

**CANADIAN FOREIGN AID AND THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT:
STEPHEN HARPER, ABORTION, AND THE GLOBAL
CULTURE WARS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 2006–2015**

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Abstract

This thesis expands upon the concept of the global culture wars in sub-Saharan Africa from a Canadian perspective, focusing on the growing division within Canada between conservative, religious values and liberal, progressive ones (Caplan, 2012). This division led to a political and cultural realignment alongside the increased visibility and leadership of religious and faith communities in Canadian public and political life. Amidst this polarization, Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper was elected Prime Minister in February 2006. Under his leadership, a conservative, pro-family agenda was established. This agenda, which advocates a traditional understanding of family life and structure, in particular refers to a legally married, heterosexual couple with children. It was supported by the evangelical Christian population in Canada, which grew from a united religious community in Canada into a significant constituency of the Conservative Party. Harper's tenure, coupled with the increased visibility and leadership of faith and religious communities significantly affected domestic and international policies during his tenure as Prime Minister, from 2006 to 2015. This thesis examines the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Child, and Newborn Health (Muskoka-MNCH) and shows how this initiative, which fostered anti-abortion rhetoric abroad, was utilized to appease the evangelical community's anti-abortion position in Canada.

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Introduction

Overview

In June 2010, at the 36th G-8 summit in Huntsville, Ontario, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the launch of a brand-new funding plan called the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (hereafter Muskoka-MNCH). Muskoka-MNCH was specifically designed to accelerate progress in developing countries towards Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4, reducing child mortality, and MDG 5, improving maternal health. Over five years, from 2010–2015, Canada pledged to provide \$1.1 billion in new funding in addition to \$1.75 billion in ongoing baseline spending, for an overall contribution of \$2.85 billion towards maternal and child health programs (Government of Canada, 2014a). Canada’s contribution, along with the contributions of both G-8 and non- G-8 members, totaled US\$7.3 billion (Government of Canada, 2010). With this funding initiative, the Canadian government “provided global leadership initially via the Group of 8 (G8) on the subject of Muskoka-MNCH” (Brown and Olender, 2013, p. 159), in order to reduce “maternal and child mortality and improve the health of mothers and children in the world’s poorest countries” (Government of Canada, 2014a, para. 3).

Figure 1 shows a map of Muskoka-MNCH’s top 20 out of 26 recipient countries from 2010 to 2013. The map shows only the top 20, because “not all funding was allocable by country, and a substantial amount was at the regional level and not specified by country, so it could not be mapped” (Bhushan, 2014). The data on the map shows that the largest recipients by country were primarily in Africa, specifically sub-Saharan Africa. Tanzania received the most funding (\$143 million), followed by Mozambique (\$123 million), Mali (\$100 million), and Ethiopia (\$92 million). As Figure 1 shows, the majority of funding flowed into Sub-Saharan

Africa, an area which accounted for 68.5% of total spending, followed by Asia (19.5%) and the Americas (9.7%) (Bhushan, 2014) (see Appendix A and B).

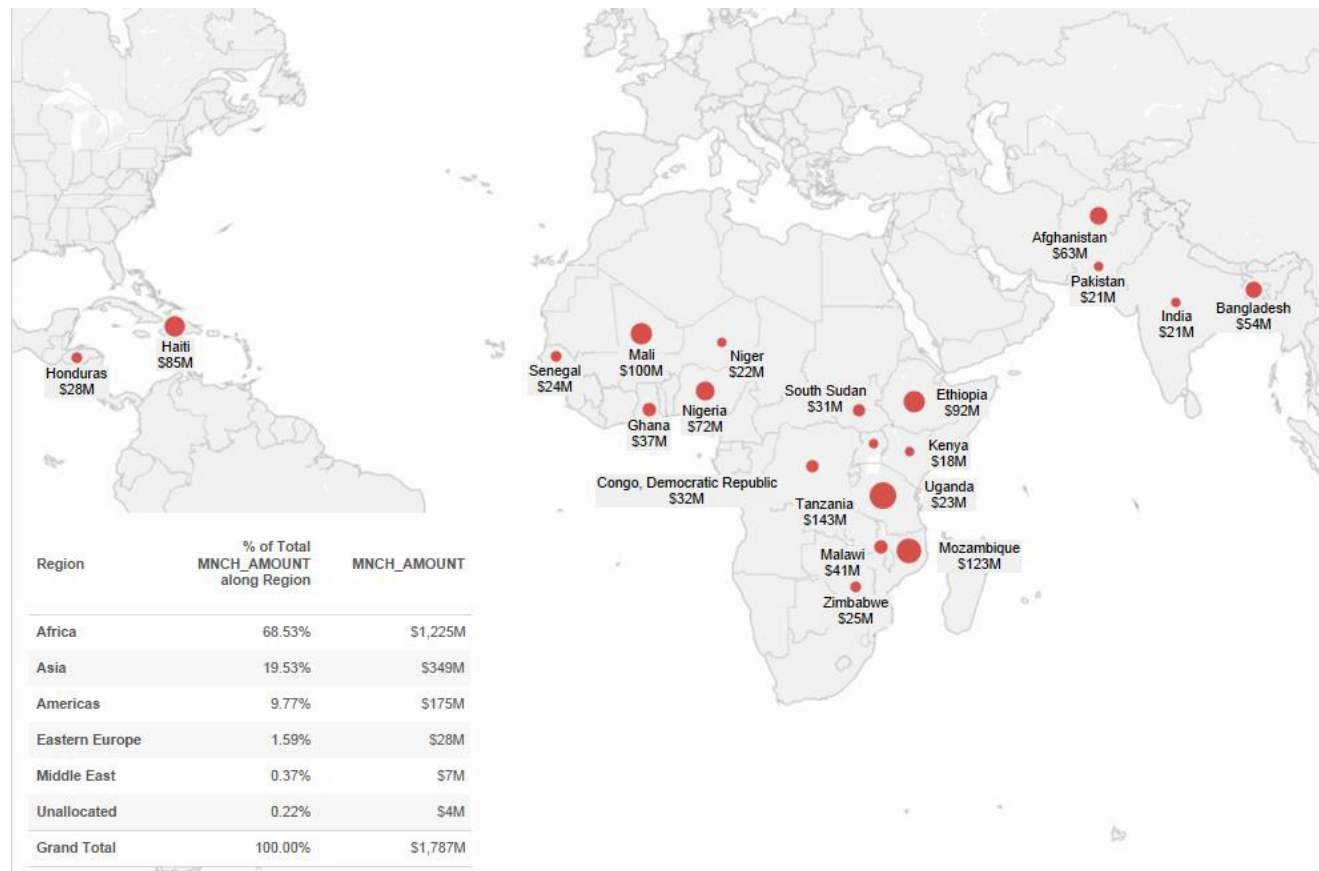


Figure 1. Top 20 Muskoka-MNCH recipient countries.

Note: Source: The North-South Institute in Bhushan, 2014.

Link: <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Muskoka-Final.pdf>

The initial outline of Muskoka-MNCH was positively received in both domestic and international spheres, but upon closer examination, it was found that although the initiative set aside funds for family planning, there was no funding specifically allocated for abortion services. For this reason, the initiative received widespread scrutiny, and was critiqued heavily by both academics and journalists (*CBC News*, 2010; Delacourt, 2010; Brown and Olender, 2013; Carrier and Tiessen, 2013; Blanchfield, 2014; Webster, 2014; McMann, 2014; Percival 2015; Tiessen,

2015; and others). Harper acknowledged the exclusion of abortion from Muskoka-MNCH and has said that “although family planning is an essential part of Canada’s efforts to improve maternal and child health, abortion remains too divisive to be included in that package” (Macreal, 2014, para. 1). He further explained that abortion was controversial not only within Canada (see Appendix C) the domestic opinion on abortion for a further discussion of this controversy), but also “controversial and often illegal in many recipient nations,” (see Appendix E for a table of the legal status of abortion in all Muskoka-MNCH countries in sub-Saharan Africa) concluding that there are “enough things that we can finance, including contraception, without getting into an issue that would be extremely divisive for Canadians and donors” (Trinh, 2014, para. 8). Harper rationalized the exclusion of abortion from Muskoka-MNCH as an intentional act by the Canadian government, one that was not only meant to appease a domestic population (which he portrayed as having extremely divisive opinions on abortion), but also in order to avoid igniting potential controversy in recipient nations.

This thesis will look at the Muskoka-MNCH as part of a broader shift in Canadian political values, reflecting a more traditional, socially conservative pro-family agenda. Chapter One, “Canadian Evangelical Christianity: The Pro-Family Agenda and Stephen Harper” outlines the history and development of evangelical Christianity in Canada. In particular, it highlights how this religious population became a constituency of the Harper government from 2006–2015 because of their similar moral, traditional and pro-family beliefs that dovetailed with the Conservative government’s socially conservative ideology. Chapter Two, “Blurring the Lines: The Influence of Religion in Politics in Stephen Harper’s Canada,” examines the increased influence of religion in Canadian political life, specifically while Stephen Harper was prime minister from 2006–2015 and his relationship with the evangelical population in Canada. Here

my research will examine scholarly secondary sources that focus on the relationship between Harper and evangelical Christians, as well as their membership numbers and electoral voting intentions. I will examine Harper's education and political background as well as his connections to influential political figures who publicly identify as evangelical Christians.

Finally, Chapter Three, "The Global Culture Wars: Canada, The Muskoka Initiative, and Reproductive Justice," places the global culture wars in a Canadian context in terms of this initiative. I examine the wider scholarship on the global culture wars and demonstrate how Muskoka-MNCH both fits with, and is a product of, the increased influence of evangelical Christianity under the Harper government. For example, it demonstrates how the Muskoka Initiative reflects a traditional and pro-family mandate that is anti-abortion and this fits in with the agenda of the evangelical population in Canada. The Harper government, in order to placate this population, exported the agenda overseas because it could not be addressed domestically. The connections between Harper and evangelical Christianity will also be identified through research into Canadian Christian Right (CCR), indicating how their "organizations, alliances, and contacts that have increased in both scope and power in Canada and internationally in the same time period" (Lawrence, 2010, p. 62). Both these directions will be explored to explain the influence of evangelical Christianity and the growth and power of the CCR in Canada under Harper's leadership.

In this thesis, I will ask and answer the four following research questions:

1. In what ways did Canadian political values shift during Harper's tenure, and how could this shift be explained using his relationship to his evangelical constituency?
2. On an international level, how did this shift impact Canadian foreign aid, and in what ways was this shift reflected in Canadian foreign aid policies?
3. How was this shift a reflection of wider global trends, and how does Canada fit into this trend?

4. What kinds of implications did this shift have for the mandate countries in sub-Saharan Africa under the Muskoka-Initiative on Maternal, Child, and Newborn Health?

I argue that there was a distinct shift in Canadian political values to reflect a more traditional, socially-conservative, pro-family agenda from 2006–2015. Although the pro-family agenda is made up of a multitude of socially conservative policies, this thesis will emphasize three main aspects: opposition to the normalization of non-heterosexual orientations and relationships, a pro-life stance, and finally, the promotion of traditional gender roles. All three of these areas were addressed by Harper during his tenure as prime minister. This agenda was backed by the evangelical population in Canada, as they opposed more liberal understandings of marriage and family structure and advocated for a more socially conservative view of these institutions. With this shift, evangelical Christians' demonstrated their support for Harper and the Conservative Party by supporting him at the ballot box from the 2006 to 2011. As a result, Harper had a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship with the evangelical Christian community in Canada and their support for his agenda.

Secondly, I argue that Canadian foreign aid was impacted because it shifted to reflect a more traditional and family-oriented worldview. In particular, a pro-family worldview was projected into the international space, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa with the foreign aid policy of Muskoka-MNCH. At the core of Muskoka-MNCH was an initial exclusion of contraception and the continued exclusion of abortion from its mandate. This policy, which demonstrated the shift of Canadian political values toward a pro-family agenda, also reflected the intention to placate the evangelical Christian population in Canada in return for their continued support of Harper.

Thirdly, I demonstrate how this shift was indicative of the “global culture wars,” a term used to explain the partnership of conservative religious communities worldwide to create a network of support for a more traditional world order against trends of liberalization (Kaoma, 2009; Oliver, 2013). Muskoka-MNCH was demonstrative of a “realignment of politics and culture” (Davison Hunter, 1991, p. 135) in Canada under Harper, and this realignment challenged “reproductive justice” (Price, 2010, p. 42) for women in sub-Saharan Africa where the majority of Muskoka-MNCH funding was allocated.

Finally, I argue that pro-family foreign aid policies like Muskoka-MNCH ignore the complexities of women’s health by treating abortion like a black and white/right or wrong moral issue. In an extremely poor region like sub-Saharan Africa there are a variety of other socio-economic, political, and health barriers that women face. Policies like Muskoka-MNCH impedes the essential services that women need in order to make real, tangible progress in comprehensive reproductive health care.

Area of Focus

Given the limitations of time and scope, this thesis will focus primarily on Muskoka-MNCH’s impact on women of reproductive age in sub-Saharan Africa. This focus was decided upon for three reasons: first, a large portion, in fact approximately 80% of the US\$7.3 billion that was pledged to Muskoka-MNCH, flowed into sub-Saharan Africa (Bhushan, 2014). Evidently, the majority of the budget for this project targeted one specific part of the continent, so it makes sense to concentrate on this region. Second, although the global culture wars are being waged all over the world (Davison Hunter, 1991; Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Webb, 2006; Tipton, 2007; Chapman, 2010), I have chosen to explore the link between sub-Saharan Africa and the

Conservative Party of Canada under Harper from 2006 to 2015. I demonstrate that the relationship of Harper to evangelical Christianity influenced the types of policies being exported abroad, specifically to those countries in sub-Saharan Africa which received funding from Muskoka-MNCH. And third, sub-Saharan Africa was chosen as an area of focus because of its dismal record of maternal and child health. In fact, unsafe and unsanitary abortions account for “10–15% of all maternal deaths” in the region (Percival, 2015, para. 21).

Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the poorest regions in the world with 48.5% of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day, and just under 70% (69.9%) living on less than \$2.00 a day (Forget, 2013). With around 910 million people living in this region, this means that approximately 637 million people are living below the poverty line (Forget, 2013). Poverty is the “single most relevant challenge for sub-Saharan Africa” (Gupta, Pattillo and Wagh, 2007, p. 104), because of its direct effect on lower education levels, the spread of disease, as well as its contribution to a lower life expectancy for people in this region (Sahn and Younger, 2009). Not only does sub-Saharan Africa bear a significant proportion of the burden of institutional, social and economic factors that hinder its development, but its development occurs at a slower rate and is greatly affected by world events (Sundarm, Schwank and von Arnim, 2011). According to a UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs Report from 2011, sub-Saharan Africa was severely affected by the 2008 global financial crisis, and its growth “decelerated significantly in 2009, endangering the limited progress made on the MDGs, especially poverty reduction” (UNECA-AU, 2010 in Sundaram et al., 2011, p. 7).

The conditions that sub-Saharan Africa faces require that, in order to meet international development targets, “at least a doubling of overseas development aid (ODA) from the year 2000 is necessary” (Moss, Petterson and van de Walle, 2006, p. 2). In 2005, British Prime Minister

Tony Blair (the chair of the Commission for Africa), called for an “immediate \$25 billion increase in aid to sub-Saharan Africa with an additional \$25 billion to come by 2015” (Moss et al., 2006, p. 2). This increase in aid, according to Moss et al. (2006), would represent almost a tripling of aid to the region. However, the UN’s Millennium Project has estimated that global overseas development aid will need to surpass even these initial estimates for substantial development to occur in this region (Moss et al., 2006).

Relevance

In most (if not all) countries, the social burden of rearing children is placed on the woman; therefore, having and raising children has a greater impact on a woman’s life, than to a man’s (Jaggar, 1998). My research is particularly relevant because it seeks to demonstrate that Canadian foreign aid policies that operate with a pro-family agenda associated with evangelical Christianity are not only more harmful to women’s health overall, but also hinder women from having access to comprehensive reproductive health care and from achieving reproductive justice. This is because the focus on foreign aid policies becomes entangled with the pro-life vs. pro-choice debate, instead of moving beyond the abortion issue to link “reproductive health and rights to other social justice issues such as poverty, economic injustice, violence towards women,” all of which combine to affect women’s ability to access comprehensive reproductive health care (Price, 2010, p. 43). Within the fields of political science and women’s studies, this research is significant, because applying a reproductive justice framework to foreign aid policies about women’s health highlights their scope and depth. In the case of Muskoka-MNCH, the anti-abortion rhetoric had negative repercussions for women’s reproductive justice, because it failed to include abortion as an issue of importance for women in developing countries (Braam and

Hessini, 2004, p. 43); this meant that Muskoka-MNCH in its failure to address abortion, did not seem to care about how the issue of abortion, its legality, and cleanliness, affects women in its mandated countries. Its exclusion also reinforces the idea of “male superiority” and “frames the morality, legality, and socio-cultural attitudes towards abortion” (Braam and Hessini, 2004, p. 43) that continue to be produced and reproduced in society, specifically in the case of Muskoka-MNCH. With its pro-family agenda, Muskoka-MNCH affected the reproductive lives of poor women of colour, because it did not take into consideration the social and institutional barriers women face when forced to continue with, for example, an unwanted pregnancy (Price, 2010; Tiessen, 2015) nor did it approach abortion as an issue that has significant implications for women of colour in developing countries.

Finally, this thesis is relevant because it will demonstrate that Canada has not been “immune from the fundamentalist religious mania” which is both “closely and negatively associated with our neighbours in the United States of America, especially the role of evangelical Christians and the Christian ‘Right’” (Malloy, 2009, p. 352). While parallels have been drawn between the movements of the evangelical communities of Canada and the United States (Reimer 2003; Bean, Gonzalex and Kaufman, 2008; Todd, 2009; Basen, 2013) according to Malloy (2009), “we should not assume that Canada will see anywhere near the [same] visibility and influence” and the “role of religion in public life and politics remains distinctly different in the two countries” (p. 352).

Evangelical Christians in Canada and the United States are not identical, as a result Canadians have often created an identity built on the assumption that Canadians are “far less

¹ Here, Malloy is referring to the American Christian Right which I distinguish from other Christian Right movements by using the acronym ACR

religious, or at least publicly religious, than Americans” (Malloy, 2009, p. 352). This adherence to a religiously neutral identity is problematic, because it ignores the reality that, while Canadian religious identity may not be experienced as intensely as it is in the United States, a “new-American style religious right” (Malloy, 2009, p. 353) has contributed to the “plurality of conflicting worldviews that are now found in [Western] societies,” including Canada (Flanagan and Lee, 2003, p. 235). What has also taken place in Canada is a resurgence in religiosity within some Christian evangelical and Muslim communities (Thomas in Kunz, 2014). This resurgence has had a profound effect on the landscape and climate of politics within the country, an effect that became evident when examining the Conservative Party of Canada under Prime Minister Harper and Muskoka-MNCH.

Literature Review

This thesis is comprised of literature from four areas: religious studies, the global culture wars, and foreign aid literature and women’s/feminist studies.

Religious Studies Literature: Evangelicalism and The Christian Right

Literature on the Christian Right demonstrates that there has been a steady increase in organizations, alliances, and contacts supporting their belief systems and giving them increasingly more power, in both the United States and Canada (McDonald, 2006; Kaoma, 2009; Lawrence, 2010; McDonald, 2010). Specifically, in the Canadian context, evangelical right-wing Christians established a web of think-tanks and foundations which played a prominent role in determining policy for the Conservative government of Canada (McDonald, 2006; McDonald, 2010). The influence of evangelical Christianity, and by extension, the American Christian Right

(ACR), has been observed in the United States since the late 1970s and early 1980s. In particular, leading ACR figures have combined “right-wing political stances with explicit involvement in political lobbying and campaigning (almost entirely through the Republican Party)” (Malloy, 2009, p. 355).

A similar process, although not to the same extent, can be observed in Canada with the rise of the Moral Majority, a Canadian Christian Right (CCR) group, under the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada church. Although this group is active on the political scene, it does not have nearly the same influence as similar groups in America. According to Malloy (2009), one primary reason for this dissimilarity was the “differing nature of political systems” in each country (p. 356). Scholars have argued that the election of Harper to the office of Prime Minister has allowed for the active pursuit of more socially conservative policies reflective of the heightened influence of the CCR under his administration (Malloy, 2009; Malloy, 2010; McDonald, 2010; Nikiforuk, 2012; Malloy, 2013). It has been suggested that the power of the CCR dovetailed with his own socially conservative nature, which can be seen in the increased support received by his party from evangelical Christians and religiously-inclined new immigrant voters starting in 2004 (Hutchins, 2015).

It is important to note that the ACR and CCR are used to describe a network of right-wing Christian political groups, characterized by their support of socially conservative policies. Along with their support of these policies, the Christian Right also attempts to influence politics and public policy in a manner that demonstrates their beliefs. For example, within Canada, the CCR has advocated for socially conservative positions on issues such as homosexuality, contraception, and abortion (Lawrence, 2010; McDonald, 2010). The Christian Right consists primarily of evangelical Protestants, a denomination within Christianity, but are also supported

by other religiously conservative groups, such as orthodox Jews and Mormons (Smith and Burr, 2007). These groups possess similar principle beliefs, in terms of their commitment to social conservative ideologies, to those of evangelical Christians. Although the ACR and CCR are significantly comprised of evangelical Christians the two groups are not synonymous and cannot be used interchangeably. The ACR and CCR refer to a sub-set of the evangelical population that are politically active and publically support socially conservative policies, whereas evangelical Christians are a religious denomination. Not all evangelical Christians fall under or support Christian Right political groups. Further details and description are provided in Chapter 2.

Not only was Harper welcomed at the ballot box by evangelical Christians, but under his leadership, supporters of the CCR also held “major positions at the top of the Prime Minister’s office (PMO) structure” (Lawrence, 2010, p. 247–248). For example, Darrel Reid who was appointed Deputy Director of Policy and Research in 2007, Vic Toews, who served in Harper’s cabinet from 2006–2013, and Jason Kenney, his parliamentary secretary, to name a few. The Harper government created and funded institutes that assisted in the promotion of values which were intimately tied to evangelical Christianity. For example, the Institute for Canadian Values and the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada are evangelical organizations, both of which have ties to the Conservative party, the CCR, and more broadly to evangelical Christianity (McDonald 2006).

The Global Culture Wars: History, the United States, and the Rest of the World

The origin of the term culture wars has roots in 1870s Germany. It is here that the phrase *Kulturkampf* (translated as “culture struggle”) was coined to describe the “political and ideological confrontation between Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, a modernist reformer, and the

Roman Catholic Church” (Chapman, 2010, p. xxvii). In other words, *kulturkampf* began primarily to secularize the Kingdom of Prussia and reduce the role and power of the Roman Catholic Church (Wylie, 1899).

In American society, the “realignment of church and state is what has garnered comparison between the *kulturkampf* of 1870s Germany and present-day America” (Chapman, 2010). Since the end of the Second World War, American society has been “wracked by social and political polarization—a conflict of ideas and values, which has become widely referred to as the culture wars” (Chapman, 2010, p. xxvii). But the culture wars did not become a major topic of debate until after it was introduced by American sociologist James Davison Hunter in his influential book, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991). This book laid out how culture and politics in the United States have been “subject to a dramatic realignment and polarization” (Davison Hunter, 1991, p. 135). As a result, issues such as abortion, federal and state gun laws, global warming, immigration, the separation of church and state, and homosexuality have all become entangled in a “metaphorical war as cultural divisions about these subjects have divided both private and public opinion” and were seen as a threat to “family values and the Judeo-Christian tradition (Chapman, 2010, p. xxviii).

One defining feature of the culture wars is the “labelling and classification of issues that suggests a moralistic either/or sensibility” where “players in this game are presented as pairs of polar opposites and irreconcilable differences,” (Chapman, 2010, p. xxvii). For example, this concept can be seen in the divide between Liberals vs. Conservatives, left vs. right, fundamentalists and evangelicals vs. religious progressives. The tendency to split opinion on culture and politics into binary constructs has, according to Chapman (2010), “a Manichean aspect, lending legitimacy to the view that the struggle is religious in nature” (p. xxvii). In other

words, issues like abortion and same-sex marriage are presented in a black or white fashion, that reflects a dualistic view of good and evil. Therefore, the polarization between church and state in contemporary society has engaged the leaders of the religious right—a term that loosely encompasses all religions that fall to the right of the political spectrum, such as evangelical Christianity—and supporters of social conservatism in the defense of traditional values in a world that is seen as progressively liberalizing.

What began as a domestic conflict has since expanded beyond North America's borders (Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Yudice, 2003; Kaoma, 2009; Anderson, 2011; Oliver, 2013; Furedi, 2014; Reno, 2014; Laycock, 2014). According to Flanagan and Lee (2003), this is particularly evident in the 12 “largest and most affluent Western nations” (p. 235), where political and religious elites in Canada, the United States, Germany, Britain, and France have been orchestrating culture wars within their own countries, as well as engaging with them on a global scale.

In Canada, evidence of a culture war is noticeable when studying contemporary issues in Canadian society. Abortion and same-sex marriage are legal, yet these issues continue to provoke significant controversy in public life. For example, a 2006 Environics study showed that while abortion may be legal for Canadians, it did not mean that people did not have strong, negative feelings associated with it (Environics Research Group, 2006). Canadians' divided opinions on abortion mark the emergence of the culture wars within the country, perhaps because “social issues have replaced economic issues as the most divisive position issues” (Flanagan and Lee, 2003, p. 251). This change was recognized by Harper and was utilized in his election

strategy. In 2003, Harper gave a speech at a Civitas² meeting, where he remarked, “the real challenge is therefore not economic, but the social agenda of the modern Left” (Harper, quoted in Citizens Centre Report Magazine, 2003, para. 26), referring possibly to abortion and same-sex marriage. In this speech, Harper pushed Canadians to rediscover the Right Agenda, because he believed that the social agenda of the modern Left was a threat to the country (Harper, 2003). The Right Agenda called for a return to a more traditional approach to Canadian society, one where the government did not interfere with the authority of the family, and took “a moral stand (...), in favour of the fundamental values of our society, including democracy, free enterprise and individual freedom” (Harper, 2003, para. 46).

The culture wars are not limited to the borders of Western nations (Webb, 2006, p. xiii). There has been pushback against what is portrayed as the “cultural aggression of Western progressives” (Reno, 2014, para. 4). This pushback can currently be seen in Russia’s tightening its ban on same-sex couples internationally adopting Russian children (Reno, 2014), to the death penalty being used as punishment for same-sex marriages in Uganda (Oliver, 2013). It is even evident now in the United States, where President Donald Trump has cut off funding to the United Nations Population Fund over concerns about abortion (Lederman, 2017) and reinstated the “global gag rule” (Talbot, 2017), a policy that “stipulates that non U.S. nongovernmental organizations receiving U.S. family planning funding cannot inform the public or educate their government on the need to make safe abortion available, provide legal abortion services, or provide advice on where to get an abortion” (CHANGE, Center for Health and Gender Equity,

² Civitas is a non-partisan “society where ideas meet”. It is the “premiere event in Canada where people interested in conservative, classical liberal and libertarian ideas can not only exchange ideas, but meet others who share an interest in these rich intellectual traditions” (Civitas Canada, 2017).

2017, para. 1). Therefore, the culture wars have implications not only domestically, but also internationally. Thus, the interconnection between countries and the support they draw from one another in this struggle are particularly critical in globalizing the culture wars.

Internationally, the culture wars have developed into a partnership of conservative religious communities worldwide (Kaoma, 2009). This partnership creates a network of support for a more traditional world order, where countries become entangled in the values conflict together, and seek support not only to justify their own value systems, but also to promote them (Kaoma, 2009; Oliver, 2013). To gain support for these value systems, developing countries have become the sites of “proxy culture wars where the domestic issues of developed countries are exported beyond their borders to be fought in the developing world” (Kaoma, 2009, p. iii).

This is particularly evident in the First World and Third World donor–recipient aid relationship. Notably, conservative donors in First World countries create policies that are reflective of their own belief systems (Brown and Olender, 2013). Third World countries must comply with these systems in order to receive aid. For example, the ACR has partnered with conservative churches in Kenya and Uganda and funnels money and resources through these religious communities (Kaoma, 2009; Oliver, 2013). But, these African communities will only receive this funding if they agree to promote the anti-gay agenda of the ACR (Herman, 1997; Kaoma, 2009; Oliver, 2013). A partnership is thus created between these two religious communities; the African religious community benefits monetarily and the American religious community benefits because they can legitimize their socially conservative stance with the support of African churches (Kaoma, 2009), where homophobia in Africa is “fomented largely for U.S. domestic purposes” as “evidence of a worldwide neo-colonial homosexual threat” (Kaoma 2009, p. 4). This allows for the ACR to push back against the liberalization of same-sex

marriage by justifying it as a “gay conspiracy” that has no place domestically or abroad (Kaoma 2009, p. 4).

Not only is there a relationship of interdependence between Christian Right groups and religious communities in different countries (Kaoma, 2009; Oliver, 2013), but there is also a more covert connection between the governments of First World countries and aid recipient development countries (Blanchfield, 2015). For example, in Canada, the debate on such contested issues as abortion is closed; it is assumed that opening it would polarize public opinion and result in the self-destruction of politicians and political parties (Carrier and Tiessen, 2013). But, this does not mean that a subset of the population did not wish for these matters to be readdressed and demand that their political parties devote efforts to engaging with them, especially those groups which adhere to a socially conservative and traditional value system, like the evangelical Christian constituency of Harper’s Conservative Party. In order to placate domestic unrest and to gain support at the ballot box, the Conservative Party under Harper used Muskoka-MNCH to export a conservative political ideology abroad, which in turn supported the traditional and socially conservative world view of Harper’s evangelical constituency. The divide on public opinion on the dominant liberal order within Canada, and the significant scope of evidence that shows the divide between traditional and progressive value systems, are demonstrated by both the Harris-Decima (March and May 2010) and Environics (2006) polls on abortion and morality (see a further discussion of this in Appendix C). These polls suggested that there was indeed an active culture war within Canada and that it polarized the domestic population’s opinions on contemporary moral issues like abortion and same sex marriage (Environics, 2006; Harris-Decima March and May 2010). This culture war was then internationalized through Harper’s Muskoka-MNCH program, which exported an initiative

characterized by anti-abortion rhetoric into the international arena in order to placate his evangelical Christian constituency in Canada (Nikiforuk, 2012).

Feminist / Women's Studies Literature

The specific focus of Muskoka-MNCH was the improvement of maternal health. First, the initiative was directed towards women's bodies and their capabilities as reproductive beings, excluding the many other roles they have in society. In this single-minded focus, Muskoka-MNCH was both "paternalistic and essentialist," because it saw all women as mothers first (Tiessen, 2015, p. 2), reducing women to a one-dimensional role and failing to address the systemic barriers women face to achieving reproductive justice.

Secondly, this focus construed women as "victims in need of saving" and placed emphasis on their "vulnerability" (Tiessen, 2015, p. 13). According to Tiessen (2015), this focus on maternal health was aimed narrowly at women's bodies and shaped the context and nature of policies and debates. Framing maternal health exclusively in terms of motherhood essentializes and treats mothers as the objects of development assistance and as instruments of policy making, rather than active agents who have options and choices (p. 18–19).

In other words, Muskoka-MNCH was created to save the lives of mothers in the developing world, but on its own terms. Overall, Muskoka-MNCH reinforced unequal gender roles by using both paternalistic and essentialist depictions of women as mothers in its mandate and by constructing women as victims in need of saving, which made Muskoka-MNCH more of a band aid solution to the problem, rather than an initiative that offered real, tangible change.

The feminist literature also illustrates that there is an overall lack of attention to other social determinants of health in the initiative, most notably gender inequality (Huish and Spiegel,

2012). Gender inequality is an important factor because it needs to be addressed in order to advance reproductive justice for women (Hord and Wolf, 2004). For instance, when contraceptives are illegal, women are forced into situations where they have little or no choice about their reproductive lives (Sethna, 2006). The legality of contraceptives is intimately related to gender equality because it is women who bear the brunt of the work of raising children and do the majority of unpaid work in the private sphere (Statistics Canada, 2010; Moyser, 2017). Thus, “sex inequality and discrimination make the right to abortion inadequate to secure reproductive choice equally for all women – young and mature, poor and rich, rural and urban” (Pillard, 2007, p. 941). Addressing gender inequality is of paramount importance in recognizing women’s reproductive justice in societies where their rights might be limited.

Finally, the feminist literature discusses the legal status of abortion laws in Canada, as well as in the recipient countries. It is argued that Canada, as a country with supposedly progressive idea about women’s reproductive justice, should support programs both at home and abroad that allow for women and girls to obtain hygienic and legal abortions (Laverdire and Ashton, 2014). The political and social stigma surrounding abortion is exacerbated by women’s low social status and lack of empowerment (Hord and Wolf, 2004; Russo and Steinberg, 2012). Therefore, the Canadian Government through Muskoka-MNCH should have reflected the domestic position on abortion and advocate for access to high quality abortion care instead of creating policies that ignore it (Cook and Ngwena, 2007; Ngwena, 2007).

Foreign Aid Literature

The foreign aid literature accentuates the unequal power dynamics between donor and recipient countries. In terms of Muskoka-MNCH, this inequality can be seen in multiple ways:

the first is with Muskoka-MNCH's approach to the contested subject of abortion. The controversial nature of abortion is twofold: within Canada the domestic population is divided on the topic (EnviroNics, 2006; Harris-Decima, March 2010; Harris-Decima, May 2010; Angus-Reid Institute, 2015) and Harper stated that he did not want to reopen the abortion debate (*CBC News*, 2011); second, the Muskoka-MNCH provided aid money to countries with far more restrictive abortion laws than those in Canada. Harper determined that Canadians "want[ed] to see their foreign aid money used for things that will help save the lives of women and children in ways that unit[ed] Canadian people rather than divid[ed] them" (Smith, 2010, para. 2). In other words, there were areas of women's health where donor aid could be used to provide tangible results in maternal and child health, without provoking other governments or the religious constituency that supported Harper by raising the issue of abortion.

The second part of the controversy is especially problematic, because Canada was not stepping up to fulfill its role as an international powerhouse and role model. Under this initiative, the Conservative Party decided to not take a stance or engage in productive dialogue with recipient countries about the legality of abortion, a dialogue which was necessary in order to change negative assumptions surrounding abortion. Primarily, Harper's Muskoka-MCNH granted aid only on Canada's terms, further perpetuating a cycle of unhelpful development assistance (Brown, 2013; Brown and Olender, 2013; Brown, Den Heyer, and Black, 2014; Blanchfield, 2015). For example, Canada's approach to abortion on the international stage suggested that "the Canadian government's MNCH multilateralism is primarily self-interested" (Brown and Olender, 2013, p.10). Instead of asking what was needed, the socially conservative stance of the Harper government assumed what was best for women in the recipient countries. This assumption gave little consideration to lives or needs of the women it wanted to help.

Research Methods / Methodological Framework

This thesis is based on secondary published material sources focusing mainly on material written during and about Harper's tenure as prime minister. I examined scholarly secondary sources from political science, women's and religious studies as well as non-scholarly sources like newspaper articles and blogs. First, I researched scholarly sources in order to develop a solid background in Canadian foreign aid, both the political and the religious composition of Canada, and finally the background and development of Muskoka-MNCH. Next, I analyzed studies about the trends of regional religious voters in Canada. Using this wide variety of scholarship, I organized themes across disciplines that I felt were relevant to my thesis topic. For example, I found a connection between the global culture wars and anti-abortion rhetoric in sub-Saharan Africa, but literature is limited on this topic. In order to work around this lack, I utilized existing literature on the American Christian Right and their anti-homosexual views in the global culture wars and drew parallels between this movement and the Canadian/anti-abortion rhetoric exported by the Harper government. I used existing literature on morality, traditionalism, and the pro-family agenda to demonstrate how there are parallels between the two movements. Finally, to place this in a Canadian context, I examined Muskoka-MNCH to demonstrate how its mandate fits within the broader scope of the global culture wars and how this has implications for women's reproductive health in sub-Saharan Africa.

Methodological Concerns

My research is based on both feminist and political science scholarship. One methodological concern that can be raised is the risk of othering and misunderstanding and/or misinterpreting the different social, political, economic, and institutional barriers that are faced

by women of colour in sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, it is necessary to be well versed in the literature from pro-choice and women of colour organizations (examples: SisterSong, Women of Colour Reproductive Justice Collective, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice) because it will provide the knowledge and research that white, Western feminist literature might miss (Roberts, 2014). The focus of these organizations on the “societal causes of racial disparity” within a reproductive justice framework will reveal the multiple barriers that women of colour in sub-Saharan face concerning their reproductive lives (Roberts 2014, p. 110).

The other potential issue that a reproductive justice framework has brought to my attention is that abortion is sometimes applied as a population control or eugenics measure by the West to restrict the births of people of colour in developing countries (and in Canada as well) (McLaren, 1990; Sethna 2006; Connelly, 2008; Dyck, 2013; Roberts, 2014; Stote, 2015). For these reasons, I will be tying in the reproductive rights framework as a model for understanding the multiple barriers that are involved in the reproductive health of women of colour. I utilize the reproductive *justice* rather than *rights* or *choice* framework because of the ability of the former to bring to the fore multiple understandings of women’s experiences with their reproductive health, and raise greater awareness of the multiple boundaries that are faced, thus moving beyond the “pro-choice movement’s singular focus on abortion” (Price, 2010, p. 43). The reproductive rights framework is said to be too narrow in scope and leaves unquestioned the unequal power balances involved in women’s ability—or inability—to choose to have an abortion. The reproductive justice framework “recognizes the importance of linking reproductive health and rights to other social justice issues such as poverty, economic injustice, welfare reform, housing, prisoners’ rights, environmental justice, immigration policy, drug policies, and violence” (Price, 2010, p. 43). As was mentioned earlier, sub-Saharan Africa is one of the poorest regions in the world, in

which poverty is the single most relevant challenge for its people and in which women of the region are affected by all these barriers, in addition to the challenges they face in carrying out their social role of rearing children. Therefore, reproductive justice acknowledges the oppression that women face by not marginalizing their experience (Price, 2010).

In my thesis, I have chosen to use the term reproductive justice instead of reproductive rights/choice. The goal of the reproductive rights/choice movement is to protect a woman's legal right to reproductive health care services. However, this framework does not always consider other barriers besides the legal system that she might face in order to obtain an abortion. The reproductive justice framework moves beyond the illusion of choice, given that for many access to abortion and the decision to have one is not a choice. According to, Russo and Steinberg (2012), "reproductive rights provide a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving reproductive justice, which requires access to the reproductive health services needed to exercise such rights without sanction or discrimination" (p. 145). Therefore, reproductive justice goes beyond the reproductive rights/choice argument, and pays particular attention to the social inequalities that affect marginalized populations.

To fully achieve reproductive fully, justice legal access to safe, hygienic birth control (both contraception and abortion) are absolutely necessary. The reproductive justice literature focuses on social, economic, and political inequalities that "contribute to the infringements of reproductive justice" (Higgins, 2006, p. 37). Therefore, reproductive justice examines women's experience and focuses on changing the structures that create inequality and the structures that affect women's reproductive health and ability to control their reproductive lives.

Reproductive justice also fits in with the broader scope of my paper, because it discusses how reproduction goes beyond biological constructions, and takes into consideration the social

processes surrounding birth, and include the nurturing and raising of children (Higgins, 2006). Therefore, social reproduction occurs when specific roles related to race, class and gender are projected in society. Specifically, in terms of gender, roles that are reproduced and reinforced by social reproduction include women's natural role as a mother (Luker, 1984). This is linked in the literature on the Christian Right, which, by promoting a family-centered picture of women's natural and social role as mothers, are reinforcing structural barriers and forms of oppression towards women. When women's identities are inherently linked to their capabilities as a reproductive beings, it is impossible to separate the two identities without further marginalizing and creating barriers for them to overcome, to improve, and have control of their reproductive lives (Lublin, 1998; Gwatkin, Bhuiya and Victoria, 2007).

Therefore, it is necessary to apply the concept of reproductive justice as a lens to examine the lives of women in developing countries because reproductive rights/choice does not adequately portray the complex barriers that exist in their lives. Gender is only one factor among many faced by a woman in the struggle to control her reproductive body. Other elements in this struggle include colonization, Western Imperialism, heterosexism/homophobia, paternalistic laws/policies, and differential power dynamics, all of which have complex and adverse consequences for women's reproductive rights (Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, 2006).

Limitations: Literature Gaps and Research Limits

The literature on the global culture wars are seriously under-researched in the Canadian context because the global culture wars are generally discussed in the context of the United States and the spread of anti-homosexuality measures to African countries. As a result, this thesis

is limited because of the gaps in literature that exist on this topic and I had to draw conclusions based on a pro-family agenda that I extended beyond homosexuality to include issues of abortion for women in sub-Saharan Africa.

Second, the literature on evangelical Christianity and the CCR, as well as their involvement with Harper is limited. Thus, I was constrained to put the pro-family agenda in a Canadian context by highlighting how the CCR embodies some of the same characteristics as the ACR and illustrate the transcontinental, transnational nature of the issues under discussion. Although there are numerous similarities between the Canadian and American Christian Right, cultural, social, and political differences between the two countries manifests themselves differently in each (Malloy, 2009). It was also difficult to obtain accurate numbers of evangelical Christians and participating members of the CCR, since each community defines and represents itself uniquely and there is not one, overarching definition that encompasses the groups in their entirety. I have set out the parameters of my definition for evangelical Christianity and the CCR, and have also sought to differentiate the CCR from evangelical Christianity, since the two are not interchangeable concepts.

Third, the literature on Harper and evangelical Christianity and the CCR is controversial and contradictory. Therefore, I had to take care to avoid popular anti-Harper sentiments and conspiracy theories about his government, in order to keep my research grounded in fact and based on empirical evidence.

Finally, due to time constraints and the limits of an M.A. thesis I did not do any fieldwork or do any interviews. I recognize that both of these would have added revealing and interesting dimensions to the overall thesis. For future directions, using interviews and doing empirical data research through fieldwork would be a good to take to further explore this topic.

Chapter 1:

Canadian Evangelical Christianity: The Pro-Family Agenda and Stephen Harper

This chapter will outline the history of evangelical Christianity in Canada and demonstrate how Christian morality, a pro-family agenda and a socially conservative ideology dovetailed with those that the Conservative Party of Canada had put forward between 2006 and 2015 through various administrative and policy initiatives. I will define evangelical Christianity as the term is used in this thesis, and will also examine the development of the Christian Right and show how this group fits into the religious political landscape of Canada. Finally, I will highlight how the evangelical Christian population became a constituency of Harper, through their similar agendas, as they relate to traditionalism, conservative sexual morality, and the family.

Who are the Evangelical Christians?

The complexity of religion, coupled with the shifting composition of belief systems in the landscape of an ever-changing world makes providing a concrete definition of a particular religion difficult. Evangelical Christianity, and by extension the Christian Right, are not excluded from this difficult process. For these reasons, this thesis will rely on the definition and foundations for describing the religion already set out by previous scholars (Reimer, 2003; Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009).

In the past, a variety of strategies have been used to define evangelical Christianity: for example, denominational, belief-based definitions as well as self-identification measures have all been applied in different ways to define the makeup of the religion. For this thesis, I will be

utilizing a denominational definition to describe evangelical Christianity. I have chosen to do so because it identifies a religious body by specific traits, such as name, structure, leadership, and the doctrine they follow. Thus, the definition of evangelical Christianity can be determined based on members' shared association with the above-mentioned categories.

According to Reimer (2003), defining evangelical Christianity can begin with the recognition of the "church as the institutional base of evangelical subculture" (p. 6). This basic definition is important because it organizes and defines evangelicals by their participation in a specific church. Therefore, it is possible to trace membership of evangelical Christians through their affiliation to specific Protestant churches.

Briefly, Protestantism is a form of Christianity that originated from the reform movement in the 16th century (Wylie, 1899). Today, Protestantism is one of three major divisions of Christendom, the other two being Roman Catholicism and Russian or Eastern Orthodoxy. Protestantism began as a movement against what its followers believed were errors in the Roman Catholic Church. Protestantism is more divided theologically and ecclesiastically than either Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy (Wylie, 1899). In other words, there are a variety of denominational families that exist within Protestantism; evangelicalism being one example. Given this wide variation, it is necessary to go beyond a basic denominational definition of this religion.

Secondly, Reimer's (2003) denominational definition distinguishes evangelicals from other religious groups, based on their unique subculture and doctrinal beliefs. Since evangelicalism is a trans-denominational movement within Protestantism, its members believe in a doctrine different from that of mainline Protestantism, which holds to a "fundamentalist belief and strict adherence to specific theological doctrines, in reaction against Modernist theology"

(Marsden, 1980, p. 116). In other words, evangelicals adhere to strict biblical literalism, meaning that they take the word of the Bible as law in everyday life. This understanding of the Bible “oppos[es] the growing tendency of church leaders to embrace a liberal interpretation of scripture and social gospel” (Butler, 2006, p. 12). Meaning that, evangelical Christians consider the word of the Bible as law and interpret it literally. It is this adherence to tradition that differentiates evangelical Christianity from other denominations, which have adopted more modern, liberal interpretations of the Bible. Further, this liberal interpretation is what has caused significant conflict between conservative and liberal religious groups, as those who believe the Bible should be interpreted literally do not condone the liberal teachings of the word of God. Thus, evangelical Christians fall under the category of religious groups who adhere to strict, literal interpretations of the Bible, which they believe are rooted in tradition (Marsden, 1980).

Third, evangelical Christians are characterized by their belief in the regeneration of the human spirit from the Holy Spirit; a concept that is known as being born again. This belief is the “specific, identifiable moment of time when a person simply and sincerely trusts in Jesus Christ as savior” (Mullen, 2012, p. 302), and is extremely common for all members of the church to have had such an experience. This transformation is important to them because being “of the flesh, associating with sin and unredeemed humanity in their earthly, bodily form,” implies that a person represents an “immoral self, one that is at odds with the will of God” (Bielo, 2004, p. 277). In order to achieve a true, pure form of moral identity, one has to change “from being of the flesh to being of the spirit, and this transition is the crux for building moral identity” (Bielo, 2004, p. 277). The born-again experience illustrates the evangelical Christian’s devotion to a pure, moral identity and explains why strict, moral beliefs are fundamental to their religiosity. The importance of this position will be further elaborated in Chapter 2.

As with many religious communities, evangelical Christianity is a broad classification that describes a variety of potentially different religious communities. While, in general, evangelical Christianity remains distinct from the more mainstream version of Protestantism, it can be further divided into smaller sub-groups. This sub-division is based on other, overarching principles that distinguish these sub-groups from evangelical Christianity. The next section will focus on defining the Christian Right, which comprises a group within, but distinct from, evangelical Christianity.

The Christian Right

The Christian Right (CR) form a community of members within evangelical Christianity. This group subscribes to the same religious principles that distinguish evangelical Christianity from more mainstream Protestantism. Both evangelical Christians and the CR have membership in Protestant churches, follow the same doctrinal beliefs and have the same unique subculture as evangelical Christians. What distinguishes the CR from evangelicals as a whole is their political involvement. Specifically, the term Christian Right is used to describe “right-wing evangelical Christian political factions who are characterized by their strong and public support of socially conservative policies” (Dowland, 2009, p. 607).

For example, although the CR adheres to the same literal biblical interpretation and is opposed to the tendency for church leaders to take a more liberal approach. This adherence to strict biblical literalism makes them more overtly outspoken in the political sphere and gives them a “willingness and ability to participate in this discourse” (Bielo, 2004, p. 278). Since they are opposed to a more liberal interpretation of scripture and social gospel, they have taken to advancing a socially conservative position on issues including homosexuality, contraception and

abortion in a public way. The CR want to “motivate the electorate around those issues” (Green and Silk, 2005, para. 4) and this is done through their involvement in public and private institutions. Therefore, although evangelicals hold similar socially conservative beliefs on homosexuality, contraception and abortion, etc. they tend to be quieter and more private about their beliefs.

This distinction is necessary because conservative religious communities have diverse interests and alliances that do not necessarily coincide with those of the CR. When the CR are referred to in this thesis, it will be with reference to “organizations and leaders that mobilize key constituencies to a conservative social agenda motivated by religious values” (Butler, 2006, p. 12), whereas evangelical Christians will be used to describe the religious community, described by the above definition, as a whole.

History and Influence of the United States

While, in recent years, evangelical Christians have gained more of a place in Canadian society, and the CCR has been more successful at mobilizing a conservative agenda, two very distinct Christian Right movements exist in both countries. Although, to date, these differences might be more difficult to discern, evangelical Christianity has had less visibility and influence historically in Canada for several reasons. One of the major reasons is because of the different religious traditions that exist in each country (Lipset, 1990; Hoover et al., 2002; Reimer, 2003; Malloy, 2009) and these different religious traditions manifest themselves in a variety of ways.

According to Malloy (2009), there are three historical reasons why Canada and the United States have “very different religious traditions” (p. 353). First, there is a significant difference in the size of the Roman Catholic population in Canada in the United States. In

Canada, approximately “half the population identifies as Roman Catholic” whereas in the United States, Catholic membership represents only a quarter of the population (Malloy, 2009, p. 353). Second, Canada has “long institutionalized the Anglican church as the *de jure* and later *de facto* official state church in Canada”, something that is different to the United States who have “outright rejected an American state church” (Malloy 2009, p. 353–354). According to 2008 census data, some 5% of Canadians identify as Anglican, which makes it the third largest church in Canada after Roman Catholicism and the United Church (Statistics Canada, 2013). With the Anglican church only holding around 5% of Canadian religious membership, its place as *de jure* and *de facto* does not really make sense. As a result, in Canada, religious identity is split between three religious institutions which account for the majority of Canadians’ religious membership. This is dramatically different from the United States where “Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians (sister denominations to Canada’s Big Three) account for less than 40% of Americans” (Reimer, 2003, p. 29). The lack of an official state church in the United States means that there has been significantly less competition between religious institutions, as evidenced by the fact that their largest religious institutions account for less than 40% membership of the entire population. Finally, the “evolution of Protestantism and its evangelical variants” was different in the two countries with a “greater American tendency to split into fundamentalist and modernist strains while Canadian denominations remained more united” (Malloy, 2009, p. 354).

Thus, evangelical Christianity has been established in present-day modern society and since the “fundamentalist-modernist debate didn’t fragment the religious community as much in Canada as it did in the United States” (Reimer 2003, p. 29), there is less of an evangelical movement in Canada.

Effects of Nationalism and Civil Identity on Religious Development

Canada and the United States are historically different when it comes to how religion developed in each country, but despite their differences, their respective national and civil identity had a significant impact on the role of religion in public life. According to Hoover et al. (2002), “Canadian nationalism has long been self-consciously defined in opposition to American national identity” (p. 353). In other words, religion and a public religious identity are fundamental aspects of Americans’ identities, yet, because Canada tends to define itself in opposition to America, there is a “call for contemptuous rejection of this sort of religious politics” (Hoover et al., 2002, p. 354). Canada’s tendency to draw a strict line between religion and politics and the competition between the three major religions in Canada has led to a distinctly different evangelical movement on Canadian soil. Reimer (2003) describes evangelicalism as a “chameleon,” because of its ability to adapt to its political, social, and cultural surroundings. Since the cultural environment of Canada and the United States is not the same, it makes sense that that evangelicalism in the two countries would display some distinct differences. The next section will show that, despite differences in membership numbers and how the religion came to be, the unique subculture of evangelical Christianity has become increasingly similar between Canada and the United States and has successfully permeated the border with few changes (Malloy, 2009).

Cross Border Links

Although there are a variety of reasons for these historic differences in evangelical Christianity between Canada and the United States, the cross-border links, networks, and

relationships linking the two movements have become increasingly apparent since the 1980s (Reimer, 2003; Malloy, 2009). In fact, an “evangelical subculture of churches, businesses, educational institutions, media, and other organizations that span the Canada-US border” has been documented (Reimer in Malloy, 2009, p. 354). As this subculture extends beyond borders, this means that private spiritual beliefs are growing more alike in Canada and the United States. According to Malloy (2009), “Canadian evangelicals mostly consume American evangelical books, music, and videos (...) and Christian radio and television deliver a stream of American evangelical music and cultural content” (p. 354). Therefore, it is argued that evangelicals in both countries “resemble each other far more than they resemble their fellow countrymen” (Reimer 2003, p. 6).

The increase in cross-border interaction could also explain why, in recent years, resulted the CCR has become more politically active in Canada. Historically, the ACR has always had a strong political presence in the United States, but it is only more recently that the presence of the CCR is seen in Canada. Before the 1990s, the influence of the CCR was minimal in comparison to the United States and it was also slower to develop. In the 1970s and 80s there were CCR groups operating in Canada but they “eschewed direct involvement in partisan politics or candidate endorsements” (Malloy, 2009, p. 355). While organizations like the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) became more active and publicly spoke out on the same moral issues as the ACR, they were unable to achieve the same visibility or influence (Malloy, 2011).

For example, EFCs status as a charitable organization meant that it had less influence in partisan politics and campaign endorsements and remained mostly outside of political life in Canada (Malloy, 2011). Although the EFC had no affiliation with an official political party, it was concentrating on the kinds of moral issues that ACR groups were concentrating on in the

U.S., a direct result of the increased cross-border interaction between the two countries. It was not until the late 1990s, almost 20 years later than the United States, that groups like the EFC achieved in Canada a degree of influence similar to that of the ACR in the political lives of Americans and in U.S. political parties. The American Christian Right had, and continues to have, strong links to the Republican party. In Canada, not only were older CCR groups such as the EFC and Focus on the Family expanding and gaining more followers and influence, but there were also several new Canadian evangelical groups and actors developing. For example, the Canadian Family Action Coalition (CFAC), was not “constrained by a charitable tax status to limit its political activities” (Malloy, 2009, p. 357) and as a result, it was able to fully engage on moral issues in the political sphere. According to Reimer (2003), other groups, such as Christians in the Public Square, Concerned Christians Canada, Inc. and 4MYCanada were all founded in the early to mid-2000s and “resembled more the ACR in their status as political pressure groups without charitable status.”

What Do They Believe?

A study in 2002 by Hoover, Martinez, Reimer and Wald examined the effects of evangelicalism on political attitudes. In particular, they compared the attitudes of evangelical Christians and non-evangelicals towards national priorities, in particular, moral and family concerns, gay rights and abortion. Unsurprisingly, evangelicals’ attitudes on homosexual rights and abortion were “slightly more opposed to equal rights for homosexuals” (p. 363) and “strongly associated with opposition to abortion” (p. 361) than non-evangelicals. But, according to their research, evangelicals were also “more moralist in their national priorities than are non-evangelicals” (Hoover et al., 2002, p. 361). In other words, evangelicals attributed more

importance to “preserving and promoting the family” and valued “raising moral standards” (p. 359) more than the non-evangelical population. The preservation of the family and raising moral standards mattered more to this community than protection of the environment or maintaining law and order in the nation. Therefore, morality and the family are two deeply held principles for evangelical Christians, which constitute a baseline for their approach to other social and economic issues.

Evangelical Christianity and Morality

Morality, in the broad sense, refers to “a complex of norms, values, or ideals that provide every individual with general guidelines to give shape to [their] life” (de Villiers, 2012, p. 4). In other words, the general sense of morality acts as a guiding compass for the individual; but it becomes much more complicated when paired with religion. Specifically, Christian morality is defined as the application of God’s laws to an individual’s personal and private life. And the application of God’s laws is coupled with the religious group’s acceptance to witness “to the unsaved that salvation is only found in Jesus Christ” (de Villiers, 2012, p. 2). Therefore, Christian morality is distinct from morality in general, because of its reliance on the will of God as the final measure of what is defined as morally good. It is also distinct because of the insistence on acceptance of Jesus Christ as a personal Lord and Saviour, which is why evangelical Christians are also known as “born again”. They trust in the salvation of Jesus Christ and in accepting him they are saved from their sins (de Villiers, 2012).

Since historically churches were “traditional arbiters of social morality” (Kaoma, 2009, p. 3), the will of God is established through their interpretation of the Bible. The role of the church in society means that churches play a fundamental role in establishing the moral direction of

their parish members. While some churches—most notably the United Church—have changed their interpretation of God’s word to be more sensitive to the attitudes and beliefs of contemporary society, others have continued to interpret the Bible literally. For example, some congregations of the United Church of Canada describe themselves as “post-theistic” and concentrate on being “more open, more inclusive, more egalitarian and more progressive” than other denominations (Wente, 2012, para. 3 and para. 5). With this stance, they have moved away from a rigid interpretation of the Bible and its moral authority, with the result that they have the most liberal outlook on key social and spiritual issues (Todd, 2012).

This shift to a more liberal interpretation of the Bible was one of the galvanizing factors in the creation of religious sub-groups, which vehemently contest the liberalization of religion and religious identity. In particular, the United Church’s³ liberal interpretation of God’s word has been seen as a factor behind the split into “fundamentalist and modernist strains” (Malloy, 2009, p. 354). One of these fundamentalist strains, evangelical Christianity, has been found to be “more moralist in their national priorities than non-evangelicals” (Hoover et al., 2002, p. 361). In other words, for evangelical Christians, their church, and their church’s interpretation of the Bible, is the institution that dictates what behaviour is acceptable in society. And that behaviour, which is dictated by the traditional moral values outlined in the Bible, has the primary influence on their morality. This strict adherence to the moral authority of the Bible means that homosexuality is seen as being “immoral and a violation of God’s will” (Oliver, 2013, p. 87). Due to the moral position laid out in the Bible, evangelical Christians are able to make arguments against

³ The United Church is a mainline reformed denomination of Protestantism that has an inclusive and liberal approach to religion. For example, there are no restrictions of gender, sexual orientation, or marital status of their ministry or parish members (United Church of Canada, 2017). The United Church falls under the blanket form of Christianity, Protestantism, which also includes evangelical Christians.

LGBTQ+ equality, because it apparently goes against what the Bible defines as moral principles. Homosexuality falls outside the spectrum for proper social and moral behaviour (Kaoma, 2009; Oliver, 2013) and is depicted as “unbiblical” (Adams, 2004, para. 22).

Those who fall outside of this perceived spectrum of normality, as well as their supporters, are painted negatively by the evangelical church and their religious community. Evangelical Christians argue that the gay community should be regarded with concern because it is promoting an unchristian, immoral agenda in contemporary society (Kaoma, 2009; Anderson, 2011; Oliver, 2013). Evangelical Christianity intertwines ideas of tradition and morality, asserting its right to “biblical orthodoxy” on what is recognized as behaviour that relates to human sexuality, specifically: homosexuality, same-sex marriage and abortion (Oliver, 2013, p. 90).

Evangelical Christianity and the Family

Secondly, evangelical Christians have a specific, traditional view not only of morality but also of family and family structure. These traditional views translate into a set of rigid social norms about the roles of men and women, family values and sexuality which occupy the “centre of the family values agenda” (Dowland, 2009, p. 629). As discussed previously, evangelical Christians’ advocate for “biblical orthodoxy” in contemporary society (Oliver 2013, p. 90). In the Bible, the family is an important and fundamental institution and evangelical Christians interpret this concept strictly. For this reason, the notion of a traditional family, which calls for “gendered family order instituted by the Bible,” is promoted and strictly adhered to (Dowland, 2009, p. 617).

In particular, the Christian Right advocates for the foundation of the family to be built from the marriage between a man and a woman, which according to Focus on the Family is the “cornerstone for society” (Dobson, 2003, para. 3). For example, as a part of this foundation they believe that gay marriage will destroy the institution of marriage and would be a “stepping stone eliminating all societal restrictions on marriage and sexuality” (Dobson, 2003, para. 26). Further, their pro-family position also affects their attitudes towards gender roles, gender equality, and abortion. According to their beliefs, women are expected to identify fully with their function of procreation—meaning that their role in the family, as well as in society, follows the bearing of children. This position is embodied in Canada by the evangelical Christian group REAL Women, which holds that women should act as the primary care givers for their family and not rely on alternative sources of day care, and that this role should be enforced by the government through tax laws and legislation (REAL Women, 2016).

Evangelical Christianity and Conservatism

This next section will focus on how the pro-family belief system and overall identity of evangelical Christianity dovetail with the underlying belief system of the Conservative Party of Canada in key areas. I will also demonstrate how these areas are used, in particular, by the CCR to influence the direction of social policies in a way that positively reflects their agenda.

Conservatism is defined by Farney and Rayside (2013) as:

1. “A set of ideas
2. Political parties on the right
3. Concerned primarily with limiting the scope of state authority and emphasizing free choice and individualism

4. Moral traditionalism, focus on order authority, and tradition
5. A pragmatic mixture of policy positions designed to appeal to a range of electoral constituencies sizeable enough to provide legislative majorities” (p. 4)

From this definition, it is clear that moral traditionalism, order and authority are key aspects in both conservatism and evangelical Christianity. According to Farney and Rayside (2013), “conservatism still marks out an adherence to traditional norms in some areas, most notably associated with family life” and “for some, this adherence to tradition comes out of a devotion to faith and religious authority” (p. 7–8). Earlier in this chapter, I outlined how these elements were fundamental to evangelical doctrine. Thus, the belief systems of evangelical Christianity and conservatism are remarkably similar.

Next, I will outline how the link between conservatism and evangelical Christianity has further dovetailed since the election of Harper to the Conservative Party and how evangelical Christians became a key constituency of this political party.

The Conservative Party and Evangelical Christianity

The relationship between evangelical Christianity and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada is complex and ambiguous. This is because their relationship is interdependent, with each group mutually benefitting from involvement with the other. In one direction, there is a “strong preference among evangelicals for the Conservative Party,” mainly because their core beliefs and moral practices align (Malloy, 2013, p. 184). On the other, “unlike the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties, the Reform/Alliance and the post-2003 Conservatives have demonstrated both a clear affinity with these groups and an understanding of how to cultivate and maintain their support” (Malloy, 2013, p. 184). In other words, the new Conservatives utilize

the support they achieve from having beliefs similar to those of the Christian right and reciprocate the relationship in order to have more success politically.

After Harper became the leader of the Conservative Party there was a rise in evangelical support for the party, as discussed in the introduction. In 2004, the Conservative Party had 53% of the evangelical vote; in 2006, 69% and in 2008, 71% (*CBC News*, 2004; Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009), an increase that will be further explored in Chapter 2.

What Does Harper Believe in?

According to Patten (2008), Harper left the Conservative party because, in his opinion, Brian Mulroney's government was "slow to deliver fundamental conservative transformation" and was not different enough from the Liberal Party (p. 28). Harper felt that the Conservative Party had lost its direction and moral foundation, because it was becoming increasingly similar to the Liberals in both policy and ideology. Instead of participating in a party he fundamentally disagreed with, Harper decided to leave in order to affiliate with something that better aligned with his personal and political position.

In particular, Harper wanted to introduce a "purer form of conservatism" to Canada, which he felt could be done through the adoption of a socially and economically conservative agenda (Patten, 2008, p. 28). This is where the connection between Harper's vision of the Conservative Party and the influence of evangelical Christianity becomes noticeable. The socially and economically conservative agenda that Harper wanted to establish in the Conservative party embodies distinct aspects of the moral belief system of evangelical Christianity. Harper's shift in ideology became apparent in the late 1990s, and it began when his association with social conservatism started to strengthen; "through his faith, approach to the

Christian Gospel, and his chosen place of worship,” he grew close to evangelical communities (Patten, 2008, p. 34).

In a Civatis speech in 2003, Harper outlined his mandate as the new leader of the Alliance party, a conservative and right-wing populist federal political party in Canada that existed from 2000–2003: to “ensure that the Alliance remains a strong and principled voice for conservatism in national politics” (Harper, 2003, para. 3). In particular, he wanted to bridge the divide between social and economic conservatism, with a core of common ideas, including “private property, small government, reliance on civil society rather than the state to resolve social dilemmas and to create social progress” (2003).

Harper (2003) criticized the Liberal agenda as a “rebellion against all forms of social norm and moral tradition in every aspect of life” (para. 34). In particular, he wanted to “rediscover social conservatism because a growing body of evidence points to the damage the welfare state is having on our most important institutions, particularly the family” (Harper, 2003, para. 42). Throughout this speech, Harper showed a particular fixation on traditionalism, moral and social norms, as well as on the institutions of the family and marriage. This position closely mirrored the convictions of evangelical Christians. Although he refused to link himself directly to this community, his efforts in creating a coalition between the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, and transforming these organizations into the new Conservative Party clearly demonstrate his belief in a party that supports the belief system of evangelical Christianity and its pro-family agenda.

Specific examples of this can be seen in the changes Harper made or attempted to make during his time as Prime Minister. For example, he wanted to reduce federal spending and change policies that interfered with the family. Harper criticized the Liberal government for

interfering in this private institution, not only by providing an “excess of government dollars in social expenditures,” things like universal child care spending, but also by directly intervening in private family matters, because “Conservatives have to give much higher place to confronting threats posed by modern liberals to this building block of our society” (Harper, 2003). Harper’s position on the government and the family is reflective of a traditionalist point of view in two ways: first, the government has no right to intrude into private family matters; second, its intrusion has a negative impact on the family and family life because there is too much outside influence.

Further, his support is identifiable with the agenda of evangelical Christians when he proposed changes to the definition of marriage. Specifically, the Conservative Party disputed the new, more liberal definition of marriage that was introduced in 2004, namely the introduction of same-sex marriage being introduced across the provinces in 2003 to it being legally recognized in the *Civil Marriage Act* in 2005. In fact, Harper built his 2004 election campaign on re-opening the same-sex marriage debate (*CBC News*, 2005). In 2005, Harper allowed a free vote in Parliament on a motion that asked the “government to introduce legislation to restore the traditional definition of marriage” (*CBC News*, 2006). Although the motion was defeated, the fact that he readdressed this debate demonstrated the direction of politics during his tenure, more generally pointing to his underlying commitment to traditionalism and conservative social norms.

More evidence that Harper’s agenda reflected parallels with evangelical Christianity is the cuts he made to government spending when he took office in 2004. His commitment to economic conservatism meant that he wanted to see less government spending on federal programs because “a nation’s government is simply wasting money if it spends more than 30%

of a nation's gross domestic product (GDP):” as he said when he took office, “Canada's various levels of spending were way above this number, in fact closer to 45% of GDP” (Wells, 2006, p. 5). In order to change this, Harper needed to make cuts to rein in federal spending. It is where those cuts were made that clearly indicate his overall plan and commitment to a socially conservative agenda. In 2006, the Harper government announced its plans to make cuts to 66 federal programs (Wells, 2006).

After Harper's election as prime minister there were also significant changes to environmental, social, and economic policies. These changes can, in part, be explained by Harper's association with the Christian and Missionary Alliance church. The Christian and Missionary Alliance church is an evangelical Protestant denomination, founded in the 1800s with around 440 churches in Canada and about two million members (Nikiforuk, 2012; the Christian and Missionary Alliance Canada, 2017). It has a wide following in Alberta, and Preston Manning, one of Harper's mentors, is a member (Coren, 2015; Nikiforuk, 2012). According to MacKey (2006), Harper was “spiritually at home in Christian and Missionary congregations in Ottawa and Calgary. Those who know him attest that he listens carefully to what his pastors and some Christian mentors have to say and finds strength in his understanding of the gospel” (p. 69). Harper's relationship with his faith and with his religious mentors helped inform his faith. This point is important because are several tenets of the Christian and Missionary Alliance church, that Harper displayed in his politics during his time as prime minister. These include:

1. Disdain for the environmental movement;
2. Distrust of mainstream science in general;
3. Distrust of the mainstream media; and finally;
4. Loyalty to the party (Nikiforuk, 2012).

All of these positions can be used to explain the shift in the direction of Canadian politics under Harper. In the 2014–2015 *Report on Plans and Priorities*, the Conservative government outlined its budget for Environment Canada, that would see “millions of dollars in cuts and hundreds of job losses over the next three years” (Nikiforuk, 2014, para. 1). The cuts to the environment were preceded by cuts to science programs and federal science budgets (Leung, 2014). Not only were there budget cuts in this area, but a survey of Canadian government employees commissioned by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) found that “nearly one-quarter (24%) of respondents had been directly asked to exclude or alter information for non-scientific reasons and that over one-third (37%) had been prevented in the last five years from responding to questions from the public and media” (n.d., p. 2) Effectively, “90% of federal scientists felt they couldn’t speak freely to the media about their research” (Leung, 2014, para. 11). The silencing of scientists and the academic community contributed to point 2 of the tenets in the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. Harper had an immense distrust of mainstream media and it translated into his control over all aspects related to public communication (Blanchfield and Bronskill, 2010). In fact, “Harper notoriously shielded himself from the media: interviews were denied, availability limited, and message control was tight” (Lederman, 2015, para. 6) because “from his right-wing perspective the media is essentially a liberal, if not socialist, institution” (Schwenger, 2007, para. 5).

Since 2006, Harper’s Conservative government used a tool known as the Message Event Proposal (MEP)⁴ in order to “control the messages from cabinet ministers, bureaucrats and Tory

⁴ MEPs are a concept instituted by the Conservative party since the won power in 2006. They are used as a political plan to co-ordinate all federal communication from cabinet ministers, federal bureaucrats, diplomats to MPs. (The Canadian Press, 2010).

MPs” (The Canadian Press, 2010). Harper’s need to control the message to the media was also reflected in his demand for loyalty from his party and from all subordinates, a demand that helped to “centralize power in the Prime Minister’s Office” (Harris, 2014, p. 48). Harper’s need for control and loyalty was so strong that for members to go against him was seen as directly opposing him (Harris, 2014). For example, in October 2006, Garth Turner, a former conservative MP (re-elected in 2006), was ousted from the Conservative party because he violated caucus confidentiality by publishing content about the party on his blog (*Globe and Mail*, 2006).

Conclusion

I have demonstrated throughout this chapter how evangelical Christianity in Canada developed with significant influence from the United States. But this did not mean that Canada experienced anything close to the size or influence of this particular religious group in political life. In fact, evangelical Christians make up a small subset of the Canadian population, some 10–12%, in comparison with their nearly 25% of the U.S. population (Reimer, 2003). While this group is considerably smaller, in recent years, the increased cross-border interaction of the ACR has served to permeate Canadian society and the CCR saw increased political activity and visibility. Since the late 1990s, the CCR has successfully created a place for itself in the public eye, through groups like 4MYCanada, CFAC, and EFC, which advocate for a more traditional and socially conservative approach to Canadian life, one which incorporates the moral tenets of their pro-family agenda (Malloy, 2009).

Clearly, the Conservative Party of Canada embodied a traditional, socially conservative and pro-family agenda that mirrored the moral convictions of Canadian evangelical Christians. This can be seen in Harper’s approach to both domestic policy. In particular, his pledge to reopen

the same-sex marriage debate as well as his cuts to federal spending in key areas, demonstrated his support for a more socially conservative and traditional Canada. For example, the cuts made to environment spending reflected Harper's commitment to a more conservative economic, social and traditional agenda. They also reflected Harper's connection to the Christian and Missionary Alliance church in Canada and his own personal faith. Harper's personal religious convictions were reflected in the types of policies he advocated in Canadian domestic, a conservative and traditional agenda that mirrored that of evangelical Christians in Canada and helped win their support in the coming federal elections.

With this mind, it is safe to say that Harper's affiliation with the Conservative Party of Canada strongly affected his attitude towards abortion, because a large portion of his constituency were against its inclusion in Muskoka-MNCH, as demonstrated by the Harris-Decima opinion polls (see Appendix C). Of this constituency, it was notably the religious population which held strong beliefs against abortion. In 2011, an exit poll conducted by Ipsos Global Public Affairs found that 57% of Protestants and 53% of Jews voted for the Conservative Party, numbers that "were well above the Tories' popular vote of 39.6%" (McMartin, 2015, para. 47). Further, "57% of respondents, who said that they attended church at least once each week also voted for the Conservatives, as did 55% of those who acknowledged that religion was important to how they cast their ballots" (McMartin, 2015, para. 48). Since the Conservative Party had made it clear that "Christians [were] welcome in politics," and in particular, "welcome in our party" (McDonald, 2006, para. 29), their exclusion of abortion from Muskoka-MNCH can be more broadly linked to their catering to a morally and socially conservative religious constituency, which did not want to see abortion funding included in the initiative.

Chapter 2:
Blurring the Lines: The Influence of Religion in Politics
in Stephen Harper's Canada -
2006–2015

Since the mid-20th century, the division between church and state has become increasingly prominent in Canadian society as “market forces undermined national identities, and consumerism nudged faith away from tradition to private spiritualities” (Van Die, 2001, p. 3). Since the early 2000s, membership in Christian churches has declined at a rate of 0.9% (Robinson, 2003). Therefore, the concept of a predominantly “Christian Canada” (Van Die, 2001, p. 3) has disappeared, and secularization theorists believe that Canada has become a “post-Christian secular state” (Bowen, 2004; Bramadat and Seljak, 2009; Gregory et al., 2009).

Unsurprisingly, this notion has drawn a considerable amount of scholarly debate (Gauvreau, 1990; Van Die, 2001; Jenkins, 2002; Butler, 2006) and it is argued that since the 1980s, religion has once again become a matter of concern (Van Die, 2001; Kaoma, 2009; Malloy, 2009; McDonald, 2010), particularly in the political sphere. Although there has been an overall decline in church membership, religious theorists assert that this is not necessarily due to a move away from religion (Haskell, 2009; Kunz, 2014; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2015). In fact, Canadians still overwhelmingly “identify themselves as Christian” (Kunz, 2014, para. 10) and “believe in God” (Haskell, 2009, p. 36); however, “institutional indicators of religiosity are on the decline” and are trending towards “more personal forms of religiosity” (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2015, p. 479).

Other trends in Canada have also altered the religious composition of the country. Since the 1990s, Canada, has welcomed immigrants with “different religious traditions” who have

contributed to a “growing religious diversity” in the country (Kunz, 2014). In 2011, Canada had a foreign-born population of 6,775,800, constituting approximately 20.6% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2013). While only representing some 20.6% of the total population, the immigrant population in Canada is more than “twice as likely than the average Canadian to be actively religious” (Todd, 2016). In fact, only “21% of people born in Canada attend religious services in comparison to the 49% of young immigrants” (Todd, 2016). Clearly, immigration has played a significant role in altering the religious composition of the country, across all religions: Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, and Sikh.

Along with a change to the religious composition of Canada due to immigration, there have also been noticeable “resurgences in religiosity, among Islamic and evangelical Christian communities” (Thomas in Kunz, 2014). In the past 20 years, the Muslim population, in comparison with every other religion in Canada, has seen its membership increase at the most rapid rate (Government of Canada, 2013). From 1991 to 2001, the number of Muslims grew by 129% (Robinson, 2003), an increase which can be linked to the immigration Canada has seen in the past 20 years from countries with Islam as their primary religion. Immigration data from 1960–2011 showed that “more than half of Arab immigrants came to Canada in the 11 years between 2000 and 2011 and more than 75% came between 1991 and 2011” and “in 2010 Arab immigration to Canada reached an all-time high – surpassing immigration from China and India” (Canadian Arab Institute, 2013, para. 1).

Evangelicalism in Canada

On a smaller scale, there is another religious group in Canada that has seen increased membership since 1991. In 1991 evangelical Christians represented 1.3% of the total Christian

population (National Household Survey, 2011). But, by 2011, their membership had increased so that they accounted for 3% of that population, or around 960,000 members (Statistics Canada, 2013). The data shows that there was a gradual, yet steady growth of the evangelical population in comparison with the rest of the Christian population, which, as stated above, has been on a steady decline (of about 0.9% per year) during the same time period (Robinson, 2003). Canada's three largest religions, Roman Catholicism, The United Church of Canada, and the Anglican Church all fell by at least 3% of total membership. Roman Catholic membership decreased from 45.2% of the total Christian population in 1991 to 38.7% in 2011; the United Church of Canada went from 11.5% in 1991 to 6.1% in 2011; and the Anglican Church went from 8.1% to 5.0% of overall Christian membership in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013).

This growth in evangelical membership can be attributed to multiple causes. First, the evangelical population has increased in Canada because of immigration. While evangelicals represent between 10 to 12% of the total Canadian population, according to Rick Hiemstra, the director of research at the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 24% of their membership is made up of immigrants (Hutchins, 2015). According to Statistics Canada, "Asia (including the Middle East) is now the main continent of origin of the immigrant population [to Canada] although Africa's share has increased" and "China and India have surpassed the United Kingdom as the country of birth most frequently reported by foreign-born people:" from 1981 to 2006 the four leading countries of origin sending immigrants to Canada were China, India, the Philippines and Pakistan (Statistics Canada in Hutchins, 2015).

In 2009, "3 out of 4 immigrants settled in Canada's three largest provinces – Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia" (Statistics Canada, 2012). Although these provinces still receive the highest numbers of immigrants in comparison to the other provinces and territories, this was

lower than previous years and “overall the proportion of immigrants settling in the three biggest provinces fell significantly from the 1990s” (Statistics Canada, 2013). In 1999, almost 90% of immigrants chose Ontario, British Columbia or Quebec in comparison to the 78% in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2013). Whereas, most notably in the Prairies but also in Atlantic Canada, the share of immigrants has increased, according to Statistics Canada (2013), the share of immigrants settling in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta rose from 9% in 1999 to 19% in 2009. Alberta was the most popular destination for immigrants, receiving 10.7% of the immigrant population for the area (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Effects of Religion and Immigration in Canada

Where immigrants settled in Canada is significant when looking at the immigrant vote in the federal elections. This is particularly relevant, because gaining the support of this community can have a positive outcome in an election campaign. For example, in the 2011 Federal Election, 29 ridings in Ontario (mostly in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)) had populations made up of more than 50% immigrants, 16 of which voted for Conservative candidates (see Figure 2). This is significant because, in the GTA “20 of the 23 seats gained in the election were won here and 41% of foreign-born Canadians live [in this region]” (Taylor, Triadafilopoulos and Cochrane, 2012, p. 1). The success of recruiting immigrant support to the Conservative Party in this election can be attributed to the notion of “shared conservative values” that led to the “creation of a new, durable, and diverse Conservative electorate” (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 2). In other words, the Conservative Party placed emphasis on attracting immigrant voters to the party by offering “more conservative policy platforms,” specifically a “respect for traditional family structures”

(Taylor et al., 2012, p. 2).

Ridings with most immigrants, as per cent of population, by victorious party (2011)

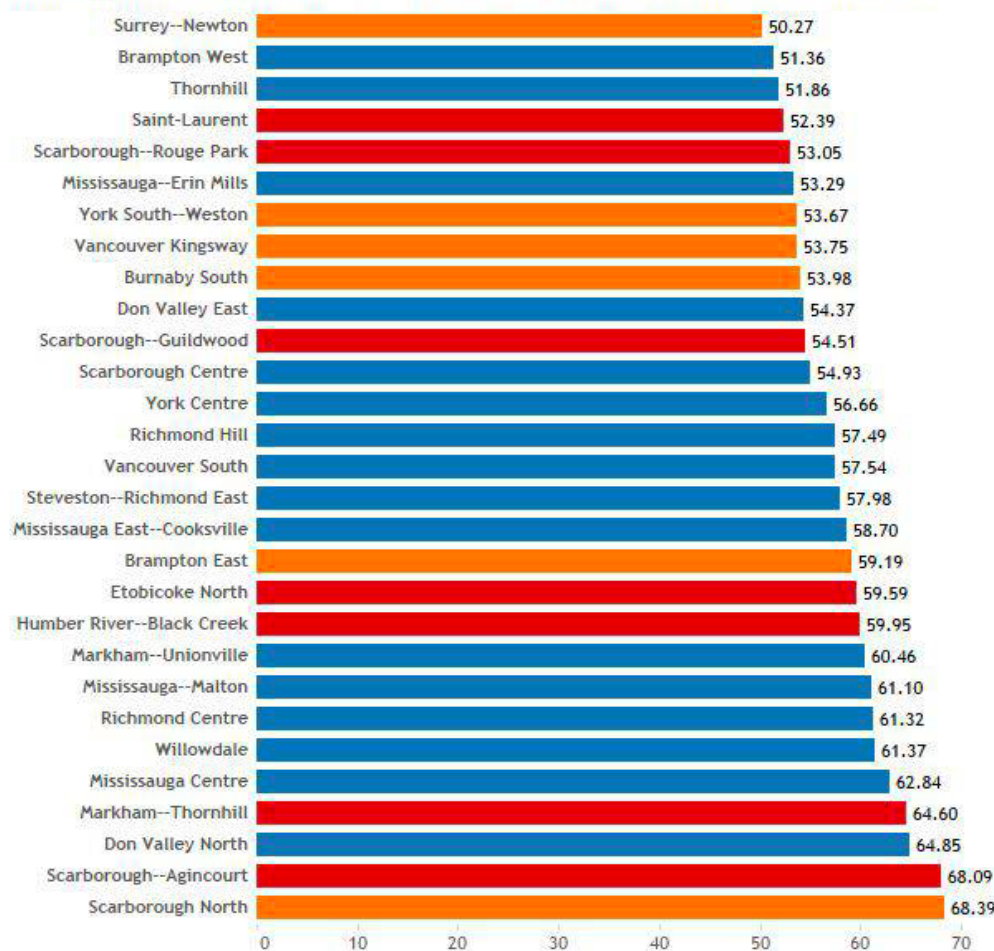


Figure 2. Ridings with most immigrants, as per cent of population, by victorious party (2011)

Note: Source: Paperny in *Global News*, 2015. Link: <https://globalnews.ca/news/2291301/immigrants-voted-liberal-by-a-landslide-and-other-things-we-learned-from-the-federal-election-results/>

The success of Harper’s 2011 election campaign in winning the immigrant vote can be attributed, in part, to Jason Kenney, the former Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. One of the strategies employed by the Conservative Party was an “aggressive ethnic outreach strategy that includ[ed] frequent visits to key ridings by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration” (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 8). During these visits, Kenney, usually

accompanied by Harper, “praised [the immigrant community’s] devotion to Canada and [their] commitment to hard work and traditional values.” Other strategies employed by Kenney included using the ethnic media to air Conservative campaign ads in the groups’ native tongue, as well as running visible minority candidates in key ridings. In 2004, the Conservative Party ran “29 visible minority candidates – more than any other party” (Bird, 2005, 453). These strategies over the course of seven years (2004–2011), especially in the GTA, were successful at “encroaching on the Liberal hegemony” where the “Conservatives expanded from rural areas into the city” (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 10) and gained significant support in immigrant-dense ridings.

As a result there was an increase of immigrant support for the Conservative Party of Canada from 2004–2011 throughout the GTA. This increase is important because the immigrant community generally supported Harper’s overall more traditional and conservative policy platforms utilized by the Conservative Party during the federal elections. Specifically, the immigrant population was praised for their traditional values, seen as similar to those of evangelical Christians.

The similarities between these two communities do not stop here. Immigrants, new and foreign-born Canadians generally are also more overtly religious than other Canadians (Todd, 2016). While native-born Canadians are less religious in nature, the influx of immigrants to the country means that immigrants are shaping religious beliefs in Canada. Notably, immigration from countries with a majority Muslim population in the Middle East, as well as Christian countries in Asia and Africa, has had an impact on both the Muslim religious community as well as on the evangelical one (Shingler, 2013). The “arrival of religious immigrants has worked to offset the country’s growing secular population” an important factor because these groups add “a

level of traditionalism to Canadian society” (Weinfield in Shingler, 2013, para. 12). Their commitment to traditionalism and the importance religion plays in their sense of identity are important factors in the Conservative Party’s targeting of this community as a voting base, beyond how their immigration to Canada alters the religious landscape of the country.

Currently there are over “200 denominations [of evangelical Christian churches] in Canada” (Hiemstra in Hutchins, 2015, para. 11). This is significant, not only because immigrants add to the number of evangelical believers in Canada, but also because it explains why it is hard to properly track and record the evangelical population. According to Hiemstra, “evangelical denominations tend to be smaller but very fast growing (...) it’s difficult to find and track them because they’re too new” (Hutchins, 2015, para. 12). These new churches are also Chinese or African in origin – or South American or Korean or Filipino or Vietnamese (Hutchins, 2015). This is noteworthy, considering the shift in the centre of Christianity from the West to the South (Jenkins, 2002). With “Christianity on a global rise—for example there could be more than 220 million Christians in China by 2050—one can extrapolate how more immigration to Canada means more potential believers” (Hutchins, 2015, para. 13).

Moreover, the evangelical community increased in membership, in part because of dissatisfaction over the way in which the Catholic Church deals with worshipers’ spiritual needs and the worship service itself. According to the Pew Research Center (2009), the majority of former Catholics cite “having stopped believing in Catholicism’s teachings overall, [and] dissatisfaction with Catholic teachings about abortion and homosexuality and birth control” as reasons for leaving the Church. Instead of leaving religion entirely, they are turning to evangelical Christianity to fill the gap (para. 3). Other reasons for this switch were cited as lack of spiritual fulfillment in the Catholic church, the Catholic Church did not view the Bible

literally enough, and liking the religion more than Catholicism (Pew Research Centre, 2009).

The influx of immigrants to Canada in recent years could explain, in part, why there has been a steady increase in the practice of evangelical Christianity. In addition, a significant proportion of Canadian Christians has grown dissatisfied with more mainstream denominations and their increasing liberalization of the understanding of religion and the Bible (Pew Research Center, 2009), leading to a steady increase in the evangelical population over time.

Both reasons are significant when looking at the broader impact this religion has had in Canada. It is difficult not only to define evangelical Christianity, but also to trace and track its membership, given that immigrants come into the country and join already existing congregations, and establish their own. It should also be noted that churches are constantly redefining themselves and their membership base, which adds to the difficulty in tracking membership. Finally, the reasons for joining evangelical Christian denominations are based on dissatisfaction about teachings on abortion, homosexuality, and birth control, demonstrating how deeply the conservative and traditional socio-political leanings of this community are.

In this chapter, I will illustrate how religion, specifically evangelical Christianity, played a role in Harper's domestic and international politics and explore the religious composition of Canada in order to demonstrate how the religious climate of Canada has changed and what looked like when Harper came to power.

Decline of Religiosity for Christians in Canada

Over the past ten years, religious identity has been on the decline within Canada, especially within Christian denominations. In the Canadian 2011 National Household Survey, 67% of the population listed Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, or another Christian

denomination as their religion. This percentage was considerably lower than the 2001 census, on which 77% of the population listed a Christian affiliation (Statistics Canada, 2013). What is also important to note is the increase in Canadians who do not identify with any religion at all. In 2011, 23.9% declared no religious affiliation as compared with only 16.5% in 2001 (Robinson, 2003). With Christianity in decline, and overall rates of religious affiliation decreasing, this data is supportive of the earlier assumption that Canada has entered a post-Christian, secular state (Bowen, 2004; Bramadat and Seljak, 2009; Gregory, et al., 2009). In fact, it is estimated that “by the year 2023 non-Christians will outnumber Christians in Canada” (Robinson, 2003, para. 16).

While this data shows a steady decrease in Christian religious membership in Canada, it is significant to note that this is not the case for other religious groups. Evangelicalism is a subgroup of Protestantism and the United Church of Canada, which holds the country’s largest Protestant denomination. While Protestant membership, has declined from 34.9% in 1991 to 24% in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2013), evangelical Christianity has seen a slow, but steady, *increase* in membership. Estimates from scholars’ state conservatively, that anywhere between 7%–12% of the Canadian population identifies as evangelical (Hoover, 2002; Reimer, 2003), but this number could be even higher, for reasons discussed earlier.

In particular, a strong current of evangelical Protestantism has emerged in the Atlantic provinces and in Western Canada: Alberta, southern Manitoba, and regions in British Columbia. These regions have now become known as the “Canadian Bible Belt” (Dart, 2012, p. 87). Strong currents of evangelicalism are also seen in the surrounding suburbs of Toronto.

Therefore, it is evident that since the 1990s, the composition of religion in Canada has shifted. What was once a country dominated by Christianity has now grown in diversity and adherence to a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs, and to such an extent, that

membership of Canadians in Christian religions is in decline and non-Christian religions, like Islam, have seen an exponential level of growth. Furthermore, smaller, sub-sects of Christianity like evangelical Christianity have garnered more followers and seen increases in membership across the country.

Religion and Party Politics: The Conservative Party and Stephen Harper

Harper was elected as Canada's Prime Minister in 2006, but prior to this election the Liberal Party held power in Parliament from 1993 to 2006. During this time, the Liberals began to slowly alienate evangelical voters through their approaches to public and foreign policy, and the introduction of domestic legislation that evangelicals felt was morally repugnant (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009), such as same-sex marriage, their stance on abortion, and the national day care bill. A distinct shift of evangelical support from the Liberal to the Conservative party can be seen to have occurred beginning in the late 1990s.

The History of the Conservative Party of Canada

The Reform Party of Canada was a Canadian right-wing, populist, federal political party, known for its strong social conservative elements. It was formed in 1987 and was active until 2000. It was founded by Preston Manning in Western Canada, the party's only leader until its dissolution in 2000. It was succeeded by the Canadian Alliance.

The Canadian Alliance was a conservative, right-wing, populist, federal political party that existed in Canada from 2000 to 2003. The party was a successor to the Reform Party of Canada, and as such, inherited the party's position as the official opposition in the House of Commons. The party was known for its support of both fiscally and socially conservative

policies. The first leader of the Canadian Alliance was Stockwell Day, and he held the post as leader until 2001, and later by Stephen Harper, who remained leader until 2003, when the party merged with the Progressive Conservatives led by Peter MacKay.

The Progressive Conservative Party was a Canadian federal political party that held a centre-right stance on economic issues, and a centrist stance on social issues. Due to declining support from conservative constituents and a split vote between this party and the Canadian Alliance, it was decided in 2003 to merge the two parties into the present day Conservative Party of Canada.

The Conservative Party of Canada is the political party in Canada that is successor to multiple right-wing parties that existed in Canada prior to 2004.

Harper and the Conservative Party

In February 2006, Harper, elected leader of the newly formed Conservative Party of Canada, was sworn in as Canada's twenty second Prime Minister. He served as Prime Minister of Canada from 2006 until 2015, and was responsible for leading the Conservative Party to three consecutive electoral victories: two minority governments (2006–08 and 2008–11) and one majority government (2011–2016) (Prince, 2015). Harper's long term success in Canadian politics was due, in large part, to his success at winning the immigrant and religious vote by targeting these communities with approaches to public and foreign policy that met their traditional, moral beliefs, beliefs that also dovetailed with his own personal and private convictions.

Harper, in the early 1980s, worked as a legislative assistant in Ottawa for Jim Hawkes, a Progressive Conservative member of Parliament (MacKay, 2005). Although he worked for the

Progressive Conservative party for some five years, Harper eventually resigned from his position under Hawkes and left this party entirely, because he felt “frustrated with the political process under Brian Mulroney’s leadership” (MacKay, 2005, p. 2). This frustration led him to Preston Manning, then leader of the Reform Party in Alberta. In 1986, Harper was invited to join the Reform Party, becoming its Chief Policy Officer, and in 1988 he played an instrumental role in drafting its election platform (MacKay, 2005). Harper believed that the Reform Party would “bring a purer sense of democracy to Canada,” something he adamantly argued that the “flat-lining Progressive Conservatives” could not do (Kennedy, 2013, para. 10).

Manning, a devout and openly evangelical Christian, is credited with converting Harper to evangelical Christianity. According to McDonald (2006), “Harper’s evangelical conversion dates back to when he was helping Manning hammer out the Reform Party’s credo”(p. 46) and as was discussed earlier, Harper belongs to the same evangelical church as Manning, the Christian and Mission Alliance, that has strongholds in Western Canada. Harper’s religious beliefs were not new and have their origins in the period he spent in Calgary with Manning and other prominent figures who belonged to the evangelical church. Tom Flanagan, a key player in Harper’s rise to political success, acted as his campaign manager for his leadership campaigns for both the 2002 Canadian Alliance leadership race, as well as the Conservative Party’s national election campaign in 2004 (Flanagan, 2007). During this period, Harper also formed a relationship with Stockwell Day, another influential political figure in Alberta, who was an evangelical Christian and acted as a voice for social conservatives within the Conservative Party (Todd, 2008).

Harper’s own personal beliefs and religious convictions, combined with the mentoring he received by active and devoutly evangelical Christians, shaped the direction of the electoral

platform of the Reform Party and its overall identity as a right-wing, populist party with strong social conservative elements (Todd, 2008; Kennedy, 2013). This identity helped the Reform Party to secure a voting base that firmly upheld their beliefs (Kennedy, 2013), one that, especially in the West, comprised a significant proportion of evangelical Christians.

In 1996, the Angus Reid Group conducted a survey in order to determine the impact of religion on voting trends. This survey broke Canada down by regions and the data showed that although evangelicals tended to be more politically conservative, especially in the West, their voting patterns “closely matched those of their neighbours” (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 3). In other words, there tended to be “political symmetry” in that evangelical Christians did not overwhelmingly vote in one direction or for one specific party; the voting intentions between all Canadians and evangelical Christians fell along similar lines depending on what region of Canada they came from (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 3). Religion was not as big a determining factor on party support, but this climate dramatically shifted when compared to 2008 statistics. Therefore, although the Reform Party had secured a voting base that was made up of more evangelical Christians, particularly in the West, this group did not play a significant role in the federal election until much later, after the Reform Party had dissolved and the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives merged into the Conservative Party of Canada. At this time, the merger between the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives, social changes, and scandals were all factors contributing to the radical shift in voting intentions⁵ for all Canadians (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 3).

⁵ Voting intentions measures the voting objectives of those surveyed and not how they actually voted in the general election. The datasets in the study by Hutchins and Hiemstra (2009), focused on the voting intentions of the evangelical population in Canada and compared them to verified voting results from Elections Canada.

In 2003, the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance Party came together to form the Conservative Party of Canada, with Harper as its elected leader in 2004. This party, for the first time in almost two decades, had a united front against the Liberals in the 2004 election. Harper understood that in order for the new Conservative Party to have political success, he needed to unite the “fragments of Canadian Conservatism” because each “represents an authentic aspect of a larger conservative philosophy” (Kennedy, 2013, para. 27). Although the Conservatives did not win, a 2004 poll showed that many formerly undecided voters came out in favour of Conservatives (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 7), representing a shift in the voting base that won the Conservatives 99 seats, 32% of seat totals (*CBC News*, 2004) and reduced the Liberals to minority status in parliament.

Western Voting Intentions

Table 1 shows that from 1996 to 2008, there was a considerable increase in support for the Conservative Party after the 2003 party merger of the Canadian Alliance with the Progressive Conservatives in the West. From 2004 onwards, the amount of support for the Conservative Party, now with no opposition, increased steadfastly within the evangelical community (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009). In 2004, they had 53% of the evangelical vote, in 2006, 69% and in 2008, 71%. In comparison with the rest of the West’s support for the party, evangelicals supported the Conservatives by at least 8% more (in 2004) and 29% more in 2008 than they had in previous federal election years. This increase in support coincided with changes Harper made to the Conservative Party and their shift in support from the Liberal party. According to Hutchinson and Hiemstra (2009), “each time Canadians went to the federal polls in 2004, 2006, and 2008, the Liberals only managed to hold on to roughly half of the evangelical voters they had had at the

previous election” (p. 6). One of Harper’s promises in his 2005 election campaign was to re-open the same-sex marriage debate (*CBC News*, 2005), a move that was considerably favoured by evangelical Christians. Harper’s changes to the Conservative Party, especially those made regarding the family and traditional values, were what convinced the evangelical community in Canada to become a constituency of Harper’s. Prior to 2005, this community did not display a distinct trend in their voting patterns and tended to vote more according to geographic location. But, since Harper espoused policies that reflected their traditional value systems, there was a noticeable change in their voting behaviour.

Party	1996		2003		2004		2006 (Internet Exit Poll)		2008	
	All (N=870)	Ev. (N=188)	All (N=890)	Ev. (N=141)	All (N=594)	Ev. (N=145)	All (N=10,324)	Ev. (N=2,047)	All (N=935)	Ev. (N=141)
PC	9	9	12	13	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ref	20	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CA	-	-	22	42	-	-	-	-	-	-
Con	-	-	-	-	45	53	49	69	42	71
Lib	37	30	31	18	23	17	23	13	12	8
NDP	9	6	15	9	18	14	22	14	18	4
Grn	-	-	6	3	6	7	6	3	10	7
Other	2	2	3	4	2	1	1	2	1	3
DK	19	15	7	7	3	4	0	0	17	8
WNV/R/ SB	5	6	4	3	3	5	0	0	0	0

Abbreviations: PC = Progressive Conservative Party; Ref = Reform Party; CA = Canadian Alliance Party; Con = Conservative Party; Lib = Liberal Party; NDP = New Democratic Party; Grn = Green Party; DK = Don't Know; WNV/R/SB = Would Not Vote/Refused/Spoil Ballot.

Table 1 Western Region: Voting Intentions for All Westerners (All) and Evangelicals (Ev.),

Note. Source: Angus-Reid Group 1996 in Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009.

Therefore, the voting behaviour of evangelical Canadians in the West trended heavily towards support of the Conservative Party, especially after the merger of the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative Party. This is particularly significant because of Harper's ties to the West, socially, religiously, and politically, as well as the impact that regionalism has on determining voting patterns (Nevitte, 2000; Blais, 2002; Gidengil, et al., 2006). In particular, in the 2004 Canadian federal election, Gidengil et al. (2006) reported that the probability for Western provinces to vote for the Conservative Party was 15 points higher as compared with the other provinces. This trend can be explained in two ways: first the West has become known as the "Canadian Bible Belt" (Dart, 2012, p. 87), with this region of Canada having higher numbers of evangelical Christians; second, since the early 2000s, immigration to the West has increased, and since the immigrant population has been shown to lean towards greater religiosity, specifically towards born-again or evangelical Christianity (Taylor et al., 2012), their settling in this region could also explain the increase in the support of evangelical Christians for the Conservative Party in the West.

Voting Intentions in Ontario

Although the West is generally known for its support of conservative political parties, Ontario has tended to go the other way and vote for Liberal political parties (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009). This has been evident in Ontario where "combined decided conservative support (whether that be Progressive Conservative, Canadian Alliance, Reform Party or Conservative) has "consistently trailed [the] decided liberal" vote (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 12). Despite the fact there is a marked history of Liberal support in Ontario, this trend

began to change in the mid 1990s. During this time, the Reform Party in 1996 began its upward climb, nearly doubling to 19.1% in the 2000 election (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 12), an increase due in large part to the decline of the evangelical community's support for the Ontario Liberal Party beginning in 2000.

According to Hutchinson and Hiemstra (2009), between 2000 and 2004 the Liberals would "lose close to half of their evangelical supporters in the province, and in 2004 the Conservative Party drew roughly equal measures of Ontario evangelical support from those who had voted PC, CA, and Liberal in the 2000 election" (p. 13). As a result, a shift in the voting tendencies of not only the general population of Ontario but also the religious vote is notable here. In particular, the percentage of the conservative evangelical vote "grew rapidly between 2003–2004, from 36% to 42%, and would continue this pace of growth, reaching its apex at 55% in 2006" (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 13).

Clearly, increasing evangelical support, demonstrated by their voting patterns with regards to the Conservative Party in the West of Canada, and coupled with the decrease in their support for the Liberals in Ontario played a contributing role in Harper's 2006 electoral victory. According to Andrew Grenville, a senior vice-president at polling firm Ipsos-Reid, who has monitored the voting patterns of religious groups in Canada for 15 years, "the [2006] federal election brought the first indication of a distinct, national religious-conservative vote (Dreher, 2006, para. 13). This was marked by the increase in the 2006 election by Protestant voters who cast their ballots for the Conservative Party, an increase of 25% (Dreher, 2006).

The support for Harper on the part of this particular community of evangelical Christians was only bolstered by the moral issues that were a focus of particular attention in Canadian public debate in the 2006 election (see Table 2). Three such moral issues that were the highest

priority for evangelical voters throughout Canada were: same-sex marriage, abortion and government corruption. In Western Canada, the issue that mattered most to evangelical Christians was cleaning up corruption, with 23% of evangelical Christians saying it was what had greatest importance for them. In Ontario, the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, moral issues had top priority for the evangelical population—25%, 25% and 22%, respectively— (Ipsos-Reid, 2006 in Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009). These three issues took priority over such concerns as managing the economy, fixing health care and social programs and promoting national unity.

Since Harper's election promise was to address these moral issues, the jump in evangelical support for his party in the 2006 election was a direct outcome of his influence in the moral direction of the Conservative Party of Canada. With these promises, evangelicals felt that they could trust the Conservative Party to not only push forward legislation that fit their socially conservative moral principles, but also to prevent things that "evangelicals found morally objectionable, such as legislation to legalize euthanasia, from passing into law" (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, it can be seen that there was a clear mixture of religion and politics under Harper's Conservative Party, highlighting how religion and religious belief in Canadian political life is more prominent and pervasive than previously assumed.

In addition, as noted previously, the immigrant vote in Ontario, specifically in the greater Toronto area (GTA), had shifted towards support for Conservatives, especially in the latter years of Harper's leadership, notably, in the 2011 election in which Harper won 20 out of 23 seats in the GTA, where immigrants made up over 50% of the ridings in the area (Taylor et al., 2012). The Conservative Party was also successful at winning the immigrant vote, because they created an electoral platform focused on the traditional and moral social values that Harper's evangelical constituency supported.

Table 2 Top Five Responses to the Question, “Which one of the following issues mattered most in decide which party’s candidate you voted for today (January 23, 2006 General Election)?” For the general population (All) and for Evangelicals (Ev.) by region, percentages

Issue	Western		Ontario		Québec		Atlantic	
	All (N=10,324)	Ev. (N=2,048)	All (N=13,792)	Ev. (N=2,056)	All (N=8,898)	Ev. (N=237)	All (N=2,898)	Ev. (N=502)
Cleaning up corruption	21	23	15	17	22	13	13	16
Moral issues like abortion and same sex marriage	12	21	13	25	6	22	11	25
Managing the economy	14	12	16	12	15	14	14	12
Fixing our healthcare system	14	10	16	12	13	10	14	12
Social programs like childcare, pensions	11	9	12	9	-	-	13	11
Keeping Canada together / National Unity	-	-	-	-	11	16	-	-

Note. Source: Ipsos-Reid Exit Poll 2006 in Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009.

Aside from region and class, “religion has been found to be one of the strongest vote determinants in Canada” (Gidengil, 1992; Blais, 2005; Anderson and Stephenson, 2010). In other words, religious affiliation is another determinant for political party support. According to Hutchinson and Hiemstra (2009), evangelicals have always been “slightly more politically conservative” (p. 3), than Catholics who “tend to vote disproportionately for the Liberal Party” (Anderson and Stephenson, 2010, p. 17). Because of their growing prominence in the electorate, “evangelicals found, especially in the 2004 and 2006 elections, that not only were [the Conservative] advocating policy positions they believed to be biblical, but they were responding to Liberal attempts to delegitimize evangelical voices and evangelical participation in public debate” (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 21).

Harper was not as openly religious as other leaders of right-wing federal parties, such as Manning or Day, but this did not mean that his religious beliefs played no role in how he guided the Conservative Party. But religious affiliation could be politically dangerous, as it had been with Day (Moriarty, 2000), as his religious beliefs called into question his ability to be a good leader in the 2000 election. In this sense, it was strategically smart for Harper to dissociate himself from his religious beliefs in public, conscious that evangelical Christians represented only a small fragment of the overall population. In so doing, Harper avoided making the same mistakes as Day, and even Manning, who were both open about their religious convictions (Todd, 2008). This is why Harper's own religious association with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, an evangelical Protestant church with two million members, was not disclosed, and he "refused to answer media questions about his beliefs or which groups inform them" (Nikiforuk, 2012, para. 14). However, he continued to keep the support of his evangelical constituency by promoting domestic and foreign policies that supported their moral convictions.

Conclusion

Harper walked a tightrope trying to balance the multiple identities of the Conservative Party while situating himself in the middle in order to appeal to everyone, namely a portion of the party fell in line with Christian and socially conservative ideologies, while others held more liberal and less religious positions and more economically conservative views. He knew that "political victory require[d] social and economic conservatives to work together in political contest against more liberal voices" (Patten, 2008, p. 38). Unifying the Reform and Alliance parties as the Conservative Party of Canada allowed him to bring together two sides of the conservative debate, and he was able to do this because he fundamentally believe[d] that social

and economic conservatives are “more often than not the same people” (Harper, 2003, para. 25). He worked hard to appear neutral and more of an economic conservative than a social one, but this was more an act of “strategic pragmatism” than anything else (Flanagan, 2009, p. 15). Although Harper worked hard to empower the social conservatives and “discredit portrayals of social conservatives as bigots” (Patten, 2008, p. 34), he had been involved in this area of conservative politics for many years and had built the Conservative Party on the strength of these ideas. His agenda extends back further than his election in 2006, and can be attributed in part to the Conservative party’s support of traditionalist, moral, and family-oriented belief system which successfully secured the evangelical population of Canada as a voting constituency, and helped to shift the immigrant vote from the Liberals to the Conservatives.

The religious vote for Harper’s Conservatives was a contributing factor in Harper’s election as Prime Minister in 2006, and helped to keep him in power until 2015. In particular, his 2011 majority win demonstrated the success Harper had with not only of the religious right, but also with the immigrant population (Todd, 2011). With these two strong communities as their voting base, the Conservatives “topped the polls in May 2011, in part by winning over religious voters, particularly Protestants⁶” (Todd, 2011). Along with religious voters, the Conservative party also successfully won 43% of the votes of immigrants who had been in Canada longer than 10 years. The higher propensity of immigrants to be more actively religious, especially in more conservative religious denominations such as evangelical Christianity, helps to explain the Conservative party’s success in capturing a significant portion of this voting base. The Conservatives, led by Stephen Harper, an evangelical Christian, were most successful in

⁶ Protestant is a term used by some as synonymous with evangelical Christian. Here, it is being used as such.

attracting the Protestant⁷ vote (55%) and those who frequently attend church or temple (50%) (Ipsos Reid Exit Poll in Todd, 2011).

⁷ See footnote 6.

Chapter 3

The Global Culture Wars: Canada, The Muskoka Initiative and Reproductive Justice

In previous chapters, I have outlined Harper's private and personal relationship with evangelical Christianity and by extension, the CCR. The effects of this relationship are illustrated by the manner in which the evangelical community morphed from a religious group in Canada to a constituency of the Conservative Party. This transformation was demonstrated by the steady increase in evangelical support for the Conservative Party, an increase that culminated at its highest point in 2008 to 71% (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009).

Harper gained the support of the evangelical community because of the ideological shift of the Conservative Party that began when he was elected interim leader, including the creation of foreign aid policies that refused funding for abortion (*CBC News*, 2010; *CBC News* 2011; Macreal, 2014). All of these changes demonstrated the shift of Conservative Party ideology towards a more conservative, traditional and pro-family agenda (MacDonald, 2010; Ibbotsen, 2014; Mackinnon, 2017), one that dovetailed with the thinking of the evangelical Christian community. And Harper did not hesitate to use the support of his evangelical constituency to justify the anti-abortion stance of Muskoka-MNCH internationally.

This final chapter will illustrate the link between the global culture wars, Canada and the anti-abortion message of the foreign aid policy, Muskoka-MNCH, in sub-Saharan Africa. I will do this by extending the arguments made by Kapya Kaoma (2009), John Anderson (2011) and Marcia Oliver (2013) concerning the global culture wars, the United States of America and homophobia in Africa. I will show that anti-abortion rhetoric, like homophobic attitudes,

dovetails with the agenda of evangelical Christianity and, by extension, fit the new ideology of the Conservative Party.

First, I will analyze the Muskoka-MNCH Initiative and demonstrate how its mandate reflects the traditional, morally strict and pro-family agenda supported by both the Conservative Party and evangelical Christians. I will show that Muskoka-MNCH coincides with the culture wars and reflects the domestic division of opinion over abortion (Davison Hunter, 1991).

Second, I will demonstrate that this domestic unrest over abortion became global when it was projected into the international arena by means of Muskoka-MNCH. Instead of a foreign aid policy meant to aid women's reproductive health internationally, it turned into an initiative representing a partnership between the Conservative government and Harper's evangelical constituency in Canada. Further, Harper utilized this initiative as a way to gain support for his own agenda, because he could not reopen the debate over the legality of abortion domestically and continue to win votes throughout the country (*Macleans*, 2011). Therefore, in order to satisfy the socially conservative demands of his evangelical constituency and keep them as his voting base, Harper had to move the debate overseas.

Finally, I will show how the Harper government did not use its international influence and leadership position to advocate for the accessibility of high quality abortion care in sub-Saharan Africa because of Harper's connection with evangelical Christianity and his own personal religious beliefs. In order to placate this community and voting base in Canada, the Harper government created a policy that ignored abortion as a legitimate and necessary facet of women's reproductive health.

Shifting Canadian Values

This section will explain in depth the distinctive mandate of the Conservative Party, which incorporated moral traditionalism, a focus on order and gender authority, limited government, all of which were tenets of the underlying belief system of evangelical Christianity and the evangelical Church to which Harper belonged (Dowland, 2009; Farney and Rayside, 2013).

One of the significant policies promoted during the tenure of the Harper Conservatives was a more negative attitude towards gender equality. In the first years of his leadership, Harper moved in “many ways to halt the course of progress for women” most notably, when his government “summarily cancelled the multi-billion-dollar national child care program that the previous Liberal government had spent years negotiating with the provinces (and women’s groups had fought to have for decades)” (Dobbin, 2010, para. 4). Instead, what was recommended by REAL Women for Canada, a right-wing, pro-life, evangelical Christian women’s group, was for families with children under age six to receive a taxable 100\$ a month payment – a “pittance compared to the cost of professional child care” (Dobbin, 2010, para. 7). They also advocated for a “dedication to the role of motherhood [which] should be encouraged, not discouraged, by tax laws and legislation” (REAL Women, 2016, para. 3). In other words, REAL women’s recommendation was for women to act as the primary care givers for their family and not rely on alternative sources of day care and that this be encouraged by the government through tax laws and legislation.

Not only were women were encouraged indirectly— through the federal cuts to the national daycare program—to stay at home with their children, but there were also significant cuts to federal programs from which women derived direct benefits. For example, in 2006, the

Harper government announced its plans to make cuts to 66 federal programs, the majority which affected minority groups and women in Canada. According to Hennessy (2008), “some of the core cuts were delivered to the Court Challenges Program and to the Status of Women Canada” (p. 41). These institutions were critical for addressing issues such as “pregnancy discrimination, discrimination of sexual orientation, and were very involved with challenging the discrimination women faced based on what they were wearing in sexual assault cases” (Brewin in Hennessy, 2008, p. 41–42). These cuts diminished the federal government’s responsibility to “protect minority rights and to ensure all Canadians have access to fundamental justice” (Hennessy, 2008, p. 41), reinforcing the idea that the Conservative Party had an anti-feminist, anti-abortion, and anti-gay agenda that was carried out through their fiscal and socially conservative legislation.

Finally, in early 2006, it was declared by the minority Conservative government that gender equality had been achieved and it “purged any reference to gender equality from the mandate of Status of Women Canada” (Bakker and Brodie, 2008, p. 7). At the same time, there was also a “discursive shift [in the language] from gender equality” to “equality between men and women” (Tiessen and Carrier, 2015, p. 95). Moving away from the language of gender equality had numerous implications. One of the most significant was seen in Canadian foreign policy commitments, in particular, the substitution of “gender-based violence” for violence against women,” and “mothers” for “women” directly “challenged the robust Canadian rhetorical tradition of promoting the concept of gender equality internationally” (Tiessen and Carrier, 2015 p. 95 and p. 99).

The Conservative Government’s erasure of gender from foreign policy was a “calculated and deliberate strategy to appeal to a conservative domestic constituency that perceives gender equality as an objectionable quality” (Tiessen and Carrier, 2015, p. 105). This strategy reflected

the Conservative's broader plan to promote a more traditional agenda that also includes a strong anti-feminist, anti-gay and anti-abortion stance (McDonald, 2006; McDonald, 2010; Gecelovsky, 2012; Gecelovsky 2013). An example of these views is illustrated by the CCR group REAL Women, referred to earlier. Its goal is to "motivate the government to integrate the needs of the family into government policy and legislation" because the "family is the most important unit in society" (REAL Women of Canada, 2016, para. 3). At the centre of the pro-family movement is a traditional view of women's role in society, as well as a pro-life—that is, anti-abortion—stance.

While Harper could not make domestic changes to abortion laws without incurring significant backlash, he was able to change Canada's foreign affairs and development policy, which, according to Carrier and Tiessen (2013), allowed him to "appease the traditional Conservative base in Canada (...) while enabling [him] to avoid committing political suicide by reopening the abortion debate" (p. 190). In other words, Harper, unable to make changes to Canadian abortion laws to please the Conservative constituency, exported abroad the changes which they wished to see on the domestic front. This move was very similar to what the ACR has done regarding homosexuality and gay marriage in the United States (Kaoma, 2009; Oliver, 2013). For these reasons, I believe there are parallels that can be drawn in the global culture wars between Harper's anti-abortion stance in Muskoka-MNCH and the ACR's anti-gay agenda in Africa.

The Global Culture Wars

Since the 1990s, the "culture wars" (Davison Hunter, 1991) brings to light the conflicting cultural value systems that conservatives and liberals have on issues such as abortion,

homosexuality, immigration, and the separation of church and state. This conflict is especially contentious between the more religious, conservative right wing and the secular, progressive left (Davison Hunter, 1991; Chapman, 2010). In Canada, this scenario played out with the “Liberal party adopting policy positions that were at odds with evangelical moral stances” (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 4). For example, the Liberal government’s decision not to appeal the Ontario Divisional Court’s ruling on the definition of marriage in 2002 was at odds with the views of the more conservative evangelical community and other groups, for example the immigrant community. Much to the distaste of these constituencies, the Liberal government “became an advocate for the redefinition of marriage, contending same-sex marriage was a human rights issue and required by *the Charter [of Rights and Freedoms]*” (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009, p. 5). This position was seen as threatening evangelicals’ pro-family agenda.

Two of the more contested cultural debates revolve around homosexuality and abortion, with the Christian Right advocating for a restructuring of society, institutions, and governmental bodies more in line with their conservative worldview (Lawrence, 2010; McDonald, 2010). For example, it holds that LGBTQ+ equality and same-sex marriage are morally wrong, and do not believe this behaviour is acceptable within contemporary society (Oliver, 2013). This interpretation of homosexuality forms a core belief of evangelical Christianity, and is advocated publicly by the Christian Right, but in the increasingly liberal and tolerant West, this worldview is not readily accepted and has meant that, in countries like Canada, the debate is closed domestically (*Macleans*, 2011).

Since the early 2000s, third world countries have become the site of “proxy” culture wars, where domestic debates are internationalized (Kaoma, 2009, p. iii). In other words, conservative political ideologies are exported abroad, covertly hidden in foreign aid policies that

are seemingly intended to benefit the communities receiving aid. Specifically, conservative political ideologies are being tied to financial aid conditions, as can be seen with Trump's cancelling of U.S. funding to the United Nations Population Fund, ostensibly because of the institution's support for abortion funding worldwide (Lederman, 2017). Another example is Canada's Muskoka-MNCH Initiative, which excluded funding for abortion in its policy mandate (McDonald, 2010). Such conservative ideologies are the West's new way of exerting control and dominance over the third world. According to Kaoma (2009), "Just as the United States and other northern societies routinely dump our outlawed or expired chemicals, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and cultural detritus on African and other Third World Countries, we now export a political discourse and public policies our own society has discarded as outdated and dangerous" (p. iv).

However, while anti-abortion and homophobic views are becoming less controversial in both belief and practice in the West, this is not the case elsewhere. For example, in Africa there has been an increase in homophobic attitudes and anti-gay legislation (Kaoma, 2009; Anderson, 2011; Oliver, 2013). As a result, political discourse and public policies that condemn homosexuality and abortion have a far more harmful and destructive impact internationally, ranging from incarceration to death (Oliver, 2013). Homophobic and anti-gay attitudes are not the only conservative positions that have taken hold in the Global South. Anti-abortion rhetoric has also become an area of attention targeted by evangelical Christians and the Christian right. In terms of global affairs, this was most notable in Canada's Muskoka-MNCH, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Shift of the Centre of Christianity

The global culture wars were also strengthened by the growing international shift in the centre of Christianity. According to Jenkins (2002), “the center of gravity in the Christian World has shifted inexorably [from the West] Southward, to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America” (p. 2). As discussed in Chapter 1, membership in the religious institutions, particularly Christian institutions, has been declining (Stackhouse, 1993; Reimer, 2003), a decline that is not reflected in the Global South. In fact, over the past 100 years in Africa, “Christians grew from less than 10 percent of Africa’s population to its nearly 500 million today, which amounts to 1 out of 4 Christian’s in the world currently residing in Africa” (Granberg-Michaelson, 2015; Pew Research Centre, 2015; Stourton, 2015). In fact, Africa is projected to reach around 40% Christian membership by 2030 (Pew Research Centre, 2015).

While the West is experiencing a considerable decline in religious membership, the opposite is happening in the developing world, with the effect of lessening the influence and power of the Christian Right both domestically and internationally (Stourton, 2015). In order to combat this shift and loss of power domestically, the Christian Right in the United States utilizes its transnational reach to gain the support of the international community, more specifically, prominent African religious leaders. This is done, in part, to find a place for the Western Christian Right’s traditionalist, conservative value system, when it is unable to thrive domestically. Since the increase of Christian membership in the Global South increases its influence in a religious direction, the Christian Right uses its status to legitimize its own agenda, and many African religious leaders have been mobilized in the fight against increasingly liberal moral values (Kaoma 2009; Oliver, 2013).

This development has “shifted the balance of power between African and Western churches, where African churches in Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria are doctrinally evangelical, an element that makes them key partners to U.S. conservatives” (Kaoma, 2009, p. 21). Western conservative groups have “mobilized African religious leaders to work on their behalf as a mouthpiece for generating homophobia in Africa which is used in turn to split American churches” (Kaoma, 2009, p. 21). The Global South has seen an increase of influence and power over the direction of Christianity because of the increasing numbers of Christians in these countries. But in reality, they are heavily influenced by the values of the ACR and their conservative evangelical Christian agenda.

With this influence, “American conservatives who are in the minority within [domestic] mainline churches depend on African religious leaders to legitimize their positions” (Kaoma, 2009, p. 3). These positions are heavily influenced by their moral agenda and overtly in opposition to homosexuality and abortion, which the ACR understands are on the rise, due in part to the increasing secularization of society and the liberalization of social values (Thornhill, Fincher and Aran, 2008). The ACR is portrayed as the ultimate authority on how to defeat the increasingly liberal agenda, and African church leaders turn to them in order to confront its growing trends in Africa (Kaoma, 2009). According to Oliver (2013), in Africa there is a “shifting terrain of the Christian Right’s global activism and the local manifestations of the Christian Right’s antigay discourses in the global South” (p. 89). With this shift, there has been a slowing of the recognition of LGBTQ people in Protestant churches as well as increased homophobia in African countries (Oliver, 2013). There is a perceived mutually beneficial relationship that has existed between these two groups: on one hand, the shift of the demographic centre of Christianity gives African churches the power to legitimize religious action, while on

the other, the Christian Right in the West depends on this legitimization to justify a “Conservative Christian vision” in both the public and political realm, domestically and internationally (Oliver, 2013, p. 89).

The Muskoka Initiative: Canada’s Leadership Role in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

One of the priorities of Muskoka-MNCH was to prevent the deaths of women during pregnancy and childbirth. In order to achieve this goal, Muskoka-MNCH asserted that “current health systems in developing countries need to be strengthened so that integrated and comprehensive health services for women can be delivered” (Muskoka Initiative, 2010, para. 6). Yet, the Muskoka-MNCH did not include abortion as a fundamental aspect of its mandate. A stance that did not fit with its position of preventing deaths of women during pregnancy and childbirth.

The Muskoka Initiative and the Global Culture Wars

In comparison with American involvement in the global culture wars, which also promotes a homophobic agenda overseas, Canada has followed the same path by fostering an anti-abortion attitude in Sub-Saharan Africa with its creation of Muskoka-MNCH. Since the growth of the increasingly interconnected evangelical cultures of the United States and Canada since the 1980s (Malloy, 2009), as discussed in Chapter 2, CCR opposition to abortion has been similar in its nature to American opposition to same-sex marriage, both domestically and internationally. Evangelical Christians in both countries utilize a similar system of beliefs and values to justify their vehement opposition to and to protest same-sex marriage and abortion and

the position and strength of the ACR and CCR in public and political life has led to an increase of domestic unrest surrounding these issues. Therefore, the actions of the United States in the global culture wars are not necessarily unique and distinct from those of Canada in regard to Christian evangelicals. Since Canadian evangelicals have a deep-seated resistance to abortion and a strong connection to the ACR, and had a Prime Minister who supported evangelical Christianity in private, the links between the global culture wars, Canada, and anti-abortion policies abroad during Harper's tenure can be definitively drawn.

While Muskoka-MNCH was intended, at least superficially, to reflect a policy aimed at helping women and children in developing countries, it is important to examine more closely why this laudable mandate encountered significant problems in achieving this overall goal. First, the initiative did not include abortion funding, nor did it advocate for the legality of abortion care in its mandate. Instead, it side-stepped the issue of abortion under the guise it was too "divisive and controversial" and would "divide Canadians" (Trinh, 2014, para. 8) instead of actively fighting for abortion and pro-choice policies in the Global South. Muskoka-MNCH clearly reflected the prominent position the CCR had within Canada and their success in lobbying, through both public and private institutions, for government support for an anti-abortion position in Canadian foreign aid programs.

As was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, there was a distinct shift in Canadian values after Harper's election in 2006. Attitudes towards women's rights and gender equality were changing, especially when one examines Muskoka-MNCH more carefully (Huish and Spiegel, 2012; Carrier and Tiessen, 2013; Tiessen 2015). The Muskoka Initiative did not advocate abortion services in sub-Saharan Africa, nor did it include funding for abortion in its policy outline. The outright refusal to address abortion services as a necessary aspect of women's

reproductive health was a clear reflection of the change in values of the Harper government. Domestically, Harper's pro-family mandate meant that changes to federal programs and the budget began to mirror the inherently anti-women, anti-feminist and anti-equality position of the Conservative Party (Fetner and Sanders, 2011). However, these changes could not go far enough to satisfy the Canadian evangelicals, without incurring a significant backlash from other Canadians who did not share these views (Carrier and Tiessen, 2013). This explains, in large measure, why Harper did not include any mention of abortion in Muskoka-MNCH and why this action strengthened Harper's relationship with the evangelical Christian community in Canada.

First, abortion goes against what the CCR defined as socially acceptable behaviour according to an orthodox interpretation of the Bible, in that abortion is as an immoral act. Since evangelical Christianity supports the pro-family agenda, and the idea of a "natural family"⁸ (Buss, 2004; Oliver, 2013) according to Dowland (2009), abortion represents "not only the murder of innocents but also an assault on motherhood, and by extension the family" (p. 608). Abortion is seen not only as murder, but also as the destroyer of women's fundamental role as mother and of her position in the family; this is the basis of the pro-life movement's efforts to protect the unborn child's right to life.

But, opposition to abortion goes beyond protecting the right to life of an unborn child, because it also places strict control over a woman's sexual autonomy. According to Tiessen (2015), "a near-exclusive emphasis on mothers and motherhood in Muskoka-MNCH signals an important critique of the embodied nature of Canadian foreign policy on maternal health" (p. 7), one that "emphasizes women's reproductive roles, particularly motherhood" (p. 10). This point

⁸ The natural family is defined by "heterosexual marriage and whose primary purpose is procreation" (Buss, 2004, 57).

of view is basic to evangelical Christianity and to Christian Right, which sees the woman only in relation to her role as the provider of children to her husband and as the caregiver of her family.

Second, this socially moralist position means that abortion is not only distinctly against the pro-family agenda of evangelical Christianity, but also against their notion of “civilized sexual norms” (Hoad, 2007, p. 57). Within this notion of civilized sexual norms is the idea of a “hetero-patriarchal family form” (Oliver, 2013, p. 95), in which men hold all power and women’s roles are subordinate to it. Moving away from the “natural” family “marginalizes men from their provider role, fostering a culture of sexual promiscuity” (Oliver, 2013, p. 89). The family is framed as a positive and safe space for women, without which they would be corrupt over-sexualized beings. In this belief, women need the family in order to control their sexuality, to keep them pure, and to protect them from the harms of the wider world.

With Muskoka-MNCH, the “Canadian position on reproductive rights moved from support for women’s reproductive rights to a policy of zero tolerance for funding for abortion outside Canada” (Gecelovsky, 2013, p. 120). While this policy reflected, more broadly, an anti-women rhetoric, it was also intimately connected to the moral agenda of the evangelical community in Canada. Moreover, it legitimized a pro-family agenda that also “limit[ed] adoption and foster care by lesbian and gay couples, restrictions on access to birth control, and constraints on sexual education curriculum” (Fetner and Sanders, 2011, p. 87). Under this agenda, the family is a private institution exempt from the influence of the federal government. In this way, the Muskoka-MNCH Initiative reflected Harper’s covert association with evangelical Christianity. As was demonstrated previously, evangelical Christian membership was growing in Canada. According to voting trends, this constituency were loyal supporters of the Conservative Party, and under Harper, evangelical Christians gained more influence in both the public and the

private sphere. The domestic climate of Canada was characterized by a definite clash of belief systems, and by eliminating funding for abortion, Harper was able to keep peace between these communities, and preserve the support of the evangelical community. Therefore, in the same way that the American Christian Right utilized Africa as the arena in which they could export their religious-based aid initiatives and gain support for an anti-gay message at home, Harper utilized the Muskoka-MNCH Initiative, at the expense of maternal health in sub-Saharan Africa.

Why Is This Problematic?

The elimination of funding for abortion was problematic, because it ignored the complexities of women's health in an extremely poor region like sub-Saharan Africa, as well as erasing the services that women need in order to make real, tangible progress in gender equality. Harper's power in the Conservative Party and the transformation of its political ideology trickled into Canadian foreign aid policies, like Muskoka-MNCH. This was a policy that, on the surface, looked like a positive step for women's health in the developing world; but in reality, it did not adequately address the gaps that exist in maternal, newborn and child health because of its refusal to fund abortion. Abortion is a crucial aspect of women's health because "worldwide over 18.5 million women in developing countries die each year due to unsafe abortions, which overall account for 13% of all maternal deaths" (WHO, 2008, n.p.) and in sub-Saharan Africa there are around 5 million induced abortions annually, resulting in 33% of all maternal deaths (Rogo, Oucho, and Mwalali, 2006). The absence of funding and advocacy for safe, legal and hygienic abortion in Muskoka-MNCH ensured that it failed in achieving its stated goal, of improving the health of women in developing countries.

Muskoka-MNCH represents a foreign aid policy that erases gender and gender equality from its mandate. As was discussed previously, gender and gender equality are important facets of health and eliminating them diminishes the power that social determinants of health have on inhibiting change (Huish and Spiegel, 2012). Social determinants are critically important for any analysis of health and health care provision, and when gender is erased from domestic discourse it leads to the overall lack of attention to other social determinants of health. This is a most important feature omitted from the Muskoka-MNCH initiative. But the deficiencies were not limited to gender equality alone (Huish and Spiegel, 2012). Gender is important in any discussion of development because it must be addressed in order to advance reproductive justice for women (Hord and Wolf, 2004). If gender inequality is not addressed and women's reproductive justice ignored, then women in societies where their rights are limited or absent, lose access and control of their maternal health rights. Without taking gender into consideration, especially in such a comprehensive plan purporting to address maternal and child health and care, Muskoka-MNCH further ostracized an already marginalized population, which as discussed previously has a large impact in sub-Saharan Africa because of the social burden of rearing children placed on women and the high level of maternal deaths occurring in the region.

Harper's Muskoka-MNCH was reflective of a wider trend of Canadian government aid that had no clear or direct interest in Africa, or African foreign aid (Black, 2012; Medhora, 2016; Madokoro, McKenzie, and Meren 2017). Canada's disinterest, while Harper was in power, was demonstrated threefold. Firstly, according to Black (2012), "there [was] a bedrock of indifference towards aid generally, and aid to Africa specifically. In short one searches in vain for influential members of the cabinet and caucus who have more than a passing knowledge of, or interest in, or commitment to things African" (p. 247). This statement was noticeable because

in both the “Conservative caucus and cabinet there were no members with a clearly established interest in Africa” (p. 252).

Secondly, Muskoka-MNCH was also announced at a time that Canada declared caps to future International Assistance Envelope (IAE) spending levels. According to Black (2012), the Canadian government was “flat lining aid, resulting in an anticipated decline in ODA as a percentage of gross national income (GNI) from 0.32 per cent in 2009/10 to 0.26 per cent over the next few years” (p. 261). This meant that although Canada was committed to carry out the aid it had set as its target, the budget would not grow from those levels.

Finally, Canada’s commitment to aid in Africa to save the lives of mothers and children came at the expense of a “broader commitment toward poverty reduction” (Black, 2012, p. 261). The reduction in aid to this region meant that the Harper government made a choice to address the “effects of poverty on maternal and child health, rather than the underlying conditions of poverty to which it is explicitly linked” (p. 261). Therefore, Canada’s commitment to aid in Africa, and specifically, aid to sub-Saharan Africa (since that’s where over 80% of Muskoka-MNCH funding was directed), was not as profound or deep as it appeared on the surface.

Looking closer at Muskoka-MNCH, it is obvious that it failed to honour its commitments to sexual and reproductive health⁹ in its mandate countries (see Appendix E for a complete list of mandate countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the legal status of abortion). As this thesis looks specifically at sub-Saharan Africa, I wanted to focus on how Muskoka-MNCH did not address women’s sexual and reproductive health in this region, but when searching for project profiles on

⁹ Sexual and reproductive health refers to “physical, mental, and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system, a safe sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so” (UNFPA, no date).

the Government of Canada's project browser, I discovered that they either do not exist anymore or a select few come up with their status as terminated. Even when seeking a breakdown of which of the 88 project profiles are geared to which countries, the data are either archived or inaccessible. Due to this difficulty, I use Alessandra Bergeron's Major Research Paper (2016) which sought to "analyze Canada's commitments to maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) specifically in relation to sexual and reproductive health (SRH)" (p. 6). Overall, she discovered that "there are gaps in the implementation of project activities, especially when they related to SRH" (p. 6) and since more than "half the projects implement services and resources regarding sexual and reproductive health" (Bergeron, 2016, p. 6), this is an extremely troubling discovery.

Bergeron (2016) highlights key findings which demonstrate how Muskoka-MNCH does not honour its commitments to women's sexual and reproductive health. The language of the Muskoka-MNCH's project profiles "emphasizes pregnancy and motherhood rather than women as persons." In fact, "61 projects relating to SRH refer to women they are helping as "pregnant women" or "mothers" (p. 32). As well, there are not enough references about gender equality. In particular, "only 36% of project profiles include explicit references about gender equality," which when looking at SHR is problematic because "without identifying gender inequality, we cannot know why women are unable to access maternal health services in the first place or how decisions around maternal health care are made" (Tiessen in Bergeron, 2016, p. 34). Finally, Muskoka-MNCH project profiles did not adequately encourage women to seek SRH care services; only "three projects relating to SRH indicate support for contraceptive methods to control and prevent unwanted pregnancies" (Bergeron, 2016, p. 39). The fact that only three projects out of 88 deal with SRH care services, specifically contraceptive methods, is evident in

the fact that Muskoka-MNCH's budget for this area of women's health only allocated 4.62% of the total budget to this region, and Canada supplied only 1.4% of its overall funding (Bhushan, 2014; Payton, 2015) (see Figure 4 for full breakdown of overall spending in Health Subsectors).

Muskoka-MNCH Spending by Health Subsectors

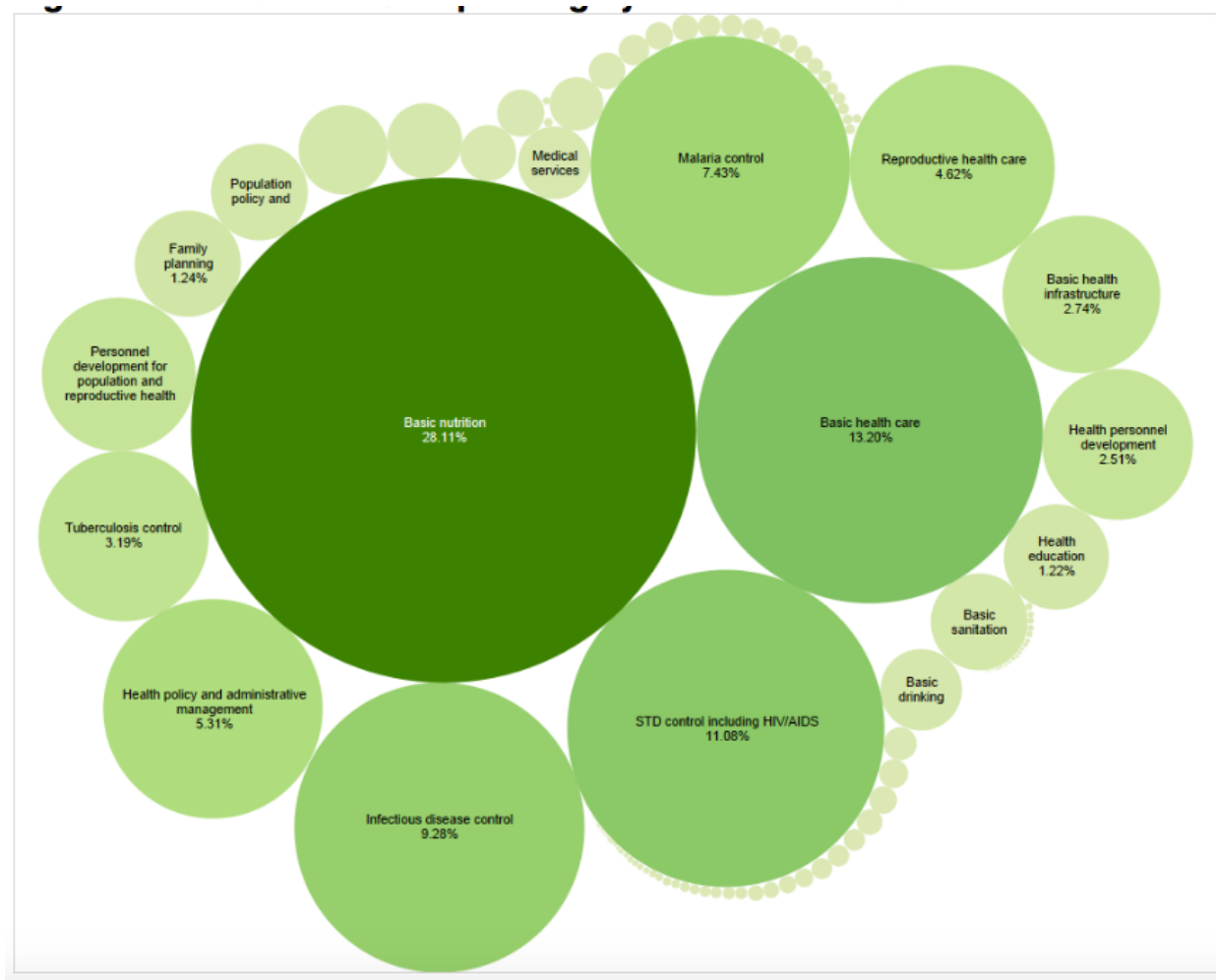


Figure 3. Muskoka-MNCH Spending by Health Subsectors

Source: Bhushan for North-South Institute, 2014

Link: <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Muskoka-Final.pdf>

Specifically, looking at sub-Saharan Africa, the data is hard to find and there are few studies showing the impact of the funding that Muskoka-MNCH has had. According to Bhushan (2014), “much more work is needed to assess the linkages between data transparency and fuller

accountability and knowledge sharing within MNCH stakeholders” and, while there is “substantial academic literature on the factors affecting health outcomes and trends there is no single source that can help non-technical users assess, for instance, the overall impact of the \$7.3 billion donors have spent on MNCH” (p. 21). Even the Government of Canada (2015) says that “the MNCH is not a ‘program’ that can be evaluated by assessing program outcomes against targets and benchmarks established in an implantation strategy and results framework” (n.p.).

This same report says that for the overall effectiveness of Muskoka-MNCH:

Most projects achieved their targets for outputs (such as number of people trained or number of children immunized) and immediate outcomes (such as coverage of skilled attendance at deliver). Information on higher level outcomes of the MNCH Initiative was generally only available from projections and mathematical models. There is evidence of progress towards achievement of results, based on progress and evaluation reports of sampled projects. (Government of Canada, 2015, n.p.).

But again, there is a lack of work that provides hard data or real numbers to back up these statements and most of the research being done tends to point out the gaps in this program (Gupta, et al., 2011; Kirton, Kulik, and Bracht, 2014; Bergeron, 2016; Medhora, 2016). Finally, Muskoka-MNCH was developed to facilitate the MDGs, and since there has been significant Canadian donor involvement Muskoka-MNCH is not starting at zero (Bhushan, 2014, n.p.). It exists in a vacuum of other policies and aid packages, so even though “under-5 mortality rate has been more than halved over 10 years in countries like Tanzania and Malawi” this data is part of a large, and “more broad macro trends” that exist over “long periods of time” (Bhushan, 2014, n.p.). While Muskoka-MNCH might have contributed to this decline, it is hard to say how much.

This lack of transparency is coupled with the fact that Muskoka-MNCH has also become much more difficult to research since the Liberals came to power in late 2015. Now, the Conservatives’ project profiles have either been terminated, archived, or expunged and there

appears to be little to no effort to determine how effective this project was and what impact the funding had in its mandate countries.

The lack of abortion funding in Muskoka-MNCH is also problematic for a different reason: namely, that it gave a conservative, traditional pro-family value system significant status in the international realm, and specifically in sub-Saharan Africa. As Kaoma (2009) and Oliver (2013) have demonstrated, sub-Saharan Africa is susceptible to outside influences that have normalized domestic anti-abortion rhetoric through foreign aid, something that further perpetuated abortion's illegal and contested status (Hord and Wolf, 2004; Russo and Steinberg, 2012). By means of Muskoka-MNCH, Harper "outsource[ed]" his government's "pro-life politics to the developing world" (Wells, 2011), and in doing so, reinforced damaging patriarchal structures that were already prevalent in the field of foreign aid (Hord and Wolf, 2004; Oliver, 2013; Brown, et al., 2014; Tiessen, 2015). Muskoka-MNCH projected CCR's pro-family agenda, in which certain family structures, marital relationships, and practices surrounding pregnancy and childbearing were imposed as the cultural norm (Braam and Hessini, 2004; Oliver 2013). In the context of the global culture wars, these conservative beliefs about family structures and the role of women and her rights to maternal care "reinforce[d] existing power dynamics in recipient countries" in which anti-abortion and anti-gay sentiments already exist (Kaoma, 2009, Oliver, 2013). Thus, the Harper government's Muskoka-MNCH followed suite by promoting an evangelical pro-family agenda. Since there has been a substantial lack of research and transparency regarding the effects of Muskoka-MNCH's funding in sub-Saharan Africa it is impossible to definitively draw conclusions whether women's access to comprehensive reproductive justice has improved or been hindered by the Initiative.

Instead what can be determined is that Harper's "obsessive control over policy" and his belief that he knew what was best for Canada, exerted more direct influence than any other prime minister on Canada's foreign policy, one which guaranteed "personal responsibility Christians and people from other religious traditions who hold similar views" (Gecelovsky, 2013, p. 117). The decision not to provide funding for abortions outside Canada was undertaken to support a domestic constituency of evangelical Christians, who are definitively anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage and anti-divorce, as well as to appease Christian Right groups, such as Focus on the Family Canada, the Canada Family Action Coalition and 4MYCanada who openly protested for the Canadian government to take a more socially conservative stance in both domestic and international politics. Harper's pro-family and traditional moralist position was the result of his direct control over the direction and substance of Canadian foreign aid policies, which fostered Canada's contradictory position on abortion internationally, while expediting its participation in the global culture wars. The ultimate effect was to further spread a position which is inherently anti-women and to encourage anti-abortion activism.

Canada, an International Leader in Maternal Health?

While Canada has, historically, been held in high esteem by the international community for its progressive and generous foreign aid contributions, the election of the Harper Conservatives resulted in a distinct shift in Canada's place as a world leader (Brown and Olender, 2013; Smith and Sjolander, 2013; Ibotson, 2014; Mackinnon, 2017), a shift that "reshaped [Canada's] role – and reputation on the world stage" (Mackinnon, 2017). According to Brown (2016), "the year 2009 is a more accurate turning point in Canadian aid policy, for it was then that the government undertook bold new initiatives, including adopting new focus countries

and themes, making prominent linkages to the extractive sector, and down-grading its relationship with Canadian development and non-governmental organizations” (p. 167).

Following this shift in Canadian aid, it was in 2010 that Harper announced a “signature initiative on maternal, newborn, and child health MNCH)” (Brown, 2016, p. 170).

This initiative was championed as Canada’s leadership role in this area and regarded as a fundamentally positive policy for women in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, one of the “poorest regions on earth and with a dire record of maternal and child health” (Caplan, 2010a, para. 9). But, the “Harper government’s attempt to seize the initiative was not well received among fellow donors” and for a number of reasons (Brown, 2016, p. 171), the most important of which was because it “explicitly excluded abortion services” (Brown, 2016, p. 171), but also because it was not the first to make use of this theme for aid services, nor even the most influential in this area. According to Caplan (2010b), “all kinds of efforts have been attempted for decades to improve maternal and child well-being globally” (para. 3) involving agencies and institutions from the United Nations, UN agencies, NGOs, the World Health Organization, government aid organizations like CIDA, and governments and civil society groups in poor countries.

Canada’s role as a leader in this area was overshadowed by the Harper government’s aversion to abortion as a necessary facet of women’s reproductive health, an aversion that shows that Muskoka-MNCH was an “afterthought – an ‘announceable’ for the summit, for which Canada could claim international leadership” (Brown, 2016, p. 171). What mattered more for Harper was establishing policy based on Canada’s “own interests and priorities” (Canada, 2012, p. 267). In particular, commercial self-interest, political opportunism and electoral imperatives (Brown and Olender, 2013; Brown, 2016) appeared to be more important factors in Harper’s

foreign policy than any act of “selfless Canadian multilateralism” (Brown and Olender, 2013, p. 9).

While Muskoka-MNCH not only ensured that abortion remained a contested issue, it also contradicted Canada’s domestic position on abortion because domestically, abortion legislation was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1988. Yet, the Canadian government under Harper, for religious and political reasons, did not make this area a priority. The Muskoka-MNCH Initiative should have taken advantage of the fact that abortion is not explicitly illegal in all its mandate countries (see Appendix D and E), and used this opportunity to advocate for the accessibility of high quality abortion care instead of creating policies that ignore it (Cook and Ngwena, 2007; Ngwena, 2007).

Abortion has been proven “conclusively to save the lives of literally hundreds of thousands of women in poor countries” (Caplan, 2010a., para. 13), yet Harper chose to make other avenues more important. Was it really possible to assert that Canada was a leader in “saving the lives of women and children” (Government of Canada, 2014b, n.p.) or that Canada had women’s best interests in mind? On the contrary, Harper instead used the Muskoka-MNCH Initiative as a political platform to “woo voters beyond the Conservatives’ narrow base” (Caplan, 2010a, para. 7), as well as an area for Harper to achieve his own partisan interests on an international stage (Brown and Olender, 2013; Brown, 2016), and not to help women in sub-Saharan Africa achieve reproductive justice. Therefore, Harper’s involvement in maternal health was more for reasons of self-interest, championing himself as a leader in this area, when in actual fact, and on further examination, Harper can clearly be seen to have been taking advantage of a popular issue in foreign aid and “engaging when the government determined it was in its interest to do so” (Brown and Olender, 2013, p. 158).

At the end of Harper's term, Canadian foreign aid was in the "throes of a five-year spending freeze", and in the middle of that was Muskoka-MNCH (Galvin, 2017, para. 4). Since Liberal leader Justin Trudeau has come to power in 2015, there has been a restoration to Canadian foreign aid, specifically in March 2017, the "Liberal government unveiled its \$650-million International Women's Day foreign aid reorientation and feminist international assistance policy" which over the next five years, will see "95% of Canada's overseas development assistance will be devoted to programs that target gender equality and empowerment of women girls" with "50% of the development budget going to sub-Saharan Africa and the amount of funding going to health and reproductive rights will double" (Galvin 2017, para. 4; *the Star*, 2017). Hopefully, the Liberals, moving forward, will give SRH for women in developing countries the appropriate attention it deserves, and will not utilize it as political currency, but will provide the right amount of transparency and research for their funding initiatives.

Conclusion

Domestically, Harper's "discursive erasure of gender equality from the language of government documents," coupled with his definitively anti-abortion stance in foreign policy the Muskoka-MNCH effectively acted as a move to counteract the perceived "hegemony of the liberal agenda" and its push to shape feminist politics both in the country and abroad (Tiessen and Carrier, 2015). Through these acts, Harper conceded to his conservative, in particular his CCR support base. In doing so he held a position that "contradict[ed] a widely held perception of Canada's leadership in the area of gender equality" (Carrier and Tiessen, 2013, p. 186). His

policies led to a resurgence in a socially conservative belief system, within Canada more generally and specifically within Canadian politics.

Although evangelical Christians represent only one-tenth of the Canadian population, their membership continues to grow. Clearly, the growing evangelical Christian community has had a significant and powerful position not only within Canada, but also abroad. This position was bolstered by powerful politicians like Harper, who advanced their ideas through his political platform and participated in the global culture wars by through Muskoka-MNCH.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how there are active culture wars taking place globally, including in Canada. In particular, I have shown that in Canada, there has been a split between progressive liberal values and traditional conservative ones, as illustrated by Canadians' conflicting attitudes on supposedly moral issues. Abortion and same-sex marriage were seen as "divisive position issues" in both public and political life (Flanagan and Lee, 2003, p. 251), and were used by political parties to gain support from the electorate. Since 2004, Stephen Harper injected his own personal beliefs into his policies and transformed the Conservative Party to reflect them, a move that garnered the support of socially and politically conservative Canadians, new Canadians, and evangelical Christian communities (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009; Paperny, 2015).

Since the 2006 election of Harper, both evangelical Christians in Canada and new immigrant communities in the Toronto area increasingly supported the Conservative Party of Canada (Hutchinson and Hiemstra, 2009; Paperny, 2015). This distinct religious-conservative vote, specifically by the evangelical Christian population, and coupled with shift in patterns by new Canadians and immigrants in the greater Toronto area, demonstrated the success of Harper's transformation of the moral and social position of the Conservative Party.

This transformation was reflective of a more traditional, socially conservative and family oriented position of the Conservative Party. Under the new Conservative Party, such issues as cleaning up corruption, abortion and same sex marriage came to the fore in Harper's election campaign. Harper promised to reopen the same-sex marriage debate, and encourage more traditional gender roles in the family (*CBC News*, 2005; *CBC News*, 2008; Dobbin, 2010). All of these promises dealt with issues which both the evangelical and immigrant communities felt

were in harmony with their pro-family agenda. As a result, these communities were transformed into constituencies of the Conservative Party, helping it achieve electoral success in 2006, 2008, and 2011.

One of the most hotly contested contemporary issues was abortion. In Canada, abortion is legal, but that does not mean that there is not still significant controversy surrounding its legitimacy and practice status. For evangelical Christians, abortion is morally wrong and they advocate for the restructuring of society, institutions, and governmental bodies in order to revoke its legal status in Canada. While Harper could not make domestic changes to abortion law, or even adequately address it to the satisfaction of his evangelical constituency, he was able to make it an issue abroad. At the time Muskoka-MNCH was announced in 2010, it was championed as signaling a global leadership role for Canada in the area of maternal, newborn, and child health. Muskoka-MNCH was to bring focus to and accelerate progress toward the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5, reducing maternal, infant, and child mortality and improving maternal health, respectively (Muskoka Declaration, 2010). But the Muskoka-MNCH initiative omitted a crucial aspect of women's reproductive health in its overall mandate: abortion. As a result, Muskoka-MNCH reflected the traditional and conservative shift in the Conservative Party's foreign policy, a move that was made primarily to appease the domestic evangelical constituency in Canada and to export their conservative political ideologies and anti-abortion rhetoric agenda abroad. This move places Canada's Muskoka-MNCH in the realm of the global culture wars.

According to *CBC News* (2010), "opposition parties have accused the government of deliberately muddying the waters of its position to hide the reversal of what has been Canada's position on maternal health in poor countries for almost three decades" (*CBC News*, 2010, n.p.).

While Muskoka-MNCH on the surface reflected a policy aimed at helping women and children, its refusal to include abortion in its plan to reduce maternal mortality made it a political ploy to gain support from the evangelical constituency in Canada since the abortion debate could not be re-opened at home. Harper utilized Muskoka-MNCH as a platform to keep the support he had in previous election years from the evangelical community, and also satisfy the rest of the Canadian population by professing to make definitive and substantial gains for women and children in poor regions like sub-Saharan Africa. Initially, it put Canada in a leadership position regarding foreign aid (Brown and Olender, 2013), but on further examination, it was found that it was more of an “afterthought” (Brown, 2016, p. 171).

While this was not only a problematic and questionable position for Canada to take towards women’s health in sub-Saharan Africa, it also had consequences for the women Muskoka-MNCH aimed to help. It had a negative impact on gender equality in the developing world, ignored abortion as a significant area of status by “reinforcing moral, legal and socio-cultural attitudes towards abortion,” and finally shifted the conversation away from women achieving reproductive health care that was attuned to their needs (Braam and Heissini, 2004, p. 43; Carrier and Tiessen, 2013). For these reasons, Muskoka-MNCH did not offer either an adequate, much less comprehensive path for the women in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve reproductive justice through abortion access.

Canada’s Muskoka-MNCH is a small snapshot of a larger picture of the way the world has shifted into a dichotomy of values, and how a more conservative and traditional world-view is becoming more prevalent in the West, one that is being projected into the Third World. For example, the 2016 election of President Trump in the United States has already had dire consequences for women in the developing world. In his article in the *New Yorker*, Michael

Spector (2017) writes, “in an executive order, the President has revived, and the U.S. government has begun to implement, a vastly expanded version of [the Mexico City] policy that states that U.S. funds can be directed only to groups that neither perform nor actively promote abortion as a method of family planning” (n.p.). Trump’s reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule will negatively affect millions of women in developing countries, who “rely on nongovernmental organizations for their basic health care, including access to contraceptives and abortion” (Spector, 2017). More recently in Canada, after the new leader of the Conservative Party, Andrew Scheer was elected, the Campaign Life Coalition, a large anti-abortion group, congratulated his win, stating this was a big “win” for pro-life and Scheer has always “voted in favour of pro-life legislation” (Boutillier, 2017; Bryden, 2017; *PressProgress*, 2017). Both these actions are set against the backdrop of hundreds more, demonstrating that the global culture wars and the division between progressive, liberal attitudes and traditional, conservative ones are still at odds in the First World with dire consequences for those who depend on them for comprehensive health care.

Appendices

Appendix A: Allocation of funds by Canada per recipient country for the Muskoka-MNCH Initiative Mandate Countries (alphabetical, from Figure 1)

1. Afghanistan - \$63 million
2. Bangladesh - \$54 million
3. Congo (Democratic Republic) - \$32 million
4. Ethiopia - \$92 million
5. Ghana - \$37 million
6. Haiti - \$85 million
7. Honduras - \$28 million
8. India - \$21 million
9. Kenya - \$18 million
10. Malawi - \$41 million
11. Mali - \$100 million
12. Mozambique - \$123 million
13. Niger - \$22 million
14. Nigeria - \$72 million
15. Pakistan - \$21 million
16. Senegal - \$24 million
17. South Sudan - \$31 million
18. Tanzania - \$143 million
19. Uganda - \$23 million
20. Zimbabwe - \$25 million

Source: Bhushan for The North-South Institute 2014

Link: <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Muskoka-Final.pdf>

Appendix B: Muskoka-MNCH Top 5 recipient countries and regional breakdown

1. Tanzania - \$143 million
2. Mozambique - \$123 million
3. Mali - \$100 million
4. Ethiopia - \$92 million
5. Haiti - \$85 million

Regional Breakdown

1. Africa - \$1, 225M or 68.53% of total Muskoka-MNCH funding regionally
 2. Asia - \$349M or 19.53%
 3. Americas - \$175M or 9.77%
 4. Eastern Europe - \$28M or 1.59%
 5. Middle East - \$7M or 0.37%
 6. Unallocated - \$4M or 0.22%
- Total: \$1, 787M

Source: Bhushan for The North-South Institute, 2014

Link: <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Muskoka-Final.pdf>

Appendix C: The Domestic Opinion on Abortion

In 2006 Environics Research Group conducted a poll for LifeCanada, a national association of pro-life groups, regarding Canadians' attitudes toward abortion issues. In 2006, this poll found that some two-thirds of Canadians said that human life should be protected by law from conception on (31% of those surveyed), after three months (23%), and after six months (10%) (Environics Research Group, 2006). Looking at Table 1, the belief in legal protection of human life has fallen since the question was first asked in 2002, from 37% to 31%, and increased after three months of pregnancy, from 13% to 23%. Although overall numbers have fallen slightly when asked the question, "In your opinion, at what point in human development should the law protect human life?" (Environics Research Group, 2006, para. 2), it is safe to say that there was no overwhelming consensus on the status of human life in Canada and the question surrounding the legality of abortion. In fact, Canadians' views were split between believing that human life should be legally protected from conception on, after three months of pregnancy, and from the point of birth. This split in opinion supported Harper's public assertion that abortion was a divisive subject for Canadians.

Table 3
Human Life Should Be Legally Protected. . . 2002–2006

Human life should be legally protected...
 2002-2006

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%
From conception on	37	31	33	30	31
After three months of pregnancy	13	21	24	19	23
After six months of pregnancy	6	11	11	11	10
From the point of birth	30	28	28	33	30
DK/NA	14	9	4	7	6

Q.96C In your opinion, at what point in human development should the law protect human life? Should it be...?

Note. Source: Environics Research Group, 2006.

It was in this climate that Harper proposed Muskoka-MNCH in 2010. He was able to rationalize the exclusion of abortion from this initiative because of Canadians' divided beliefs on the topic. In 2010, Harris-Decima (March 2010) completed a poll that asked Canadians whether they believed in funding contraception and abortion as part of maternal health initiatives in the developing world. This poll found that although the majority of Canadians "supported providing contraception to women in developing countries as a wider maternal health program" (at 74% of those surveyed), the opinion about providing abortion was, yet again, split. When respondents were asked if Muskoka-MNCH should include funding for abortion, 48% were opposed and 46% were in favour (Harris-Decima, Mar. 2010, p. 1) (See Figure 5).

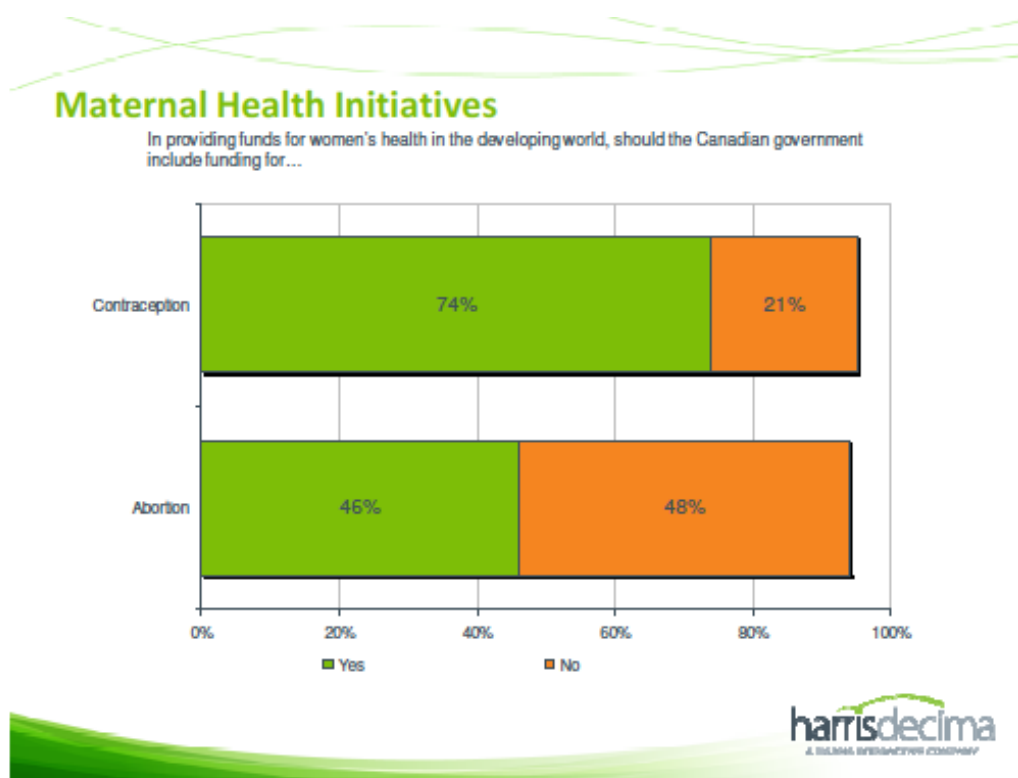


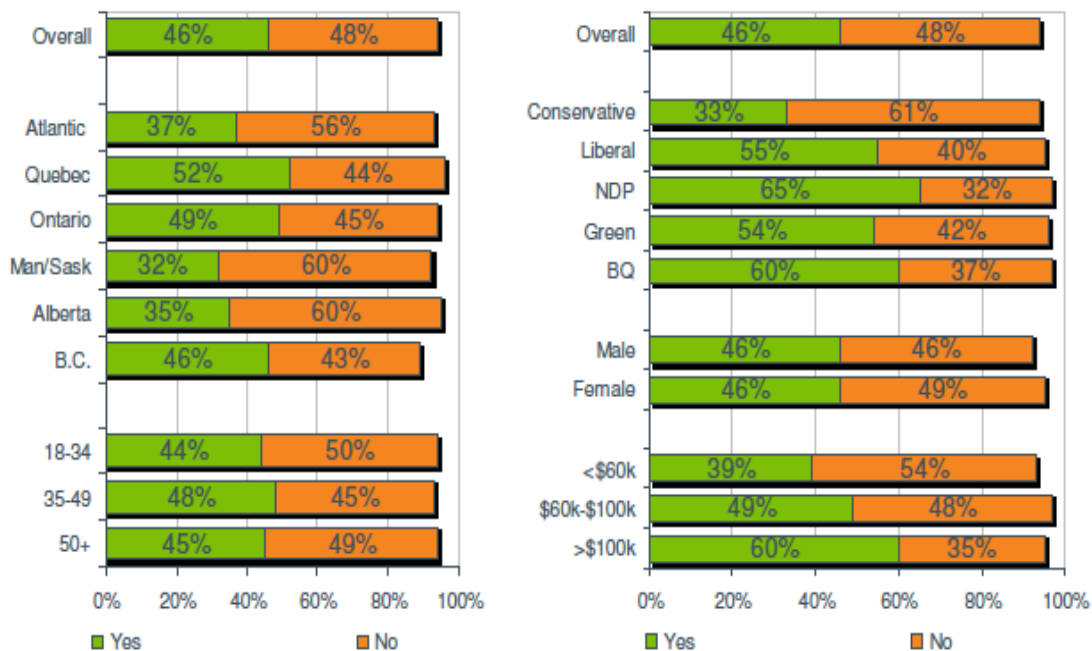
Figure 4. Harris Decima Opinion Poll - Canadian Government Funding Areas.

Note: Source: Harris-Decima Mar. 2010.

This survey also showed that opinions about abortion were divided along party lines (see Figure 6). Only 33% of Conservative Party members agreed with the need to fund agencies overseas providing abortion services compared to 61% of Conservative party members who disagreed with funding for abortion and the Conservative party is “significantly less likely than any other voting block to support such funding” (Harris-Decima, Mar. 2010, p. 2).

Maternal Health Initiatives

In providing funds for women's health in the developing world, should the Canadian government include funding for...abortion



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Figure 5. Maternal health initiatives.

Note: Source: Harris-Decima, March, 2010.

Initially, Muskoka-MNCH was not going to provide funding for contraception or abortion. In March 2009, Harper stated “the government would be closing doors against any options including contraception” (*CBC News*, 2010, para. 9). But a substantial backlash followed, with polls showing that Canadians were not opposed to the provision of contraception—in fact “3 in 4 Canadians, or 74% of those surveyed, believed that the government should include funding for contraception” (Harris-Decima, Mar. 2010, p. 2). This overwhelming consensus drove Harper to change his position, and in April 2010, International

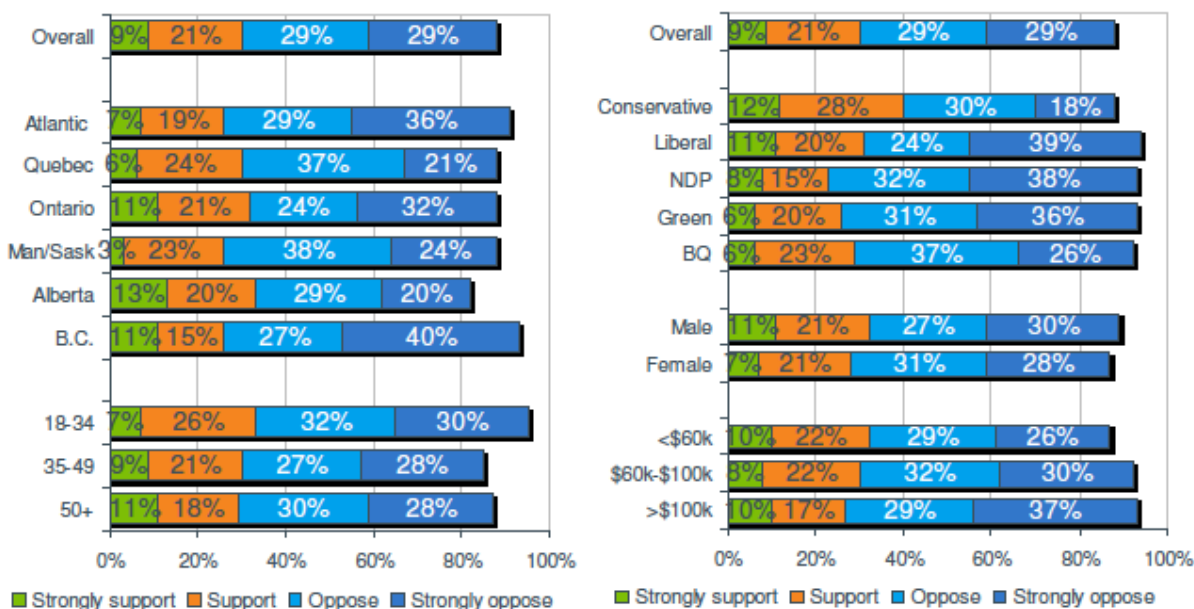
Co-Operation Minister Bev Oda stated that the government's position would "consider family planning measures such as contraception, but not abortion under any circumstances" (*CBC News*, 2010, para. 4).

While contraception would be provided by the initiative, it was minimal. Only 1.4% of Canada's funding under Muskoka-MNCH would go toward contraception. In total, it would receive around 4% of overall funding (Payton, 2015). The March 2010 Harris-Decima poll showed that opinions surrounding providing abortion care as part of Muskoka-MNCH were mixed, but opinions about the provision of contraception were positive, meaning that Harper could no longer rationalize the exclusion of contraception from the initiative, since an overwhelming number of Canadians supported its inclusion. However, opinions on abortion were still split, lending weight to Harper's decision to leave abortion out of the initiative because of domestic division.

A later poll conducted by Harris-Decima in May 2010 showed that public opinion shifted from its initial almost 50–50% split to a more favorable position for abortion provision (see Figure 7). At the time of this poll, opinions trended towards a more supportive view for providing abortion care as part of Muskoka-MNCH. According to Harris-Decima's Vice President, Megan Tam (2010), there was "a marginal increase in Canadian's willingness for the government to support initiatives that include abortion" (p. 1). Around 58% of Canadians opposed a policy whereby "Canada refused to fund agencies that provide abortion procedures in the developing world" (Harris Decima, May 2010, p. 1). Support for an anti-abortion stance fell to 30%, an 18% difference from the previous survey, taken just a few months earlier (Harris-Decima, May 2010).

Maternal Health

Do you strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose a policy that would see Canada NOT fund agencies that provide abortion procedures in the developing world



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Figure 6. Maternal health.

Note: Source: Harris-Decima May 2010.

Both surveys conducted by Harris-Decima (March 2010 and May 2010) showed that Canadians' opinions on abortion provision varied and that there was no strong consensus that trended either way. This position was also reflected in the research poll conducted in 2006 by the Environics Research Group. But, contrary to this poll done in 2006, the Harris-Decima May 2010 poll showed that Canadian public opinion had started to trend towards a more positive view of abortion funding through Muskoka-MNCH.

Appendix D: (Figure 8): The Legality of Abortion in Africa, 2015

Legality of Abortion in 2015

Countries in Africa can be classified into six categories, according to the reasons for which abortion is legally permitted

Reason	Countries
Prohibited altogether, or no explicit legal exception to save the life of a woman	Angola, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritania, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal
To save the life of a woman	Côte d'Ivoire, Libya (e), Malawi (f), Mali (a,b), Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan (a), Tanzania, Uganda
To preserve physical health (and to save a woman's life)*	Benin (a,b,c), Burkina Faso (a,b,c), Burundi, Cameroon (a), Chad (c), Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea (e,f), Eritrea (a,b), Ethiopia (a,b,c,d), Guinea (a,b,c), Kenya, Lesotho (a,b,c), Morocco (f), Mozambique, Niger (c), Rwanda (a,b,c), Togo (a,b,c), Zimbabwe (a,b,c)
To preserve mental health (and all of the above reasons)	Algeria, Botswana (a,b,c), Gambia, Ghana (a,b,c), Liberia (a,b,c), Mauritius(a,b,c), (Namibia (a,b,c), Seychelles (a,b,c), Sierra Leone, Swaziland (a,b,c)
Socioeconomic grounds (and all of the above reasons)	Zambia (c)
Without restriction as to reason	Cape Verde, South Africa, Tunisia

*Includes countries with laws that refer simply to "health" or "therapeutic" indications, which may be interpreted more broadly than physical health. *Notes:* Some countries also allow abortion in cases of (a) rape, (b) incest, (c) fetal impairment or (d) other grounds. Some restrict abortion by requiring (e) parental or (f) spousal authorization. Countries that allow abortion on socioeconomic grounds or without restriction as to reason have gestational age limits (generally the first trimester); abortions may be permissible after the specified gestational age, but only on prescribed grounds. *Source:* Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), *The World's Abortion Laws 2015*, New York: CRR, 2015.

Figure 7. The Legality of Abortion in Africa, 2015

Note: *Source:* Guttmacher Institute, Facts on Abortion in Africa, November 2015 / Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), *The World's Abortion Laws 2015*, New York: CRR, 2015.

Link: https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/IB_AWW-Africa.pdf

Appendix E: Legality status of Abortion in Sub-Saharan Muskoka-MNCH mandate countries

Table 4 Legality Status of Abortion in Sub-Saharan Muskoka-MNCH Mandate Countries

1. Prohibited Altogether (or no explicit legal exception to save the life of a woman)
 - a. Democratic Republic of the Congo
 - b. Senegal
2. To save the life of a woman
 - a. Malawi + restriction **F** (see below)
 - b. Mali + reasons **A** and **B** (below)
 - c. Nigeria
 - d. South Sudan + reason **A**
 - e. Tanzania
 - f. Uganda
3. To preserve physical health (and to save a woman's life)*
 - a. Ethiopia + reasons **A, B, C, and D**
 - b. Kenya
 - c. Mozambique
 - d. Niger + reason **C**
 - e. Zimbabwe + reasons **A, B, and C**
4. To preserve mental health (and all above reasons)
 - a. Ghana + reasons **A, B, and C**

Reasons 5. Socioeconomic grounds and 6. Without restriction do not have any sub-Saharan African countries that fit the criteria

*Includes countries with laws that refer simply to "health" or "therapeutic" indications, which may be interpreted more broadly than physical health

Note: some countries also allow abortion in causes of

A: rape

B: incest

C: fetal impairment

D: other grounds

Some restrict abortion by requiring

E: parental consent

F: spousal authorization

Note: Table compiled from data in Appendix D, Figure 8

Link: https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/IB_AWW-Africa.pdf

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