

# “Think About the Women!”: The New Anti-Abortion Discourse in English Canada

**Kelly Gordon**

Thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
In fulfillment of the requirements  
for the MA in Political Science with a Specialization in Women’s Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Political Studies  
University of Ottawa

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Abstract:

This thesis offers an overview of the new rhetorical strategies of persuasion being implemented by the contemporary English Canadian anti-abortion movement. This thesis analyzes the main arguments, philosophical principles, narratives and other important rhetorical strategies used by the contemporary anti-abortion movement in English-speaking Canada. It seeks, in other words, to explain how the anti-abortion movement talks to Canadians and how it attempts to persuade them of anti-abortion views.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In his book *The Political Brain*, Drew Westen writes, “contentious issues are the issues that arouse emotions.” He further observes, “Republicans go straight for these issues”<sup>1</sup>. For more than thirty years abortion has been such an issue. Abortion conjures visceral emotions and has been consistently used by North American conservative governments to produce a coherent, conservative narrative of abortion as a defining issue in the right-left political split. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009, in her speech at the Vanderburgh County Right to Life dinner in Indiana, Sarah Palin (arguably the most visible female voice currently in the Republican Party) announced that supporting a “culture of life” should be used as a means to “identify and unify”<sup>2</sup> the Republican Party.

In a Canadian context abortion also remains a divisive and topical issue. In the Conservative government’s 2010 G8 maternal health proposal Prime Minister Harper was charged with playing “ideological games”<sup>3</sup> with women’s health by glaringly omitting abortion funding in the proposal. Moreover in April 2010 Winnipeg MP Rod Bruinooge introduced private member’s Bill C-510, better known as Roxanne’s Law, which seeks to “empower pregnant women to stand up against abortion coercion.”<sup>4</sup> Both of these instances demonstrate the continued relevance of abortion in Canadian politics.

However it is not only at the governmental level that abortion has become a contentious issue that dictates people’s political behavior. Mobilization around abortion has infiltrated the realm of the micropolitical, operating “below the threshold of large legislative acts and executive initiatives.”<sup>5</sup> To borrow William Connolly’s definition of the micropolitical I am referring to “such techniques organized and deployed collectively by professional associations, mass-media talk shows, TV and film dramas... church meetings, school assemblies... charitable organizations, commercial advertising, child rearing, judicial practice, and police routines.”<sup>6</sup> From anti-abortion blogs to protests outside of abortion clinics to the assassination of Dr. George Tiller, the politics of abortion are manifest in ways far beyond centralized government.

Indeed, given the political sensitivity of abortion and the reluctance of most politicians to directly address the abortion issue, the discursive framing of abortion is being increasingly left to non-governmental actors. Interest groups,

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<sup>1</sup> Westen, D. (1997). *The Political Brain: The role of emotion in deciding the fate of the nation*. New York: Public Affairs. (173)

<sup>2</sup> Governor Sarah Palin’s Speech at Vanderburgh County Right to Life Banquet. (Vanderburgh Right to Life, 2009). Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJTM04kGxv0>

<sup>3</sup> Taber, J. (2010-02-02). Include abortion in the maternal health pledge, Michael Ignatieff tells PM. *Globe and Mail*. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/include-abortion-in-maternal-health-pledge-michael-ignatieff-tells-pm/article1453666/print/>. (retrieved April 1, 2010)

<sup>4</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne’s story)

<sup>5</sup> Connolly, W. (2002). *Neuropolitics: thinking, culture, speed*. University of Minnesota Press. (19)

<sup>6</sup> Connolly, W. (2002). *Neuropolitics: thinking, culture, speed*. University of Minnesota Press. (19)

blogs, websites, and talk-radio are thus having a growing impact on how we talk, think and relate to abortion. Consequently, within both the macro and micropolitical framing of abortion, a specific discursive approach to abortion has emerged. Historically the dominant philosophical, political and legal approach to the study of abortion has been to examine the issue using a rights lens, i.e. for both the anti-abortion and pro-abortion sides of the debate, strategies and counter-strategies have been formulated around rights-talk. As a result, the debate has emerged a competition between two rights: the right to life of the fetus versus the women's right-to-choose.

The feminist pro-abortion side of the abortion debate has sought to base its argument for safe and legal access to abortion on the right to one's person. However with this approach, feminists have opened up discursive space wherein counterclaims about the rights of the fetus can be made by the anti-abortion side. The anti-abortion movement has thus mobilized around the right to life of the fetus, maintained through the insistence on fetal personhood. The anti-abortion movement's religious representation of the fetus (as a separate subject with rights) fundamentally portrays abortion as killing or murder. This portrayal frequently uses graphic imagery of aborted fetuses, juxtaposed with photos of murdered victims of the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. Central to this representation of abortion is the presentation of the fetus as a self-evident, fully human person able to claim a right to life.

This focus on the language of rights within the abortion debate is not surprising considering the rise in popularity of rights-talk as a means through which issues involving the law, morality and politics are analyzed throughout North America. Aligned with this trend, rights-based rhetoric has produced a very rigid debate structure which restricts the avenues with which to address the issue of abortion, both inside and outside formal political arenas.

However this rigid attachment to the right-based frame has masked new developments within the anti-abortion movement. The pro-abortion side has come to define abortion as an issue of women's rights, and this definition has found general appeal in much of society. Conversely, the anti-abortion movement has struggled to find a message against abortion that strikes similar acceptance. Historically, the anti-abortion movement has been committed to a religious and moral line of argumentation to maintain the personhood of the fetus. With a general decline in religiosity and the success of the women's movement in the 1970's and 80's, this message has become increasingly difficult to market to a more moderate audience. As a result, the pro-abortion movement has earned an upper hand in establishing a strong discursive link between access to abortion and the more general realm of women's health. In English speaking Canada, this advantage has manifested in the defeat of bill C-43, which sought to restrict women's right to abortion only when approved by a doctor (thus removing a women's ability to control her own body).

These pro-abortion victories were in part made possible by three main problems with the anti-abortion movement fetal-rights line of argumentation. The first problem for the anti-abortion movement is that which is always encountered with any rights-based argumentation: rights clash and collide, and ultimately contending rights cannot co-exist. The competing nature of rights has led to an awkward stalemate "in which people are left in an uncomfortable state of puzzlement as they attempt to 'juggle' or otherwise resolve, the opposing 'rights' of the woman and the

foetus.”<sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup> Problem number two: the anti-abortion movement’s narrow emphasis on fetal-rights has created feminist rebuke of the anti-abortion movement as “anti-woman”<sup>9</sup>, and thus ignoring the woman and her experience. The third problem facing anti-abortionists is the societal backlash (even from supporters) that has resulted from the use of violent, visual imagery and religious-based arguments for the sanctity of life.

I believe that in attempting to overcome these three obstacles, the anti-abortion movement has been forced into a quantum shift in its rhetorical justification for why abortion should be banned. Accordingly, this thesis will argue that new anti-abortion discourse is increasingly moving away from a religious line of argumentation and towards a ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion discourse centered on women’s negative experiences with abortion. As such, contemporary anti-abortion discourse has become a softer, gentler version of its former self.

In order to analyze this shift, this thesis will examine the discourse being disseminated by current anti-abortion advocates in English speaking Canada. By analyzing contemporary anti-abortion discourse, this project will seek to uncover (1) what anti-abortion arguments are being invoked, and (2) how current anti-abortion arguments differ from past anti-abortion discourse. My justifications for this analysis are six-fold:

- (1) To begin, abortion is a crucial issue within our contemporary political landscape and remains a defining issue in the right-left partisan split. This split has been made clear recently in the United States House of Representatives where reduction in medical coverage of abortion was used as a primary negotiating tool in passing President Obama’s health care policy. In a English Canadian context, Saskatoon MP Maurice Vellacott has recently come out in vehement opposition to Canada’s “abortion regime”, arguing that abortion in Canada is in fact eliminating women’s choice and is “directly and seriously harmful to mothers, as well as their unborn children.”<sup>10</sup> These two cases are but examples of the prominent role that the abortion issue still plays in the political realm today. Tracking this shift in anti-abortion discourse is thus important if only because abortion is still a significant political issue.
- (2) To feminists, a ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion discourse is cause for concern because of its appropriation of historically feminist language and concepts. One preliminary example of this phenomenon is the U.S.-based website [unchoice.com](http://theunchoice.com). The anti-abortion website warns women of the harms of abortion; their slogan: “Abortion is the unchoice: unwanted, unsafe, unfair.”<sup>11</sup> This site features an advertisement campaign of poster billboards and bumper stickers that applies historically feminist issues (such as domestic violence) to justify complete prohibition of abortion. The most shocking advertisement shows only a broken lamp with the

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<sup>7</sup> Hopkins N., Reicher S., & Saleem J., (1996) Constructing women's psychological health in anti-abortion rhetoric. *Sociological Review* 44. (542)

<sup>8</sup> This is obvious within the Canadian legal dealings with abortion, where no formal abortion law has been put in place.

<sup>9</sup> Hopkins N., Reicher S., & Saleem J., (1996) Constructing women's psychological health in anti-abortion rhetoric. *Sociological Review* 44. (542)

<sup>10</sup> Jaslsevack, J. (November 27, 2009). *Outspoken MP Slams Canada's "Abortion Regime"*. Retrieved November 2009 from Life Site News: <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2009/nov/09112704.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Abortion is the unchoice, “Ads & Awareness”, 2006. Retrieved April 10, 2009, <http://theunchoice.com>.

caption, “Like most women, Mary didn’t want an abortion, but her husband can be very persuasive.” This website, amongst many, provides a representative insight into the current allocation of women’s health, rights and equality into the discourse of the anti-abortion movement. This rhetoric presents abortion as a tragedy, not only for the unborn child who is terminated, but also for the woman. By injecting historically feminist language into its rhetoric, the anti-abortion movement rebukes the feminist charge that it is anti-woman whilst simultaneously gaining possible support from moderates (i.e. people who have previously have been alienated from the anti-abortion cause because of its fetal-centric approach but nevertheless remain uncomfortable with the idea of abortion). To measure its potential to widen anti-abortion support and its prevalence within a Canadian context, I believe an in-depth analysis of current anti-abortion discourse is necessary.

- (3) An analysis of the new ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion discourse is also important because it holds the potential for having direct repercussion on women’s access to abortion. Within the current Canadian context, abortion access have yet to be secured for *all* Canadian women and thus the abortion debate remains open, at least within parts of our society. Women living in Prince Edward Island have no access to abortion within their province. Abortion procedures in New Brunswick are not covered by provincial healthcare. Access to abortion in many areas of Canada typically involves long waiting periods because of lack of resources. The centralization of abortion services in city centers leave rural women with additional travel expenses. Anti-choice doctors abound, medical ethics and prescribed practices notwithstanding. Social stigma is still attached to abortion by much of society. In sum, despite triumphs at the judicial level that would seem to guarantee all women access to safe and legal access to abortion, the street-level reality: access to abortion is not guaranteed for all Canadian women. As a result, even if the new anti-abortion arguments do not succeed in legally banning abortion, they do hold the potential to further limit access and impede any further positive action towards universal abortion access.
- (4) The discursive shift in anti-abortion discourse is demonstrative of the larger trend of conservatives’ appropriation and reclamation of the language of progressives (for instance as was seen with the ironic injection of the word ‘change’ into John McCain’s presidential campaign). Consequently the expropriation of feminist language into the anti-abortion rhetoric can be further used as a case example of the larger trend.
- (5) The most important justification for the examination of this discursive shift is that the new ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion rhetoric holds the possibility of shaping the ways in which women talk about and relate to pregnancy, motherhood and abortion. If discourse is understood not to be “the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but on the contrary, a totality in which a network of distinct sites is deployed”<sup>12</sup>, a spectrum of discursive representations can be created by different rhetorical formations.

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<sup>12</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Archeology of Knowledge*. New York: Vintage Books, 1972.

Questions of how women are represented within this discourse need to be addressed in order to assess how women could and should position themselves in relation to or within this new anti-abortion argument.

- (6) And finally, my interest in analyzing the contemporary discursive framing of abortion has emerged out of what I believe to be a gap in feminist literature surrounding the emergence of a ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion discourse within a Canadian context. This gap is manifest in two main ways. Firstly, most abortion research broaches the subject using a rights-lens and remains focused on the judicial treatment of abortion. This is particularly true with the case of the ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion argument.<sup>13</sup> And secondly, the majority of research that does address the new anti-abortion rhetoric is centered in the United States (and to a lesser extent in the United Kingdom). Although the U.S. is distinctive from Canada in many respects, cross-border “formal and informal links between anti-abortion activists mean that ideas and tactics developed in one country may be deployed elsewhere.”<sup>14</sup> Whilst I believe a review of non-Canadian research is necessary, situating this discourse within a uniquely Canadian context is equally needed.

In sum, an in-depth analysis of the current ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion discourse is motivated by multiple factors. My thesis will thus analyze the explicit argument and the rhetorical strategies being implemented by contemporary Canadian anti-abortion advocates.

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS**

Giving the above context, my primary research objective is to analyze the contours of the new ‘pro-woman’ anti-abortion discourse as presently articulated by anti-abortion organizations, bloggers and politicians in English speaking Canada. As such I will examine both the usage of explicit arguments and the rhetorical strategies by English Canadian anti-abortion activists. Specifically this project will examine how new anti-abortion arguments are built around discursive representations and anti-abortion storytelling.

My preliminary hypothesis, as briefly articulated above, is that there has in fact been a visible shift in anti-abortion discourse. Whereas historically anti-abortion arguments have relied heavily on a religious conception of fetal personhood, the current discourse is undergoing a shift in focus, one that increasingly incorporates a ‘pro-woman’ discursive approach.

Ultimately my primary research question is the following: How are current anti-abortion activists attempting to persuade English Canadians that abortion is wrong? Specifically, what are the primary rhetorical techniques employed by contemporary English Canadian anti-abortion discourse?

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<sup>13</sup> The vast majority of the literature that can be found on the abortion-harms-women argument is by Reva Siegal, a legal scholar.

<sup>14</sup> Hopkins N., Reicher S., & Saleen J., (1996) Constructing women’s psychological health in anti-abortion rhetoric. *Sociological Review* 44. (543)

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Before discussing my specific methodological approach, I will briefly review and comment on the existing literature and evaluate how anti-abortion discourse has previously been examined within feminist scholarship. Initially two questions must be asked. To begin, how has feminist scholarship previously analyzed anti-abortion discourse? And second, to what degree has feminist scholarship identified a rhetorical shift within anti-abortion discourse?

The short answer to both questions is surprisingly little. Few feminist scholars have systematically analyzed anti-abortion discourse and even fewer have noted the emergence of a shift in anti-abortion rhetoric. In an attempt to answer the two questions raised above, what little contemporary feminist scholarship that does exist can be grouped into three main categories: (1) rights-based literature which deals with abortion discourse through strictly a liberal, rights tradition, (2) second wave literature on abortion discourse, and (3) literature that strongly engages with the new 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse. My exploration of the above will allow me to properly situate this thesis within existing feminist literature.

#### **3.1 RIGHTS-BASED LITERATURE**

A primary lens through which feminists have addressed the abortion debate has been a rights-based approach to anti-abortion abortion discourse. The right-based approach ultimately emerged out of two main and interrelated changes: (1) the rise in popularity of rights-talk and (2) the legal struggle to secure safe and legal rights to abortion throughout North America (which has deployed the liberal conception of rights and has been defined primarily through the efforts of second wave feminists throughout the 1970's and 1980's). The impact of these two developments has given way to a strong tendency to structure abortion discourse around the tenets of liberalism and individual rights. For both the pro-abortion and anti-abortion sides, liberal rights have become the primary means by which abortion discourse has been framed.

Despite this strong propensity to structure anti-abortion discourse in terms of rights, there are surprisingly few feminist scholars who have systematically analyzed and deconstructed the rights-based discourse disseminated by the anti-abortion movement. Instead the feminist literature that engages with rights-based anti-abortion discourse does so through the formulation of pro-abortion counter-strategies. This trend has resulted in the materialization of a rigid debate where the anti-abortion cause is arguing for fetal rights and the pro-abortion (feminist) side is theorizing around women's rights, but neither side thoroughly and analytically deconstructs each other's discourses.

Those opposing abortion engage the rights-based realm of liberalism through claims that the fetus should be considered a liberal subject and thus afforded liberal rights. Simultaneously feminist scholars<sup>15</sup> engage the precepts of liberalism by privileging the notion of the individual (in this case the woman) as a rational, equal and unified subject, thus relying in the same right-based logic as their anti-abortion counterparts. Essential to the principles of liberalism is the further notion that all individuals are to be treated as equal within the legal realm. Accordingly the rights-based feminist literature tends to advocate the legal *right to one's person*<sup>16</sup> be extended to women in relation to pregnancy, maternity and abortion. Out of these two opposing discourses emerges the supreme tension between a woman's right to bodily integrity and a fetal right to life. In the rights-based approach to abortion, female rights and fetal rights are viewed as separate and contradictory and as a result feminist scholars form their argument for abortion around the notion that women's rights must be treated as greater than the rights of the fetus.

Feminist theorist Susan Bordo is representative of this line of argumentation. In her book *Unbearable Weight*, Bordo explores the contradiction between the legal treatment of unpregnant and pregnant bodies. She observes that the law upholds the *right to one's person* as a fundamental principle of North American law, consistently refuting any notion that individuals *must* submit to medical procedures without consent (even if the life of another human being is threatened by the refusal). She also observes the dilemma when that right is withdrawn when the legal subject is a pregnant woman. Bordo outlines a history of contradictions when dealing with the pregnant subject, i.e. cases of forced sterilization, caesarean section and control over unwanted pregnancy. While Bordo argues that in our current climate fetal rights are being privileged over female rights, she maintains that pregnant women should have the legal right (based on the tenets of liberalism) *not to sacrifice* their own bodily integrity for the well-being of a fetus. Although Bordo does provide some analysis of the anti-abortion rights-based argument through her examination of the law, she does so only to support her main argument that from both a medical and legal standpoint women's rights should trump fetal rights.

Another example of the rights-based literature comes from feminist philosopher Judith Jarvis Thomson. In her famous article *A Defense of Abortion*, Thomson argues that a woman's right to control her own body trumps fetal rights through the allegory of the celebrated violinist. She asks us to imagine that "you wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back with an unconscious violinist... He has been found to have a fatal kidney ailment... and to unplug him would be to kill him."<sup>17</sup> In this thought-experiment Thomson asks us to consider ourselves not as a pregnant woman but instead as a de-gendered, rational, liberal actor. Her analysis is therefore not about anti-abortion arguments, but instead about rationally and systemically trying to counter the validity of the anti-abortion claims to a fetal right-to-life.

<sup>15</sup> Myrsiades, L. (2002). *Splitting the Baby: The Culture of Abortion in Literature and Law, Rhetoric and Cartoons*. New York: Peter Lang.; Ruhl, P. (2002). Disarticulating Liberal Subjectivities: Abortion and Fetal Protection. *Feminist Studies*, 28(1), 40.; Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.; Brodie, J., Gavigan, S., Jenson, J. (1992). *The Politics of Abortion*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.; Dubinsky, K. "Lament For 'Patriarchy Lost'?: Anti-feminism, Anti-abortion and R.E.A.L. Women in Canada". in *Feminist Perspectives (March, 1985 ed.)*. Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1985.

<sup>16</sup> Bordo, Susan. (1993) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>17</sup> Thomson, J. (1971). A Defense of Abortion. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1(1), 40.

Ultimately, Thomson's allegory of the violinist attempts to refute the anti-abortion claim that fetal rights should be privileged over a women's choice to choose abortion by simply adopting the women-rights-trumps-fetal rights argument widely adopted by the right-based literature on abortion. However, once again, Thomson's analysis does not extend into the realm of analyzing and deconstructing the argumentation of anti-abortion discourse. Instead her argument remains in the realm of the theoretical, and thus she does not directly address the arguments and rhetorical framings of anti-abortion advocates.

In sum, the rights-based approach to anti-abortion discourse focuses on the role that rights-talk plays in the formulation of anti-abortion argumentation and how those rights-based arguments directly affect pro-abortion argumentation. According to rights-based abortion literature, anti-abortion discourse views the fetus as fully human and thus able to claim a right to life. Furthermore the rights of the fetus and the rights of the pregnant woman are presented as diametrically opposed.

For the purposes of this thesis, the right-based literature is necessary background in historically situating the new 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse because new anti-abortion discourse has largely been shaped and influenced by its rights-based predecessor. However, the rights-based approach to anti-abortion discourse has proven insufficient in properly analyzing the types of arguments and rhetorical strategies utilized by the anti-abortion movement. In other words, rights-based literature has yet to examine how anti-abortion advocates are more recently attempting to persuade their audience. Moreover, because of its rigid focus on rights, the rights-based literature has overlooked the possibility of an anti-abortion shift towards a new 'pro-women' discourse. Accordingly, my thesis will attempt to fill this gap in literature by (1) specifically analyzing English Canadian anti-abortion discourse and (2) focusing on arguments and rhetorical strategies utilized by the anti-abortion movement, including but not limited to rights-based arguments. By centering my thesis on these two tenets I will ultimately be tracking the possible emergence of a new 'pro-woman' line of anti-abortion argumentation.

### 3.2 SECOND-WAVE LITERATURE

Although rights-based literature only minimally engages with the anti-abortion movement and its corresponding discourse, there does exist second-wave feminist literature that more directly analyzes anti-abortion advocacy and its mode of argumentation. Linda Myrsiades, Rosalind Petchesky and Susan Faludi (all significant contributors to second wave literature on abortion) offer important insight into the organizational and structural elements of the anti-abortion movement. Since "rhetoric involves the ability to reach out to one's converts or to affect public perceptions by the ways one frames issues for debate,"<sup>18</sup> second wave literature maintains that the structure of anti-abortion discourse is an important realm of study. As such second wave literature revolves around an examination of anti-abortion advocacy and argues that the anti-abortion movement is largely defined by two main features that

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<sup>18</sup> Myrsiades, L. (2002). *Splitting the Baby: The Culture of Abortion in Literature and Law, Rhetoric and Cartoons*. New York: Peter Lang. (43)

fundamentally structure their arguments and rhetorical framing: (1) it a religious movement and (2) its rhetoric is influenced by discourse of the “New Right”<sup>19</sup>.

To begin, second wave literature insists that the anti-abortion movement is a religious movement. Mysiades argues that the anti-abortion movement has “essentially rejected secular values for a religious approach to reproductive issues.”<sup>20</sup> Petchesky adds that in an American context it was the Catholic Church that “began to organize right-to-life committees to stop the tide of legalization.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently the anti-abortion movement has become infamous for using “religious language, invok[ing] religious motivations, and enlist[ing] prayer as an aid.”<sup>22</sup> Since it regards the anti-abortion movement as fundamentally movement, second wave literature argues that its resulting anti-abortion discourse is also fundamentally religious. Mysiades states anti-abortion discourse depicts childbearing “as part of a plan for women based on God’s will. Part of a world plan in which women are expected to subordinate their needs to male authority, the family, and social community, it is contrasted to abortion which is regarded as a violation of women’s nature.”<sup>23</sup>

The second feature of the anti-abortion movement highlighted by second wave literature is the idea that the anti-abortion movement is just one part of a bigger right-wing platform. As such, second wave literature argues that the anti-abortion movement is in fact “a central vehicle through which the New Right has crystallized and developed its mass base and mass ideology.”<sup>24</sup> Accordingly the anti-abortion position is synonymous with right-wing, traditional positions on “sex, religion and the family” as well as “traditional right-wing goals such as racial segregation, welfare cutbacks and militarism.”<sup>25</sup>

Correspondingly, Susan Faludi argues that the anti-abortion movement is saturated with disenfranchised men who “belonged to the second half of the baby boom, who had not only missed the political engagement of the ‘60s but had been cheated out of that affluent era’s bounty. They were downwardly mobile sons, condemned to the ‘80s economy to earn less than their fathers.”<sup>26</sup> Ultimately the anti-abortion position, right-wing economic principles and an anti-feminist mentality are joined to form a large New Right ideology. Petchesky argues that “women’s employment outside the home, as well as the women’s liberation movement, is once again blamed for the economic crisis [of the

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<sup>19</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books (414)

<sup>20</sup> Myrsiades, L. (2002). *Splitting the Baby: The Culture of Abortion in Literature and Law, Rhetoric and Cartoons*. New York: Peter Lang. (44)

<sup>21</sup> Petchesky, R. (1990). *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (rev. ed.). Michigan: Northeastern University Press. (241)

<sup>22</sup> Petchesky, R. (1990). *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (rev. ed.). Michigan: Northeastern University Press. (252)

<sup>23</sup> Myrsiades, L. (2002). *Splitting the Baby: The Culture of Abortion in Literature and Law, Rhetoric and Cartoons*. New York: Peter Lang. (44)

<sup>24</sup> Petchesky, R. (1990). *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (rev. ed.). Michigan: Northeastern University Press. (245)

<sup>25</sup> Petchesky, R. (1990). *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (rev. ed.). Michigan: Northeastern University Press. (245)

<sup>26</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (411)

1980s], for taking jobs away from men, and this adds fuel to the New Right's antifeminist attack."<sup>27</sup> Moreover she argues that central to that antifeminist attack is an attack on women's abortion rights.

For second wave literature this means that anti-abortion discourse is shaped and formed more generally by discourse of the New Right. Faludi argues that anti-abortion discourse is largely "aggressively moralistic rhetoric and the strategy for regaining the offensive was largely semantic."<sup>28</sup> Ultimately second wave theorists maintain that anti-abortion activists "resor[t] to the verbal tactics pioneered by the New Right."<sup>29</sup>

Thus second wave literature on abortion regards anti-abortion discourse as shaped by two main factors: religion and the rhetoric of the New Right. They view the anti-abortion position as part of a larger traditional right-wing platform and argue that their discourse is reflected of their religious viewpoints. However the second wave analysis of the anti-abortion movement is lacking in three areas.

First, second wave literature is more focused on the structure of the anti-abortion movement from the 1970s onward than the examination of the discourse that represents it. Although second wave literature examines the general categories of arguments made by the anti-abortion movement, it fails to systemically examine the specific types of arguments and rhetorical strategies being implemented by anti-abortion discourse. Although the second wave analysis of the anti-abortion position as a political movement is indeed interesting and important, it is not the main objective of this thesis. For the purposes of my own research it is the *specific* arguments and rhetorical framings that are of primary importance, not the movement or political ideology that represents them. As such, the second wave literature on abortion proves insufficient in specifically analyzing anti-abortion discourse.

Secondly, the analyses of Mysiades, Petchesky and Faludi are all somewhat outdated. All three scholars examine the anti-abortion movement as it existed in the 1980s. As such, their analyses do not represent an examination of the new and contemporary anti-abortion movement. This is particularly important within my thesis because of its objective to systemically analyze the possibility of a recent emergence of a 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse.

Lastly, the movement-based literature focuses on the American anti-abortion movement. As such there is a gap in literature related to anti-abortion discourse in a Canadian context. Whilst there are formal and informal ties between anti-abortion advocacy in the United States and Canada, my thesis will explore uniquely English Canadian anti-abortion discourse.

The feminist second wave literature on abortion has provided an important contribution to the study of anti-abortion discourse but it does not address the specific research objectives of this thesis, namely current English Canadian anti-abortion discourse.

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<sup>27</sup> Petchesky, R. (1990). *Abortion and Woman's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (rev. ed.). Michigan: Northeastern University Press.(245)

<sup>28</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books (414)

<sup>29</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books (414)

### 3.3 SPECIFIC ANALYSES OF THE ABORTION-HARMS-WOMEN ARGUMENT

As detailed above, the literature dealing with anti-abortion discourse has not yet fully analyzed the discursive shift within the anti-abortion movement towards a pro-woman line of argumentation. In fact there are less than a handful of publications that actively examine the issue. Moreover, the analyses that do exist are dispersed across a variety of disciplines.

Reva Siegal is an American legal scholar who has analyzed the possible consequences that discursive framing could have on both the law and on women's tangible access to abortion. Siegal explores the current anti-abortion discourse through her reviews<sup>30</sup> of the "Report of the South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion"<sup>31</sup> ("the South Dakota Report"), a 70-page set of findings that Siegal argues is the "most comprehensive government account of the arguments and evidence for protecting women from abortion."<sup>32</sup> The South Dakota Report was also the basis of an attempt in 2005 to criminalize abortion in South Dakota. Siegal analyzes the language used in the South Dakota Report and its appeal to women's nature (and natural right to be mothers) in order to understand how the notion of women's rights and women's health have been adopted by anti-abortion rhetoric. Her examination led Siegal to observe that 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse is paternalistic and presents women as weak, emotional and confused decision-makers in need of state protection.

In her analysis, Siegal calls for an alternative framing of abortion through the concept of dignity, has had recently come out of a policy initiative in Colombia. Although she explores the deployment of the new anti-abortion discourse through its articulation in the law, her investigation primarily focuses on the *legal* consequences of a 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse. Whilst the law (and the language surrounding law-making) has a major hand in shaping the politics of abortion, Siegal's analysis does not examine the role of non-legal actors (i.e. actors in advocacy and the formal political realm). Hence analysis that reaches beyond the realm of the law is missing.

Hopkins, Reicher and Saleem have also tracked the emergence of the new 'pro-woman' anti-abortion rhetoric within the UK. They offer an insightful analysis of the new discourse, specifically in terms of its deployment of Post-Abortion-Syndrome (PAS). Hopkins, Reicher and Saleem maintain the anti-abortion movement has consistently remained "vulnerable to the charge of ignoring the woman and her experience. Indeed, while the image of the foetus as a free-floating independent individual able to claim 'rights' is actually dependent upon ... the reduction of the woman to invisible 'empty space', this treatment of the woman is something of a rhetorical Achilles' heel."<sup>33</sup> Out of this rhetorical weakness, Hopkins, Reicher and Saleem claim that the anti-abortion movement has responded with a

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<sup>30</sup> Siegel, R., & Blustein, S. (2006). Mommy Dearest? *American Prospect*, 17(10), 1. Siegel, R. (2007). The Right's Reason: Constitutional Conflict and the Spread of Woman-Protective Anti-Abortion Argument. *Duke Law Review*, 57(1641), 1641-1692. Siegel, R. (2007). The New Politics of Abortion: An Equality Analysis of Woman-Protective Abortion Restriction. *University of Illinois Law Review*, 2007(3), 991-1065. Siegel, R. (2008). Dignity and the Politics of protection: Abortion Restrictions under Casey/Carhart. *Yale Law Review*, 118(1074), 1694(107).

<sup>31</sup> South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion, *Report of the South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion* (December 2005), online: Vote Yes for Life [http://www.voteyesforlife.com/docs/Task\\_Force\\_Report.pdf](http://www.voteyesforlife.com/docs/Task_Force_Report.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Siegel, R., & Blustein, S. (2006). Mommy Dearest? *American Prospect*, 17(10), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Hopkins N., Reicher S., & Saleem J., (1996) Constructing women's psychological health in anti-abortion rhetoric. *Sociological Review* 44, 542.

counter-construction of women's experience with abortion (mainly articulated through PAS). Through this counter-construction, women become victims of abortion since the "destruction of one's unborn child... is beyond the range of usual human experience."<sup>34</sup>

What is particularly perceptive in Hopkins, Reicher and Saleem's analysis of current anti-abortion discourse is their observation that the anti-abortion movement is in fact co-opting women's experience of abortion by hypothesizing the "avoidance phenomenon" (a tenet of PAS). The avoidance phenomenon asserts that *all* women will continue to psychologically re-experience their abortion in a negative way. These re-experiences can manifest themselves through "intense psychological distress at exposure to events which symbolizes or resemble the abortion experience."<sup>35</sup> Although in practice some women may experience varying degrees of post-abortion distress, PAS (and the larger 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse) argues that *every* woman will *always* experience this psychological distress to a *serious* extent. PAS further hypothesizes that many women may not be consciously aware of the ways in which abortion has impacted their lives, "even women damaged by their abortion experiences can in good faith claim to have no negative reactions because the problems are being suppressed."<sup>36</sup> The Hopkins, Reicher and Saleem analysis is fundamental to an understanding of the monolithic narrative that is being advanced by the 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse. However, as is the case with Siegal's legal analysis, Hopkins, Reicher and Saleem do not fully explore the role of non-governmental actors in the formulation of anti-abortion discourse. Furthermore, Siegal, Hopkins, Reicher and Saleem are focused in the context of the United States and the United Kingdom respectively, which means that their work does not cover a strictly Canadian context.

In fact the only Canadian text dealing with the 'pro-woman' anti-abortion argument is a text written by Cara Davies which was presented at a student symposium on human rights at the University of Toronto.<sup>37</sup> Davies uses Bill C-484 (the *Unborn Victims Act*) to examine the dissemination of a 'pro-woman' anti-abortion argument in Canada. Davies deploys the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) to show how current anti-abortion discourse, through its elimination of women's choice regarding pregnancy option and stereotyping of women as weak decision-makers, is unethical and hence must be eliminated.

With the framework of both Bill C-484 and CEDAW, Davies explores the new anti-abortion rhetoric's reliance on a "descriptive" stereotype, namely that women will always behave like mothers because it is their nature. Within this "woman-protective" stereotype, if women are choosing to have abortion even though it is against their nature, then these women are either confused, poor decision-makers or are coerced. It thus becomes the role of the anti-abortion activist to limit women's access to abortion for their own protection. For Davies, this anti-abortion logic is contingent on the descriptive stereotype that all women are, and will behave as, mothers.

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<sup>34</sup> Speckhard, A.C., Rue, V.M., (1992), Postabortion Syndrome: An emerging public health concern, *Journal of Social Issues*, 48 (3), 95-119.

<sup>35</sup> Hopkins N., Reicher S., & Saleem J., (1996) Constructing women's psychological health in anti-abortion rhetoric. *Sociological Review* 44, 546.

<sup>36</sup> Hopkins N., Reicher S., & Saleem J., (1996) Constructing women's psychological health in anti-abortion rhetoric. *Sociological Review* 44, 546.

<sup>37</sup> Davies, C. (2008). *Stereotyping and the new Women-protective Antiabortion Movement*. Paper presented at the 2009 John and Mary Yaremko Forum on Multiculturalism and Human Rights: Student Symposium on Women's Human Rights. University of Toronto Faculty of Law, March 6, 2009.

Davies' analysis is quite important to my proposed research because it aids in "identifying and naming the stereotype that operates in this new women-protective movement."<sup>38</sup> Davies also provides guidance in assessing the consequences of a 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse poses to women's equality. Davies' analysis is limited to the examination of the pro-woman argumentation within the context of Bill C-484. Consequently, Davies' important first step, a more in-depth analysis of current Canadian anti-abortion discourse, is needed. As such, my thesis will examine English Canadian anti-abortion discourse outside the realm of Bill C-484. Moreover my research will target anti-abortion discourse outside even the legal realm by examining argumentation at various levels of anti-abortion activism (this will be explained in detail in Chapter 2).

In conclusion, although the present literature on the anti-abortion discourse is integral to my analysis, it has not yet specifically and systematically analyzed current anti-abortion discourse within an English Canadian non-legal context. An exploration into the arguments being diffused by various levels of anti-abortion advocates within Canada is thus needed. In order to examine English Canadian anti-abortion argumentation and rhetorical framing, I will examine anti-abortion discourse in five different capacities.

To begin, the following chapter (chapter 2) will first review my methodological approach to the analysis of anti-abortion discourse.

Following this methodological discussion, chapter 3 will explore the realm of anti-abortion advocacy in the 1980s and compare it to the current English speaking Canadian anti-abortion movement. This chapter will discuss how the face of anti-abortion advocacy has changed and moreover how that change is part of a conscious strategic shift by anti-abortion activists.

Chapter 4 will then examine the explicit arguments being promulgated by the anti-abortion movement in English Canada. This chapter will seek to uncover which types of 'rational' arguments are being used by the anti-abortion movement to dissuade women from abortion.

After analyzing explicit argumentation, chapter 5 will focus on implicit arguments and anti-abortion rhetorical strategies. Ultimately this chapter will explore the rhetorical framing of values, issues and epistemology by anti-abortion discourse.

Chapter 6 will examine the construction of anti-abortion narratives as well as the representation of the characters that structure those narratives. This chapter will explore how women, abortion providers, feminists and men are represented by anti-abortion discourse and ultimately how these representations differ from old anti-abortion constructions.

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<sup>38</sup> Davies, C. (2008). *Stereotyping and the new Women-protective Antiabortion Movement*. Paper presented at the 2009 John and Mary Yaremko Forum on Multiculturalism and Human Rights: Student Symposium on Women's Human Rights. University of Toronto Faculty of Law, March 6, 2009. (26)

Chapter 7 will conclude the thesis by suggesting elements of potential pro-choice strategy that may be used to counter the anti-abortion implementation of a 'pro-woman' discourse.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

To fulfill my research objectives of analyzing the explicit arguments and rhetorical framings being deployed by English Canadian anti-abortion discourse, it is necessary to develop a methodological approach for analyzing discourse. As such, an understanding of how discourse has generally come to be analyzed is required. This chapter will review the primary methodological approaches that both shape and justify my analysis of anti-abortion discourse. Accordingly I will explore (1) why the analysis of discourse is important, and (2) the importance examining both explicit 'rational' argumentation and the implicit framing of concepts and values.

The latter half of this chapter will outline the three anti-abortion locations of my discursive analysis. It will also review the coding system that was used to identify and assess the anti-abortion materials within each location.

### 1. THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCOURSE

#### 1.1 THE MODERNIST APPROACH TO DISCOURSE: NOAM CHOMSKY

The modernist approach to language holds that discourse is important because it is through language and discourse that social relations are expressed. The modernist approach is centered on a rational and humanist subject that is capable of objectivity and reason. By extension, language becomes an expression through which the subjectivity of a unified speaker is knowingly expressed. Language is thus viewed as a medium which maintains transparency and neutrality. For the modernist, social relations are ultimately expressed in, but not constituted through, language and discourse.

Noam Chomsky's scientific approach to linguistics presents itself as an example of the modernist approach to the use of language<sup>1</sup>. Chomsky's view of language grew out of a critique of the behaviorist approach to the study of linguistics. He leveled his criticism against the "unscientific" nature of the behaviorist method of analysis and opposed the constraints and limitations that behaviorism places on scientific inquiry. In contrast to the behaviorists, Chomsky constructed a scientific method in which to study linguistics by extending Descartes, Galileo, and Darwin's mechanical theories of natural phenomenon to language.

Chomsky's modernist methodology does not view humans as "blank slates" as to the learning of language. Instead he contends that there exists an advanced "initial state of the language learner". He views language as an intuitive knowledge using children's intricate familiarity of language based on limited data as his justification. Consequently, for Chomsky and other modernists language provides infinite use for finite means. Although modernists acknowledge that there is a structure of language, they maintain it is internal to the subject and that the limitation of language actually allows for language to be used as a means of liberation. Chomsky maintains that "it is important to

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<sup>1</sup> Chomsky, N. & Foucault, M. (1971) *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*. New York: The New York Press, Chomsky, N. (2006). *Language and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., Chomsky, N. (1987). *The Chomsky Reader*. Toronto: Random House Limited.

stress... that were it not for these limitations, we would not have the creative act of going from a little bit of knowledge, a little bit of experience, to a rich and highly articulated and complicated array of knowledge. Because if anything could be possible, then nothing would be possible.”<sup>2</sup>

As seen from the discussion above, the modernist approach to language revolves around three main tenets. First, modernists view discourse as free from coercion, repression and deceit and thus as free from political manipulation. Second, discourse should be viewed as evolutionary and progressive, meaning that changes in discursive framing or hegemonic understanding of language and concepts simply reflect the discovery of new truths. Third, discourse is used to describe power relations but *not* create them and hence power relations remain outside the realm of discourse, which remains solely descriptive. In this sense experience is understood to be prior to language but requires language in order to be communicated to other people.

## 1.2 THE CRITICAL AND FEMINIST APPROACH TO DISCOURSE

Although it proves important to review and understand the modernists approach to language, its three tenets are contested. Alternatively, the critical approach to language is centered on a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, meaning that discourse is viewed as a “totality in which a network of distinct sites is deployed.”<sup>3</sup> In contrast with the modernist approach to language, Foucault believes that history (and the discourses that represent history) has not followed a linear progression nor can discourse be necessarily seen as always evolving throughout history. Instead, within the critical discourse realm, certain knowledges are shaped through power relations, disseminated through discourse and, in the end, identified as truths. Accordingly, for Foucault, it is through discourse that knowledge and truth are created; discourse joins knowledge and power.

This project is centered on such a critical conception of discourse<sup>4</sup>, meaning that discourse is viewed as a “totality in which a network of distinct sites is deployed.”<sup>5</sup> In contrast with the ‘rational approach’ to language<sup>6</sup>, a critical conception of discourse maintains that it is through discourse that knowledges and truths are created. Ultimately, this view of discourse substantially changes the relationship that exists between the speaker and language. In accordance, the subject is no longer regarded as a totally rational, objective speaker or receiver but instead as profoundly affected and shaped through discourse.

For this project, the subject (i.e. the speaker or receiver of discourse) is considered to be produced and reproduced through discursive representations. As such, language is not a neutral medium that is used and received by the subject, but instead a medium that holds the ability to codify power relations and shape subjectivities. The body,

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<sup>2</sup> Chomsky, N. & Foucault, M. (1971) *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*. New York: The New York Press.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault, Michel. (1972) *Archeology of Knowledge*. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, Michel. (1972) *Archeology of Knowledge*. New York: Vintage Books. Connolly, W. (1983). *The Terms of Political Discourse*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Foucault, Michel. (1972) *Archeology of Knowledge*. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>6</sup> Chomsky, N. & Foucault, M. (1971) *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*. New York: The New York Press., Chomsky, N. (2006). *Language and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., Chomsky, N. (1987). *The Chomsky Reader*. Toronto: Random House Limited.

thought and feeling have no meaning outside the discursive realm, and the manner in which discourse represents the body and mind is part of a larger network of power relations.

Since anti-abortion discourse deals primarily (although not exclusively) with a female subject, my project will equally employ a feminist approach to discourse.<sup>7</sup> While the feminist approach to discourse sees the subject as being constructed through discourse, it additionally analyzes the subject through a gendered lens and thus centers its approach on the role that gender plays in discourse. The feminist approach believes that discourse is often based only on a common-sense perception of gender relations. Chris Weedon<sup>8</sup> illustrates this approach by analyzing the common-sense rhetoric that insists that children need their mothers (despite the absence of any decisive empirical support for this). Although this statement is seemingly innocent, the subject position being constructed for women within this rhetoric is the monolithic representation of women as mothers. By relying on common-sense notions of gender roles, the plurality of women's individual experiences is ignored and only this subject position is constructed to the exclusion of all others. By standardizing the women's role in this way, this type of discourse presents all women with a homogeneous and one dimensional code of conduct (i.e. women should focus on motherhood and not their careers).

What is important to recognize in this view of common-sense rhetoric is that the circular idea of femaleness exists only within social relations, these relations in turn being created through discourse. When there exists a gap between the female reality and the discursive representation of being female individual discomfort emerges. Common-sense discourse immediately provides remedies to this discomfort, resulting in the female subject becoming an object to herself. She becomes detached from her own body, in the hopes of fulfilling the limited subject position that is being offered to her by the common-sense discourse.

Consequently, within my own analysis of anti-abortion discourse, it becomes especially necessary to examine the representations of the female subject. Only through the analysis of these representations will an understanding about the impact of anti-abortion discourse on the female subject be possible. Consequently, both the critical and feminist approaches to discourse, as outlined above, are the bases of my own methodological approach to discourse.

This approach to discourse also justifies the importance of analyzing anti-abortion argumentation. Since the subject is constructed, produced and reproduced through discourse, discourse must be analyzed in order to understand the subtle ways in which it "subject[s] our bodies, govern[s] our gestures,[and] dictate[s] our behaviours."<sup>9</sup> Further, from a feminist perspective, the analysis of anti-abortion discourse is crucial in uncovering how women are being discursively constructed, produced and reproduced.

## **2. THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPLICIT ARGUMENT AND RHETORICAL FRAMING**

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<sup>8</sup> Weedon, Chris. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Foucault, M. (1978). *History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books. (97)

Since my main objective is to uncover both the explicit arguments and the overall rhetorical strategies being employed by the contemporary anti-abortion movement, it is important to outline the significance of both explicit and implicit means of argumentation. To this end, my methodological approach will apply both Rawlsian and Lakoffian modes of analysis to anti-abortion discourse.

John Rawls approaches the issue of argument in much the same way as he approaches human nature, i.e. he considers both to be rational and reasonable. For Rawls, when presented with explicit arguments, the subject will analyze and compare each argument's reasoning and, in the end, will arrive at a rational conclusion. Such an approach to discourse emphasizes the importance of explicit argumentation. According to Rawls, the 'rational' subject weighs "his preference between the options open to him. He ranks these options according to how well they further his purposes; he follows the plan which will satisfy more of his desires rather than less, and which has the greater chance of being successfully executed."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the subject will be persuaded by arguments that explicitly represents his desires or beliefs.

This means that the examination of explicit argumentation is a crucial domain of analysis. Moreover, when looking at explicit arguments the speaker's own agenda is a good starting point. Ultimately an understanding of the strategy behind political discourse provides for greater comprehension of specific explicit argumentation. As such, by examining both the strategy and explicit arguments of anti-abortion discourse, this thesis will in part utilize a Rawlsian methodology.

However, in the mind of many political theorists a Rawlsian examination of explicit argumentation is not sufficient. For instance George Lakoff argues that the analysis of the rhetorical framing of concepts, issues and values is equally important when examining the persuasiveness of discourse. Ultimately politics is not so much about explicit arguments as it is "about worldview." Hence, for Lakoff "how people conceptualize the world"<sup>11</sup> becomes a crucial realm of study. He considers the conceptual framing of metaphors and categories as a form of implicit persuasion. By adopting a Lakoffian approach to discourse, what becomes imperative is that common sense not be taken as a given but instead understood as being conceptually framed. He writes,

Common sense cannot be taken for granted as a given... Common sense has a conceptual structure that is usually unconscious. That's what makes it 'common sense'. It is the commonsensical quality of political discourse that makes it imperative that we study it. I hope you will see... just how deep, complex, sophisticated, and subtle common sense is, especially in the domains of morality and politics.<sup>12</sup>

Because common sense is a 'conceptual structure', Lakoff sees the analysis of the framing of that structure as necessary.

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<sup>10</sup> Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Lakoff, G. (1996). *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (3)

<sup>12</sup> Lakoff, G. (1996). *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (4)

Adopting both a Rawlsian and Lakoffian methodological approach, this thesis maintains that implicit forms of persuasion are equally as important as explicit, ‘rational’ argumentation. Ultimately, for this thesis, rhetorical strategy and the discursive framing of political issues matter, whether they are rational or not. As such I will explore the discursive use of principles and values to assess the structure of political concepts and issues, the rhetorical role of epistemological framing, narrative building and discursive representations of the subject. This thesis maintains that all of these implicit rhetorical tactics subtly reinforce explicit arguments and are crucial to the examination of political discourse.

Within the theoretical methodological approach outlined above, I will now outline the concrete method through which it was applied.

### **3. SYSTEM OF ANALYSIS**

In order to systematically analyze the explicit arguments and rhetorical strategies of anti-abortion discourse in English speaking Canada, I used the qualitative research tool QDA Miner. QDA Miner is a research computer software program that codes, annotates and analyzes texts and images. However unlike traditional qualitative data-mining programs QDA miner uses a mixed method approach. Instead of automatically coding and counting text, QDA Miner allows for an individual and detailed reading of every case analyzed. Thus the resulting data from the QDA program reveals both the quantitative measure of arguments and further aids in gaining an overall understanding of the inner-workings of the discourse examined.

The anti-abortion materials (which will be discussed below) were inputted into the QDA Miner program and each input counted as one case. Some 470 cases of anti-abortion discourse were coded. Each case was coded for five major concepts: (1) what anti-abortion argument was used, (2) if the argument used an abortion-harms-women discourse, what type of harm was argued, (3) how women were being represented, (4) what position/person/organization/ideology was being attacked, and (5) what type evidence was provided in support of the anti-abortion position. Each of these concepts was broken down into separate codes (see appendix A).

Each time a case was referenced to any of the above codes, that word/passage/phrase was coded. From a quantitative perspective, this allowed me to see which arguments, representations and positions were being argued, advanced or attacked and exactly how often. From a qualitative perspective, I was also able to analyze how different arguments co-existed and worked, both in ways that converged and diverged.

### **4. THE CODING DICTIONARY**

The coding dictionary for this project (see appendix A) was informed by a preliminary analysis of the anti-abortion materials.

The materials were initially coded for six different anti-abortion arguments: the fetal personhood argument, abortion-harms-society, the wrong side of history argument (i.e. abortion is genocide), abortion-harms-men, , and other miscellaneous anti-abortion arguments. The main objective for this specific code (the anti-abortion argument used code) was to analyze the explicit arguments that are employed by anti-abortion activists.

The second code applied was the abortion-harms-women code, which essentially worked as a sub-section to the anti-abortion argument used code. Since a primary research objective of this thesis is to analyze whether or not a 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse is emerging, specifically tracking the explicit anti-abortion arguments that deal directly with women is imperative. Consequently, if a case was coded abortion-harms-women it was then sub-coded depending on what abortion-related harm (on women) was being argued. The five possible abortion-harms-women sub-codes are: physical/medical harm, psychological harm; harm to one's personal life; general, unspecified harm; and other miscellaneous abortion-related harm. Ultimately, the main objective of the abortion-harms-women sub-code was to further measure the types of 'pro-woman' arguments are being utilized by anti-abortion discourse.

The third code is the representation of women code. Another important aspect of this project was to examine the rhetorical strategies and discursive representation of anti-abortion discourse. How women were represented by abortion rhetoric was an important aspect of analysis and anti-abortion passages that referred to women were coded based on how women were presented. The representation of women code is formulated around what I initially observed were the six most common portrayals: (1) women as victims/coerced, (2) women as uninformed/misinformed/ignorant, (3) women presented as the enemy/selfish/criminal, (4) women as unnatural, (5) women as grieving mothers, (6) other miscellaneous portrayal.

The fourth important QDA code sought to uncover who was regarded as the enemy of the anti-abortion movement. Since this thesis seeks to examine the anti-abortion construction of narratives, and narratives are primarily constructed around villains, it was important to track anti-abortion discourse rhetorical framed as the enemy. Consequently the attack code was formulated around what position/person/organization/ideology was attacked by anti-abortion discourse. The four main categories of the attack code were (1) feminists/feminism/pro-choice side, (2) abortion providers/clinic/pro-abortion organizations, (3) pro-abortion society/elites, and (4) any other miscellaneous attack.

The last code of importance is the evidence code. In order to analyze the anti-abortion usage of epistemology, the epistemological framings through which anti-abortion claims are justified and defended were coded. Any passage that supported anti-abortion argumentation was coded along the following five codes: (1) expert/research study/statistic, (2) appeal to religious faith, (3) explicitly principled, (4) through narrative/personal experience/anecdotes, (5) any other miscellaneous defense.

This coding system was developed to systematically analyze this project's main research question; namely, what arguments and rhetorical strategies are anti-abortion advocates using to convince English speaking Canadians that abortion is wrong.

## **5. SITES OF ANALYSIS**

Since this project believes that discourse must be examined at both the macro and micro level, anti-abortion discourse in the formal political realm and discourse that operates "below the threshold of large legislative acts and executive initiatives"<sup>13</sup> were both examined. Ultimately I was less interested in the internal reasons and motivations of the anti-abortion movement and more interested in the specific arguments, conceptual frames and rhetorical strategies employed.

The three locations selected for analysis were as follows: (1) English anti-abortion bloggers in Canada, (2) English speaking Canadian anti-abortion organizations, and (3) political acts from four anti-abortion Canadian Members of Parliament (Maurice Vellacott, Rod Bruinooge, Paul Szabo and Ken Epp). I will briefly discuss each location.

### **3.1 CANADIAN BLOGS**

In terms of methodology, blogs are an important realm of analysis because of the role they play in the mass delivery of news as well as the potential role they can play in mass political mobilization such as the surprisingly significant role blogging and social media played in the election campaign of Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately the analysis of blogs within this thesis is important for four main reasons. To begin, blogs are pervasive and easily accessible. Anybody with an internet connection can easily access countless blogs on countless topics. Secondly, blogs have become a readily accessible means of delivering news. For example, each national newspaper has real-time bloggers that keep their readership up to date with news. Third, the delivery of news through a political blog is an interesting realm of analysis because political blogs generally have a stated bias. And lastly, anybody can blog. Whereas mainstream news is a realm reserved for journalists, any person with basic computer skills can set up a blog that is accessible to the masses. As such, the analysis of blogs can be used as a mean of generally gauging how non-formal realms of advocacy are relating to and talking about political issues.

For these four reasons, I selected and examined the English Canadian blog ProWomanProLife in order to observe how anti-abortion activists are talking about and relating to abortion. ProWomanProLife (PWPL)<sup>15</sup> is an English Canadian blog that first appeared in December 2007 in order to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Morgentaler decision. The site is comprised of nine Canadian women from "different walks of life (medicine, psychology, actuarial

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<sup>13</sup> Connolly, W. (2002). *Neuropolitics: thinking, culture, speed*. University of Minnesota Press. (19)

<sup>14</sup> Cuthbertson, Richard. (2010, October 20). "New Media Strategy gave Nenshi Big Win". *Calgary Herald*. retrieved from <http://www.calgaryherald.com/technology/media+strategy+gave+Nenshi/3698332/story.html>.

<sup>15</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

science, journalism, and public policy), different religions (or no religion at all), have never been vocal or activist on abortion before, do not represent any larger group, and do not currently receive funding from any larger group.”<sup>16</sup> The general idea of PWPL is that each blogger “has a different take on abortion-related issues, and each will have complete freedom to blog precisely what she thinks, representing a spectrum of nuanced pro-woman and pro-life views”<sup>17</sup>. Moreover the PWPL blog has gained notable national recognition. It has been referenced in the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* and won fifth place in the politics category at the 2009 Canadian Blog Awards.

The analysis of the PWPL blog can be viewed as representative of anti-abortion discourse due in part to the political influence of its founding member, Andrea Mrozek. Mrozek has gained Canada-wide recognition for her conservative ideology and anti-abortion stance. She is frequently published across Canada in the *National Post*, the *Calgary Herald* and the *Ottawa Citizen*. Mrozek is currently employed as Manager of Research and Communications at the Institute of Family and Marriage. She has also worked for *Toronto Life* magazine, the Fraser Institute and was the associate editor of the *Western Standard*. Given Mrozek’s resume, she clearly has both political influence and the platform to promote both her anti-abortion ideology and the PWPL blog. For this reason, she can be viewed as representative of anti-abortion activism. As such, I analyzed all existing blogs from December 2007-December 2009 on the ProwomanProLife website that deal directly with the issue of abortion. This analysis led to a fuller understanding of how anti-abortion activists are arguing against abortion at the internet level.

### 3.2 ANTI-ABORTION ORGANIZATIONS

Anti-abortion organizations are an undeniably important site of analysis when examining anti-abortion discourse. Not only are anti-abortion organizations funded and highly organized, they also represent the formal realm of anti-abortion advocacy. By and large it is anti-abortion organizations that fund anti-abortion studies (i.e. the Elliot Institute in Canada) and have readily available resources to organize public campaigns that disseminate an anti-abortion message (as was seen with the Alliance for Life Ontario Ontario-wide commercial campaign). Moreover, anti-abortion organizations are more likely to be players and lobbyists in the realm of formal politics and policymaking.

As such, within this thesis, anti-abortion organizations are a crucial site of analysis. Consequently the websites of four anti-abortion organizations were also examined. The entirety of each of these anti-abortion websites were examined, including mission statements, advertising campaigns, video postings, newsletters, press releases and links provided for women to acquire more information on unplanned pregnancies.

The anti-abortion organizations analyzed are set forth below.

#### *i. Alliance for Life Ontario*

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<sup>16</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>17</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

Alliance for Life Ontario<sup>18</sup> is a pro-life organization that was founded in 1989 and is based in Guelph, Ontario. It serves 55 pro-life educational groups and its goal is to act as a Provincial voice that advocates for “issues of life”<sup>19</sup>. In September 2009, Alliance for Life Ontario launched their fifth Ontario-wide commercial campaign, designed “to reach out to women experiencing a crisis pregnancy and to challenge and reshape people's thinking and emotions on the societal acceptance of abortion. They [were] designed especially to reach people who identify themselves as pro-choice or unsure on the issue of abortion.”<sup>20</sup>

Alliance for Life Ontario has affiliates promulgating the same message all across English speaking Canada. Hence Alliance for Life Ontario can be regarded as generally representative of anti-abortion organizations in English speaking Canada.

ii. *Life Canada, Toronto-Right-to-Life and Signal Hill*

Life Canada<sup>21</sup> shares similar objectives with Alliance for Life Ontario but operates on a national level. Life Canada’s main objective is to produce educational materials for English speaking Canadians, which are then posted on its websites or mailed out to members. Life Canada maintains two websites: lifecanada.org and abortionincanada.ca. The first is Life Canada’s official website. It includes posts of annuals polls and general information about the negative effects of abortion. Abortionincanada.ca on the other hand is a website that was “created to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of unrestricted access to abortion in Canada”<sup>22</sup> and speaks more directly to women about the harm of abortion. The sheer magnitude of Life Canada web presence, combined with its national scope, makes Life Canada an important location of analysis.

Life Canada also works in affiliation with other local and provincial pro-life organizations. These associated websites provide important insight into the discourse being disseminated by anti-abortion organizations at the local and provincial level. Consequently I will analyze the websites of two anti-abortion organizations that are affiliated with Life Canada, namely Toronto Right-to-Life<sup>23</sup> and Signal Hill<sup>24</sup> (an organization based in British Columbia).

The analysis of these four anti-abortion organizations is important because the websites are impressive in their scale and thus provide a large sample of both provincial and national anti-abortion advocacy all across English speaking Canada.

### 3.3 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

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<sup>18</sup>( AllianceForLifeOntario, Home)

<sup>19</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Home)

<sup>20</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Media Campaign)

<sup>21</sup> (Life Canada, Index Page)

<sup>22</sup> (AbortioninCanada. Home Page)

<sup>23</sup> (TorontoRightToLife, Facts)

<sup>24</sup> (Signal Hill, About Us)

Finally, I examined the dissemination of anti-abortion argumentation at the governmental level through a review of the political acts and speeches of four outspoken anti-abortion Canadian Members of Parliament (MPs). For this purpose I selected Maurice Vellacott, Rod Bruinooge, Ken Epp and Paul Szabo as representative of anti-abortion discourse in Parliament. These four MPs are notable because of their geographical spread (Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Mississauga respectively) and because they represent two of the three main political parties (Vellacott, Epp and Bruinooge from the Conservative Party and Szabo from the Liberal Party; there are no outspoken anti-abortion advocates in the NDP Party. All four have been outspoken in regard to their anti-abortion positions. In order to examine these four MPs I studied their websites, parliamentary interventions, and press releases.

In terms of the locations of my analysis, it is important to note that my objective is not to develop a comprehensive register of all English Canadian anti-abortion discourse and all of its political impacts. Rather my objective is to track the hypothesized emergence of a 'pro-woman' anti-abortion discourse by analyzing the anti-abortion materials for the purposes of identifying and assessing their explicit arguments and rhetoric strategies.

## CHAPTER 3: A SELF-CONSCIOUS STRATEGY SHIFT

As was seen in the introductory chapter, the abortion debate has, until recently, historically revolved around feminists fighting for a woman's right to choose and anti-abortionists fighting for a fetal right-to-life. The rigid attachment to a rights-based abortion discourse has led to a mainstream representation of anti-abortion advocacy. For feminists, anti-abortionists are generally considered to be aggressive men who diffuse religious and anti-women arguments.

However this simplified mainstream view of anti-abortion advocacy has tended to limit the ways in which anti-abortion discourse has been analyzed. In my view, the hypothesized recent strategic rhetorical shift within the anti-abortion camp may be going undetected because of an adherence to the outdated image of what anti-abortion advocacy looks like and what types of discourse are being disseminated.

The first part of this chapter will review in detail the common, mainstream representation of the anti-abortion movement, its argument and its advocates. Understanding the widespread portrayal of anti-abortion discourse is important because this common story continues to dominate contemporary, conventional thinking around anti-abortion rhetoric. The latter section of this chapter will examine how the common depiction of the anti-abortion movement is overlooking a key, self-conscious strategic shift which is fundamentally transforming the types of arguments that are circulated by the anti-abortion movement.

### 1. THE COMMON STORY

In 1991 Susan Faludi described the American anti-abortion movement's campaign against women in her now famous book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. She describes the 1980's anti-abortion movement as bearing

...all the hallmarks of the New Right ideology that had preceded it. In its war-torn psychological landscape, the enemy was feminism, the weapon was aggressively moralistic rhetoric, and the strategy for reclaiming the offensive was largely semantic... To stake out the commanding position, to remake themselves into true 'activists', the anti-abortion men resorted to the verbal tactics pioneered by the New Right.<sup>1</sup>

Faludi's depiction of anti-abortion advocacy is an example of the most frequent image that comes to mind with respect to the anti-abortion movement: religious, aggressive and male. Further imagery often involves protestors blocking entrances to abortion clinics, shaming women and preaching God's will to save unborn children. Faludi describes such a similar scene outside a Sacramento abortion clinic in 1989,

Don't kill me, mommy! A grown man clutching a crucifix shouts these words over and over, as he tries fruitlessly to push through a line of women guarding the Sacramento Pregnancy Consultation Center. He

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<sup>1</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books (414)

is just one of the many ‘warriors’ in Operation Rescue’s ‘National Day of Rescue II’...a nationwide siege of family-planning clinics<sup>2</sup>

Faludi captures the violent and aggressive anti-abortion movement of the 1980s, a visual that continues to dominate mainstream representations of the anti-abortion movement. This depiction revolves around four main stereotypes: (1) that the anti-abortion movement is dominantly a religious and moralistic movement, (2) that the movement’s arguments revolve around the personhood of the fetus, (3) that the anti-abortion movement is saturated with men and more importantly male-led and openly hostile towards women, and (4) that it is a violent and overtly aggressive movement.

Each stereotype works to solidify a mainstream understanding of what anti-abortion advocacy looks like and what discourse and arguments it disseminates. Below I will briefly outline how each of these four stereotypes functions to paint a picture of a cohesive aggressive, moralistic and anti-woman movement.

### 1.1 THE RELIGIOUS ANTI-ABORTION MOVEMENT

The anti-abortion movement is most commonly viewed as being intertwined with a Christian message. The religious logic against abortion is simple: abortion kills babies and it interferes with God’s will. Consequently the image of anti-abortion advocates often involves religious symbols and protests. In this sense, anti-abortion discourse is perceived as “aggressively moralistic” often using explicitly religious slogans such as “Jesus Loves the Little Children”<sup>3</sup> as a means of deterring women from abortion.

Randall Terry founded Operation Rescue (an American organization whose slogan is “if you believe that abortion is murder, act like it’s murder”), made himself a household name as an anti-abortion advocate throughout the 1980s. He serves as an exemplar of the religiosity that is considered to be the main pillar of anti-abortion argumentation. In a 2008 interview with *Playboy*, Randall Terry outlines his religious reasoning and speaks about the role abortion plays in the degradation of society,

Man has forgotten who he is. We are the unique creation of God, and when we reject that reality, we are in a moral free fall and anything goes—as you see today in the slaughter of innocents, child pornography and corruption in every human arena. One of the great tragedies we face is the general loss of the wonder of human life. It is tied directly to the cheapening of human life that occurs because of abortion on demand. America’s social decline is the fruit of the philosophical rejection of human beings being made in the image of God and the rejection of the existence of eternal truths.<sup>4</sup>

This passage outlines the role that a Christian God plays in the anti-abortion movement. As expressed by Terry, abortion leads to societal degradation and the devaluation of human life, merely the result of society’s “rejection of God.” In line with this specific kind of religious discourse emerges the mainstream representation of anti-abortion advocates as devoutly religious.

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<sup>2</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (409)

<sup>3</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (409)

<sup>4</sup> Collie, A. J. (2008, July). *Will Roe V. Wade Continue to Stand? Antiabortionist Randall Terry Doesn't Think So*. Retrieved April 1, 2010, from The SOP: [www.ahumbleplea.com/Docs/julyplayboyinterview.pdf](http://www.ahumbleplea.com/Docs/julyplayboyinterview.pdf)

## 1.2 A MOVEMENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE UNBORN

A second common representation and generally accepted view of the anti-abortion movement is that it is a fetal-focused movement. In this sense, abortion discourse is perceived as primarily revolving around the right-to-life of the fetus (to the exclusion of any women's rights). The fetal person discourse has special relevance within a Canadian context. In 1983, Joe Borowski, a former Canadian politician and militant anti-abortion activist, brought a case to the Supreme Court of Canada arguing the personhood of the fetus. According to Borowski, Canada's abortion laws were illegal because they infringed the section 7 Charter rights of the fetus to be free of infringement of life, liberty, and security of the person. Although the Supreme Court eventually dismissed the argument (because the Court had already deemed the fetus not a person in the earlier *R. v. Morgentaler* case), the case solidified the perception of anti-abortion activists as "protectors of the unborn"<sup>5</sup>.

The arguments presented by Borowski's legal team to the Supreme Court argued for personhood of the fetus on two levels. To begin they approached fetal personhood from a scientific perspective, arguing "modern medicine... [had] discovered that the so-called 'fetus' is indeed a human person"<sup>6</sup>. The second argument used the *Persons Case*<sup>7</sup> to draw parallels between the political treatment of women and fetuses as "non-persons."

The incorporation of fetal-centric language into the legal realm was also manifest in the United States. In voicing a dissenting opinion in the *Roe V. Wade* decision that disallowed federal and state barriers to abortion, Justice Byron R. White asserted that the Court "values the convenience of the pregnant mother more than the continued existence and development of the life or potential life that she carries."<sup>8</sup> Justice White's incorporation of the concept of "life" into his speech ensures that the life of the fetus remained the main focus of his discourse.

This fetal-centric language not only existed in the domain of formal politics but also migrated into the realm of activism. Common anti-abortion slogans became "The baby has to have a choice!", "'Little Ones', an Operation Rescue protest song, called for 'Equal rights/Equal time/For the unborn children.'"<sup>9</sup> These chants all denoted fetal personhood, which became part of the anti-abortion strategy. In Joseph Scheidler's *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortions* (which has been described as "a primary text of the militant antiabortion movement"<sup>10</sup>), Scheidler argues the importance of emphasizing the personhood of the fetus. When speaking about the abortion issue, Scheidler advises, "rarely use the word 'fetus'. Use 'baby' or 'unborn child.'"<sup>11</sup>

The discursive pervasiveness of the right-to-life argument in the 1980s, in and outside the realm of formal politics, has made the fetal personhood argument one of the most universally accepted descriptors of the anti-abortion

<sup>5</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

<sup>6</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (136)

<sup>7</sup> The *Person's Case* determined, in 1918, that women were persons and thus had the right to vote and hold seats in the Senate

<sup>8</sup> *Doe v. Bolton*, 410 U.S. 179 (1973).

<sup>9</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (414)

<sup>10</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (414)

<sup>11</sup> Scheidler, J. (1985). *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortion*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. (68)

movement. Consequently most pro-abortion strategy and discourse has revolved around countering the very idea that the fetus is a person by tirelessly arguing for a women's right to choose. Thus these two opposing and contradicting sides became locked into a battle between the rights of a fetus and the rights of a woman.

### 1.3 ABORTION ADVOCATES AS ANGRY, MALE AND ANTI-WOMAN

A third stereotype presents the anti-abortion movement as aggressive, male-led and hostile towards women. According to Faludi, Operation Rescue (the organization started by anti-abortion icon Randall Terry) is representative of the saturation of the anti-abortion movement by disenfranchised men. She writes, "the Operation Rescue men (and the majority were men)... belonged to the second half of the baby boom, who had not only missed the political engagement of the '60s but had been cheated out of that affluent era's bounty. They were downwardly mobile sons, condemned to the '80s economy to earn less than their fathers."<sup>12</sup>

According to Faludi, the economic marginalization of men combined with the rise of feminism in the 1980s to produce an openly hostile faction of men who were angry, anti-woman and anti-abortion. In her book *Right-Wing Women*, Andrea Dworkin argues that anti-abortion activism has, in fact, always revolved around male interests. For feminists like Faludi and Dworkin, it was not surprising that the movement had become male dominated. Dworkin argues that anti-abortion discourse consistently brings the act of abortion back to male interests:

To many men, each aborted pregnancy is the killing of a son- and he is the son killed. His mother would have killed him if she had had the choice. These men have a particularly retro-active and abstract sense of murder: if she had had a choice, *I* would not have been born- which is murder. The male ego, which refuses to believe its own death, now pushes backward, before birth. *I* was once a fertilized egg; therefore to abort a fertilized egg is to kill *me*... If you had your way, men say to feminists, my mother would have aborted *me*. Killed *me*.<sup>13</sup>

Both Canadian and American leaders of the anti-abortion movement in the 1980s appear to reaffirm Dworkin's sentiments. Randall Terry speaks of his own insecurities involving abortion. He writes, "I was conceived out of wedlock. I could've been aborted. I hope and think that my parents wouldn't have, but I'm just real glad they didn't even have the choice."<sup>14</sup>

Joe Borowski goes even further in his distrust of pregnant women. In a letter to the Premier of Manitoba written in 1976, Borowski's pleads funding for the "Pregnancy Distress Service", an anti-abortion group that 'counsels and assists' women with unwanted pregnancies. He writes, "The life they may save may be a Mindszenky- or a future premier of Manitoba. Think where you would be if your dear old mom believed in abortion during the hungry, dirty thirties."<sup>15</sup>

This representation of the anti-abortion movement not only portrays the movement as strongly under male

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<sup>12</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (411)

<sup>13</sup> Dworkin, Andrea. (1983) *Right-Wing Women*. New York: Perigee Books., (74)

<sup>14</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (415)

<sup>15</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (142)

influence but also exudes a certain distrust of women. Further, the organizational structure within the anti-abortion movement itself is often observed as a gendered hierarchy, with men inundating the leadership positions, women standing quietly in the periphery. Faludi writes of the scene outside an abortion clinic,

Down the block, Operation Rescue's 'Prayer Support Column,' a largely female auxiliary, is lined up in neat rows along the sidewalk. The wives and daughters of the 'warriors' stand very still, their lips whispering 'Jesus Loves the Little Children,' their palms raised towards heaven. 'We're not allowed to speak,' one of the women says when approached for an interview.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas women outside the anti-abortion movement are treated as the enemy, women within the anti-abortion movement are relegated to a silent, supportive and secondary role. Faludi writes of the paradoxical existence between religious compassion and open disdain, "...they praise the lord but they also curse the women; mingled among the 'amens', the words 'whore' and 'dyke' can be heard more than once"<sup>17</sup>

Another example of this open hostility again comes from Joe Borowski, who wrote in an open memo to the Manitoba legislature,

We are being asked to be accomplices in this medieval act of barbarism, forcing our doctors and nurses to commit murder... so a handful of cheap, third-rate tramps (and also some good women) can escape the consequences of their actions.<sup>18</sup>

Such anti-woman sentiments have become infamous sound bites that are compiled to paint a picture of a nasty, uncompassionate and forceful anti-abortion movement. The movement's reputation for being ignorant of and unconcerned with the complicated lives of women has become one of the most widespread criticisms and depictions of anti-abortion advocacy.

#### 1.4 VIOLENCE AS A FORM OF ADVOCACY

Probably the most common view of the anti-abortion movement has been with respect to its civil disobedience and outright violence. In the United States between the years 1977 and 1989, "seventy-seven family-planning clinics were torched or bombed... 117 were targets of arson, 250 received bomb threats, 231 were invaded and 224 were vandalized."<sup>19</sup> Whereas anti-abortion violence in Canada has not occurred at the same level, it has still existed. Between the years 1994 and 1997, three Canadian doctors who perform abortions were shot and in 1992 the Morgentaler Clinic in Toronto was bombed, completely destroying the abortion clinic.

The response of Reverend Ken Campbell, then president of Choose Life Canada, to the bombing of the Toronto Morgentaler Clinic is seen as representative of the anti-abortion movement's attitude to violence as a form of advocacy. Campbell stated that although he did not condone the bombing, anti-abortion groups had warned the

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<sup>16</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (409)

<sup>17</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (409)

<sup>18</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (66)

<sup>19</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (420)

government that “this [violence] would be the consequence of the failure to stop violence against humanity at facilities like this,” further stating that, “violence begets violence.”<sup>20</sup>

This weak response to violence has come to define anti-abortion discourse, thus opening itself up to the charge of being an extremist, fanatical and violent movement.

## **2. THE CHANGING REALITY**

As has become evident, the common, mainstream understanding of the anti-abortion movement has been deeply shaped by the abortion debate as it existed post 1973 (post *Roe v. Wade*). In both the Canadian and American context, the 1980s were the battleground for abortion politics in the realm of both political activism and formal politics. At that time both sides were engaged in a more clearly defined battle: the fetal right-to-life versus the woman’s right to choose.

Today (particularly in Canada<sup>21</sup>) the legality of abortion has largely been decided. With the *Roe v. Wade* decision in the United States and the defeat of Bill C-43 in Canada, pro-abortion advocates have found much success in the arena of formal politics.

These pro-abortion legal victories combined with a general decline in religiosity have made it increasingly difficult for the anti-abortion movement to sell its historic religious, fetal-right-to-life arguments to the masses. Consequently a self-conscious strategic shift is slowly occurring. Anti-abortion advocacy is leaving the domain of legislative and judicial politics in favor of becoming a more grassroots movement. Anti-abortion discourse is becoming less about moralistic and aggressive tactics and more about changing the hearts and minds of the population.

The remainder of this chapter will analyze this strategic shift within anti-abortion discourse and briefly review how this shift is changing the language disseminated by anti-abortion advocates. This section will look at both the websites of anti-abortion organizations in English speaking Canada and the English Canadian blog ProWomanProLife (PWPL), predominately referencing PWPL discussions of anti-abortion strategy. It is important to examine blogger’s use of language because blogs are less likely to be bound to formal politics, political funding and the demands of constituencies (as is the case with politicians). As affirmed by the mission statement posted on the PWPL blog, “...each woman has a different take on abortion-related issues, and each will have complete freedom to blog precisely what she thinks, representing a spectrum of nuanced pro-woman and pro-life views.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore PWPL affirms that “the founding board are women... [who] have never been vocal or activist on abortion before, do not represent any larger group, and do not currently receive funding from any larger group.”<sup>23</sup> Consequently bloggers (especially PWPL bloggers) are more able to openly discuss potential strategies that advance an overtly anti-abortion agenda without any political or economic consequences.

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<sup>20</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (315)

<sup>21</sup> In the United States abortion access is more often contested in the courts at the State level.

<sup>22</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>23</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

So how are bloggers (and to a lesser extent anti-abortion organizations) talking about strategy? And perhaps more importantly, how are they representing themselves, abortion advocacy and the larger anti-abortion movement as part of that strategy? The short answer to these questions is that many prominent voices within the anti-abortion movement think that there are different and better ways to argue against abortion. Consequently, anti-abortion activists are presenting themselves in new and innovative ways that reject their 1980's former selves. The stark portrayal of the religious, violent, anti-woman activist is slowly being replaced by a softer and more compassionate image.

This new picture of anti-abortion activism can be marked by four main changes: (1) it focuses on changing values and culture rather than laws, (2) it is largely non-religious, (3) it is female-led and woman positive and (4) it is an empathetic and peaceful movement that actively rejects violence. It is important to note that these four changes are part of a self-conscious strategic shift, a shift “designed especially to reach people who identify themselves as pro-choice or unsure on the issue of abortion.”<sup>24</sup> This rebranding is gradual, manifest and mindful but it has not yet completely replaced the old religious, moral trademarks. Instead the two arguments are beginning to co-exist within a larger anti-abortion movement. This co-existence and gradual metamorphosis makes tracking the gradual emergence of the new, softer line of anti-abortion discourse both complicated and crucial to a full understanding and analysis of overall anti-abortion discourse.

## 2.1 ANTI-ABORTION ADVOCACY: AIMED AT “THE CULTURE OF ABORTION”

As was mentioned above, abortion access in Canada (with few exceptions<sup>25</sup>) has been secured in the Canadian courts. The defeat of Bill c-43 and the expulsion of the Borowski's Charter challenge have marked the foreseeable end to Federal court cases that *directly* challenge country-wide access to abortion<sup>26</sup>. However this is not to say that abortion has been completely removed from the realm of political activism. Instead the political strategy has shifted and abortion is being targeted in less direct ways. Whereas previously anti-abortion advocacy and political initiatives aimed at barring direct access to abortion services, contemporary initiatives are now largely aimed at targeting “the culture of abortion”<sup>27</sup>. In this sense the terms of contestation have shifted. New anti-abortion discourse, in both the realms of activism and politics, is not seeking to “criminalize women” but instead is arguing for a profound cultural change. In her mission statement, Andrea Mrozek, the founding director of PWPL,

... call[s] on all women who believe the key to the cultural change is a grassroots movement of women, not legislation. Top-heavy legislation, that might criminalize abortion, for example, gets us nowhere with a culture of women who believe abortion to be anything from a necessary evil, to a compassionate act, to completely neutral... We must be able to discuss the issue with complete and total freedom, and to highlight how uncompassionate abortion actually is, from a woman's perspective.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> (Alliance for Life Ontario, Media Campaign)

<sup>25</sup> The main exception being the on-going court case between Henry Morgentaler and the province of New Brunswick

<sup>26</sup> Practical barriers to accessing abortion still remain a problem for women in Canada. Canadian women living in rural areas, women with out of province health care (like many university students) and women living in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island all face additional travel and procedural costs that can inhibit access to abortion services.

<sup>27</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>28</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

In this instance Mrozek, actively rejects the stereotypical depiction that anti-abortion advocates want to criminalize women seeking abortion. She instead contends that abortion is “a moral, cultural and philosophical problem inextricably tied to our view about sexuality, motherhood and marriage- it’s not a criminal problem, like drunk driving, to be solved by ramping up penalties and fervent prosecution.”<sup>29</sup>

Mrozek advances the notion that our societal approach to abortion needs to change from a culture that sees abortion as a viable option to one that sees abortion as an “uncompassionate act.” She also acknowledges that this change is not to be accomplished through judicial means. The PWPL blogs’ main slogan reiterates this viewpoint, “A Canada without abortion, by choice”<sup>30</sup>. Again Mrozek stresses that eliminating abortion through the forceful imposition by the courts is not the end goal. The end goal is convincing society as a whole that abortion is wrong.

Another important change revealed in the blogs’ mission statement is its target of attack. Instead of blaming women, the new anti-abortion discourse targets pro-abortion society. Unlike the common representation of the male abortion advocate who sees women as “third rate tramps”<sup>31</sup>, Mrozek (and the anti-abortion movement at large) now view women as victims of abortion. By highlighting the need for “women’s perspective,” Mrozek is reaching out to include women into the anti-abortion discussion. Instead of remaining concentrated on the macro-level of politics, the anti-abortion movement has changed its focus to the micro-political level of individual women.

This shift in focus was also seen in the 2009 Ontario-wide campaign against abortion organized by Alliance for Life Ontario. The advertisement campaign brought “pro-life television commercials to Ontario” specifically “designed to reach out to women experiencing a crisis pregnancy.”<sup>32</sup> By embracing women, (instead of alienating them), the new anti-abortion discourse is seeking to change the hearts and minds of women who face unplanned pregnancies.

The new-age anti-abortion advocate appears to acknowledge and accept, and least on one level, that individuals may vary on the spectrum of abortion beliefs. Accordingly the new strategy attempts to reach and include individuals from all sides of the abortion debate in hopes of garnering new support. Signal Hill, an anti-abortion organization based in British Columbia, echoes this sentiment,

Abortion is a much-debated, highly charged issue. However, when analyzed properly, the issue need not be seen as so divisive; in fact, we believe there is room for agreement among those on all sides of the issue... Signal Hill invites all people to take an intellectually honest look at the issue. We believe that when people are provided with all of the options and information available to them about a specific issue, they will rarely make a decision that would harm themselves or others... While Signal Hill recognizes the importance of civil and criminal law in society, it is not our mandate to advocate for a change in the law with regard to abortion. Rather, our mandate is to educate the public and women in unplanned pregnancy about the harms of abortion, both to themselves and to their preborn children. We believe that when women and their families are fully

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<sup>29</sup> (ProWomanProLife, PWPL in the Citizen)

<sup>30</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>31</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (315)

<sup>32</sup> (Alliance For Life Ontario; Media Campaign)

informed of all of their options, and the physical and psychological dangers of abortion, it will rarely be chosen.<sup>33</sup>

Signal Hill appeals to all sides of the abortion debate to find “room for agreement”, while nevertheless observing that when the abortion issue is ‘analyzed properly’ abortion will rarely be chosen. The organization maintains that their mandate is not to “advocate for change in the law” but instead to educate and inform women of “all their options”. This approach to anti-abortion advocacy is representative of the shift of focus from the judicial level to the level of the individual through *non-judicial* means. The objective is no longer to change the law but instead to change the mind-sets of individual women.

The shift of analysis toward individual women redirects the entire anti-abortion movement to a more caring approach, as represented by the Alliance for Life Ontario’s advertisement campaign. The campaign’s main goal is to “challenge and re-shape people’s thinking and emotions on the societal acceptance of abortion. They are designed especially to reach people who identify themselves as pro-choice or unsure on the issue of abortion.”<sup>34</sup> By focusing on “people’s thinking and emotions”, Alliance for Life Ontario remains focused on the individual. Further, by including individuals who are “unsure on the issue of abortion”, Alliance for Life Ontario targets those who historically have been alienated by the movement’s top-heavy, aggressive tactics. For this reason, much of the new anti-abortion strategy seeks to convince the “unsure” portion of the population that abortion is uncompassionate and anti-woman, with the objective of persuading a much broader and more progressive market segment.

In sum, while the old anti-abortion advocate was focused on the level of formal politics, the new activist sees more opportunity at the societal level by including women and those “unsure” about the abortion issue into the discussion. Ultimately this objective has produced a strategic change in the terrain of debate.

## 2.2 NON-RELIGIOUS

The image of the religious, fanatic protestor grasping a crucifix while simultaneously screaming at women is perhaps one of the most widespread representations of anti-abortion activism. The argument against abortion is largely considered to be explicitly religious, preaching the right of all God’s creatures to live. However, as will be discussed in more detailed in chapter 4, this religious line of persuasion is being replaced by a nuanced pro-woman argument. In effect anti-abortion rhetoric is sidelining religion.

The bloggers at PWPL are at the forefront of the movement away from religion. The mission statement of their blog states that “the founding board are women from different walks of life (medicine, psychology, actuarial science, journalism, and public policy), different religions (or no religion at all)” and thus “represen[t] a spectrum of nuanced pro-woman and pro-life views.”<sup>35</sup> By emphasizing its religious diversity, PWPL seeks to attract potential supporters

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<sup>33</sup> (ProWomanProLife, PWPL in the Citizen)

<sup>34</sup> (Alliance For Life Ontario; Media Campaign )

<sup>35</sup> (ProWomanProlife, The Story)

who are not from a religious (specifically Christian) background. Further, when addressing the actual issue of abortion PWPL emphasizes that abortion is not an issue of religion or faith but rather a social issue of human rights,

ProWomanProLife believes abortion is a human, social issue, not a religious or faith matter, whereby women and men of any faith or no faith at all can stand up in support of women's rights and life, at the same time.<sup>36</sup>

Instead of relying on the faith-based argument against abortion, the women at PWPL are rebranding their approach with a “human rights” label. The concept of human rights holds substantial mass appeal and thus has the potential of penetrating a progressive section of the population that has otherwise been illusive to the anti-abortion movement. Consequently, alienating itself from the overtly religious sect of the anti-abortion movement is part of a thoughtful strategic shift by the PWPL as a leading edge in anti-abortion marketing.

Whereas the PWPL mission statement distances itself from the religious anti-abortion activism some bloggers go as far as to overtly denounce it. In July 2008, in response to an article posted on the site LifeSiteNews called “Why aren’t there more non-Christians in the pro-life movement?”, blogger Brigitte Pellerin responded,

My short answer to “Why aren't there more non-Christians in the pro-life movement?” is this: Because some Christians can be real off-putting. Especially the ones who won't shut up about religion even when surrounded by ostensibly non-religious people. There are people I actively avoid because of that, even though they know (I can be very clear when I want to) I do not wish to hear about Jesus and how much they love Him... One of the reasons I agreed to join PWPL was Andrea's insistence that it be non-religious. As she said “ProWomanProLife believes abortion is a human, social issue, not a religious or faith matter, whereby women and men of any faith or no faith at all can stand up in support of women's rights and life, at the same time.”<sup>37</sup>

In this case Pellerin is co-opting a stereotypically pro-abortion view of religious zealots to advance her anti-abortion position. In line with the blog’s mission statement, she insists that abortion be viewed as social issue, again delegitimizing the religious argument against abortion. However Pellerin takes her critical view of religion even further by blaming obnoxious, outspoken Christian activists for alienating non-religious people from the anti-abortion movement. She even goes as far as to relate with the non-religious (and potentially pro-abortion) population by speaking about how Christians can be “real off-putting” and insists that abortion be argued on the grounds of human rights and not religion.

In another entry, blogger Rebecca Walberg questions the basic assumption that religion has historically played a large role in the anti-abortion movement. In response to a column printed in the *Ottawa Citizen* about the PWPL blog, Walberg writes,

...any publicity is good publicity: Nonetheless, there is a distinctly patronizing flavour to the column, which is built on some rather, shall we say, outdated perceptions. The pro-life movement is mostly led by Christian fundamentalist men? (And, abortion advocates are all women? A significant current in the abortion movement is the fact that abortion cuts the links between men's sexual activity and its consequences.) Pro-life women are ‘church ladies’? I don't know if that was even true in the 1970s, but it's certainly not the case now.... Rather,

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<sup>36</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>37</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Yeah, good question)

the vast majority see abortion as something that destroys an innocent baby, while also harming the mother, and on a broader basis contributing to a culture of death.<sup>38</sup>

Walberg not only affirms that the contemporary anti-abortion activism is non-religious, she even questions that a religious anti-abortion movement ever existed in the first place. Walberg's blog entry re-confirms the existence of a strategic push away from a faith-based argument and towards an argument that appeals to a larger population base.

### 2.3 FEMALE-LED AND WOMAN POSITIVE

During the 1980s the anti-abortion movement has come to be defined by male, aggressive advocates like Randall Terry in the U.S. and Joe Borowski in Canada. These men have been outspoken in their disdain for women seeking abortion, seeing the criminalization of abortion and the legislation of pregnancy options as the only option in the fight against abortion. Historically, anti-abortion discourse has been accused of diffusing sentiments of deep distrust for women's decision-making capabilities. As stated by Terry, women's access to abortion even threatened his own existence, "I could've been aborted. I hope and think that my parents wouldn't have, but I'm just real glad they didn't even have the choice."<sup>39</sup>

Current anti-abortion discourse is attempting to divorce itself from this predominantly male representation of abortion advocacy. Not only is there an increased focus on the mass involvement of women within the movement, rhetoric is also shifting towards a more woman-positive sentiment and all of the bloggers are women. One of PWPL's main goals is to actively refute the common story that abortion advocacy is male-dominated and revolves around male interest. In a response to a letter printed in the National Post, PWPL blogger Rebecca Walberg writes,

There is an excerpt containing the old chestnut that most anti-abortion activists are men, that it's about controlling women, that if men got pregnant this wouldn't be an issue. It's to put this to rest that I think PWPL is so timely and necessary.<sup>40</sup>

This passage shows the intentions of PWPL to rebrand the anti-abortion movement as a women's movement. They stress that the anti-abortion movement is no longer dominated by men and instead is a compassionate movement led and intended for women. This nuanced, pro-woman stance is re-iterated by the PWPL mission statement where they insists upon female involvement in anti-abortion advocacy,

ProWomanProLife is a home for all women who believe that being pro-life is compatible with women's rights and freedoms;  
ProWomanProLife celebrates women's legitimate choices, freedoms and rights;  
ProWomanProLife believes abortion is bad for women and that women will be integral in removing abortion from our cultural landscape.<sup>41</sup>

The PWPL team is encouraging women to join the movement and advancing the idea that women are "integral in removing abortion from our cultural landscape". This calculated attempt to involve and embrace women into the anti-

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<sup>38</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Yeah, good question)

<sup>39</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (415)

<sup>40</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I'm prowomanprolife)

<sup>41</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

abortion movement is starkly opposed to the old male-centric method of anti-abortion advocacy. There is also an explicitly positive outlook on women. Women, in the context of the new anti-abortion movement, are being celebrated, and their rights and freedoms protected.

Not only are women being invited to join the movement they are also being presented as the leaders of the campaign against abortion. In an article posted by Andrea Mrozek on her blog PWPL, Colleen Campbell writes,

Women, and particularly young women, are beginning to question the feminist establishment's reduction of the abortion debate into a zero-sum game that pits a mother's welfare against that of her unborn child... This pro-life, pro-woman message has attracted a strong following among young women who consider opposition to abortion a crucial component of defending women's dignity.<sup>42</sup>

By presenting young, female anti-abortion advocates as crucial defendants of "women's dignity", Campbell is arguing against the notion that feminists are the only social advocates that represent women's rights. In this vein, women's voices are being pushed to the forefront of the anti-abortion movement.

The "Silent No More Awareness Campaign"<sup>43</sup> exemplifies the inclusion of the female voice into anti-abortion rhetoric. The Campaign is designed to dispute the feminist notion that abortion helps women and brings the female voice to the head of the movement by advertising women's "stories of post-abortion emotional trauma"<sup>44</sup> The web-based Campaign posts hundreds of personal accounts of how women have suffered from abortion. While advocating against abortion, the posts simultaneously position women as the main advocates fighting against abortion.

In addition to placing women at the forefront of the anti-abortion movement, new discourse is also reflecting a more sensitive approach to women. Rebecca Walberg blogs about the compassion the anti-abortion movement feels for women who have experienced abortion,

The number I have met who think abortionists should be jailed I can count on both hands. Rather, the vast majority see abortion as something that destroys an innocent baby, while also harming the mother, and on a broader basis contributing to a culture of death... it's not a criminal problem, like drunk driving, to be solved by ramped up penalties and fervent prosecution.<sup>45</sup>

In this passage, Walberg presents women as the victims of abortion. Whereas past abortion discourse focused solely on the personhood of the fetus (recall the arguments used in the Borowski charter challenge), there has been a strategic shift to include women into the discussion. Although the fetal centric rhetoric is still very much part of anti-abortion discourse, the argument has been upgraded. Instead of remaining wholly centered on the fetus, the concept of women's well-being is infused into the argument.

Consequently the new anti-abortion argument continues to stress the personhood of fetus but only in relation to the woman that houses it. Thus the argument becomes that women are psychological, physically and spiritually harmed

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<sup>42</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A Revolution in Reverse)

<sup>43</sup> (Silent No More, About Us)

<sup>44</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A Revolution in Reverse)

<sup>45</sup> (ProWomanProLife, PWPL in the Citizen)

by abortion because abortion is the process of “killing their unborn child”. Walberg presents this new argument when she blogs,

I have my own beliefs about the sanctity and rights of an unborn baby, but I don't think we'll change many minds by arguing about that. The proliferation of 3D ultrasound machines, new research about fetal awareness and pain, and the increasing viability of extremely premature babies will continue to make an impression on some people, but for those who are heavily invested in the moral neutrality of abortion on demand, and who see the concession of any status to the fetus as in direct conflict with the rights of the mother, this won't make a lot of difference. We need more discussion, then, of abortion as a women's issue. Abortion damages women.<sup>46</sup>

This blog stresses the strategic nature of this shift in anti-abortion rhetoric. Walberg insists that while she fully agrees with the old fetal focused arguments, she does not see their dissemination as a strategically sound tactic. She emphasizes the strategic importance of changing anti-abortion language to include women into the discussion.

#### 2.4 ANTI-ABORTION ADVOCACY AS COMPASSIONATE AND PEACEFUL

The anti-abortion movement has begun to move away from the main characteristics that have historically defined it. As discussed throughout this chapter, the new movement is a gentler, softer version of its former self. Its discourse strives for change at the grassroots level, it rejects its former religious reputation and it actively seeks the inclusion of women into its movement and its arguments. These changes have combined to shape the representation of anti-abortion activism as compassionate and peaceful.

The movement emphasizes compassion for women instead of distrust of women and openly embraces the female voice (including the voices of women who have had abortions). Rebecca Walberg from PWPL echoes this sentiment,

If a drunk driver kills someone, we emphasize community service, education so the event is less likely to be repeated, and often therapy to address the underlying immaturity and poor judgment that led to the episode. If, and I stress if, we were to criminalize abortion, it strikes me that education and therapy would be the most appropriate response.<sup>47</sup>

Instead of disdain for women who have had abortions, the movement now expresses nothing but pity and empathy for them. They grieve abortion, they do not chastise it. Not only does the movement mourn the “killing of babies” but it laments the women and the natural “penalties” they will face for having ended a life,

In fact, the most common thing I have heard expressed about them is the sentiment that they are harming themselves, often accompanied by prayers that they rehabilitate themselves, not only to prevent aborting more babies but also for their own sake. As to the women who have abortions, pro-lifers, who know far more about the consequences of abortion for all involved than the average non-committed person, tend to express deep sympathy and grief for these women, and run many programs to help them heal from their abortions? The reality, too, is that ending a life carries with it a number of different penalties depending on a number of factors.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I'm prowomanprolife)

<sup>47</sup> (ProWomanProLife, McElroy's Madness)

<sup>48</sup> (ProWomanProLife, McElroy's Madness)

Even the movement's approach to anti-abortion violence has softened. Whereas the anti-abortion response to violence against abortion clinics and providers has formerly been that "violence begets violence"<sup>49</sup>, now the movement portrays itself as peaceful and claims to reject former violent forms of advocacy. This alleged rejection is exemplified by blogger Andrea Mrozek when she writes "these lunatics [anti-abortion advocates who commit violence] make for easy targets, and deserve the scorn, derision and life sentences in prison they receive. I call them lunatics."<sup>50</sup> Instead Mrozek preaches compassion,

By word and deed, let us teach that violence against abortionists is not the answer to the violence of abortion. Every human life is precious. George Tiller's life was precious. We do not teach the wrongness of taking human life by wrongfully taking a human life. Let our 'weapons' in the fight to defend the lives of abortion's tiny victims, be chaste weapons of the spirit.<sup>51</sup>

By equating the preciousness of George Tiller's life to the preciousness of all human life (including "the lives of abortion's tiny victims"), the anti-abortion movement is widening its focus to the realm of all human rights, not just the right-to-life of the fetus. In this sense, the anti-abortion movement seeks to represent itself as a leading advocate human rights and social justice.

This chapter examined the ways that anti-abortion strategy is changing and adapting to a new political climate. The new anti-abortion strategy involves an active and forceful effort to reject the former representation of the anti-abortion movement as a religious, anti-woman and violent establishment. As has been demonstrated above, anti-abortion advocates are talking about the necessity of a shift towards a strategy that embraces women and rejects religion and violence. Chapter 4 will address the question of whether and how this strategic shift has actually begun to take place. It will analyze discourse being disseminated by the anti-abortion movement specifically to see if this re-branding is being reflected in actual rhetoric.

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<sup>49</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (315)

<sup>50</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Radical Fallacies)

<sup>51</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Bad News)

## CHAPTER 4: EXPLICIT ARGUMENTS

The customary representation of the anti-abortion movement, as presented in Chapter 3, is a political movement defined by four main tenets: it largely deploys religious strategy and its argument is intertwined with a Christian message; it revolves around the personhood of the fetus, to the exclusion of the woman; it is male-led and dominated; and lastly it is aggressive (and sometimes violent) in its approach to activism.

However, as previously shown in Chapter 3, prominent anti-abortion activist voices are advocating for a change in rhetorical tactic. For example, the English Canadian blog ProWomanProLife (PWPL) openly discusses the need to fundamentally modify anti-abortion discourse. PWPL blogger Rebecca Walberg expresses the need for a strategy change when she blogs, “I have my own beliefs about the sanctity and rights of an unborn baby, but I don't think we'll change many minds by arguing about that... We need more discussion, then, of abortion as a women's issue. Abortion damages women.”<sup>1</sup>

What Walberg is expressing is representative of PWPL's larger belief that anti-abortion discourse needs to change to reflect a softer, more nuanced and pro-woman approach. The women at PWPL explicitly stress that anti-abortion rhetoric needs to focus on “the [abortion] issue with complete and total freedom, and to highlight how uncompassionate abortion actually is, from a woman's perspective.”<sup>2</sup>

However not surprisingly there is less overt and public discussion of anti-abortion tactics by anti-abortion organizations and Canadian politicians. This lack of strategy talk on their part is not necessarily surprising because both advocacy organization and politicians are more likely constrained by potential political funding, party politics and/or the demands of their constituents. Blogs, on the other hand, are less likely to be bound to outside factors. In fact PWPL insists that, “...each woman [that blogs for PWPL] has a different take on abortion-related issues, and each will have complete freedom to blog precisely what she thinks, representing a spectrum of nuanced pro-woman and pro-life views.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover PWPL “do[es] not represent any larger group, and do[es] not currently receive funding from any larger group.”<sup>4</sup> Consequently it is not surprising that most discussion regarding anti-abortion strategy is introduced by bloggers.

However the lack of overt strategy talk on the part of anti-abortion activists does raise the crucial question of whether or not a new anti-abortion strategy is being reflected in actual anti-abortion concepts and arguments. Or,

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<sup>1</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I'm ProWoman, ProLife)

<sup>2</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>3</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>4</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

alternatively, is it just the opinions of a few hopeful bloggers? In other words, is anti-abortion discourse shifting towards a softer, pro-woman argument?

For perspective on this issue, I used methodology outlined in Chapter 2 and analyzed what types of anti-abortion argumentation are being employed by activists in English speaking Canada. In an attempt to include different levels of activism, I examined three different locations that disseminate anti-abortion discourse. The first was the English Canadian blog ProWomanProLife (see appendix G), a proudly anti-abortion “news and commentary blog on all things related to women’s rights and freedoms, life and abortion.”<sup>5</sup> I coded just over 290 blogs from December 2007 to December 2009. The second anti-abortion outlet examined was English Canadian anti-abortion organizations (see appendix H). Four anti-abortion organizations were analyzed (Alliance for Life Ontario, Life Canada, Signal Hill and Toronto Right to Life). The mission statements, abortion information and all abortion-related materials posted on their official websites (which ultimately comprised just over 90 webpages) were studied. Lastly, I looked at the diffusion of anti-abortion discourse in the political realm. Four outspokenly anti-abortion Members of Parliament were selected (Paul Szabo, Maurice Vellacott, Rod Bruinooge and Ken Epp) and their Parliamentary interventions and official websites (which totaled 65 cases) were analyzed (see appendix I).

As representative of current anti-abortion discourse in English speaking Canada, the sources mentioned above were coded with respect to various anti-abortion frames, concepts and arguments to reveal the dominant explicit arguments being utilized by contemporary anti-abortion advocates. I will then investigate the structure, construction and content of these arguments and examine whether and how anti-abortion discourse is in fact shifting away from the religious, fetal-centric argument that formerly dominated anti-abortion rhetoric.

## **1. TRACES OF THE OLD DISCOURSE**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the old portrayal of anti-abortion discourse maintained two main points as part of its explicit argumentation: (1) the religious argument that abortion is morally wrong and goes against God’s will, and (2) the presentation of the fetus is a separate and distinct person from its female host (this point was often backed by religion, making the two arguments interrelated).

Despite some discussion advocating the sidelining of religion and fetal personhood approaches from the anti-abortion agenda, both remain within current abortion discourse. Explicit and implicit references to religion still persist throughout anti-abortion argumentation as exemplified by Life Canada’s mission statement. Life Canada states its goal as, “to promote the sanctity of human life from fertilization to natural death through public education. To advocate for the preborn, the disabled, the infirm and the elderly who are all uniquely created by God.”<sup>6</sup>

This mission statement implies that human life (including the lives of the “preborn”) is sacred because we “are all uniquely created by God”. Here religion and fetal personhood are melded together to “promote the sanctity of life”.

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<sup>5</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Plan)

<sup>6</sup> (LifeCanada, Our Mission)

Unsurprisingly, given the significance of religion in the history of anti-abortion activism, traces of religion are also scattered throughout the PWPL blog. Despite PWPL's mission statement that abortion is "a human [and] social issue, not a religious or faith matter"<sup>7</sup>, an implied reliance on religious claims against abortion remains apparent. For example Andrea Mrozek defends the religious stance on unplanned pregnancy when she blogs,

I know Gov. Palin means faith in God when she speaks of faith. And the Bible does expressly teach we won't be given more troubles than we can handle. That is encouraging, but only for those who believe the Bible. But I think for non-religious types you could simply have faith in something better coming down the pipes. I think it's called optimism. I have come to understand that pro-choicers suffer from a frightful lack of creativity—an incapacity to see how healing in an unplanned pregnancy could occur with the baby living, not dead.<sup>8</sup>

Mrozek attempts to attract a less religious audience into Palin's stance on abortion by replacing an appeal to religion with an appeal to optimism. By re-working religion in this way Mrozek is able to sideline religion while simultaneously legitimizing its position on abortion. While she is no longer using religion as an explicit argument against abortion, an implied obedience to religious anti-abortion values is nevertheless upheld.

However, discussions of fetal personhood still remain a dominant trend in anti-abortion discourse. Anti-abortion rhetoric remains dedicated to representing the fetus as fully human, and uses only terms that emphasize its personhood. The fetus is largely referred to as "the unborn", "the pre-born" or as "unborn child". Ultimately, it seems that anti-abortionists still believe that "killing babies is at the heart of abortion."<sup>9</sup> The inclusion of the fetal personhood argument in anti-abortion discourse particularly true for politicians in Parliament as illustrated by Winnipeg MP Rod Bruinooge,

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present to the House today from many citizens of my home province of Manitoba calling upon the House of Commons to extend some valuation to the unborn, as in Canada we do not have any value associated with our unborn children.<sup>10</sup>

Rod Bruinooge's petition emphasizes the anti-abortion argument that the fetus must be protected, valued and viewed as wholly human. This representation is at the heart of private member's Bill C-484 which sought to entrench the portrayal of the fetus as fully human into criminal law. As described by Ken Epp in Parliament, Bill C-484 (the "Unborn Victims of Crime Act") would introduce additional criminal charges "in the event that an unborn child is injured or killed during an attack on its pregnant mother."<sup>11</sup> While introducing a petition supporting Bill C-484, Epp stressed that "the most poignant part of [the] petition is that they [the petitioners] ask that injuring or killing an unborn baby during a violent act be a criminal offence."<sup>12</sup> This sentiment is once again reiterated by Saskatoon MP Maurice Vellacott in his own Parliamentary intervention,

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<sup>7</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>8</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Planned Parenthood- in the influencing business)

<sup>9</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The debate rages on)

<sup>10</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, September 17, 2010, line 2010.

<sup>11</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, June 4, 2008, line 1555.

<sup>12</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, June 6, 2008, line 1740.

The petitioners are asking to draw attention to a particular concern that they have and that others share. In current federal criminal law an unborn child is not recognized as a victim with respect to violent crimes. When a pregnant woman is assaulted or killed in Canada there is no legal protection offered for unborn children and no charge can be laid.<sup>13</sup>

Vellacott is thus equating the rights of the fetus with the rights of women. Instead of presenting the well-being of the fetus as dependent on the well-being of the woman that carries it, the MP presents the fetus as a complete and separate pre-born person. Thus the fetus is unrelated to and disconnected from its female host. This separation of the relationship between woman and fetus, once again, reinforced the fetal personhood concept.

As such, it becomes evident that new proponents of the anti-abortion cause are still using some elements of the old strategy, namely adherence to the religious stance against abortion and the continued representation of the fetus as a distinct. However if there remains traces of these old strategic element, they are no longer predominate in the abortion discourse.

## **2. THE NEW ANTI-ABORTION ARGUMENT: ABORTION-HARMS-WOMEN**

We need more discussion, then, of abortion as a women's issue. Abortion damages women. It does them physical and psychological harm, which is multiplied by the fact that very few women seeking abortions give their informed consent (meaning consent even after being advised of the risks.) Those of us who take such things seriously tend to agree that it does them spiritual harm. More broadly, a culture in which abortion is seen as essentially harmless wreaks profound changes to our collective understanding of motherhood, sexuality, the obligations of mothers and fathers to each other and their children, and adulthood. These changes aren't good for anyone, but they're especially pernicious to young women.<sup>14</sup>

If there are still traces of the old anti-abortion strategy what is most shocking is how little of it makes up the current anti-abortion discourse. For instance, religion is almost invisible in the new rhetoric. In only 1.9% of the all anti-abortion cases coded was religion discussed or referenced (see appendices G, H, I). Another surprising revelation is that the English Canadian Member's of Parliament analyzed do not once refer to religion in either Parliament or on their websites. When it comes to anti-abortion advocacy in English speaking Canada, religion has seemingly been removed from the arena of formal politics.

To differentiate among the explicit arguments used by anti-abortion discourse the anti-abortion materials analyzed were coded for five different anti-abortion arguments: fetal personhood argument, abortion-harms-society, the wrong side of history argument, abortion-harms-men, abortion-harms-women, and miscellaneous anti-abortion arguments (see appendix A for coding dictionary and appendices G, H, and I for coding frequencies). The main objective for this specific code (the anti-abortion argument used code) is to gain insight into what explicit argumentation is currently being employed by anti-abortion activists. Ultimately the anti-abortion argument used code seeks to determine whether or not the re-branding strategies discussed in Chapter 3 are being embodied by contemporary anti-abortion discourse.

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<sup>13</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, February 28, 2008, line 1010.

<sup>14</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I'm prowomanprolife)

The results of the anti-abortion argument used code reveal that, by far, the two leading, explicit anti-abortion arguments are the fetal personhood argument and the abortion-harms-women argument. As was the case with the old anti-abortion strategy, fetal personhood remains a dominant concept in contemporary anti-abortion discourse. However even the argumentation of fetal personhood has been transformed from its former articulation (this will be discussed in detail at the end of this chapter). Moreover, whereas at one point fetal personhood was considered by far the principal anti-abortion argument, it no longer holds such a strong monopoly on anti-abortion discourse and, in fact, the fetal personhood argument is no longer the dominant form of anti-abortion argumentation.

The results of the anti-abortion discourse coding show that while the fetal personhood idiom is used in 41 percent of all anti-abortion cases analyzed, an abortion-harms-women argument is present in 48 percent of cases (see appendix B). Furthermore the abortion-harms-women discourse is particularly pervasive in the rhetoric used by the PWPL blog and by anti-abortion organizations. In the PWPL blog, the abortion-harms-women argument leads, being used in 38.9 percent of cases, whereas the fetal personhood discourse is used in only 35.5 percent (see appendix G). The discourse disseminated by anti-abortion organizations also shows the abortion-harms-women argument prevailing, being argued in 54.8 percent of anti-abortion organization cases while the fetal personhood position is only used in 49.3 percent of cases (see appendix H).

The dominance of the abortion-harms-women argument is more surprising when the anti-abortion discourse disseminated by MPs is more closely analyzed. The fetal personhood argument is used the most frequently by politicians in the formal political realm. At first glance, the fetal personhood argument, which is argued in 59.4 percent of MP cases, strongly overshadows the abortion-harms-women rhetoric, which is used in only 18.8 percent of cases (see appendix I). However when Parliamentary interventions are examined in detail, it becomes apparent that these numbers are skewed. During the period of analysis, Bill C-484 (the Unborn Victims Act) was introduced into Parliament. The bill called upon Parliament “to enact legislation to recognize unborn children as separate victims when their mothers are the object of the commission of an offence.”<sup>15</sup> Ultimately the bill sought to charge perpetrators with additional criminal charges on behalf of the fetus, in the event a pregnant woman was subject to a violent attack. Consequently Bill C-484 necessitated a fetal personhood argument.

Additionally, all four MPs analyzed submitted multiple petitions supporting Bill C-484 that were highly repetitive and all stressed the personhood of the fetus. Therefore if the submissions of these redundant petitions for Bill C-484 are removed from analysis, the abortion-harms-women argument actually becomes a more important argument even in the politicians’ anti-abortion discourse. With the removal of the Bill C-484 petitions, the use of the fetal personhood argument by politicians drops to 45.7% whereas the abortion-harms-women discourse increases to 31.4% of cases (see appendix J). Furthermore, if the petitions are removed from the larger analysis, the numbers also change. Without Parliamentary petitions, the abortion-harms-women discourse is used in a dominating 51% of all anti-abortion cases examined, whereas the fetal personhood argument is used in a smaller 38.9% of cases (see appendix C).

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<sup>15</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, February 27, 2008, line 1520.

It is clear that the abortion-harms-women argument is emerging as a dominant discourse within the anti-abortion movement, particularly remarkable given little evidence of its existence in secondary literature as seen in Chapter 1. The lack of coverage of the abortion-harms-women argument in academic literature combined with its surprising dominance in anti-abortion discourse makes its analysis important.

In order to further deconstruct the abortion-harms-women argument, each case coded with the abortion-harms-women argument code was sub-coded according to what type of abortion-related harm was being argued. Recall that the abortion-harms-women argument codes were sub-coded into five different harms: (1) psychological harm, (2) physical/medical harm, (3) harmful to personal life, (4) general/unspecified harm, and (5) other miscellaneous harms.

Each of the above sub-codes will now be analyzed in their structure and content.

## 2.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

Saskatoon MP Maurice Vellacott has been outspoken in his opposition to abortion. Not only does he oppose Canada's legal system for having "no law to protect the lives of unborn children"<sup>16</sup>, he further advocates that abortion is "an injustice for women"<sup>17</sup> and has "devastating emotional, physical and psychological effects."<sup>18</sup> Vellacott's anti-abortion position is representative of the larger abortion-harms-women argument which argues that while the fetus should be protected, the real injustice of abortion is that it harms women. Ultimately women are presented as the victims of abortion.

The predominant tenet of the abortion-harms-women discourse is that women are being psychologically harmed and emotionally devastated by abortion. MP Rod Bruinooge asserts that "pregnant women... have suffered grievous physical, emotional and psychological harm as a result of abortion."<sup>19</sup> Out of all the cases coded for the abortion-harms-women argument, 37.3<sup>20</sup> percent argue that abortion causes women to experience long-term and severe psychological harm (see appendix D).

According to information posted on the Alliance for Life Ontario<sup>21</sup> website, women who have had abortions are commonly experiencing "post abortion syndrome" (PAS). PAS is said to emerge out of the "trauma of an abortion [and] can follow a woman for the rest of her life". For instance, study posted on the Alliance for Life Ontario website list the following long-manifestations five to ten years after the abortion,

81% had a preoccupation with the aborted child  
73% had flashbacks of the abortion experience  
69% were sexually inhibited

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<sup>16</sup> (Vellacott, 2009)

<sup>17</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Defending Vellacott, 2009)

<sup>18</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, March 13, 2008, line 1010.

<sup>19</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne's Law)

<sup>20</sup> Out of the cases coded abortion-harms-women psychological harm was argued in 28 percent of PWPL cases, 70 percent of anti-abortion organization cases, and 50 percent of the politician cases (see table 4)

<sup>21</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, March 31, 2008, line 1515.

65% had thoughts of suicide  
61% increased their use of alcohol  
54% had nightmares related to the abortion  
23% had hallucinations related to the abortion<sup>22</sup>

These manifestations of PAS are considered by anti-abortion discourse to be experienced by women as a result of the feelings of sorrow, grief and regret following their abortions. The logic is that abortion results in feelings of regret and guilt, mental illness, suicidal thoughts, nervous disorders, depression and/or substance abuse. According to a study posted on the PWPL blog, “more than 85 per cent of women reported at least one negative emotional reaction, including sorrow, sadness, guilt, regret, grief and disappointment”<sup>23</sup>. The study further claims that women who reported at least one negative reaction had 1.4-1.8% higher rates of mental health problems. The report then concludes that “this evidence raises important questions about the practice of justifying termination of pregnancy on the grounds that this procedure will reduce risks of mental health problems in women having unwanted pregnancies.”<sup>24</sup>

The study’s conclusion also reveals the intention of the abortion-harms-women discourse, namely to eliminate abortion in order to preserve women’s psychological well-being. As part of the bid to discourage women from choosing abortion on the grounds of psychological harm, anti-abortion advocates argue two main points: (1) that abortion leads to feeling of sadness, regret and guilt, and (2) these feelings often lead to depression, mental illness and thoughts of suicide.

### *Regret and Guilt*

The most common symptom of PAS is the emergence of feelings of regret, guilt and sadness. The anti-abortion materials argue that “31% [of women] had regrets about their decision”<sup>25</sup> to have an abortion. Because anti-abortion discourse largely considers that “abortion is bad for women”<sup>26</sup> they also believe that women could not possibly be choosing abortion for themselves. As such, anti-abortion discourse largely asserts that “many [women] are forced into an unwanted abortion by husbands, boyfriends, parents, or others...” This coercion can lead to psychological trauma and the “unwanted abortion may be perceived as the ultimate violation in a life characterized by abuse.”<sup>27</sup> Consequently symptoms of PAS are said to often resemble the symptoms of sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Moreover the abortion procedure itself is often presented as an emotional traumatizing process. The Toronto Right to Life websites states that some women “report that the pain of abortion, inflicted upon them by a masked stranger invading their body, feels identical to rape”<sup>28</sup>. Consequently the trauma of this “invasion” is paralleled with the trauma felt by victims of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Like PTSD victims, “victims of abortion” often

<sup>22</sup> (Ontario Right to Life, The trauma of abortion)

<sup>23</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Abortion can put women at risk of mental health problems)

<sup>24</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Abortion can put women at risk of mental health problems)

<sup>25</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The trauma of abortion)

<sup>26</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The Story)

<sup>27</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>28</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

experience “recurrent and intrusive thoughts about the abortion or aborted child, flashbacks in which the woman momentarily re-experiences an aspect of the abortion experience, nightmares about the abortion or child, or anniversary reactions of intense grief or depression on the due date of the aborted pregnancy or the anniversary date of the abortion.”<sup>29</sup>

During a discussion of whether or not abortion is a viable solution for sexual assault survivors, PWPL blogger Rebecca Walberg writes,

Any attempt to point out that abortion for rape victims might not be the answer is dicey, because of the need to be sensitive to the pain and horror endured by rape victims for a long time – frequently a lifetime – after the assault itself. Pregnancy with a much-wanted child can still be a physically and mentally stressful experience; I can't imagine how much worse this would be if the pregnancy was not only unwanted but a constant reminder of violation. If the issue, though, is to minimize the suffering of a woman who has already been victimized, why do the reservations pro-lifers have about abortion in general – that it damages women on a physical, moral and emotional level – not still apply?  
To put it more bluntly: most pro-lifers believe abortion to be wrong because it ends a human life. How does it help a rape victim to make her an accessory to this?<sup>30</sup>

Walberg argues that because of the psychological harm and emotional trauma caused by “ending of a human life”, abortion is wrong. She argues that no matter the circumstance, even in cases of rape, abortion is never the right choice for any woman. Instead, Walberg maintains that abortion re-victimizes the sexual assault victim by making her “an accessory to ending a human life”. Blogger Mrozek agrees with Walberg and adds,

We recently had someone who regrets her abortion write in to PWPL. She had the abortion because she was raped. Just goes to show you, these cases are not clear cut—and the pain of killing another exists even when you were wronged in the first place, grievously so.<sup>31</sup>

What Walberg and Mrozek emphasize is that abortion is psychologically harmful to women even in the worse case scenario (i.e. rape). Their blogs read like abortion is never a viable option for any woman. Further, even when abortion might seem like the compassionate option, anti-abortion discourse affirms that it is not. As Mrozek underlines, “It’s only in a world where abortion is viewed as compassionate that we would ‘offer it’ as a ‘solution’ to a rape victim. We’re a long ways away from reversing the ‘abortion as compassion’ sentiment.”<sup>32</sup>

Women are often presented as being coerced into abortion, or at least coerced into the circumstances that lead to the abortion decision. However, even in cases where women freely choose abortion, anti-abortion discourse maintains that “no matter how compelling the reason they have for seeking an abortion [women] still perceive the termination of their pregnancy as the killing of their own child. The fear, anxiety, pain and guilt associated with the

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<sup>29</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>30</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Palin and pro-life consistency)

<sup>31</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Palin and pro-life consistency)

<sup>32</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Palin and pro-life consistency)

procedure are mixed into this perception of grotesque and violent death”<sup>33</sup> Consequently women are found to have “deep feeling of regret and also love for the child that ‘should have been.’”<sup>34</sup>

According to Mrozek, this guilt can manifest itself in many, often undetectable, ways,

These two anecdotes came to me courtesy of distinctly non-religious people and the women featured are their friends, not mine:

One: A woman, now married, was once a doctor who did some abortions. No more. But now she'd like to conceive and can't and says she thinks God is punishing her.

Two: A woman, single, gets pregnant and has an abortion. She later gets married and has a son, all is well. He is killed in an accident in his teens. She thinks that God is punishing her.

A couple of thoughts come to me. First off, there are repercussions from abortion that are not easily measured. It would have to be some kind of specially-designed, longitudinal study that could get at the guilt and pain two decades later, arising the result of the death of a son, for example.

Secondly, I do not buy into the God as Great Punisher model, and I do not do so with some justification. God in the Christian conception does not run “on one strike and you're out!” and is rather a God of love and forgiveness, even when egregious mistakes are made. Plus, these random comments show that religious or non, God is in the picture, for many folks. And those in the abortion-related business, ought to be prepared to address meta-physical questions, and correct misconceptions, too.

But the main point is that I am amazed at the manner in which abortion haunts these women. These are some of the things I hear on the street in my life, day to day. They just come up, when we give the opportunity.<sup>35</sup>

What Mrozek stresses is that the psychological harm caused by abortion is undetectable and has long lasting effects. She emphasizes that abortion results in self-inflicted “pain and grief”. Instead of focusing on the grief that the woman in the blog is experiencing as a result of the death of her son in a car accident, she pushes back more than 20 years and asserts that this grief is in fact associated with having had an abortion. Although she approaches women’s emotional trauma with sympathy on one level, on another she alludes that women are making “egregious mistakes” when choosing abortion and that these mistakes will continue to “haunt” them.

According to this line of anti-abortion discourse, a woman who has undergone an abortion will experience guilt “because she has violated her own moral code.”<sup>36</sup> Ultimately this guilt can manifest itself through many post-abortive symptoms. She “may experience flashback, nightmares or become obsessed with babies”<sup>37</sup> and a large percentage of women are said to experience “anxiety over fertility, some fear that they will never become pregnant again.”<sup>38</sup> “Anniversary syndrome” is also frequently cited by anti-abortion advocates as an effect of abortion, arguing that women “exhibit symptoms near the anniversary of the abortion or the due date of the aborted baby. She may look at children about the age her child would be and try to imagine what hers would look like.”<sup>39</sup>

### *Depression, Self-Destructive Behaviors and Suicidal Thoughts*

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<sup>33</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>34</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Abortion Complication)

<sup>35</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Two anecdotes on a Saturday morning)

<sup>36</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The trauma of abortion)

<sup>37</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The trauma of abortion)

<sup>38</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The trauma of abortion)

<sup>39</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The trauma of abortion)

Another commonly cited symptom is serious depressive episodes combined with suicidal thoughts. The psychological harm rhetoric argues that in many cases women who have had abortions experience “severe, prolonged depression [that] can cause hopelessness and thoughts of suicide.”<sup>40</sup> Depression is argued to result in numerous effects including psychological numbness, eating disorders, alcohol and drug abuse and suicidal thoughts. The Life Canada website argues,

Abortion is frequently touted as the cure for the emotional distress many women experience when they discover they are pregnant.... In the words of Mika Gissler, author of the Scandinavian study, ‘childbearing prevents suicide. Abortion, rather than being a relief, might be an additional proof of their worthlessness, and might contribute to suicidality’. It also contributes to self-destructive behaviours such as the abuse of tobacco, alcohol and non-medical drugs.<sup>41</sup>

Anti-abortion activists assert that the potential relief offered by abortion will inevitably be overshadowed by feelings of deep regret and remorse. Further these feelings are said to contribute to self-destructive conduct. The dominant self-destructive behavior cited by the psychological harm discourse is substance abuse. Life Canada states that “abortion is significantly linked to subsequent drug abuse... and the psycho-social costs of such abuse.” Further because of the increased risk of drug abuse, women who have had abortion are also “linked with increased exposure to HIV/AIDS infections, congenital malformations, and assaultive behavior.”<sup>42</sup>

Life Canada equally claims that “women who have had an abortion are five times more likely to report subsequent substance abuse compared to women who carry to term.”<sup>43</sup> The anti-abortion organization finds this especially troubling because they believe that abortion-related substance abuse seriously affects women’s future ability to mother,

... women with unresolved grief or trauma related to a prior abortion are more likely to feel anxiety, fear, and depression during subsequent pregnancies... If they are unable to legally obtain mood-altering drugs with a prescription, many of these women resort to alcohol or illegal drugs as a means of suppressing unwanted feelings about their past abortions.<sup>44</sup>

Life Canada justifies the claim that abortion causes women to abuse substances during future pregnancies by stating that “several previously published studies have documented much higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse among pregnant women who have a history of abortion.”<sup>45</sup> Consequently Life Canada argues that the psychological effects of abortion seriously compromises women’s ability to successfully carry any future pregnancies.

Another frequently mentioned psychological effect of abortion is increased thoughts and occurrence of suicide. MP Maurice Vellacott’s website posted a letter written to Vellacott by the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The letter states that “induced abortions have a significantly increased risk of

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<sup>40</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The trauma of abortion)

<sup>41</sup> (LifeCanada, Time for a fresh look at the medical and psychological risk of abortion for women)

<sup>42</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>43</sup> (LifeCanada, Abortion linked to subsequent substance abuse)

<sup>44</sup> (LifeCanada, Abortion linked to subsequent substance abuse)

<sup>45</sup> (LifeCanada, Abortion linked to subsequent substance abuse)

subsequent suicide, major depression and substance abuse, as compared with women who bring to birth.”<sup>46</sup> To support this claim the Toronto Right to Life website argues that 60 percent of women who experience PAS “report suicidal ideation, with 28 percent actually attempting suicide, of which half attempted suicide two or more times.”<sup>47</sup>

The PWPL bloggers also argue that abortion is leading to an upsurge in suicide in Canadian society. In response to an article that argues an increase in suicide rates among white women aged 40 to 65, Mrozek blogs,

From time to time, pro-abortion advocates tell me that if abortion were so bad, really, we'd be seeing an epidemic of wounded women. Which, they then say, we're not seeing.

Really? Seems to me we do have some problems in our culture, generally speaking, with too many people on anti-depressants, and visiting psychiatrists and all.

Now I know the difference between causation and correlation, and I am not saying abortion is causing or even correlated to this increase in suicides. What I am saying is that there's a problem when suicide rates go up that much that suddenly—and we won't necessarily ever be able to find a direct link. Oftentimes social problems experienced broadly can't be directly traced to one single source.

Yet there's no doubt that abortion causes an increase in depression, suicide and suicide ideation—on that the literature is quite clear, in spite of what the American Psychological Association claims. And so when I saw this report about increased suicides, it made me think of a possible link to abortion. The walking wounded—they are all around us—if we care enough to see.<sup>48</sup>

Although she is claiming not to be making a causal/correlative statement about the relationship between abortion and suicide, Mrozek implies that there is a correlation between the two. By stating that “oftentimes social problems experienced broadly can't be directly traced to one single source”, Mrozek then opens up the possibility that abortion might be a correlative factor in the sudden increase in suicide rates. She then makes the final leap by stating “there's no doubt that abortion causes an increase in depression, suicide and suicide ideation”.

Mrozek's blog is representative of the paradigmatic strategy of denying a statement and then affirming precisely what is being denied. Moreover, fellow blogger Tanya Zaleski backs Mrozek's findings by adding, “[I] think this is no coincidence. Quebec not only has the highest abortion rate in Canada, it also has the highest rates of suicides.”<sup>49</sup> Consequently Zaleski explicitly makes the correlation between abortion and suicide rates in Quebec that Mrozek was previously denying.

Not only is abortion argued to increase women's probability of committing suicide, abortion is also alleged to increase women's chance of death by other means. On a webpage titled “Time for a fresh look at the medical and psychological risks of abortion for women”, Life Canada argues that “during [a] eight year period stud[y], women who aborted had a 154 percent higher risk of death from suicide, an 82 percent higher risk of death from accidents, and a 44 percent higher risk of death from natural causes.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> (Vellacott Website, 2010)

<sup>47</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>48</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Suicide is on the rise)

<sup>49</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Suicide is on the rise)

<sup>50</sup> (LifeCanada, Abortion may cause increased mortality)

In sum the abortion-harms-women discourse asserts that women are being psychologically harmed and emotionally devastated by abortion. Ultimately women suffer psychologically because abortion is the “killing of your own offspring”. As Mrozek puts it,

Pro-lifers never have to shame or guilt women who have abortions. They do it to themselves. Apparently, because the abortion involves a web of complex physical and psychological processes that themselves pull us in two directions at once. It involves our bodies, our emotions and our spirits in a way that engages us on many levels simultaneously, and that ensures that our response will be anything but simple. And now in severely non-academic language, because you are killing your own offspring, which certainly would engage those emotions on many, many levels, indeed.<sup>51</sup>

Abortion discourse argues that abortion causes feeling of grief, guilt and regret and also can lead to severe depression, thoughts of suicide and even death. Further, because of this psychological damage, abortion is never a viable or legitimate choice for women.

## 2.2 PHYSICAL/MEDICAL HARM

Another leading abortion-harms-women sub-code is the physical/medical harm argument. This physical harm tenet is present in 31.9 percent<sup>52</sup> of instances where the larger abortion-harms-women argument is used, trailing the psychological harm sub-code by only five percent (see appendix D). Their similar frequency rates are not surprising considering these two harm arguments often go hand-in-hand. For example MP Maurice Vellacott argues that “post-abortive women are speaking about the devastating emotional, physical and psychological effects abortion had on their lives.”<sup>53</sup> Vellacott melds the two harms caused by abortion into one larger argument. This grouping is reiterated by Signal Hill whose website states, “research has indicated that both the physical and emotional impact of abortion is multi-faceted and complex.”<sup>54</sup>

The physical harms rhetoric varies in its intensity and argument across anti-abortion literature. Medical harms cited by the anti-abortion materials range from the common risks of any surgical procedure to an increased risk of cancer, and even to higher threat of death. All discourse maintains, however, that abortion leads to physical pain and medical complications. The Toronto Right to Life website argues that during the three month period after their abortions, “women had a more than four times higher rate of hospitalization for infections, a five times higher rate of ‘surgical events’ and a nearly five times higher rate of hospitalization for psychiatric problems than the matching group of women who had not had abortions.”<sup>55</sup>

The physical harm argument frequently draws correlations between increased rates of abortion and the increased rates of other medical complications. Like the causal link Andrea Mrozek draws between suicide and

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<sup>51</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Saturday morning coffee)

<sup>52</sup> Out of the cases coded abortion-harms-women physical/medical harm was argued in 24 percent of PWPL cases, 47 percent of anti-abortion organization cases, and 31.5 percent of the politician cases (see table 4)

<sup>53</sup> (Vellacott, Fear depopulation, not overpopulation)

<sup>54</sup> (Vellacott Website, Lessons on reproductive health from Europe)

<sup>55</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Facts)

abortion above, these connections are often backed by common sense reasoning. An article posted on MP Vellacott's website exemplifies this type of argumentation,

Since the 1970s, there has been a marked increase in North America in the number of abortions and repeat abortions, which may explain the significant increases in pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), uterine hemorrhage, sepsis, pain due to endometritis, retained fetal or placental tissue, and the increasing evidence of an abortion-breast cancer link.<sup>56</sup>

The implied correlative statement in this passage is representative of the anti-abortion discourse's reliance on common sense. Although there is no proven correlative or causal link between abortion and the "significant increase in PID, uterine hemorrhage, sepsis, pain due to endometritis..." a common sense explanation is advanced regardless. Consequently, this quotation reads as if abortion is directly causing, or correlated to an increase in disease.

Ultimately though, the two most commonly cited physical harms arguments in anti-abortion material are (1) that abortion increases women's risk of breast cancer and (2) that abortion increases future risk of pre-term delivery and maternal mortality.

### *Breast Cancer*

The argument that abortion causes breast cancer appears consistently throughout all anti-abortion discourse. The anti-abortion materials analyzed cite abortion as increasing the risk of breast cancer anywhere from 25 to 310 percent. For instance the PWPL blog mentions a study done on women in Turkey that argues "a 66 percent increased risk of contracting breast cancer as a result"<sup>57</sup> of abortion. Conversely, a study posted on Maurice Vellacott's website argues that "worldwide studies show an increased breast cancer risk with abortion, a risk as high as 310 per cent."<sup>58</sup>

Like the numbers, the logic behind the abortion-breast cancer link also varies. On the one hand Vellacott's website argues that "the biological rationale for breast cancer development is related to women's unprotected internal exposure to estrogen when a pregnancy is abruptly terminated early in gestation."<sup>59</sup> However the Signal Hill website diverges, arguing that there exists,

...a large body of evidence supporting the finding that a decision to terminate a pregnancy significantly increases a woman's risk of breast cancer. It is an undeniable, scientific fact that pregnancy affects the breast tissue and aborting a pregnancy denies the woman the long-term protective effect of her full-term pregnancy. Pregnant women who are considering an abortion need to know that they elevate their risk of breast cancer if they choose abortion over childbirth.<sup>60</sup>

The Signal Hill website's deviation from the "exposure to estrogen" argument alludes to the discontinuation of pregnancy as the primary cause for an increased risk of breast cancer. Following Signal Hill's logic it is non-pregnancy,

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<sup>56</sup> (deVeberInstituteforBioethicsandSocialResearch, Women's Health After Abortion: The Medical and Psychological Evidence)

<sup>57</sup> (ProWomanProLife, New study shows higher risk of breast cancer after abortion)

<sup>58</sup> (deVeberInstituteforBioethicsandSocialResearch, Women's Health After Abortion: The Medical and Psychological Evidence)

<sup>59</sup> (deVeberInstituteforBioethicsandSocialResearch, Women's Health After Abortion: The Medical and Psychological Evidence)

<sup>60</sup> (SignalHill, Breast cancer)

not abortion, that causes cancer. By extension, all non-pregnant women should be warned that their current (non-pregnant) condition is putting them at increased risk for breast cancer.

Blogger Andrea Mrozek, on the other hand, avoids scientific explanation whatsoever and instead argues from a commonsensical approach,

[This]cancer link [is a] no-brainers if you ask me... Intuitively, it makes sense that abortion would increase your risk of breast cancer. In totally non-scientific terms, it is my understanding that a woman's body changes when she gets pregnant and part of that change involves increased hormone levels and a multiplication of breast cells. And when you abort, you are left with the multiplying cells (again, I'm not a doctor but isn't that what cancer is?) and higher levels of hormones of the cancer-causing variety.<sup>61</sup>

Mrozek's populist appeal breaks down the seemingly simple abortion-breast cancer correlation. In "totally non-scientific" terms, Mrozek argues that cancer results from "the multiplying of cells". If one follows Mrozek's basic argument, women should also avoid running, breathing and eating because these activities also cause the multiplication of cells, and therefore might increase their risk of cancer. Furthermore, since it is pregnancy that leads to the multiplication of cells and "higher levels of hormones of the cancer-causing variety", it would seem that women should avoid ever getting pregnant in the first place.

Vellacott, Mrozek and Signal Hill all offer varying explanations for the abortion-breast cancer correlation. Where all three converge is in their belief that "that abortions cause significant adverse medical risk for women who have them, in addition to killing their unborn children."<sup>62</sup> Moreover anti-abortion discourse emphasizes that pregnancy is, in fact, beneficial to women's health. On a webpage entitled "The Protective Effects of Childbirth", Toronto Right to Life argues that pregnancy is advantageous to women's health, especially in fighting against breast cancer,

Pregnancy provides one of the strongest protective factors from breast cancer. Medical experts have universally recognized since the publication of a landmark Harvard study in 1970 that the earlier a woman has her first full term pregnancy, the lower is her risk for breast cancer. The study estimated that 'women having their first child when under age 18 years have only one third the breast cancer risk of those whose first birth is delayed until age 35 years or more.'<sup>63</sup>

Toronto Right to Life takes the breast cancer-abortion link in a similar direction to the Signal Hill website. By arguing that pregnancy provides a long list of health benefits to women, it makes the implicit argument that terminating any pregnancy is detrimental to women's health. It also specifies that women under the age of 18 (which is a target demographic for the anti-abortion movement) enjoy an even longer list of health benefits from pregnancy. Additionally, Toronto Right to Life argues that the protective effects of childbirth are not receiving the public attention they deserve,

... [studies]clearly contradict the unsubstantiated assumption that carrying a so-called "unwanted" pregnancy to term is more harmful to women than undergoing an abortion. Unfortunately, the protective

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<sup>61</sup> (ProWomanProLife, New study shows higher risk of breast cancer after abortion)

<sup>62</sup> (ProWomanProLife, New study shows higher risk of breast cancer after abortion)

<sup>63</sup> (SignalHill, Breast cancer)

effects of childbirth in lowering a woman's risk of psychological problems, substance abuse, smoking, reproductive problems, pregnancy complications and certain types of cancer have received scant attention.<sup>64</sup>

This quotation appeals to the concept of censorship by arguing that both the psychological and medical harms of abortion are receiving “scant attention” and are ignored by the medical field in general. An article posted on Vellacott’s website reaffirms the claim that “the medical establishment is often slow to accept and respond to emerging data, slowed further, in this case [the case of abortion causing breast cancer], by the conflicting politics of abortion.”<sup>65</sup> As such, many anti-abortion advocates believe that the abortion-breast cancer link is being covered up. For example a January 2010 press release posted on the Vellacott website states,

Maurice Vellacott, MP for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin, believes that in due course, the media and cancer societies cover-up on the abortion-breast cancer link will be exposed, and the truth will break through. Today Vellacott said, ‘Women are done a horrific disservice when media and health care professionals deliberately turn a blind eye to the evidence and deny this unsettling truth.’ Vellacott disseminated the Coalition on Abortion/Breast Cancer revelations in the interests of women’s health in Canada, saying, ‘Women have a right to know.’ He posed the ominous question, ‘Who’s standing up for women on this issue?’

By appealing to “women’s rights and health”, Vellacott presents the anti-abortion movement as censored by “the media and cancer societies” while simultaneously arguing that abortion causes breast cancer. The press release not only highlights the physical harms of abortion but also addresses the issue through the women’s rights frame by portraying anti-abortionist as staunch advocates of women’s rights.

Ultimately, despite diverging statistics and explanations, all anti-abortion discourse agrees that abortion causes an increased risk of breast cancer. Further, activists argue that the “real facts” regarding the physical danger of abortion are being concealed from women.

### *Risks of Pre-term Delivery and Maternal Mortality*

In addition to the abortion-breast cancer correlation, the physical harm argument argues that complications from abortion often negatively affect women’s future ability to become pregnant. According to Alliance for Life Ontario, the list of physical complications resulting from abortion is long and frequently affects future pregnancies. The list of medical consequences introduced includes a 35 percent increase in miscarriages, a 2 to 3.3-fold increase in prematurity and a 2 to 2 1/4 times greater likelihood of low birth weight in women who have had abortion.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, women are less likely to be able to become pregnant after an abortion and are said to face an increased complications during the delivery of future pregnancies. The long-term physical consequences of abortion include “sterility or subsequent ectopic pregnancies and premature birth” moreover, “premature births are associated with higher rates of cerebral palsy, as well as respiratory, brain, and bowel abnormalities.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Protective Effects of Childbirth)

<sup>65</sup> (deVeberInstituteforBioethicsandSocialResearch, Women's Health After Abortion: The Medical and Psychological Evidence)

<sup>66</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Abortion Complication)

<sup>67</sup> (Vellacott, Vellacott condemns Saskatoon doctors for promoting a climate for less abortion)

What all of these medical harms of abortion have in common is that they affect women's future ability to become mothers. This conception of future motherhood risk is one that dominates much of the physical harm argument present in the anti-abortion materials. Young women who are choosing abortion are warned that abortion could seriously impact their capacity to become pregnant again. Furthermore, even if women do become pregnant, every stage of that pregnancy will be seriously compromised by past abortions.

As previously mentioned, the physical and psychological harm arguments often co-exist and work together in the larger abortion-harms-women argument. Not only are women decreasingly able to bear children because of medical harm caused by abortion, but abortion renders them psychologically unfit to raise them even if they are actually able to have them. The abortion-harms-women argument maintains that the psychological consequences of abortion are not only affecting women, they are equally affecting the future children of post-abortive women. Since abortion is linked with increased rates of depression, violent behavior, and alcohol and drug abuse, anti-abortion activists argue that maternal bonding with future children is seriously compromised. Furthermore, these psychological factors "link post-abortion trauma with subsequent child abuse."<sup>68</sup> Children whose mothers have a history of abortion are considered "to have less emotional support at home and more behavioral problems than children whose mothers have not had abortions."<sup>69</sup> Here the physical and psychological harm arguments work together to argue that the ability of women to become physically and psychologically fit mothers is jeopardized by abortion.

Another frequently argued medical consequence of abortion is maternal mortality. Life Canada argues that women who have abortions are at significantly higher risk of death than women who give birth. Their website argues that "women who had abortions [are] almost twice as likely to die in the following two years and that the elevated mortality rate of aborting women persisted over at least eight years."<sup>70</sup> Blogger Brigitte Pellerin confirms this argument when she writes,

There seems to be a connection between a country's abortion restrictions and its maternal mortality rate – the less restrictive a country is, the higher the rate of maternal mortality... Both Ireland and Poland, favorite targets of the abortion lobby for their strong restrictions on abortion, have better maternal mortality ratios than the United States.<sup>71</sup>

According to Pellerin, the apparent relationship between restrictive abortion policies and low maternal mortality rates proves that abortion correlates to maternal mortality. Further the increased risks of complications in future pregnancies, combined with higher rates of substance abuse and suicide, mean that women who have had abortions are at a higher risk of premature death.

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<sup>68</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>69</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Alliance For Life Ontario)

<sup>70</sup> (LifeCanada, Abortion may cause increased mortality)

<sup>71</sup> (ProWomanProLife, , Want to reduce maternal mortality?)

Although the psychological harm argument often works to reinforce the physical consequences of abortion, the abortion-breast cancer connection and increased rates of pre-term delivery and maternal mortality make the physical/medical harm argument its own distinct claim.

### 2.3 HARMFUL TO PERSONAL LIFE

Another notable abortion-harms-women sub-code is the harmful to personal life argument. Anti-abortion discourse asserts that abortion results in significant damage to women's personal lives and interpersonal relationships. In the larger abortion-harms-women rhetoric, the harmful to personal life argument was sub-coded in 12.7 percent of cases<sup>72</sup> (see appendix D). The anti-abortion materials commonly present abortion as a leading cause in the break up of marriages and romantic relationships and the dissolution of families. Mrozek states that "one area of solid agreement is that when the woman herself harbours grave misgivings over the act [of abortion], that woman is indeed more likely to experience personal damage."<sup>73</sup>

The most frequent logic used within the harmful to personal life argument is the notion that abortion causes the break-up of marriages and long-term relationships. Generally, women who choose abortion are alleged to be "more likely to have troubled relationships."<sup>74</sup> For most couples, anti-abortion discourse states that "abortion causes unforeseen problems in their relationship" and consequently "post-abortion couples are more likely to divorce or separate."<sup>75</sup> The stress of an abortion also puts couples at an increased risk for developing chronic relationship problems,

Relationships are stressed by abortion. Reports of relationship failure following abortion have varied from 25% to 70%. Some men will withdraw from relationships, particularly intimate relationships with women... Many relationships will suffer from a decrease in healthy communication. Sadly, many couples never discuss the abortion.<sup>76</sup>

The abortion process is presented as being harmful to both women and men in post-abortive couples and portrayed as a major stressor that most relationships cannot endure. If a relationship does survive abortion, the relationship is said to be fundamentally changed. Anti-abortion discourse claims that in the wake of abortion, relationships are more likely to be dysfunctional and violent. According to a study cited by blogger Tanya Zaleski,

When a woman gets an abortion, the couple is more than twice as likely to argue when discussing future children, and nearly three times as likely to experience domestic violence, compared with women who carry the pregnancy to term and raise the child.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Out of the cases coded abortion-harms-women the 'harmful to personal life' sub-code was argued in 11 percent of PWPL cases, 17 percent of anti-abortion organization cases, and 8 percent of the politician cases (see table 4)

<sup>73</sup> (ProWomanProLife, , Failing to see the forest for the trees)

<sup>74</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Teens and Abortion)

<sup>75</sup> (SignalHill, Requirement of psychological treatment)

<sup>76</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>77</sup> (ProWomanProLife, New study: abortion cause relationship problems)

Zaleski not only portrays abortion as corrosive to the health and future of the relationship, she also implies that pregnancy and parenthood will benefit the relationship. In another entry Zaleski blogs that abortion will actually cause sexual and physical violence,

A link was also found between domestic violence and women seeking repeat abortions. 30% of women having a second abortion reported relationship violence and women having a third or subsequent abortion were over 2.5 times as likely to report a history of physical or sexual abuse by a male partner.<sup>78</sup>

According to Zaleski the connection between abortion and domestic violence works in two ways. To begin, abortion is said to stress relationships, causing an increased risk of domestic abuse. Alternatively, she argues that women who have had abortions also are more likely to report a history of domestic abuse. No matter from which direction the link between abortion and violence is approached, abortion is depicted as being the root cause of violence and physical and sexual abuse.

Abortion is also alleged to negatively affect women's future relationships. The Toronto Right to Life website argues that "many post-abortion women develop a greater difficulty forming lasting bonds with a male partner. This may be due to abortion-related reactions such as lowered self-esteem, greater distrust of males, sexual dysfunction, substance abuse, and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and volatile anger."<sup>79</sup> The inability of women to develop relationships with men after abortion is echoed by a woman quoted on the PWPL website. This woman, who had an abortion, reports "the results of her abortion: a (temporary) split with her husband, guilt, feelings of inadequacy and relief, a lack of desire for more kids."<sup>80</sup>

In the rare case where relationships do survive abortion, they rarely return to their original, healthy state. "After abortion, many relationships come to an end, and if the woman stays with her partner or husband, sexual dysfunction often results."<sup>81</sup> Whereas some men withdraw from the relationship "others may become promiscuous and still others may experience sexual problems such as impotence."<sup>82</sup> This argument brings to focus the pain that abortion also afflicts on men. It is not only women's lives being adversely affected by the abortion process, but anti-abortion discourse also maintains that the personal lives of men are also harmed.

Ultimately the harmful to personal life argument stresses the negative impact that abortion has on relationships. Chronic relationship problems, separation, divorce, domestic abuse and sexual dysfunction are all argued to be the common consequences of abortion.

## 2.4 RHETORICAL ASSERTION AND REPETITION: THE UNSPECIFIED HARMS OF ABORTION

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<sup>78</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Abortion and domestic violence)

<sup>79</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>80</sup> (ProWomanProLife, , Why I killed my first child)

<sup>81</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A list of major psychological sequelae of abortion)

<sup>82</sup> (deVeberInstituteforBioethicsandSocialResearch, Women's Health After Abortion: The Medical and Psychological Evidence)

The frequency of the appearance of the general/unspecified harm sub-code is perhaps the most surprising discovery in the analysis of the abortion-harms-women argument. In 37.2 percent of abortion-harms-women cases<sup>83</sup> (only .1 percent less than the psychological harm sub-code), the anti-abortion materials argue that abortion harms women, without specifying as to how (see appendix D). Through general, non-descript statements, anti-abortion advocates repeatedly assert that abortion is damaging to women.

Just one of many examples of the heavily repeated claim that abortion hurts women comes from the PWPL blog where Mrozek writes, “we as women enjoy the ‘right and privilege’ of going to specially sanctioned centres to kill our children. That this is killing is very, very true... and that it hurts women is also very, very true.”<sup>84</sup> Whereas the psychological, physical and personal harm arguments advance detailed descriptions outlining the specifics of how abortion harms women, Mrozek’s unspecified harm argument is less comprehensive and offers no explanation. Instead her assertion that abortion damages woman is presented as “very, very true” without any detail.

These highly repetitive declarations can be seen as a discursive strategy on the part of anti-abortion advocates. As discussed by Drew Westen, the process of repetition is an effective way of transforming value paradigms into psychological values. In other words, the more frequently a speaker repeats one statement, the more likely that statement is to be internalized by its receiver. Ultimately Westen is arguing that “the more the repetition, the great the probability of communicating the message.”<sup>85</sup>

Westen’s analysis on repetition helps explain the high frequency of the general/unspecified code. The anti-abortion material is scattered with unspecified allusions to the “undisputable fact” that abortion damages women. One of the goals of the Toronto Right to Life’s mission statement is to provide “a sure and certain voice regarding the care and protection of the unborn [and] women hurt by abortion.”<sup>86</sup> The Signal Hill website presents “the choice to end a pregnancy” as “the most damaging option for women”<sup>87</sup> Even MPs deliver an identical message. In a press release Vellacott states, “Members of Parliament stand with pro-life Canadians... to bear witness to the damage abortion inflicts on women, children, families, and society.”<sup>88</sup> Ultimately the unspecified abortion-harms-women claim is disseminating a coherent message that abortion harms women, without specifying how.

Unlike the psychological, physical and personal harm anti-abortion arguments, the general and unspecified assertions that abortion damages women do not advance a comprehensive argument. However, the persistent repetitiveness of vague abortion-harms-women claims has important impacts on how the abortion-harms-women discourse is received by its audience.

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<sup>83</sup>Out of the cases coded abortion-harms-women the ‘general, unspecified harm’ code was argued in 44 percent of PWPL cases, 22 percent of anti-abortion organization cases, and 16 percent of the politician cases (see table 4)

<sup>84</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The debate rages on)

<sup>85</sup> Westen, D. (1985). *Self and Society: Narcissism, Collectivism, and the Development of Morals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (301)

<sup>86</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Mission)

<sup>87</sup> (SignalHill, Mandate)

<sup>88</sup> (Vellacott, Violence no more)

### 3. **FETAL PERSONHOOD: REWORKED**

As previously mentioned, the explicit use of the concept of a fetal right-to-life is still very much present in contemporary anti-abortion discourse. Although in the PWPL blog and anti-abortion organizations the abortion-harms-women argument has surpassed the fetal personhood one, this is not yet the case in the formal political realm. The fetal personhood argument is only used in 41 percent of non-politician cases but it still remains the dominant form of argumentation used by English Canadian anti-abortion Members of Parliament (see appendix B). When the politicians' anti-abortion materials are analyzed collectively, the fetal personhood argument comprises 59.4 percent of cases while the abortion-harms-women argument is only argued in 18.8 percent of cases (see appendix I).

Possible reasons for this disparity are two-fold. To begin, politicians are responsible to their constituents and party politics. Consequently the arguments utilized by politicians tend to be less advanced and adhere more to status-quo, simplistic and customary discourse. Blogs and lobby organizations have more freedom to explore different and varying discourse. A second reason for the discrepancy is the actual content of abortion-related materials being argued in Parliament during the time of analysis. Bill C-484 (the Unborn Victims Act) dominated Parliamentary debate during my period of analysis. The very imperative of Bill C-484 was to argue that the fetus should be treated, by criminal law, as a separate and distinct person. Thus, it is not surprising that Parliamentary discourse during this time period largely followed a fetal personhood line of argumentation. Further most anti-abortion MPs argued that Bill C-484 was not directly targeting abortion rights (although many pro-abortion advocates argued that it was). Consequently in most cases where MPs were arguing for Bill C-484, they were not explicitly arguing against abortion, although an anti-abortion stance was implicit in their argument for the protection of the fetus.

Regardless, it is clear that fetal personhood remains an important form of argumentation for current anti-abortion advocates. As was the case with the older anti-abortion discourse, presenting the fetus as independently human remains a crucial aspect of anti-abortion rhetoric. However despite its continued significance, the fetal personhood argument has notably changed. The representation of the fetus as a person has shifted, and its discourse is markedly different than it was in a 1980's context.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the anti-abortion argument has historically been tied to religion. Consequently, in a religious context, the fetus was valued and regarded independently human because it was God's creation. Moreover fetal rights were often presented in contrast with the rights of women. On the whole, abortion discourse consisted of pro-abortion advocates arguing for women's right to choose and anti-abortion activists arguing for a fetal right to life. Women's rights and fetal rights were consistently presented as diametrically opposed. Common anti-abortion slogans became "The baby has to have a choice!" and "Equal rights... for the unborn children."<sup>89</sup>

United States Justice Bryon R. White characterized the woman vs. fetus approach to anti-abortion advocacy when he asserted in response to the *Roe v. Wade* decision that the Court "values the convenience of the pregnant

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<sup>89</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books. (414)

mother more than the continued existence and development of the life or potential life that she carries.”<sup>90</sup> Ultimately, the old fetal right-to-life argument is based on a religious conception of fetal personhood and presents the interests of the fetus and woman as incompatible.

It has become evident that anti-abortion advocates are shifting their rhetorical strategy. The abortion-harms-women argument, and its rise to discursive dominance, demonstrates a new anti-abortion discourse that discourages abortion because of the harm it inflicts on women. Endless argumentation over the psychological, physical and personal damage abortion causes women has become the main tenet of anti-abortion advocacy. It presents abortion as a tragedy, for both unborn children and women. In line with this strategic shift, the fetal personhood argument has also been reworked.

In contemporary anti-abortion discourse, the fetus is still presented as fully human. Activists still believe the fetus deserves to be protected, but religion has been sidelined and also the woman has been infused into discussions of the fetus. No longer are women regarded as a threat to their unborn children but instead are presented as harmed by the “killing of their unborn child”. Further, the fetal right-to-life argument is presented as analogous to other progressive and compassionate social movements. As such, the fetal personhood argument has been reframed into a less religious and more compassionate, pro-woman discourse.

Ultimately, the fetal personhood argument has changed in three fundamental ways: (1) references to fetal personhood are now backed by science and not religion, (2) the fetal personhood cause is paralleled with other progressive causes (i.e. genocide, the holocaust, etc), and (3) the concept of fetal personhood has been infused with the notion of women’s rights and health.

### 3.1 FETAL PERSONHOOD: SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN

Contemporary anti-abortion discourse presents the fetus as fully human, and hence as able to claim a right to life. However the modern ways in which fetal personhood is argued have little to do with religion, morality or ideology. Instead anti-abortion advocates suggest that the fetus is a scientifically-proven human. They argue that the “scientific evidence (ultrasound etc.) of preborn humanity is overwhelming.”<sup>91</sup> By referencing research studies, scientific experts and 3D ultrasounds, anti-abortion rhetoric is attempting to medically prove the subjectivity of the fetus. Blogger Andrea Mrozek writes that “the proliferation of 3D ultrasound machines, new research about fetal awareness and pain, and the increasing viability of extremely premature babies will continue to make an impression on some people.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, according to Mrozek, the scientific concept of fetal personhood needs to play a part in the strategy to convince the public that the lives of fetuses deserve protection. MP Maurice Vellacott echoes the importance of Mrozek’s strategy when he argues that “ultrasound technology [is] leading more and more women to reject abortion and [is]

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<sup>90</sup> *Doe v. Bolton*, [410 U.S. 179](#) (1973).

<sup>91</sup> (LifeCanda, Morgentaler vs. Canada’s Unborn)

<sup>92</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I’m ProWoman, ProLife)

discouraging a greater number of doctors from providing abortions.”<sup>93</sup> Both Mrozek and Vellacott are affirming that the scientific presentation of the fetus as a person is crucial to curbing the occurrence rate of abortion.

As such, the fetus is now being presented as scientifically-demonstrated human. The PWPL blog recounts supermodel Kathy Ireland’s description of how science led her to re-think her conception of the fetus, and ultimately, her entire stance on abortion,

My entire life I was pro-choice – who was I to tell another woman what she could or couldn’t do with her body? But when I was 18... I dove into the medical books, I dove into science. What I read was astounding and I learned that at the moment of conception a new life comes into being. The complete genetic blueprint is there, the DNA is determined, the blood type is determined, the sex is determined, the unique set of fingerprints that nobody has had or ever will have is already there.... I’ve also asked leading scientists across our country to please show me some shred of evidence that the unborn is not a human being. I didn’t want to be pro-life, but this is not a woman’s rights issue but a human rights issue.<sup>94</sup>

Here Ireland highlights the role that medicine and science played in changing her views on abortion. She implies that although “she didn’t want to be pro-life”, the hard facts of science left her no other choice. Scientific proof of fetal personhood becomes the only factor of importance when examining the fetus and consequently the anti-abortion debate is anachronistically transformed into a “human right issue”.

Anti-abortion discourse additionally emphasizes the fully human-like qualities of the fetus. The Alliance for Life Ontario website stresses that abortions performed under twelve weeks “occur when the child has fingerprints, urinates, squints, swallows, wrinkles its forehead, sleeps, wakes and exercises”<sup>95</sup> In reaction to “4D ultrasound pictures” posted on their website, Toronto Right to Life argues that “the foetus is seen rubbing its face... and yawning.”<sup>96</sup> These statements all personify the fetus as fully human, and do so from an angle of medical credibility. Science and medicine become vital to anti-abortion claims of fetal personhood.

The prevalence of scientific experts and research studies in the fetal personhood argument is partly due to the societal belief that science and medicine provide logical, credible and non-ideological proof. Drew Westen argues that while there exist a number of ways through which “value paradigms” can be internalized into psychological values “the most direct approach is through simple teaching of values by authorities whom the person considers legitimate.”<sup>97</sup> As such, anti-abortion rhetoric seeks to convince the public of the fetal personhood argument through the usage of a scientific authority. PWPL blogger Brigitte Pellerin highlights the anti-abortion movement’s usage of scientific logic when she argues,

It takes a science text book to see an embryo as the very first stage in human life. It takes...ideology, leaps in logic and a sustained attack against those medical texts to view abortion as a woman’s right. People can

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<sup>93</sup> (Vellacott, Vellacott condemns Saskatoon doctors for promoting a climate for less abortion)

<sup>94</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Bad News)

<sup>95</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Did you know?)

<sup>96</sup> (LifeCanada, Womb Walker)

<sup>97</sup> Westen, D. (1985). *Self and Society: Narcissism, Collectivism, and the Development of Morals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

and do choose their views on this topic. But that being pro-life is somehow viewed as extreme is very, very strange to me.<sup>98</sup>

Pellerin argues two things with this post. To begin she presents the “embryo as the first stage in human life” as an undeniable scientific fact. And secondly she portrays any alternative position as being a “leap in logic” and an attack against medicine. By doing so, Pellerin is implying that the anti-abortion message is rational and scientific. Moreover this scientific opinion of the fetus is presented as the “objective” and “non-ideological” position. Andrea Mrozek asks us to,

Recall the words of Dr. Gutowski: ‘So with doctors, we are human beings, we get influenced by political things just like everybody else, and so we forget our science—that the fetus is a genetically distinct individual. We as scientists should be dealing with the science, not the politics—but it takes us a while to really think the whole thing through.’<sup>99</sup>

What Dr. Gutowski is implying is that if we deal “with the science, not the politics” fetal personhood is a given. The abortion debate is being presented as ideology, and thus as less legitimate. Science, on the other hand, is offered as an objective and legitimate truth. Ultimately, the scientific formulation of the fetus (which sides with the anti-abortion position) is argued as able to rise above the ideological messiness of the abortion debate. As such any alternative (and thus ideological) viewpoint is delegitimized.

Consequently the “objective” presentation of fetal personhood as an unquestionable scientific truth has become a crucial aspect of anti-abortion discourse’s fetal personhood argument. The Toronto Right to Life website does just that when it states,

Pro-life advocates claim that abortion takes the life of an innocent human being. They do so for the following reasons:

Scientific Proof: Human life begins at conception. The beginning of human life is rarely disputed among scientists. With the advent of ultra-sound technology and fibre optics, images of the union of sperm and egg have been clearly captured and are widely available to the public. When 23 chromosomes from the mother combine with 23 chromosomes of the father to form a complete DNA chain of 46 chromosomes, this marks the point of total substantial change. Something has come into existence, which did not exist before. The claim that human life begins at any other time after conception is arbitrary and mere speculation.<sup>100</sup>

The above quotation asserts total medical agreement on the fact the human life begins at conception by using scientific concepts and language to outline how human life undeniably begins conception. Further, it discredits any differing opinions by accusing them of being “arbitrary and mere speculation”.

Advocate Andrea Mrozek also uses the scientific re-working of fetal personhood to delegitimize any opposing position. She argues that as long as the pro-abortion camp rejects the anti-abortion strategic usage of medicine, no dialogue between the two sides will ever be possible,

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<sup>98</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Your morning news)

<sup>99</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Abortion and conscience in Australia)

<sup>100</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, ProLife answers to ProChoice Questions)

Unless pro-choicers are prepared to acknowledge the scientific fact that a fetus as early as four weeks after conception is a human being with a beating heart and brain waves, and not a mere clump of cells whose humanness is relative only to its degree of wantedness, then no common ground is possible.<sup>101</sup>

By arguing that “no common ground is possible” because pro-choicers refuse to “acknowledge the scientific fact that a fetus... is a human being”, Mrozek implies that the pro-choice side are ignorant to science. Since the medical articulation of the fetus as a human being is presented as logical and credible, the pro-choice position is implied to be ideological and illogical.

On the whole the fetal personhood argument has been reworked to rely on the authority of science and medicine to legitimize its argument. Religious justifications have been abandoned in favor of a more “rational and logical” approach. Furthermore, any opposing opinions are discredited and considered unreliable, anti-scientific and ideological.

### 3.2 THE FETAL PERSON: THE VICTIM OF AN UNJUST ERA

In order to further emphasize the fetus’ right to life, anti-abortion discourse compares the treatment of the fetus to the treatment of other marginalized groups. Essentially, anti-abortion discourse depicts abortion as the “extermination of the powerless by the powerful.”<sup>102</sup> As part of this representation of abortion, the fetal personhood argument is presented as analogous to other progressive, compassionate social movements, such as the abolition and civil rights movements. In a blog entitled “The Ultimate Goal”, Veronique Bergeron compares the end goal of the anti-abortion movement to the abolition of slavery,

Let's parallel this human rights issue (abortion) with another one from another era, when William Wilburforce [sic] first introduced a bill to criminalize the slave trade. He was ridiculed and success seemed far off. He was always up-front with his ultimate goal. Through creative and gradual measures, by more means than simply introducing his annual bill, his goal was eventually realized.... I would hope that every person who speaks out for the right for the unborn would have as an ultimate goal that these tiny humans' rights be held up as equal to our own.... philosophical contortions to justify killing some human non-persons in a discourse reminiscent of 19th century slavery rhetoric. Our dismal historic track record in deciding who – or what – is human suggests that we should stop the circus act and recognize that determining humanity based on human-made criteria has embarrassed more than one civilization. Will our treatment of the unborn shame us in a few generations? I have no doubt about it, particularly in light the demographic decline of Western civilizations.<sup>103</sup>

This passage argues three main points that all support the fetal personhood argument. First, Bergeron compares the anti-abortion movement to the abolition of slavery movement. By doing so, she parallels the treatment of slaves in the nineteenth century with the fetuses of today, portraying both as victims of injustice. Second, Bergeron compares pro-abortion discourse to the rhetoric that denied slaves personhood. This comparison implies that fetuses are persons deprived their rights, as were slaves. It also aligns the anti-abortion movement with the progressive, humanitarian cause of William Wilberforce. As such, the anti-abortion entity becomes the mouthpiece of voiceless victims (as Wilberforce was for slaves). Last, Bergeron suggests that the denial of rights to the fetus will shame our generation in the future, as

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<sup>101</sup> (ProWomanProLife , A woman after my own heart)

<sup>102</sup> (ProWomanProLife , The uneasy conscience of feminism)

<sup>103</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The ultimate goal)

the era of slavery shames us now. Ultimately Bergeron presents the anti-abortion movement as a progressive, compassionate movement while simultaneously asserting fetal personhood. This strategy has become a favorite of anti-abortion advocates.

The fetal personhood argument works to represent the anti-abortion activist as defender of the defenseless and wronged. The fetus is presented as a voiceless person. Blogger Tanya Zaleski “sees many parallels”, she writes, “I can’t even count how many times I’ve heard that 100 year ago in the U.S., a black man wasn’t even recognized as a person”<sup>104</sup> Her parallel is clear. Just as the Black man was denied personhood, so is the fetus. In a similar vein, the Life Canada website equates the treatment of First Nations people by colonizers and the treatment of the fetus by the Canadian Supreme courts. It reads,

‘An Indian is not a person within the meaning of the  
Constitution.’  
George Canfield  
American Law Review, 1881  
‘The law of Canada does not recognize the  
unborn child as a legal person  
possessing rights.’  
Canadian Supreme Court decision  
Winnipeg Child and Family Services Case, 1997<sup>105</sup>

By juxtaposing these two quotations the denial of fetal rights is compared to the denial of rights to First Nation communities. To further this type fetal personhood argument, any opposing position is also described as dishonest and historically wrong,

Being pro-choice means standing on the wrong side of history: A side that says it is just fine to use people, to have sex and leave, to deny a natural and normal result (pregnancy) of a natural and normal action (sex). To live in an empty shell, devoid of all logic and reason, where charity, love and compassion themselves become nothing more than choices.<sup>106</sup>

In this case not only is the pro-choice position “standing on the wrong side of history” but it is attacked as being “devoid of all logic, love and compassion”. By default, the anti-abortion stance becomes the compassionate and loving alternative.

This fetal personhood argument is also being utilized by politicians. In a speech to more than 600 Signal Hill supporters, Preston Manning, former leader of the Reform Party, “drew a direct parallel between the struggle to end abortion and the fight to end slavery in the British Empire.”<sup>107</sup> Maurice Vellacott, Saskatoon MP, describes a similar comparison when he wages in on the debate over sex-selection abortions. He spoke,

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<sup>104</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Never again?)

<sup>105</sup> (Vellacott, Vellacott condemns Saskatoon doctors for promoting a climate for less abortion)

<sup>106</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Wrong side of history)

<sup>107</sup> (ProWomanProLife , A pro-life movement for the new)

Whether the target is black babies, or female babies, or babies with some other characteristic we might screen for, when we single out certain categories of children for destruction, we undermine our commitment to the ideals expressed in the UN Declaration, 'the dignity and equality of all Canada's children.'<sup>108</sup>

Through a discussion of abortion and eugenics, Vellacott is able to frame his argument of fetal personhood using a humanitarian lens by appealing to the "UN Declaration". He subsequently demands "dignity and equality" for all Canadian children, while implying that fetuses deserve equal protection.

The new fetal personhood argument has been re-worked and is now presented as part of a progressive, humanitarian movement. By comparing the treatment of the fetus with the treatment of other marginalized populations, anti-abortion discourse is able to argue fetal personhood while simultaneously presenting the fetus as a helpless person in need of protection.

### 3.3 FETAL PERSONHOOD AS A WOMEN'S RIGHT

A major aspect of the fetal personhood argument is the presentation of abortion as the killing of a child. Abortion is wrong for the same reason that murder is wrong, because it is the killing of a person. The depiction of the fetus as a person is a given in this line of anti-abortion argumentation, a tenet of both old and the new anti-abortion discourse. However what has changed in contemporary rhetoric is the manner in which the "killing of a child" is framed. While "the taking of innocent human life" is still emphasized to be "intrinsically wrong", the tragedy of abortion is now argued to lead to "on-going negative repercussions for the survivors and for those involved in the act of killing."<sup>109</sup> Ultimately the concept of women's welfare is injected into the fetal rights rhetoric.

The introductory webpage of the PWPL blog is representative of this infusion. The PWPL women still hold the stereotypical anti-abortion position that "the fetus is deserving of our protection". However they simultaneously acknowledge the role of women in that protection by stating "the fetus is a new and unique human being from conception, separate from, though dependant on, the woman." In the same breath they argue that "abortion is bad for women and that women will be integral in removing abortion from our cultural landscape."<sup>110</sup> The end result of these statements is the overall presentation of the health and happiness of both the woman and the fetus as being interrelated. As such the health of the fetus becomes dependent on the woman and, more importantly, the psychological and physical health of the woman becomes dependent on the fetus.

You can't protect a foetus without protecting the woman. You can't hurt a woman without hurting the foetus. When a foetus is aborted, you have to hurt the woman to hurt the foetus. This is why we are prolife because we are prowoman.<sup>111</sup>

This passage highlights the mutually dependency of both the fetus and the woman. Whereas previous fetal personhood rhetoric represents abortion as exclusively violating the right-to-life of the fetus, now abortion is depicted as equally

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<sup>108</sup> (Vellacott, Niece of Martin Luther King Jr says abortion is the civil rights movement of the 21st Century)

<sup>109</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, About us)

<sup>110</sup> (ProWomanProlife, The Story)

<sup>111</sup> (ProWomanProLife , What fits in mother Russia)

harmful and dangerous for women. The two arguments co-exist, working together to advance a two dimensional argument against abortion.

This attack against abortion accentuates that abortion harms both the fetus and the woman. Abortion is presented as harmful to the women, and in the same breath, argued to kill a living person,

A new study done on women in Turkey who had abortions finds a 66 percent increased risk of contracting breast cancer as a result. The study is the latest to confirm that abortions cause significant adverse medical risks for women who have them, in addition to killing unborn children.<sup>112</sup>

As such, at the same time as anti-abortion discourse maintains that abortion harms women it concurrently stresses fetal personhood and the role the fetus plays in maintaining women's health. Thus abortion, more generally, becomes a "trap for women and for unborn children too."<sup>113</sup> One woman, who had an abortion, argues that she was "trapped into believing the lies that abortion was just a quick fix and just 'a clump of tissues.'"<sup>114</sup> This woman's testimonial implies that abortion is not a quick fix because the fetus is more "than just a clump of tissues". This implication works, once again, to argue fetal personhood.

A social worker, quoted on the Alliance for Life Ontario website, states that she "never use[s] any word but baby because any woman who's considering having an abortion is considering not having a baby. And, unless she faces that fact, she's going to be in severe trouble afterwards, whether it's 6 months afterwards or 6 years."<sup>115</sup> What this social worker is explicitly arguing is that if women do not acknowledge that abortion is the "killing of a person", negative repercussions will occur. On the other hand, what the social worker is implicitly arguing is that once women realize what abortion is (i.e. the killing of a person); they will never choose abortion because it will harm them.

A key component of the union of the fetal personhood and the abortion-harms-women arguments is the portrayal that physical and psychological harm result from abortion *because* abortion is the killing of an unborn person. As such, "women feel guilt [about their abortions] because people are feeling bad for killing their babies."<sup>116</sup> PWPL's Andrea Mrozek exemplifies this argument by reporting,

Because the abortion involves a web of complex physical and psychological processes that themselves pull us in two directions at once. It involves our bodies, our emotions and our spirits in a way that engages us on many levels simultaneously, and that ensures that our response will be anything but simple.... And now in severely non-academic language, because you are killing your own offspring, which certainly would engage those emotions on many, many levels, indeed.<sup>117</sup>

Here Mrozek outlines that the negative emotional response to abortion is ("in non-academic language") due to the fact that women are "killing their own offspring". Anti-abortion discourse argues that because of women's intimate

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<sup>112</sup> (ProWomanProLife , New study shows higher risk of breast cancer after abortion)

<sup>113</sup> (ProWomanProLife , A new woman's voice)

<sup>114</sup> (ProWomanProLife , A new woman's voice)

<sup>115</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, Abortion Complications)

<sup>116</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, Abortion Complications)

<sup>117</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Saturday morning coffee)

awareness of their bodies, especially during pregnancy, abortion is hugely emotionally traumatic and damaging. Consequently, the good health of the female body is actually dependent on bringing the pregnancy to term.

In the same vein, the Signal Hill website states that “pregnancy is a life changing event. Once a woman has knowledge of her pregnancy, she becomes acutely aware of the presence of a developing baby. As a result, the choice to abort is almost always fraught with intense emotions.”<sup>118</sup> Because of a woman’s “acute awareness” of her own pregnancy, she is able to feel “the presence of a developing baby”. This “awareness” implies two things; first that women are aware that abortion is the termination of a person and secondly that that termination is unnatural and thus emotional disturbing.

Brigitte Pellerin argues that her strategy for anti-abortion advocacy revolves around informing women of the physical harms of abortion, in addition to protecting the lives of “little innocent being[s]” trapped inside women,

For my part, this means writing and talking and discussing the issue, hoping to convince women at least to think twice before having an abortion. Think about what abortion is, what it does to your body (to say nothing of what it does to that other body inside yours) and please avoid it – both for your sake and that of the little innocent being trapped inside you through no fault of his or her own.<sup>119</sup>

While on one level Pellerin is arguing that women need to avoid abortion because of what it does to their bodies, on a more obvious level she is arguing that abortion needs to be avoided for the sake of “the little innocent being trapped inside you through no fault of his or her own”. This is yet another example of how the concept of fetal personhood is melded with an abortion-harms-women argument.

The amalgamation of the fetal personhood and abortion-harms-women arguments is also having policy ramifications, most notably in the United States. The PWPL blog reports that,

... doctors in South Dakota must tell women seeking abortions ... ‘that the abortion will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being.’ Women also would have to be told they have a right to continue a pregnancy and that abortion may cause them psychological harm, including thoughts of suicide.<sup>120</sup>

South Dakota legislature has affirmed the anti-abortion discourse’s conception of fetal personhood, while simultaneously arguing that abortion psychologically harms women. Accordingly, not only do doctors need to inform women seeking abortion of the personhood of their fetus, but they also must be told of the psychological harm that could result because of the termination of that life.

In an English Canadian context neither the fetal personhood argument nor the abortion-harms-women rhetoric has reached the same level of success as in South Dakota. However the fusion of the fetal personhood and abortion-harms women discourses has reached the realm of formal politics. In a Parliamentary intervention, MP Maurice Vellacott, “calls on Parliament to recognize unborn children as separate victims” by asserting that “this pro-woman

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<sup>118</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Children and happiness, continued)

<sup>119</sup> (ProWomanProLife , About the strategy)

<sup>120</sup> (ProWomanProLife, We are not all on the same page)

proposal recognizes the grief that women experience when their children are harmed and killed.”<sup>121</sup> Here Vellacott is arguing on the basis of the generally accepted notion that women are harmed by the death of the child. Therefore, women must also be harmed by the deaths of “their unborn children”. Consequently, while appearing sympathetic and pro-woman, Vellacott is in fact advancing the conventional anti-abortion argument of fetal personhood.

Although the fetal personhood argument possesses characteristics of the old anti-abortion strategy, the contemporary fetal personhood has fundamentally changed. It has shifted away from a religious, conservative and anti-abortion argument and embraced a scientific, progressive and pro-woman sentiment. Most notably, the fetal personhood argument has grown beyond its fetal-centric focus and incorporated an abortion-harms-women argument into its conception of the fetus. As a result, fetal personhood is largely realized through its relationship with the pregnant woman (alternatively the woman is also realized through her relationship with the fetus, as will be discussed in detail in chapter 6).

#### **4. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

If we review the explicit arguments of contemporary anti-abortion discourse we see that anti-abortion activism has fundamentally changed. Despite some traces of old anti-abortion rhetorical strategies, a new abortion-harms-women discourse has risen to discursive dominance within the larger anti-abortion argumentation. Through the strategy of repetition, the new abortion-harms-women discourse is arguing against abortion by citing the psychological, physical and personal damage it inflicts on women.

Most surprising is that even arguments that appear reminiscent of the old anti-abortion strategy (like the fetal personhood discourse) have actually been reworked to incorporate a more pro-woman anti-abortion stance. As such, the concept of fetal personhood has been reframed and now argues the scientific validity of the fetal personhood argument while simultaneously infusing women’s health and wellness into its discourse.

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<sup>121</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, May 29, 2006, line 1510.

## CHAPTER 5: VALUES AND ISSUES FRAMING

The explicit arguments of new anti-abortion discourse are clear. Anti-abortionists are arguing that abortion is wrong because it psychological, physically and personally damages women. However the anti-abortion shift towards a 'pro-woman' discourse does not stop there. Anti-abortion advocates are also implementing new rhetorical strategies that reinforce the argument that abortion is an injustice to women. Moreover these rhetorical strategies include the incorporation of historically feminist values, issues and epistemology.

Ultimately the adoption of new pro-woman rhetorical framings has led to the rise of a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon: a feminist-based anti-abortion discourse. This new 'pro-woman' discourse repeatedly argues that "women and men... can stand up in support of women's rights and life, at the same time."<sup>1</sup> In disseminating this seemingly contradictory message, anti-abortion activists are appropriating discursive framings that have largely been associated with feminism. While the abortion-harms-women argument dominates, it is primarily framed around pseudo-feminist terminology.

The remainder of this chapter will outline how anti-abortionists are using three different pseudo-feminist rhetorical strategies. To begin I will explore the anti-abortion framing of the feminist values of "equality" and "choice". The second section of this chapter will then analyze the anti-abortion appropriation of feminist issues (such as women's health, rights and sexual assault). And lastly I will review the anti-abortion epistemological adoption of feminist standpoint theory.

### 1. VALUE FRAMING: EQUALITY AND CHOICE

Feminism has largely been considered an ideology that is devoted to equality between the sexes. Feminists have demanded for equal rights, equal pay and equal treatment. Historically attached to the feminist conception of equality has been the notion that women must be able to control their reproduction and thus be afforded unfettered access to abortion services. Abortion rights and female equality have largely been discursively joined by feminists and pro-abortion advocates. However anti-abortion discourse is increasingly framing the concept of equality in a way that rejects abortion access. Andrea Mrozek, for example, blogs about and anti-abortion devotion to equality,

It is a million gazillion times easier to defend life in the public square—precisely because the arguments—and the sound bites—are rights based. They are equality based. Equality and dignity for both mom and child. There's this shaky notion pro-abortion types put forward that abortion serves women's rights because they are 'in control of their own bodies' but it's a superficial argument, and one that is fairly easily overcome by unpacking the euphemism and looking at what really happens.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Yeah, good question)

<sup>2</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A fight we can't lose)

In this passage Mrozek dismisses the notion that the pro-abortion position serves women's rights. Instead she argues that it is the anti-abortion camp that advocates "equality and dignity" not just for the fetus, but for "both mom and child". Ultimately Mrozek attempts to break the discursive link between abortion access and women's equality.

The integration of 'equality and dignity' into this anti-abortion message is interesting since both are concepts that have largely been claimed by feminist and progressive discourses. However the anti-abortion re-framing of the feminist concept of choice is perhaps the most surprising rhetorical strategy being adopted by anti-abortion discourse.

The concept of "choice" has a long history of being rhetorically tied to feminist activism, literature and ideology. The framing of choice has become a focal point of feminist discourse. Recognized feminist thinkers, from deBeauvoir to Butler, have advanced numerous feminist articulations, constructions and criticisms of the concept of choice. Ultimately constant reference to choice has transformed the term into a rhetorical foundation of feminist discourse.

Perhaps the most common feminist formulation of choice has been with regards to abortion. The pro-abortion/pro-choice camp has framed its discursive case for abortion access around women's right to choose. During the Canadian Parliamentary debates over abortion access in the summer of 1988, then-NDP speaker in the House Marion Dewar asserted that her party was committed to the proposition that "women should have the right to *choose*."<sup>3</sup> In the American context, the Court ruled in the case of *Roe v. Wade* that "the government may not place obstacles in the path of a woman's exercise of her freedom of *choice*."<sup>4</sup> This legal framework of abortion access supports the wider feminist concept of a woman's choice.

Thus the concept of choice has been largely associated with feminism, abortion access and progressive discourse. Moreover the pro-abortion camp has found great success with the women's right to choose discourse. Both the Morgentaler decision in Canada and the U.S.' *Roe v. Wade* (both referenced above) ultimately sided with the pro-abortion framing of choice. In response, anti-abortion rhetoric is seeking to break the rhetorical association between choice and abortion access. To that end, the concept of choice is being amalgamated into the anti-abortion platform, but not in a predictable manner. Whereas old, fetal-centric anti-abortion discourse advocated the fetus' "choice to live", new anti-abortion activists are arguing choice in the feminist sense of the word. Anti-abortion discourse is claiming to "defend" women's choices.

The term "choice" is scattered throughout the anti-abortion materials. The main slogan of the PWPL blog, "A Canada without abortion. By choice", epitomizes the trend. As part of their mission, the PWPL bloggers claim to "celebrate women's legitimate choices, freedoms and rights."<sup>5</sup> Despite the mission statement's insinuation that there are

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<sup>3</sup> Marion Dewar in 'Sense of the House' Debate (July, 1988) Quoted in, Janine, B. (1992). Choice and No Choice. In J. Brodie & S. Gavigan & J. Jenson (Eds.), *The Politics of Abortion* (57-116). Toronto: Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 153 (1973)

<sup>5</sup> (ProWomanProlife, The Story)

illegitimate choices, PWPL nonetheless positions itself as a firm defender of women's choices and thus as 'pro-woman'.

At the very heart of the anti-abortion choice argument is the position that women are not presented with legitimate and informed choices when it comes to unplanned pregnancy. As articulated by Andrea Mrozek, the anti-abortion position is that "women don't really get choices."<sup>6</sup> In a blog entitled "This pro-abortion culture is brought to you", Mrozek recounts three stories of marginalized women (all were single and without support) who faced unplanned pregnancies. In all three stories, the pregnant women reach out to health care professionals who offer them information about abortion. Mrozek, outraged by the presentation of abortion as a pregnancy choice, blogs,

Is this what passes for compassion, for help? What kind of choice is this? Have these health care workers lost any semblance of compassion or empathy? Do they not care? Do they think providing an abortion constitutes care? Such a response is incredible. How can they so completely fail to register the real issues at hand—to send women packing with nothing more than the words "I can get you an abortion" ringing in their ears?<sup>7</sup>

Mrozek's response represents the discursive framing of abortion as an uncompassionate and non-empathetic pregnancy choice and presents abortion supporters as "men and women who love the slavery of abortion: slavery to a false freedom, a choice that isn't freeing at all."<sup>8</sup> Abortion is portrayed as a false choice, and abortion providers are depicted as actively pushing abortion onto women without choice. Mrozek further hints at the notion that the pro-abortion, feminist position fails to understand the larger societal issues at hand (i.e. the unequal distribution of the responsibility of child-rearing),

These three women I spoke of kept their babies. And lived to tell the tale, imagine that. Not everyone gets the same happy ending. Health care workers, clinic workers, those who give this kind of lame excuse for advice—our pro-abortion culture is at least in part, courtesy of them. I've said for a while that women don't really get choices. It just dawned on me how very painfully true this actually is. It's a special kind of country for young women to live in where killing our unborn children is the first choice presented. The very first one. Do you have to call yourself pro-life to think this is wrong?<sup>9</sup>

Mrozek concludes that the only pregnancy option presented to women is abortion and, as a result, women "don't really get choices". Mrozek points to health care professionals, clinic workers and the greater pro-abortion society as the main culprits behind the elimination of women's choices. Mrozek's blog ignores the customary association between abortion access, feminism and women's choices and instead depicts the feminist stance on abortion as uncompassionate and anti-woman. In its place, a pseudo-feminist anti-abortion movement is portrayed as embodying sympathy and compassion and becomes the main advocate for women's choices. This story paints anti-abortionists as staunch supporters of women's choices, whereas pro-abortion advocates "completely fail to register the real issues at hand" and "send women packing with nothing more than the words "I can get you an abortion ringing in their ears". Ultimately

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<sup>6</sup> (ProWomanProLife , This pro-abortion culture brought to you by)

<sup>7</sup> (ProWomanProLife , This pro-abortion culture brought to you by)

<sup>8</sup> (ProWomanProLife (LifeCanada, 15 year of choice?, 2003) , Name that author)

<sup>9</sup> ProWomanProLife , This pro-abortion culture brought to you by)

the anti-abortion position epitomizes the “happy ending” of women keeping their babies, becoming mothers, and “living to tell the tale”.

Anti-abortion discourse also insists that real pregnancy choices are compromised because women are trapped, coerced and deceived into abortions. The Life Canada website contends that “it is often easier for a woman to obtain an abortion than pregnancy support or crisis pregnancy counseling. As a result, many a woman [sic] finds the only choice available to solve her problems is a dead baby.”<sup>10</sup> Further, anti-abortion rhetoric is arguing that women are being “tricked” into abortion because they are not offered the “facts”. In an article entitled “15 year of ‘Choice?’” the website further argues that,

An informed abortion choice must start with the clear understanding, easily available through ultrasound, that a child is really there, beating heart and all. Next, why are women not being told about studies reporting a strong correlation between abortion, especially of a first pregnancy, and breast cancer risk? They should also be warned of the risk of post-abortion emotional trauma and harmful premature delivery of future children. Withholding basic information shows disrespect for women and is both dishonest and patronizing, since it implies that women are ‘intimidated’ by the truth. Ignoring or suppressing what we now know about the dangers of abortion serves a coercive agenda, which fails to care about women's most important needs.<sup>11</sup>

The Life Canada website presents abortion, and those advocating abortion, as “dishonest and patronizing”. The very title of the article (‘15 years of Choice?’) questions the feminist formulation of the choice concept. Life Canada’s explicit argument is that women are being lied to about the ramifications of abortion by pro-abortion forces. The suppression of “what we know about the dangers of abortion” serves as a means of coercing women into abortion. Central to this claim is the explicit argument that women’s choices are eliminated by the mere existence of abortion, implying that it is anti-abortion activists that are the ones actually standing up for women. For example, in its role as pseudo-feminist, Life Canada “care[s] about women’s most important needs”.

Conservative MP Maurice Vellacott reinforces the representation of the anti-abortion movement as the main supporter of women’s choices. In a press release Vellacott argues that women need better support so “they don't feel trapped into killing their unborn child,” have a “real choice”, and be able to “choose life”,

As a compassionate, caring, progressive society, we should provide the kind of support and options for the expectant mother, so that she doesn't feel her only choice is to choose death for her offspring. To put women in that kind of position is not the hallmark of a caring, compassionate, progressive society. That's providing no choice. We should be doing so much more for women in this regard so they don't feel backed into a corner and coerced... As a caring, compassionate, progressive society, we should provide the kind of supports so that they have real choice, so they can do the instinctive thing ‘so they can choose life.’<sup>12</sup>

With this passage, Vellacott attempts to do four things. To begin, he presents abortion as the “death of her offspring”. Here Vellacott adheres to the customary fetal-focused discourse, but inserts a woman into the picture by emphasizing that the fetus is “her offspring”. He also sympathetically adds that “the expectant mother” feels abortion her “only

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<sup>10</sup> (LifeCanada, 15 year of choice?)

<sup>11</sup> (LifeCanada, 15 year of choice?)

<sup>12</sup> (Vellacott, Vellacott condemns Saskatoon doctors for promoting a climate for less abortion)

choice” (this leap in logic is the critical part of his statement). As such, Vellacott is not blaming the “expectant mother” for the “death of her offspring” but instead exonerates her because abortion is her “only choice”. Secondly, while Vellacott acknowledges that abortion is a pregnancy choice, he does not grant it as a “real choice”. Childbirth, motherhood and life are “real choices”, abortion is not. Third, the MP concludes that if women are given “real choices”, women will “choose life” because it is “instinctive”. The presentation of childbirth and motherhood (life) as “instinctive” implies that abortion is not “instinctive” and thus an unnatural choice (further reinforcing the portrayal of abortion as an illegitimate choice). And finally, Vellacott, three times over, underlines the notion that a society without abortion is the hallmark of a “caring, compassionate, progressive society”, thus placing anti-abortion discourse at the forefront of caring, compassionate progressive politics.

The appropriation of feminist concepts by anti-abortion discourse goes beyond a mere inclusion of the word choice into the vocabulary of anti-abortion activists. Classic feminist arguments about pregnancy choices, motherhood, and the roles available to women in society are also being incorporated into larger anti-abortion discourse. As an important example of this, Veronique Bergeron, a PWPL blogger, writes about the professional and personal sacrifices that she has made throughout her life because of her choice to become a mother,

I have completed some of my studies but my career is unmistakably mommy-tracked. I had dreams of traveling the world and I now find myself the least traveled person of my acquaintance. I have carried my pregnancies to term and I do harbor regrets about all the things I might have been able to do, especially when I look at my peers who are paying off their mortgages at 35 while I wonder how the heck I will pay back the \$60 000 line of credit I incurred to buy a Master's degree and with it, the possibility of developing a career.<sup>13</sup>

Not only does Bergeron use explicitly feminist concepts (“mommy-tracked”) but she further acknowledges the merits of a life without children. She admits that she “harbors regrets” and insecurities about her own choices. As such, her personal narrative parallels the feminist critique of motherhood. Bergeron echoes Betty Friedan’s infamous articulation of “the problem with no name”. In her now famous book *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan argues that,

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning [that is, a longing] that women suffered in the middle of the 20th century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries ... she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question — ‘Is this all?’<sup>14</sup>

Both Friedan and Bergeron speak to the common insecurities that mothers face. Whereas Friedan senses a “dissatisfaction” suffered by women, Bergeron personalizes that unease by admitting to harboring regrets about her own life choices. However these two nearly identical testimonials lead to two very divergent results. Whereas Friedan’s book is argued to have sparked the American second-wave of the women’s movement (which included the advocacy of abortion access), Bergeron’s logic leads her to a firmly anti-abortion position. In fact Bergeron argues that it is her observations of “prejudices against mothers” (which leads to insecurity and the devaluation of motherhood) that lie at the “heart of her position against abortion”,

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<sup>13</sup> (ProWomanProLife, I blame individualism)

<sup>14</sup> Friedan, B (1963). *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

When we flaunt abortion as the panacea for our inability to recognize motherhood as an important contribution to society and to acknowledge that mothers may have ambitions in life other than motherhood – ambitions that are not per se incompatible with motherhood but that are made so by a myopic outlook on motherhood and ambition – we effectively reinforce prejudices against mothers, children and families. This is the heart of my position against abortion.

I am not ‘anti-choice.’ I only firmly believe that choice in matters of pregnancy has effectively reduced the range of options available to women in society. And this occurred principally when we made childbearing a personal choice for which women alone are held accountable.<sup>15</sup>

Bergeron begins by adopting the feminist critique of motherhood and then arguing, as do feminists, that motherhood is undervalued given its importance to the functioning of society. However Bergeron departs from feminism when she presents her theory as to why. Feminists point to patriarchy, but Bergeron blames abortion. To her abortion has led to the societal devaluation of mothers because it transforms motherhood into just another choice which “reinforces prejudices against mothers”. She ultimately claims that the pro-abortion position is incompatible with feminist ideals of equality and the proper valuation of motherhood. Bergeron neatly dodges the position of feminists who support abortion, public child care and paid maternity leave and overlooks women who are both pro-abortion and mothers.

Bergeron relates her own struggle in finding a job. She observes that if she had “aborted [her] babies, [she] would have plenty of [work] experience by now. Employers demand this experience, why? Because they can. And certainly since pregnancy is a choice, they don't need to accommodate women who don't choose experience over life.”<sup>16</sup> In the end, Bergeron’s own unemployment, the societal devaluation of motherhood and the privileging of “experience over life” (i.e. non-pregnancy over pregnancy) are all blamed on abortion.

As demonstrated by Vellacott and Bergeron, the anti-abortion movement is making a claim on best representing women’s interests and their choices. Accordingly, the anti-abortion remodeling of choice works to strengthen the perception of the anti-abortion movement as empathetic, compassionate and, most importantly, pro-woman. In line with this the new pseudo-feminist shift, the published goals of the anti-abortion movement have also changed. As previously discussed (in Chapter 3), the anti-abortion movement is no longer just about legislating women’s bodies, but now equally focused more on around women’s choices,

Firstly, we are pro-life precisely because we are pro-woman. Secondly, I am not interested in legislative action. Rather, I am interested, as my web site explains, in seeing abortion dwindle and decrease in Canada because that is what women choose.<sup>17</sup>

Because of anti-abortion advocates’ new-found respect for women’s choices, the target of legislative efforts have also been affected. In early 2008, Conservative MP Ken Epp introduced Private Member’s Bill C-484 under which harming a fetus would constitute a crime. Notwithstanding Epp’s denial that Bill C-484 was directly aimed at

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<sup>15</sup> (ProWomanProLife, I blame individualism)

<sup>16</sup> (ProWomanProLife, I blame individualism)

<sup>17</sup> (ProWomanProLife, From Andrea with love)

women's access to abortion, many politicians and medical experts<sup>18</sup> argued that the bill's acknowledgment of fetal rights held the potential for targeting abortion access in the future.

Ken Epp, who makes "no secret of being pro-life"<sup>19</sup>, described the bill as going "very narrowly at one issue - where the woman has made the choice to have the child and that choice is taken away unilaterally without her consent and usually with violence."<sup>20</sup> Epp's framing of Bill C-484 is notable. The bill was named the "Unborn Victims of Crime Act" and its main goal was to "extend some valuation to the unborn."<sup>21</sup> Rather explicitly, it sought to entrench the rights of the fetus into criminal law. However Epp's marketing of the bill was not at all centered on fetal rights, but rather on women's choices, i.e. "if the woman has chosen to have a child and she... has done everything possible to protect her unborn child, why should she have to stand alone?"<sup>22</sup>

Although the bill was dropped after its second reading, its usage of the concept of women's choices serves as an important illustration of the appropriation of feminist language by anti-abortion advocates in the political realm. Ken Epp presents the bill as a defender of women's choices (although from my reading those choices do not include abortion).

In conclusion, the feminist conception of choice has made a notable appearance in the vocabulary of anti-abortion advocates. Anti-abortion discourse is now presenting itself as a defender of women's choices against a "pro-abortion society" that has eliminated all pregnancy options that are not abortion. The result is an anti-abortion movement that can now present itself as staunchly pro-woman.

## **2. ISSUE FRAMING**

### **2.1 WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND HEALTH**

In addition to the advocacy of women's choices, anti-abortion discourse also strives to be "compatible with women's rights and freedoms."<sup>23</sup> The notion that women have a right to abortion was popularized by second-wave feminists who no longer considered abortion merely as "a matter of medical intervention allowed by state-defined 'health' indication but, instead, a fundamental right of all women."<sup>24</sup> The heretofore conventional anti-abortion rebuttal has been to deny that abortion is a women's right while simultaneously maintaining the right-to-life of the fetus.

As such, the anti-abortion rhetoric that abortion is not a woman's right is by no means a new discourse. However its formulation has been substantially altered and it now focuses around feminist ideas and language. Not only is abortion argued not to be a woman's right but anti-abortion discourse is additionally disputing the notion that pro-

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<sup>18</sup> (CTV News, Tory bill could lead to abortion ban)

<sup>19</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The question nobody is asking)

<sup>20</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The question nobody is asking)

<sup>21</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, September 17, 2010, line 2010.

<sup>22</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, March 8, 2008, line 1155.

<sup>23</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The story)

<sup>24</sup> Janine, B. (1992). Choice and No Choice. In J. Brodie & S. Gavigan & J. Jenson (Eds.), *The Politics of Abortion* (57-116). Toronto: Oxford University Press. (72)

abortion feminists represent women's interests at all. Instead anti-abortionists are positioning themselves as champions of women's rights, freedoms, equality and health. This infusion of feminist language into anti-abortion rhetoric appears to be widespread.

The statement that "abortion rights are not women's rights" appears frequently throughout the PWPL blog. The very idea behind the blog's inception, according to founding director Andrea Mrozek, was to underpin the viewpoint that "it's not a woman's right to have an abortion... There's no such thing as a right to an abortion, not for women, not for men. It doesn't contribute to women's rights and freedoms at all, because having an abortion is, put simply, not a right."<sup>25</sup> This argument pervades the entire blog. For example, in response to the banning of anti-abortion group at the York University campus (for a protest that coupled images of genocide with 'images of abortion'), Mrozek defends the protest by emphasizing that women have no right to abortion,

Broken record alert: It is no one's right to have an abortion. Abortion is not now, never was a right. The Supreme Court of Canada never said that. And if you take away freedom of speech, you sure don't enhance women's rights. Repeating this is getting tiring.<sup>26</sup>

Not only does Mrozek reiterate the idiom that abortion is "not now" and "never was" a woman's right, she also decrees that interference with the campus group's right to "free speech" compromises the rights of women. While dismissing abortion as a right, the anti-abortion camp simultaneously portrays themselves as the victims of censorship and as a representative of women's "real" rights.

In a later blog, Mrozek, yet again, highlights the need for a societal education to quell the feminist ideology that abortion is a "woman's right",

I was taught that abortion was a right through years of schooling. It takes years of reading to discover that offering or withholding an abortion has nothing to do with women's rights and freedoms at all, and that the mantra 'my body, my choice,' isn't true. It is my goal to educate on this: Abortion is not a right and it does not enhance women's lives. Once we disconnect abortion from 'rights talk' and other assorted euphemisms about 'reproductive choice,' we'll be able to truly and compassionately assist women who feel trapped in an unwanted pregnancy.<sup>27</sup>

Mrozek represents her discovery of this anti-abortion position as a sort of enlightenment. Although she was "taught... through years of schooling" that abortion was a right, through "years of reading" Mrozek was able to come to the free-thinking and progressive realization that "abortion has nothing to do with women's rights and freedoms". Further, she links her anti-abortion enlightenment to a compassionate and pro-woman standpoint. Mrozek maintains that only when the public is convinced that abortion "does not enhance women's lives" will they "truly and compassionately assist women". This argument represents the new articulation of the anti-abortion rebuttal of abortion as a right. Instead of focusing on a fetal-right-to-life, the new discourse integrates women into the discussion (although in my observations

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<sup>25</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The story)

<sup>26</sup> (ProWomanProLife, York U ain't for learning)

<sup>27</sup> (ProWomanProLife, It's gonna take time)

not always logically). By breaking the discursive connection between abortion and women's rights, anti-abortionists are once again depicting themselves, not feminists, as advocates for women interests.

Whereas segments of anti-abortion discourse focuses on the ways in which abortion is *not* considered to be a woman's right other segments explicitly address how the anti-abortion position also *stands up* for women's rights. Through an engagement of the medical concept of "informed consent", anti-abortion advocates are arguing that women's rights are being violated by abortion practices. The Signal Hill website outlines the concept of informed consent and how its enforcement is being neglected in the case of abortion in Canada,

The concept of informed consent is fundamental in Canadian medical practice. Regardless of how futile or relevant a particular procedure is in the eyes of the doctor, it is ultimately the patient who will decide to accept or refuse a treatment. The right to informed consent is rendered meaningless if the patient is not given sufficient information. Thus there is a legal obligation placed on doctors to provide all of the material information in order for their patients to make an informed choice.... However, this standard is not being met within the community of doctors and health care professionals who are working in women's reproductive health. Women are not being informed about the numerous studies showing a statistically significant link between abortion and breast cancer, information that may have serious bearings on their decision to carry through with an abortion. This is a violation of a woman's right to know.<sup>28</sup>

According to Signal Hill, the Canadian doctrine of informed consent legally demands the medical disclosure of any finding or study to the patient, "regardless of how futile or relevant". Hence, the anti-abortion organization maintains that "the community of doctors and health care professionals who are working in women's reproductive health" (i.e. abortion providers) are in direct violation of the terms of informed consent because of their omission of "numerous studies". This not only implies that abortion providers are knowingly breaking the law, but more importantly that this omission is "a violation of a woman's *right* to know". The anti-abortion position is, once again, depicted as standing up for women's rights and health.

Interestingly the doctrine of informed consent has previously been argued from a feminist perspective in order to defend abortion rights. Feminist legal scholar Susan Bordo<sup>29</sup> argues that the doctrine of *informed consent* supports the fundamental "right to one's person" by honoring personal bodily integrity so broadly that judges have consistently refused to force individuals to submit to medical procedures without consent, even if the life of another human being is threatened by the refusal. Since the right to one's person privileges one's own bodily integrity over anybody else's, even assuming hypothetically full personhood is granted to the fetus, women would still have the unfettered legal right to consent to the abortion procedure. Consequently the pro-choice rhetorical framing of informed consent defends women's legal right to abortion.

However the anti-abortion camp consistently counters the feminist legal framing of informed consent. Although the anti-abortion interpretation of informed consent is still pseudo-feminist, it contradicts the argument that abortion is a woman's right. MP Maurice Vellacott endorses this anti-abortion formulation of informed consent by speaking out against what he calls the "cover-up on the abortion-breast cancer link." Vellacott argues that "women are done a

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<sup>28</sup> (SignalHill, Breast Cancer)

<sup>29</sup> Bordo, Susan. (1993) *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (73)

horrific disservice when media and health care professionals deliberately turn a blind eye to the evidence and deny this unsettling truth... Women have a right to know... Who's standing up women on these issues?" Although Vellacott asks the question "who's standing up for women", his implication seems clearly that anti-abortion advocates are the ones standing up for women's rights.

Further assumed in the anti-abortion logic of informed consent is the notion that when women are "fully informed", they will never choose abortion. This logic is reinforced in an article posted on the Life Canada website entitled "My Abortion: One Woman's Story". The article presents one woman's abortion testimonial that 'exposes' the harsh and harmful reality of abortion,

I believed what I had been told about abortion. I believed in my right to choose, that this was a hard-won right thanks to my feminist predecessors. I believed that what was growing in my body was a foetus.... I believed I was well informed. I did my best to be. Afterwards, I realised I had not been well informed at all. If anything, I had been misinformed. At no point had I been told that going through an abortion can be extremely psychologically distressing. I did not know that women's lives can fall apart the way mine did as a result. The 'unbiased' information and language, supposedly feminist, did not make me feel empowered. It denied my truth, and saved society from the inconvenience of another single mother.<sup>30</sup>

Similar to Mrozek, this woman was also taught to believe that abortion was a woman's right. However unlike Mrozek, this woman had to endure the "extremely psychologically distressing" pain of an abortion to come to the realization that she was not "well-informed". The author argues that the "supposedly feminist" information she received "did not make [her] feel empowered". Instead she questions the motives of pro-abortion feminists, implying that they want to "save society from the inconvenience of another single mother" instead of serving women's best interests.

This charge against a "pro-abortion society" also touches on another common feminist concept being appropriated by anti-abortion discourse: the concept of empowerment. Feminism and the second wave of the women's rights movement have historically appealed to the notion of empowerment. Employment equity, legislation against sexual harassment and the decriminalization of birth control and abortion were all celebrated by feminists and hailed as important steps in the empowerment and liberation of women. Further, women were empowered by the idea that they could control the spacing of their children, or even decide whether to have children at all. However, this feminist notion of empowerment is now being appropriated and mutated by anti-abortion rhetoric.

Not only does anti-abortion discourse present abortion itself as degrading and harmful to women, it portrays the feminist position on abortion as callous. Abortion supporters are accused of underestimating the strength and natural abilities of women. Ultimately the stereotypical representation of the abortion debate is turned on its head. The anti-abortion movement is itself as pro-woman, while simultaneously the feminist stance is depicted as anti-woman, uncompassionate and as actively promoting abortion as the only pregnancy option. Andrea Mrozek epitomizes this representation when she writes, "show me an abortionist and I'll show you a misogynist."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> (LifeCanada, Abortion: one woman's story)

<sup>31</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A callous sort of Canada)

Moreover, the “misogynistic” abortion supporters undervalue women’s abilities and power. Andrea Mrozek tell us that,

The pro-choice crowd is in the business of influencing—encouraging a young girl to believe she is not equipped, not strong, not able to carry a pregnancy to term. You think they just leave women to “make a choice?” Well in so doing, they play upon all the fears we know women feel—mostly because we have ourselves already felt them in one way or another.<sup>32</sup>

Following her argument that “the pro-choice crowd” does not encourage or support pregnant women, Mrozek quotes Sarah Palin as an inspirational icon for young, pregnant women. Palin’s passage addresses her own unplanned pregnancy with son Trig. She argues that women have been “influenced by society to believe that [they] are not strong enough, equipped enough or convenience enough to make the choice to let the child live.” However Palin urges women to “be encouraged that you are strong enough, and smart enough and equipped enough to deal with it [an unplanned pregnancy]. And may people walk into your life who are savvy and kind enough to know this, and to speak those words.”<sup>33</sup>

Palin’s words reposition the anti-abortion viewpoint as encouraging, kind and compassion and in believing in the power, intelligence and strength of women. Following Palin’s logic, anti-abortion advocates believe women intrinsically possess all the resources needed to deal with unplanned pregnancy. In contrast, anti-abortionists view the feminist position on abortion as patriarchal promoting “a male standard of sexual behavior”, as noted by blogger Veronique Bergeron,

[Society] institutionalize[s] equality according to a male standard of sexual behaviour. That is, to be equal, we have to be able to have sex without having the kids. To achieve this great ideal, women have to stuff themselves with synthetic hormones, contraceptive devices and, failing that, undergo invasive surgery in the form of abortion. Then, having convinced women that they are really like guys, we will bombard them at a very young age with suggestions of proper sexual behaviour: ‘51 tricks that will make him jump for joy,’ ‘Release your inner vixen’ and ‘How Hally got her bikini body back only 3 months post-partum.’<sup>34</sup>

This argument is notable because of its direct inclusion of a classic feminist argument. Countless feminist have contended precisely what blogger Veronique Bergeron is arguing. The notion that sexuality revolves around male interests is characteristically feminist. However, again, the feminist and anti-abortion analyses diverge at the point of proposed solutions for the problem of “a male standard of sexual behavior”. Whereas feminists, such as Catharine Mackinnon, argue that “sexuality free of male dominance will require change not re-conceptualization, transcendence, or excavation”<sup>35</sup>, anti-abortion advocates like Bergeron argue that the promotion of birth control and abortion are to blame.

A right to abortion is often regarded as an extension of women’s rights. However contemporary anti-abortion discourse is seeking to break that discursive link through two somewhat incongruous arguments: (1) abortion has never

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<sup>32</sup> (ProWomanProLife, , Planned parenthood- in the influencing business)

<sup>33</sup> (ProWomanProLife, , Planned parenthood- in the influencing business)

<sup>34</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Where is freedom of choice when you really need it, part ii)

<sup>35</sup> MacKinnon, C. (1996). Not a Moral Issue. In K. Weisberg (Ed.), *Application of Feminist Legal Theory to Women's Lives: Sex, Violence, Work and Reproduction* (37-58). Philadelphia: Temple University Press. (39)

been a woman's right, and (2) abortion providers in Canada are compromising a woman's "right to be informed". Both arguments are supported by the appropriation of feminist language and concepts. Ultimately anti-abortion discourse maintains that abortion is not a woman's right and that notions such as the "no choice but pro-choice" ideology further imperil women's rights by not respecting their *right* to a fully informed choice (which from what I observe from the anti-abortion discourse does not include abortion).

## 2.2 SEXUAL ASSAULT

Susan Brownmiller<sup>36</sup> famous analysis of the politics of rape has irreversibly shaped feminist thought and literature. Brownmiller's contention that rape perpetuates male dominance by keeping all women in a state of fear has become an iconic feminist argument. However, again surprisingly, this staunchly feminist examination of the politics of sexual assault is being appropriated and incorporated within new anti-abortion discourse. Whereas most would associate Brownmiller's analysis of sexual assault and patriarchy with a pro-abortion position, anti-abortion activists have engaged in its exploratory use to argue against abortion.

Contemporary anti-abortion discourse is now arguing that abortion and sexual assault both represent similar levels violence against women. Anti-abortion discourse argues that "pro-life feminists have also come to see abortion as part of a male agenda to have women more sexually available."<sup>37</sup> As such, anti-abortion rhetoric consistently compares the abortion procedure and the effects of abortion as being "identical" sexual assault. The Toronto-Right-to-Life website informs that "women report that the pain of abortion, inflicted upon them by a masked stranger invading their body, feels identical to rape."<sup>38</sup> The Alliance for Life Ontario website reaffirms this comparison between rape and abortion (in surprisingly similar language) by charging abortion with being a form of "medical rape",

Many women report that their abortions felt like a degrading and brutal form of medical rape. This association between abortion and rape is not hard to understand. Abortion involves a painful examination of a woman's sexual organs by a masked stranger who is invading her body. Once she is on the operating table, she loses control over her body. If she protests and asks for the abortionist to stop, she will likely be ignored or told: 'It's too late to change your mind. This is what you wanted. We have to finish now.' And while she lies there tense and helpless, the life hidden within her is literally sucked out of her womb.<sup>39</sup>

Here the feminist argument that rape is a form of violence inflicted on women by men is directly injected into fairly descriptive anti-abortion narrative. In the anti-abortion version, the abortion provider is the violator and the victim is the pregnant woman. The abortion provider is presented as a "masked stranger" who does not care about the wishes or safety of the woman. He ignores the woman's pleas and "invades her body". The abortion provider is by metaphor a rapist who gives his victim no choice.

Not only is the abortion procedure considered akin to rape, this segment of anti-abortion discourse also claims that the aftereffects of abortion on women are "identical" to emotions after being sexually assaulted,

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<sup>36</sup> Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. New York: Fawcett Books.

<sup>37</sup> (Vellacott, Vellacott condemns Saskatoon doctors for promoting a climate for less abortion)

<sup>38</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A List of Major Psychological Sequelae of Abortion)

<sup>39</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Rape, incest and abortion)

Research shows that after any abortion, it is common for women to experience guilt, depression, feelings of being "dirty," resentment of men, and lowered self-esteem. What is most significant is that these feelings are identical to what women typically feel after rape. Abortion, then, only adds to and accentuates the traumatic feelings associated with sexual assault. Rather than easing the psychological burdens of the sexual assault victim, abortion adds to them.<sup>40</sup>

Once again the explicit abortion-harms-women discourse is juxtaposed with the abortion as medical rape argument, i.e. because the pain caused by abortion is “identical” to the pain of sexual assault victims, abortion can never be a solution to sexual assault since it merely doubles the original pain.

In another example of marginalizing the differences between abortion and sexual assault, Alliance for Life Ontario observes that in “a sexual rape, a woman is robbed of her purity” whereas “in this medical rape [abortion] she is robbed of her maternity.”<sup>41</sup> Both sexual assault and abortion are argued to harm women, albeit with slightly different effect.

This portrayal of abortion as further victimizing sexual assault victims is used by anti-abortion rhetoric to deny any permissibility of abortion (be it moral, legal or ethical), even in cases where pregnancy has resulted from rape or incest. When the unplanned pregnancy of a sexual assault victim is the result of a violent and criminal act, some (more sympathetic) anti-abortion advocates consider abortion tolerable. However with the assertion that abortion would further violate sexual assault victims, anti-abortion discourse presents abortion as doubly wrong. By focusing on the detrimental effect abortion has on women, anti-abortion discourse can simultaneously argue the wrongness of abortion in any and all circumstances while maintaining sympathy for sexual assault victims. Mrozek states “To put it more bluntly: most pro-lifers believe abortion to be wrong because it ends a human life,” followed by the seductive ‘two wrongs don’t make a right’ logic of, “how does it help a rape victim to make her an accessory to this?”<sup>42</sup>

Alliance for Life Ontario also attempts to sustain this chain of inductive reasoning,

The welfare of the mother and child are never at odds, even in sexual assault cases. Both the mother and child are helped by preserving life, not by perpetuating violence. The reason most people reach the wrong conclusions about abortion in cases of rape and incest is that the actual experiences of sexual assault victims who became pregnant are routinely left out of the debate. Most people, including sexual assault victims who have never been pregnant, are therefore forming opinions based on prejudices and fears which are disconnected from reality.<sup>43</sup>

By linking the continuation of pregnancy (i.e. the well-being of the fetus) to the well-being of sexually abused woman, abortion is presented as harmful. Alliance for Life Ontario breathtakingly leaps to the conclusion that a discussion of whether or not abortion is permissible in cases of rape is hardly necessary. When “the actual experiences” of raped women are properly recognized, abortion as a pregnancy option for sexual assault victims will no longer be needed.

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<sup>40</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Rape, incest and abortion)

<sup>41</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Rape, incest and abortion)

<sup>42</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Palin and pro-life consistency)

<sup>43</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Rape, incest and abortion)

In conclusion, some commonalities between feminist discourse on sexual assault and anti-abortion discourse are notable. Ultimately divergence occurs when anti-abortion rhetoric regards abortion as “perpetuating violence” and further victimizing sexual assault victims. This parallel between sexual assault and abortion is used to invalidate abortion as a choice for sexual assault victims. Once again, a woman’s “real choices” do not include abortion.

### **3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMING**

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, a predominant criticism of the anti-abortion movement has been its anti-woman approach to the abortion debate. Anti-abortion advocates have consistently been accused of focusing solely on the fetus to the exclusion of the lived realities of women. Moreover, anti-abortion discourse is often alleged to present the relationship between pregnant woman and fetus as adversarial and incompatible.

Simultaneously feminist methodology has increasingly stressed the importance of incorporating women’s diverse realities into its discipline. Standpoint theory<sup>44</sup>, which emphasizes the value of personal experience, has surfaced as a crucial feminist epistemological approach. Feminist standpoint theory argues that an individual’s standpoint, meaning the location from which people view the world) affects how that individual experiences political reality. In other words, reality is seen as socially constructed and thus relational. Feminist theorist Marjorie Devault argues that “the research generated by academic feminism- involving a new and careful attention to women’s experiences- is beginning to “bring women in” to theorizing.”<sup>45</sup>

Although often charged with simplifying the socially constructed category of “woman”<sup>46</sup>, Catharine MacKinnon also affirms the opinion that woman’s experience is crucial to feminist theorizing in her analysis of the politics of pornography. MacKinnon argues the incorporation of women’s viewpoint into the pornography discussion is essential because it “is part of a larger project that attempts to account for gender inequality in the socially constructed relationship between power- the political - on the one hand and the knowledge of truth and reality - the epistemological - on the other.” Consequently MacKinnon asserts that her “feminist critique of pornography is politics, specifically politics from women’s point of view, meaning the standpoint of the subordination of women to men.”<sup>47</sup>

MacKinnon illustrates how a person’s standpoint affects their reality and how the systemic privileging of the male perspective has concrete political ramification. She writes,

For example, the candid description of Justice Stewart once offered of his obscenity standard, ‘I know it when I see it,’ becomes more revealing than it is usually understood to be, if taken as a statement that connect epistemology with power. If I ask, from the point of view of women’s experience, does he know what I know when I see what I see, I find that I doubt it, given what’s on the newsstands.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Dorothy Smith, Donna Haraway, Sarah Harding, Patricia Hill Collins

<sup>45</sup> Devault, M. (1990). Talking and Listening from Women’s Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis. *Social Problems*, 37(1), 96

<sup>46</sup> Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge. (53)

<sup>47</sup> MacKinnon, C. (1996). Not a Moral Issue. In K. Weisberg (Ed.), *Application of Feminist Legal Theory to Women’s Lives: Sex, Violence, Work and Reproduction* (37-58). Philadelphia: Temple University Press. (38)

<sup>48</sup> MacKinnon, C. (1996). Not a Moral Issue. In K. Weisberg (Ed.), *Application of Feminist Legal Theory to Women’s Lives: Sex, Violence, Work and Reproduction* (37-58). Philadelphia: Temple University Press. (38)

As such, feminist standpoint theory attempts to integrate women's lived reality into discourse. Ultimately "feminism does not begin with the premise that it is unpremiered. It does not aspire to persuade an unpriemered audience." Instead, the feminist projects attempts to "uncover and claim as valid the experience of women."<sup>49</sup>

Academic feminist research has been focused around the lived experiences of women. Moreover, the most common feminist charge against anti-abortionists has been that their activism ignores women and their experiences. In response to this accusation, and in line with their new pseudo-feminist argumentation, anti-abortion advocacy has begun to introduce women's experience into its discourse. For example, PWPL was started "in order to provide a voice for those *women* who are pro-life *because* they are pro-woman."<sup>50</sup> Founder Mrozek stresses the importance of including women into the abortion discussion,

An obstetrician I met several years ago told me that in his experience, 'women want an abortion like an animal in a trap wants to chew its leg off.' Making it easier and less painful to chew off a leg isn't how I want to make a difference. We need to talk about why women choose abortion, how that choice affects them and those close to them in the short- and long-term, and what we can do to help women, after they've had an abortion and especially before they make that choice.<sup>51</sup>

Instead of adopting the stereotypical anti-abortion argument that women are killing their unborn babies, Mrozek's approach is much more nuanced: women's voices need to be included in the anti-abortion discussion because "how that choice affects them" is a crucial aspect of being able to "help women" especially before they "make that [abortion] choice". Implicit in this statement is the assumption that once women voices are introduced into abortion discourse these voices will come to realize that abortion is not a viable choice.

Whereas previously the feminist, pro-abortion movement was considered to be representative of women's experiences, anti-abortion discourse is now claiming to be both the recorder and defender of women's "real" lived realities. In a press release posted on Toronto-Right-to-Life website, anti-abortion activist Natalie Hudson argues that, "You cannot argue with the lived experience of these women. For them, abortion is a physically painful, humiliating experience that has denied them motherhood and left them coping with long-term grief reactions."<sup>52</sup>

Like MacKinnon, Hudson is arguing that women's position in society (and with abortion) is a reliable and important site of analysis. The feminist argument that advocates the importance of women's experience is co-opted by the anti-abortion inclusion of women's stories. Hudson further appropriates the stereotypical feminist argument that abortion is stigmatized and thus is something women are forced to experience in solitude and silence. She states "society tends to shut down discussion about the after-math of abortion. People will talk about the ills of smoking or breast cancer, but no one dares mention the 'a-word'."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Mackinnon, C. (1989). *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (116)

<sup>50</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The story)

<sup>51</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Gaaaack! Huckabee calls abortion)

<sup>52</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

<sup>53</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

Hudson asserts that women should not have to undergo the abortion process in silence, a notion strikingly similar to the 1972 American feminist petition to the U.S. government of women who had abortions. The “We Had Abortions” petition, signed by several famous feminists (including Gloria Steinem and Billie Jean King) was a feminist attempt to de-stigmatize abortion (the “a word”). Both the petition and Hudson seek to take the abortion issue out of secrecy and move it into the public sphere.

This is where the similarity ends. The “We Had Abortions” petition was designed to promote the need to de-stigmatize and legalize abortion. The anti-abortion press release, on the other hand, highlights the negative effects of abortion and stresses the importance of “the numerous studies that have documented high levels of post traumatic stress disorder and other behavioural problems related to [abortion].”<sup>54</sup> As with the previous examples, the anti-abortion discourse has adopted a feminist paradigm but remodeled the argumentation to suit its objectives.

As part of the new woman-centric anti-abortion rhetoric, women’s stories, narratives and experiences are being infused into anti-abortion discourse, and their singular theme of the harm and regret caused by abortion is used as evidence against the viability of abortion as a pregnancy option. The woman’s voice that is inserted into anti-abortion discourse is consistently presented as monolithic: “I regret the day I decided to have an abortion and wish that I could take it back.”<sup>55</sup>

The anti-abortion view of the woman’s abortion experience is thus advancing one all-encompassing story; women regret their abortion because of the psychological, physical and emotional harm that it forces women to endure. For example, Signal Hill’s website posts the story of Josephine Woodgate who at 25 “had one of the UK’s earliest legal abortions. Today, 40 years after women were given the legal right to abortion, she remains haunted by the choice she made.” Woodgate’s personal testimonial is also posted on the website and reads, “Over the years, the regret I felt has never waned. Even now, I still catch myself wondering about the child I might have had, if only I had been given more information at the time.”<sup>56</sup> “Catching oneself wondering” is transformed into psychological and emotional torture.

The PWPL blog also posts a myriad of testimonials from women who regret their abortion. Newspaper articles, blogs and letters are referenced by PWPL in order to advance the singular representation of women as regretful of their abortions. Just one example is the story of Julie Desjardin who wrote this in a letter to PWPL:

I grew up in an evangelical family and consequently would have considered myself pro-life however, in my twenties, away from my faith and living in the UK, I found myself pregnant and afraid. What would not have been an option in another lifetime, suddenly became the only way out. With no counselling [sic], no support and certainly no information, I chose to have an abortion. Of all the decisions and events in my life that I would change if I could – including the death of my beloved mother – this is the one thing I would change above all others. Of all the things I’ve said or done that are worthy of regret or repentance, this is the one thing that can consistently drive me to my knees.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

<sup>55</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A tempest in a teacup)

<sup>56</sup> (SignalHill, Teen Sex)

<sup>57</sup> (ProWomanProLife, This is the one thing I would change above all)

For Julie Desjardin, her abortion decision was worse than the death of her mother (which, from a literal reading, apparently Desjardin could also change). Desjardin's story is just one of the many examples of the anti-abortion assertion of the reality that all women regret their abortions.

In fact, the entire English Canadian campaign, "Silent No More"<sup>58</sup>, is designed around using women's narratives to argue that abortion "is not freeing... is not liberating... [and] is the most humiliating experience of [women's] li[ves]."<sup>59</sup> The Silent No More Campaign "began in 2002 when co-founders Janet Morana and Georgette Forney decided that women suffering from abortion needed to be given the message that they are not alone and that help is available."<sup>60</sup> The campaign runs a series of outdoor and radio advertisements, but more importantly administers a website that offers its visitors putative facts, statistics, and resources about the different ways in which abortion harms women. The most important element of the website is the webpage titled "Testimonials" in which women (and some men) write about the ways in which abortion harmed them. The "Testimonials" page is primarily a confessional for those dealing with the aftereffects of abortion, providing a consistent message that abortion leads to "physical, emotional and spiritual pain."<sup>61</sup> The "Silent No More" Campaign is argued to be,

Painfully resonant many women today, whose regret over past abortions have led them to buck feminist orthodoxy on the issue. Although abortion-rights activists generally portray abortion as a routine medical procedure without moral import or lasting consequences, women in the Silent No More Campaign dispute that storyline with their own stories of post-abortion emotional trauma<sup>62</sup>

The campaign repeatedly "disputes" the "abortion-rights activists" portrayal of abortion with women's "own stories of post-abortion trauma". These anecdotes "show the prowoman face of the pro-life movement"<sup>63</sup> countering the feminist charge that anti-abortion rhetoric ignores women's lived realities. A PWPL blog post takes this new face one step further:

The feminist establishment has tended to dismiss such stories as evidence of patriarchal brainwashing. That explanation may comfort pro-choice feminists who see their ranks dwindling. Yet today's young women are questioning abortion not because they know too little, but because they know too much. They have paid the price for the modern feminist embrace of counterfeit liberation. Now they are standing up to demand the real thing-whether or not their elders approve.<sup>64</sup>

This passage not only refutes the feminist, pro-choice position on abortion, but now presents the anti-abortion stance as youthful rebellion against their feminist elders. Feminist abortion politics are depicted as old-school and outdated. The new anti-abortion movement, a movement focused around women, is presented as fresh and more profoundly invested in "the safety of women's health and safety."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> (SilentNoMore, About Us)

<sup>59</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

<sup>60</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

<sup>61</sup> (Silent No More, Testimonials)

<sup>62</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

<sup>63</sup> (Mrozek A. , Sweden, home of 'gender equity')

<sup>64</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A revolution in reverse)

<sup>65</sup> (Vellacott, Violence no more)

In this particular line of argument, anti-abortion advocates are dismissing feminism because there is “no proof that... women’s lives are improved”<sup>66</sup> by abortion. Testimonials of women who do not regret their abortions are ignored or presented as invalid.

A predominant means through which anti-abortion discourse renders some women’s stories invalid (while simultaneously validating other stories of women who regret their abortions) is through the medicalization of post-abortionive women. Abortion “experts” stress that “since many post-aborted women use repression as a coping mechanism, there may be a long period of denial before a woman seeks psychiatric care.”<sup>67</sup> Consequently, even when women claim to be healthy and unharmed by their abortion, this branch of anti-abortion discourse argues that they are nevertheless harmed by their abortion, because repression of regret is used as a way of amplifying negative experiences and invalidating positive experiences with abortion. This medical, and discursive, diagnosis serves as an easy and intuitive means of co-opting all women’s experiences into a singular anti-abortion argumentation.

Further, any negative feelings experienced by a woman at any point after an abortion are presented as being directly caused by that abortion. The Toronto-Right-to-Life website reports that repressed feeling, caused by abortion, “may cause psychosomatic illnesses and psychiatric or behavioral [problems] in other areas of her life. As a result, some counselors report that unacknowledged post-abortion distress is the causative factor in many of their female patients, even though their patients have come to them seeking therapy for seemingly unrelated problems.”<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, any negative experiences felt by women who have had abortion are discursively linked to the harms caused by abortion.

In addition to the discursive anti-abortion appropriation of the female abortion experience, general research problems are cited as the reason that only a small number of women reported post-abortion harm. Again, the Toronto-Right-to-Life website states,

Barnard's study identified a 19% rate of PTSD among women who had abortions three to five years previously. But in reality the actual rate is probably higher. Like most post-abortion studies, Barnard's study was handicapped by a fifty percent drop out rate. Clinical experience has demonstrated that the women least likely to cooperate in post-abortion research are those for whom the abortion caused the most psychological distress. Research has confirmed this insight, demonstrating that the women who refuse followup evaluation most closely match the demographic characteristics of the women who suffer the most post-abortion distress.<sup>69</sup>

Ignoring the actual study results, Toronto-Right-to-Life focuses only on the high drop-out rate, which was (rather unscientifically) imputed to be further confirmation of the abortion-harms-women argument.

The website also adds that “the emphasis on women experiencing relief [from their abortions] is misleading because most women reporting relief also report negative reactions”. The Toronto-Right-to-Life website goes on to

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<sup>66</sup> (Mrozek A. , Sweden, home of 'gender equity')

<sup>67</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A List of Major Psychological Sequelae of Abortion)

<sup>68</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A List of Major Psychological Sequelae of Abortion)

<sup>69</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A List of Major Psychological Sequelae of Abortion)

argue that “women are simply presented with this single work so women who feel relief that they survived unpleasant surgery, relief that they will no longer face their boyfriend’s badgering to have an abortion, relief that they are no longer having morning sickness, or relief from any number of other stresses, are all lumped into the same category, even though their experiences are different. Lumping all forms of relief together helps to makes it sound like most women are reporting that abortion has fundamentally improved their lives, but it’s a sloppy and misleading data variable.”<sup>70</sup> This level of disingenuousness in ignoring and discrediting survey data appears, in my research, fairly routine.

Summarizing, anti-abortion discourse is now professing to incorporate women’s voices, which is notable because the epistemological inclusion of women’s narratives is a classic feminist strategy. However when analyzed closely, anti-abortion use of the psychological concept of repression and the pointing out of research anomalies delegitimize some women experiences, while privileging other women’s anti-abortion voices. Ultimately the anti-abortion movement has adopted the use of elementary feminist vocabulary and methodology to purport to speak on behalf of all women.

#### **4. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

As was previously discussed in Chapter 4, the explicit abortion-harms-women argument is presently dominating English Canadian anti-abortion discourse. The highly repetitive argument that abortion causes psychological, physical and personal harm has become an anti-abortion staple. Indeed, as reviewed by this chapter, the explicit abortion-harms-women argument is often rooted in classic feminist concepts and language which have been manipulated to fit the anti-abortion purpose.

Basic feminist arguments revolving around women’s choices, rights and sexual assault are being appropriated by anti-abortion advocates, then modified and directly inserted into their discourse. Anti-abortion discourse is substituting selective women’s stories for hard data. These selective women’s experiences are being co-opted and presented as one monolithic voice that condemns abortion. From a strategic level, the new anti-abortion rhetoric is creative, shrewd and initially impressive. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, in my view these arguments represent women in constricted and inadequate ways.

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<sup>70</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Media Campaign)

## CHAPTER 6: ANTI-ABORTION NARRATIVES

The previous chapters have analyzed both the emergence of the predominant abortion-harms-women argument and the infusion of feminist language and concepts into larger English Canadian anti-abortion discourse. As I have hopefully demonstrated, the anti-abortion movement has embraced a new pro-woman position through a series of argumentation that seeks to discredit abortion's contribution to women's rights, health and choices while simultaneously arguing that abortion compromises women's physical, psychological and personal well-being. The consequence of the combination of the abortion-harms-women argument (as presented in Chapter 4) and the appropriation of feminist concepts (as presented in Chapter 5) is the formulation of specific narratives by anti-abortionists that serve to reinforce an anti-abortion message. The following chapter will examine the ways in which anti-abortion narratives construct and highlight certain characters within larger anti-abortion discourse.

### 1. THE ROLE OF A NARRATIVE

The analysis of explicit arguments made by anti-abortion discourse is undoubtedly important. The deconstruction of the newly dominant abortion-harms-women argument is crucial in analyzing anti-abortion discourse because its arguments hold the potential of persuading its receiver in the absence of scientific, economic or medical evidence. For example, the argument that abortion causes breast cancer may convince a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy that the risk of getting breast cancer outweighs the benefits of abortion. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the analysis of the implicit framing of concepts and values is equally important when examining the persuasiveness of discourse.

For instance, Lakoff argues that politics is as much about narratives as it is about worldview. Hence "how people conceptualize the world"<sup>1</sup> becomes a crucial realm of study. Furthermore, Drew Westen argues that the framing of a "narrative" or "story" by political discourse is a crucial lens through which people implicitly relate to discourse and ultimately develop their worldview. Westen explains that a narrative within political discourse consists of

A coherent story [that] has... a protagonist, a problem that sets up what will be the central plot or story line, obstacles that stand in the way, often a clash between the protagonists trying to solve the problem and those who stand in their way or fail to help, and a denouement, in which the problem is ultimately resolves... Most stories- and all that try to teach a lesson, as political stories do- have a moral. Many stories are complex with subplots and submorals. But in general, they follow a similar and recognizable structure that gives them their rhetorical power.<sup>2</sup>

Hence for Westen, a political narrative is similar to a typical childhood storybook. The story revolves around three main characters: the victim who needs to be rescued, the hero who rescues the victim, and the villain who harms the victim and stands in the way of the hero. Following this narrative structure the hero represents what the political

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<sup>1</sup> Lakoff, G. (1996). *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (3)

<sup>2</sup> Westen, D. (2007). *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of The Nation*. New York: Public Affairs. (146)

discourse stands for, and the villain represents what the discourse *cannot* stand for. Westen emphasizes that it is through the telling and retelling of such narratives that the discourse's implicit argumentation is made.

Anti-abortion discourse is no different. Anti-abortion advocates have explicitly framed their narratives around childhood storybook. For instance Andrea Mrozek blogs that “abortion providers are evil- Abortion providers are the wicked witch in a fairy tale, holding a bright, shiny apple... In short, [abortion] is a malicious lie, pushed at the cost of babies' lives and women's health—but it's attractive nonetheless, all in an anxious moment.”<sup>3</sup> Here Mrozek uses a classic childhood narrative to describe abortion providers as cold and calculating “witches” who take advantage of vulnerable women who are experiencing “an anxious moment”. Just like the wicked witch in children's fairytales, the abortionist is relegated to the category of villain.

This type of simple but effective narrative structure is consistent throughout the anti-abortion materials. Throughout anti-abortion rhetoric certain narratives and storylines are told and retold in order to implicitly argue one main point; abortion is wrong. To reinforce the wrongness of abortion, anti-abortion rhetoric constructs specific representation of the villain, the victim and the hero. Each category of representation implicitly works at emphasizing the detrimental effects of abortion. Although the characters in new anti-abortion narratives have shifted from the old anti-abortion discourse, the basis of the narrative remains the same: abortion is wrong. This chapter will now review the construction of each category of character and how it fits into larger anti-abortion narrative caricatures while tracking each category of character has shifted from previous anti-abortion discourse.

## **2. THE VILLAIN**

### **2.1 WOMEN AS VILLAINS**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the anti-abortion discourse of the 1980s presented the woman as the primary villain of the anti-abortion movement. Women were depicted as sexually promiscuous and as substantial threats to their “unborn children”. This older representation was epitomized by Canadian politician turned anti-abortion activist, Joe Borowski, who wrote in an open memo to the Manitoba legislature:

We are being asked to be accomplices in this medieval act of barbarism, forcing our doctors and nurses to commit murder... so a handful of cheap, third-rate tramps (and also some good women) can escape the consequences of their actions.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, past anti-abortion rhetoric presented the woman as the main villain of the anti-abortion storyline. The woman was portrayed as a criminal who was sexually irresponsible. Moreover her rights were considered incompatible with those of her fetus who was “trapped inside her through no fault of his or her own.”<sup>5</sup> As embodied in Borowski's comments, women's sexuality was often the target of anti-abortion discourse and more generally the woman was regarded as the enemy of the movement. Mass protests outside abortion clinics (like the protests staged by Randall

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<sup>3</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Celebrating selective abortions)

<sup>4</sup> Morton, F. (1992). *Morgentaler vs. Borowski: Abortion, the Charter and the Courts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. (66)

<sup>5</sup> (ProWomanProLife, About the strategy)

Terry's anti-abortion project "Operation Rescue") were designed to shame women, with picket signs pronouncing that abortion would turn them into murderers. Susan Faludi argued "to stake out the commanding position, to remake themselves into true 'activists', the anti-abortion men resorted to the verbal tactics pioneered by the New Right."<sup>6</sup>

However, as has been discussed in detail, this older description of anti-abortion discourse no longer applies to current anti-abortion activism. Contemporary anti-abortion advocates are not men who appeal to anti-woman sentiments through aggressive, right-wing and religious rhetoric. Instead the new face of anti-abortion activism is female; her discourse is compassionate, pro-woman, pseudo-feminist and sympathetic. As such, the predominant villain of anti-abortion rhetoric is no longer the "post-abortive woman".

This is not to say that the woman is never vilified. A woman's decision to abort is still often presented as selfish by anti-abortion advocates. In fact in 5.8% of the anti-abortion discourse reviewed and coded, women were the target of discursive attack (see appendix F). This negative representation of women and abortion is exemplified by a PWPL entry that responds to the story of "Julie". Julie, a Quebecois woman, was distressed after learning that her fetus would be born with a grave disability and chose abortion. Veronique Bergeron responds to Julie's distress by blogging, "That nagging feeling of distress, could it possibly be your conscience telling you that terminating a disabled life was likely a selfish decision based on your needs rather than compassion for the child?"<sup>7</sup>

Despite feeling distressed, Julie "remained certain that she made the right decision"<sup>8</sup> for her situation. However, according to Bergeron, Julie's distress has nothing to do with discovering the compromised state of her pregnancy. Instead, Bergeron insists that Julie feels distressed because her abortion decision was a "selfish decision based on [her own] needs rather than compassion."<sup>9</sup> The pro-woman front of the ProWomanProLife (PWPL) blog seemingly disappears when dealing with a woman who defends her abortion choice. Instead Julie is attacked as self-interested, unsympathetic and ultimately as villainous.

Although not the dominant anti-abortion narrative, the representation of women as selfish is nonetheless, present throughout the anti-abortion materials. Anti-abortion advocates typically argue that "almost all abortions performed in Canada are done because the pregnant woman chooses to end the pregnancy for personal reasons, not medical ones."<sup>10</sup> The discourse emphasizes that "medical necessity is rarely part of the decision"<sup>11</sup>. The repeated assertion that women are not choosing abortion for medical reasons but rather for superficial and selfish reasons serves to delegitimize abortion as a pregnancy option. It paints the woman doing the choosing as callous, uncaring and above all else selfish. A Rebecca Walberg's blog typifies the selfish woman character,

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<sup>6</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books (414)

<sup>7</sup> (ProWomanProLife, How can it be right if it feels so wrong)

<sup>8</sup> (ProWomanProLife, How can it be right if it feels so wrong)

<sup>9</sup> (ProWomanProLife, How can it be right if it feels so wrong)

<sup>10</sup> (LifeCanada, Defunding Abortion)

<sup>11</sup> (LifeCanada, Defunding Abortion)

I truly think we need to emphasize this: the vast majority of aborted babies are terminated because they are inconvenient. Not to save the health of the mother, not because they were conceived in rape, not because they are suffering from conditions that will result in their death anyway. The great majority of babies aborted would be joyfully borne by other women, or by the very same woman a year or two down the road, or in a different relationship.<sup>12</sup>

By presenting the reasons women abort as superficial, Walberg more than implies that abortion is an invalid choice. She further contrasts the woman who has an abortion with the “other woman” who would “joyfully” give birth. This act distinguishes the good woman (the hero) who gives birth, from the selfish woman (the villain) who, for shallow reasons, has an abortion. This narrative means that women who have abortions for non-medical reasons cannot be good or compassionate because they can only be villains.

Andrea Mrozek also adds to the anti-abortion illustration of the selfish woman in a blog she entitles “Running Low in the Sympathy Department”. In this blog, Mrozek responds to another (pro-abortion) blogger who, despite having mixed emotions, ultimately defends her abortion decision. Mrozek writes,

If you claim to want to do the right thing, then just do it. Now I was raised by tough and courageous parents, who moved across the ocean to escape an immoral regime. Maybe that's why I find I'm often short on the sympathy file. If you claim to want to do the right thing, then just do it. Don't write long meandering tracts on how you wanted to but couldn't possibly be brave.... You know what I'm sorry about? (Because I'm not feeling sympathy for her right now, to be sure.) I'm sorry a person can be so spineless as to kill her child in favour of a Masters degree. And then claim ‘it was the right thing to do’ to the nodding affirmation of New York Times types.<sup>13</sup>

An impatient Mrozek presents abortion as a selfish option and the woman as a “spineless” villain. Moreover, by equating a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy to her parents who “moved across the ocean to escape an immoral regime” the blog contains an element of self-righteousness. The equation also emphasizes the self-centeredness of the woman and implies that facing an unplanned pregnancy is trivial when compared to facing real social injustice. Consequently, according to Mrozek, women should “be brave” and “just do” the right thing. The trivialization of this post-abortion woman and the contempt with which Mrozek addresses her is very much reminiscent of the 1980s anti-abortion depiction of women as villains.

Although contemporary anti-abortion discourse tried its best to not present women as criminals, the overtones of the old anti-abortion representations of women as villains still clearly persist. Albeit on a much smaller scale, women who have or consider abortions continue to be painted in a negative light by anti-abortion activists. However, as will be argued below, women are no longer presented as the main villains of anti-abortion discourse.

## 2.2 PRO-ABORTION SOCIETY

In the Mrozek blog discussed above (“Running Low in the Sympathy Department”) Mrozek represents women as “spineless” villains. However what is notable is that Mrozek simultaneously blames the “nodding affirmation of New York Times types”. Although the decision to abort a pregnancy is still argued to be a selfish decision, Mrozek

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<sup>12</sup> (ProWomanProLife , The debate rages on)

<sup>13</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Running low in the sympathy department)

implies its origins are societal. This shift in anti-abortion blame is symbolic of a larger trend within contemporary anti-abortion discourse. Whereas previously women were presented as the primary villains within anti-abortion narratives, now pro-abortion society is being charged with contributing to a wider pro-abortion culture. Ultimately there has been a shift away from vilifying women as the main antagonist.

In fact anti-abortion rhetoric is increasingly arguing that the groundwork for women's "pro-Me" attitude comes from a pervasive, pro-abortion *societal* mentality. In 13.3% of cases anti-abortion advocates blame a pro-abortion society for the state of Canada "abortion regime" (see appendix F). For instance, blogger Veronique Bergeron argues that as a society we are "not really pro-choice, we are pro-Me. Me support your choice to whatever as long as it doesn't affect Me. That's why Me supports abortion."<sup>14</sup> Bergeron's statement ultimately blames a selfish society for the "pro-Me" mentality that leads women to the selfish abortion decision. Despite on occasion presenting women as selfish villains, anti-abortion discourse more usually insists that women are selfish because pro-abortion *society* has conditioned them to be selfish.

Mrozek outlines this revised model and faults contemporary society's for current pro-abortion thinking. She blogs that,

[Pro-abortion] thinking comes down to this—that women must be able to do whatever they want, no matter what. This involves some fairly anti-woman thinking—the notion that women simply can't do well in life if they bear children in 'unwanted' moments. This magic women-trump-all formula is everywhere.<sup>15</sup>

Mrozek's blog presents three somewhat contradictory arguments: (1) pro-abortion means that women should be "able to do whatever they want", (2) this pro-abortion belief is "anti-woman", and (3) this anti-woman belief is "everywhere". Consequently, despite presenting abortion as a selfish decision (and thus the woman who chooses abortion as selfish) she places the blame on society's anti-woman "woman-trump-all" mentality.

The representation of a pro-abortion society as contributing to a pro-abortion culture has two important implications for contemporary anti-abortion advocacy. It allows anti-abortion discourse to continue to present abortion as a selfish choice while simultaneously maintaining a sympathetic approach to women. Thus, while women are considered selfish for choosing abortion, they do so because they are socialized to be selfish. Second, it opens up a discursive space to introduce the primary villains of the new anti-abortion story: the unsupportive male partner, the feminist villain and the abortion provider. Ultimately, for anti-abortion discourse, it is men, the feminist villain and the abortion provider that are the adversaries in a pro-abortion society.

### 2.3 MEN AS COERCERS

Often it is men that are accused of contributing to a pro-abortion culture. To date, a common anti-abortion representation of the male subject is that he coerces women into unwanted abortions. Anti-abortion activists argue that

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<sup>14</sup> (ProWomanProLife , What's the legal terminology for that)

<sup>15</sup> (ProWomanProLife , When pro-choicers do pro-life)

“women often state that it was their male partner who decided on the abortion.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover anti-abortion discourse argues that “many women who have abortion feel coerced or pressured to do so by their boyfriends.”<sup>17</sup>

In fact, male coercers are the primary target of anti-abortion MP Rod Bruinooge’s Bill C-510. Bruinooge’s bill (commonly referred to as “Roxanne’s Law”) would specifically criminalize any man who “coerces a female to procure or attempt to procure an abortion for herself.”<sup>18</sup> Named after Roxanne Fernando (a woman who was killed by her abusive boyfriend for refusing an abortion) the bill’s stated intention is to prevent other women from suffering the same fate as Ms. Fernando. This story of male coercion and violence related to abortion has become a popular image within anti-abortion discourse. Consequently, when placed in direct relation with women, men are often depicted as coercive villains.

Another example of the villainous man comes in the form of a defense of Bill C-484. The “Unborn Victims Act” is a Canadian bill which would introduce additional criminal charges “in the event that an unborn child is injured or killed during an attack on its pregnant mother.”<sup>19</sup> ). MP Ken Epp argues,

the man should not have power over her [the woman’s] body. Usually, not always, the attacker is a man. The man is saying to the victim, ‘You want to have your baby? I am sorry, I’m going to prevent that’. We have several cases where the woman made that choice, was attacked, lost her child and the woman survived. Women are not getting justice.<sup>20</sup>

In Epp’s narrative, pregnant women are victimized by villainous men. In this anti-abortion storyline, it is men (not women) who are presented as the main threat to “the unborn”.

In both the context of Bill C-484 and Bill C-510 men are presented as coercive villains. They are discursively regarded as a threat to pregnant women, “unborn children” and are charged with contributing to a larger societal pro-abortion sentiment.

## 2.4 THE FEMINIST VILLAIN

As seen above, the woman who chooses abortion is no longer presented as the predominant villain of the anti-abortion story. Another type of woman has taken her place. Feminism, and the women that represent it, are now charged with having “betrayed an entire generation of women.”<sup>21</sup> In 10.9% of anti-abortion discourse analyzed the feminist is depicted as the villain within anti-abortion narratives (see appendix F).

The anti-abortion characterization of Joyce Arthur, coordinator of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, is representative of how anti-abortion discourse treats the feminist villain. A letter posted on the Vellacott website, written by the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG), refers to Joyce Arthur as

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<sup>16</sup> (LifeCanada, Time for a fresh look at the medical and psychological risks of abortion on women)

<sup>17</sup> (AllianceForLifeOntario, Did you know?)

<sup>18</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne’s Law)

<sup>19</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, June 4, 2008, line 1555.

<sup>20</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, March 3, 2008, line 1155.

<sup>21</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Alice Walker’s daughter writes)

“gross[ly] ignoran[t] of the facts about medical abortions, especially in resource poor nations whose medical system is not equipped to deal with the known complications.”<sup>22</sup>

The PWPL blog joins the AAPLOG in undermining Arthur’s intelligence and accuses her of hypocrisy. In response to Joyce’s argument that Bill C-484 (the “Unborn Victims of Crime Act”) conflicts with existing Canadian laws that maintain the non-personhood of the fetus Mrozek writes,

Joyce Arthur fears, more than usual, that the eternal hypocrisy of our system will be exposed. (This system, which cares for infants on one floor of a hospital and aborts them on another.) But either this is a game of choice, or it's not. Joyce has two choices then: To support women's choices, or not. Arbitrary? Yes. But groups like hers made the rules. Now they ought to play by them.<sup>23</sup>

Mrozek implies that by denying the personhood of the fetus, Arthur is not supporting women’s choices (specifically not supporting women’s choice to give birth). Initially it seems that Mrozek’s argument is yet another example of anti-abortion discourse’s appropriation of the concept of *choice* (as was observed in the previous chapter). However what is new and notable with this specific blog is the contempt with which Mrozek addresses Arthur. According to Mrozek, feminists like Arthur are to blame for the “damage” *they* have done to women,

It's those 1960s feminists who are responsible for abortion on demand, claiming it is good for women... those 1960s feminists have done a lot of damage; damage we must all work to undo. I will say this for them: They were very successful: Just look at how ‘the right to choose’ is accepted dogma. Time to re-evaluate, indeed.<sup>24</sup>

Because anti-abortion discourse argues that abortion harms women, and feminists advocate for abortion access, Mrozek holds feminists accountable for the “damage” that abortion does to women. However, by portraying feminists as “damaging” women, a contradiction arises. While anti-abortion advocates are, on the one hand, appropriating feminist language and concepts, on the other hand, and somewhat ironically they are treating feminism and feminists with contempt and disdain. To deal with this paradox, anti-abortion advocates have separated their own pseudo-feminism from the feminist villain. For example, Zaleski blogs,

There is a stigma attached to being pro-woman. Recently, I chatted with a man who was taken aback when I referred to myself as a feminist. The only self-proclaimed feminist he'd ever met was yelling, “We won't go back!” and striking him in the head with a hanger. I assured him I was not that sort of feminist.<sup>25</sup>

In this blog Zaleski accomplishes two important tasks. To begin, she presents the feminist villain as “yelling” and violent (i.e. the feminist villain strikes men over the head with hangers). Secondly, she separates herself from “that sort of feminist”. Her feminism is implied to be softer and less extreme. Accordingly, when contrasted with the feminist villain, Zaleski’s brand of anti-abortion feminism becomes the reasonable position.

Whereas Zaleski remains a pseudo-feminist, Mrozek detaches herself from the label all together. Mrozek writes, “the words ‘I’m proud to be a feminist’ have never - and will never pass my lips. Because they way feminism

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<sup>22</sup> (Vellacott, AAPLOG responds to Joyce Arthur)

<sup>23</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Joyce's choice on bill c-484)

<sup>24</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A saturday morning contemplation)

<sup>25</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A saturday morning contemplation)

looks to me, I'd rather, um, be a chauvinist.”<sup>26</sup> For Mrozek (who from my observations has no problem using feminist vocabulary to suit her anti-abortion purposes) any label would be better than the label of the pro-abortion feminist villain. Mrozek is implying that since feminists advocate abortion access, and abortion “harms women”, one would be better off to be a chauvinist than a feminist.

While some women (i.e. those who choose abortion) are no longer the main targets of anti-abortion discourse, others (the feminist villain) are portrayed as ignorant and unreasonable. Moreover because of the feminist's pro-abortion position, the feminist is held accountable for the harm that women experience as a result of abortion. As such, feminists are relegated to the category of villain when it comes to anti-abortion story-telling.

## 2.5 THE ABORTION PROVIDER

The feminist villain shares the anti-abortion category of villain with the abortion provider. By and large the abortion provider is presented as the main enemy of the anti-abortion movement. The characterization of abortion providers as “evil”<sup>27</sup>, “callous”<sup>28</sup>, and “misogynistic”<sup>29</sup> has become a commodity anti-abortion discourse. In 15.6% of coded discourse abortion providers are characterized as uncompassionate, anti-woman and a threat to pregnant women everywhere. Ultimately, the abortion provider is the ultimate transgressor (see appendix F).

Villainous abortion providers are argued to be biased and uncompassionate, knowingly harming women by forcing them into unwanted abortions. In a blog entitled “When you work at an abortion clinic”, Mrozek epitomizes this representation of the depraved abortion provider by arguing that medical professionals who work at abortion clinics are,

... the furthest removed from being ‘unbiased’ that you could possibly be. The simple fact that you work in an abortion clinic means you don't see anything at all wrong with women killing their unborn children. In fact, you likely view it as ‘compassionate’—again, not unbiased at all. They are encouraging women to be completely distant from their own child, from their own bodies in which the child is living so that they can experience a short-term relief from what could be a bigger, broader problem.<sup>30</sup>

While portraying women as victims who are void of agency, Mrozek simultaneously portrays abortion providers as cajoling women into abortion. Because abortion providers present abortion as a pregnancy option, Mrozek accuses them of being uncompassionate and biased. Further, Mrozek blames abortion clinics of encouraging women to “be completely distant from their own child” so they can experience superficial “short term relief”.

Mrozek's blog typifies the representation of abortion providers as coercers. Pro-abortion health care professionals are illustrated as abortion-pushers, promoting abortion as the only pregnancy option to any and all pregnant woman. Whilst the old anti-abortion discourse considered the woman as a threat to her fetus, in the emerging

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<sup>26</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A Saturday morning contemplation)

<sup>27</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Choice pushers)

<sup>28</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A callous sort of Canada)

<sup>29</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A callous sort of Canada)

<sup>30</sup> (ProWomanProLife, When you work in an abortion clinic)

discourse the abortion provider has replaced the woman and has become a threat to all women's pregnancies. In fact, health care professionals who work in abortion clinics are regarded as the main culprits behind the coercion of women into unwanted abortions (coercion which is argued to occur "in almost every case"<sup>31</sup> of abortion). Mrozek blogs,

... the extermination of the powerful by the powerless [which] begins with conniving and devious so-called supporters of women's rights- those who lie about what abortion is and then convince everyone that access to abortion is a right... They meet women in their personal deserts and offer a refreshing drink of cyanide. Only call it Sprite and add ice and one of those fun umbrellas.<sup>32</sup>

Mrozek takes her previous analogy of abortion providers as "wicked witches" one step further through a convoluted metaphor. Mrozek parallels abortion with "cyanide" and charges abortion providers with offering women "a refreshing drink of cyanide" while "calling it sprite". This narrative implies that abortion providers are poisoning women by offering abortion, and explicitly represents abortion providers as "conniving", "devious" and "liars". This anti-abortion imagery clearly paints abortion providers as evil-doers and, in contrast, pregnant women as victims.

As evidence of the villainous nature of abortion providers, the PWPL blog offers personal testimonials that highlight the abortion provider's "devious and coercive" ways. Tanya Zaleski recounts the story of punk rocker Courtney Love, who was struggling with a heroine addiction when she discovered her pregnancy. The blog continues,

... the doctor tried to give clinical advice, suggesting to Courtney [Love] that it was not a great idea to have a baby while dealing with [heroin] addiction. Courtney, who was only six weeks pregnant, went into a confrontational mode, saying: 'Is that a medical fact, or is that just your opinion? I want to see it in a medical book'... He sheepishly acknowledged that at this early stage of pregnancy a woman could discontinue heroin use with no physical or psychological damage to the fetus. Courtney looked triumphant as she towered over the doctor seated at his desk. Courtney stopped taking heroin and daughter Frances Bean was born in perfect health later that year. How often do medical professionals offer abortion up as the quick-fix? We can be sure it didn't only ever happen to Courtney Love.<sup>33</sup>

Zaleski presents Courtney Love's narrative as just one of many occurrences where women are coerced into abortion by abortion providers. Notwithstanding that Love did not actually have an abortion; Zaleski presents her story as proof that pro-abortion doctors force women into unwanted abortions. She then implies that medical professionals often "offer abortion up as the quick-fix". What is also noteworthy about Zaleski's blog is the incorporation of pop-culture into anti-abortion discourse. Whereas older anti-abortion discourse revolved around a religious and traditional value-set, this contemporary blog utilizes Courtney Love (a somewhat infamous pop-star icon) within the anti-abortion narrative. While almost certainly disagreeing with Love's overall lifestyle, Zaleski is able to highlight the specific parts of the pop-stars life that fit perfectly into a larger anti-abortion narrative.

In a Canadian context, Dr. Henry Morgentaler is one of the most popular targets of attack for anti-abortion discourse. As is the case with the general category of abortion provider, Morgentaler is consistently accused of coercing women into abortion. Mrozek writes "forced on knifepoint? No, I'm sure he didn't do that. But turn a blind

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<sup>31</sup> (SignalHill, What to expect)

<sup>32</sup> (ProWomanProLife, The uneasy conscience of feminism,)

<sup>33</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Medical opinionist to the stars)

eye to a woman's insecurity, indecision, anxiety and pain? We know for a fact he did."<sup>34</sup> Morgentaler's disdain and disregard for a woman's "pain" and her choices is presented Mrozek as "a fact".

In another Morgentaler-related blog, Mrozek again summarily presents Dr. Morgentaler (and internationally recognized abortion advocate and Order of Canada recipient) as selfish and sexist. Se writes,

I get the feeling Dr. Morgentaler has a selective respect for the rights of others. The rights of women who agree with his views are paramount. The rights of unborn children are non-existent. The beliefs of women who disagree with him are to be dismissed; any religion which advocates against his views is to be disregarded; the qualms of those Canadians appalled at the carnage that has flowed from his work are to be ignored. I suspect — and I'm just guessing — that what's important to Dr. Morgentaler is his beliefs alone. Others' beliefs are inconsequential. Maybe this callousness is what lets him so easily take life away from so many.... Show me an abortionist and I'll show you a misogynist.<sup>35</sup>

In this blog, Mrozek attempts to break the strong discursive connection between Henry Morgentaler and women's rights by arguing that Morgentaler dismisses "women who disagree with him". She presents the abortion provider (and more generally the whole category of abortion provider) as callous and disrespectful. Moreover Mrozek implies that this "callousness" makes Dr. Morgentaler a misogynist. She then widens her claim and concludes that all abortionists are in fact misogynists.

Ultimately then Henry Morgentaler and all abortion providers have become the main villain within anti-abortion story-telling. By speaking about the general category of abortion provider, as well as targeting individual pro-abortion doctors, anti-abortion discourse singularly represents pro-abortion medical professionals as callous, uncompassionate and as coercers.

### **3. VICTIMS**

Anti-abortion discourse, both past and contemporary, present the fetus as a principal victim of abortion. An adherence to the presentation of the fetus as fully human remains a key component of all anti-abortion discourse. Throughout the telling of anti-abortion stories, the fetus is only referred to as the "unborn", "the baby", or the "preborn" so as to stress the personhood of the fetus. Ever thus, at the heart of anti-abortion argument is the notion that "the fetus is deserving of our protection."<sup>36</sup>

However, in line with the rise of the abortion-harms-women argument to discursive dominance, the woman has now been added as a victim of abortion. Abortion is argued to harm women for numerous reasons. As reviewed in detail in Chapter 4, anti-abortion discourse explicitly argues that women are psychologically, physically and personally harmed by abortion. Abortion is said to increase mental illness, breast cancer, and maternal mortality and to compromise women's ability to mother in the future. Women's personal lives are alleged to be harmed by abortion, divorces, depression, personal trauma and several other post-traumatic effects. As part of this explicit abortion-harms-

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<sup>34</sup> (ProWomanProLife, , Morgentaler never forced a woman to have an abortion)

<sup>35</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A callous sort of Canada)

<sup>36</sup> (ProWomanProLife, 2007)

women argument, women are being implicitly represented as coerced, traumatized and forever affected victims of abortion.

### 3.1 WOMEN AS COERCED VICTIMS

Although the anti-abortion representation of the woman as “selfish” is noteworthy, it is no longer the dominant representation of women deployed by anti-abortion narrative. Instead the dominant representation of women is that they are *coerced* victims of abortion. In fact, 26.5% of anti-abortion cases argue that women are coerced (or at the very least misinformed) in the abortion decision (see appendix F).

In its ‘pro-woman’ narrative anti-abortion discourse holds that women are not the ones choosing abortion for themselves. In this regard it was observed that anti-abortion discourse argues that 51%<sup>37</sup> to 64%<sup>38</sup> of women “do not feel free in making their [abortion] decision but felt pressured by others,”<sup>39</sup> i.e. presenting the majority of women are effectively coerced into abortion.

This representation is a far departure from Joe Borowski’s charge that “third rate tramps” were forcing “doctors and nurses” to commit “medieval acts of barbarism”. Instead Borowski’s anti-abortion theory has been flipped on its head. In line with the new pro-woman anti-abortion approach, anti-abortion advocates now argue that it is doctors, nurses and spouses that are the villains who coerce women into choosing abortion. Activists claim that women do not choose abortion freely but instead “in almost every case, a woman chooses abortion to accommodate the wishes of others who do not welcome her child.”<sup>40</sup> Consequently, the woman is now widely represented as the vulnerable victim of abortion.

The shift toward vilifying pro-abortion society, abortion providers and unsupportive partners has opened up discursive space for women to be presented as victims of abortion. Instead of blaming the woman who chooses abortion, by and large anti-abortion discourse now approach her situation with compassion and patience. Subsequently anti-abortion activists become advocates for “vulnerable pregnant women”. Referring to the Ontario ban on cell phone use while driving, Tanya Zaleski blogs,

If cell phone use while driving warrants three months of leeway, how much leeway are we to offer women who have been raised and indoctrinated to believe abortion is their human right; abortion is the most valid ‘choice’; abortion is safe; abortion evacuates a blob of tissue; abortion is necessary; abortion goes hand in hand with the liberation of women?<sup>41</sup>

Zaleski’s entry makes allowances for women who choose abortion because they have been “indoctrinated” to believe abortion is their human right, and thus should be afforded some “leeway” and compassion. While maintaining the error

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<sup>37</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The Trauma of Abortion)

<sup>38</sup> (ProWomanProLife, When logic replaces sanctity of life)

<sup>39</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The Trauma of Abortion)

<sup>40</sup> (SignalHill, What to expect)

<sup>41</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Hypocrite and proud of it)

of choosing abortion, Zaleski's blog tolerantly characterizes women as victims of a pro-abortion society, instead of criminals who are killing their unborn babies.

Within this anti-abortion narrative the woman is represented as having no choice or agency. Alliance for Life Ontario argues that "many women faced with an unwanted pregnancy may view abortion as their only solution."<sup>42</sup> Instead of blaming the woman for choosing abortion, the website maintains that "statistics indicate that women who have had abortions were encouraged to do so by boyfriends or parents. Often women... aren't aware of the medical and psycho-social ramifications of abortion"<sup>43</sup>

A similar representation is also employed by Toronto-Right-to-Life which positions itself as defenders of powerless women. Its website states that "many are forced into an unwanted abortion by husbands, boyfriends, parents, or others. If the woman has repeatedly been a victim of domineering abuse, such an unwanted abortion may be perceived as the ultimate violation in a life characterized by abuse."<sup>44</sup> This statement presents "post-abortive women" as victims in much the same way as victims of domestic abuse are portrayed. Both are in need of protection and both are vulnerable to coercion.

In a similar vein, anti-abortion discourse further argues that coercion is not always apparent, which conveniently explains why "abortion coercion" is habitually "under-reported". Tanya Zaleski argues that "coercion can be subtle. If a woman is scared her mate will leave her unless she has an abortion, she's being coerced. If a woman is made to feel guilty, as though she's choosing an unborn baby over the man she's currently with, she's being coerced."<sup>45</sup> According to Zaleski, not only does coercion work in subtle and undetectable ways, it is moreover a "silent suffering". She argues that admitting "we were coerced is admitting weakness."<sup>46</sup> Consequently this branch of anti-abortion discourse maintains that even when coercion is not overt, it is, nevertheless, present. Her reasoning echoes the feminist claim that high levels of sexual assault go unreported.

It is because women are "silently suffering" from coerced abortions that MP Rod Bruinooge has tabled a private member's bill that seeks to criminalize the coercion of women into unwanted abortions. Bill C-510, (Roxanne's Law), is described as a bill that will "empower pregnant women to stand up against abortion coercion."<sup>47</sup> The Roxanne's Law website argues:

This bill empowers vulnerable women by giving them the legal recourse to press charges when they feel they are being coerced into an unwanted abortion, potentially averting escalation into violence and even murder. As well, we can hope that Canadians will become educated and realize it is wrong to coerce a woman into an abortion against her will.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The Trauma of Abortion)

<sup>43</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, The Trauma of Abortion)

<sup>44</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A List of Major Psychological Sequelae of Abortion)

<sup>45</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Conversation with the previous generation,)

<sup>46</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Conversation with the previous generation,) (Bruinooge, Roxanne's story)

<sup>47</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne's story)

<sup>48</sup> (Bruinooge, FAQs)

If passed in Parliament, Roxanne's Law (currently awaiting second reading) would criminalize anyone who "coerces a female to procure or attempt to procure an abortion for herself."<sup>49</sup> As previously discussed, Bill C-510 is named after Roxanne Fernando, "a Winnipeg woman whose boyfriend attempted to coerce her to abort their unborn child and subsequently murdered her for refusing to do so."<sup>50</sup> This tragic story of domestic assault and violence against a woman at the hand of her partner has been co-opted by Rod Bruinooge and other anti-abortion activists to present Fernando as an unknowing martyr in the new fight against abortion. The motivation (according to Bruinooge) behind Bill C-510 is described below,

Whereas many pregnant women have been coerced to have an abortion and have suffered grievous physical, emotional and psychological harm as a result;  
Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada recognized in *Dobson v. Dobson* that 'pregnancy represents not only the hope of future generations but also the continuation of the species. It is difficult to imagine a human condition that is more important to society';  
And whereas Parliament wishes to ensure pregnant women are able to continue pregnancy free of coercion.<sup>51</sup>

Bruinooge's justification for Roxanne's Law is two-fold. To begin, he states that "many women have been coerced into abortions" and have suffered accordingly. Secondly, through an anti-abortion cooptation of *Dobson v. Dobson*, Bruinooge states pregnancy is "a human condition that is... important to society" since the "continuation of the species" is reliant on pregnancy. As such, a pregnant woman should be protected because society has a stake in her pregnancy. Moreover in a Parliamentary intervention, Bruinooge affirms that "research shows that women are at greater risk of violence when they are pregnant."<sup>52</sup> Thus he claims that "this bill would protect vulnerable pregnant women."<sup>53</sup> Ultimately Bill C-510 is justified because (1) society has a stake in pregnancy and (2) pregnant women are especially "vulnerable" and often "coerced into abortion".

Roxanne's Law is noteworthy because all sides of the abortion debate concur that what happened to Roxanne Fernando was horrific and fundamentally ignored Fernando's choices and rights. Moreover, pro-abortion advocates would also agree that women like Roxanne Fernando should be free from coercion. Where the two sides of the abortion debate diverge is in their belief about which choices and which women should be protected by the law. For the pro-abortion side, women's protected choices should include abortion. Further, feminists would argue that all women, pregnant or not, deserve to be protected from coercion and violence. However for anti-abortion activists including Rod Bruinooge, only "vulnerable" (meaning pregnant) women, like Roxanne Fernando, deserve protection from coercion and violence. Thus, women who face coercion for reasons other than abortion are not represented by Bruinooge's Bill C-510. From my observations, Bill C-510 is not really about "protecting *women*" from male violence but more about protecting the fetus from abortion.

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<sup>49</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne's Law)

<sup>50</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne's Law)

<sup>51</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne's Law)

<sup>52</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, May 29, 2006, line 1510.

<sup>53</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, April 13, 2010, line 5151.

Roxanne's Law is also significant because it is the first the mainstream incorporation of the explicit abortion-harms-women argument into the realm of formal politics. As was reviewed in Chapter 4, within the sphere of formal politics, the explicit abortion-harms-women argument is not as pervasive as it is with anti-abortion bloggers and organizations. However, the representation of women as coerced victims is substantially more pervasive amongst English Canadian politicians than in any other anti-abortion medium. In 49.6% of all the political discourse reviewed, women are presented as either coerced or as victims of abortion. This is remarkable when compared to the 13.7% of blogs or the mere 3% of anti-abortion organization's materials that represent women as coerced victims.

The potential reasons for this considerable disparity are two fold. Firstly, the topic of "coercion" saturated the analyzed period of Parliamentary debate on abortion coercion since Roxanne's Law was introduced in April 2010. Second, since politicians are less able to explicitly argue against abortion in Parliament (i.e. there is no current bill that explicitly seeks to criminalize abortion), anti-abortion MPs instead implicitly argue against abortion by representing post-abortive women as having been coerced. As such, the pervasiveness of the coerced woman in politician's anti-abortion discourse can be seen as representative of its incorporation of the abortion-harms-women argument (i.e. women are harmed by abortion because they are coerced into abortion). The use of the implicit "coerced victims" argument allows politicians to discuss abortion and bring forward legislation without having to directly advance the "abortion-harms-women" argument in formal politics.

On balance then, anti-abortion discourse only represents and advocates for women who do not choose abortion. Pregnant women who are "coerced" into abortion are represented as victims and as deserving of legal protection. On the other hand, non-pregnant women or women who choose abortion are rarely represented favorably by anti-abortion discourse at all. This anti-abortion representation of women as victims is nicely summarized by a Press Release posted on MP Maurice Vellacott's official website. Vellacott asserts,

The current abortion regime is also conducive to abuse. Aborted women tell stories of being badgered, harassed and coerced into getting their abortion by boyfriends, partners, parents, employers, or other unsupportive circumstances. Abortion has also been used to cover up the sexual abuse of girls who were minors. Pro-life feminists have also come to see abortion as part of a male agenda to have women more sexually available. With widespread abortion access, the male partner also has come to think that he can blame the woman if she chooses not to have an abortion after an unplanned pregnancy.<sup>54</sup>

Vellacott's statements represent the general anti-abortion narrative of women as victims of abortion. Women are no longer positioned as the enemy of anti-abortion discourse but instead are portrayed as forced into and harmed by abortion. Ultimately, unsupportive boyfriends, partners, parents and employers have become the anti-abortionist's new antagonist of choice.

### 3.2 MEN AS THE UNSEEN VICTIMS OF ABORTION

Although current anti-abortion discourse is most often centered on the female experience with coerced abortions, men are also occasionally represented as victims in anti-abortion materials, surprising (and to some

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<sup>54</sup> (Vellacott, Vellacott condemns Saskatoon doctors for promoting a climate for less abortion)

confusion) given that men are also considered villains within other anti-abortion narratives. Not surprisingly then when the male subject is discussed in isolation from the woman, a contradictory representation of men often arises.

To begin, similar to their female counterpart, men are argued to be harmed and victimized by abortion. When the man is not coercing his partner into an unwanted abortion, he is “suffer[ing] in silence because [he] is confused about [his] feelings, trying to put up a strong front, and ignored by society.”<sup>55</sup> This bifurcation of anti-abortion polemics maintains that “abortion affects men, too.”<sup>56</sup> One woman cited on the PWPL blog writes that her boyfriend “had to be strong for me, but no one was taking care of him.”<sup>57</sup>

As such, this anti-abortion target marketing appeals to men who are suffering (or may suffer) from abortion. Both the Alliance for Life Ontario and Signal Hill websites have entire web pages dedicated to counseling and comforting men who have been adversely affected by their partners’ abortion. The web pages argue that since abortion has largely been framed as a woman’s issue, men have been forced to suffer the consequences of their partner’s abortion in silence. Alliance for Life Ontario argues that,

Not far in the background were their partners also suffering the hurt. Many feminists, both male and female, see abortion solely as a woman's issue. It's her body, therefore, it's her choice. Unfortunately, this cut-and-dry approach fails to take into consideration that all people have emotions, both sexes. This simple answer to a complex issue does nothing to resolve the confusing feelings women and men experience when faced with the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy.<sup>58</sup>

This passage charges feminists with ignoring the male experience with abortion, as well as failing “to take into consideration that all people have emotions”. By remaining focused on pregnancy as a woman’s experience, anti-abortion discourse accuses feminists of removing “men from the equation.” Anti-abortion activists argue that “we don’t talk enough.... about what it’s like to be a man whose child is aborted without his consent, or sometimes even his knowledge until after the fact.”<sup>59</sup> Andrea Mrozek point out that the man suffers as a result of abortion because,

that man has no rights, no ability, no decision-making capacity to actually do anything at all—thanks to this notion that women get pregnant all on their own, and therefore it's a ‘woman's right’ to abort. He was good enough to have sex with, but nothing more than that.<sup>60</sup>

Here Mrozek suggests that men are being used for sex and “nothing more”. Accordingly, the man is stripped of his “rights and decision-making capability”. This argument implies that men are devalued and eclipsed by “a woman’s right to abort”.

In response to the absence of men within the abortion discussion, anti-abortion discourse is attempting to provide them a platform. Like the female experience, male testimonials that denounce abortion are scattered throughout anti-abortion rhetoric. For example, the PWPL blog posted the story of a man who confesses “I lost the two things I

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<sup>55</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, Men and abortion)

<sup>56</sup> (ProWomanProLife, What's the legal terminology for that)

<sup>57</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I killed my first child)

<sup>58</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, Men and abortion)

<sup>59</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A woman's right to choose)

<sup>60</sup> (ProWomanProLife, What's the legal terminology for that)

tried to protect with the abortion – our relationship and my career. But most importantly we lost our precious child, who would now be 25 year old, and the pain is still with me. Abortion affects men too.”<sup>61</sup> By posting this narrative, anti-abortion discourse is underlining not only that men are negatively affected by abortion, but also “the pain” is long-lasting and relentless.

The PWPL blog also posted the music video of male rapper Flypside to its blog as a visual representation of the damage abortion does to men. The song (entitled “Happy Birthday”) highlights the victimization of men by abortion. Flypside’s rap recounts his own experiences with abortion and features the lines, “as a fetus did you fight for your life”... “I have a million excuses as to why you died, I know people got their own reasons for homicide” and “I never tell a woman what to do with her body, but if she don’t love children then we can’t party”. The chorus features a female voice singing “I made a mistake.”<sup>62</sup>

This video reinforces the anti-abortion claims that men regret their partners’ abortions and that abortion is harmful to men. It further represents abortion as a “mistake” and as “homicide” and highlights its devastating impact on men. Bloggers Mrozek and Pellerin, in a jointly-written article which appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* (and was also posted on the PWPL blog), describe the song as “haunting.” They claim the song is representative of the silent suffering that men are forced to endure as a result of abortion. They write “when rap artists start writing songs apologizing to their aborted children, songs that become international hits, you know something’s up. Namely, that abortion is very far from being the settled issue politicians and advocates in Canada claim.”<sup>63</sup>

The harm inflicted on men by abortion is described as similar to the harm experienced by women. An article posted on MP Vellacott’s website argues that “men are negatively affected and sense of loss of control and pride, especially when their partner has had an abortion without their being consulted.”<sup>64</sup> As such, male symptoms include “depression, guilt, anger, and feelings of powerlessness.”<sup>65</sup>

The reasons why men are harmed by abortion parallel the reasons women suffer, namely because abortion is “horrendous and unnatural.”<sup>66</sup> In accordance with the “unnaturalness” of abortion, men experience harm because abortion conflicts with their “masculine” nature. Alliance for Life Ontario argues,

Your natural role as a father was cut short... ‘Abortion rewrites the rules of masculinity. Whether or not the male was involved in the abortion decision, his inability to function in a socially prescribed manner leaves him wounded and confused.’ As a man, you naturally begin to take on the responsibility of protecting the child. It’s how you are wired. But, because of the abortion, you are no longer able to fulfill this role. You may develop anger, resentment and guilt. You may not even realize where these feelings are coming from.

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<sup>61</sup> (ProWomanProLife, What’s the legal terminology for that)

<sup>62</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Freedom to discuss choice)

<sup>63</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Freedom to discuss choice)

<sup>64</sup> (deVeberInstituteForBioethicsandSocialResearch, Women’s health after abortion)

<sup>65</sup> (deVeberInstituteForBioethicsandSocialResearch, Women’s health after abortion)

<sup>66</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I killed my first child)

They often come out in destructive behaviors-excessive drinking, drug use, depression, suicidal feelings, risk taking or maybe running from relationship to relationship unable to make commitments.<sup>67</sup>

Alliance for Life Ontario argues that because abortion contradicts with how men “are wired”, men may experience “destructive behavior” as a result. Furthermore, because the abortion decision may not involve the male subject, it is argued to fundamentally “rewrite the rules of masculinity” and thus “his inability to function in a socially prescribed manner leaves him wounded and confused.” For anti-abortion discourse, since the abortion decision is largely a woman’s decision, men are not allowed to function in “a socially prescribed manner”. The anti-abortion conclusion is that abortion, not the “rules of masculinity”, is wrong.

This illustration of the wounded man stripped of his masculinity sits in stark opposition to his representation as coercer in other anti-abortion rhetorical tangents. Whereas on the one hand (as is the case with Bill C-510), anti-abortion advocates side with women’s choices and want to protect them from male coercers, the other hand suggests that men should have rights and a voice when it comes to a woman’s abortion decision. The considerable dissonance in these two representations of the male subject is easily resolved by the man’s stance on abortion. When men advocate abortion, they are represented as coercers and criminals; when men denounce abortion, they are presented as “natural” and approached with discursive sympathy and compassion.

Consequently, these two seemingly contradictory representations of men peacefully co-exist within the larger anti-abortion discourse. Men are presented as both the coercers of abortion and the wounded, silenced victims. Which representation is advanced depends upon the specifics of the anti-abortion narrative being presented.

#### **4. HEROES**

Within the anti-abortion movement of the past, men stood at the forefront. It was men who have until recently represented the heroes and martyrs of the anti-abortion movement. As described by Susan Faludi, the anti-abortion movement of the 1980s was headed by (and saturated with) men. Faludi argued that men inundated the ‘warrior’ positions within the anti-abortion hierarchy whereas “the wives and daughters of the ‘warriors’ lined up in neat rows... their palms raised towards the heavens. ‘We’re not allowed to speak’, one of the women says when approached for an interview.”<sup>68</sup>

Historically, anti-abortion men, such as Randall Terry (founder of “Operation Rescue”) were the mouthpieces and the heroes of the movement. Even now, the anti-abortion male hero still remains in contemporary anti-abortion discourse. The four most outspoken anti-abortion politicians in Parliament (who were analyzed for this project, namely Ken Epp, Maurice Vellacott, Rod Bruinooge and Paul Szabo) are men positioned as heroes of the anti-abortion cause. In fact PWPL blogger Rebecca Walberg wrote an entire entry praising the anti-abortion efforts of MP Rod Bruinooge. She writes,

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<sup>67</sup> (AllianceforLifeOntario, Men and abortion)

<sup>68</sup> Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books (411)

Bruinooge could curry favour with higher-ups in the party and set himself up for a smooth climb through the party. He's also got a young family... and therefore no end of claims on his time. But instead of playing it safe and keeping his mouth shut, as the CPC would prefer, he's speaking his conscience, leading the most-unsecret-ever secret pro-life caucus, and setting an example more of us should follow.... I have a feeling Rod himself doesn't see himself as a hero for doing what he does and saying what he says, but I admire him, and look forward to what he'll do in the years to come. We need more MPs like him.<sup>69</sup>

Notwithstanding Rod Bruinooge's modesty (he "doesn't see himself as a hero"); Walberg nevertheless positions Bruinooge as a hero and leader of the anti-abortion cause. Moreover, she constructs a typical anti-abortion narrative around Bruinooge's anti-abortion advocacy. She argues that despite attempts by the Conservative Party (nominally pro-abortion), Bruinooge is a hero that will not be silenced. Moreover because he refuses to "play it safe and keep his mouth shut" (thus potentially sacrificing his budding political career), Bruinooge is also portrayed as an anti-abortion martyr. This anti-abortion narrative is just one of many that illustrate anti-abortion advocates as heroes, fighting against villainous anti-abortion forces.

This dominant anti-abortion narrative is nicely summed up by an article posted on the Life Canada website entitled "Morgentaler v. Canada's Unborn: Who wins this time?" In the article the popular story of David and Goliath is extended to the abortion debate in Canada,

Given Henry Morgentaler's heroic status among the ruling elite of this country, and his great financial resources, the approaching legal battle seems something like David (us, a weak-because-politically-incorrect lot representing the unwanted, voiceless littlest ones whose humanity is denied) vs. Goliath (the abortion king of Canada). But Goliath does not have to win.<sup>70</sup>

Here the anti-abortion narrative is clear. As David, the anti-abortion movement is weak but righteous, whereas Morgentaler, as Goliath, is an elite, over-funded "abortion king". The discursive implications of this anti-abortion allegory are also apparent. The heroic anti-abortion activists are going to find a way to defeat the villainous abortion provider.

Whereas men are still significantly regarded as anti-abortion heroes, the category of anti-abortion hero has in fact been widened. Now, anti-abortion rhetoric not only relates stories of anti-abortion men, but also of heroic anti-abortion women. One example is Andrea Mrozek's blogs about Linda Gibbons, a "soft spoken grandmother" who has been imprisoned for repeatedly defying the bubble zone outside of an abortion clinic. Mrozek writes,

Let the record stand: For women in jail because of abortion, there's only one in this country that I know of, and she's pro-life. Linda Gibbons is a soft spoken grandmother whose trial is today. Gibbons has spent years in jail because she protests abortion... She has been peacefully standing in front of [an abortion clinic] for the past five years handing out pamphlets and talking to women. Often only allowed an hour at a time before a peace officer warns her three times and then calls the police for her disobedience of the injunction [that does not allow protesting within a 60 foot zone outside of abortion clinics].... But why is this 14-year-old injunction that was intended to be temporary still enforced and used to prosecute a peaceful pro-lifer? And that is a very good question.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Speaking of extinct)

<sup>70</sup> (Ryan, Morgentaler vs. Canada's Unborn: Who wins this time?)

<sup>71</sup> (ProWomanProLife , From Andrea, with love)

Here Linda Gibbons is elevated to the heroic status that previously eluded women within anti-abortion discourse. Like Randall Terry, Gibbons has become an icon of the new peaceful and female face of anti-abortion advocacy. Consequently, Mrozek's blog tells the story of a "soft-spoken" and "peaceful" grandmother who is being unfairly targeted by a fourteen year old pro-abortion injunction.

Ultimately, the anti-abortion hero has remained faithful to its 1980s construction. Men and women who stand up against abortion are presented as martyrs and heroes within an anti-abortion narrative that vilifies any pro-abortion ideology.

## **5. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The analysis of narratives is a crucial domain of analysis because the ways in which stories are framed implicitly advance specific sets of values and morals. Anti-abortion narratives are no exception. The representation of the subject by anti-abortion discourse is formulated around the construction of three main categories of representation: the villain, the victim and the hero. These three categories monolithically argue that abortion is wrong and harmful to women (and sometimes men).

Old anti-abortion discourse considered the "post-abortive woman" as the primary villain, but the stories' plot, theme and characters have now been remodeled for a contemporary audience. Women are now portrayed as coerced victims, forced into unwanted abortions by a conspiracy of their male partners, a pro-abortion society, feminists and abortion providers. As with all anti-abortion storytelling, anti-abortion activists are presented as the paternalistic heroes that will eventually save unborn children from abortion, and women from themselves.

Although the anti-abortion storyline has changed substantially in character and plot, the overall anti-abortion narrative remains a tragedy. However now, abortion is not only a tragedy for the unborn children who are aborted, but also for the coerced women who are psychologically, physically and personally harmed by abortion, and occasionally by men, who are affected in various ways.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION**

### **1. SUMMARY**

This research project has reviewed contemporary English Canadian anti-abortion discourse and begun its deconstruction. A recent and significant shift in anti-abortion argumentation has been observed within the anti-abortion movement. From my review, this shift has yet to be addressed within existing academic literature. As a first step, this thesis has attempted to present the current anti-abortion discourse within the context of its new pro-woman, pseudo-feminist approach. As we have seen, there are four dimensions to the shift in anti-abortion discourse.

First, the strategic outlook of the anti-abortion movement has substantially changed. Whereas old anti-abortion strategy revolved around aggressive and religious tactics, new anti-abortion strategy is centered on a softer, more compassionate and pro-woman methodology.

Secondly, the primary explicit arguments disseminated by anti-abortion discourse have been considerably altered. Instead of religious, fetal-centric arguments, anti-abortion advocates have centered their explicit argumentation on the notion that abortion harms women, i.e. the primary reason why abortion is wrong is because it psychologically, physically and personally damages women. Even the old concept of fetal personhood has been newly framed in a way that infuses women's wellbeing into the discussion of a fetal right-to-life.

The third shift in anti-abortion discourse has been its appropriation of feminist language and concepts. As a means of presenting the anti-abortion movement as 'pro-woman', elementary feminist concepts and vocabulary have been incorporated into anti-abortion argumentation. Arguments that advocate for *women's choices, rights and health* have become anti-abortion mantras.

The last major alteration observed within the anti-abortion discourse involves the introduction of new anti-abortion narratives, i.e. testimonials. Where women generally used to be the villains of anti-abortion storytelling, they are now presented primarily as victims. Coercive male partners, feminists and abortion providers have taken on the roles of anti-abortion antagonists. While new anti-abortion narratives are different in plot and characters than previous ones, the anti-abortion narratives' theme remains one of tragic appeal.

These four components in the shift in anti-abortion discourse have contributed to what is now a new and different anti-abortion movement. Moreover, this new discourse is having tangible legal effects. In Nebraska, women "who experienced psychological problems after an abortion" now have the legal ability to sue their abortion providers (Planned Parenthood is considered one of the main targets of attack). The

rhetorical framing of this bill implies that abortion providers are “coercing women into unwanted abortions”<sup>1</sup> and should be held accountable for their negligent behavior. Furthermore, in a Canadian context, “Roxanne’s Law” (Bill C-510) also holds the potential of having similar legal ramifications. This poses a risk for the legal safety of organizations that aid women in accessing abortion. Consequently, bills like Bill C-510 hold some risk of adversely affecting access to abortion services.

Ultimately, an analysis of response to this new anti-abortion discourse and its potential impacts on abortion access in Canada seems necessary. Accordingly, to conclude this thesis, I offer five opinions, following which I will finish my commentary by suggesting four possible pro-choice responses to the remodeling of anti-abortion discourse.

**i. Anti-abortion activism has fundamentally changed but both the pro-abortion and the feminist response have not**

The notion that anti-abortion discourse is fundamentally changed from its previous 1980’s version has been demonstrated throughout this research project. Not only has the face of anti-abortion activism changed (it is now female), so has its explicit argumentation and the language it deploys. As importantly, the target of anti-abortion activism has shifted. Having found little success in the legal realm, anti-abortion advocacy is now focused on “people’s thinking and emotions.”<sup>2</sup> The terrain of debate has moved out of the courtrooms and into the micro-political realm of the individual (on the internet). Anti-abortion discourse is now targeted at the dismantling “the culture of abortion” and doing it from a woman’s perspective.

The incorporation of women voices into the anti-abortion movement is one of the most exceptional changes within anti-abortion activism. By including women’s voices into the anti-abortion conversation, anti-abortion discourse is able to shake the charge that it is “anti-woman”. Moreover the inclusion of a female voice lends legitimacy to the movement’s anti-abortion claims. As stated by the Toronto-Right-to-Life organization, “you cannot argue with the lived experience of these women.”<sup>3</sup>

One major ramification of the anti-abortion shift is that the traditional feminist response to anti-abortionists (the no choice but pro-choice response that worked so well in the 1980s) is no longer effective. If we return to Chapter 3 and examine Andrea Dworkin deconstruction of anti-abortion argumentation, we clearly see that her analysis cannot be applied to contemporary anti-abortion discourse. In *Right Wing Women* Dworkin writes anti-abortion “men think of pregnancy and abortion primarily in terms of themselves,

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<sup>1</sup> The Elliot Institute (July 15, 2010). “For first time women can sue for psychological injuries after abortion”. AfterAbortion.org. <http://www.afterabortion.org/news/nebraskabillineffect.html>

<sup>2</sup> (Alliance For Life Ontario; Media Campaign )

<sup>3</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

including what happened or might have happened to them back in the womb.”<sup>4</sup> Consequently, for Dworkin, anti-abortion advocacy has always revolved around male interests.

However with new anti-abortion discourse, Dworkin’s analysis falls flat. Not only are women’s voices at the forefront of new anti-abortion activism, but its discourse claims to represent women’s health, choices and rights. Anti-abortion activists are arguing that *they* occupy the feminist, pro-woman position. In fact, current discourse actively refutes the notion that the anti-abortion position represents male interests. Anti-abortion blogger Rebecca Walberg argues that “the old chestnut that most anti-abortion activists are men, that it’s about controlling women, that if men got pregnant this wouldn’t be an issue. It’s to put this to rest that I think PWPL is so timely and necessary.”<sup>5</sup>

It seems that anti-abortion discourse has taken Dworkin’s argument to heart, and changed anti-abortion activism accordingly. As a result, a major gap in feminist theorization on abortion has emerged.

## **ii. While anti-abortion argumentation is different, its consequences to women remain the same**

Much of anti-abortion discourse has substantially changed. For starters, anti-abortion argumentation now revolves around science, not religion. Fetal personhood is no longer justified with religion but instead it is asserted through the anti-abortion citations of selected scientific and research studies or (more often) opinions of selected credentialed advocates. Science is advanced as an authoritative voice since “the most direct approach is through simple teaching of values by authorities whom the person considers legitimate.”<sup>6</sup> As such, anti-abortion rhetoric seeks to convince the public of the fetal personhood argument through the usage of a scientific authority. From my observations, their authorities are misguided. In the most obvious case, the explicit argument that abortion causes breast cancer has been shown to be more generally reduced to the arguably irrelevant issue (from an abortion perspective) of whether childbirth reduces breast cancer.

Additionally, fetal personhood has now been tied to the concept of women’s welfare. Whereas in old anti-abortion arguments the fetus was the main victim of abortion, now women are advanced as the primary victims. Because abortion harms women through the “killing of their unborn child”, abortion is doubly wrong.

You can't protect a foetus without protecting the woman. You can't hurt a woman without hurting the foetus. When a foetus is aborted, you have to hurt the woman to hurt the foetus. This is why we are prolife because we are prowoman.<sup>7</sup>

This passage intertwines the fate of the fetus with the fate of the woman. Anti-abortion logic suggests that abortion (“the killing of the fetus”) *always* negatively affects the woman that carries it. Anti-abortionists argue

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<sup>4</sup> Dworkin, Andrea. *Right-Wing Women*. (New York: Perigee Books, 1983.) (75)

<sup>5</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I’m prowomanprolife)

<sup>6</sup> Westen, D. (1985). *Self and Society: Narcissism, Collectivism, and the Development of Morals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>7</sup> (ProWomanProLife , What fits in mother Russia)

that because abortion is the “killing of [women’s] own offspring”, women are *always* psychological and physically wounded.

It is also interesting to observe that not only is there *always* harm, but that *all* women are harmed by their abortions. This cooptation of women’s experience with abortion is accomplished mainly through the medicalization of post-abortive women. Abortion “experts” stress that “since many post-aborted women use repression as a coping mechanism, there may be a long period of denial before a woman seeks psychiatric care.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, even when women claim to be healthy and unharmed by their abortion, a paternalistic anti-abortion discourse maintains that they have nevertheless been hurt by abortion. In the end, the combination of the re-framed fetal personhood argument and the anti-abortion medicalization of post-abortive women constructs an anti-abortion discourse that argues that *all* abortions “cause significant adverse medical risks for [*all*] women who have them” because it is the “killing of unborn children.”<sup>9</sup>

The primary difference between the old construction of fetal personhood and the reworked concept of fetal personhood is the role of the woman. Old discourse argued the fetus should be protected because of its intrinsic right-to-life. New discourse argues that the fetus deserves protection because its well-being is intricately tied to the well-being of women. Ultimately, for anti-abortionists, if the fetus is killed, the woman will suffer, because women’s physical and psychological health is actually contingent on the well-being of the fetus. This means that the results of the new anti-abortion discourse are very similar to the results of the old; the fetus must be protected.

The ramifications of this discourse on women are substantial. Not only does this line of argumentation delegitimize abortion as a pregnancy option but it also relegates women to the realm of reproduction and motherhood, a concept successfully opposed by feminists. For instance, under a webpage entitled “Our Pro-Life Position”, Life Canada argues that “pro-lifer[s]... hold that not everything is relative; that human action is guided by principles, which govern our nature. These principles should be followed, despite individual circumstances, in order for people and hence society to be truly happy.”<sup>10</sup>

Implicit in Life Canada’s statement is the portrayal of women who bear children as “guided by... nature” and following “nature” contributes to women becoming “truly happy”. Anti-abortion discourse simultaneously argues that abortion is “so horrendous and unnatural” that it “has got to be contrary to [women’s] fundamental dignity”<sup>11</sup>. Ultimately, the combination of these statements leads to the anti-abortion representation of “post-abortive women” as unnatural, undignified and most importantly, unhappy. Abortion is argued to rob women of not only of their nature but also of their happiness.

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<sup>8</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, A List of Major Psychological Sequelae of Abortion)

<sup>9</sup> (ProWomanProLife, New study shows higher risk of breast cancer after abortion)

<sup>10</sup> (LifeCanada, An awesome picture to see)

<sup>11</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Why I killed my first child)

Conversely pregnancy and motherhood are actually argued to improve women's health. An essay entitled "The Protective Effects of Childbirth" (posted on the Toronto-Right-to Life) website goes as far as to suggest that childbirth and breast-feeding could actually be used as a form of cancer prevention,

What is seldom- if ever- emphasized in public discussion on preventing breast cancer is the fact that having a full-term pregnancy has been linked to decrease in breast cancer risk- the earlier the better... The more children a woman had and the longer the duration of breast-feeding after birth, the lower her risk of developing breast cancer.<sup>12</sup>

The article further argues that women with children also have fewer mental health issues (as long as they are also married), and therefore concludes that "childless women don't really get much out of giving up having children."<sup>13</sup>

Consequently in the overall construction of the fetus, abortion and women, two main rhetorical planks emerge. First, women's happiness and psychological and physical health are discursively tied to the well-being of the fetus. Second female worth, happiness and health are presented as dependent on pregnancy and motherhood.

Despite the incorporation of traditionally feminist language and concepts, anti-abortion discourse maintains that women's health, happiness and self-worth is reliant on the continuation of her pregnancy. This nudge is attempting to supplant the woman's own decision regarding unplanned pregnancy.

### **iii. The construction of an anti-abortion narrative selects only that which falls perfectly into its storyline**

As a very important part of the new woman-centric anti-abortion rhetoric, women's stories, narratives and experiences are being infused into anti-abortion discourse. Women's testimonials regarding abortion and pregnancy are profusely scattered throughout the anti-abortion materials. As such, the anti-abortion movement is able to make the claim that it represents women's best interests.

However the anti-abortion incorporation of women's narratives advances only one monolithic and singular theme. According to anti-abortion advocates, *all* women's experiences echo the notion that they "regret the day [they] decided to have an abortion and wish that [they] could take it back."<sup>14</sup>

The entire Canadian campaign "Silent No More"<sup>15</sup> is designed around the main objective of using women's narratives to argue that abortion "is not freeing... is not liberating... [and] is the most humiliating experience of [women's] li[ves]."<sup>16</sup> The "Testimonials" webpage of the online chapter of "Silent No More"

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<sup>12</sup> Sobie, A. (2001) The Protective Effects of Childbirth, 2006. *Post Abortion Review*, 9(2).

<sup>13</sup> Sobie, A. (2001) The Protective Effects of Childbirth, 2006. *Post Abortion Review*, 9(2).

<sup>14</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A tempest in a teacup)

<sup>15</sup> (SilentNoMore, About Us)

<sup>16</sup> (TorontoRighttoLife, Toronto group launches campaign)

does just that. Women's voices are used as testaments to the "physical, emotional and spiritual pain"<sup>17</sup> caused by abortion.

However the only voices represented on the "Silent No More" website are the voices of women who ultimately regret their abortions. Understandably, anti-abortion discourse privileges certain voices, while ignoring or discrediting others. On the occasion I observed where blogs dealt with opposing, pro-abortion voices; anti-abortion advocates ideologically manipulated their stories to reinforce their own anti-abortion position. For instance with the pro-abortion response to "Silent No More" (a pro-choice version called "I'm Not Sorry), blogger Tanya Zaleski writes,

I took a trip to I'm Not Sorry. As I understand it, this site is the pro-choice response to Silent No More. Both of these offer women's stories of past abortions. I can safely say that two-thirds of the testimonies I read on I'm Not Sorry were by women who had undergone an abortion within the last year; most shared their stories a day or two after the fact. Wisely, a pro-choice organization has decided to publish these stories, which don't usually lack emotion, but do often lack any sort of full perspective of what the abortion experience is really like, long-term, for a woman.<sup>18</sup>

After introducing the concept of "I'm Not Sorry" and initially hinting at the failure of "I'm Not Sorry" to take into consideration the "full perspective of what the abortion experience is really like", Zaleski proceeds to outline specific entries that fit into her own anti-abortion position. She quotes the following women,

'I am still unsure how I feel about everything, although I know what's done is done. I am unsettled, but I am starting to feel better.' Amelia; 2 days later  
'I do not regret the first abortion that I had...but I do not want to do this to myself again.' Nadia; 1 year ago<sup>19</sup>

Zaleski then concludes, "These are the portraits of women who escape "unscathed" from the abortion experience. No words."<sup>20</sup>

Although Zaleski does not explicitly refute the notion that these women are not sorry that they had abortions, she implicitly makes the claim that women are "scathed" by their experiences with abortion (even when they denied being "scathed"). This discursive approach to women who defend their abortion decision is symbolic of a larger anti-abortion trend. In the end, all narratives are ideologically manipulated to fit neatly into the anti-abortion idiom.

Every story presented by anti-abortion discourse is thus filtered through an anti-abortion lens. Take Rod Bruinooge's 'Roxanne's Law' for instance. Bruinooge insists that "Roxanne's Law" is not meant to reopen the abortion debate but instead is a bill designed to "empower pregnant women to stand up against abortion coercion."<sup>21</sup> As such, Andrea Mrozek's (in a recent editorial printed in the *Calgary Herald*<sup>22</sup>) claims

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<sup>17</sup> (Silent No More, Testimonials)

<sup>18</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Whatever you do, never say you're sorry)

<sup>19</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Whatever you do, never say you're sorry)

<sup>20</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Whatever you do, never say you're sorry)

<sup>21</sup> (Bruinooge, Roxanne's Law)

that Roxanne's Law is something "we can all choose to support," i.e. this is a bill designed to empower women and protect women's *choices* (although it would appear that pregnancy is the only choice being protected). I note (as have many others) that the issue of coercion is already addressed in the Criminal Code of Canada, making Roxanne's Law redundant.

It is also clear to most that Roxanne's Law is in fact not a bill aimed at "empowering women", but instead a back-door means of stigmatizing (and diminishing access to) abortion. Ironically the bill actively co-opts the story of Roxanne Fernando. Instead of focusing on the domestic violence and brutality Fernando experienced at the hands of an abusive male partner, Bruinooge centers his bill on abortion. In my view, Fernando's tragic story is ideologically manipulated to fit neatly into Bruinooge's anti-abortion narrative.

In sum, although anti-abortionists claim to represent women's voices and interests, only specific voices, stories and narratives are highlighted throughout anti-abortion discourse. Every voice is carefully selected, edited and marketed to suitably fit the requisite tragic anti-abortion narrative.

#### **iv. The anti-abortion position revolves around identity-based polemics**

As was reviewed in Chapter 6, anti-abortion advocates have positioned themselves as the heroes in their anti-abortion narrative. Fighting against villainous pro-abortion (and feminist) forces, anti-abortion advocates present themselves as champions of both the "unborn" and vulnerable pregnant women. Ultimately, anti-abortion activists have turned themselves into martyrs while vilifying pro-abortion men, feminists and abortions providers.

Within this struggle, the anti-abortion movement is positioned as "defender of the defenseless". However what is most notable is that any criticism of, or opposition to, the anti-abortion position is represented as persecution. Pro-abortion argumentation is most notably considered, by anti-abortion discourse, as censorship. For instance Andrea Mrozek argues that there exists a major difference in the societal treatment of pro-abortion and anti-abortion advocates. She writes, "when you support abortion, you are a catalyst for an important debate. When you are against abortion you are a pesk [sic], some spending time in jail, others sidelined from their working spheres, be it politics, law, medicine or journalism."<sup>23</sup>

Mrozek's argument is that anti-abortion activists are not only silenced by a stanchly pro-abortion society but moreover they are sidelined from debate and even imprisoned for their anti-abortion views. This rhetorical representation portrays the anti-abortion movement as the underdog, who is persecuted by a larger, meaner and anti-woman society.

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<sup>22</sup> Mrozek, A. (2010, November 2). An abortion law we can all support. *Calgary Herald*, . Retrieved from <http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/abortion+choose+support/3762270/story.html>

<sup>23</sup> (ProWomanProLife , Now he's a 'catalyst for change')

In line with the anti-abortionist martyr complex, anti-abortion discourse rarely attacks the pro-abortion position but instead the abortion supporters that represent it. As such, name-calling has become a favorite discursive strategy of anti-abortion advocates. Pro-abortion advocates are argued to be “evil”<sup>24</sup>, “callous”<sup>25</sup>, and “misogynistic.”<sup>26</sup> According to anti-abortionists,

Being pro-choice means standing on the wrong side of history: A side that says it is just fine to use people, to have sex and leave, to deny a natural and normal result (pregnancy) of a natural and normal action (sex). To live in an empty shell, devoid of all logic and reason, where charity, love and compassion themselves become nothing more than choices.<sup>27</sup>

According to anti-abortionists abortion supporters are unnatural, uncompassionate and “devoid of all logic and reason”. What is notable about the above passage is that the pro-choice argument is not even outlined. Instead it is described as “an empty shell” which does not really need to be debated because it is “devoid of logic and reason”.

Moreover, the intentions of the pro-choice (or pro-abortion) position are placed in question. Signal Hill writes on their website,

There is a legal obligation placed on doctors to provide all of the material information in order for their patients to make an informed choice.... However, this standard is not being met within the community of doctors and health care professionals who are working in women's reproductive health. Women are not being informed about the numerous studies showing a statistically significant link between abortion and breast cancer, information that may have serious bearings on their decision to carry through with an abortion. This is a violation of a woman's right to know.<sup>28</sup>

According to Signal Hill, Canadian doctors are purposely jeopardizing women's health by advocating abortion and knowingly breaking the law. This is just one example of how abortion supporters themselves (and not the arguments that represent their position) have become the main target of attack. Not only does anti-abortion discourse refute the notion that abortion access serves women's rights, but moreover they claim that it knowingly contradicts it.

While abortion is framed as an uncompassionate and non-empathetic pregnancy choice, abortion supporters are described as “men and women who love the slavery of abortion: slavery to a false freedom, a choice that isn't freeing at all.”<sup>29</sup> Thus abortion is portrayed as a false choice, and abortion providers are depicted as actively pushing abortion onto women without choice.

By remaining focused on attacking abortion supporters, anti-abortion discourse is relying on the emotions of its receivers. Anti-abortion discourse appeals to the emotional responses that result from the usage of the words such as “evil” or “misogynist”. This discursive development is notable because it indicates that anti-

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<sup>24</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Choice pushers)

<sup>25</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A callous sort of Canada)

<sup>26</sup> (ProWomanProLife, A callous sort of Canada)

<sup>27</sup> (ProWomanProLife, Wrong side of history)

<sup>28</sup> (SignalHill, Breast Cancer)

<sup>29</sup> (ProWomanProLife (LifeCanada, 15 year of choice?, 2003), Name that author)

abortion argumentation is not relying on explicit, rational argument to persuade its audience. From my observations, implicit arguments and emotional representations are much more frequently used to advance the anti-abortion cause.

**v. Reasonable truths are hyperbolized by anti-abortion discourse**

There is no doubt that abortion causes women to experience a plethora of both negative and positive emotions. Moreover it is also a fact that some women even regret choosing abortion. However anti-abortion discourse has manipulated women's narratives and emotions surrounding abortion and turned them into a systemic and universal problem with abortion. According to anti-abortion discourse it is not some women that regret their abortion decision, it is *all* women.

This manipulation is representative of the sensationalization of reasonable truths that occurs within anti-abortion discourse. A woman's feelings of insecurity or discomfort is rhetorically transformed into her being psychologically and physically tortured by abortion. The basic risks of any surgical procedure are, in the case of abortion, turned into potential complications that can and will result in serious physical harm and death. Feelings of sadness are distorted into depression and suicidal ideations. Every feeling, emotion or discomfort that surrounds women's experiences with abortion is systemically hyperbolized by anti-abortion discourse. Women's testimonials are distorted and misrepresented in ways which consistently deplore abortion.

The singular narrative that all women who have had abortions always regret their abortion has two major ramifications. Firstly, it calls to question the decision-making capabilities of pregnant women. Since women are universally and unquestionably harmed by abortion and still choose abortion, the clear implication is that women are in need of paternalistic action to protect them from abortion. That is where bills such as Bill C-510 ("Roxanne's Law") emerge. According to Bill C-510 "vulnerable pregnant women" need to be protected from abortion because women cannot be trusted to protect themselves.

Secondly this type of argumentation makes a pro-choice counter-attack very difficult. Since anti-abortion discourse is based around reasonable truths, their arguments cannot be wholly dismissed. The fact that some women do struggle emotionally with abortion means that a responsible pro-choice discourse cannot fully dismiss the anti-abortion argument that abortion psychologically harms (some) women. This places the pro-choice movement in a precarious position. As such I have outlined below four potential points around which future abortion advocacy might revolve. It must be noted that this list is not extensive or without potential problems. Instead, these points might be considered as discussion points for the preliminary stages of abortion advocacy planning.

## **2. RESPONSE**

**i. A pro-abortion platform is not enough, we need to reclaim choice**

In my view, the concept of choice needs to be reclaimed by abortion supporters. However it needs to be reclaimed as part of a larger pro-choice platform. The truth is that the feminist position is the pro-choice position, not only in terms of abortion but in terms of life choices. When it comes to abortion, child-rearing, same-sex marriage, women in the workforce and countless other positions, feminism represents choice. Specifically feminism supports *women's choices*, whether those choices include child-rearing (or not), marriage (or not) and working inside or outside the home (and having affordable child care to be able to do either). This aspect of the feminist position needs to be highlighted.

Consequently not only do pro-abortion advocates need to reclaim the concept of choice, they need to reclaim it in a context that includes abortion but does not exclude other progressive causes. Abortion advocates need to work with their feminist and progressive allies. In this sense solidarity across issues must become a pro-choice focus. It should be highlighted that abortion exists within a larger societal context. Consequently other issues (like the availability of affordable child care) and abortion need to be presented as importantly related issues.

Ultimately the pro-choice platform needs to be widened. Not only will a wider platform hold potential for garnering additional support for abortion access but moreover its very existence points out the contradiction that exist within the anti-abortion discourses' reformulation of choice. While anti-abortion discourse claims to support women's choices, most anti-abortion advocates do not support same-sex marriage for women (or men), a national child care program or children outside the realm of traditional marriage. The anti-abortion position is, in my view, clearly incompatible with women's choices, and should be revealed as such.

**ii. Rights-based language is not going to cut it**

The pro-choice framing of abortion around women's legal rights has also been a popular rhetorical tool of the pro-abortion camp. Although I would not argue that this line of argumentation should be completely removed from a pro-choice vocabulary, it is no longer sufficient. Because anti-abortion advocacy has widened its focus and moved away from arguing the legal wrongness of abortion, current pro-choice discourse that uses only rights-lens falls short.

Women's voices and experiences with abortion will be an important tool in countering the anti-abortion representation of abortion. "I'm Not Sorry.com" is, in my opinion, an excellent first step towards a pro-choice movement that incorporates women's stories and simultaneously contradicts the dominant anti-abortion narrative. Along with the testimonials of women who do not regret their abortion, the voices of pro-abortion mothers could also be an important addition. The image of a mother who supports abortion is an important one. To begin, this representation places abortion within the discursive realm of maternity. It

simultaneously presents motherhood and abortion advocacy as compatible positions. Moreover, it complicates the anti-abortion demonization of abortion supporters. By rhetorically separating abortion from the realm of motherhood, anti-abortion discourse is able to vilify abortion supporters and celebrate motherhood. However, by presenting motherhood and abortion side by side, I think a strong message about the maternity, pregnancy and choice (i.e. that they are all related) is transmitted. This is not a simple model and will need refinement.

Another alternative to the legal lens could be the access lens. Women's tangible access to abortion in Canada is still complicated. Women living in New Brunswick (where abortion is not funded), Prince Edward Island (where abortion is not offered), in rural areas or out of province all face additional barriers in accessing abortion. This has (and should continue) to become an important way in which to frame abortion. The unequal accessibility of abortion among women should be framed as an issue of discrimination, inequality and injustice. Moreover (in conjunction with my first point) it can be fought in solidarity with other progressive health care advocates.

### **iii. Name the problem, on pro-choice ground**

The abortion system in Canada is by no means perfect. This is why new anti-abortion argumentation holds risk of serious ramifications. The truth is there is inadequate pro-choice counseling surrounding abortion. There is inadequate post-abortion care. However this is not because abortion supporters are abortion-pushing monsters. It is because abortion funding does not provide the funds for indefinite post-abortion counseling. Moreover, sufficient sex and birth control education is not offered in the educational or the health care systems.

These shortcomings of our current (conservative) health care and education system need to be highlighted. However they need to be highlighted from a pro-choice perspective.

### **iv. Fight the battles that need fighting and compromise when given the chance**

Within Canada the absence of an abortion law has been considered both good and bad. However what is undisputable is how the absence of such a law has been strategically manipulated by the anti-abortion movement. Despite the absolute unavailability of abortion past 24 weeks (at the absolute latest) in Canada, anti-abortion advocates endlessly (and dishonestly) argue that women are able to abort their "unborn children" throughout all nine months of pregnancy. An anti-abortion campaign which features a woman near the end of her pregnancy underlined with the slogan "Abortion. Have we gone too far?"<sup>30</sup> is representative of this anti-abortion distortion. What is implicit in the advertisement campaign is the notion that women enjoy unrestricted access to abortion, no matter what stage of pregnancy.

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<sup>30</sup> AbortionInCanada.ca. "Home". <http://www.abortionincanada.ca>. Retrieved November 1, 2010.

Abortion advocates are constantly refuting the claim that women can secure abortion during nine months of pregnancy. However this anti-abortion charge remains. As such, I propose that a pro-choice movement be open to a third trimester limit on abortion. Since the reality of abortion access in Canada disallows abortion in the third trimester, this should be an easy compromise for the pro-choice movement to support. The advantages to a legal limit are three-fold. First, the anti-abortion charge that abortion is unrestricted in Canada will no longer be valid. Secondly, this will give pro-choicers a chance to compromise on pro-choice ground. And lastly, it will give abortion advocates the opportunity to frame abortion around access issues (as mentioned above) instead of around legal ones.

**v. Name the opposition**

The anti-abortion movement consistently names its enemy. It presents Henry Morgentaler as corrupt and Joyce Arthur as ignorant. It paints all abortion providers as callous and wicked. However, the pro-choice movement has yet to name their enemy. The question is, why not? Rod Bruinooge, for example, would provide a fairly easy target. Bruinooge is a man who is actively anti-abortion and is alleging that he stands up for women's choices while simultaneously dismissing abortion as a legitimate pregnancy options. He claims to speak and represent Roxanne Fernando and yet has appropriated and remodeled her voice and her story. Although prolific and poignant, his explicit argumentation is weak and his implicit argumentation model, although interesting and initially appealing, is, in my view, easily rebuked.

Andrea Mrozek is a woman who, despite claiming she has "never been vocal or activist on abortion before, do[es] not represent any larger group"<sup>31</sup> works for one of the largest conservative think-tanks in Canada (the Institute of Family and Marriage). The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada does not support abortion, same-sex marriage, single parents, or families based around anything except heterosexual marriage.

I do not believe that either Bruinooge or Mrozek represent the best interests of women. Instead they represent traditional, heteronormative family values that revolve around traditional patriarchal values. These anti-abortion advocates, and other like them, need to become faces of the opposition within the pro-choice movement. The plethora of contradictions that exist within their 'pro-woman' position needs to be incorporated into current pro-choice discourse. Ultimately, an alternative narrative for abortion advocacy needs to be constructed.

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<sup>31</sup> (ProWomanProlife, The Story)

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: CODING DICTIONARY**

#### **Variables**

Title (T:)

Author (A:)

Date (D:)

Publication information (M:)

#### **Codes**

##### **What anti-abortion argument is being used?**

- Fetal Personhood argument
  - Refers to any argument which opposes abortion based on claims made about the life the fetus (i.e. right to life arguments)
- Abortion-harms-women argument
  - Refers to any argument which opposes abortion on the basis of the medical/physical, psychological, personal, or unspecified harm caused by abortion
- Abortion-harms-society
  - Refers to any negative impact of abortion on society (i.e. abortion harms the family, the economic cost of abortion on society, etc)
- Abortion-harms-men
  - Refers to any argument which opposes abortion on the basis that it harms men or men or men's place in society
- Wrong side of history argument
  - Compares the legacy of abortion to other historical atrocities (i.e. the holocaust, slavery, etc.)
- Other
  - Refers to any other anti-abortion argument

##### **What abortion harms-women argument is being used?**

- Physical/Medical harm
  - Refers to increased risk of breast cancer, infertility, death, etc.
- Psychological harm
  - Refers to increases risk of depression, suicide, regret, PAS, etc.
- Harmful to personal life
  - Refers to abortion as detrimental to existing relationships, leads to increased occurrence of domestic violence, etc.
- General, unspecified suffering
  - Refers to general, non-specific harm

- Other
  - Refers to any other abortion harms women argument

**How are women portrayed by the anti-abortion discourse?**

- Victims/Coerced
- Uninformed/misinformed/ignorant
- Enemy/selfish/criminal
- Unnatural
- Grieving mother
- Other portrayal

**What position/person/organization/ideology is being attacked?**

- Feminism/feminists/pro-choice side
- Abortion providers/abortion clinics/pro-abortion organizations
- Pro-abortion society/pro-abortion elites
- Other attack

**What type of evidence is provided in support of the anti-abortion position?**

- Expert/research study/statistics
- Appeal to religious faith
- Narrative/personal experience/individual story
- Other

**Additional codes of interest**

- Men
- Feminist language
- Motherhood
- Disbelieved narrative/personal accounts
- Reason/ rationality/logic

**APPENDIX B: TABLE 1**

| <b>Abortion-harms-women and fetal personhood frequency (with Parliamentary petitions)</b> |                                          |                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Medium</b>                                                                             | <b>Abortion-harms-women<br/>argument</b> | <b>Fetal Personhood Argument</b> |
| PWPL Blog                                                                                 | 114                                      | 104                              |
| Anti-abortion organizations                                                               | 80                                       | 36                               |
| Politicians                                                                               | 12                                       | 38                               |
| Case Total                                                                                | 206                                      | 178                              |
| <b>Percentage of total cases</b>                                                          | <b>48</b>                                | <b>41</b>                        |

**APPENDIX C: TABLE 2**

| <b>Abortion-harms-women and fetal personhood frequency (without Parliamentary petitions)</b> |                                      |                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Medium</b>                                                                                | <b>Abortion-harms-women argument</b> | <b>Fetal Personhood Argument</b> |
| PWPL Blog                                                                                    | 114                                  | 104                              |
| Anti-abortion organizations                                                                  | 80                                   | 36                               |
| Politicians                                                                                  | 11                                   | 16                               |
| Case Total                                                                                   | 205                                  | 156                              |
| <b>Percentage of total cases</b>                                                             | <b>51</b>                            | <b>38.9</b>                      |

**APPENDIX D: TABLE 3**

| <b>Abortion-Harms-Women Breakdown (of all anti-abortion materials)</b> |                                            |                                           |                                       |                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Medium</b>                                                          | <b>Psychological<br/>Harm<br/>Argument</b> | <b>Physical/Medical<br/>Harm Argument</b> | <b>Personal<br/>Harm<br/>Argument</b> | <b>General,<br/>Unspecified Harm<br/>Argument</b> |
| PWPL Blog                                                              | 33                                         | 28                                        | 13                                    | 51                                                |
| Anti-abortion organizations                                            | 23                                         | 19                                        | 7                                     | 9                                                 |
| Politicians                                                            | 6                                          | 6                                         | 1                                     | 2                                                 |
| Case Total/Total number of all cases                                   | 62/166                                     | 53/166                                    | 21/166                                | 62/166                                            |
| <b>Percentage of total cases</b>                                       | <b>37.3</b>                                | <b>31.9</b>                               | <b>12.7</b>                           | <b>37.2</b>                                       |

**APPENDIX E: TABLE 4**

| <b>Percentages of Abortion-Harms-Women Argument Frequency by Site of Analysis</b> |                                                |                                                   |                                           |                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Site of Analysis</b>                                                           | <b>Psychological<br/>Harm Argument<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Physical/Medical<br/>Harm Argument<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Personal<br/>Harm<br/>Argument (%)</b> | <b>General/Unspecified<br/>Harm Argument (%)</b> |
| PWPL Blog                                                                         | 28                                             | 24                                                | 11                                        | 44                                               |
| Anti-abortion organizations                                                       | 70                                             | 47                                                | 17                                        | 22                                               |
| Politicians                                                                       | 50                                             | 50                                                | 8                                         | 16                                               |

**APPENDIX F: TABLE 5**

| <b>Frequency of Discursive Representations of Anti-Abortion Stock Characters</b> |             |                               |                    |                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Discursive Representation</b>                                                 | <b>Blog</b> | <b>Anti-Abortion Websites</b> | <b>Politicians</b> | <b>Percentage of Total Cases</b> |
| Women as Selfish                                                                 | 20          | 5                             | 0                  | 5.8                              |
| Women as Coerced/Misinformed                                                     | 59          | 22                            | 33                 | 26.5                             |
| Feminism as Villain                                                              | 38          | 8                             | 1                  | 10.9                             |
| Abortion Provider as Villain                                                     | 54          | 11                            | 2                  | 15.6                             |
| Pro-Abortion Society as Villain                                                  | 45          | 7                             | 5                  | 13.3                             |
| Men as Victims of Abortion                                                       | 6           | 2                             | 1                  | 2.1                              |

**APPENDIX G: TABLE 6**

| <b>Coding Frequency for ProWomanProLife Blog</b> |                                        |              |                |              |                |                 |                |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>Category</b>                                  | <b>Code</b>                            | <b>Count</b> | <b>% Codes</b> | <b>Cases</b> | <b>% Cases</b> | <b>Nb Words</b> | <b>% Words</b> |
| abortion-harms-women argument                    | general, unspecified suffering         | 56           | 5.1%           | 51           | 17.4%          | 4034            | 3.1%           |
| abortion-harms-women argument                    | harmful to personal life               | 13           | 1.2%           | 13           | 4.4%           | 695             | 0.5%           |
| abortion-harms-women argument                    | other a-h-w argument                   | 21           | 1.9%           | 20           | 6.8%           | 1599            | 1.2%           |
| abortion-harms-women argument                    | physical (medical) harm                | 29           | 2.7%           | 28           | 9.6%           | 2428            | 1.9%           |
| abortion-harms-women argument                    | psychological harm                     | 37           | 3.4%           | 33           | 11.3%          | 3209            | 2.5%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                      | abortion-harms-men                     | 6            | 0.5%           | 6            | 2.0%           | 513             | 0.4%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                      | abortion-harms-society                 | 8            | 0.7%           | 8            | 2.7%           | 917             | 0.7%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                      | abortion-harms-women                   | 161          | 14.8%          | 114          | 38.9%          | 10939           | 8.5%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                      | fetal personhood                       | 124          | 11.4%          | 103          | 35.2%          | 9087            | 7.0%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                      | other argument                         | 26           | 2.4%           | 24           | 8.2%           | 2210            | 1.7%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                      | wrong side of history                  | 23           | 2.1%           | 18           | 6.1%           | 2056            | 1.6%           |
| codes of interest                                | disbelieved narratives/stats           | 8            | 0.7%           | 8            | 2.7%           | 1608            | 1.2%           |
| codes of interest                                | feminist language/concepts             | 44           | 4.0%           | 33           | 11.3%          | 3107            | 2.4%           |
| codes of interest                                | general lifestyle judgments            | 6            | 0.5%           | 6            | 2.0%           | 622             | 0.5%           |
| codes of interest                                | men                                    | 21           | 1.9%           | 17           | 5.8%           | 1744            | 1.4%           |
| codes of interest                                | motherhood                             | 11           | 1.0%           | 10           | 3.4%           | 1464            | 1.1%           |
| codes of interest                                | reason, rational, logical, etc         | 3            | 0.3%           | 3            | 1.0%           | 141             | 0.1%           |
| codes of interest                                | stereotypical anti-fem attacks         | 6            | 0.5%           | 6            | 2.0%           | 437             | 0.3%           |
| evidence provided                                | common sense/nature/stereotype/logical | 19           | 1.7%           | 17           | 5.8%           | 1274            | 1.0%           |
| evidence provided                                | expert/research/study/s                | 32           | 2.9%           | 30           | 10.2%          | 2246            | 1.7%           |

|                                                        |                                                       |    |      |    |       |      |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----|------|----|-------|------|------|
|                                                        | tats                                                  |    |      |    |       |      |      |
| evidence provided                                      | explicitly principled                                 | 9  | 0.8% | 9  | 3.1%  | 836  | 0.6% |
| evidence provided                                      | narrative/ personal<br>experience/individual<br>story | 48 | 4.4% | 41 | 14.0% | 5442 | 4.2% |
| evidence provided                                      | other evidence                                        | 2  | 0.2% | 2  | 0.7%  | 129  | 0.1% |
| evidence provided                                      | religious                                             | 6  | 0.5% | 5  | 1.7%  | 419  | 0.3% |
| how women are<br>portrayed                             | enemy/criminal/selfish                                | 22 | 2.0% | 20 | 6.8%  | 2193 | 1.7% |
| how women are<br>portrayed                             | grieving mothers                                      | 1  | 0.1% | 1  | 0.3%  | 54   | 0.0% |
| how women are<br>portrayed                             | other portrayal                                       | 6  | 0.5% | 6  | 2.0%  | 330  | 0.3% |
| how women are<br>portrayed                             | unnatural                                             | 5  | 0.5% | 5  | 1.7%  | 603  | 0.5% |
| how women are<br>portrayed                             | uninformed/misinformed/<br>ignorant                   | 21 | 1.9% | 19 | 6.5%  | 1893 | 1.5% |
| how women are<br>portrayed                             | victims/coerced                                       | 44 | 4.0% | 40 | 13.7% | 3861 | 3.0% |
| person/position/<br>organization/<br>ideology attacked | abortion<br>providers/clinics/<br>proabortion orgs    | 59 | 5.4% | 54 | 18.4% | 5073 | 3.9% |
| person/position/<br>organization/<br>ideology attacked | censorship                                            | 45 | 4.1% | 38 | 13.0% | 3617 | 2.8% |
| person/position/<br>organization/<br>ideology attacked | feminism/feminists/<br>pro-choice side                | 46 | 4.2% | 38 | 13.0% | 4761 | 3.7% |
| person/position/<br>organization/<br>ideology attacked | other attack                                          | 13 | 1.2% | 12 | 4.1%  | 1713 | 1.3% |
| person/position/<br>organization/<br>ideology attacked | pro-abortion society/<br>pro-abortion elites          | 51 | 4.7% | 45 | 15.4% | 4077 | 3.2% |

**APPENDIX H: TABLE 7**

| <b>Coding Frequency for Anti-Abortion Organizations</b> |                                        |              |                |              |                |                 |                |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>Category</b>                                         | <b>Code</b>                            | <b>Count</b> | <b>% Codes</b> | <b>Cases</b> | <b>% Cases</b> | <b>Nb Words</b> | <b>% Words</b> |
| anti-abortion argument used                             | fetal personhood                       | 59           | 11.8%          | 36           | 49.3%          | 6770            | 9.6%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                             | abortion-harms society                 | 3            | 0.6%           | 3            | 4.1%           | 1318            | 1.9%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                             | abortion-harms men                     | 7            | 1.4%           | 2            | 2.7%           | 507             | 0.7%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                             | wrong side of history                  | 2            | 0.4%           | 2            | 2.7%           | 316             | 0.4%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                             | other argument                         | 26           | 5.2%           | 17           | 23.3%          | 5064            | 7.2%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                             | abortion-harms-women                   | 80           | 16.1%          | 40           | 54.8%          | 13230           | 18.8%          |
| abortion-harms-women argument used                      | physical (medical) harm                | 21           | 4.2%           | 19           | 26.0%          | 5328            | 7.6%           |
| abortion-harms-women argument used                      | general, unspecified suffering         | 12           | 2.4%           | 9            | 12.3%          | 785             | 1.1%           |
| abortion-harms-women argument used                      | harmful to personal life               | 8            | 1.6%           | 7            | 9.6%           | 544             | 0.8%           |
| abortion-harms-women argument used                      | psychological harm                     | 31           | 6.2%           | 23           | 31.5%          | 8106            | 11.5%          |
| abortion-harms-women argument used                      | other a-h-w argument                   | 7            | 1.4%           | 7            | 9.6%           | 308             | 0.4%           |
| how are women portrayed                                 | victims/coerced                        | 15           | 3.0%           | 12           | 16.4%          | 1685            | 2.4%           |
| how are women portrayed                                 | uninformed/misinformed/<br>ignorant    | 12           | 2.4%           | 10           | 13.7%          | 1561            | 2.2%           |
| how are women portrayed                                 | enemy/criminal/selfish                 | 6            | 1.2%           | 5            | 6.8%           | 502             | 0.7%           |
| how are women portrayed                                 | unnatural                              | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| how are women portrayed                                 | grieving mothers                       | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| how are women portrayed                                 | other portrayal                        | 1            | 0.2%           | 1            | 1.4%           | 406             | 0.6%           |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked               | feminism/feminists/<br>pro-choice side | 9            | 1.8%           | 8            | 11.0%          | 1198            | 1.7%           |

|                                           |                                                                |    |      |    |       |      |      |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|----|-------|------|------|
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | abortion<br>providers/clinics/<br>proabortion<br>organizations | 13 | 2.6% | 11 | 15.1% | 1148 | 1.6% |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | censorship                                                     | 8  | 1.6% | 7  | 9.6%  | 1083 | 1.5% |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | proabortion society/<br>proabortion elites                     | 8  | 1.6% | 7  | 9.6%  | 573  | 0.8% |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | other attack                                                   | 5  | 1.0% | 3  | 4.1%  | 381  | 0.5% |
| evidence provided                         | expert/research/study/<br>stats                                | 44 | 8.8% | 26 | 35.6% | 6241 | 8.9% |
| evidence provided                         | common sense/<br>nature/stereotype/logic<br>al                 | 9  | 1.8% | 6  | 8.2%  | 963  | 1.4% |
| evidence provided                         | religious                                                      | 3  | 0.6% | 3  | 4.1%  | 203  | 0.3% |
| evidence provided                         | narrative/<br>personal experience                              | 15 | 3.0% | 8  | 11.0% | 2719 | 3.9% |
| evidence provided                         | explicitly principled                                          |    |      |    |       |      |      |
| evidence provided                         | other evidence                                                 | 2  | 0.4% | 1  | 1.4%  | 190  | 0.3% |
| codes of interest                         | men                                                            | 6  | 1.2% | 5  | 6.8%  | 2759 | 3.9% |
| codes of interest                         | feminist<br>language/concepts                                  | 15 | 3.0% | 11 | 15.1% | 2102 | 3.0% |
| codes of interest                         | general lifestyle<br>judgments                                 | 14 | 2.8% | 11 | 15.1% | 1313 | 1.9% |
| codes of interest                         | stereotypical anti-<br>feminist attacks                        | 3  | 0.6% | 3  | 4.1%  | 523  | 0.7% |
| codes of interest                         | motherhood/<br>pregnancy benefits                              | 17 | 3.4% | 14 | 19.2% | 2722 | 3.9% |
| codes of interest                         | reason/rational/logical                                        | 1  | 0.2% | 1  | 1.4%  | 23   | 0.0% |
| codes of interest                         | disbelieved narratives                                         | 10 | 2.0% | 6  | 8.2%  | 650  | 0.9% |
| codes of interest                         | all-encompassing<br>narrative (no<br>alternatives)             | 1  | 0.2% | 1  | 1.4%  | 13   | 0.0% |
| codes of interest                         | religiosity                                                    | 4  | 0.8% | 2  | 2.7%  | 271  | 0.4% |
| codes of interest                         | strategy                                                       | 5  | 1.0% | 5  | 6.8%  | 668  | 1.0% |

**APPENDIX I: TABLE 8**

| <b>Coding Frequency for Politicians (websites and Hansard)</b> |                                                      |              |                |              |                |                 |                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>Category</b>                                                | <b>Code</b>                                          | <b>Count</b> | <b>% Codes</b> | <b>Cases</b> | <b>% Cases</b> | <b>Nb Words</b> | <b>% Words</b> |
| anti-abortion argument used                                    | fetal personhood                                     | 48           | 17.7%          | 38           | 59.4%          | 3313            | 11.6%          |
| anti-abortion argument used                                    | abortion-harms-society                               | 4            | 1.5%           | 4            | 6.3%           | 527             | 1.9%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                    | abortion-harms-men                                   | 2            | 0.7%           | 1            | 1.6%           | 182             | 0.6%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                    | wrong side of history                                | 1            | 0.4%           | 1            | 1.6%           | 41              | 0.1%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                    | other argument                                       | 9            | 3.3%           | 6            | 9.4%           | 953             | 3.4%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                    | abortion-harms-women argument                        | 28           | 10.3%          | 12           | 18.8%          | 4671            | 16.4%          |
| abortion-harms-women                                           | physical (medical) harm                              | 11           | 4.1%           | 6            | 9.4%           | 2884            | 10.1%          |
| abortion-harms-women                                           | general, unspecified harm                            | 2            | 0.7%           | 2            | 3.1%           | 232             | 0.8%           |
| abortion-harms-women                                           | psychological harm                                   | 7            | 2.6%           | 6            | 9.4%           | 791             | 2.8%           |
| abortion-harms-women                                           | harmful to personal life                             | 1            | 0.4%           | 1            | 1.6%           | 86              | 0.3%           |
| abortion-harms-women                                           | other a-h-w argument                                 | 7            | 2.6%           | 4            | 6.3%           | 1020            | 3.6%           |
| how are women portrayed                                        | victims/coerced                                      | 31           | 11.4%          | 30           | 46.9%          | 3228            | 11.3%          |
| how are women portrayed                                        | uninformed/ignorant                                  | 3            | 1.1%           | 3            | 4.7%           | 128             | 0.5%           |
| how are women portrayed                                        | enemy/criminal/selfish                               | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| how are women portrayed                                        | unnatural                                            | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| how are women portrayed                                        | grieving mother                                      | 3            | 1.1%           | 2            | 3.1%           | 230             | 0.8%           |
| how are women portrayed                                        | other portrayal                                      | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| person/position/organization attacked                          | feminism/feminist/organization attacked              | 1            | 0.4%           | 1            | 1.6%           | 93              | 0.3%           |
| person/position/organization attacked                          | abortion providers/clinics/proabortion organizations | 2            | 0.7%           | 2            | 3.1%           | 309             | 1.1%           |
| person/position/                                               | censorship                                           | 5            | 1.8%           | 4            | 6.3%           | 505             | 1.8%           |

|                                           |                                                |    |       |    |       |      |       |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----|-------|----|-------|------|-------|
| organization attacked                     |                                                |    |       |    |       |      |       |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | proabortion society/<br>proabortion elites     | 6  | 2.2%  | 5  | 7.8%  | 387  | 1.4%  |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | other attack                                   | 1  | 0.4%  | 1  | 1.6%  | 45   | 0.2%  |
| evidence provided                         | expert/research/study/<br>stats                | 23 | 8.5%  | 14 | 21.9% | 2945 | 10.4% |
| evidence provided                         | common sense/<br>nature/stereotype/logic<br>al | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| evidence provided                         | narrative/<br>personal experience              | 15 | 5.5%  | 11 | 17.2% | 1546 | 5.4%  |
| evidence provided                         | religious                                      | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| evidence provided                         | explicitly principled                          | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| evidence provided                         | other evidence                                 | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | men                                            | 4  | 1.5%  | 4  | 6.3%  | 367  | 1.3%  |
| codes of interest                         | feminist<br>language/concepts                  | 38 | 14.0% | 32 | 50.0% | 2674 | 9.4%  |
| codes of interest                         | general lifestyle<br>judgment                  | 1  | 0.4%  | 1  | 1.6%  | 44   | 0.2%  |
| codes of interest                         | stereotypical anti-<br>feminist attack         | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | motherhood/pregnancy                           | 9  | 3.3%  | 9  | 14.1% | 870  | 3.1%  |
| codes of interest                         | reason/rational/logical                        | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | disbelieved narratives                         | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | religiosity                                    | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | strategy                                       | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |

**APPENDIX J: TABLE 9**

| <b>Coding Frequency for Politicians without Bill C-484 (websites and Hansard)</b> |                                                      |              |                |              |                |                 |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>Category</b>                                                                   | <b>Code</b>                                          | <b>Count</b> | <b>% Codes</b> | <b>Cases</b> | <b>% Cases</b> | <b>Nb Words</b> | <b>% Words</b> |
| anti-abortion argument used                                                       | fetal personhood                                     | 26           | 12.6%          | 16           | 45.7%          | 2090            | 8.4%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                                       | abortion-harms-society                               | 4            | 1.9%           | 4            | 11.4%          | 527             | 2.1%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                                       | abortion-harms-men                                   | 2            | 1.0%           | 1            | 2.9%           | 182             | 0.7%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                                       | wrong side of history                                | 1            | 0.5%           | 1            | 2.9%           | 41              | 0.2%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                                       | other argument                                       | 8            | 3.9%           | 5            | 14.3%          | 895             | 3.6%           |
| anti-abortion argument used                                                       | abortion-harms-women argument                        | 27           | 13.1%          | 11           | 31.4%          | 4616            | 18.5%          |
| abortion-harms-women                                                              | physical (medical) harm                              | 11           | 5.3%           | 6            | 17.1%          | 2884            | 11.6%          |
| abortion-harms-women                                                              | general, unspecified harm                            | 2            | 1.0%           | 2            | 5.7%           | 232             | 0.9%           |
| abortion-harms-women                                                              | psychological harm                                   | 6            | 2.9%           | 5            | 14.3%          | 736             | 2.9%           |
| abortion-harms-women                                                              | harmful to personal life                             | 1            | 0.5%           | 1            | 2.9%           | 86              | 0.3%           |
| abortion-harms-women                                                              | other a-h-w argument                                 | 7            | 3.4%           | 4            | 11.4%          | 1020            | 4.1%           |
| how are women portrayed                                                           | victims/coerced                                      | 19           | 9.2%           | 18           | 51.4%          | 2444            | 9.8%           |
| how are women portrayed                                                           | uninformed/ignorant                                  | 3            | 1.5%           | 3            | 8.6%           | 128             | 0.5%           |
| how are women portrayed                                                           | enemy/criminal/selfish                               | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| how are women portrayed                                                           | unnatural                                            | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| how are women portrayed                                                           | grieving mother                                      | 2            | 1.0%           | 1            | 2.9%           | 196             | 0.8%           |
| how are women portrayed                                                           | other portrayal                                      | 0            | 0%             | 0            | 0%             | 0               | 0%             |
| person/position/organization attacked                                             | feminism/feminist/organization attacked              | 1            | 0.5%           | 1            | 2.9%           | 93              | 0.4%           |
| person/position/organization attacked                                             | abortion providers/clinics/proabortion organizations | 2            | 1.0%           | 2            | 5.7%           | 309             | 1.2%           |
| person/position/                                                                  | censorship                                           | 5            | 2.4%           | 4            | 11.4%          | 505             | 2.0%           |

|                                           |                                                |    |       |    |       |      |       |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----|-------|----|-------|------|-------|
| organization attacked                     |                                                |    |       |    |       |      |       |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | proabortion society/<br>proabortion elites     | 6  | 2.9%  | 5  | 14.3% | 387  | 1.6%  |
| person/position/<br>organization attacked | other attack                                   | 1  | 0.5%  | 1  | 2.9%  | 45   | 0.2%  |
| evidence provided                         | expert/research/study/<br>stats                | 21 | 10.2% | 12 | 34.3% | 2809 | 11.3% |
| evidence provided                         | common sense/<br>nature/stereotype/logic<br>al | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| evidence provided                         | narrative/<br>personal experience              | 14 | 6.8%  | 10 | 28.6% | 1490 | 6.0%  |
| evidence provided                         | religious                                      | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| evidence provided                         | explicitly principled                          | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| evidence provided                         | other evidence                                 | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | men                                            | 3  | 1.5%  | 3  | 8.6%  | 312  | 1.3%  |
| codes of interest                         | feminist<br>language/concepts                  | 19 | 9.2%  | 14 | 40.0% | 1536 | 6.2%  |
| codes of interest                         | general lifestyle<br>judgment                  | 1  | 0.5%  | 1  | 2.9%  | 44   | 0.2%  |
| codes of interest                         | stereotypical anti-<br>feminist attack         | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | motherhood/pregnancy                           | 9  | 4.4%  | 9  | 25.7% | 870  | 3.5%  |
| codes of interest                         | reason/rational/logical                        | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | disbelieved narratives                         | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | religiosity                                    | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |
| codes of interest                         | strategy                                       | 0  | 0%    | 0  | 0%    | 0    | 0%    |

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