.

In this study, we sought to analyze the narrative structures of contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse by systematically examining the existence (or lack of) and substantive nature of key character roles and the moral lessons they contain. Concretely, this meant that we coded all 401 cases according to a variety of categories designed to track the existing narrative structure and character roles – including how often narrative-like structures were employed; how women were represented in general, what type of actors were ‘attacked’ as the enemy, and what type of actors were accorded the role of villain, victim and hero. Overall, we found that a very high percentage of all anti-abortion discourse employs narrative techniques – with more than 88% of all cases mobilizing at least one stereotypical character role that pointed to a moral lesson. What specifically were these roles and what lessons did they convey? We discuss each in detail below.

### 3.1 Villains

Canadian anti-abortion discourse in the 1970s and 1980s – as does much contemporary American discourse - represented the pregnant woman seeking an abortion as the primary villain in the abortion drama. In this narrative, women tended to be depicted as either irresponsible and sexually promiscuous Jezebels or as selfish uncaring career climbers – both of which ensure that the woman is cast as a villain, seeking to murder their “unborn children” who were “trapped inside her through no fault of his or her own” (PWPL July, 2008).

As was foreshadowed in section 2, contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse continues this pattern at moments. A woman’s decision to abort is still sometimes presented as selfish by anti-abortion advocates. In 6.5% of the anti-abortion discourse reviewed and coded, pregnant women were the targets of discursive attack (see appendix B). An excellent example of this can be found in PWPL founding member Andrea Mrozek’s response to another (pro-abortion) blogger who, despite having mixed emotions, ultimately defends her abortion decision. Mrozek writes,

If you claim to want to do the right thing, then just do it. Now I was raised by tough and courageous parents, who moved across the ocean to escape an immoral regime. Maybe that's why I find I'm often short on the sympathy file. If you claim to want to do the right thing, then just do it. Don't write long meandering tracts on how you wanted to but couldn't possibly be brave.... You know what I'm sorry about? (Because I'm not feeling sympathy for her right now, to be sure.) I'm sorry a person can be so spineless as to kill her child in favour of a Masters degree. And then claim ‘it was the right thing to do’ to the nodding affirmation of New York Times types (PWPL June 19, 2009).

In line with the Strict Father mode of anti-abortion discourse, an impatient Mrozek presents abortion as a selfish option and the woman as a “spineless” villain. Moreover, by equating a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy to her parents who “moved across the ocean to escape an immoral regime” the blog contains an element of self-righteousness that justifies a punitive orientation. It is an excellent example of the 6.5% of cases that do make recourse to this tone.

Mrozek’s post is instructive for another reason. For if we return to the quote, we can see that Mrozek not only attacks the pregnant woman. She simultaneously blames the “nodding affirmation of New York Times types”. Although the decision to abort a pregnancy is represented to be a selfish decision, Mrozek implies that its origins are societal. And therein lies the rub. For this seemingly subtle shift in anti-abortion blame is symbolic of a larger and profoundly important trend within contemporary anti-abortion discourse. Whereas previously women were presented as the primary villains within anti-abortion narratives, now pro-abortion society is being charged with contributing to a wider pro-abortion culture.

In fact anti-abortion rhetoric targets a pervasive, abstract-yet-very-real pro-abortion societal mentality as the villain responsible for the state of Canada’s ‘abortion regime’ in 26.7% of all cases – a rate that is almost four times the frequency of those that blame the pregnant woman (see appendix B). An example of this discourse is blogger Veronique Bergeron’s argument that as a society we are “not really pro-choice, we are pro-Me. Me support your choice to whatever as long as it doesn’t affect Me. That’s why Me supports abortion” (PWPL Nov 13, 2008). For despite on occasion presenting women as selfish villains, anti-abortion discourse is much more frequently targeting pro-abortion *society* as the ultimate villain that is causing women to choose abortion.



While this shift might seem minor, it is not. For shifting the object of blame and villainy alters the overall tone and moral lesson of the story dramatically. In this version, pregnant women are less and less the Jezebel who should be punished and more and more the Snow White who have been seduced by the shiny apples presented to them by a pro-abortion society. And this allows anti-abortion discourse to present abortion as a selfish choice while simultaneously avoiding a punitive tone toward women. This, in turn, allows anti-abortion discourse to create the appearance of embodying sympathy and compassion towards women considering abortion (as long as women can admit abortion is a mistake).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse is quite committed to finding a rich new cast of villainous characters to flush out the somewhat impersonal bogeyman of the pro-abortion society. Men, feminists and abortion providers have become increasingly prevalent stock villains. Let's begin with men. In contrast to traditional anti-abortion narratives, where men are discursively constructed as opponents to abortion, our analysis shows that in recent anti-abortion narratives, men are often blamed for the pro-abortion culture which is plaguing Canada. Notably, the most common anti-abortion representation of the male subject is that he coerces women into unwanted abortions. Anti-abortion activists argue: "women often state that it was their male partner who decided on the abortion" (LifeCanada, 2010). Moreover anti-abortion discourse argues that, "many women who have abortion feel coerced or pressured to do so by their boyfriends" (Alliance for Life Ontario, 2010a). Thus in 8.2% of the cases, coercive men were portrayed as the villains (see appendix B).

While this might not seem like a particularly high rate (only slightly higher than the percentage of cases that blame women), the impact of this discourse has been far-reaching in Canada as it has framed both pieces of anti-abortion related legislation introduced in the Canadian House of Parliament over the last several years. In fact, male coercers were identified explicitly as the primary targets of anti-abortion MP Rod Bruinooge's recent Bill C-510. This 2010 private member's bill, commonly referred to as "Roxanne's Law", sought to specifically criminalize any person who "coerces a female to procure or attempt to procure an abortion for herself" (Bruinooge Official Website, 2010a). Named after Roxanne Fernando, a woman who was killed by her abusive boyfriend for allegedly refusing an abortion, the bill's stated intention is to prevent other women from suffering the same fate as Ms. Fernando. Bill C-484, the "Unborn Victims Act", is yet another example of influential representations of the villainous man within anti-abortion discourse. When defending the proposed law, MP Ken Epp argued that, "the man should not have power over her [the woman's] body. Usually, not always, the attacker is a man. The man is saying to the victim, 'You want to have your baby? I am sorry, I'm going to prevent that'. We have several cases where the woman made that choice, was attacked, lost her child and the woman survived. Women are not getting justice" (Parliamentary Debates March 3, 2008). Neither bill passed. However, their characterization of abortion-related male violence has become a popular image within anti-abortion discourse. Consequently, it seems likely that this rhetorical strategy will only grow stronger in the coming years – especially as it resonates with and borrows from feminist positions against domestic violence.

Not surprisingly, another popular target of attack for anti-abortion discourse is feminism and the women that represent it. While pregnant women are no longer the main villains, women who defend or represent feminism are regarded as a crucial enemy to the anti-abortion cause. The anti-abortion characterization of Joyce Arthur, coordinator of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, is representative of how anti-abortion discourse treats the feminist villain. A letter posted on the Vellacott website, written by the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG), refers to Joyce Arthur as "gross[ly] ignoran[t] of the facts about medical abortions, especially in resource poor nations whose medical system is not equipped to deal with the known complications" – a characterization that combines insinuations of incompetence (gross ignorance) and callousness (not caring about the citizens of the developing world) (Vellacott Official Website March, 2010). This example is not an isolated case. In fact, 24.7% of the cases analyzed (see appendix B) characterized feminists as the villain – a rate that is well over triple the frequency of portrayals of the women seeking abortions as the villain.

Finally, it is important to note that the feminist villain often shares the stage with the abortion provider. For increasingly, the abortion provider is presented as the main enemy of the anti-abortion movement. The characterization of abortion providers as "evil" (PWPL April 20, 2009), "callous" (PWPL July 3, 2008), and "misogynistic" (PWPL July 3, 2008) has become common throughout anti-abortion discourse. In 24.1% of

cases (again, more than 3 times the number of cases where women were portrayed as the villain) abortion providers were characterized as the villain (see appendix B).

Targeting abortion providers as the villain is not new, of course. What's new is the main reason for *why* they are villainous. They are villains not because they are godless or anti-fetus. Rather, for the new anti-abortion discourse, the abortion provider is the ultimate villain because they are anti-woman. As one PWPL blogger puts it, "show me an abortionist and I'll show you a misogynist" (PWPL July 3, 2008). Why this link? Because according to the new discourse, abortion providers are the new, uncaring patriachs – biased, removed and uncompassionate, knowingly harming women by forcing them into unwanted abortions to further the abortion providers' own ideology. In a representative blog entitled "When you work at an abortion clinic", Mrozek epitomizes this representation of the depraved abortion provider by arguing that medical professionals who work at abortion clinics are "the furthest removed from being 'unbiased' that you could possibly be... They are encouraging women to be completely distant from their own child, from their own bodies in which the child is living so that they can experience a short-term relief from what could be a bigger, broader problem" (PWPL March 9, 2009).

The abortion provider as villain has one other advantage in Canada. For whereas in an abstractly pro-abortion society, men and feminists are stock villains, in Canada, there is an actual person who can be used as the concrete instantiation of the role of abortion provider. Dr. Henry Morgentaler, an internationally recognized abortion provider and Order of Canada recipient who was responsible for the campaign that led to abortion laws being struck down, is one of the most popular targets of attack for anti-abortion discourse. As a champion of abortion, he is a person who literally personifies the villainous role in the discourse - and thus takes the blame that needs to be directed away from the pregnant woman herself. As one PWPL blog writes "forced on knifepoint? No, I'm sure he [Morgentaler] didn't do that. But turn a blind eye to a woman's insecurity, indecision, anxiety and pain? We know for a fact he did" (PWPL July 11, 2008).

With this, the transformation is complete. The new villains – whether in the form of a nebulous pro-abortion society, men, feminists or abortion providers – are seen to "meet women in their personal deserts and offer a refreshing drink of cyanide. Only [they] call it Sprite and add ice and one of those fun umbrellas" (PWPL Sept 16, 2008). As a consequence, women considering an abortion are represented less and less as the conniving and blameworthy Jezebels of the past and more and more the Snow White victims of dark interests, poisoned apples and spiked Sprite.

### 3.2 The Victims of Abortion

Traditionally, of course, anti-abortion narratives have tended to represent the fetus as the primary victim. Throughout anti-abortion storytelling, the fetus is referred to as the "unborn", "the baby", or the "preborn" so as to stress its personhood. At the heart of the traditional anti-abortion argument is thus the fetus, cast in the role of an innocent and powerless victim so as to ground the moral lesson that "the fetus is deserving of our protection" (PWPL December 14, 2007). This characterization remains a very powerful trend in contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse. In fact, in 24.2% of all cases, the fetus was portrayed in the narrative role of victim (see appendix C).

What is notable, however, is that several other types of actors are also increasingly portrayed as innocent victims. As noted above, perhaps most obvious is the almost wholesale inclusion of pregnant women seeking abortions into the victim character position. Contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse achieves this by locating the locus of choice outside women seeking abortion and presenting them as victims of overt coercion and/or implicit peer/social pressure.

Consider the coercion plotline implied by the cast of villainous characters. Here, women are implicitly and explicitly represented as coerced, traumatized and forever affected victims of abortion. They are no longer autonomous agents making selfish choices, they are victims whose decisions are not their own. For example, organizational websites and bloggers suggest that between 51% (Alliance for Life Ontario, 2010b) and 64% (PWPL July 17, 2009) of women "do not feel free in making their [abortion] decision but felt pressured by others" (Alliance for Life Ontario, 2010b). Instead of blaming the woman for choosing abortion, this characterization circles back to identify the real villains: "statistics indicate that women who have had abortions were encouraged to do so by boyfriends or parents" (Alliance for Life Ontario, 2010b). The website for

Toronto-Right-to-Life similarly reinforces this narrative and increases its intensity by comparing this coercion to domestic abuse, suggesting that many women “are forced into an unwanted abortion by husbands, boyfriends, parents, or others. If the woman has repeatedly been a victim of domineering abuse, such an unwanted abortion may be perceived as the ultimate violation in a life characterized by abuse” (Toronto Right to Life, 2010). As we saw in the previous sub-section, whether the coercive villain is feminists, men/spouses or abortion providers, women are the victims.

Contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse has also sought to extend what counts as coercion-like influence so as to even more fully present women seeking abortions as victims. Activists routinely suggest that coercion is not always apparent and that this is why “abortion coercion” is habitually “under-reported”. According to one blog entry, “coercion can be subtle. If a woman is scared her mate will leave her unless she has an abortion, she’s being coerced. If a woman is made to feel guilty, as though she’s choosing an unborn baby over the man she’s currently with, she’s being coerced” (PWPL Dec 3, 2008). In sum, the new representation is a significant departure from Joe Borowski’s charge that “third rate tramps” were forcing “doctors and nurses” to commit “medieval acts of barbarism”. In fact, in today’s anti-abortion discourse, Borowski’s logic has been flipped on its head. It is now the doctors, nurses and spouses who are villains coercing vulnerable women into becoming a victim of their own ‘choices’

In our study, we found that the dominant representation of women in contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse is as the coerced/pressured victims of abortion. In a stunning 45.9% of all cases, women having abortions were portrayed as victims. This is almost twice the percentage of cases that represent the fetus as a victim and more than 7 times more frequent than the 6.5% of cases that portrayed women as selfish/self-interested (see appendix B and C). It is also worth noting that the representation of women as victims is particularly strong in the formal political realm – with 68.6% of all cases of politicians’ discourse forwarding this portrayal. Moreover, as we saw above, this perspective also increasingly defines the framing of anti-abortion themes in new laws – as we saw with the case of Bill C-510 and C-484. Bill C-510 vilified male coercers, it was also described as something that would “empower pregnant women to stand up against abortion coercion” (Bruinooge official website, 2010b). Its defenders argued that “this bill empowers vulnerable women by giving them the legal recourse to press charges when they feel they are being coerced into an unwanted abortion, potentially averting escalation into violence and even murder. As well, we can hope that Canadians will become educated and realize it is wrong to coerce a woman into an abortion against her will” (Bruinooge official website, 2010a).

Increasingly, however, other actors are also being portrayed as victims. Although we don’t have space to discuss it here, one interesting new category is the anti-abortion movement itself. In line with conservative populist rhetoric across a range of issues, the anti-abortion movement is seeking to present itself as a victimized underdog. Perhaps more notably, Canadian anti-abortion discourse is also beginning to represent men as victims of abortion. As we noted above, men are often portrayed as villains. Yet the new discourse also is starting to suggest that men who are not coercing their partners to get an abortion are, “suffer[ing] in silence because [he] is confused about [his] feelings, trying to put up a strong front, and ignored by society” (Alliance for Life Ontario, 2010c). Both the Alliance for Life Ontario and Signal Hill websites have entire web pages dedicated to counseling and comforting men who have not only been suffering, but whose suffering has been erased by feminism. “Many feminists, both male and female, see abortion solely as a woman’s issue. It’s her body, therefore, it’s her choice. Unfortunately, this cut-and-dry approach fails to take into consideration that all people have emotions, both sexes. This simple answer to a complex issue does nothing to resolve the confusing feelings women and men experience when faced with the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy” (Alliance for Life Ontario, 2010c). Bloggers have also taken up this characterization, accusing feminists of removing “men from the equation” and arguing that “we don’t talk enough... about what it’s like to be a man whose child is aborted without his consent, or sometimes even his knowledge until after the fact” (PWPL March 18, 2008). It is still a nascent pattern - only 4.7% of cases suggest that men are harmed and victimized by abortion. But we suspect it will become more important in the coming years.

Interestingly, the loss of traditional masculinity is also highlighted as element of men’s victimization by abortion. Material quoted favorably on MP Maurice Vellacott’s website implicitly suggests this when he argues that “men are negatively affected and sense of loss of control and pride, especially when their partner has had an

abortion without their being consulted” (deVeber Institute January, 2004) and that this leads to male symptoms include “depression, guilt, anger, and feelings of powerlessness” (deVeber Institute January, 2004). Others make it much more explicit. The Alliance for Life Ontario, for example, argues,

Your natural role as a father was cut short... ‘Abortion rewrites the rules of masculinity. Whether or not the male was involved in the abortion decision, his inability to function in a socially prescribed manner leaves him wounded and confused.’ As a man, you naturally begin to take on the responsibility of protecting the child. It’s how you are wired. But, because of the abortion, you are no longer able to fulfill this role. You may develop anger, resentment and guilt. You may not even realize where these feelings are coming from. They often come out in destructive behaviors-excessive drinking, drug use, depression, suicidal feelings, risk taking or maybe running from relationship to relationship unable to make commitments. (Alliance for Life Ontario, 2010c)

This illustration of the wounded man stripped of his masculinity sits in stark opposition to his representation as coercer in other anti-abortion rhetorical tangents, of course. But what looks like a paradox is actually a very clear moral lesson. When men advocate abortion, they are coercers and criminals; when men denounce abortion, they are presented as “natural” and approached with discursive sympathy and compassion. Consequently, these two seemingly contradictory representations of men peacefully co-exist within the larger anti-abortion discourse.

### 3.3 Anti-Abortion Heroes

If narrative characterizations of villains and victims serve to mobilize and move audiences by engaging their outrage and protective instincts, no political narrative is truly complete without a portrait of its heroes, if only to offer its audience positive affective resonances that strengthen the positive self-understanding of those involved in the struggle. In the anti-abortion discourse of the past, men stood at the forefront and it was men who have until recently represented the heroes and martyrs of the anti-abortion movement. As Susan Faludi described, men inhabited all the leadership and ‘warrior’ positions of the anti-abortion movement with “the wives and daughters of the ‘warriors’ lined up in neat rows... their palms raised towards the heavens. ‘We’re not allowed to speak’, one of the women says when approached for an interview” (Faludi 1991, 411).

So who are the heroes of the new anti-abortion discourse in Canada? Unsurprisingly, some of them are men who have taken a clear public stand against abortion. In 8.7% of cases, men were identified as the hero of the narrative (see appendix D). A good example of this is PWPL blogger Rebecca Walberg’s entry where she offers extensive praise of the anti-abortion efforts of MP Rod Bruinooge:

Bruinooge could curry favour...and set himself up for a smooth climb through the party. He’s also got a young family... and therefore no end of claims on his time. But instead of playing it safe and keeping his mouth shut, as the CPC would prefer, he’s speaking his conscience, leading the most-unsecret-ever secret pro-life caucus, and setting an example more of us should follow.... I have a feeling Rod himself doesn’t see himself as a hero for doing what he does and saying what he says, but I admire him, and look forward to what he’ll do in the years to come. We need more MPs like him. (PWPL Jan 3, 2009).

This is a typical anti-abortion hero narrative. Despite it being an unpopular stance, despite the fact that it will harm his political career in the party, and despite the fact that it takes time away from his young family, Bruinooge chooses to sacrifice his own personal interests in order to speak truth to power.

As is the case with the other categories, however, the new anti-abortion narratives have widened the cast of characters who are portrayed as heroes. Most obvious is the very strong move to tell the stories of heroic anti-abortion women. In fact, the emergence of women as heroes of the anti-abortion movement has become a key rhetoric tactic throughout anti-abortion discourse. For instance, PWPL founder Andrea Mrozek writes, “I started ProWomanProLife.org in order to provide a voice for those women who are pro-life because they are pro-woman. I believe ours is a unique approach to the abortion debate” (PWPL June, 2008). In fact, anti-abortion discourse repeatedly asserts that the anti-abortion movement is a movement designed *for* women, *by* women. Speaking to an article printed in *Chatelaine* about the PWPL blog, Rebecca Walberg responds, “There is an excerpt containing the old chestnut that most anti-abortion activists are men, that it’s about controlling

women, that if men got pregnant this wouldn't be an issue. It's to put this to rest that I think PWPL is so timely and necessary" (PWPL February 23, 2008). Again and again new anti-abortion discourse is telling stories of the strong anti-abortion women who represent the cause. In yet another blog post Mrozek writes, "Meanwhile I'm glad to hear about women like Bachman, Palin, Laura Ingraham.... Strong pro-life women are a very scary thing to the pro-abortion side. Not to belabour the point, but they should be worried. We're not just coming. We're already here" (PWPL Oct 21, 2008).

This is not a minor strategy either. Women were identified as the hero of the tale in 16.5% of all cases – more than double the rate of cases that identify men as the hero (see appendix D).<sup>1</sup> What is key, however, is that the anti-abortion rhetoric portrays these women as heroic not simply because they are female, but because a female-led anti-abortion movement is a social movement that stands up to protect and empower women. In fact in almost 46% of cases, the anti-abortion movement itself was held up as a hero, sacrificing its own self-interests for the good of the broader community, coerced women and defenseless fetuses (see appendix D). Nowhere is this more dramatically exhibited than in one PWPL blog entry explicitly channeling Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. In it, Andrea Mrozek blogs, "I have a dream! Women, loved and supported, loving and supporting their kids and families. Women, strong women, doing what they choose—aware that sex is also an action to be responsible for, and it is quite often, though not always, linked to having kids. Women, aware that some things simply aren't a choice, and that we don't kill to solve our problems. Women accepting life as it comes, with all the ups and downs. I have this idea that women want to love their kids, even the unplanned ones. And that the minority who don't still don't need to kill those kids" (PWPL March 8, 2009). Drawing on tropes that clearly attempt to link her movement with the women's rights movement, and the civil rights movement before it – this new anti-abortion movement seeks to portray itself as a selfless, courageous and compassionate battle against profound social injustice. Those links, of course, might be hard to uphold if subjected to conscious, critical evaluation. But the power of narrative is that these links are usually slipped in below the threshold of conscious evaluation – and thus can take hold in the minds of the audience regardless of their analogical accuracy.

#### **4. Shifting Discourses, Shifting Tactics**

In this article, we have demonstrated that in both the metaphorical tone and the narratives it employs, the discourse of the new Canadian anti-abortion movement differs profoundly from that of the dominant stance in the American movement as well as those of previous generations in Canada. We have shown in particular that the new anti-abortion discourse attempts to position the anti-abortion perspective as a 'pro-woman' stance by crafting a largely sympathetic tone towards women and by re-crafting the villains, victims and heroes of the narratives in ways that seek to avoid vilifying women and instead frame women as innocent victims, and potential liberators, of an oppressive pro-abortion society. What are the implications of this discourse for feminist theorization and praxis? There are many. Here, however, we will only briefly mention a few of the most important ones.

At a theoretical level, this case is an excellent demonstration of the broader pattern in contemporary North American political discourse in which traditionally 'conservative' positions are increasingly being defended by employing and redefining what have historically been 'progressive' values, tropes and rhetorical strategies. The anti-abortion movement's use of the value of 'choice', a nurturant parent metaphorical tone, and a narrative structure that appears to reproduce (although in very different ways and to very different ends) feminist structural arguments about informal modes of influence/coercion are all examples of the ways in which the ideological terrain has shifted considerably over the last twenty years. Second, by revealing the degree to which the anti-abortion movement relies on the use of these common sense narratives about villains and victims, the article illustrates the feminist theoretical assertion that the stories we tell matter very much politically.

At the level of strategic praxis, this case supports broader arguments that understanding and framing the abortion debate in terms of pro-choice vs anti-choice may no longer be the most helpful approach. This is extremely important at the practical level of policy advocacy. For one of the most significant disadvantages faced by the anti-abortion movement is the fact that its historically anti-woman tone and sensibility was at odds

with the demographic and political shift in favour of greater gender equality (or at least a general discourse in favour of greater gender equality) in North American society. By seeming less anti-woman, this new anti-abortion discourse might appear more reasonable and less alienating to the broader population - particularly to younger women who are politically active and who might identify with the language of 'equalism' rather than feminism. If new anti-abortion discourses are shifting away from an outright attack on women's rights and morality, it suggests that the North American pro-choice movement needs to be continually developing new arguments, narratives, metaphorical tones and other rhetorical tactics to make its case. Proponents of abortion rights and access, of course, have been doing this to some degree. This research, however, makes it clear how strongly anti-abortion discourse is working to take over and use traditionally feminist arguments about women's rights and choice. This, in turn, suggests that defenders of abortion rights must not take for granted the strength and exclusivity of their traditional arguments and intensify their efforts on this front.

Finally, this case also might be seen as relevant for the recent debates in feminist scholarship and activism around 'reproductive justice' perspectives (see Smith 2005; Luna 2009, 2010, 2011). Emerging out of women of colour analysis and activism, the reproductive justice movement has begun to highlight how a variety of structural conditions that contextualize the nature and limits on formal 'choice' must be considered and that it is not sufficient to simply protect formal choice alone. Contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse has understood the weaknesses implicit in a political position that defends its position simply through appeal to formal choice. And it is now seeking to exploit it by undermining the idea that choice is necessarily pro-woman and necessarily in favour of robust access to abortion. Perhaps then, the language of reproductive justice - with its willingness to frame the question of abortion around protecting the right to reproduce as well as the right to not reproduce, and its ability to highlight a vision of justice that defends these rights and their structural conditions - might be an excellent starting point from which to derive a more subtle perspective that defends access to abortion in a way that is capable of countering the new 'pro-woman' discourse of the anti-abortion movement.

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**APPENDIX A**

<b>Anti-Abortion Tone/ Sensibility</b>	<b>Blogs (Total # blog cases coded) and (% of total blog cases)</b>	<b>Organizations (Total # of org cases coded) and (% of total org cases)</b>	<b>MPs (Total # of MP cases coded) and (% of total MP cases)</b>	<b>Total (Total # of all cases codes) and (% of total cases)</b>
1. Strict Father	(58 cases) (19.8%)	(11 cases) (15.1%)	(0 cases) (0%)	(69 cases) (17.2%)
2. Nurturant Parent	(87 cases) (29.7%)	(22 cases) (30.1%)	(22 cases) (62.9%)	(131 cases) (32.6%)

**APPENDIX B**

<b>Anti-Abortion Villains</b>	<b>Blogs (Total # blog cases coded) and (% of total blog cases)</b>	<b>Organizations (Total # of org cases coded) and (% of total org cases)</b>	<b>MPs (Total # of MP cases coded) and (% of total MP cases)</b>	<b>Total (Total # of all cases codes) and (% of total cases)</b>
1. Abortion Providers	(66 cases) (22.5%)	(27 cases) (37.0%)	(4 cases) (11.4%)	(97 cases) (24.1%)
2. Feminists/Feminism/Pro Choicers	(84 cases) (28.7%)	(10 cases) (13.7%)	(5 cases) (14.3 %)	(99 cases) (24.7%)
3. (Pro-Abortion) Society	(86 cases) (29.4%)	(18 cases) (24.7%)	(3 cases) (8.6 %)	(107 cases) (26.7%)
4. Pregnant Women	(20 cases) (6.8%)	(6 cases) (8.2%)	(0 cases) (0%)	(26 cases) (6.5%)
5. Men/Fathers	(13 cases) (4.4%)	(7 cases) (9.6%)	(13 cases) (37.1%)	(33 cases) (8.2%)
6. Other Villains	(7 cases) (2.4%)	(1 case) (1.4%)	(1 case) (1.6%)	(9 cases) (2.2%)

**APPENDIX C**

<b>Anti-Abortion Victims</b>	<b>Blogs (Total # blog cases coded) and (% of total blog cases)</b>	<b>Organizations (Total # of org cases coded) and (% of total org cases)</b>	<b>MPs (Total # of MP cases coded) and (% of total MP cases)</b>	<b>Total (Total # of all cases codes) and (% of total cases)</b>
1. Anti-Abortion Activists/Movement	(75 cases) (25.6%)	(2 cases) (2.7%)	(1 case) (2.9%)	(78 cases) (19.5%)
2. Society	(13 cases) (4.4%)	(11 cases) (15.1%)	(2 cases) (5.7%)	(26 cases) (6.5%)
3. Pregnant Women	(121 cases) (41.3%)	(39 cases) (53.4%)	(24 cases) (68.6%)	(184 cases) (45.9%)

4. Fathers/Men	(14 cases) (4.8%)	(4 cases) (5.5%)	(1 case) (2.9%)	(19 cases) (4.7%)
5. Babies/Fetuses/Unborn	(62 cases) (21.2%)	(23 cases) (31.5%)	(12 cases) (34.3%)	(97 cases) (24.2%)
6. Other Victims	(10 cases) (3.4%)	(4 cases) (5.5%)	(0 cases) (0%)	(14 cases) (3.5%)

### APPENDIX D

<b>Anti-Abortion Heroes</b>	<b>Blogs (Total # blog cases coded) and (% of total blog cases)</b>	<b>Organizations (Total # of org cases coded) and (% of total org cases)</b>	<b>MPs (Total # of MP cases coded) and (% of total MP cases)</b>	<b>Total (Total # of all cases codes) and (% of total cases)</b>
1. Anti-Abortion Activists/Movement	(134 cases) (45.7%)	(26 cases) (35.6%)	(22 cases) (62.9%)	(182 cases) (45.4%)
2. Pregnant Women	(19 cases) (6.5%)	(1 case) (1.4%)	(3 cases) (8.6%)	(23 cases) (5.7%)
3. Babies/Fetuses/Unborn	(6 cases) (2.0%)	(4 cases) (5.5%)	(1 case) (2.9%)	(11 cases) (2.7%)
4. Hero as female	(51 cases) (17.4%)	(8 cases) (11%)	(7 cases) (20.0%)	(66 cases) (16.5%)
5. Hero as male	(20 cases) (6.8%)	(6 cases) (8.2%)	(9 cases) (25.7%)	(35 cases) (8.7%)
6. Hero as unspecified gender	(88 cases) (30%)	(22 cases) (30.1%)	(10 cases) (28.6)	(120 cases) (29.9%)
6. Other Heroes	(2 cases) (0.7%)	(3 cases) (4.1%)	(1 cases) (2.9%)	(6 cases) (1.5%)

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Note: All the following references refer to online entries as per the specific date noted. Unless otherwise noted, all were accessed May 2010.

- AFLO: “Alliance For Life Ontario” at [www.allianceforlife.org](http://www.allianceforlife.org)
- LC: “Life Canada” at [www.lifecanada.org](http://www.lifecanada.org)
- PWPL: “ProWomanProLife” at [www.prowomanprolife.org](http://www.prowomanprolife.org)
- TRTL: “Toronto Right to Life” at [www.righttolife.com](http://www.righttolife.com)
- SH: “Signal Hill” at [www.thesignalhill.com](http://www.thesignalhill.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, however, where bloggers strongly emphasize the role of women in the anti-abortion movement (representing women as heroes more often than men- 17.2% vs. 6.8% of all cases), this trend is reversed in the realm of formal politics (where men are represented as heroes in 25.7% vs. women in 20% of total cases). This hints at another reality. The representation of the anti-abortion movement as a female-led movement is an emerging trend especially strong in civil society movements. But given the continuing reality of unequal gender representation in electoral politics, men continue to be – and represent themselves – as key leaders in the formal political realm.