

**MOBILIZING VICTIMHOOD: BLAMING AND CLAIMING
THE VICTIM IN CONSERVATIVE DISCOURSE IN CANADA**

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to the politics of victimhood, existing academic accounts contend that conservative politics and ideology have largely been defined by a backlash against discourses of victimization. In this respect, North American conservatism is seen as embodying an anti-victimist approach – one where progressive claims of victimhood are represented as the result of an impaired character rather than as the result of systemic cultural and legal discrimination. However, while this literature accurately captures many characteristics of conservative ideology, it risks overlooking the ways that conservative proactively engage *with* the politics of victimhood and victim arguments.

This dissertation offers an examination of the discursive significance of the “victim” in contemporary conservative politics and ideology through an analysis of three realms of conservative politics in Canada: (1) the men’s rights movement, (2) the anti-abortion movement, and (3) the Conservative Party of Canada. Drawing on the results of a large-scale critical discourse analysis and the participant observation of over a dozen conservative events in Canada, this dissertation contends that the debate over the politics of victimhood is not a battle between anti-victim conservative and pro-victim progressives. Rather, contemporary Canadian conservatives are increasingly makers of victim politics – rather than its critics – challenging many academic assumptions made about both conservative ideology and discourse in Canada, as well as the larger politics of victimhood in North America.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZING THE “VICTIM” AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICS

Perhaps more so than ever before, the “victim” has taken on an iconic status in contemporary political discourse. We need to look no further than the meteoric and global rise of the recent #metoo movement to understand how pertinent and abundant claims (and counter-claims) of victimization in North American politics have become. Moreover, discourses of victimization are by no means a new political phenomenon and have a long history on both the left and the right of the political spectrum. We can think, for example, of civil rights activist Rosa Park who has become one of the most recognizable and admired black victims of white racism of the 20th century. Violence against women (VAW) campaigns have also largely succeeded because of their affective appeal to a victim subject – a discourse that has created a political space for women who have largely remained reticent in larger human rights discourse to speak of incidents of gender-based violence (Kapur 2002).

The progressive and feminist use of arguments of victimization, however, has also been met with fierce opposition, particularly from conservatives. In response to claims of victimization, many on the right of the political spectrum charge progressive and feminist campaigns with promoting a “victim mentality” and creating a “culture of victimization” (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010, 274). Current darling of the conservative movement Jordan Peterson, for instance, has suggested that #metoo is not about genuine experiences of victimization but rather, “a concerted effort on the part of the radical, post-modern left” (Blatchford 2018). Former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s repeated refusal to launch an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women – which was framed as an issue best left to police – was also viewed by some as embodying “victim-blaming” tones. At the time, critics suggested that the Harper government

should legitimize the concerns of families instead of continuing to blame Indigenous communities themselves for the victimization experienced by their own people (Big Canoe and Laboucan-Massimo 2015). As a result, the debate over the politics over victimhood has tended to be regarded as one of right vs. left, conservative vs. progressive – with anti-victim conservatives on the one side and pro-victim progressives on the other (Williams 1984; Cole 1999).

The central claim of this dissertation, however, is that the debate over victims and victimization cannot be neatly divided into two diametrically opposed camps – pitting anti-victim conservatives against pro-victim progressives. Rather, tensions and conflicts over what constitutes a “true” or “legitimate” victim cross the boundaries of partisanship and political ideology. Indeed, there is a long history of conservatives being *practitioners* of the politics of victimization. Consider, for example, that conservative activists and politicians regularly describe men as victims of feminism, fetuses as victims of abortion, and society as a victim of racialized gang violence and increasing crime rates. Conservatives have also summoned what many might consider “progressive” frames of victimhood. Both President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Stephen Harper regularly justified their continued military involvement in Afghanistan throughout the 2000s by invoking arguments that framed Afghan women as victims of their patriarchal cultures, often mimicking feminist refrains about male violence against women (Bush 2001).

This dissertation offers an examination of the discursive significance of the “victim” in contemporary Canadian conservative politics and ideology. I argue that while an anti-victimist orientation does indeed remain an important staple of some pockets of conservative politics in North America, conservative politicians and activists by no means limit their arguments to ones that blame victims or decry a “culture of victimization”. Rather, contemporary Canadian

conservatives are increasingly *makers* of victim politics – rather than its critics – challenging many academic assumptions made about both conservative ideology and discourse in Canada, as well as the larger politics of victimhood in North America. In this respect, I suggest that one of the most overlooked and underexplored dimensions of conservative ideology and politics is its close proximity to politics and discourses of victimhood.

In order to contextualize the forthcoming analysis, this introductory chapter proceeds in four main sections. First, section 1.0 presents the main research questions that underpin my examination of conservative discourses of victimization in Canada. Second, I examine why conservative discourse and politics of victimization are an important, and increasingly relevant, site of investigation in the first place. Section 3.0 then provides a brief review of the existing academic literature on both discourses of victimization and conservative discourse and ideology in Canada, suggesting that a significant gap remains in the literature when it comes to the examination of contemporary Canadian conservatives' relationship to the politics and practice of victimhood. And finally, I will conclude by presenting an overview of my main arguments and an outline of the chapters to come.

1.0 Research questions

This dissertation's examination of the framing and deployment of "victim arguments" in contemporary conservative politics in Canada is structured around five broad sets of interconnected questions:

1. The first set of questions address the larger question of **who are the victims in conservative discourse**. These questions seek to determine some basic demographic information about "who" is represented as victimized in conservative discourse. For

instance, in a practical sense, who is framed as a victim? Are conservative victims cisgender men and women, gender queer, or transgender? Are they old or young? Are they racialized, Indigenous, or white? Do they vote in a particular way? And what are the primary causes of their victimization? This set of questions revolves around determining what segments of the Canadian population contemporary conservatives in Canada frame as victims.

2. The second set of questions that structures my analysis is: **how do contemporary conservative actors in Canada represent victims?** At a general level, these questions seek to determine whether conservatives frame victims and victimization in a negative or positive way. Do conservatives dismiss victims' accounts of victimization? Or do they embrace victims and seek to provide them with pathways to restitution, protection, and justice? With what "tone" do conservatives address victims? Ultimately, are conservatives anti-victim, pro-victim, or both?
3. Third, my dissertation asks: **what role does the framing of victims play in the elaboration and communication of larger conservative ideology and policy preferences?** As I will argue below, discourses of victimization provide a lens through which larger ideological and partisan divides can be investigated and theorized. In this respect, I ask, how is the conservative framing of victims used to promote larger conservative politics, policy, and ideology in Canada?

4. The fourth question is: **are there variations in discourses of victimization across the conservative movement in Canada?** For instance, do conservative activists and mainstream politicians approach and frame victims in ways that converge or diverge? Are social conservatives more likely to be anti-victim than their more moderate Conservative Party (CPC) counterparts? Ultimately, how do discourses of victimization differ across the larger “big blue tent” of the conservative movement in Canada?
5. And finally, I ask: **in what ways, if any, are conservative discourses of victimization gendered?** As we will examine in chapter 3, the history of the politics of victimhood has been heavily marked by themes of gender. Therefore, this last set of questions seeks to investigate the ways in which gender is constructed (and/or performed) in order to advance conservative discourses of victimization.

2.0 Why study the politics of victimhood in Canadian conservatism?

The first question that might arise, of course, is why an investigation into conservative discourses of victimization is a necessary and worthwhile endeavor in the first place. What can victim arguments and frames tell us about larger political discourse and ideology? And why focus on the conservative mobilization of these arguments? I point to three broad justifications.

2.1 The rise of the politics and discourses of victimhood

Few would question the salience of discourses of victimization in contemporary politics for they have long played a central role in both political theory, and legal and public discourse. Historically, for instance, the term “victim” has roots in ancient Greek thought as well as in early

religious conceptions of suffering, sacrifice, and death (Lu 2017). Christianity, notions of political martyrdom, and “Jesus’ time on the cross” have all nourished rich conceptions of victimhood and suffering (Cole 2007, 14). The “victim” was also recognized in ancient civilizations, where law often mandated that the victim be recognized as a person who deserved “to be made whole again” by the offender (Dussich 2006). Even throughout the early nineteenth century in colonial Canada and the United States (US), the criminal justice system was “victim-centric” in many ways. Crimes, for instance, were often investigated and prosecuted by victims, emphasizing the personal and individual dimensions of criminality (Elias 1986).

Moreover, by the middle of the twentieth century, legal and political attention on the “victim” intensified as a result of at least two larger political phenomena. The first phenomena occurred in a shift in the ways in which the field of criminology analyzed crime. While some early work by criminologists such as Sutherland (1924), Hentig (1948), Nagel (1949), Ellenberger (1955), Wolfgang (1958), and Schafer (1968) examined the effects of crime on victims, the bulk of the field remained narrowly focused on the scientific study of perpetrators and criminal deviance (Dussich 2006). However, beginning in the 1940s, a growing group of criminologists began to challenge this limited approach. In particular, Benjamin Mendelsohn, the “father of victimology”, advocated an approach to the study of crime and criminality that would apply the concept of science to the study of victims. In 1956, he coined the term “victimology” and recommended the establishment of an international society, which led the way for the founding of the World Society of Victimology in 1973 (Dussich 2006). Since then, the field has become a popular and important academic discipline – one that studies social and political phenomena and causal relationships related to victimizations (Dussich 2006). This shift not only

provided the field of criminology with a vision for studying victims, but also contributed to a shift in larger public and political discourse.

The second factor that challenged the marginalization of victims within the legal and political system was the emergence and success of identity-based social movements throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The civil rights movement remains one of the most pertinent examples of this. Drawing on discourses of victimization – often supported by graphic imagery and personal testimonials of slavery and the Jim Crow era – African American activists sought to highlight the violent reality of being Black in America. Civil rights discourse underscored the ways that Black Americans were victimized by school segregation, systemic employment discrimination, white supremacy, and a racist legal and political system.

In many ways, the civil rights movement's model of activism heavily influenced the structure and arguments of other, subsequent social movements. Alyson Cole argues that “modern emancipatory movements that addressed the oppression of women, Native Americans, Chicanos and Latinos, lesbians and gays, among Others turned first to the African American experience in search of models of mobilization, strategies, and identification” (2007, 15). Auschwitz and Hiroshima also came to supplement slavery and racial discrimination as subjects of victimization, with the plight of European Jews during WWII ultimately cemented views about victimhood, suffering, and trauma into North American public consciousness (Cole 2007, 15).

Building on these frames, arguments that emerged out of the feminist movement – and centered on violence against women – became one of the most well known, and perhaps most successful, examples of discourses of victimization (something that will be further explored in

chapter 3). With the rise of the women's rights movement in the 1970s, feminists argued that women were victims of patriarchy and male violence. The terms "wife abuse" and "battered women" became constructed categories that advocated the necessity for political solutions – such as the need for publicly funded women's shelters and for changes to divorce and custody laws. The victim frame also countered public ideas and arguments that viewed domestic violence as a "private issue" best dealt with within the home, contradicting the popular public perception that women themselves were personally responsible for solving the problem of domestic violence and, at times, for causing the abuse in the first place (Berns 2004, 11). Ultimately, the strategic use of discourses of victimization became crucial in winning over public sympathy, institutionalizing (some) feminist grievances into mainstream politics, and answering the age-old question "why didn't she leave?" (Berns 2004).

By the mid-1980s, both the emergence of victimology as a viable and important realm of academic study, and the successful mobilization of discourses of victimization by social justice movements contributed to bringing the experience and perspective of victims to the center of the political fold. Victims of crimes were becoming the site of intense academic study, which led many scholars to argue that victims needed to be afforded a more meaningful role in criminal proceedings. Moreover, discourses of victimization are increasingly crucial political resources in gaining both social and political recognition and legal rights for marginalized groups.

Therefore, discourses of victimization are worthy sites of investigation not only because of their increasing influence on how criminologists study and understand crime (and related processes of victimization), but also, and perhaps more importantly, because victim arguments have long been a fundamental part of our contemporary political vernacular. By placing "victims" at the center of their political demands and struggle, social justice and equality-seeking

movements even further entrenched discourses of victimization into contemporary political discourse. Moreover, as we will see, it is not only progressive movements that have capitalized on arguments of victimhood. Rather, conservatives have also long recognized the political salience and strategic value of discourses of victimization, countering progressives with their own arguments about victims and, perhaps most stereotypically, “false victims”.

2.2 The practice of the “politics of victimhood” as a form of partisan politics

However, it is not only that “victims” have increasingly become central to political discourse and arguments. Rather, a second justification is that the political use of “victim arguments” offers a window into larger ideological and partisan division and politics. In this regard, unpacking the framing of “who” is a victim is crucial in order to understand how discourses of victimization work to communicate an underlying worldview or ideology. Consider, for example, the recent protests staged by NFL players in the US. After quarterback Colin Kaepernick took the knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality against Black communities, President Trump seized on an opportunity at a political rally in Alabama to call him a “son of a bitch” who “disrespected the flag” and should “get off the field right now” (Graham 2017). The following Sunday, in solidarity with Kaepernick, players, coaches, and managers across the US either crossed arms or took the knee during the national anthem. The protests generated enormous amounts of media attention, and perhaps expectedly, incited a tweet storm from President Trump (Graham 2017).

On the one side, some NFL players and managers stepped forward to decry the treatment of Black communities in America. Black men, they argued, are three times more likely to be killed by police than white men and are five times more likely to be incarcerated (Puglise 2016).

Black communities have been historically and systemically discriminated against and are *victims* of racism in America. On the other side, predictably perhaps, conservative media and politicians, and Donald Trump in particular, argued that such a protest – held during the national anthem no less – was disrespectful and unpatriotic. Extending the victim frame, they argued that veterans and the military that risk their lives “for America” were victimized by such thoughtless and out-of-touch protests (Graham 2017). America, writ large, was also portrayed as a victim. A popular conservative argument following the protest was that the NFL, an organization that is supposed to “bring Americans together”, was instead dividing the country. By allowing these protests to take place, conservatives argued, the NFL chose to “focus on division and anger” (Kyle 2016).

What this example illustrates is how victim frames can subtly, and yet very powerfully and persuasively, communicate larger ideological and political beliefs. If, for example, you believe that the US is a place of equal opportunity where everybody, regardless of race or gender, has the same chance of success, or that you have worked hard for what you have and others haven’t, you are far more likely to believe “regular” Americans – who just want to enjoy a relaxing Sunday of football with their families – are victimized by the inflammatory politics of ungrateful and overpaid athletes. However, if you believe that racial inequality and the mass incarceration of Black men is a problem in America, you are more likely to consider Colin Kaepernick – who has now been blacklisted by the NFL – to be a brave victim and symbol of racism and racial intolerance.

Moreover, politicians very much understand the power of these victim frames. Central to successful political persuasion is the ability of politicians to communicate their ideology or worldview in a way that registers on an emotional level with constituents. And the victim frame has the power to do just that. If you believe, for example, that America is victimized by the

divisive identity-based politics of the NFL, the “veteran” becomes the perfect victim frame. The veteran is noble and patriotic. He has died for his country. He represents real American values both abroad and at home. He is silent and serves his country loyally without speaking out, without playing divisive “victim politics.” The veteran is an ideal victim – one that represents what society must protect and stand for. It is not difficult, then, to understand why politicians across the political spectrum, but especially conservatives, so often invoke the veteran in order to promote their ideas and policies.

2.3 The changing nature of conservative victim arguments

However, while certain victim arguments work to “prime” or “activate” larger ideological orientation and worldviews (for example, the link between the veteran subject and conservative values), victim arguments can also be used by politicians in ways that challenge many of the assumptions we might make for broader partisan alignment and ideology. The fact that the victim is such a salient and powerful discursive force means that discourses of victimization are a very persuasive and compelling political tool – one that holds the potential of registering on an “affective” level.

Moreover, as we will see in the chapters to come, there are signs that Canadian conservatives in particular are shifting the ways that they approach and frame victims. Consider, for example, the somewhat ridiculous 2016 scandal that came to be known as “Elbowgate”, the incident in which Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was accused of having “manhandled” two opposition members of Parliament in the House of Commons (Global News 2016). The details of how Elbowgate “went down” are, of course, controversial and contested. It took place as opposition MPs sought to delay a closure motion on the final reading of Bill C-14, a bill to

amend the Criminal Code to allow physician-assisted dying. In interviews with CBC News, Green Party leader Elizabeth May recounted that some NDP members were deliberately seeking to disrupt proceedings and refused to clear the aisle to allow the vote to proceed (something denied by the NDP). Watching the situation, Trudeau crossed the floor of the House, took hold of Conservative Party Whip Gordon Brown's arm to guide him through the group, and allegedly shouted to the other MPs "Get the fuck out of my way" (Global News 2016). NDP MP Ruth-ellen Brosseau stated that in the confusion, Trudeau elbowed her in the chest, later telling the House she had felt overwhelmed and had gone to sit in the lobby, missing the vote as a result.

The following day, media frenzy surrounded the incident. News analysts dissected and picked apart video footage of the incident; MPs were interviewed; and op-eds were run in every major national newspaper. Back in the House of Commons, MPs spent no less than five hours discussing the altercation, with Trudeau apologizing to the House several times for his actions (Global News 2016). Most pertinent for this discussion is the fall-out over Elbowgate highlights a few interesting insights about the partisan practice of victimhood in Canada. In particular, the invocation of very similar discourses of victimization by both Conservative and NDP MPs raises interesting implications for how we understand the political use of victim arguments. Let us briefly examine three "discourses of victimization" that emerged out of Elbowgate.

The first is what one might call a "victim-blaming response". Interestingly, this response largely came from the larger Canadian public – and not the parties themselves. Brosseau said after the incident she received telephone calls to her office accusing her of "crying wolf" (Global News 2016). One tweet directed at Brosseau stated, "[Trudeau] accidentally brushed your chest with his arm. You act like he shot you in the face. #YouMockRealAssaultVictims" (cited in Kirkup 2016). Even the Beaverton, Canada's news satire publication, ran a parody article with

the headline, “Entire NDP caucus arrive in neck braces, wheelchairs to House of Commons after Trudeau’s assault” alongside a picture of then-NDP Leader Tom Mulcair in a neck brace (Hunt 2016). However, not only did this anti-victimist argument draw on the idea that Brosseau was “playing the victim” for political gain, it often linked supporting Brosseau with a larger feminist cause. For example, one men’s rights thread on Reedit took this “false victim” argument even further, asking, “[h]ow are feminists expecting the average person to take them seriously about any real issues, when this gets blown up like he raped her in the middle of parliament” (Kill_Frosty 2016).

The second “victim” response came from NDP MPs. For instance, NDP MP Pierre Nantel argued that Trudeau approached Brosseau with “such determination that it was clear he was furious and determined to make it physical” (Smith 2016). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the NDP sought to link Brosseau’s victimization to their larger ideological and policy platform – one that has consistently advocated for gender equality. NDP MP Nicki Ashton believed that the matter should be considered assault and that Trudeau’s action represented a form of violence against women, arguing, “[w]hat I will say, if we apply a gendered lens, it is very important that young women in this space feel safe to come here and work here... He made us feel unsafe and we’re deeply troubled by the conduct of the prime minister of this country” (Smith 2016). Of course, this argument is perhaps expected given that this use of discourses of victimization fits into a long history within the NDP of deploying progressive and feminist victim arguments.

The third response came from the Conservative Party, and is more surprising. Given much of the literature on the conservative ideology and politics of victimhood (Williams 1984; Cole 1999; Laycock 2002; see chapter 3), one might expect the arguments of Conservative MPs to more closely resemble the first response, one that vilifies the “practice” of victim politics. Of

course, some comments inevitably framed the incident as victimizing conservatives. Former Minister Jason Kenney, for example, called Trudeau's actions "unforgivable" and suggested that "if Stephen Harper had ever physically bullied MPs like Justin Trudeau, there would be immediate and widespread demands for his resignation", which is perhaps a fair point (Smith 2016).

However, the vast majority of Conservative responses, rather unexpectedly, echoed their NDP colleagues. Peter Kent suggested that Trudeau's actions were in contempt of Parliament; Peter Julian compared the incident to violent outbreaks in other countries; and Michael Cooper said he considered Trudeau's actions to constitute criminal assault (all three of whom are Conservative MPs) (Smith 2016). Even more surprising, however, was the feminist argument invoked by several female Conservative MPs. Former Minister Lisa Raitt, for example, tweeted, "[t]he aftermath of some saying the NDP caused the reaction of the PM, so she deserved it, has gender-like nuance. Victims don't cause violence... Hard for women to come forward with complaints when that's the reaction" (quoted Smith 2016). Moreover, Raitt's tweet was linked to a past statement (by colleague Michelle Rempel) condemning Jian Ghomeshi and stating the importance of "believing women". Perhaps counter-intuitively, Conservatives also linked Elbowgate to larger feminist and progressive arguments about gendered victimization.

Conservative MPs' reaction to Elbowgate points to another reason why victim arguments are such an interesting and potentially revelatory site of analysis. For the ways that "victims" are invoked can often challenge many of the dominant assumptions about a party's platform or ideology. Of course, it could be that Lisa Raitt was simply playing partisan politics, relishing the opportunity to decry a then-popular and out-spoken "feminist" Liberal government and prime minister. However, as this dissertation will argue, there are also signs that indicate it might be

emblematic of a larger reorientation of (at least some) factions of the conservative movement and Party towards issues of women, victims, and sexual violence. In this sense, not only can one's choice of "victim frame" signal "what side you are on" by activating and priming certain "networks of association" (as is the case with Donald Trump and Colin Kaepernick) (Westen 1985). But victim arguments might also offer conservative parties and politicians a pathway through which they can extend their ideological and appeals (perhaps, for example, to women who support Trudeau in the case of Lisa Raitt).

3.0 Literature review

Given the prevalence of discourses of victimization in the political realm, it is not surprising that scholars have long addressed questions about the political mobilization of victim arguments. In particular, there are three relevant literatures that have theorized questions of victim politics and contemporary conservative politics: (1) the literature on the global mobilization of discourses and arguments of victimhood, (2) the scholarship on the relationship between conservative ideology and victim politics, and (3) the literature on conservative politics and the history of the CPC. As I will argue throughout this section, these three groupings of literatures are very helpful in thinking about the politics of victimhood and its broad relationship to conservative politics and ideology in Canada. However, despite the depth and breadth of the existing scholarship, there exists no academic account that *explicitly* examines the mobilization of discourses of victimization by conservative politicians and activists, particularly in Canada. In this respect, my dissertation seeks to fill important gaps in the existing literature on both the politics of victimhood, and conservative politics and ideology in Canada.

3.1 The literature on victim politics

The literature on victim politics and discourse is large and vast, with a variety of academic disciplines contributing to its proliferation. Scholars, for instance, have long addressed questions of criminal victimization (Elias 1986); the legal recognition of victims (Wilke 2007); victim claims as avenues for the expansion of human rights and transnational justice (Meister 2002; Lu 2017); the social and political representations of victims (Siniver 2012); the psychological and collective dynamics of victimhood (Daniel Bar-Tal et al. 2009); victimhood as violence (Yildiz and Verkyten 2011); and victimhood as partisan (Williams 1984). Together, these studies challenge existing assumptions about victimhood in diverse political, geographical and temporal contexts (Jacoby 2014). In particular, the scholarship on victim politics exposes four important components of “victim discourses” that are worth pausing to consider.

First, arguments about victimization – and related claims of victimhood – are a salient and productive form of political argument. This, for example, is the argument that Catherine Lu puts forth in her 2017 book *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics*. Lu suggests, “in political conditions that have culminated in war, oppression, or atrocity, attention turns to the urgent but confounding task of settling accounts” (2017, 63). And indeed, for Lu, claims of victimhood are one means of expressing and drawing attention to those injustices, for “those harmed in such contexts, as well as their supporters, typically seek ways to have their status as victims recognized and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account” (2017, 63). This is why in the face of “worries about ‘the cultivation of victimhood’ as a political pathology” and the related argument that “the peaceful regeneration of societies [might] actually proceed more smoothly if people were not encouraged to focus on claims of victimhood, moral injury, and rectification”, Lu disagrees. She argues that abandoning the concepts of victim and victimization is not “the right answer, nor is it likely to be a realistic one”. Rather, she suggests that, “[t]o understand

properly the idea of justice as settling accounts, it will be essential to clarify how we are to think about victims, how we even determine who they are, what it means to take their view, and what is involved in giving victims their due” (Lu 2017, 66). For Lu, then, even though claims of victimhood are often fraught with political conflict – and risk exacerbating tensions, rather than soothing them – the notion of the “victim” should not be abandoned. This is, in large part, because victim discourses function as a fundamental and powerful means through which justice can be understood and achieved.

This leads to a second dimension of discourses of victimhood raised in the literature. Because claims of victimhood are normatively charged and occur within larger ideological and political systems (which recognize some victim claims while denying others), scholars contend that they are fundamentally *subjective* (Saeed 2015; Fassin and Rechtman 2009). Judith Shklar, for example, insists that victimhood “has an irreducibly subjective component that the normal model of justice [and its assignment of victimhood] cannot easily absorb” (1990, 37). Therefore, perhaps most importantly, victim claims are not neutral discursive appeals, but rather are deeply intertwined with relations of power. The literature on victim politics, then, largely suggests that the ability of one’s group to define a victim (or be so defined) grants legitimacy and often opens some avenues for “justice” to some groups and not to others.

Third and related, discourses of victimization are argued to be affective and emotional (Loseke 2009; Ebersole 2000; Karstedt 2002; Hoggett and Thompson 2012). As David Welch explains, the experience of injustice “triggers a unique emotional response. It engages powerful passions that have the effect of increasing the stridency of demands, amplifying intransigence, reducing sensitivity to threats and value trade-offs, increasing the willingness to run risks, and increasing the likelihood of violent behavior” (1995, 12-13). In particular, the proliferation of

standpoint testimonials within discourses of victimization (one can think, for example, of the global #metoo campaign) often successfully transforms issues that have been considered “matters of private, intimate, or personal relations into objects of public concern” (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010, 276). Such personal accounts mobilize an emotional or “affective” register in ways that were significantly shaped by (and in turn came to shape) liberal understandings of cruelty, trauma, and political suffering (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010, 277).

While the scholars cited above largely understand discourses of victimization to be, at least potentially, a productive avenue for pursuits of justice, other scholars are much more critical of their mobilization. As Catherine Lu reminds us, there is an ever-present danger that individual experiences of victimhood will be “transform[ed] or co-opt[ed]” into political claims by collectives and states (Lu 2017, 76). And, indeed, a large feminist scholarship has emerged that critiques the mobilization of claims of victimhood, suggesting that due to their normative, subjective, and affective nature, discourses of victimization should be approached with great caution and skepticism (Cole 2007).

In this sense, feminists and postcolonial scholars have long sought to situate and problematize conceptions of victimhood based on sex, gender identity, race, class, (dis)ability, and sexuality in the dominant power structures of the international system (Enloe 1989; Peterson 1992; Tickner 1992; Jiwani 2009; Jiwani and Young 2006; Gilchrist 2010; Razack 2000). Makau Mutua, for instance, has criticized the global human rights regime for privileging certain kinds of injustice while ignoring others. On her telling, “[t]he human rights movement recognizes only a particular type of victim... individuals who have suffered specific abuses arising from the state’s transgression of internationally recognized human rights” (2001, 201). Feminist scholar Wendy Brown concurs, further suggesting that victim discourses can further lead to depoliticization,

which “involves removing a political phenomenon from comprehension of its *historical* emergence and from a recognition of the *powers* that produce and contour it” (2001, 15).

In this respect, feminist and race scholars insist that the intersections between race, ability, class, and gender heavily influence the mobilization of discourses of victimization. According to Rarna Kapur, for instance, the “‘Third World’ victim subject has come to represent the more victimized subject; that is, the real or authentic victim subject” (2002, 2). Contemporary Canadian feminist scholars have also long examined the multiple ways that women, and in particular racialized and Indigenous women, have been to varying degrees represented as helpless victims in need of rescue (Jiwani 2009; Jiwani and Young 2006; Gilchrist 2010; Razack 2000). At the center of this feminist critique of victim arguments is the notion that representations of victims are inherently gendered and racialized, often working to undermine the lived experience and agency of marginalized communities. Most commonly, feminist scholars argue that discourses of victimization function to position women – and in particular racialized women – as victims, often contrasting “foreign” victims and villains to an unmarked homogenous national (and moral) majority (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010, 282). In this respect, the feminist scholarship suggests that the victim subject simply serves to reinforce gender and cultural essentialism.

Summarizing, the above scholars have long addressed questions of victims and victimization from a variety of analytic, theoretical, and political perspectives and, therefore, the literature on politics of victimhood is helpful in many ways. In particular, this literature highlights how claims of victimhood have heavily shaped legal and political approaches to justice and retribution. It is also useful in identifying the key characteristics of discourses of victimization – as political and legal arguments that are salient and productive; subjective and normative; but also potentially

dangerous and capable of stoking political conflict and tension. And finally, existing feminist theorizations of discourses of victimization are particularly valuable in unpacking the ideological, gendered, and racialized dimensions surrounding the mobilization of victim arguments.

However, the literature on victim politics and discourse often stops short of examining the more explicitly partisan and political dimensions of discourses of victimization, particularly in Canada. Largely departing from a global or transnational perspective, many scholars treat the mobilization of victim arguments by liberal democratic nation-states as relatively homogenous and unpartisan (Enloe 1989; Peterson 1992; Jacoby 2014). In this sense, discourses of victimization mobilized by states are generally assumed to be relatively consistent regardless of what party or government is in charge. Moreover, while Canadian scholars have critiqued the Canadian government's mobilization of gendered and racialized victim arguments (Jiwani 2009; Jiwani and Young 2006; Gilchrist 2010; Razack 2000), there exists no examination of the mobilization of victim arguments as an explicitly political exercise on the part of conservative activists, politicians, and partisans. Therefore, while the literature on victim politics is useful in theorizing the defining characteristics and emotional appeal of victim arguments, it does not focus on the explicitly political or partisan dimensions of victim arguments, and even less so in conservative Canada.

3.2 Conservative ideology and victimhood

A second literature that is helpful in thinking about politics of victimization is the literature on the relationship between victim politics and conservative psychology and ideology in North America. While this relationship will be examined in more detail in chapter 3, at a general level, this scholarship links conservatism with an “anti-victimist” ideological orientation

(Lakoff 2009; Westen 1985; Cole 2007). In particular, existing research raises three important insights about the relationship between conservative politics and the discourses of victimization that are relevant to my own examination of conservative discourses of victimization in Canada.

First, scholars contend an anti-victimist ideological orientation and the deployment of discourses of victim-blaming have come to dominate political and institutional culture, particularly on the right of the political spectrum (Williams 1984; see also chapter 3). In *The Cult of True Victimhood*, for example, Alyson Cole convincingly argues that throughout the 1980s American Republicans came to increasingly approach “victims” with great skepticism and scrutiny, demanding that “so-called” victims convincingly “prove” their victimization (Cole 2007). Moreover, much of the psychological research since at least the 1980s indeed confirms that conservatives are more likely to “blame the victim” than liberals, with American researchers and psychologists regularly arguing that one’s propensity to “blame the victim” is positively linked to the conservatism of their worldview (Anderson, Cooper & Okamura 1997; Lambert & Raichle 2000). For instance, two psychological experiments conducted with liberal and conservative university students in Maine found not only that conservatives were more likely to blame welfare recipients (regardless of the reasons for their reliance on welfare programs), but that conservatives were less likely than liberals to express feelings of sympathy and more likely to express disgust towards individuals who rely on social assistance (Williams 1984).

Second, scholars suggest that the conservative anti-victimist ideology intensified throughout the 1970s and 1980s largely in response to the rise of progressive and identity-based social movements and their own deployment of discourses of victimization (see chapter 3 for full discussion). For example, Jacobsen and Stenvoll argue that “the populist right’s efforts to delegitimize the claims made for right by minoritized groups” are based on conservatives’

concern with a weak and unproductive “victim mentality” (2010, 276). As we will see throughout this dissertation, this does not mean that conservatives fundamentally destabilize dominant dichotomies between “victims” and “perpetrators” or “them” and “us”. But, rather, conservatives often reposition so-called victims as more or less ideal and deserving victims, and attribute blame and guilt (Jacobsen and Stenvoll 2010, 276).

This leads to the third characteristic of the conservative relationship to victimhood raised in the literature. Since anti-victimism largely emerged in opposition to progressive political forces, scholars argue that the *denial* of victim claims often permeates conservative responses to claims of victimhood. Given this propensity to distrust claims of victimhood, existing academic accounts suggest conservatives (but also larger legal and political structures) have come to demand idealized forms of victimhood (Cole 2007; Lu 2017). Lu, for example, maintains that by such a standard, “authentic” victimhood typically consists of “innocent and powerless women and children who need to be comforted, rather than driven young men and women who become armed rebels or insurgents” (2017, 71). Moreover, conservative representations of “victims” often emphasize their powerlessness, loss, and confusion rather than their sense of injustice and capacity for resistance and vengeance (Lu 2017; see also, Jiwani 2009; Jiwani and Young 2006; Gilchrist 2010; Razack 2000). For those engaged in political or ideological conflict, when opponents do not measure up to the “saintly image of victimhood”, they are not acknowledged as “real” victims (Lu 2017, 71). In this context, for conservatives to believe victims, victims must be constructed as sympathetic, innocent, morally righteous, and completely blameless (something that will be further discussed in chapter 3) (Cole 2007).

The literature on conservatism and victim politics is instructive for my own investigation of Canadian conservatism in a couple of ways. First, it adds a political dimension to the

examination of discourses of victimization. Scholars indeed confirm that political ideology and/or partisan identification fundamentally affects one's positioning to victims and processes of victimization – with conservatives being more likely to “blame the victim” (Anderson, Cooper & Okamura 1997; Lambert & Raichle 2000). Second, the literature suggests that debates over “victim claims” intensified with the rise of progressive, identity-based social movements. As the 1980s progressed and progressive political movements gained visibility and traction, claims of systemic victimization became increasingly subjected to political – but especially conservative – scrutiny and contestation (Cole 2007). This literature suggests that examining discourses of victimization in a contemporary context – where so-called “identity politics” are at the forefront of so many political conversations and debates – might raise interesting insights about the political mobilization of discourses of victimization, particularly in conservative politics.

However, while this literature provides important ideological and historical background for my own examination of conservative discourses of victimization, it does not directly address questions of Canadian conservatism. In particular, the existing literature is heavily focused on the American political context. In fact, as we will see below, the larger Canadian scholarship has largely been silent on questions examining the relationship between political discourses of victimization and conservative politics and activism. Despite the obvious influence of victim arguments on contemporary politics and discourse more widely, there exists no robust account of the role that discourses of victimization play in structuring conservative strategy, politics, and ideology in Canada. In this respect, my project seeks to contribute to the existing literature on conservatism and the politics of victimhood through an analysis of contemporary conservative activists and politicians in Canada.

3.3 Literature on conservative ideology and discourse in Canada

The third and final literature that sheds light on questions of discourses of victimization and Canadian conservatism focuses on conservative politics, political persuasion, and ideology in contemporary Canada. This literature examines many interesting aspects of conservatism – including elements that are important to my own analysis of conservative discourses of victimization. In particular, this scholarship is helpful in providing the necessary historical and ideological context for my analysis by identifying two key characteristics of conservative politics and ideology in Canada.

First, Canadian scholars largely agree that the discursive and ideological orientation of contemporary conservative politics in Canada was fundamentally changed by the emergence – and subsequent take-over of the CPC – by the Reform Party. Scholars suggest that the Reform Party’s increasing popularity throughout the 1990s came to form a formidable challenge the Progressive Conservative Party’s adherence to vestiges of the Tory tradition (Patten 2016; Sawyer 2004; Snor and Moffitt 2012). In the 1997 federal election, Reform surpassed their Progressive Conservative counterparts, and was elected official opposition to the Chrétien Liberal government. In contrast to the more moderate and, at times, interventionist, “red Tory” approach of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Reform Party injected a hard-line free-market approach into mainstream Canadian politics (Laycock 2002; 12). David Laycock contends that compared to its Progressive Conservative counterpart, the Reform Party favoured “the market over political deliberation, hard-edged negotiation strategies over accommodation of differences between regions and classes, and attention to the needs of individual entrepreneurs over the needs of the disadvantaged” (Laycock 2002, 12). From its Western regionalist roots, the Reform Party’s platform grew quickly, adopting positions in favour of free trade, lower taxes, and in

opposition to the Meech Lake constitutional agreement and an interventionist federal state (Laycock 2002).

Scholars further contend that the influence of the Reform Party on conservative politics and ideology in Canada was cemented in 2003 when the Reform/Alliance merged with the Progressive Conservative Party, and consolidated under the leadership of Reformer and future prime minister, Stephen Harper (Laycock 2002; Farney 2012; Flanagan 2009; Saurette and Gunster 2011, 2013). While previous Progressive Conservative parties, led by red Tories such as Diefenbaker and Joe Clark, may have tilted towards incremental change, the virtues of pragmatism, compromise and balance, scholars argue that the contemporary CPC is much “blue tory” than a “red”. Since 2003, the CPC has consistently campaigned on supporting lower taxes, the reduction of federal spending, state security, and a “tough on crime” approach to issues of criminal justice (see chapter 7 for full discussion). According to Steve Patten, the modern CPC is a party defined by neoliberalism, and thus has injected a free market ethos into Canadian conservative politics, which marginalizes competing currents of conservatism (2016). Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party included voices that resisted radical individualism, the CPC – as well as the larger conservative movement – has come to fully embrace free market individualism (Farney 2012).

The second relevant insight raised by Canadian scholars is the fact that the larger conservative movement in Canada is ideologically diverse and has been historically been marked by intense disputes and internal tensions (Gagnon and Tanguay 2016). At a general level, the conservative movement has been described as the “big blue tent”, which shelters varying strains of, and perspectives on, Canadian conservatism. As we have seen, the root of this ideological tension is often considered to be the split between “red Tories” and “blue Tories” within a

unified conservative party (Leuprecht 2003; Marland and Flanagan 2013; Behiels 2010). Scholars argue that the prototypical “red Tory” largely upholds British institutions and traditions; is suspicious of arguments about the “market being supreme”; and doesn’t oppose state intervention for a collectivist good. On social issues, the red Tory is more likely to be “tolerant”, often supporting – or at least not actively opposing – abortion and same-sex marriage (Farney 2012). By contrast, “blue Tories” subscribe to frugality in spending, social conservatism, anti-statism, and a preference for markets over governments in economic matters. This “Tory divide” has led scholars to argue that Canadian conservatism embodies a “dual nature”. Perlin, for example, argues that conservatives in Canada have long had to balance competing conceptions of conservatism, with “collectivism and privilege” on one side, and “individualism and freedom” on the other (Perlin 1980).

However, others have contended that contemporary conservatism in Canada is far more “rhizomatic” than it is dualistic (Saurette and Gunster 2013; see also Cochrane 2015), for the conservative movement has always been comprised by more than just red and blue Tories (see chapters in Farney and Rayside 2013; Cochrane 2015). Rather, the term “conservative” is applied to a wide range of different ideological and policy positions. Some see conservatism as a set of ideals and principles, others as a moral code. Whereas neoliberal conservatives are concerned with limiting the role of government – emphasizing free markets and individual autonomy – social conservatives are likely focused on tradition, law, order, and individual responsibility (Farney and Rayside 2013).

Understandings of conservatism in Canada have also varied across time and context. For instance, while the emergence of the Reform Party paralleled conservative trends throughout other parts of the world – most notably in the US under the presidency of Ronald Reagan – there

are also important differences in the emergence of the new right in Canada and the socially conservative brand of socio-cultural backlash politics that has taken hold in the US (Faudi 1991). James Farney, for example, suggests that while the US and Canada share many similarities – particularly when it comes to economic, free-market conservatism – there are also significant and noteworthy differences between the two countries – especially when it comes to social conservatism. While in the 1960s, the free-market, libertarian wing of the Republican Party began to elaborate religious and moral arguments in the US, Canada saw no such emergence of social conservatism. Instead, largely as a result of the disorganization of conservative politics in Canada throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government was able to liberalize laws surrounding abortion, divorce, and homosexuality with minimal conservative opposition. As a result, the conservative movement in Canada never framed its argumentation predominantly around religious or moral righteousness, but rather prioritized market-based arguments.

However, there are also signs that the conservative movement is strategically seeking to remedy this focus on the market. To this end, Saurette and Gunster have argued that over the past 20 years, both the CPC and the larger conservative movement have become increasingly focused on cultivating and popularizing a conservative philosophical position, a stance which might further distance Canadian conservatism from its American counterpart. New forms of Canadian conservative ideology, for example, are quite distinct from the backlash, culture-war-type conservatism that has emerged dominant in the American conservative movement. Of course, one needs to look no further than Doug Ford's takeover of the Conservative Party of Ontario to understand that conservatives continue to employ some tones and arguments of backlash populism. However, many other factions of the conservative movement (for example, Ford's

predecessor Patrick Brown) have developed what Saurette and Gunster have coined “cappuccino conservatism” (2013).

Saurette and Gunster believe that cappuccino conservatism – a “frothier and sweeter version” of conservatism – holds the potential of being key to the long-term success of the CPC. Because most successful political parties understand that cultivating a hospitable ideological climate is key to political persuasion, Saurette and Gunster argue that new conservative strategies are seeking to embed a challenge to liberal ideological dominance (2013). On their telling, there is growing evidence that many important actors in the conservative movement are seeking to “conservatize” Canada’s political culture not *by replacing* progressive political values (for example, individual choice, tolerance, pluralism, equality) but rather by *redefining* these values in a way that favours conservative policies and ideology (Saurette and Gunster 2013).

Moreover, there has been some analysis of the ways in which conservatives have begun to implement many of these subtle value changes. Saurette and Gunster, for instance, argue that Preston Manning and Mike Harris have been key architects of this shift, rejecting explicitly anti-elitist backlash discourse with an optimistic perspective that embraces novelty and change and boasts that “Canada’s best is yet to come” (Saurette and Gunster 2013). Jason Kenney’s “ethnic outreach” is also an oft-cited example of this subtle value shift. By contesting the LPC’s claim on immigrant values throughout the 2011 election campaign, the CPC secured the largest share of the “new Canadian” vote in Canada, winning a Parliamentary majority as a result (Kwak 2017).

This existing literature on conservative politics in Canada is instructive to my own project in at least three important ways. First, Canadian scholars are helpful in thinking about the

relationship between the institutional and organizational structure of conservative parties, and the broad – and decidedly neoliberal – ideological orientation of conservatism in Canada. Second, the Canadian literature on conservatism also helps us in distinguishing many of the important ways that Canadian and American conservatism are overlapping and yet distinct political entities. The work of James Farney (2012), in particular, demonstrates that Evangelicals – and the larger Christian Right – were able to exercise significant control in determining the agenda and leadership of the Republican Party in the US. By contrast, in Canada, social conservative and religious groups and ideas have been largely marginalized within mainstream Canadian conservatism. According to Didi Herman, while the US witnessed a shift towards a conservative “Moral Majority” throughout the 1980s, Canadians experience the reverse, an equally significant shift towards a liberal consensus (1994). This has meant that there have long existed important distinctions between American and Canadian conservative policies, electoral strategies, and ideological orientations. And third, this literature is also instructive in disrupting the idea that the conservative movement, or Party, is a homogenous and unchanging political entity. Rather, scholars suggest, at the very least, that conservative politics in Canada have always been “dualistic” in nature. However, academic accounts of conservative politics in Canada increasingly reveal that conservative ideology is perhaps more pluralistic than it is dualistic. The work of Saurette and Gunster, for instance, demonstrates that ways in which conservative ideas and strategy are constantly being challenged, contested and re-defined.

However, despite the compelling insights raised in the literature, there still remain a number of important gaps in our understandings of conservative ideology and politics. First, much of the existing literature does not necessarily take conservative *discourse* as its primary site of analysis. While many scholars of Canadian politics supplement their accounts with examples

from conservative speeches and documents, few existing accounts take discourse as its central unit of analysis. In this respect, as I will explain in detail in chapter 2, both my theoretical and methodological approach to studying conservative discourse seeks to contribute to the scholarship on conservatism by explicitly analyzing the discursive justifications, framings, and explicit arguments used by conservative activists and politicians in Canada.

Second, the literature on conservative politics in Canada is heavily focused on the CPC, often to the exclusion of other more marginalized areas of the conservative movement. My analysis seeks to fill this gap by placing the CPC in conversation with other realms of conservative activism, allowing me to draw underexplored connections and comparisons between different areas of conservatism in Canada and to consider how they might work to influence each other. My project adds to the existing literature, then, by explicitly considering what studying men's rights and anti-abortion activism can teach us about the politics and discursive strategies of the CPC, and vice versa.

And finally, no existing academic account of conservative politics in Canada specifically examines the mobilization of discourses of victimization by Canadian conservatives. As will be explored in chapter 3, scholars have often indirectly commented on the conservative use of (particularly populist-inspired) arguments about victims. However, there exists no explicit and rigorous investigation into the ways in which conservative discourses of victimization function within larger Canadian conservative politics. In this respect, this project contributes to the growing literature on Canadian conservatism through an investigation of its mobilization of discourses of victimization.

4.0 Arguments and chapter outline

This dissertation is centered on three broad arguments about conservative politics and discourses of victimization. My first argument is that despite popular and academic assumptions about the conservative movement being anti-victimist, discourses of victimization are actually central to conservative political persuasion and ideology. In this respect, I argue conservatives are not only, or even primarily, defined by an anti-victimist ideology. Rather, they are *key producers* of the politics of victimhood.

My second argument is that the conservative movement's mobilization of victim arguments in Canada might be best characterized as "ambidextrous". On the "right-hand", many of the discourses of victimization that will be examined throughout this dissertation are rather expected forms of conservative argumentation. Unsurprisingly, conservative activists and politicians continue to invoke right-handed victim arguments, which present women and minorities as "false victims", or conversely, draw on arguments about "victims of crime" to justify the need for more punitive laws against criminals. These types of arguments are stereotypically conservative, often centered on the "victimization" of hard-working Canadians, taxpayers, children, victims of crime, and grieving parents. What these "rightist" victims all have in common is that they are mobilized, at least in part, because of the uncomplicated and idealized nature of their victimization.

However, these right-handed arguments are by no means the only victim arguments evoked by Canadian conservatives. In fact, they might not even be the most notable. For other conservative discourses mobilize more "left-handed" representations of victims and victimization. For instance, anti-abortion activists have sanitized many of their typical "victim

blaming” arguments, replacing them with more compassionate arguments about women and victimization. Moreover, when criminalizing sex work, conservative politicians did not draw on “tough on crime” victim discourses but rather on feminist-inspired arguments about the systemic marginalization of women. Perhaps most significantly, these left-handed arguments challenge many academic and popular assumptions made about conservative discourse and ideology by re-deploying language and tones more commonly associated with progressive discourse and ideology.

And finally, my third argument is that gender is fundamental in shaping the mobilization of these two different forms of conservative discourses of victimization. Depending on the gendered context, conservatives often shift not only the structure and content of victim arguments and narratives, but also their tone, sensibility, and performance. In this sense, conservative discourses of victimization can activate at least two very different sets of gendered emotions from its audience: masculine notions of toughness and punishment, and feminine virtues of compassion and protection. Moreover, the inclusion of softer, and even progressive-sounding, victim arguments by conservatives activists and politicians signals that this may well be an emerging capacity within the larger conservative movement. At the center of the dissertation, then, is the argument that conservative activists and politics are strategic about their mobilization of discourses of victimization – very much tailoring their victim argument to the particular, and often gendered, situation at hand.

In fleshing out these arguments, each chapter of this dissertation offers a “snapshot” of different areas of larger conservative politics in Canada – as well as their relationship to victim arguments and discourse. Given my focus on *discourse*, chapter 2 lays out my theoretical and methodological choices. Shaped by a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, I present my

three primary methodologies: (1) a historical and theoretical overview of conservative discourses of victimization in North America since the 1970s, (2) a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of contemporary conservative discourse, and (3) the participant observation of key conservative events in Canada.

I begin my investigation into conservative victim arguments in chapter 3 by providing an historical and theoretical overview of what I consider to be the three main conservative discourses of victimization in North America: victim-blaming, victim-making, and victim-protecting. This chapter highlights the historical complexity of North American conservative victim arguments. I argue that the variation with which conservatives mobilize victim arguments holds the potential of impacting the future ideological and discursive direction of the conservative movement in Canada.

Chapter 4 begins my empirical investigation of Canadian conservative discourse by focusing on a particular area of conservative activism: men's rights activism. Drawing on the findings of a mixed method analysis of the men's rights movement (MRM), the central claim of this chapter is that while the MRM in Canada is by no means a cohesive or unified movement, a reliance on discourses and narratives of victimization underpins and structures the majority of men's rights discourse and arguments in Canada. In fact, the arguments around victimhood taken up by the MRM closely mirror two of the three main conservative discourses of victimization outlined in chapter 3. In this sense, the MRM provides an interesting example of the rightist victim arguments mobilized in Canadian conservative activist circles.

Chapter 5 continues my examination of conservative activist politics in Canada through an investigation into the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion movement. This chapter suggests

that while an anti-victimist ideological and discursive approach continues to influence some areas of contemporary anti-abortion activism (particularly in the hyper-charged American abortion debate), the Canadian movement has also shifted its relationship to victim politics. Departing from the victim and woman-blaming ethos that defined 1980s anti-abortion activism, this chapter argues that contemporary activists have taken up a new left-handed approach that claims to protect victims. The central claim of this chapter is that the anti-abortion discourses of victimization – as well as their approach to victims and women – are fundamentally shifting in ways that challenge many of the academic and popular assumptions made about both anti-abortion activism and the politics of victimhood.

Chapter 6 will pause in order to explicitly consider a few of the key similarities and differences between men's rights and anti-abortion activism in Canada. This chapter argues that for all the significant ways in which the MRM and the anti-abortion movements converge (and there are many), there are perhaps stronger indications that the contemporary movements are headed in opposite discursive and ideological directions, in particular in their different-handed approaches to victims and gender.

Chapter 7 begins my analysis of more mainstream conservative politics by examining Stephen Harper's Conservative government's defence and promotion of a "tough on crime" criminal justice agenda. Through a CDA of the Parliamentary defence of bill c-10 – an omnibus bill that hardened many criminal justice responses in Canada – this chapter argues that there is continued evidence that discourses of victimization align with more traditionally right-handed conservative orientations of Canadian party politics. In particular, Conservative MPs draw on explicit arguments, narratives, and forms of evidence, that align closely with old-style understandings of conservatism and its close relationship with populist, victim-making, discourse.

However, these are not the only, or perhaps even the most dominant, conservative victim arguments at the governmental and party level. Chapter 8, by contrast, suggests that when marketing bill c-36 – a Conservative government bill that re-criminalized sex work in Canada – MPs often replace harsher and more traditional conservative arguments with softer and, at times, progressive-sounding tones and arguments around the protection of victims (and in particular, female victims). My findings reveal that conservative politicians are using distinct, and often contradictory, tones, narratives, and arguments to advance policy initiatives – performing gender in seemingly incongruous ways.

Chapter 9 once again pauses in order to explicitly compare the Conservative government's defence of bills c-10 and 36. This chapter considers the key differences and similarities between the Conservative marketing of bills c-36 and c-10, arguing that given the prominent role of gender and women in bill c-36, conservatives were more likely to take up softer tones and arguments around victimization. This chapter argues that, like its activist counterparts, the CPC is ambidextrous, regularly mobilizing both strict masculine victim arguments and compassionate feminine ones.

Finally, chapter 10 concludes by considering what the analysis of conservative discourses of victimization can tell us about larger Conservative politics and ideology. I argue not only that discourses of victimization are absolutely central to conservative rhetoric, strategy, and ideology in Canada, but also that the conservative mobilization of victim arguments is inherently gendered – appealing to both masculine conceptions of “protection” as well as feminine ideals of “vulnerability”. I conclude by considering a number of important empirical, theoretical, and practical implications raised by my findings.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND METHOD

Given this project's focus on *discourses* of victimization, my analysis of conservative victims arguments necessitates both theoretical and methodological approaches that allow for the examination of words and language. Before turning to my analysis of conservative discourses of victimization in Canada, this chapter first outlines how I went about – in both theoretical and practical terms – analyzing conservative discourse.

1.0 Theoretical approach: words matter

My general approach to examining conservative discourse rests on one basic theoretical assumption: that the words we use in politics matter. The premise that “words matter” is, of course, not novel. For there is a long theoretical tradition that holds as its central premise that political language is not a transparent medium of communication but, instead, that the very struggle over the definition and use of words and concepts lies at the foundation of modern politics (Gramsci 1971; Strauss 2002; MacKinnon 1987; Butler 2004; Connolly 1993, 2002; Lakoff 2002, 2009, Westen 2007). In this theoretical context, language is neither a neutral channel for exchanges of information nor a reflection of a pre-existing reality. Rather, language is best imagined as a “machine” that generates and constitutes our social and political world.

Perhaps more than any other thinker, Michel Foucault has shaped contemporary theorizations of language, meaning, and discourse (Foucault 1984). On Foucault's telling, a discourse “is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined” (Foucault 1972, 117). In this respect, language (i.e. the use of, and meaning attached to, specific words or phrases) is perhaps best considered as structured within

larger “patterns” or “systems” of discourse. A “Foucauldian approach” to language investigates the rules that determine which “discursive constructions” are accepted as meaningful and true across different political and social contexts, and how these discursive meanings change across time. At the center of a Foucauldian approach, then, lies the theoretical presupposition that changes in discourse are a means by which the social and political world can be understood.

This Foucauldian approach to language has given rise to the proliferation of “discourse analysis” as a field of study (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2008). At a general level, all Foucault-inspired discourse analyses share the starting point that our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our political world, identities, and social relations but rather play an “active role in creating and changing them” (Johnson and Phillips 2008, 3). For this reason, *language and words* become concrete sites whereby researchers can access “reality” or, perhaps more accurately, access particular regimes of knowledge that create different “realities”. In accordance with the larger field of discourse analysis, my own approach to analyzing political discourse is centered on the belief that language provides a compelling lens through which we can make sense of our political world (Fairclough 2001; Wodak and Meyer 2009). More specifically, two key theoretical assumptions underpin my approach to understanding and analyzing discourse.

1. *Language can never be fixed and therefore discursive dominance (or hegemony) changes across time*

Because the production of knowledge is so intimately intertwined with discourse and power, knowledge of the world should not be treated as an objective truth, but rather as something that changes across different historical, social, and political contexts. On Jorgensen and Phillips’ telling, reality is “only accessible through categories, so our knowledge and representations are

not a reflection of reality ‘out there’, but rather are products of our ways of categorizing the world, or, in discursive and analytical terms, products of discourse” (2008, 4).

Moreover, the instability of language means that linguistic meaning can never truly be fixed. In Foucault’s words, “[d]iscourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form... it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history” (1972, 17). This project, then, departs from the premise that discourse is not a closed, unchanging, homogenous entity but rather is continually being changed and transformed through contact with other discourse. This means that any given discourse represents a particular way – within a particular time and place – of talking about and rationalizing the world.

Certainly, this does not mean that all discourses are equal in their persuasiveness or accepted meanings. For Foucault, those in power create a “dominant discourse” that operates as the established and/or politically privileged way of understanding or speaking. Dominant discourses thus provide the prevailing “accepted” rules of everyday living (Hall 2001). For Foucault, truth is determined not by objective fact but by the discursive constructions privileged by different regimes of knowledge. These discursive constructions, however, are not neutral, but rather (re)produced by systems power.

Moreover, power does not belong to a particular agent or group of agents (such as the bourgeois for the Marxists) but is *productive* – spread across all different social and political practices. In Jorgensen and Phillips’ words, “[p]ower is responsible *both* for creating our social world *and* for the particular ways in which the world is formed and can be talked about, ruling out alternative ways of being and talking” (2008, 7). Therefore while there is no one universal and overarching “discourse”, certain “political rationalities” can emerge dominant in particular

political contexts (and, of course, the dominance of these political rationalities can and will wane and wax across time). Drawing on Gramsci (1971) and Laclau and Mouffe (2001), one might find the concept of “discursive hegemony” useful. In this context, when a particular discourse becomes *hegemonic*, alternative forms of action or argumentation become unnatural, and others unthinkable.

In this respect, historical and cultural specificity matter in discourse analysis, assuming that knowledge (i.e. the ways we understand and represent the world) is both culturally specific and contingent (Jorgensen and Phillips 2008, 4). Our ideologies, worldview, and subjective identities are all shaped by the context that surrounds us and can change over time. Briefly consider, for example, our discussion in chapter 1 of how discursive and political appeals to ‘victims’ have – and continue to – change across time and political circumstance, partisanship, and ideology. Examining this discursive struggle over meaning – particularly in the explicitly political realm – allows us to investigate larger questions of political persuasion and ideology.

This project, then, begins from the anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist position that language and meaning are constantly in flux, and are context-dependent. In other words, our political world is “socially and discursively constructed”, implying that subjects and discursive constructions do not possess a set of fixed and authentic characteristics, but rather change across time as they come into interaction with competing discourses and/or political rationalities (Jorgensen and Phillips 2008, 4). My dissertation aims to deconstructing discursive practices and dominance – in all their fluidity and discontinuity.

2. Language and discourse shape subjectivity, political action, and collective behaviour

My project is generally affixed to the theoretical premise that the subjects are formed through social relations. The subject is not a blank slate objectively determining her own existence (and subjectivity), but instead is shaped, moulded, and produced by the social reality that surrounds her. In this sense, individual and collective behaviour is strongly shaped by language, discourse, and dominant forms of knowledge (which are forever shifting and mutating).

Of course, this premise – that subjectivities are grounded in sociality – has a strong tradition in theories of political ideology, with varying schools of thought contributing to its elaboration. The Marxist tradition, for example, has long taken seriously the notion that the subject is formed through her material (and economic) existence. Marxist thinkers, such as Georg Lukacs (1971) and Antonio Gramsci (1971), approach the formation of the subject from the viewpoint that “it is not men’s consciousness that determines their existence but on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Lukacs 1971, 16). Further, the Marxist approach largely considers the subject as a product of her material reality, which is predominantly produced and reproduced by the capitalist system. Thus, in accordance with the Marxist approach to subjectivity, the consciousness of the individual is intimately linked to capitalist structures, drawing a clear link between economic relations, “sense-making”, and the formation of individual subjectivity. As Lukacs explains, “as the capitalist system continuously produces and reproduces itself economically on higher and higher levels, the structure of reification progressively sinks more deeply and more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man” (Lukacs 1971, 93).

For other post-structural thinkers, the production of subjects reaches far beyond their economic existence. While Foucault agrees that the production of the modern subject is intimately linked to the rise of capitalism (1978, 141), he also observes that the formation of

subjectivities transcends mere material conditions. For Foucault, not only is the consciousness of the subject structured through socialization, but so is the body – and political subjectivity – itself.

Foucault, for example, suggests we consider the example of the soldier,

Let us take the ideal figure of the soldier as it was still seen in the early seventeenth century. To begin with, the soldier was someone who could be recognized from afar; he bore certain signs: the natural signs of his strength and his courage, the marks, too, of his pride; his body was the blazon of his strength and valor; and although it is true that he had to learn the profession of arms little by little - generally in actual fighting-movements like marching and attitudes like the bearing of the head belonged for the most part to a bodily rhetoric of honor (Foucault 1977, 135).

For Foucault, the “classical age discovered the body as object and target of power” (Foucault 1977, 135). The soldier’s body, then, is disciplined, shaped and moulded to symbolize the power and might of the state. Through military training, for example, the soldier’s body is “manipulated, shaped and trained” until it “obeys [and] responds” to the state (or, perhaps more accurately, dominant) power (Foucault 1977, 135). However, this “manipulation” is not limited to the soldier for Foucault. Indeed, consider the physical (and often very gendered) performance of politicians (Butler 2004). Or one could even consider (and chapters 9 and 10 will) a persuasive “enactment” of victimhood.

Therefore, discourse and language can shape our individual consciousness, our bodily performances, and our collective action. Said differently, political arguments and language, especially when they are dominant, can spur individual subjects into action. They can fundamentally shape the way we process information and make political decisions. Given this link between language and action, then, I adopt the theoretical premise that public, political discourse by a wide variety of actors is an important factor in influencing political behaviour,

ideology and subjectivity. Those influences range from the immediate effect of convincing key constituencies to vote for a specific party or policy to the much longer term impacts of reinforcing and making “commonsensical” certain patterns of argumentation, broad sets of values, emotional responses, physical performances and other practice structures that help determine the “limits of the possible” to everyday politics.

2.0 Methodological approach: operationalizing critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Now that this chapter has outlined the theoretical importance of discourse and language, the next obvious question is: how should one go about *analyzing* discourse? At its most practical level, my examination of conservative victim language draws on the combination of three approaches to analyzing discourse: (1) a historical and theoretical overview of conservative discourses of victimization in the US and Canada, (2) a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of contemporary conservative political discourse in Canada, and (3) the participant observation of conservative events and conferences.

2.1 Historical and theoretical overview of conservative discourses of victimization in

Canada and the US

Given that my larger approach to discourse analysis recognizes the relationship between language and “other aspects of social life” (Fairclough 2003, 5), my analysis is grounded within a larger theoretical and historical overview of discourses of victimization in Canada and the US. To this end, I conducted a review of the secondary literature devoted to the history and analysis of “victim politics” in North America since the 1950s. The bulk of this context is presented in chapter 3, which offers an overview of what I consider to be the three main discourses of victimization in Canada and the US over the past 50 years. However, the subsequent chapters

also include a survey of important political and historical contexts that are more specific to that chapter site of analysis. Chapters 4 and 5, for example, contrast the contemporary men's rights and anti-abortion movements with their historical predecessors. Similarly, chapters 7 and 8 offer an overview of conservatives' positions on, and approaches to, criminal justice law making and the legality and morality of sex work. Situating my CDA within a larger historical and theoretical analysis allows me both to offer an overview of the most important events, trends and discursive tendencies of the debate over "victim politics", and to more accurately assess the ideological causes and effects of conservative discourse.

While my CDA focuses on the Canadian context, I chose to include American scholarship and examples within my survey of the secondary literature. Practically speaking, there is a larger and more robust literature on "victim politics" in the US than in Canada. Including the American literature allows me to provide a wider context to analyze conservative discourses of victimization in Canada. As we will see, American and Canadian conservatives have often adopted overlapping approaches to the politics of victimhood, at times deploying nearly identical arguments around victims and victimization. Additionally, comparing the US and Canada also offers the opportunity to parse apart the nuances between the conservative movements in the US and Canada. This is perhaps why it has become a norm in the study of Canadian politics and ideology to examine Canada in comparison (for examples, see Farney 2012; Lipset 1967; Horowitz 1966; Cochrane 2015). It was in the context of his own examination of Canadian political culture, for example, that American political scientist Seymour Lipset argued that "all social science is comparative" and that "without examining social relations in different nations it is impossible to know to what extent a given factor actually has its suggested effect" (Lipset, 1967 115). On Neil Wiseman's telling, "[w]e are shaken into an awareness of our culture's

nuances when we visit another culture. Never doing so renders us culture-bound” (Wiseman 2011, 13). Indeed, as the rest of the dissertation will suggest, placing Canada in comparison holds the potential of unearthing findings that challenge many of our dominant understandings of the conservative movement relationship to “victim politics” in Canada.

2.2 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

My approach to analysis the contemporary discourse of conservative activists and politicians in Canada draw rests on a rigorous “mixed method” approach to CDA, one that allows for the analysis of explicit arguments, narratives, concepts and value-framing, both qualitatively and quantitatively. At a more practical level, my CDA involved three mains steps: (1) assembling a dataset of conservative discourse, (2) creating a coding dictionary, and (3) manually coding my dataset using the software QDA Miner.

1. Assembling a dataset of discourse

The first step to any discourse analysis is to identify a relevant, representational, and comprehensive *corpus or data set* of discourse. To ensure my data set accurately captured different “snapshots” of conservative politics in Canada, I did three things. First, given the gendered nature of discourses of victimization (see chapters 1 and 3 for full discussion), I focused on areas of conservative discourse that intersect in both implicit and explicit ways with gender. Second, I included different areas and strains of conservatism in Canada by investigating three key areas within the larger “blue tent” of the conservative movement: traditional backlash conservatism through men’s rights activism, socially conservative politics through the anti-abortion movement, and conservative governance through an examination of two major pieces of legislation tabled by Harper’s Conservative governments’ between 2011 and 2015 (bills c-10 and

c-36). Third, in order to ensure a certain level of representativeness, I included discourse from a wide-range of conservative actors – from bloggers and pundits, organizations and think tanks, to policy platforms and Hansard transcripts.

In total, this larger study analyzed 75 “cases” of men’s rights discourse (including blogs, organizational materials, and national pundits), 202 conservative speeches delivered in Parliament (in defence of bills c-10 and c-36), and 401 cases of anti-abortion discourse (including blogs, organizational materials and Parliamentary speeches delivered by anti-abortion MPs on the issue of abortion), for a total of 678 cases of conservative discourse (see appendix F for further breakdown of dataset).

Rather than enter into the specifics of how each “site of analysis” was selected in this chapter, each subsequent chapter will begin by further contextualizing and explaining the specifics of my discourse analysis as it applies to each site of analysis. For example, chapters 4 and 5 outline in more detail the activist organizations and actors that were selected for analysis and why. And chapters 8 and 9 explain in greater detail why bills c-10 and c-36 were chosen as examples of conservative law-making in Canada. Rather than enter into the “nitty gritty” of how my sites of analysis were selected here (which will be elaborated throughout this dissertation), this chapter is, rather, provides a general overview of how my larger approach to CDA was operationalized.

2. Creating a coding dictionary

The second step was designing a coding dictionary in order to operationalize my analysis. Drawing on the growing literature on critical discourse analysis, I designed “coding dictionaries” in order to track the use of various conservative discursive trends and strategies of persuasion (Fairclough 2001). Given that each “site” of conservative discourse is occurring in different

policy and political contexts, the coding dictionary for each chapter is slightly different (for full coding dictionaries, see appendices A through E). However, there are nevertheless strong continuities between how I examined each area of conservative discourse. At a general level, coding dictionaries were constructed to track a variety of strategic discussions of victims and rhetorical techniques of persuasion, including types of explicit argumentation, framing devices, metaphorical tone, and narrative structure. In particular, the coding dictionaries were designed along the seven following questions/criteria:

1. Demographics (who is defending the conservative position?).
2. What key issue is identified?
3. What explicit arguments are conservatives making about victims?
4. What values are conservatives promoting?
5. How are conservatives framing their own position in relation to victims?
6. What tone are conservatives using (sympathetic/punitive/strict)?
7. What narratives are conservatives deploying? (what stories are they telling?
Who are the victims, villains, heroes of those stories?).

3. *Coding*

Finally, using the software QDA Miner, I manually coded each document along the criteria set out by my coding dictionary. Unlike traditional quantitative content analysis/data-mining approaches (that automatically count specific words), CDA requires a manual and qualitative interpretation and coding of every document. In practical terms, because the coding categories

for each question are not mutually exclusive, if a single text case included several different arguments, for example, I coded each element as present. This approach offers a more accurate and reliable way of analyzing the weight of various rhetorical techniques in a given discourse since it does not require the coders to make subjective judgments about which category is the most important in a given text (something that would have been often required if we wanted to make them mutually exclusive). Because it does incorporate a quantitative element, however, unlike purely qualitative approaches (which are less able to empirically establish how broadly a given argument is used), a mixed method approach allows one to gauge how widely, and how intensively, certain rhetorical strategies are employed across a given discourse.

2.3 Participant observation

As with any methodology, there are limits to what CDA can uncover. For my purposes, three such limitations are worth noting. First, while CDA can unearth many interesting, often counterintuitive, findings about the rhetorical framing of political issues and values, there often exists a sharp distinction between in-group/unsanitized discourse and out-group/sanitized discourse in political movements (Flanagan, 2012). Whereas discourse targeted at the Canadian public (i.e. press releases, websites, electoral platforms) is largely sanitized for the larger public consumption, informal, in-group discourse (where conservatives are talking to conservatives) is often left unsanitized. Thus, while CDA may give us hints about issues such as the intentionality of the speakers, it is not always ideal for accurately exploring this important discourse distinction. Secondly, CDA is again not ideal for mapping some of the basic facts about the demographic dimensions of the conservative movements, nor its subjects' own experiences of their roles. For instance, CDA cannot fully disclose exactly how many women participate in conservative movements in Canada nor the precise picture of norms and mores that structure these

experiences. A third constraint of CDA is that its analysis is restricted to only the textual realm. Hence, one might miss other sites of practice or performance, most notably the realm of non-written or non-verbal communication (Butler, 2004). In other words, CDA cannot reveal the non-verbal context of discourse nor the ways in which the subject ultimately embodies gendered practices.

For these reasons, while this dissertation will draw primarily on the result of my CDA, it also recognizes the many advantages of using the multiple types of triangulation. In particular, I supplemented my critical discourse analysis with the participant observation of key conservative events. Participant observation allowed me to observe the physical and social context of conservative events; examine the relationship among and between conservative participants; and evaluate the behavior and activities of conservative activists and policymakers in Canada. In total, I attended 16 conservative events and conferences where I estimate that I observed over 500 conservative activists and politicians speak, as well as thousands of other conservative activists and policymakers participate in events (for full list of events, see appendix A).

Building on the growing CDA tradition, my methodological approach to analyzing discourse offers at least three advantages. First, it allows me to examine a vast corpus of conservative discourse (678 written “cases” combined with a robust sample of conservative speeches and events). Moreover, I examined very different – and at times competing – areas of conservative politics in Canada. The breadth and depth of this study, then, allows me to compare and contrast the victim arguments used across very different parts of the larger conservative movement. Second, by including a broader historical overview of “victim politics”, I am able to place contemporary conservative discourses and ideology into a much larger ideological and political context. This “intertextual” approach thus enables me to more readily identify changing

norms and trends within conservative arguments of victimization. And finally, the participant observation of conservative events allows me to offer a more accurate account of conservative discourse and an inner look at how many debates over the politics of victimhood are playing out *within* the conservative movement. In this respect, this study not only examines conservatives' *public, out-group* discourse (through which conservatives attempt to persuade the larger public) but also its more *private, strategic, and in-group* discourse (where conservatives are speaking to each other). Combining these methodological approaches allows me to present a more robust and accurate portrait of the conservative movement – and its relationship to the politics of victimhood – in Canada. It is to these findings that this dissertation now turns.

CHAPTER 3: CONSERVATIVE DISCOURSES OF VICTIMIZATION IN NORTH

AMERICA: BLAMING, MAKING, AND PROTECTING THE VICTIM

Before exploring the multiple, varying, and at times contradictory, conservative deployments of discourses of victimization in practice, it is the purpose of this chapter to outline and explore the main characteristics of conservative discourses of victimization. This chapter asks: what role has the “victim” played in the formulation of conservative discourse and ideology in North America throughout the past two decades? How have North American conservatives drawn upon discourses of victimhood historically? And, what are the gendered implications of conservative approaches to victims?

In examining these questions, this chapter will examine what I consider to be the three main conservative discourses of victimization in North America. To begin, section 1.0 explores the conservative backlash against the perceived rise of “victim politics” through an investigation of conservative discourses of victim-blaming. I argue that victim-blaming has become the most archetypal conservative discourses of victimhood – often requiring that “so-called” victims prove that their victimization is the result of intentional and severe wrongdoing. Section 2.0 then considers the role that populist “victim-making” claims have played in conservative politics. While intimately intertwined with discourses of victim-blaming, victim-making more often positions conservatives as the victim of a contemporary political “elite” or racialized or gendered “Other”. Drawing on populist appeal, conservatives argue that “true victims” are often conservative individuals who have been censored and punished by progressive “politically correct” policies and ideology.

Section 3.0 offers a preliminary analysis of a growing trend in contemporary conservative politics: the rise of “protect victims/women” discourses. These arguments often foreground and perpetuate particular, and rather new, understanding of victims and victimization (and by extension, of conservatism) by drawing on progressive and feminist arguments and tropes. Finally, I conclude this chapter by arguing that examining the multiplicity and variation of conservative discourses of victimization – in particular, arguments that frame women as victims in order to justify conservative policy and ideology – is necessary as these new arguments hold the potential of impacting the future ideological and discursive direction of the conservative movement in Canada.

1.0 Conservative discourses of victim-blaming

In many ways, blaming the victim has become a hallmark part of conservative political discourse, and is certainly the most prototypical conservative discourse of victimization. In this context, critics accuse conservatives of holding the victim of a wrongful or criminal act responsible for his or her own victimization. In response, conservatives counter that claims of false victimization have become all too prevalent, thus becoming a pervasive threat to larger North American society.

1.1 The politicization of victim-blaming

Given how thoroughly entrenched the term “blaming the victim” has become in everyday political vocabulary, it is easy to forget that the expression itself was coined only 40 years ago. William Ryan’s classic, *Blaming the Victim*, first developed the term – describing victim-blaming as an ideology or an ideological process used to justify and defend racial discrimination in American social and urban policy. Interestingly, Ryan first deployed the term to condemn left-

leaning “social justice” reformers who, throughout the 1960s, argued that racial disparity was the result of disruptions to the black family (Ryan 1971). While many reformers traced the disruption to the Black family to slavery and other more contemporary forms of social and economic discrimination against Black Americans, they nevertheless proposed to “redress inner-city poverty by restricting and reinvigorating the family” (Cole 2007, 111). For reformers, this required significant investment in the promotion of Black nuclear family structures.

Ryan’s work criticized this reformist approach, arguing that policies that targeted Black families as the key site of reform viewed racial inequality as emanating from the victim’s difference (or Otherness). This emphasis, argued Ryan, wrongly shifted responsibility onto Black Americans to lift themselves out of poverty. Moreover, by focusing on the Black families, reformers perpetuated “the oppression of the poor by finding inherent faults within them, while ignoring the social and economic forces that create and perpetuate poverty” (Ryan 1971, 17). Drawing on Marx, Ryan identified victim-blaming as emerging from “systemically motivated, but unintended, distortion of reality... rooted in a class-based interest in maintaining the status quo” (Ryan 1971, 25). In a racial context, this meant victim-blaming often took up familiar representations of victims as “savages” that needed to be “civilized” (Cole 2007, 112). For Ryan, this type of victim-blaming may not have held the victims directly responsible for their own victimization, but it did seek to reform Black subjects, expecting the victim to make an effort to change.

While Ryan might have been the first to coin and fully develop the concept of “victim-blaming”, it would be the women’s movement that would come to popularize and mainstream the phrase throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Building on Ryan’s work, second wave feminists replaced Ryan’s class and race analysis with a gender one. Feminist scholars like Catharine

MacKinnon, Susan Brownmiller, and Germaine Greer came to identify gender inequality in society as facilitating both victimization *and* victim-blaming (MacKinnon 1987; Brownmiller 1975). By viewing societally engrained myths about sexual violence as a manifestation of victim-blaming, feminists argued that the trauma caused by sexual assault tended to be diminished in all pockets of North American society. Advice doled out to women to prevent sexual assault – don’t go out alone at night, don’t wear short skirts, travel in groups – was also framed as a form of victim-blaming, invoked in order to diminish the offender’s culpability. Susan Brownmiller, for example, argued that this type of advice presented “rape as a woman’s problem, rather than a societal problem resulting from a distorted masculine philosophy of aggression” (Brownmiller 1975, 450).

The result of the feminist popularization of “victim-blaming” was two-fold. First, feminists sought to “establish the status of raped women as victims” instead of as perpetrators (Cole 2007, 121; see also Backhouse 1991). Given that North American rape laws first conceived of women as the property of men, and by extension of sexual assault as a crime against men, this discursive and symbolic shift is more radical than it might seem on the surface. Consider, for example, that well into the 1970s American law referred to rape victims not as “victims” in the court but rather as the “prosecutrix” (Cole 2007, 121). Feminist arguments, in this respect, changed the way that many view the crime of sexual violence.

The second result of the feminist reframing of rape victims as “victims”, however, was the rise of a swift and fierce conservative backlash – one that would further entrench discourses of victim-blaming into political vernacular. The rape victim’s legal status as “victim” was, and continues to be, greatly disputed and discredited, particularly by those on the right of the political spectrum. As the culture wars took hold throughout the 1980s, North American conservatives

increasingly targeted the women's movement, criticizing its advocates for encouraging women to "secure their status as victims in order to gain various material and psychological rewards" (Cole 2007, 47). American philosopher and pundit, Christina Hoff Sommers, for instance, has been a vocal spokesperson for this backlash, describing feminism as "male-bashing". For Sommers, being a feminist means "being a victim", "bitter", and "angry" (quoted in Cole 2007, 50). Scholar Camille Paglia has also spent much of her career (at Yale no less) criticizing the women's movement for creating a generation of victims, arguing "a girl who lets herself get dead drunk at a fraternity party is an idiot. Feminists call this "blaming the victim." I call it common sense" (quoted in Cole 2007, 53).

1.2 The backlash: Characteristics of conservative discourses of victim-blaming

If the women's movement's mainstreaming of the concept of "victim-blaming" was met with opposition from conservatives, what form did this backlash take? What main principles underlie conservative discourses of victim-blaming? And, in what ways do contemporary conservatives deploy discourses of victim-blaming?

The most common precept underlying discourses of victim-blaming is the belief that claims of victimhood are both pervading and corrupting society. In practice, this means victim-blaming campaigns are often positioned in opposition to what conservatives consider to be the proliferation of a "nation of victims", a "victim's revolution", the "politics of victimization", or other pejorative phrases and expressions constructed around the word "victim". Sociologist Alyson Cole argues that since the 1990s conservatives have increasingly argued not only that victim claims have come to dominate North American society, but also that most victims' claims "disingenuously cover for little more than general malaise or personal dissatisfaction" (Cole

2007, 20).¹ Connected to the belief that society is overrun with false claims of victimization is the added assertion that it is society that suffers from these deceitful claims. For example, Roger Connors, director of the conservative think tank American Alliance for Rights and Responsibility, considers our “culture of victimization” to be “a mind set [that constitutes] a profound deformation of our society, a collective form of paranoia” (quoted in Cole 2007, 20-1). In this sense, the conservative critique of victim discourses is rooted in two main tenets: one, that society is overrun by dishonest claims of victimization, and two, that untruthful claims of victimhood are corrupting our moral and social fabric.

Victim-blaming is also linked to the larger political shift towards neoliberalism, in which “individuals are encouraged to see themselves as active subjects responsible for enhancing their own well-being” (Comack and Peter 2005, 285). In understanding the ideological underpinning of victim-blaming, the work of cognitive scientist George Lakoff on conservative ideology is particularly helpful. According to Lakoff, beginning in the 1970s, the core of the conservative ethos became a “Strict Father” metaphorical mindset and its championing of a punitive sensibility (2009). For Lakoff, conservatives view the world as a place where individuals need strict rules, rewards and punishments to cultivate the self-discipline, self-reliance, and deep respect for legitimate authority (2009, 66). For the Strict Father, the idea of “character” and “moral strength” are given high value and individuals who fail to make choices in line with this value framework are seen to be entirely responsible for their actions. Strong authority and consistent and often harsh punishment are both seen morally sanctioned and instrumentally necessary.

¹ Cole argues that victim-blaming (or what she calls anti-victimism) is not unique to conservatives but instead crosses all ideological camps. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will focus on the ways in which Cole explores the conservative dimensions of victim-blaming. For further discussion of the progressive and feminist usage of victim-blaming, see Cole 2007, chapter 3.

Within this Strict Father ideological mindset, there is little room for claims of victimhood. Victimization is represented as the result of an impaired character rather than as the result of systemic cultural and legal discrimination. Thus, victimhood is often viewed simply as evidence of individual's weakness or a personality defect. As a result, Strict Father conservatives believe that claims of victimization must be scrutinized in the public realm, picked apart in order to uncover "true" victims. Ultimately, conservatives argue that personal accountability and resilience are the only tangible solutions to a dangerous "victim mentality" that is overtaking society.

Another notable characteristic of victim-blaming is that its campaigns often take inherently gendered forms, with "campaign[s] that associate[e] victimization with weakness, passivity, dependency, and effeminacy," while simultaneously depicting "victims as manipulative, aggressive, and even criminal, at times, as actual or potential victimizers, a danger to themselves and society" (Cole 2007, 3). The victim frame, for instance, is frequently associated with traditionally feminine characteristics of weakness, passivity, and vulnerability. Moreover, the conservative deployment of victim blaming arguments has, in large part, emerged as a reaction to the gains made by the second wave of the women's movement and its mobilization of feminist arguments about sexual and intimate partner violence, as well as other gendered forms of discrimination and violence. This evolution of conservative discourses of victim-blaming has meant that gender has often been at the center of victim-blaming, with the most aggressive victim-blaming campaigns often being directed at women and so-called "victim" feminists. The work of legal scholar Constance Backhouse, for example, traces the multitude of ways that women were vilified for their own victimization by nineteenth century law in Canada (Backhouse 1991). Backhouse argues that Canadian courts often ruled that women – ranging

from sex workers, to victims of sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse, and sexual assault – were complicit in, and blameworthy for, their own victimization. In some instances, legal decisions even found male perpetrators to be the “true” victims, persecuted by rebellious, manipulative, and mutinous women.

In response to the threat of victim claims on society, Cole argues that conservatives have adopted a three-part “gradual line of attack” to combat victim politics (Cole 2007, 27). First, discourses of victim-blaming seek to discredit victims, arguing that those who claim to be victims are imposters who do not face “real” discrimination or victimization. One of the primary ways conservatives “distinguish the real from the bogus victim... might be to scrutinize carefully the content of the victim’s claim, its validity, and its correlation to the victim’s specific demands” (Cole 2007, 33). Embedded within this discourse, is the denial that victimization can be caused by forms of systemic injustice or inequality. Second, conservatives argue that those who are disadvantaged “in some way use their victim status to achieve gains incommensurate with their actual circumstances” (Cole 2007, 27). In this respect, claims of victimization are seen as a profitable narrative and not as a genuine expression of victimization. And finally, conservatives argue that regardless of the truthfulness or proportionality of a victim’s claims, making victimization a central theme of a group or individual identity is harmful to both the victim and society in general. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, Cole’s analysis of anti-victim discourse in the US found that “condemning blame” (i.e. critics bemoaning the “hostile and accusatory tone” of progressives) is a key element of victim-blaming discourses (Cole 2007, chapter 5).

Within the conservative logic of victim-blaming regardless of what an individual might have endured, “blaming, whining, complaining, and other public displays of weakness are considered aesthetically repulsive and socially harmful” (Cole 2007, 130-1). Conservative discourses of

victim-blaming most often target victims by demanding that they refrain from complaining, command responsibility over their own fate (ideally by rejecting the victim label altogether), and not connect their victim status to any larger collective politics. Perhaps most importantly, however, victims must be able to prove their complete and total innocence. They must, in other words, be morally upright and pure. For conservative philosopher James Bayley, for instance, this means that victim status should be reserved for “individuals who vigorously resisted their injury and were entirely powerless to prevent it” (1991, 61).

1.3 Victim-blaming and contemporary conservative ideology

Blaming and shaming victims, then, has a long history – with deep roots in North American political and legal culture. Moreover, this anti-victimist approach continues to resonate in a contemporary context. In 2016, for example, Alberta’s Minister of Justice complained to the Canadian Judicial Council after Justice Robin Camp made what he called “victim-blaming statements” during a 2014 sexual assault trial. During the trial Justice Camp repeatedly referred to the 19-year-old complainant as “the accused” asked her “why couldn’t you just keep your knees together”, and told her that “pain and sex sometimes just got together” (Fine 2016). Moreover, this is not an isolated incident. In March 2016, Justice William Horkins found former CBC poster boy Jian Ghomeshi not guilty on four counts of sexual assault, and one count of overcoming resistance to sexual assault by choking. Horkins’ verdict – particularly in the absence of any testimony or statements from Ghomeshi – seemed to rely most prominently on his own personal assessment of the credibility and behaviour of the three complainants. Critics of the verdict argued that this was a blatant display of victim-blaming that highlighted the unfair burden placed on accusers to behave in a way that others perceive as consistent with how a victim “should” behave (Bussel 2016).

However, as William Ryan's analysis reminds us, victim-blaming can also take more subversive forms, invoked as a way of deflecting responsibility for victimization onto racialized "Others" (1971). Consider the response of many conservatives and police departments to the epidemic of police shootings of Black Americans in the US. Conservative politicians have often successfully shifted blame onto Black victims of police shootings in order to support the assertion that an officer acted legally in using lethal force. In one extreme example, the court filing in the case of Tamir Rice – a 12-year-old boy killed by officers in 2014 for playing with a toy gun in the park – claimed that Rice was responsible for his own death, and that the shooting was "directly and proximately caused by the failure of [Rice] to exercise due care to avoid injury" (quoted in Lopez 2015). Downloading responsibility for police brutality onto a young 12-year-old boy embodies all of the characteristics of a victim-blaming campaign.

It is not overly surprising, then, that conservative discourses of victim-blaming are also often linked to the larger conservative critique of progressive identity politics. Discourses of victimization often articulate this position by blaming racial politics, feminism, the welfare state, and university campuses for promoting and perpetuating "pro-victim" mentalities. The arguments that people of colour who cling to their "racial identity" do so to avoid personal responsibility to better themselves, or that women "who cry rape" are manipulative "man haters" have both become typical conservative responses to claims of victimization. Consider, for instance, the prominent role the prototypical "welfare queen" – who abuses her victim status by exploiting the generosity of the nation and its taxpayers – has come to play in conservative discourse. Or the conservative contention that left-leaning liberals are taking over our university campuses with their demands for political correctness that over-privilege identity politics and silence conservative viewpoints. Conservative discourses of victimization contend that by

claiming victim status, individuals are able to give up any sense of personal responsibility, externalizing their own shortcomings or unhappiness. Within this discourse, there emerges a new pejorative connotation to the word “victim”.

In the US, discourses of victim-blaming have come to dominate certain circles of conservative political discourse. Republican politicians and conservative activists such as Newt Gingrich, Phyllis Schlafly, Dinesh D’Souza, and Christina Hoff Sommers have come to be representative of this victim-blaming approach. Most recently, moreover, President Donald Trump and his supporters have very much embraced the politics of victim-blaming. In fact, it seems that Trump’s politics of victim-blaming know no limit. According to Trump, Senator John McCain is responsible for his own imprisonment during the Vietnam War (Rucker 2015). If sexually harassed at work, women should find another job (Close 2016). And, the epidemic of sexual violence in the military is due to the fact that women should not be in the military in the first place (Johnson 2016). Perhaps most revealing, however, was Trump’s response to nearly a dozen different women accusing him of sexual harassment and assault throughout the 2016 election cycle. Not only did Trump attack one of the complainants as a “horrible woman”, insinuating that she was not attractive enough for him to assault, he also claimed that,

These vicious claims about me of inappropriate conduct with women are totally and absolutely false. ... These events never happened, and the people that said them meekly, fully understand. You take a look at these people, you study these people, and you’ll understand also. ... These attacks are orchestrated by the Clintons and their media allies (quoted in Yee Hee Lee 2016).

Trump’s denial of any form of “inappropriate conduct”, his implication that if we “study these people” we will clearly see that these are false claims of victimization, and finally his insistence

that these women's stories of victimization are "attacks" that "are orchestrated by the Clintons and their media allies" invoke many of the key characteristics of victim-blaming campaigns.

However, while Trump might be an extreme example, themes and discourses of victim-blaming have defined other, more moderate factions, of the Republican Party, as well. House leader Paul Ryan's anti-poverty plan, for instance, has also been accused of blaming the victim. According to Ryan's "Contract with America", if low-income people want to be eligible for government programs and assistance, they must sign a "contract" that would outline the steps and benchmarks they would be responsible for, or suffer various "sanctions" (Haines 2016). Critics of Ryan's approach argue that it places the blame on victims of poverty rather than the problem economic system itself.

In contrast to the US, however, discourses of victim-blaming have played a much more reticent and subtle role in Canadian conservative politics. Of course, Canadian neoliberals and social conservatives have often engaged in the politics of victim-blaming. As we will see in chapter 4, men's rights discourse in Canada, for instance, often deploys victim-blaming rhetoric. However, mainstream conservative politicians and activists have largely avoided the inflammatory rhetoric of their American Republican counterparts. While Harper's policies included some more implicit characteristics of victim-blaming – and some neoliberal discourses of victim-blaming can be traced back to the Reform Party (Farney and Rayside 2013) – victim-blaming has not been a defining feature of contemporary Canadian conservative politics as it has been in the US. However, as we will see in the chapters that follow, Canadian conservatives do continue to engage in the politics of victimhood and have frequently adopted other forms of conservative discourse of victimization that are equally worthy of investigation.

2.0 Conservative discourses of victim-making

[O]ne of the ironies of American politics today that as the Left desperately struggles to disengage from ‘victim politics’, the Right jockeys to carve out a place within it. While conservative critics deem victimization to be a pervasive threat and call to restrain victim, they nevertheless become in effect practitioner of victim politics by dividing and promoting new groups of victims (Cole 2007, 4).

As we have seen, an anti-victim orientation has come to characterize much of North American ideology and discourse, particularly in the US. Discourses of victim-blaming have become central to the articulation of a neoliberal ethos – one that seeks to reinforce the virtue of taking personal responsibility and rejects any collective claims of systemic injustice or inequality. However, in the above quotation, Alyson Cole argues that as conservatives deride the rise of a so-called “culture of victimization”, they also engage in a simultaneous process of making and legitimating the “true” victim. Intimately connected to discourses of victim-blaming, then, are discourses of “victim-making”. For as conservatives lament the proliferation of victims and claims of victimization, they simultaneously create new groups of “true” or “real” victims.

Central to conservative discourses of victim-making is the rising prevalence of right-wing populism in North American. Appeals to populism have always played an important role in North American political discourse and it has long been the case that populist discourse has been a key rhetorical strategy on both the left and the right of the political spectrum. Often by appealing to an “us vs. them” frame of reference, the populist argument contends that political power is concentrated in a small political elite – an elite that ignores the rights, voices, and values of a silenced and victimized majority. Within the logic of populism, the “them” is represented as all-powerful, unaccountable, and elitist “other”. *They* are the villains in the populist narrative. The “us”, on the other hand, is the victim – persecuted by the powers-that-be,

victimized by an undemocratic and unelected political elite. Central to most populist arguments, then, is the construction of a mistreated and yet noble victim: the “common people”.

Older forms of populism most often had left-wing agendas, particularly in the Canadian prairies where agrarian populism took hold throughout the 1930s (Barney and Laycock 1999). More recently, one needs to look no further than the presidential campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders in 2016 to find strong currents of leftist populism. For Sanders and his following, it is Wall Street, business elites, and banks and international financiers who act with impunity and are largely unaccountable to existing democratic structures. Central to Sanders’ argument is that big corporations and unelected elites are *victimizing* ordinary citizens and middle-class families by not paying their fair share.

However, in many ways, Sanders is a relative outlier – a fact that might help explain his unpredicted and enthusiastic following. In contrast, throughout the past four decades, populist arguments and rhetoric have more often come to be associated with conservative and neoliberal economic and social politics (Frank 2004). Moreover, this shift has come to shape the discursive contours of conservative victim-making arguments in important ways.

2.1 The rise of conservative populism

Historically populism was a rebellion against the corporate order, a political tongue reserved by definition for the non-rich and the non-powerful... But beginning in 1968 this prima set piece of American democracy seemed to change its stripes. The war between classes had somehow reversed polarity. It was now a conflict in which the patriotic, blue collar, ‘silent majority’ (along with their employers) faced off against a new elite, the ‘liberal establishment’ and its spoiled, flag-burning children. This new ruling class – a motley assembly of liberal journalists, liberal academics, liberal foundation employees, liberal politicians, and the shadowy powers of Hollywood – earned the people’s wrath not by exploiting workers or ripping off

family farmers, but by showing contemptuous disregard for the wisdom and the values of average Americans (Frank 2000, 26).

The rightward shift in populist discourse can be explained, at least in part, by the backlash against the rise of identity-based social movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s – as was the case for its victim-blaming counterpart (Faludi 1991). However, insecurities fostered by globalization and the increasing pace of social and economic change also paved the way for the rise of conservative populism. According to Sawyer and Laycock, for instance, populism, “stoked, and channeled, insecurities over economic and cultural change” (2009, 146), with the resulting discourse mobilizing “distrust and resentment towards political elites, however now elites were not the financial elites of older forms of populism, but instead supporters of the welfare state and equality rights agenda” (Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 146). In particular, the popularity of conservative populist rhetoric grew out of an American context where, by the mid-1970s, conservatives were beginning to recognize the potential and political salience of a populist, anti-elite narrative.

Today’s North American populism is directed less against Wall Street and banks, and more against the political “elite”, the liberal media, and the welfare state and its supporters. All forms of populist campaigns and rhetoric share some common characteristics, for example, an “us vs. them” dichotomy; appeals to “real” democratic choice; and a rhetorical affinity for the common people (Sawyer and Laycock 2009). However, I will argue that conservative populist arguments take two separate, albeit related, forms: market populism and backlash (or sociocultural) populism. Most relevant for this discussion is that each form of populist rhetoric constructs a new category of “true” victims.

2.2 Market populism

It was Thomas Frank who first popularized the term “market populism”, using it to explain the rise of the “New Economy” in 1990s’ America (Frank 2000; 2004). Frank has spent much of his career tracking the rise and deployment of populist arguments, suggesting that in contemporary populism it is the marketplace that has come to supersede existing political channels as the most legitimate instrument of the common people. Through the reframing of populism vis-à-vis the market, it is entrepreneurs and corporate leaders that have come to replace union leaders and working-class people as the champions of democracy and equality. For Frank, this represents a marked and important shift in American politics, as well as a threat to democratic governance.

Under the rationality of market populism, Frank argues that many Americans, but in particular Republicans, have come to view the market as the purest and truest form of democracy. Moreover, when market freedom is limited or regulated, it is “ordinary” citizens that are victimized. Frank observes that throughout the 1980s Republicans came to increasingly argue that markets held the ability to express the popular will of the people more effectively and efficiently than other existing democratic structures. Building on Frank, Sawyer and Laycock (2009) contend that market populism is based on three main propositions. First, in line with Frank’s argument, the logic of market populism rests on the notion that the market is the purest form of democracy. For market populists, “the market itself is the only system through which people can make choices without interference from ‘social engineers’” (Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 135). The second premise builds on a critique of the welfare state, which is presented as a “project of elites, including a cluster of rent-seeking special interests that share vested interests in public spending and a barely-disguised contempt for popular preferences” (Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 135). And finally, market populism draws on intense distrust of intermediary institutions,

such as courts or tribunals. For market populists, these institutions are sanctuaries for non-elected “elites” who disregard, and often override, popular opinion. In particular, “[t]hese elites promote jurisprudence that constructs equal opportunity as requiring recognition and accommodation of group difference rather than same treatment, and undermines the democratic work of market-based choice” (Sawer and Laycock 2009, 135). Within this logic, not only are markets represented as the standard bearer for democracy, but any institution or policy that limits or regulates markets is depicted as inherently out-of-touch, elitist, and undemocratic.

Most relevant here, however, is that the deployment of discourses of market populism has simultaneously uncovered a new and increasingly salient discourse of victimization. In essence, it has created a new category of victims. For it is no longer the draft dodgers, underpaid women, or black children receiving subpar education under segregated school regimes of the 1970s that are the victims of elitist and undemocratic governance. Rather, under the banner of new populism it is the smug, latte-sipping leftist elite who is victimizing the common (and most often conservative) people by ignoring their voices, values, and experiences.

Victimization assumes an iconic status in populist discourse (Pratt 2007, 18). Within the reasoning of market populism, tax cuts, the de-unification of the workplace, and the privatization of health care and education can all be represented as an expansion of choice and personal freedom. Anywhere personal freedom is threatened, the people are victimized. The reverse is also true. Publicly funded or subsidized programs, it is argued, are a threat to personal freedom and liberty by narrowing and limiting personal choice. Consider, for example, Stephen Harper’s logic in opposing a national childcare program throughout his tenure as prime minister. Presenting a federally subsidized child-care program as the “antithesis of big government” and “special-interest-driven”, Harper argued that his approach of providing families with children

under six with a \$100/month subsidy would “provide parents with real choice in childcare” (quoted in Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 141). According to Harper, “[t]he idea here is to help parents pay for childcare that makes the most sense to them – not to some bureaucrat or special interest group in Ottawa” (quoted in Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 141). Moreover, in the face of many academics and critics that argued that Harper’s plan would do little to create necessary childcare spaces, Harper responded, “there are already millions of childcare experts in this country. Their names are Mom and Dad and that’s who we’re going to work with” (quoted in Snow and Moffitt 2012, 282-3).

With just these few phrases, Harper highlights three of the primary characteristics of market populism and its creation of a new category of victims. First, he represents childcare – an issue that, in large part, affects women’s ability to work outside the home – as a “special interest”. Here, the implication is that affordable and accessible childcare is not an issue for “normal” or “regular” Canadians, but instead will be a burdensome public expense that will only serve an elite and non-representative sample of the Canadian population (namely, working women). Second, Harper ties his opposition to a national childcare program to “big government” and “some bureaucrats... in Ottawa”. This rhetorical appeal to “Ottawa” plays on the decades-long alienation felt by Western Canadian towards Eastern political elites. In line with Sawyer and Laycock’s argument, Harper expresses the victimization of the common people by non-elected (and thus non-representative) “bureaucrats and special interests” who seek to override real democratic choice. And finally, he appeals to the common wisdom of millions of regular “Moms” and “Dads”. This appeal to common sense acts as what Saurette and Gunster call a “discussion-ending trump card” – serving as a counterpoint to the excessively “ideological, intellectual or idealistic politics of those who lack grounding in the ‘real world’” (2011, 199).

Moreover, Harper's position on, and discursive approach to, childcare is not an outlier. On the contrary, throughout North America, rhetorical appeals to market populism have come to play a prominent role in conservative politics. In the US, Ronald Reagan's trickle-down economics largely embodied this type of market populist reasoning. According to Christopher Rash, while Reagan might have made himself "the champion of 'traditional values'... there was no evidence he regarded their restoration as a high priority. What he really cared about was the revival of the unregulated capitalism of the twenties: the repeal of the New Deal" (quoted in Frank 2004, 6-7).

Similarly, Canadian market populism has also frequently taken the form of neoliberal logic. Drawing inspiration from the thinking of neoliberals such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek – and often in combination with neo-conservative arguments about the family and the nation – market populist rhetoric has infiltrated many areas of the conservative movement in Canada (Sawer and Laycock 2009, 136). The creation of the Fraser Institute in 1974, for instance, signaled a new populist phase in Canadian market liberalism. Moreover, the current president of the Fraser Institute, Niels Veldhuis, has taken up the torch of market populism in Canada, arguing that health care and education need to be privatized and that cutting taxes will increase workers' productivity. At a 2013 student conference held by the Fraser Institute in Toronto, for example, Veldhuis made a passionate argument about income inequality, stating that income inequality is not a problem in Canada; that "most of what you hear in the mainstream media [about income inequality] is total BS;" that "if we tax a corporation, you might as well be taxing grandma and grandpa because they are ones who own the corporation;" and that social welfare de-incentivizes people at the bottom (Fraser Institute 2013, author's observations). His speech embodied all the hallmarks of market populist rhetoric, echoing populist themes in its distrust of

the “mainstream” media. Moreover, by denying the very existence of income inequality in Canada, Veldhuis implies that it is not the working poor or the underclass that are the victims of our economic system. Rather it is “grandma and grandpa” (and, by a stretch of logic, corporations) who are the “true” victims of social welfare and re-distribution.

Market populism has come to permeate Canadian electoral politics, as well. Themes of market populism were at the forefront of both Mike Harris and Ralph Klein’s tenures as premiers (of Ontario and Alberta, respectively). In Ontario, under the slogan “Common Sense Revolution”, Harris cut taxes and reduced the size and role of government in ways that closely paralleled Ronald Reagan throughout the 1980s. Moreover, often by railing against government “handouts”, Harris’ “revolution” strongly emphasized the important necessity of individuals to take personal and economic responsibility into their own hands (Saurette and Gunster 2013). Similarly in Alberta, the “Klein revolution” or “the Alberta Advantage” cut government spending by more than 20 per cent, resulting in huge job cuts across the public sector. Government funding to arts and health programs were also cut, often by appealing to a discourse that represented artists as out-of-touch and spoiled elites (Saurette and Gunster 2013).

At the federal level, the success of the Reform Party, and its eventual takeover of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), has also been attributed to its deployment of the tenets of market populism (see chapter 1). The populist arguments of Preston Manning often drew on a long tradition of Western Canadian distrust of Eastern political “elites”. The Reform Party was the only federal party, for instance, to oppose what it viewed as the “elite-driven” Charlottetown Accord on constitutional reform (Sawer 2004, 12). By presenting itself as the only alternative to “unaccountable parliamentary majorities”, the Reform Party was able to benefit from long-held

feelings of “disenchantment with traditional representative structures” (Barney and Laycock 1999, 322).

Another important dimension of Reform Party discourse was the “contempt for ordinary people and their values attributed to them by new class elites” (Sawer and Laycock 2009, 136). For Barney and Laycock, for instance, “part of the Reform Party’s politics of anti-politics involve[d] claiming they [were] distinguished from other parties because they listen[ed] to ‘the common sense of the common people’” (Barney and Laycock 2009, 332). This meant that Reformers often linked arguments about political alienation and victimization to Western Canadian resentment towards Quebec’s demands for special recognition and official bilingualism. Reformers argued that Albertans, Westerners, and other “regular” Canadians were the victims of “special interests”, “bureaucrats who secure their own livelihood by expanding programmes to meet ‘special interests’ demands, and unaccountable, ‘old-line’ parties, particularly with those with leaders from Quebec” (Barney and Laycock 1999, 323). According to Steve Patten, the Reform Party came to use populism as an “ideological instrument” to foster “antagonism between the common people and powerful ‘special interest’”(1999, 29).

Perhaps most notable, however, is the mobilization of discourses of market populism by Stephen Harper throughout his tenure as leader of the Conservative Party and as prime minister. Given his work record with the National Citizens Coalition and the Taxpayers Federation of Canada, it should not be overly surprising that Harper’s career has been heavily marked by themes of market populism. During a 2003 conservative conference, for instance, Harper argued that “the real challenge is not economic, but the social agenda of the modern Left. Its system of moral relativism, moral neutrality, and moral equivalency... leads to views ranging from radical, responsibility-free individualism, to tribalism in the name of group rights” (quoted in Sawer and

Laycock 2009, 145). He went on to ask conservatives to imagine “a country of freedom and rights for ordinary people, taxpayers, and families, not just for criminals, political elites and special interests” (quoted in Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 141).

Moreover, these themes of market populism followed Harper into his transition from conservative activist to CPC leader to Prime Minister of Canada. He won the CPC leadership by promising to “lower taxes for the many, not special subsidies for the few” and, in his reply to the 2006 Speech of the Throne, characterized citizens as “besieged taxpayers whose true wishes had been ignored by special interests, government bureaucrats, and a national government too responsive to both” (quoted in Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 141). As prime minister, he also governed on these themes. One of his first actions, for example, was to cut funding to the Court Challenges Program (CCP), a not-for-profit that provided financial assistance for court cases that sought to advance language and equality rights under the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedom*. His logic?

No other federal program... has done more damage to Canadian democracy. No other has fundamentally altered Canadian society without recourse to Parliament. Although its funding comes entirely from taxpayers, the CCP was hijacked early on by leftist cause-pleaders at odds with the broad Canadian public... CCP-funded groups have achieved through the court rights and laws they would never have been able to win democratically (quoted in Sawyer and Laycock 2009, 145).

Central to Harper’s reasoning here is the representation of conservatives as victims of a powerful, unelected, and leftist elite. By repositioning equality-seeking groups as “cause pleaders” and *Charter* challenges as “special-interest”, Harper advanced the notion that these causes and interests are at odds with ordinary, and ultimately victimized, Canadians.

The rise and increasing salience of discourses of market populism in North American politics has meant that conservatives now regularly speak about the victimization of conservatives by an unelected, non-representative, smug, and leftist political elite. In the face of such elitism, conservatives in both the US and Canada claim to speak on behalf of the common people. They argue that decisions and choices must be left to the market, which, in contrast to other democratic structures, embodies the purest form of democratic freedom. Within this narrative, it is taxation, wealth redistribution, and government handouts that are victimizing “ordinary” and “middle-class” citizens and families. Moreover, it is conservatives that are revealed to be the “true” victims – wronged by an economic and political system that does not listen to, or represent, the silent majority. However, as we will see in the next section, there is an added dimension to this populist argument, one that draws on more explicitly gendered and racialized arguments about the victims and victimization.

2.3 Backlash/sociocultural populism

The high priests of conservatism like to comfort themselves by insisting that it is the free market, that wise and benevolent god, that has ordained all the economic measures they have pressed in America and the world over the last few decades. But in truth, it is the carefully cultivated derangement of places like Kansas that has propelled their movement along. It is culture war that gets the good. (Frank 2004, 9-10).

With its emphasis on the democratic effectiveness and purity of the markets, market populism has played a key role in contemporary conservative arguments. Moreover, by drawing on neoliberal themes of economic and personal responsibility, market populism has created a new category of victims: “ordinary” citizens victimized by the overregulation of the market.

However, scholars argue that the rightward shift in populist rhetoric over the last three decades also extends far beyond discussions of the market (Frank 2004). Of equal importance is

that conservative populists have increasingly drawn on potent cultural issues to further their arguments. Consider the symbolic role that the aborted fetus has come to play in mobilizing conservatives, particularly in the US. The fetus – deprived of its right to life by irresponsible women, dangerous abortion providers, and an uncaring and pro-abortion society – has become perhaps the most potent victim in social conservative discourse. Moreover, its victim status has become a rallying cry for Republicans in the US. In the words of 2008 Vice Presidential Republican candidate and conservative movement icon Sarah Palin, the victimization of the fetus continues to be a crucial way to “identify and unify” the GOP (Vanderburgh Right to Life 2009).

While appeals to sociocultural populism have a long history and can be traced back in history to the segregation campaigns of George Wallace in the US, contemporary themes of sociocultural populism have taken new up new meanings and increasing intensity over the last few decades. Thomas Frank argues that the relatively new populist focus on social and cultural issues, such as abortion, is the result of the rise of backlash conservatism – a style of conservatism that “first came snarling into the national stage in response to the partying and protests of the late sixties” in the US (2004, 5). While earlier conservative arguments were grounded in economic arguments on “fiscal sobriety”, backlash conservative discourse is centered on “explosive social issues – summoning public outrage over everything from busing to un-Christian art” (Frank 2004, 5). Like its market populist counterpart, backlash populism imagines itself “as a foe of the elite, as the voice of the unfairly persecuted, as a righteous protest of the people on history’s receiving end” (Frank 2004, 6). However, the difference between market and backlash populism is that the latter often downplays economics, focusing on sociocultural imagery and using much more aggressive and polarizing language and arguments.

In this respect, backlash populist arguments confirm what a growing literature suggests – that politics of post-materialism have shifted away from economic concerns and into the realm of the sociocultural (Snow and Moffit 2012). According to Snow and Moffit, whose work examines the sociopolitical dimension of Canadian populism, backlash populism often complements arguments about socioeconomic “elites” with appeals to a gendered and/or racialized “Other”. Under the rationality of backlash populism, the language of the “Other” often replaces that of the “elite” (Snow and Moffit 2012, 273). As opposed to market populism that appeals to a neoliberal ethic, backlash populist discourse plays more to social conservative values of social order, ethno nationalism, respect for tradition, and Christian morality.

This has meant that in Canada backlash populist discourse often came to be fused with arguments of market populism. The Reform Party, for example, labeled any “organization that promoted state intervention to redistribute market-generated incomes” as belonging to a class of “special interest” (Sawer 2004, 13). Most commonly included in this group, however, were constructed “Others”, such as feminist groups, First Nations organizations, and ethnic and language minorities. The defunding of Status of Women Canada by the Harper Government in 2006, for example, drew on this representation of women and feminists as “Others”. According to Sawer, Status of Women Canada was “no longer regarded as having an authentic democratic role in crystallising and representing women’s views but rather were depicted as self-interested and unrepresentative special interests” (2004, 13). For Harper, this – combined with the support for more conservative women’s groups like REAL Women of Canada – became a way to balance neoliberalism and social conservatism factions within the CPC and the larger conservative movement.

Another distinguishing feature between market and backlash populism is its register of appeal. Whereas market populism primarily uses the dry logic of the market to articulate its arguments, backlash populism's "core appeal [is] in the realm of passion and emotion, where sociocultural symbols, rhetoric, performances, habits, and customs take precedent" (Snow and Moffit 2012, 274, see also Saurette and Gunster 2011). Backlash populist discourse, much more than market populism, tends to take up explicitly gendered and racialized themes, centered on debates over immigration, multiculturalism, gender equality, reproductive choice, LGBT rights, citizenship, and criminal justice. In this sense, backlash populism erects a new narrative of victimization according to which it is "normal Americans/Canadians" who are victimized by an influx of immigration, a changing gender order, and progressive ideology and policies which seek to entrench the rights of "Others" into North American law.

In the US, backlash populism has perhaps become the single most defining feature of American conservative culture. You need only to turn on Fox news for a few minutes to hear of the variety of ways that "ordinary", "freedom-loving" Americans are under siege. Moreover, in recent years, the rising influence of news sites such as Breitbart News (whose founder Andrew Breitbart acted as Donald Trump's presidential campaign manager) and the Drudge Report have intensified backlash populist rhetoric. In the US, this discourse often takes the form of arguments in favour of Christian religious "freedom". For years, now, Americans have been hearing about the war on Christmas, the discrimination against Christian doctors who refuse to prescribe contraception or abortion referrals, or the coercion of ministers and priests who are being forced to marry same-sex couples. While these themes are present in the Canadian context as well, they are much more reticent and largely limited to social conservatives, in particular think tanks such as Cardus or the now-defunct Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. According to this

discourse, it is the Christian “silent majority” that is victimized by contemporary and largely secularized politics.

However, more recently it has (once again) been Donald Trump – a man who is by no means an embodiment of Christian values – who has become the standard-bearer for backlash populist rhetoric in the US. In the name of “making America great again” and protecting American lives, values, and jobs, Trump has implemented a ban on Muslims in the US; refused to condemn white supremacists campaigning on his behalf; committed to building a wall along the Mexican/US border; attacked Muslim gold star parents; claimed a US federal judge was biased against Americans because he is of Mexican descent; and questioned whether President Obama was born in the US (O’Connor 2016). Further, just five weeks before the 2016 election, Trump undertook a campaign to defend himself against what he has called “false smears” of sexual harassment and assault (this in spite of the fact that he has been recorded boasting about “grabbing women by the pussy”) (New York Times 2016). At a campaign event in Palm Beach, Florida he preached to his supporters,

I take all of these slings and arrows, gladly, for you. I take them for our movement, so that we can have our country back. Our great civilization here in America and across the civilized world has come upon a moment of reckoning... [This is] a conspiracy against you, the American people... The establishment and their media neighbors wield control over this nation through means that are very well known — anyone who challenges their control is deemed a sexist, a racist, a xenophobe and morally deformed... They will seek to destroy everything about you, including your reputation. They will lie, lie, lie, and then again, they will do worse than that. They will do whatever’s necessary (Healy and Rappeport 2016).

Fused with discourses of victim-blaming, Trump’s response also embodies all of the key characteristics of backlash populist rhetoric. Using what seems to be a combination of tropes that

rely on both biblical and Greek mythology, Trump represents himself, his followers, and the American people as victimized by an elaborate and pervasive conspiracy against their values. Simultaneously, however, he also positions himself and his campaign as the ultimate champion and the backbone of American (and perhaps global) civilization. He then dismisses any criticism of his actions or politics (i.e. that they are racist, sexist and xenophobic) as an attempt to silence his powerful and, above all, truthful campaign to restore American greatness. Drawing on all of the key rhetorical tropes of backlash populism, Trump presents himself as both the victim of broad and dangerous conspiracies and the ultimate savior of American civilization. In Trump's words, "I alone can fix the [American political] system" (quoted in Applebaum 2016).

Conservatives in Canada, of course, have not mobilized the same levels of backlash populist discourse as the US (Sawer and Laycock 2009, 140). However, that does not mean that these themes are entirely absent in Canada, evidenced by Doug Ford recent rise as leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. Snow and Moffit argue that Canadian conservatives' also draw on populist arguments that go well beyond market populism. In particular, conservative discourses about immigration, multiculturalism, citizenship, criminal justice and childcare "also contained an important sociocultural dimension" in Canada (2012, 272). As we will see in chapter 7, for instance, Harper's tough-on-crime agenda – which was a centerpiece of every one of his electoral campaigns – often embodied tones of backlash populism. Moreover, in 2009, Harper revamped the Canadian guide to citizenship by removing references to peacekeeping and tolerance of racial and culture difference, replacing them with themes of individual responsibility and a telling of history that reflected shared and homogenous Canadian identity and values. Many critics argued that this shift in focus was a departure from the liberal emphasis on Canada's multicultural character (Snow and Moffit 2012). Perhaps most notable,

however, was his introduction of the language of “barbaric cultural practices”, which would become a staple of conservative rhetoric and politics throughout Harper’s tenure as prime minister (and that, as we will see, came to play a pivotal role in the 2015 federal election).

Most relevant for this discussion, however, is that by appealing to populist rhetoric, both American and Canadian conservatives have created new categories of victimhood. Albeit using different tones, intensities, and arguments, conservatives in both countries have come to argue that, along with a list of stock characters (which will be explored in more detail in the chapters that follow), it is conservatives and conservative values that are under attack – victimized, persecuted, and discriminated against by a dominating (and liberal) victim politics. “True” victims, then, are most often individuals who, “have been ostracized, censored, and punished in other ways by political correctness, affirmative action, hate speech codes, and similar manifestations of injurious victim politics” (Cole 2007, 6). The debate around “political correctness” (PC), for instance, often stands as representative of this conservative shift in populist rhetoric. Within this controversy, those who are labeled as “PC” (academics, feminists, anti-racist activists) are often represented as victimizing both conservatives (who are largely considered the primary targets of PC culture) and society by placing dangerous limits on freedom of expression. This pivot – where the alleged victimizer becomes the victim – takes up themes of both victim-blaming and victim-making and has become an increasingly common line of conservative argumentation since at least the 1980s.

Within the logical conservative discourses of victimization, then, it is not the survivor of domestic or sexual assault or racialized communities who is the victim of systemic and cultural discrimination and injustice. Rather, the “true” victims are innocent men who are subject to false allegations of sexual assault; unborn children who are being denied a right to live; the tax payer

who is taken advantage of by single mothers who live off “entitlements”; unemployed and disenfranchised white men who are discriminated against due to affirmative action; “illegal aliens” seeking to take advantage of North American generosity and charity; and the innocent bystander caught in the crossfires of brutal gang violence. Most notably, however, it is the conservative himself who has come to be victimized by victim politics itself.

3.0 Conservative discourses of “protecting women”

The dual and intertwining rhetoric of victim-blaming and victim-making has transformed conservative discourses of victimhood into a powerful political discourse throughout North America. Arguments that blame (certain) individuals for their own victimization while simultaneously representing “real” North Americans as victimized by a smug leftist elite and a dangerous racialized “Other” continue to resonate with millions of citizens and voters. In the US in particular, this discourse has helped turn many blue states red, become a staple of Republican political discourse, and, at least in part, led to the election of Donald Trump as President.

However, it also seems as though there are real limits to what these discourses of victimization can accomplish, particularly in Canada. After running a 2015 election campaign that relied heavily on tropes of racialized backlash populism, Stephen Harper and the CPC were voted out of office in a decisive electoral outcome that secured the Liberal Party with a strong parliamentary majority. Critics accused Harper’s electoral campaign of being negative, cynical, and intentionally stoking fear around Muslims and Syrian refugees, particularly when contrasted to Liberal leader Justin Trudeau’s “Sunny Ways” approach. It seems, then, that many Canadians are off-put and alienated by a discourse that depicts “real” Canadian values as under siege by immigrants and refugees or an overregulating “nanny-state”. One Canadian survey, for instance,

found that 58 per cent of Canadians disagree that there is too much immigration and fewer voiced concerns about immigrants not adopting “Canadian values” than at any time over the last 20 years (Hepburn 2016). Moreover, public support for publicly funded services, such as health care, continues to be relatively high in Canada, indicating a continued skepticism to the tenets of market populism (Blizzard 2013).

For these reasons, and as the rest of this dissertation will argue, conservatives in Canada are deploying new arguments around victimization and frames of victimhood. Moreover, these new narratives and arguments challenge many of our key assumptions about conservative anti-victimist ideology by adopting progressive and feminist language and arguments about victims, victimization, and gender. In particular, the emergence of conservative arguments that claim to “protect victims” (and most often women victims) from a wide variety of social phenomena have emerged as an increasingly salient site of conservative political discourse.

3.1 The role of conservative “protect women” arguments in larger conservatism

In understanding the rise and increasing use of conservative “protect women” arguments, it is useful to first consider the complex and multifaceted makeup of North American conservative ideology and its related movement. If the meteoric rise of Donald Trump in the United States (US) and the electoral defeat of Stephen Harper in Canada over the past year have taught us anything, it is that North American conservatism is a complex, shifting, and often philosophically contradictory phenomenon.

Moreover, understandings of conservatism have changed and continue to change over time. Well into the mid-1970s when Americans thought of religiously based political activism, the images that came to mind were likely to be those of figures on the left: Martin Luther King,

Jr., or anti-war priests such as Daniel Berrigan (Oldfield 1996). However, this all changed by the 1980s when, under the guidance and leadership of Evangelicals like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, Christian Right activism became an increasing influence within the Republican Party. In contrast, not only did Canada not shift towards a “Moral Majority”-inspired conservatism, but instead witnessed the reverse: the solidification of a liberal consensus that largely dominated public debate, policy, and party politics around such social issues as abortion, education, public health, and LGBT issues (Herman 1994).

In Canada, in particular, this has meant that, as is the case with most mainstream political movements and ideologies, contemporary conservatism has always been comprised of a coalition of different variants of, and approach to, conservatism. As discussed in chapter 1, Saurette and Gunster argue that North American conservatism is best understood as having a “rhizomatic” nature, since a rhizome is a “networked organic assemblage that shares a common root system but has no main, unifying trunk” (2013, 238). In Canada alone, the conservative movement includes various strains of Red Toryism, libertarianism, social conservatism, fiscal pragmatism, and prairie populism, among others. Most relevant here, however, is that this has meant that in Canada there is a “powerful strain of contemporary conservatism... that is distinct from the often crude and extreme anti-government discourse associated with... ‘backlash populism’” (Saurette and Gunster 2013, 228). Moreover, Saurette and Gunster have identified the rise of what they call “cappuccino conservatism” – a strain of conservative discourse that “has the potential to attract the support of many centrist swathes of voters (since it may well appear to be much less radical/confrontational and more consumer-friendly than the backlash populism version) (228) (see chapter 1 for full discussion).

My argument is that, within the cadre of “cappuccino conservatism”, Canadian (but also some American) conservatives have taken up new arguments around victimization, race, and, perhaps most notably, gender. While these new discourses hark back to century-old arguments about the protection of women, they also appropriate contemporary feminist and progressive language and arguments in important ways. As I outlined in the introduction, it is the purpose of this larger thesis to examine the contours and relevance of this new discourse throughout different ideological and policy areas of the conservative movement in Canada. Before beginning that examination, however, the remainder of this chapter will set the stage by outlining the origins of these new discourses. For, as we will see, “protect women” discourses of victimization rely on a more nuanced understanding of victims and victimization and have the potential of resonating with a new audience of supporters.

3.2 The origins of “protect women” arguments

The 2015 Canadian federal election has come to be regarded by many as the “election of the niqab” (Wherry 2015). Of course, this is a vast oversimplification of a long (by Canadian standards) six-week election campaign, which resulted in the end of 10 years of conservative governance and a near total collapse of the NDP. However, in an election cycle that was dominated by a debate over Syrian refugees and a tip line that Canadians could call to report their neighbours’ “barbaric cultural practices”, the debate over the niqab often came to be representative of it all.

The conservative opposition to the niqab in citizenship ceremonies (and for some in the public service) has a long history for Harper Conservatives. In 2011, for instance, then-Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney argued that banning the veil during

citizenship ceremonies is necessary because the veil itself is “indicative of a cultural tradition, which I think reflects a certain view about women that we don’t accept in Canada” (quoted in Snow and Moffit 2012, 284). When MP Chris Alexander took over for Kenney as Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism in 2013, he doubled down on Kenney’s position. Claiming to speak for “all the women in Afghanistan”, Alexander argued that he “spent six years in Afghanistan... [and] saw first-hand the systematic oppression of women by extremists like the Taliban, who often forbade women to uncover their faces in the pain of death” (quoted in Huffington Post Canada 2015). During the election campaign, moreover, PM Stephen Harper himself added that he would never tell his “daughter that a woman has to cover her face because she is a woman” (quoted in Wherry 2015).

Without getting into the nuances of the debate – for example, the fact that polls consistently show that most Canadians do not consider the niqab to be an important electoral issue, and that only a very small number of Muslim women in Canada choose to wear the niqab – let us consider the contours and relevance of this argument, particularly in its relationship to other discourses of victimization. First, and most notably, this discourse positions racialized Afghan women as victims of their home countries and cultures of origin – a significant departure from the other conservative discourses of victimization that often vilify racialized “Others”. Second, it represents Canada (and in this case, conservative politicians and the CPC) as the embodiment of women’s rights and liberal and multicultural values. Kenney, for instance, implies that in Canada we have a zero tolerance approach to sexism, a seemingly counter-intuitive position from a man who started his career as an anti-abortion activist in Saskatchewan. And finally, through the victimization of Afghan women, this argument allows conservatives to speak for “all of the women in Afghanistan” in ways that depict them as caring listeners who will

act as the benevolent spokesmen for brutalized, silenced, victimized, and forcefully veiled, Muslim women.

Of course, in many ways, these “protect women” arguments are not new. The framing of women as frail, submissive, and naïve victims by conservative advocates and politicians can be traced far back in history. “Protect women” discourses hark back to nineteenth century arguments that championed colonialism, treating racialized women as helpless, weak, and passive. Racialized women, in this discursive formulation, were victims, entirely powerless and in desperate need of rescue and salvation (see chapter 1). These types of “protect women” arguments were also common in both the medical and legal realms. For instance, rather than employ anti-woman tones or women-shaming rhetoric (as would become the case later), early anti-abortion discourse framed white women as innocent victims, the targets of dangerous and often racialized abortionists and midwives (Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 2 and 3; see also Marmon and Palley 1986). Moreover, the direct targets of these early anti-abortion laws were not women, as most legislation opted to criminalize those individuals who were found guilty of inducing the abortion, rather than the pregnant woman herself. While these early arguments might be seen as infantilizing women – as beings incapable of making reproductive decisions of their own – they did not embody the anti-woman tone and moral rhetoric that would emerge at later stages of conservative discourse.

Moreover, in the wake of 9/11, these new “protect women” discourses took up new relevance when both US President George W. Bush and PM Stephen Harper framed their ongoing military campaigns in Afghanistan as being necessary to protecting Afghan women abroad. The contours of these types of arguments – particularly about Muslim, Afghan, and Iraqi women – have been well documented by scholars (Brenner 2009; Ho 2007; Cole 2007). According to Alyson Cole,

for instance, facing increasing public scrutiny, the Bush administration repackaged the war in Afghanistan (and to a lesser degree in Iraq) as a momentous struggle for the emancipation of women. Moreover, “discussions about victimization drifted from metaphoric rape to actual women’s bodies and psyches, as Bush’s war machine ramped up... [s]uddenly, conservatives of all stripes were versed in feminist vocabulary – reproving ‘misogyny’, ‘gender apartheid’, and even ‘the feminization of poverty’” (Cole 2007, 150). Political optics also supported this shift in emphasis, with First Lady Laura Bush becoming the spokesperson for the war (and by extension the victimized Afghan women and girls the war was protecting). In one radio broadcast, Laura Bush decried, “Our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us. The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women” (Bush 2001).

There are, of course, strong undercurrents that connect these various “protect women” arguments. For Alletta Brenner, “protect women” discourses used by “European colonizers [to] justif[y] the domination and exploitation of other peoples by claiming to liberate native women from their oppressive cultures” are strongly mirrored in discourses that claim that the bad treatment of women in other countries today justifies “‘regime change’ at the hands of the United States and its allies” (Brenner 2000, 22). Under this framework, the place of women in politics and society becomes a marker of democracy and modernization, which the US and its allies are both an embodiment of, and a champion for. Moreover, within this logic, the plights of American feminists are often depicted as unworthy. This discourse both makes the victim (Afghan women) while also denying victim status to North American women (who, within this narrative, enjoy full democratic rights and privileges). Feminist scholar Iris Marion Young calls this discourse of victimization the “logic of masculine protection” which “carries an implicit deal: forgo freedom,

due process, and the right to hold leaders accountable, and in return we will make sure that you are safe” (Young 2003, 9).

However, while there is a long history behind the conservative deployment of “protect women” discourses of victimization, my argument is that these types of discourses of victimization are far more prevalent in contemporary Canadian conservatism than much of the existing scholarship accounts for and thus are a legitimate site for further investigation. As I will argue in the chapters that follow, we can see seemingly more nuanced discussions of victimization across many milieux of the conservative movement. “Protect women” arguments are taking new forms and being applied to new social and political contexts. Alongside more stereotypical and right-handed discourses of victimization, conservatives argue that women are victims of feminism and feminist ideals of gender equality; victims of coercive men and a pro-abortion society; victims of the sexualization of Canadian society; and victims of the primitive and patriarchal nature of “Other” non-Western norm and cultures. At the same time, however, I will also argue that the representation of women as victims has real limits. For while some women are considered worthy of protection and saving, others test the limits of “rescue-ability”.

4.0 Concluding Remarks

This chapter examined the three most important conservative discourses of victimization in Canada and the US over the past 50 years. The first discourse of victimization – victim-blaming – has largely come to characterize much of the popular and academic coverage of North American conservative politics, in particular in its relationship to the politics of victimhood. Connected to a larger anti-victimist worldview, victim-blaming arguments emerged out of the broader cultural and ideological backlash against the rise of identity-based social movements and

their own mobilization of arguments around systemic discrimination and victimization. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the most aggressive and prototypical victim-blaming campaigns have been directed at women, feminists, visible and sexual minorities, and social justice movements. While the victim-blaming discourse has been hugely influential in American conservative politics, it has not marked Canadian conservative politics to the same extent, remaining much more reticent in the Canadian context.

The second conservative discourse of victimization is very closely related to the first. For as politicians and activists direct blame at “false victims”, they simultaneously appeal to a new set of “real” or “true” victims. In both the US and Canada, victim-making arguments have largely been articulated through populist claims and discourse. Both the rise of market-based and socio-cultural backlash populism has thus fundamentally reshaped both the structure and content of populist discourse (which historically took more leftist forms), as well as the key rhetorical and ideological direction of conservative politicians and activists in Canada.

Finally, this chapter concluded by preliminarily investigating an emerging trend in conservative politics: the rise of “protect victims/women” arguments. For there is increasing evidence that over the past 15 years at least, North American conservatives have buttressed more traditional conservative victim frames with a new “updated” argument. Increasingly, it is women (and often racialized women) who are the true victims. Moreover, only by waging war against their countries or banning their niqab in citizenship ceremonies can conservatives protect them. As we will explore in the chapters to come, these newer and “modernized” victim arguments are an expanding and increasingly salient dimension of conservative politics and activism in Canada.

PART I:

CONSERVATIVE ACTIVISTS AND THE POLITICS OF

VICTIMHOOD

CHAPTER 4: BLAMING AND MAKING THE VICTIM: MEN’S RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN CANADA

While chapter 3 broadly examined the ways that North American conservatives have mobilized a diversity of discourses of victimization, this chapter begins my empirical analysis of contemporary conservative discourses of victimization with an investigation into the contemporary Canadian men’s rights movement (MRM). Drawing on the findings of a mixed method analysis of men’s rights activism in Canada, the central claim of this chapter is that while the MRM is by no means a cohesive or unified movement, a reliance on discourses and narratives of victimization underpins and structures the majority of men’s rights discourse and arguments in Canada. My findings reveal that while the central grievances and strategic visions of men’s rights organizations across Canada vary in significant and noteworthy ways – with some men’s rights activists (MRAs) adopting inflammatory and controversial tactics and discourses while others speaking to the mainstream by softening their tone and message – there remains a remarkable convergence across the entire MRM when it comes to its approach to the politics of victimhood. In fact, the arguments around victimhood taken up by the MRM closely mirror two of the three main “right-handed” discourses of victimization outlined in chapter 3.

This chapter presents two related arguments. My first argument is that men’s rights discourse has been heavily marked by victim-making arguments since at least the 1970s. For instance, fathers’ rights activism – which became increasingly influential throughout the 1980s – presented men and fathers as the *true* victims of divorce law and child custody. Moreover, victim-making claims indeed remain central to men’s rights discourse in the contemporary MRM in Canada. My second argument suggests that men’s rights activism has also taken up an *anti-victimist* orientation, deploying distinct yet intimately related victim-blaming arguments.

Through its frequent attacks on women and feminists, both historic and contemporary forms of activism have thus solidified an anti-victimist ethos into men's rights discourse and ideology.

In laying out these arguments, this chapter will be structured in four parts. First, in order to set the context, section 1.0 gives an overview of the organizations and coding criteria that made up my analysis. Section 2.0 then traces the history of men's rights activism through an analysis of two prevalent men's rights arguments: (1) that men are the *true victims* of gender inequality, and (2) that women and feminists are to blame. Section 3.0 examines the contours and arguments of the contemporary MRM, in particular considering its current relationship to previous eras of men's activism and the discourses and politics of victimhood. And finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the relevance of these findings and the implications of my analysis for larger conservative politics and discourse in Canada.

1.0 Organizations of analysis and coding

In order to ensure my analysis is representative of the larger MRM in Canada, I focused on examining the advocacy efforts of four of the most influential men's rights organizations in Canada: the Canadian chapter of A Voice for Men (AVFM), the Canadian Association for Equality (CAFE), Men's Rights Edmonton (MR-E), and Honest Ribbon (formerly White Ribbon.org). Why focus on these groups? Simply put, these four organizations offer a representative snapshot of the landscape of men's rights activism in Canada, comprising both the largest and most influential organizations.

1.1 Organizations of analysis

To begin, A Voice for Men (AVFM) is an obvious entry point into the MRM. Largely considered the flagship organization of the movement, AVFM was founded in 2009 and is the

largest and most influential men's rights organization internationally, with chapters in 12 countries, including Canada (Sharlet 2014; AVFM, About). In 2014 alone, the AVFM website had just shy of 9 million visits and functions as the closest thing to a center of the larger international MRM (Sharlet 2014). AVFM is also a noteworthy site of analysis because of its controversial founder Paul Elam, who has in many ways become the face of the modern MRM. Since the mid-2000s, Elam has been crucial in transforming men's rights activism into the modern, online phenomenon that exists today – largely by helping “fellow activists attract sympathetic media attention, launch[ing] franchises all over the world, and seek[ing] mainstream acceptance” (Sewer and Baker 2015). However, far from being a unifying figure, Elam has also been very controversial within both men's rights activism and larger political circles. His slogan, for instance, is “Fuck their shit up” (“their” meaning feminists). He has also authored essays such as “When Is It Ok to Punch Your Wife” and tabled a proposal to make October “Bash a Violent Bitch Month”, which would entail taking women who abuse men “by the hair and smack[ing] their face against the wall till the smugness of beating on someone because you know they won't fight back drains from their nose with a few million red corpuscles” (Sharlet 2014). Not only has Paul Elam become *the* leading figure in the MRM, the controversy that surrounds him ensures that both his activism and his organization are widely covered by the mainstream media and followed by millions of men (and some women) around the world.

My second men's rights organization, the Canadian Association for Equality (CAFE), has also become a prominent organization in the landscape of men's rights in Canada. CAFE is a non-profit that received charitable status in March 2014, becoming the first ‘educational charity’ focused on men's issues in Canada. Its stated mandate, which is carefully sanitized of inflammatory and violent men's rights language like that used by Paul Elam, is to achieve

“equality for all men, women, girls and boys... by focusing our limited resources on those areas of gender which are understudied in contemporary culture” (CAFE, Mandate). The website argues that this mandate has led the group to focus on “the status, health and well-being of boys and men, where attention, investment and support for educational and social programs stands at a level that is far from equal to the seriousness of the problem” (CAFE, Mandate).

CAFE has been a very active organizer on behalf of men’s issues throughout Canada, hosting events in Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton, and Vancouver. The group holds regular series talks, featuring speakers such as MRA Warren Farrell, University of Ottawa English professor Janice Fiamengo, and National Post columnist Barbara Kay (CAFE, Events). Moreover, the group has become committed to promoting its message on Canadian campuses, and is affiliated with 16 university and college men’s rights groups in Ontario alone (including groups at the University of Toronto, York University, and Guelph) (CAFE, Events). In March 2015, the group once again increased its national visibility by posting a controversial billboard in downtown Toronto bearing the message, “Half of domestic violence victims are men. NO domestic shelters are dedicated to us.” The caption was accompanied by a photo of a woman yelling at a terrorized man plugging his ears. This has meant that in terms of national representation, CAFE is one of the most visible groups, largely acting as a liaison and umbrella group for men’s activists in Canada.

The third group of analysis is the organization Men’s Rights Edmonton (MR-E). While MR-E is a relatively small group – comprised of less than a dozen active online contributors – it has managed to receive widespread national media attention largely due to its use of controversial strategies. In July 2013, for instance, MR-E made headlines across the country with its ‘Don’t be that Girl’ poster campaign mirroring the Edmonton Police’s ‘Don’t be that Guy’ campaign (the original ‘Don’t be that Guy’ campaign was designed to increase awareness around the

problem of sexual violence and promoted a message of affirmative consent). Posters displayed throughout downtown Edmonton and on the University of Alberta campus stated: “Just because you regret a one-night stand doesn’t mean it wasn’t consensual. Don’t be that Girl” (Klingbell 2013).

The founder of the group, a man who goes by the online alias of Raz, has said that the posters aim to inform people that feminists are adults in positions of power that are “educating young people and filling their heads with their bigoted slants” (quoted in Klingbell 2013). His goal? To make “feminism fall into the same disrepute as Nazism or KKK” (quoted in Klingbell 2013). Aside from their on-the-street poster campaigns, MR-E has also begun to expand, opening a chapter and organizing rallies in Calgary as well. While MR-E is not as vast and far-reaching as other groups, like AVFM or CAFE, its ability to generate widespread and national media coverage makes it an interesting and crucial site of analysis.

My final organization of analysis is the online forum Honest Ribbon. Formerly WhiteRibbon.org, AVFM’s Paul Elam and former feminist activist Erin Pizzey launched Honest Ribbon in 2014. Most interesting about this group is the fact that the organization has appropriated its name, and in some ways its approach, from the White Ribbon campaign – a pro-feminist, international movement of men seeking to put an end to violence against women. The original White Ribbon campaign – which was founded in 1991 in the wake of the École Polytechnique massacre of female students by Marc Lépine – is now active in 60 countries and seeks to promote gender equality and a compassionate vision of masculinity. Conversely, the rival website, WhiteRibbon.org, adopted the slogan “Stop Violence Against Everyone,” arguing that domestic and sexual violence is perpetrated equally by men and women. In response to a public outcry and the tabling of a lawsuit by the original White Ribbon campaign, Elam changed

the name of the organization to Honest Ribbon in 2015. The relationship of this organization to larger feminist politics, as well as its close relationship to AVFM, also makes Honest Ribbon an interesting window into the world of the MRM.

1.2 Coding

As I discussed in Chapter 2, in order to operationalize my approach to discourse analysis, I employed a rigorous mixed method approach, one that allows for the analysis of explicit arguments, narratives, concepts and value-framing, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Using the software QDA Miner, I examined every document posted on each organization's websites over a six month period (from May – October 2014), coding each to track (1) basic demographical information, (2) the representation of, and orientation towards, gender and gender equality, (3) the MRM's deployment of rhetorical communication strategies (ranging from the explicit arguments they use, to the framing strategies they embody, to the narratives they tell), and (4) the MRM orientation towards, and use of, discourses of victimization (see full appendix B for full coding dictionary).

Finally, I supplemented my discourse analysis with a review of the substantial secondary literature outlining the history of men's rights activism (the bulk of which is presented in section 2.0), as well as the participant observation of four men's rights events held in Ottawa (discussed in sections 3.0 and 4.0). This adds to the nuance of the analysis because, while most contemporary men's right activism does seem to be happening online, many groups are also attempting to mobilize on the ground. The group CAFE, in particular, has been active in the organization and promotion of 'men's events' throughout Canada (although mostly in Ontario). Attending men's rights events (three of which were but on by CAFE and a third by the Free

Thinking Film Society) also allowed me to triangulate many of the findings of my CDA, constructing a more complete and accurate picture of the organizational, discursive, and demographic contours of the MRM.

2.0 The history of men's rights activism in Canada and the US: Making and blaming the victim

2.1 Victim claims and early men's activism

Even before the emergence of an organized MRM, discourses of victim-making played an influential role in early men's activist discourse. Rooted in early men's rights arguments was the notion, often accepted by feminists, that our dominant and rigid gender order not only harmed women, but victimized men too. Robert Bly's book *Iron John*, for example, focused on healing the wounds done to heterosexual men by unequal gender relations, providing a critique of patriarchy and the ways rigid interpretations of masculinity harmed both women and men (Connell 1993; Messner 1997). Moreover, *Iron John* – and its account of the male victimization – was largely taken up as the pioneering text for early men's liberation, with men's consciousness-raising circles using it as a guide in, “rediscovering and reclaiming ‘the deep masculine’ parts of themselves that they believed had been lost” (Messner 1997, 17). This meant that early forms of men's rights activism actively drew on many of the same victim frames as early feminist and civil rights language – portraying men, and sometimes even women, as victimized by the rigidity and severity of dominant gender norms and social scripts.

However, below the surface early men's liberation hinted at a different reading of gender inequality than liberal feminism. The growing movement was strongly adverse to what they viewed as the “feminization” of men, resulting from “modernization and a changing gender order”

(Messner 1997, 17). Through consciousness-raising, the movement's leaders attempted to guide men through a spiritual journey that would help them restore their masculinity. Men and women, men's activists argued, are natural opposites: the breadwinner vs. the nurturer, "macho vs. mother-earth" (Connell 1995, 210). As the 1970s progressed, this essentialist belief in gender difference increasingly permeated the movement.

At the heart of men's rights arguments was the notion that equality as defined in feminists' terms could never exist in a reality where men and women's natures were diametrically opposed. Whenever feminists attempted to implement "equality", argued men's activists, men were victimized. Robert Bly, for example, thought men had been unjustly accused by feminism, that men should not accept blame and rather acknowledge and celebrate their biological and fundamental differences from women. Moreover, as men's activism grew from loosely organized coalitions of men to a more cohesive movement throughout the 1980s, its discourse also began to intensify. It was not only that men were victimized by the burdens of masculinity, it was that too much attention had been given to women's experience of powerlessness. It was time to turn our attention to men's troubles, argued men's rights activists. Increasingly, activists came to argue that men were actually *more* oppressed by sexism than women. It was thus men who emerged as the *true victims* of the contemporary gender order.

While early men's rights discourse was built around a victim-making claim, perhaps the most pervasive and persuasive victim-making claim made by the MRM has been with regard to fathers' rights. Of course, MRAs also took up other issues and arguments about victimization. The claims that men are the real victims of sexual harassment policies and victimized by widespread false accusations of sexual violence by women became recurring themes throughout the 1980s. However, as the MRM grew in both size and influence, father's rights became its

“most successful rallying cry” and arguments about legal and social bias against fathers came to dominate men’s rights circles (Messner 1997, 44). Even Hollywood would come to pick up in this victim-making claim with blockbuster hits like *Kramer vs. Kramer* depicting honest and hard-working dads as disenfranchised victims of the scorn and rage of their ex-wives.

Predominantly comprised of white, middle or working-class men, the fathers’ rights movement developed a masculinist discourse on divorce with the intent to alter laws related to divorce and child custody. According to scholar Terry Arendell, fathers’ rights discourse throughout the 1980s and 1990s was centered on the inherent differences between men and women and the problems related to the nature of post-divorce families (1995). Through the issue of fathers’ rights, the growing MRM was able to develop a “rhetoric of rights through which relationships, actions, and emotions [were] framed and defined” (Arendell 1995, 582). More than any other part of the larger MRM, the fathers’ rights wing gained traction not only among Canadian men but also at the organizational and political level.

Organizationally, the bulk of Canadian fathers’ rights organizations emerged in the mid-1980s in response to a number of family law reforms and initiatives (Bertoia & Drakich 1993). The two biggest and most influential mobilizations around fathers’ rights came in 1985 (in opposition to Canada’s Divorce Act, which instituted Canada’s prevailing no-fault, child’s-best-interest family law regime) and in 1998 (with the Special Joint Committee on Custody and Access). In these contexts, fathers’ rights were, in large part, championed by Senator Anne Cools who “lauded the testimony of representatives of 69 pro-men’s groups, entering into evidence lists of family violence studies that men’s advocates maintain support their claims of victimization by women” (Mann 2008, 54; see also The Current 2015).

The peak success of the fathers' rights movement came when it was able to exercise considerable pressure on the restructuring of divorce and child custody practices and law in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Crean 1988). In response to the demands of a growing and increasingly vocal fathers' rights movement in the early 2000s, then-Prime Minister Jean Chrétien introduced what would be a new Divorce Act in 2002. Bill c-22 sought to "balance" the demands of fathers' rights activists (by introducing joint parental responsibility as a substitute for child custody) with concerns from the feminist community (by elaborating child's best interest considerations to include the history of care and family violence). Although the bill died in November of 2003 when Chrétien resigned as Prime Minister, it provided a lightning rod for men's rights activism (Mann 2008).

At the discursive level, fathers' rights claims were largely couched in the principles of "equality" and "rights". Advocates constructed a public rhetoric based on equality and gender-neutral models to both underscore their rights and to influence law reform and public opinion. For Bertoia and Drakich, fathers' rights activists capitalized on the rise of rights-based language, which proved "seductive largely due to its support of the cherished principles [of equality and legal fairness] and appeals to idealized notions of post-divorce families" (1993, 593). At the center of these rights-based claims was the notion that men were victims, deprived of their rights as fathers.

Most significant for our discussion of discourses of victimization is that fathers' rights activism allowed the larger MRM to make two important, and inter-related, victim-making claims. First, fathers' rights discourse introduced the notion that "mothers are favoured in family law, feminists have gained excessive control of the law reform agenda, and the government must redress this bias" (Boyd 2008, 28). By framing family courts and law as having been "taken over"

by feminists, this argument cemented the claim that fathers and men are victims of unfair *legal bias* and discrimination (Morton and Allen 2001). The second argument targeted the perceived *social inequality* that men and fathers experience, promoting the idea that “women are equally or indeed more violent in domestic contexts than men, and that abused women shelters, restraining orders, anti-stalking laws, risk assessment tools, and other feminist-supported anti-domestic violence interventions promote hatred of and bias against men” (Mann 2008, 44-5). In essence, the two related arguments allowed MRAs to advance the claim that it was men and fathers, and not women and mothers, who are the real victims of both legal and social gender discrimination.

2.2 The rise of anti-victimism and victim-blaming

Consistent throughout men’s rights activism since the 1970s, then, has been the argument that men are victimized. The reasons have varied – from rigid gender norms and modernization to unfair divorce and child custody laws – but the crux of the argument remains: men are the real victims. However, these victim-making arguments are not the only victims arguments that have characterized the men’s rights discourse. Rather, alongside stories about victimized, downtrodden fathers emerged other more aggressive and anti-victimist arguments. For many activists within the movement were not hesitant in doling out blame for the persecution and oppression of men. In particular, women, ex-wives, old girlfriends, and feminists all became popular targets of attack, with the movement adopting a resolutely more victim-blaming approach. By waging discursive and legal attacks against its enemies, the movement severed ties with the therapeutic orientation of the past and embraced an anti-victimist present.

As the 1980s progressed, religion also played an increasing role in the contours and discourse of the larger men’s rights movement, in the US in particular. As the influence of the

“Moral Majority” grew on American politics generally (Saurette & Gordon 2015, chapter 6), there also emerged a religious defence of traditional models of masculinity. Under the leadership of activists like Jerry Falwell and Phyllis Schlafly – and following an essentialist reading of the bible – new organizations and discourses emerged as increasingly influential actors in the realm of men’s rights activism. Evangelical leader Bill McCartney, for example, founded the men’s rights group Promise Keepers in 1990 on the premise that men were being victimized by a departure from their “natural roles” forced upon them by feminists and progressives. By the late 1980s, attacks on feminists and feminism grew in both intensity and aggressivity with men’s rights discourse mirroring Reaganite backlash populist attacks on “liberals” of the same era (Connell 1993, 210).

With the rightward shift of the men’s activism, the movement came increasingly to define itself in opposition to feminism, gay and lesbian liberation, and the sexual revolution. With this, the MRM’s use of the language and tenets of anti-victimism intensified. Increasingly, MRAs shifted from a discourse of victimization, which presented men as victimized by dominant gender norms, to a discourse of vilification, which presented progressives, women, and feminists as false victims. Not only did women and feminists become more common targets of public attacks, but the growing MRM also charged the women’s movement with inciting “the rise of victimism” and blamed it for encouraging women to “secure their status as victims in order to gain various material and psychological rewards” (Cole 2007, 47). According to MRAs, it is feminism itself that has “turn[ed] women into victims in both theory and fact” (Cole 2007, 48). More and more men’s rights activists came to take up explicitly victim blaming arguments and by the 1980s attacking “victim feminism” had become so fashionable that, by the early 1990s, it created a new cottage industry for books, articles, and op-eds (Cole 2007, 48-9).

As a result, the MRM was increasingly influenced by an anti-victimist and victim-blaming logic and discourse. As the American culture wars took hold throughout the 1980s, MRAs argued that claims of victimization were increasingly pervading society as a result of the unnatural demands of the women's movement. MRAs took up a "gradual line of attack" (Cole 2007, 28), seeking to discredit false victims, most of whom were women and feminists. Not only were women not victims, men argued, they also used their (often false) victim status in an attempt to secure unfair advantages and gains. MRAs criticized and attacked feminism, arguing that its dangerous claims of victimization have come to pervade society.

While religion and its related anti-victimism had less influence in shaping conservative and backlash politics in Canada than it did in the US (Farney 2012), it nonetheless had two significant effects on men's rights activism north of the border. First, by the late 1980s, the MRM adopted a decidedly anti-woman orientation. Men and fathers' rights discourse deployed increasingly negative depictions of women – representing ex-girlfriends and ex-wives as "alimony drones," "mendacious and vindictive mothers," and "unruly women" (Kaye & Tolmie 1998). When participating in policy dialogues around the existing divorce law in Canada, for example, fathers' rights activists habitually refused to "abide by norms of 'mutually respectful' policy dialogue", heckling women and feminists who testified in defence of Canada's no-fault divorce laws (Mann 2008, 66). This anti-woman orientation was also readily articulated through the MRM's claims of women's widespread use of false allegations and their economic exploitation of men, and often their children (Mann 2008, 55). Fathers' rights activists came to argue that "restraining orders are nuclear weapons in Family Court" and that false allegations are "rampant" and the "ultimate weapon" of women and the "divorce industry" (quoted in Mann 2008, 57). Mothers and ex-wives were also charged with being financially greedy and of abusing

their children by denying them access to their fathers (Boyd 2008). Often, through the deployment of vicious ad hominem attacks, men's rights discourse was intensely personal, sexist, and anti-victim (Boyd 2008; Mann 2008).

Second, and related, the anti-woman proclivity of the movement was further buttressed by an unambiguously anti-feminist position. This is not overly surprising given that one of the central mandates of most men's rights organizations is to create sustained political opposition to the "unconscionable" feminist "agenda" (quoted in Mann 2008, 63). Accordingly, the movement directed much of its energies, efforts, and discourse to discrediting its "self-proclaimed feminist enemy", much more so than, for instance, exploring or advancing alternative and concrete policy suggestions (Mann 2008, 67). Men and fathers' rights discourse is scattered with references to feminists being "misandrists" or perpetuating a "patricast" by carrying out a "holocaust" on men (Mann 2008, 63).

In sum, since the 1970s, men's activism has fundamentally relied on two discourses of victimization. The first is victim-making in nature and can be traced back to the therapeutic roots of the MRM. Early forms of men's activism, for example, often adopted similar structures and rationales as its women's movement counterpart, arguing that both women and men are victimized by patriarchy and inflexible gender norms. As the 1980s progressed, wronged and mistreated fathers would emerge as the iconic victim of the movement. Fathers were the victims of alimony payments, social discrimination, and divorce and custody laws.

However, by the late 1980s – and in part due to the rising influence of groups like the Promise Keepers – men's rights discourse had all but eliminated many of the characteristics that had been present in early men's liberation and the mythopoeic men's movement. The critique of

the traditional male role was sidelined in favour of a more overt and angry anti-feminist backlash (Messner 1997, 41). Men's rights leaders argued that feminism was a conspiracy – a cover-up for the reality that it is actually women who have the power and men who are oppressed by gender inequality, largely eliminating the notion of gender symmetry (i.e. the idea that both men *and* women were harmed by unequal gender relations) from its public arguments. As the fathers' rights movement gained traction throughout the 1980s, activists were increasingly eager to assign blame for this victimization. It was ex-wives, girlfriends, lying women, and feminists that were victimizing and terrorizing men. In this respect, an anti-victimist discursive and ideological orientation increasingly characterized the movement as the 1980s heavily buttressed arguments about male victimization throughout the 1980s.

The next question is whether these discourses of victim-making and victim-blaming continue to structure contemporary men's rights arguments. Do the political and legal grievances of alienated and estranged fathers continue to define the movement? Or have contemporary MRAs shifted away from the father's rights arguments of its 1980s predecessor? Ultimately, what is the contemporary MRM's relationship to the discourses and politics of victimhood? It is to my empirical analysis of contemporary men's rights activism that this chapter now turns.

3.0 The contemporary men's rights movement in Canada

3.1 Similarities

Of course, there are many similarities between older and newer forms of men's rights activism. Both the demographic of the movement as well as its discourses of victimization have remained relatively consistent since the 1970s. The movement continues to be comprised of an older, male demographic and MRAs persist in their depictions of men as victims of legal and

societal bias and inequality. In particular, the demographics of the movement, arguments about male victimization, and personalized attacks on women and feminists all remain key features of the men's rights discourse.

3.1.1 Demographics

The first similarity between the contemporary MRM and its fathers' rights precursor is its demographic composition. In terms of active online participation in Canadian men's rights forums, my critical discourse analysis revealed that men over 50 continue to comprise the vast majority of contributors to formal organizational materials. In fact, in only 1.3% of the cases of men's rights discourse analyzed was the author of web materials/organizational blogs under the age of 30 (56% were over 50; 13%, between 30 and 50; and in 24% of the cases, the age was not specified). Further, the demographics of online participation of MRAs are consistent with the type of people that attend men's rights events.

However, the claim that the MRM consists primarily of older men should be qualified in a couple of ways. First, it is important to note that there is a substantial number of women who are very active members of the MRM. Indeed, at every men's rights event I attended in Ottawa, there was a small contingent of women present. In fact, one of the events held by CAFE was organized by a woman (Janice Fiamengo) and featured a woman as the keynote speaker (Barbara Kay) (CAFE November 11, 2015, author's observations). This is also reflected in the online activity of the movement, where women are at times the fiercest proponents of the men's rights position. Many actively embrace the labels of "honey badger" (because they don't 'give a shit' about the opinion of other women) or labia traitors (this is considered a compliment) (Sharlett 2014). They have their own blogs and vlogs and are very active online. In Canada, for example,

University of Ottawa Professor Janice Fiamengo has become one of the loudest, most visible, and militant defender of the MRM in Canada – hosting events, running a YouTube channel, and participating in public debates in defence of men’s rights across the country (Urback 2014).

Second, despite ample evidence that the majority of the most active MRAs continue to be older men, there does seem to be an inclination on the part of both the media and the Canadian MRM to present the movement as one primarily led by youth. Over the past decade, journalists have increasingly argued that the parameters of the movement are actually shifting (The Current 2015; Rekai 2013). In 2013, Canadian political magazine MacLeans ran a piece entitled “Men’s rights attracts angry young men”, which argued that the contemporary MRM is actually substantially younger and more aggressive than the fathers’ rights movement of the 1980s and 1990s. The piece also suggests that new MRAs are focused on different issues and seem more concerned with false claims of sexual assault than with divorce laws and child custody. According to author Mika Rekai, the early days of fathers’ rights have spawned a movement that is actually very different than its fathers’ rights predecessor, bearing “little resemblance to the original, [a movement] whose demographic is considerably younger, whose focus is more scattered, and whose anger is considerably more pitched. No longer is it a movement for disenfranchised men. This is now, increasingly, a movement of Angry Young Men” (Rekai 2013).

Third, it is not only pundits and journalists who present the contemporary MRM as being a movement dominated by young men. There also seems to be an inclination on the part of the movement itself to *self-represent* as a movement run by youth for youth. One way the movement has done this is by placing great emphasis on its presence on university and college campuses. Most recently, Ryerson University has been embroiled in a debate over whether men’s rights

groups can organize on campus. In April 2016, for instance, the Ryerson Student Union (RSU) denied a small men's rights group official status on campus. In response, founder Kevin Arriola claimed that the RSU's decision was discriminatory and violated his right to freedom of expression and association. On his telling, of course, he, as a student, is the *real* victim: "Being pushed out, it doesn't feel great...I kind of saw my school as having turned its back on me" (CBC's Out in the Open 2016). Echoing Arriola's tone, on a segment of CBC's "The National", men's rights sympathizer Jonathan Kay (a man over 50) went to great lengths to present the rise of men's groups on campuses as organic grassroots mobilized by male university students who feel alienated by liberal Canadian campuses (The National 2015). Kay painted the movement as a legitimate and burgeoning one, emerging out of the discontent of young and victimized men on university campuses.

In reality, however, men's rights mobilizations on campuses have actually been quite different than the portrait painted by Arriola and Kay. For the most part, it has not been university students that have led the campaign to have men's groups recognized on campus. In fact, it has largely been the group CAFE (run by James Brown, a man in his late 50s) that has championed the recognition of men's rights by Canadian campuses, something that has been vehemently opposed by student groups themselves (CBC's Out in the Open 2016). Indeed, over my six-month period of analysis, every blog posted about the marginalization of men's groups on university campuses was written by a white man over the age of 50. Therefore, despite a seemingly growing willingness on the part of the MRM to self-represent as a young and vibrant movement, my analysis reveals that the movement continues to be dominated by an older white male demographic. At all three men's rights events that I attended, the crowd (of 30-40 people at each event) was comprised primarily of older white men. I would estimate that white men over

50 made up approximately 70% of the audience at each event. It seems relatively clear, then, that the bulk of active and networked MRAs in Canada (at least at the organizational level) mirror their father's rights counterparts.

3.1.2 *Victim-making arguments*

A second area of convergence across all eras of men's rights activism is the consistent claim that it is men, and not women, who are the *real* victims of gender inequality. Consider

Figure 4.3 below,

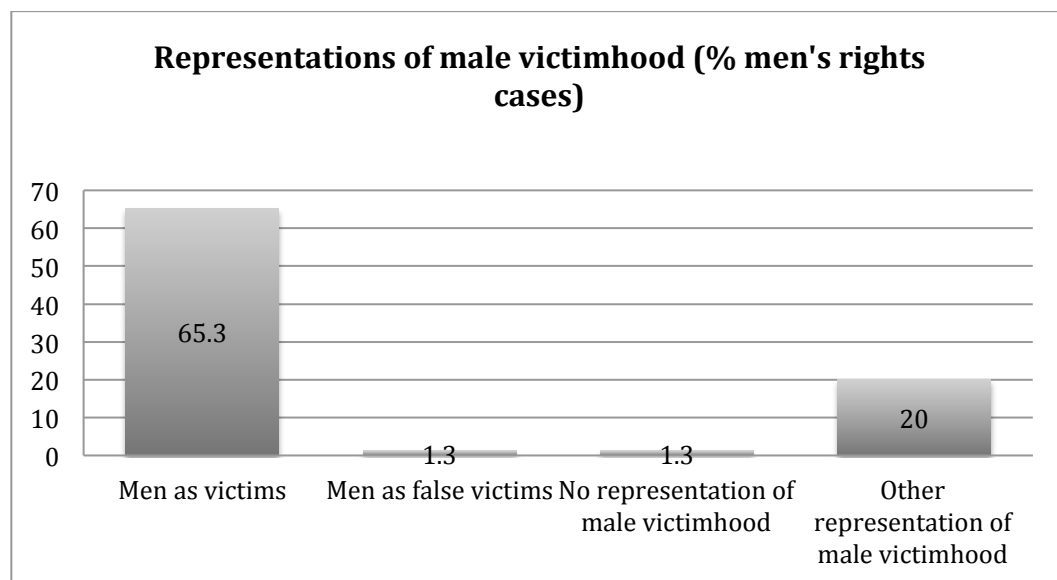


Figure 4.1

The above graph presents the ways MRAs represent men in relation. And indeed, my analysis confirms that representing men as victims remains a dominant trend throughout the movement's literature. In a remarkably dominant 65.3% of the cases, men are represented as victims.

Therefore, as we will see below, while the contemporary MRM no longer has a clear defining issue (such as fathers' rights), it does have a dominant victim argument that underpins

the majority of organizational men's rights materials in Canada. Whether it is in the context of divorce laws, the institution of marriage, genital circumcision, the suppression of free speech, sexual violence, domestic violence, legal inequality, or social discrimination, it is men, and not women, who are the primary victims. Moreover, this message of victimhood is echoed across all pockets of the movement. MRAs argue that men are victims of violence and abuse; that they suffer at the hands of feminism; that no institutions are set up to help men; and that they face legal and societal prejudice. MRAs are often the victim of the "despotism of the left" which is "exercising its tyranny over straight white males, the only group in Western culture upon which any and all collective slander may be heaped with impunity" (Kay 2015). This discourse of victimization often presents the men's rights movement as the underdog in a David and Goliath type battle where feminism (Goliath) dominates every sphere of society. Men are the little guys – the Davids who are ignored, oppressed, and abused.

Men's rights' victim-making claims are also echoed across the mandates of all men's rights discourse, and often articulated as central to the mandates of men's rights organizations. The group CAFE, for example, believes that it is men who are the real victims of contemporary gender-based discrimination, "because [men's] issue[s] receives much less attention than equal rights for women" (CAFE FAQ). Consider that the group rejects the "men's rights label, "because discrimination against men also adversely affects many women including the daughters, mothers, sisters, partners and friends of male victims. Inequality can affect anybody and should be everyone's concern" (CAFE FAQ). The framing of the argument that women can be victimized is interesting here because it is a nearly complete inversion of liberal feminist arguments that suggest that patriarchy also harms men. Rather, at the center of CAFE's claim is that women are only victimized by *male victimization*.

At times, discourses of victim-making tend to take up softer, more moderate language than one might expect from MRAs. The assertion that men are victimized more than women, for instance, is often plainly stated as fact, supported with statistics and numbers. Paul Elam – more often known for his aggressive and inflammatory rhetoric – argues, “[t]he plain fact is that men and boys do have problems and this society needs to have a much different dialog about those problems than it has ever had. The reasons for that are found throughout the over 3,000 feature articles on this website” (Elam June 5, 2014). In further drawing out the argument that men are the real victims, one article states that there are “228 scholarly investigations, 221 empirical studies, and 65 review and/or analyses, demonstrating that women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships with their spouses or partners” (MR-E October 17, 2017). Perhaps unsurprisingly, none of this evidence is cited in the blog.

As discussed above, it is this more moderate approach to victimhood that has also come to characterize the mandate of the increasingly professionalized Toronto-based CAFE. While, as we will see, many MRAs take up aggressive, bordering on violent tones and language, CAFE has positioned itself as a more moderate group within the larger MRM. As I have discussed, CAFE rejects the term “men’s rights”, claiming instead that it deals with “men’s issues”, a much more restrained mandate. In some ways, the group resembles the early therapeutic consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s. The group has opened a men’s centre in downtown Toronto, which is described as a safe space for men to come and learn about being men. The poster for one of the group’s Ottawa events reads: “Men’s Experience of Being Male: A Dialogue on men’s experiences and understanding of maleness in contemporary society. Women also welcome.” (CAFE, Events). Harking back to early forms of men’s activism, CAFE is even willing to concede that women can be victims too.

Moreover, it is not just that men are being victimized, it is that they are being harmed at much higher rates than women. At a CAFE event in November 2013, speaker Barbara Kay spoke in great detail about the various ways that “good men are victims” in Canadian society. On Kay’s telling, men suffer because there are no institutions or not-for-profits set up to help them; they suffer because of feminism; and they suffer because there is a prejudice in Canadian courts against fathers. However, most notable for Kay is the way that men suffer because they are not adequately celebrated. To remedy this, Kay suggests that we “need to valorize men’s heroism” On a practical level, Kay suggests that we oppose a gender-neutral national anthem and ensure that men (and not women) are at the forefront of Remembrance Day celebrations because these “are not things about women”. The masculine virtues of “courage, valour, and strength,” declared Kay, “these are things that are not talked about enough” (Free Thinking Film Society 2013, author’s observations).

However, in contrast to more moderate discourses of victim-making, much of men’s rights discourse invokes more intense tones and arguments about victimization. Consider, for example, the “About us” page of AVFM, which warns men:

THERE ARE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ACTIVISM. This is something you must know. Corrupt public officials, including police, prosecutors, judges and elected public servants do not usually appreciate being publicly challenged and/or exposed. They can and will act with vindictiveness toward you for the measures we take exposing their actions to the public. You need to be prepared for that risk before proceeding. There is a possibility with any given case that the individual suffers more than he or she would without the activism (AVFM, About).

This passage highlights another important trend in men’s rights discourse: it is not only that men are victims, it is that in particular it is MRAs who suffer. To that end, MRAs argue that it is not only that men suffer from legal bias and the societal devaluation of men, it is also that

society is out to get anyone who dares challenge the “matriarchal” world order (AVFM, About). In fact, in 17% of the cases, MRAs (often in conjunction with men) are presented as the foremost victims of the movement. It is MRAs who are the victims of “militants who disrupt their events,” of “harass[ment by] members of the public,” of false allegations, and perhaps most notably, of feminism.

3.1.3 *Anti-victimist arguments*

Moreover, this more aggressive approach to victim-making is equally reflected in the continued prevalence of *victim-blaming* arguments throughout men’s rights discourse. Like its 1980s predecessor, the contemporary MRM supplements its victim-making discourse with anti-victimist tones and arguments. In particular, my analysis of men’s rights discourse affirms that one of the most dominant orientations of the MRM continues to be anti-victimist by actively deploying both anti-woman and anti-feminist arguments.

Unsurprisingly, the contemporary MRM remains committed to its anti-woman position and arguments. In order to assess the continued relevance of victim-blaming in the MRM, I examined the ways in which women are represented in relation to victimhood by MRAs. Indeed, in 36% of the cases, MRAs argued that women were *false victims* – self-representing as victims when they were not victims at all.

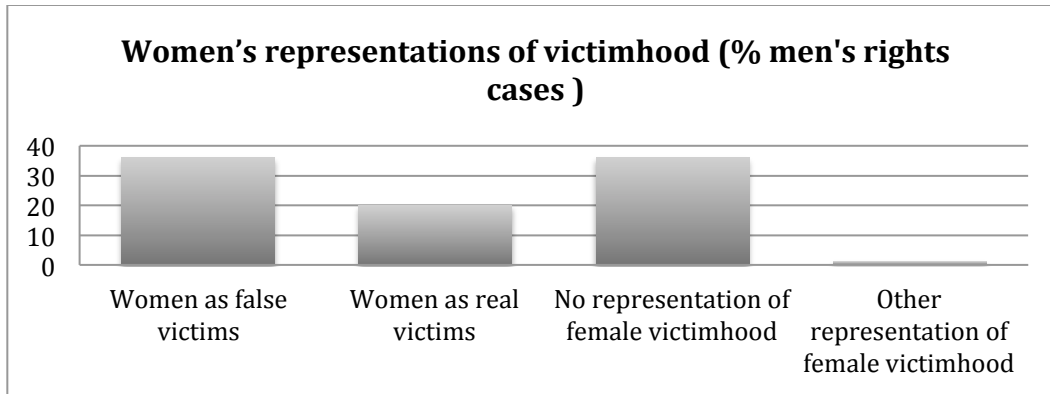


Figure 4.2

Before entering into a discussion about the representation of women as false victims, let us first consider that 20% of men's rights discourse actually affirms that women are victims. Given their history of anti-victimist and anti-women orientation, how should we make sense of this? Are contemporary MRAs indeed more likely to make argument about female victim than their historical counterparts?

First, this finding is less surprising when you take the mandate of Honest Ribbon into consideration. Given that the group's central mandate is to "show with complete clarity, [that] violence in the home is not a gendered problem [but rather] a learned behavior by both sexes," it is not surprising that many MRAs do concede, at times, that women can be victims of real violence. In one representative example, Paul Elam argues,

Somewhere in all of us, I think, by virtue of systematic brainwashing, is the idea that domestic violence is epitomized by a frail and battered woman, quietly weeping and huddled in a dark corner. We have been trained, through the hypnotic repetition of misinformation, to conjure the image of a male monster driven by the insatiable need for control, pummeling [sic] his wife or girlfriend because her independence threatens him.

Do such monsters exist? Certainly. I have spoken with many of them. Some are guilt-ridden over their actions, some are sociopathic and unrepentant, rationalizing that their misdeeds are justified. All of them are wrong.

But of course to be fair, and more importantly truthful, my memory has no shortage of women who also fill the bill. I have dealt with many who slapped, punched, kicked, and clawed their partners out of anger and frustration and, just like a few of the men, out of the sick desire for dominance. The only real difference between the two is that I found significantly less remorse in the women. I have always attributed that to the fact that their violence was never taken as seriously as the men's, and never as stigmatized by social taboo. It didn't make any of them less wrong (Elam October 2, 2012).

This case, for example, was coded as representing women as victims. For Elam affirms that men who are “monsters” who pummel their “frail and battered wom[e]n” do indeed exist. However, embedded in this passage, of course, is the more powerful anti-women and anti-victim assertion that men and women actually are equally violent but for the fact that women are “significantly less remorse[ful] than men.”

Second, in the time period over which my analysis took place, a Queen's University student was attacked by a stranger after receiving threatening emails over her support for feminist activities on campus. In March 2014, Danielle D'Entremont posted a picture of her swollen face on Facebook saying that she walked out of her house in Kingston and was attacked by a stranger. While D'Entremont noted that she was not sure if the attack was directly related to her feminist activities, she said her assailant was a man who knew her name (CBC News March 17, 2014). The fallout over the attack generated much attention across men's rights forums, with 15 cases referring to the incident. In many of these blogs, MRAs conceded that Danielle had, in fact, been the victim of some kind of violence, although few believed this had anything to do with the MRM. Paul Elam, in fact, went as far as to “offer a \$1,000.00 reward to anyone who can provide conclusive, corroborated proof of how Danielle D'Entremont was injured on the night in

question, regardless of how it happened, even if her injuries were self-inflicted”, maintaining that he was “very sceptical that she was attacked at all” (Elam May 21, 2014). Regardless, of the core argument/message (that MRAs are being falsely accused of violence), many of these cases were also coded as representing women as victims of real violence.

With these qualifications in place, the fact that 20% of the cases represent women as victims becomes less surprising. Moreover, in a much more dominant 36% of the cases, MRAs argue that women are false victims, that it is men who are victimized by our “women and children” first society (Davison August 10, 2014); that “women do lie,” and “that false claims of abuse, whether sexual or physical, are a reality” (O’Hara July 10, 2013). Moreover, arguments of victim-blaming are further evident in the most popular targets of attack of the movement. Consider the figure below,

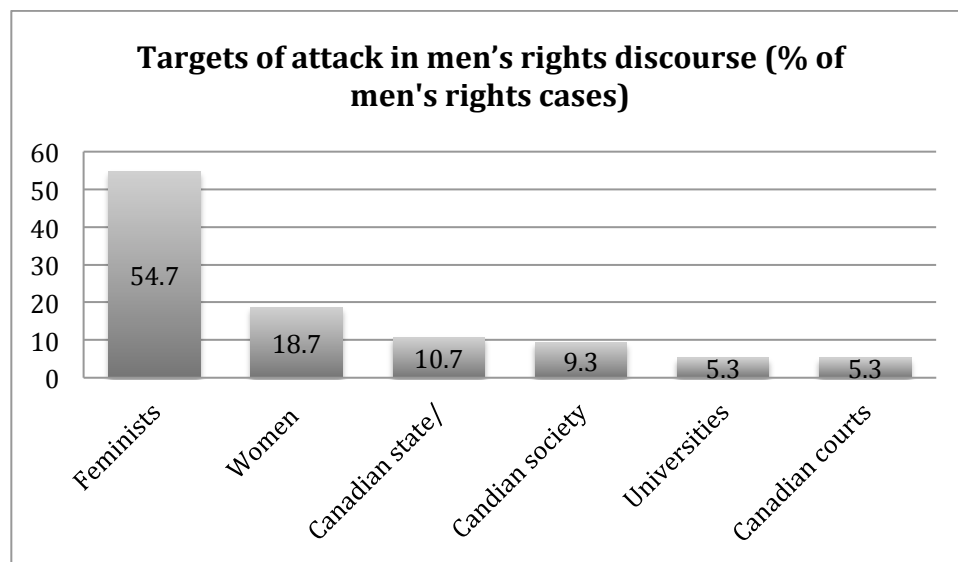


Figure 4.3

In 18.7% of the cases, women are the “targets of attack” from the movement, further signalling the MRM continues to rely on gendered discourses of victim-blaming. The anti-

women orientation and discourse of the movement is made even more pronounced by some of its most publicized arguments and campaigns. As we have seen, perhaps the highest profile example is Paul Elam, who has garnered considerable media attention for his use of inflammatory and offensive language about women. Elam's self-proclaimed slogan, for instance, is "Fuck their shit up" ("their" meaning feminists). He also authored an essay entitled "When Is It Ok to Punch Your Wife" and tabled a proposal to make October "Bash a Violent Bitch Month" which would entail protecting men by beating women. In Elam's words, "I don't mean subdue [women], or deliver[ing] an open handed pop on the face to get them to settle down. I mean literally to grab them by the hair and smack their face against the wall till the smugness of beating on someone because you know they won't fight back drains from their nose with a few million red corpuscles. And then make them clean up the mess" (Sharlet 2014).

Moreover, there is ample evidence that many Canadian activists also continue to take up an anti-woman and anti-victim approach. The group Men's Rights Edmonton actively promotes the "register-her.com" website – a site which publicized the names of women they allege to be bigots and "female rapists", the majority of which are accused of statutory rape or false allegations against men (Men's Rights Edmonton n.d.). Perhaps even more indicative of an anti-woman orientation was the Edmonton group's very public 2013 attack on Lise Gotell, then-chair of the Women's Studies department at the University of Alberta. Mirroring the feminist campaign "Don't be that guy" – which advocated a "yes means yes" approach to consent – the MR-Edmonton campaign developed their own "Don't be that girl" campaign. Part of this campaign involved posterizing downtown Edmonton with images of Professor Gotell with the caption: "Theft isn't black; Bank fraud isn't Jewish. And rape isn't male. Just because you get paid to demonize men doesn't mean rape is gendered. Don't be that girl" (Dehaas 2013).

Moreover, these tones are echoed throughout much of men's rights literature. I found that in 35% of the cases, the overall, implicit representation of women was negative. And 24% of the cases deployed the negative use of ad hominem attacks to discredit opponents of the MRM.

As per the above figure, the only more frequent target of attack than women are feminists. While perhaps expected, it is clear that the contemporary MRM continues to be characterized by an intensely anti-feminist discourse and ideology.

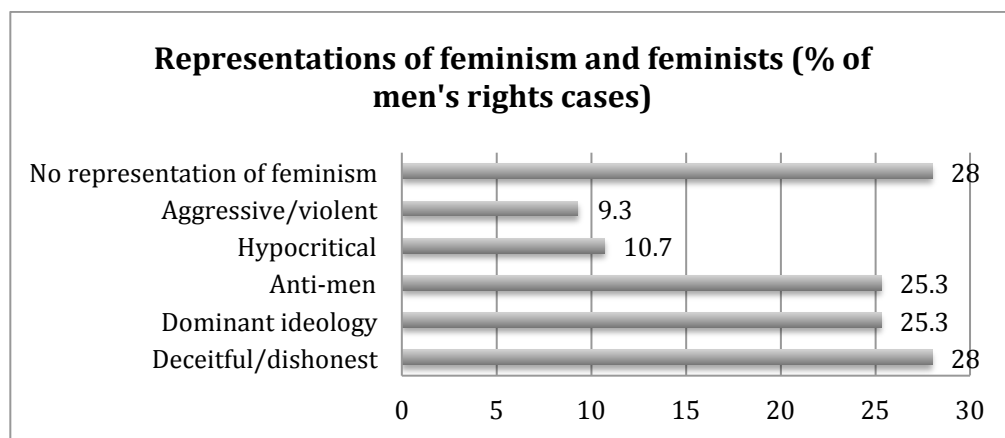


Figure 4.4

This anti-feminist, anti-woman ideological and discursive orientation is further evident in men's rights representations of feminists. As per Figure 4.4, feminists and feminism continue to be presented as the number one enemy of the MRM. In the majority of cases (54.7%), feminists and feminism are depicted as purposefully untruthful (in 28% of the cases); anti-male (25.3%); dominant and all pervasive (25.3%); hypocritical (10.7%); and aggressive and violent (9.3%). Moreover, attacks are not only directed at women who represent feminism. In fact, the most vitriolic attacks are reserved for male feminists, labelled by the movement as, "manginas" who "oppose their own sex" and "defen[d] evil feminists who are bent on male domination" (Swift June, 2014). Central to contemporary men's rights activism and discourses, then, is a victim-

blaming ethos. By portraying women and feminists as false victims who are conspiring against men, the movement reproduces and reifies many of the academic and popular assumptions made about both men's rights activism and conservative ideology (Boyd 2008; Mann 2008; Cole 2007; Kaye and Tolmie 1998).

While victim-making claims are the most dominant form of men's rights victim argument, anti-victimist ideology and victim-blaming arguments continue to structure much of men's rights activism in Canada. In particular, by attacking women and feminists, men's rights activists ensure that certain circles of the conservative movement continue to embody the anti-victimist ideological orientation that characterized 1980s' men's rights activism. While, as we will see throughout the rest of this dissertation, anti-victimist arguments are reticent in mainstream Canadian conservative politics, they continued to be widely used in more extremist men's rights circles.

3.2 Differences

However, while certain characteristics of the movement have remained consistent across times, others have not. There are strong indications, for example, that the movement is moving away from a strict focus on father's rights-based grievances, moving its activism from Parliament to the Internet. Consider, for example, that it is almost unheard of for a MRA to protest Parliament, petition MPs, or push for changes in divorce laws and proceedings in 2018. Moreover, these changes in the organizational capacities of the movement have shifted both the political orientation and the central grievances of the movement.

3.2.1 Forms of organization

Perhaps the biggest difference between the MRM of the 1980s and the movement today is the ways in which the two movements mobilize support for men's issues. In the past, the MRM emerged from small consciousness-raising groups, often held in men's homes, church basements, or rented community centres (Connell 1993). These groups, as well as the larger movement, were comprised of men who felt that they had been unfairly treated by the legal system. Group meetings drew in unhappy, divorced men who only had their children every other weekend. Fathers' rights activists argued that family courts corrupt, regularly practicing bias against men and fathers. The 1980s MRM was a movement that, at least in part, advocated legal and judicial reform.

However, the proliferation of the Internet has allowed the MRM to mobilize in new ways. In particular, the explosion of the "manosphere" has made the landscape of men's rights advocacy much more diverse, multiplying the number of grievances and amplifying the movement's voice (Sharlet 2014). The manosphere can be thought of as "an online network, nascent but vast and like the universe constantly expanding, each twinkling star in its firmament dedicated obviously to men. Men and their problems. Usually with women" (Sharlet 2014). Within the larger manosphere, moreover, exists countless "galaxies", some composed of "self-declared "pickup artists" (PUAs) who want to help ordinary guys trick women into bed; other solar systems deal earnestly with child custody and the Adderallization of rambunctious boys." (Sharlet 2014)

The explosion of the manosphere – and its constantly expanding galaxies – has meant that MRAs are able to generate huge amounts of media attention by organizing exclusively online. In February 2016, for instance, infamous MRA Roosh V – an activist who has advocated for the legalization of rape in the US – organized an international day of action (Kabas 2016).

Roosh V's plan was to host 165 meetings in 43 countries, and he arranged for "hosts" to be at each meet-up point in order to direct participants to a secret location. All of the arrangements were made online. Citing security concerns, Roosh V eventually cancelled the event. However, he was able to disseminate his anti-victimist argument – that rape should be made legal on private property so women would be forced to learn to protect themselves – to a vast audience from a laptop in his mother's basement (Kabas 2016). Most mainstream media outlets picked up the story. With the rise of the manosphere, men's rights activism is no longer limited to a particular geographical location, like a church basement. Rather, men's rights networks can reach men in all areas of the world and across different walks of life.

3.2.2 Political orientation

Given the history of the MRM, one might also expect to find a strong undercurrent of conservatism, and perhaps in particular social conservatism. And, indeed, a right-leaning worldview is evident in some men's rights arguments. For example, in pundit Jonathan Kay's defence, men's groups on campus frame men's rights activism in the familiar language of the "culture war": "the left has largely won the culture war on campuses. Now it's just a question of if the right can have some sort of dignified fighting retreat, and I think the men's rights movement is part of that" (The National 2015). Further, he suggests, "my side [the conservative side] is losing the culture war. We just want to go out with a little dignity" (The National 2015).

However, Kay's statements are not necessarily the norm among MRAs. By and large, a conservative orientation is not central to the political approach or the larger worldview of the Canadian MRM. In fact, many MRAs actively eschew the idea that they are of a conservative orientation, instead presenting themselves as resolutely non-partisan. The distancing of the MRM

from its perceived socially conservative underpinnings is communicated through men's rights arguments in a couple of ways.

First, the organizations that make up the MRM do not support socially conservative issues. The official position of AVFM, for instance, is that "men's issues are neither a matter of partisan alignment nor aided by religious doctrine" (AVFM Oct. 16, 2014). In another entry, the organization goes even further arguing that it "takes no side at all in partisan political struggles and, after weighing the evidence at hand, generally view[s] all organized mainstream political options as gynocentric" (AVFM May 24, 2014). Perhaps even more notably, none of the four organizations I examined are against same-sex marriage or explicitly anti-abortion – two political positions that are generally considered as hallmarks of social conservatism in North America (Farney 2012). In this respect, the policy positions of the MRM do not map on to a socially conservative policy agenda. Dean Esmay, the managing editor of the Canadian chapter of AVFM, for instance, uses his own political opinions on abortion and gay rights to argue that the MRM is decidedly non-conservative. He writes: "Although I generally shy away from left/right dichotomies, I am actually rather liberal in political orientation since I am supportive of liberal ideas like gay rights, abortion, equality and separation of the church and state" (MR-Edmonton June 8, 2014).

In fact, in 2014, Toronto-based organization CAFE applied to march in the Toronto Pride Parade, arguing that "much of its activity has focused on raising awareness of men's issues – including those that affect, say, the right of gay men (and all men) to have equal parenting rights under the law" (AVFM July 2, 2014). While CAFE was initially granted permission to march in the parade, following an outraged backlash on the part of many LGBT groups in Toronto, this permission was revoked (Honderich 2015). For CAFE, this was proof of the continued social

discrimination the MRM faces every day. It became CAFE (and not the LGBT community) that was the primary target of societal discrimination.

Secondly, neither the philosophical underpinnings nor the content of men's rights arguments seem to support the notion that it is, in essence, part of a larger social conservative movement. For one, the MRM's discourse is decidedly, and often proudly, unreligious. All four groups of analysis were explicitly non-religious. In fact, many blogs displayed a rather pejorative attitude towards religion. The "Editorial and Comment Policy" page of the AVFM website, for example, states, "it is the AVFM's official position that men's issues are neither a matter of partisan alignment nor aided by religious doctrine, so do not expect special protection from other commentators when you introduce those subjects" (AVFM, Editorial and Comment Policy). Also absent from official men's rights discourse in Canada is the promotion of a traditional family structure and moralizing rhetoric around kids needing an intact family. While there remains some discourse on the harm violent mothers inflict on their children (most notably from the organization Honest Ribbon), even this argument is increasingly presented within a larger argument about the 'cycle of violence'.

3.2.3 Focus of the MRM: Key Issues

As we saw throughout section 2.0, the grievances of fathers' rights activists dominated the MRM throughout the 1980s. Fathers were the victims of inflated alimony payments, vicious ex-wives, and social and legal bias. However, there are significant indications that the contemporary movement is shifting away from a focus on legal-based grievances. According to English professor Jeff Sharlet, who attended AVFM's first international conference in Detroit, while pamphlets and online materials described the conference as tackling serious issues, like

high rates of male suicide and the overmedication of boys in school, very little attention at the actual conference went into discussing these issues (The Current 2015). Instead, men would talk about the looming problems of false accusations of rape and domestic violence against men. They argued that men are much more likely to be sexually assaulted than women. For Sharlet, it seemed MRAs always came back to the idea that some women, and all feminists, were out to get them.

In order to gauge whether Sharlet's account is accurate, I investigated whether what key issues, if any, drove contemporary men's activism and arguments. To this end, I coded each case of men's rights discourse as one of the following: (1) a clear issue is identified, (2) no clear issue is identified, and (3) an issue is somewhat identified. The first two categories are relatively straightforward: if an issue was raised and discussed, it would be coded (1) and if no issue was raised, it would be coded (2). A case would be coded (3), however, when an issue was raised but not discussed. An event notification would be a good example of this. For instance, if a blog post was devoted to publicizing an event around domestic violence – but the post contained no discussion of the actual issue – it would be coded as “an issue is somewhat identified.”

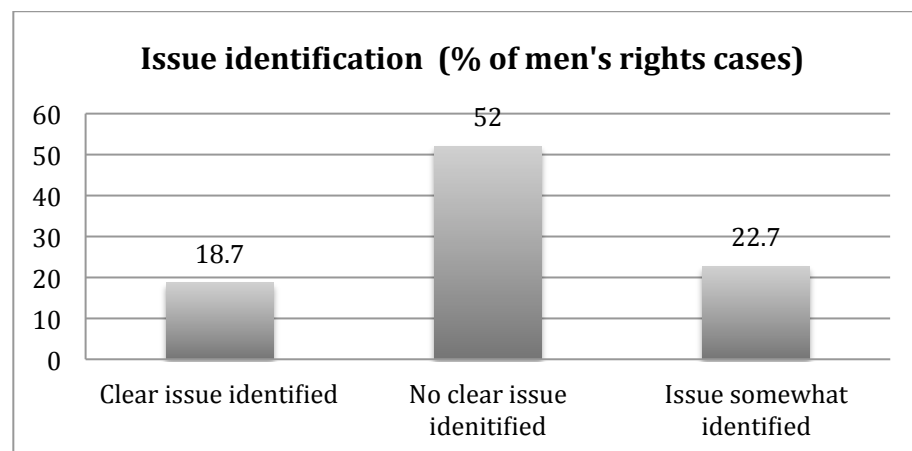


Figure 4.5

My initial findings are notable because in a majority of cases, no issue was identified. Rather, most posts (and blogs in particular) were simply rambling, at times incoherent, rants about feminist conspiracies and the vast society-wide victimization of men (see Figure 4.5).

Moreover, even when a concrete issue was identified, it was not done so as part of a cohesive policy project. Rather, the MRM has witnessed an explosion of issues – something further distancing it from its fathers’ rights roots.

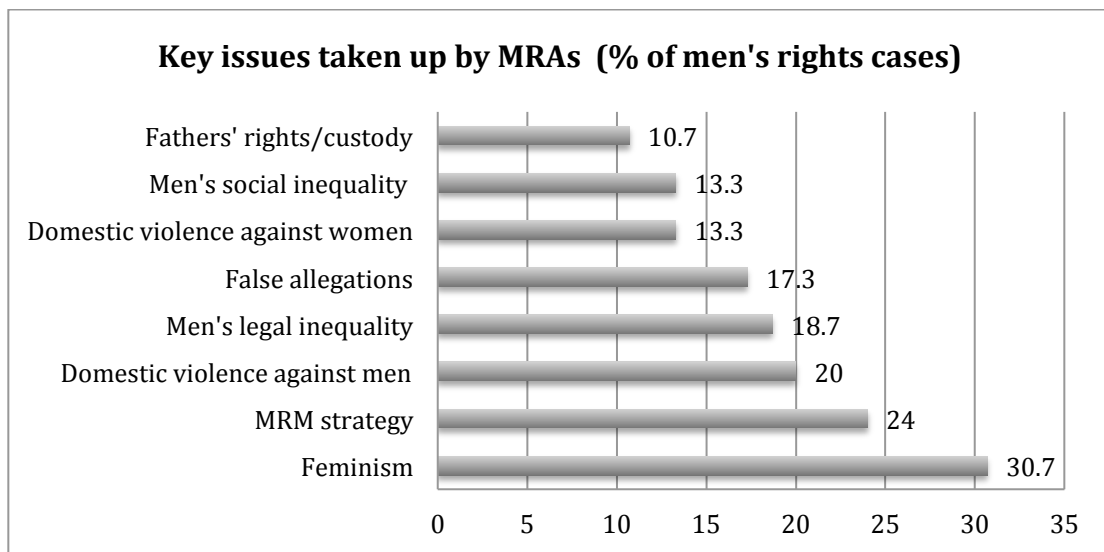


Figure 4.6

The above Figure 4.6 represents the most common issues raised by the MRM. Before we examine what issues continue to define the movement’s activism, a quick note on how my analysis was operationalized. In first developing my coding dictionary, I drew on a robust review of the secondary literature on men’s rights activism in order to generate a comprehensive list of any possible issues that might be raised as significant to the MRM. Moreover, if a new issue emerged, I would add it to my coding dictionary (for a full list, see Appendix B). Therefore, the

above graph does not represent my complete search, nor does it capture all of the issues raised by the MRM. Rather, these are the most common and frequently raised issues that emerged throughout my analysis of men's rights discourse. My analysis raises three interesting findings.

First, given the Canadian MRM's focus on fathers' rights throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it is perhaps most surprising that the fathers' rights issues (and their related custody claims) are only raised as significant ones in a relatively small 10.7% of the cases. Rather, my analysis reveals that there is really no *one* defining issue that dominates the men's rights landscape. It seems that the movement's discourse is centred on a cluster of often-related issues. The issues that came to represent the 1980s MRM remain relevant in contemporary men's rights circles. Issues of false allegations were raised in just over 17% of the cases; legal bias against men in 18.7%; and domestic violence against men in 20%. However, no one issue is dominant.

Second, my findings raise interesting insights about the degree to which the MRM is centered not on a central grievance, but largely defines itself and its discourse through its oppositional relationship to feminism. In 30% of the cases, MRAs discuss feminism and the harms it is inflicting on men. On AVFM's mandate page, for example, it is clear that its ethos is based around an "anti-feminist" mandate, regarding feminism as "a corrupt, hateful and disingenuous ideology based in female elitism and misandry... [and] regards self proclaimed feminists as agents, unwitting or otherwise, of that hate and corruption" (AVFM, Editorial and Comment Policy). MRA and blogger Dan Perrins further argues, "[f]eminist lies are promoted for society to gasp at, and for feminists to use emotionally to extort money from society" (Perrins April 15, 2014). On the telling of MRAs, while men are the *victims*, feminists are the ultimate *victim makers*.

The third significant topic that emerged within the literature of the MRM is a self-reflective one. In 24% of the cases, MRAs raise and debate issues of men's rights strategy and the movement's purpose. On questions of strategy, moreover, there seems to be two distinct schools of thought within the larger movement. On the one end of the MRM spectrum are groups like AVFM and MR-E, which have adopted an aggressive and controversial approach to men's rights activism. Their strategy is to use offensive language and tactics in order to garner as much media attention as possible. In describing the "Don't be that Girl" campaign, for instance, one men's rights activist argued that the MR-Edmonton "offended the hell out of the feminist powers-that-be... and put said powers on notice that there's a new game in town. Hey, that's not half bad" (MR-Edmonton January 3, 2014). For this activist, MR-E "garnered international presence for the pro-male cause by savvy manipulation of the media... and made inroads into the cultural conversation. Why, that's excellent work, and sorely needed!" (MR-Edmonton January 3, 2014). Movement leaders also often echo this aggressive approach. Paul Elam, for example, describes himself as a Malcolm X-type character – someone who speaks unpopular truths to power. This more extremist faction of the movement tends to adopt a more victim-blaming ethos.

However, on the other end of the men's rights spectrum are groups like CAFE and Honest Ribbon, which have seemingly adopted a more mainstreamed approach to activism, one that emphasizes the ways that men are innocent victims. Like CAFE, Honest Ribbon is often representative of this mainstream approach. Not only did the group co-opt the name "White Ribbon" from a pro-feminist group that advocates a feminist approach to ending sexual violence, but it also argues that domestic violence should be understood as a "spectrum of behaviour" – a common approach in feminist circles. However, coordinator Erin Pizzey diverges from the feminist argument in her insistence that men are equally – if not more likely – to experience

violence than women. Pizzey's arguments appeal to "academic" studies on violence (Pizzey October 20, 2014). She also acknowledges that men have an important role to play in ending the cycle of violence. For her, it is not that women don't experience violence at the hands of men. It is just that domestic violence is not an inherently gendered social phenomenon.

4.0 Concluding remarks

This chapter offers an exploration of men's rights activism and its relationship to the politics of victimhood, arguing that men's rights activism has been heavily influenced by its engagement with discourses, frames, and narratives of victimization. In this chapter, I examined the relationship between discourses of victimization and the MRM, in two related arguments. The first argument is that MRAs are key *producers* of claims of victimization. Whether it is divorce laws, the suppression of free speech, sexual violence, domestic violence, legal inequality, or social discrimination, it is men, and not women, who are the *true* victims of gender inequality and discrimination. My account of the MRM highlights the extent to which discourses of victimization and appeals to "victims" are a central staple of conservative discourse, even in more extremist pockets of the larger conservative ideology.

However, the second part of my argument also suggests that men's rights victim-making discourses have always been buttressed by an anti-victimist orientation. Of course, men's rights discourse operates on the notion that men are victimized, but it does so by explicitly, and often violently, attacking its enemies. MRAs represent ex-wives, girlfriends, women, and feminists as aggressive, hypocritical, anti-men, and as having infiltrated all areas of society – these arguments often fused with ad hominem attacks and threats of counter-action. While groups like Honest Ribbon and CAFE seem to be sanitizing their arguments and platforms of more inflammatory

anti-women arguments, the whole of the movement continues to revolve around a fundamentally anti-victimist ideologically orientation.

This analysis is relevant to my larger examination to discourses of victimization and conservative politics in at least two ways. First, my analysis of the MRM raises interesting questions about both the relationship between MRAs and larger conservative politics, and about the contemporary state of conservative ideology in Canada. One reading of the contemporary MRM might be that it is a movement that is distancing itself from larger conservative partisan politics. For example, by eschewing religious and conservative partisanship, some might consider that the MRM is post-conservative. However another – perhaps more revealing reading – of the contemporary MRM is that the movement actually more accurately represents a larger shift that is occurring *within* conservatism. Consider, for example, that both Donald Trump and Doug Ford have risen to prominence within conservative politics in both the US and Canada, respectively. Rather than embodying many of the key characteristics of conservatism – for example, respect for institutions and constitutions, social conservatism, and positive partisan identification as conservative – both politicians largely reject conservative politics as usual, often deploying inflammatory rhetoric closely resemble the discourse of contemporary MRAs. As we will see in the next chapter, for example, Trump’s relationship with the American anti-abortion movement has been a contentious one given his previously public pro-choice position on the issues of abortion. In this sense, rather than being centered on social, or even fiscal and neoliberal logic, conservatives might increasingly be characterized by a backlash or reactionary politics, much like their men’s rights counterparts. As will be discussed in chapter 6, there are emerging signs that rather than distancing themselves from men’s rights discourse and activism,

some conservative in Canada are actually embracing their reactionary and backlash style of politics.

Second, to return to the analogy of the “ambidextrous nature” of conservative victim argument discussed in chapter 1, the MRM’s mobilization of victim argument can be considered an example of the dominant, stereotypical, masculinist, and right-handed discourses of victimization. As we will see in the next chapter, other conservative activists have largely shifted deployment of discourses of victimization in ways that challenge contemporary understandings and theorizations of conservative ideology and politics. However, by embodying anti-victim tones, the MRM provides an example of how right-handed and more punitive approach to victims continue to dominate many existing realms of conservative politics.

CHAPTER 5: WOMEN AS VICTIMS: ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVISM IN NORTH AMERICA²

The previous chapter examined the ways discourses of victim-making and victim-blaming have dominated certain conservative activist circles, exploring how these two discourses are intimately related in men's rights discourse. The contention that feminists are false victims, for example, fits closely with the men's right's claim that men are the *real* victims of gender discrimination. Therefore, while victim-making claims are most frequent and dominant in men's rights discourse, their discursive contours are heavily shaped by their victim-blaming counterparts. This might help explain why men's rights discourse is disproportionately centered on decrying the feminist cause and the women that represent it.

Chapter 5 continues the exploration of conservative discourses of victimization by examining a very different realm of activism: the anti-abortion movement. I suggest that while victim-blaming arguments continue to shape some elements of contemporary anti-abortion activism, the movement has also altered its relationship with victim politics over at least the last decade in significant and noteworthy ways. For instance, departing from the "right-handed" victim and woman-blaming ethos that defined 1980s anti-abortion activism, contemporary activists have taken up a new approach that claims to *protect victims*. Moreover, within this new victim logic, pregnant women are often presented as the new foremost victims of abortion. The central claim of this chapter, then, is that the anti-abortion discourses of victimization – as well as their approach to victims and women – are fundamentally shifting in ways that challenge many of the

² Portions of this chapter are based on work that has previously been published with Dr. Paul Saurette (see Saurette and Gordon 2013, 2015; Gordon and Saurette 2017).

academic and popular assumptions made about both anti-abortion activism, larger conservative ideology, and the politics of victimhood.

In order to examine the anti-abortion movement's relationship to discourses of victimization, this chapter will be structured in five sections. The first will briefly outline how, in practical terms, I went about analyzing anti-abortion discourse in Canada. Section 2.0 will then present what we have called the "traditional narrative" of the anti-abortion movement in Canada, examining the ways in which anti-abortion activists have historically drawn upon victim arguments that blame women for victimizing innocent fetuses. This section will consider the ways that these victim-blaming discourses largely came to define anti-abortion activism throughout the 1980s at the peak of the abortion debate.

With this background in place, the remainder of the chapter will explore the ways in which Canadian anti-abortion activists are framing the victims in contemporary discourse. Section 3.0 will begin by outlining the ways that contemporary anti-abortion activists continue to draw on traditional victim-blaming and making arguments. Section 4.0, by contrast, will contend that the movement is shifting its approach to both discourses of victimization *and* to women. In particular, through the movement's deployment of the "abortion-harms-women" argument, activists increasingly present the movement as one that can protect the *real* victims of abortion: pregnant women. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the ways in which the emergence of new "protect victim" arguments represent a larger shift in the strategies of the anti-abortion movement in Canada.

1.0 Methodological choices

This chapter draws on the results of a larger-scale analysis of the anti-abortion movement in Canada (for details on this larger study, see Saurette and Gordon 2013; Saurette and Gordon 2015, especially the preface and chapter 1; Gordon and Saurette 2017). Mirroring the methodological approach outlined in chapter 2, our analysis of anti-abortion discourse is comprised of three main components: (1) an extensive critical analysis of the substantial secondary literature devoted to the history of abortion politics in North America over the last several hundred years, (2) a critical discourse analysis of contemporary anti-abortion discourse, and (3) the participant observation of anti-abortion events and conferences. As we have outlined the details of my methodological approach elsewhere (Saurette and Gordon 2013, 2015; Gordon and Saurette 2017), I will only briefly highlight four important dimensions of the study for the purposes of this chapter.

First, in order to capture a representative snapshot of the anti-abortion movement in Canada, we included three different *areas* of activism. The first site of discourse chosen was the Canadian blog ProWomanProLife (PWPL), a Canadian blog that first appeared in December 2007 in order to mark the 20th anniversary of the Morgentaler decision. Aiming to represent “a spectrum of nuanced pro-woman and pro-life views”, the blog is composed by nine Canadian women from “different walks of life (medicine, psychology, actuarial science, journalism, and public policy), different religions (or no religion at all), have never been vocal or activist on abortion before, do not represent any larger group, and do not currently receive funding from any larger group” (PWPL 2007). PWPL has gained notable national recognition and is by far the most visible anti-abortion blog in Canada, has been referenced in the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* and has won fifth place in the politics category at the 2009 Canadian Blog Awards.

This national recognition, its large web presence, and the fact that its founder (Andrea Mrozek) is also the program director at Cardus (Canada's pre-eminent socially conservative think tank), mean that this blog is an important site of Canadian anti-abortion discourse on its own, and a reliably representative exemplar of the discourse of influential anti-abortion activists (Saurette and Gordon 2013).

Since anti-abortion organizations are also significant actors in the abortion debate, our second site of discourse is that of Canadian anti-abortion organizations. Discourse at the organizational level is an undeniably important site of analysis since it is officially vetted by formal organizations whose primary aim is anti-abortion advocacy and who are the main actors instigating a variety of other anti-abortion organizing. Consequently, we examined the public websites of four anti-abortion organizations from across Canada (Alliance for Life Ontario, Life Canada, Toronto-Right-to-Life and Signal Hill). The entirety of each of these anti-abortion websites was analyzed, including mission statements, advertising campaigns, video postings, newsletters, press releases and links provided for women to acquire more information on unplanned pregnancies. These four specific anti-abortion organizations were selected because their websites are impressive in their scale and thus provide a large sample of both provincial and national anti-abortion advocacy from across Canada (Saurette and Gordon 2013).

The final discourse analyzed was the anti-abortion one in the realm of formal politics. To this end, we included every Parliamentary intervention made with respect to abortion by four of the most outspoken anti-abortion Members of Parliament (MPs). For this purpose, we 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), because they represent two of

the three main federal political parties (Vellacott, Epp and Bruinooge from the Conservative Party and Szabo from the Liberal Party), and because all four MPs have been outspoken in regard to their anti-abortion positions on their websites, in parliamentary interventions, and in press releases (Saurette and Gordon 2013).

Second, in terms of time frame, our larger study of the anti-abortion movement examined all the materials contained on each of the four anti-abortion organizations' websites as of May 2010, all abortion-related blog postings at PWPL and all of the four MP's statements about abortion for a three-year period, between December 2007 and January 2011. This three-year time frame is an interesting time in its relationship to abortion because it includes the 20th anniversary of the Morgentaler decision (Dec 2007), Morgentaler's awarding of the Order of Canada (July 2008) and the tabling of two abortion-related private member's bills (PMBs) in Parliament (the Unborn Victims Act and Roxanne's Law). In total, we collected 401 discrete documents.

Third, once again as outlined in chapter 2, this chapter draws on the result of a rigorous mixed method critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, which analyzed the explicit arguments, framing, and narratives of anti-abortion discourse in Canada both qualitatively and quantitatively. For the larger study, we constructed our coding dictionary to track a variety of strategic discussions and rhetorical techniques of persuasion (see appendix C for the full coding dictionary). Most relevant for the analysis in this chapter, however, was that I coded for narrative structure and content, above all the key character roles of villain, victim and hero.

And fourth and finally, in order to update this analysis for the purposes of this chapter, I also qualitatively examined a variety of other, more recent anti-abortion sources. Although not included in the formal quantitative dataset, the recent websites, twitter accounts, promotional

materials and campaigns of many other anti-abortion organizations and actors – including the Campaign Life Coalition (CLC), the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform (CCBR), the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA), the Evangelical Fellowship Canada (EFC), the National Campus Life Network (NCLN), We Need a Law, and the Institute for Marriage and Family Canada (IMFC) – were all analyzed.

2.0 Anti-victimism: The traditional portrait and anti-abortion discourses of victim-blaming

If you ask Canadians to describe the anti-abortion movement, by and large you get very similar accounts. Despite the fact that the contemporary abortion debate has been relatively understudied in Canada, there is nonetheless a widely shared image of the nature of the movement and the type of communication strategies it uses. Most assume that the movement (1) has a largely male-dominated public face; (2) often embodies an angry, aggressive, sometimes violent, anti-woman tone; (3) publicly and explicitly defends its policy position with reference to explicitly stated religious principles; and (4) employs heavily fetus-as-victim arguments to further buttress its position (Saurette and Gordon 2015). As we have outlined elsewhere in detail, this image – one we call the “traditional portrait” – dominates most academic and popular accounts of the anti-abortion movement (see Dworkin 1983; Faludi 1991; Muldoon 1991; Blanchard 1994; Jelen and Chandler 1994; Cassidy 1996; Herring 2003; Steiner 2006; Morton 1992; Brodie et al. 1992; Tatalovich 1997; McLaren and McLaren 1997).

2.1 Victim blaming in anti-abortion discourse

Moreover, this traditional portrait largely operates around a right-handed, anti-victimist story of blame. Consider, for example, the ways in which anti-abortion activists have approached

– in discursive but also literal ways – the pregnant women seeking an abortion: as untrustworthy, irresponsible, and dangerous to the “unborn” (Faludi 1991). According to cognitive linguist George Lakoff, for instance, anti-abortion discourse relies on two main stereotypes of pregnant women (2002, 267). The first representation is that of the “pregnant girl” – young, irresponsible, and promiscuous. This stereotype characterizes girls as reckless and immature. On this anti-abortion logic, “an unmarried teenage girl should not be having sex at all. It is a moral weakness, a lack of self-discipline, a form of immoral behavior, and she deserves punishment” (Lakoff 2002, 267). The second stereotype is that of the selfish career woman who decides that her interest in a career is more important than her child – and thus needs to be coerced by legislation to make the morally sanctioned and traditional choice (Lakoff 2002, 268; Saurette and Gordon 2015). Following these stereotypes, the “unborn” must be protected from dangerous, irresponsible, or selfish women, and women, in turn, must be taught right moral lessons through punishment, not compassion.

The anti-woman and anti-victimist tones embedded into these anti-abortion stereotypes are perhaps best highlighted by the stereotypical anti-abortion approach to the “rape victim”. In the US, for example, former Republican Vice-Presidential candidate Sarah Palin has been vocal about the fact that she would not support abortion for her own daughter even if she had been sexually assaulted (Stein 2008). Perhaps we should not be surprised, then, that during his 2016 election campaign, Donald Trump asserted that there should be “some kind of punishment” for women who have abortions, a statement that 39% of Trump supporters agree with (Cauterucci 2016).

Moreover, in both Canada and the US these anti-woman/victim arguments accurately capture many dimensions of anti-abortion discourse, particularly at the height of the abortion debate in

the US and Canada throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (see Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 1). The rise of controversial and inflammatory groups like Operation Rescue in the US exemplifies the anti-abortion movement's shift towards a victim-blaming approach. On the telling of feminist scholar Susan Faludi, throughout the 1980s, "as resentment over women's increasing levels of professional progress became mixed with anxiety over the sexual freedoms women had begun to exercise, [anti-abortion activists] developed a rhetoric of puritanical outrage to castigate their opponents" (Faludi 1991, 402, see also Dworkin 1983; Blanchard 1994; Sanger 2004). In this sense, anti-abortion discourse often took up similar structures and contours as those of their men's rights counterparts as examined in the previous chapter. Like men's rights activists, anti-abortion protestors would often hurl insults at abortion rights activists and pregnant women entering abortion clinics, charging them with being "feminazis" and "hating God" (Steiner 2006, 9). One Operation Rescue activist went as far as to frame abortion as women's way of getting even, "... in a subliminal way, [abortion's] revenge against men. Men have treated women shabbily and now the women's movement has struck back in overkill" (quoted in Faludi 1991, 401).

Operation Rescue was certainly not the only faction of the anti-abortion movement to mobilize anti-woman tones and arguments, however. This brand of aggressive anti-abortion discourse would also permeate the more mainstream areas of anti-abortion activism. John Willke, former president of the National Right to Life Committee, argues that supporting abortion "do[es] violence to marriage [by] remov[ing] the right of a husband to protect the life of the child he has fathered in his wife's womb" (quoted in Faludi 1991, 402). Anger at women's ability to make reproductive choices without consulting their partners and husbands also emerged in the movement's public discourse – becoming particularly explicit in the many "fathers' rights"

lawsuits filed across the US to stop women from obtaining abortion without the consent of their husbands (Faludi 1991, 402-3).

Similar anti-woman and anti-victimist tones also permeated Canadian anti-abortion activist politics. For instance, Joe Borowski – one of the most active and outspoken leaders of the Canadian anti-abortion movement – often replicated the key characteristics of anti-victimism in his discourse and arguments. In 1977, he penned an open memo to the Manitoba legislature, stating that in legalizing abortion, “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 (cited in Morton 1992, 66). The story of abortion constructed by Borowski, of course, fits very neatly into the script of anti-victimism. On Borowski’s telling, it is not only that women are “cheap, third-rate tramps” committing “medieval acts of barbarism” victimizing their unborn. It is also that they are victimizing the innocent “doctors and nurses” that become their accomplices to “murder.” This very much places the blame for both unplanned pregnancies (because women are “tramps”) and for abortion on women.

Victim-blaming tones would also permeate judicial politics throughout the late post-Charter 1980s, at least to some extent. The most famous example of this surrounds a series of controversial court decisions regarding the *Daigle* case. In 1989, Jean-Guy Tremblay successfully obtained an injunction preventing his once-girlfriend Chantale Daigle from terminating her pregnancy. In an unprecedented 3-2 decision, the Quebec Court of Appeal upheld the injunction, declaring the fetus a “distinct human entity” in accordance with the Quebec Charter, a reasoning that “clearly echoed the central themes of pro-life discourse” (Brodie et al. 1992, 93). The ruling was particularly shocking to many observers since Chantale

Daigle had testified that her relationship with Tremblay had been an abusive one and that he had intimidated her to discontinue her use of birth control. Nonetheless, the Court ruled that Daigle's pregnancy had been voluntary, further arguing that "the rule of nature is that pregnancy must lead to birth", that "pregnancy is not an attack on a women's physical well-being" and, thus, that abortion could never be justified as medically therapeutic (quoted in Brodie et al. 1992, 93).

While the Supreme Court of Canada would eventually overturn the Quebec Court's decision – and Daigle was able to procure abortion care in the US – the original decision highlights the ways in which activist victim-blaming tones infiltrated Canadian judicial politics. Moreover, politicians would also capitalize on these types of victim-blaming argument. Some private members bills sought to explicitly criminalize women who sought an abortion. In March of 1997, for instance, Reform MP Keith Martin tabled a bill that proposed to "charge pregnant women who abuse alcohol, drugs, etc. with criminal endangerment of the fetus" (ARCC 2013).

It is clear that, in line with the traditional portrait, anti-abortion activism of the 1980s was underpinned by an openly anti-victimist approach. Victim-blaming arguments not only shaped anti-abortion activism, but its tenets also reverberated in the judicial and political realms. Often echoing their men's rights counterparts, irresponsible and selfish women increasingly became the forefront targets and villains of anti-abortion discourse. By the 1980s, both men's rights and anti-abortion discourse were – to various degrees – characterized by the vilification of women and feminists.

2.2 The fetus-as-victim-frame: Victim-making and 1980s anti-abortion activism

However, this is not the only similarity that exists between men's rights and anti-abortion activism, since anti-abortion discourse, like its men's rights contemporaries, also fundamentally

rests on a *victim-making* claim. The most obvious victim-making claim made by the anti-abortion movement, of course, presents the fetus as the ultimate innocent victim. At the center of anti-abortion discourse is the story of the victimization, brutalization, and dehumanization of the fetus. The ultimate – and often explicitly religious – tenet of the anti-abortion movement, then, is a victim-making one: that the vulnerable “unborn” are being denied their fundamental, inherent, and God-given right to life. At the center of the traditional narrative lies the fetus-as-victim frame.

Given the contested and political nature of the abortion debate – and the unique role that the anti-abortion movement has played within conservative politics in North America – the fetus-as-victim frame has become one of the most pervasive and recognizable discourses of victimization in the larger conservative discourse. In the US context, for instance, scholar Alyson Cole has argued that the anti-abortion movement, “whose proponents speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, may be the most striking contemporary rendition” of conservative discourses of victimization (Cole 2007, 13). The fetus, in many ways, has become the “most potent” victim of conservative discourse and politics (Cole 2007, 13). This has meant that anti-abortion discourse has tended to, perhaps first and foremost, represent the fetus as the primary victim of abortion. Often drawing on religious philosophical justifications, the suffering and victimization of the fetus lies at the very essence of the traditional anti-abortion narrative.

The fetus-as-victim frame has at least two main discursive victim-making characteristics. First, anti-abortion discourse goes to great lengths to emphasize the full humanity or personhood of the fetus. According to the traditional narrative, this is most often accomplished by offering up religious justifications for opposing abortion. Fetal personhood arguments are seen to serve two purposes: one, to persuade citizens to oppose abortion (often through the Bible’s teachings), and

two, to seek to enshrine the personhood of the victimized fetus into law (by banning abortion) through political lobbying.

Second, by discursively pitting fetal rights against women's rights, the fetus-as-victim frame is further fleshed out. Canadian scholar, Shelley Gavigan, for example, argues not only that the fetal argument is the dominant anti-abortion frame in Canada, but that the effect of "the imagery of the foetal personhood campaign [is] to render women invisible" (Brodie et al. 1992, 146). Her co-author Brodie agrees, suggesting that "control of the womb is of primary importance" to the anti-abortion movement and that it wages a "discursive campaign against women" (1992, 81-2) in which the construction of the fetus as fully autonomous and human requires anti-abortion discourse to "render the woman's body invisible and irrelevant to fetal personhood" and reduce women to the status of a "mechanical incubator" (Brodie et al. 1992, 80-1). With this, anti-abortion discourse fuses anti-victimist tones with arguments about the victimization of the fetus.

As was the case with anti-victimist anti-abortion discourse, fetal centric victim-making claims were also heavily represented in anti-abortion activism throughout the 1980s. Anti-abortion discourse focused intensely on the fetus, throughout which discourse it was referred to as the "unborn", "the baby", or the "preborn" so as to stress that abortion results in the victimization of a fully formed human being. The educational materials of groups like Operation Rescue underscored the importance of controlling anti-abortion language in ways that emphasized fetal personhood and by extension the victimization of the "unborn". In *Closed: 99 Ways to Stop Abortion* – a primary text of the militant anti-abortion movement – Joseph Scheidler advises his fellow anti-abortionists to "rarely use the word 'fetus'. Use 'baby' or 'unborn child'... You don't have to surrender to their vocabulary... They will start using your terms if you use them" (quoted in Faludi 1991, 405). Anti-abortion literature stressed that

activists should carefully emphasize the humanity of the fetus through their use of language, encouraging the usage of terms like “this little guy” to describe the fetus, and “place of residence” to describe the pregnant woman (quoted in Faludi 1991, 421). In an even more extreme example, one militant right-to-life committee even went as far as to draft an “unborn child’s diary” in which a fetus “ruminat[ed] about flowers and confided, ‘I want to be called Kathy’” (Faludi 1991, 421). This fetus-as-victim discourse was also married, at times, with graphic imagery that heavily featured a victimized fetus, but never the pregnant woman (Faludi 1991, 421). The movement literature and signage most often featured photos of “the whole ‘unborn child’ float[ing] in a disembodied womb” (Faludi 1991, 421).³

As was the case with its anti-victimist counterpart, arguments of victim-making also emerged as significant at the judicial level. At the center of activist Joe Borowski’s decade-long legal campaign, for example, was the argument that fetuses were victimized by abortion. Borowski’s battle against Canada’s then-abortion law began in September 1978 when, on behalf of fetal rights, he argued for the first time in front of the Saskatchewan Court of Queen’s Bench. Issuing a “direct attempt to force the Canadian Supreme Court to grant legal protection to the unborn” (Tatalovich 1997, 79), he argued that Section 251 of Canada’s *Criminal Code* contradicted the right-to-life provision of the then-Canadian Bill of Rights. It would ultimately take Borowski five years of court battles before being granted legal standing to represent the unborn, during which time the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was implemented. As a consequence, his final legal argument would use a strategy very similar to the one used by opponent and abortion rights activist Henry Morgentaler, arguing that Section 7 granted “everyone”, including fetuses, the “right to life, liberty and security” (Tatalovich 1997, 79).

³ As discussed in Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 1

Legally, Borowski's arguments were in the fetus-as-victim frame, relying heavily on the notion that Canada's abortion law victimized fetuses.

His extra-legal discourse, however, also reproduced the other, more aggressive, anti-victimist tones of popular anti-abortion discourse. Borowski would regularly depict women seeking abortions as "callous". As was the case with the men's rights movement, then, anti-abortion discourses of victim-blaming and victim-making were intimately intermeshed. While the fetus-as-victim frame underpinned nearly all anti-abortion discourse throughout the 1980s – including legal campaigns and, as we will see, legislative attempts – anti-victimism also shaped the contours and tenor of those victim-making claims. Joe Borowski, for example, once arrived at the Supreme Court for a day of hearings carrying a bag with two large glass jars, both containing fetuses, claiming that if the judges had only been able to see them and "pass them hand to hand" it would have been "very convincing evidence" (quoted in Morton 1992, 271). When his appeal failed, he also turned on the very institution of the courts declaring that if he had been in Ottawa for the announcement, he "probably would have gone into the court and punched the judges in the nose" (quoted in Morton 1992, 272) and that "if the court will not act to save babies then... people... will have to do it themselves" (quoted in Brodie et al. 1992, 95). Given that many people saw Borowski as the spokesperson of Canadian anti-abortion movement, this only further cemented impressions of the anti-abortion movement as an extremist and backlash movement.

3.0 The contemporary anti-abortion movement

If the anti-abortion movement of the 1980s was heavily shaped by both victim-blaming and victim-making claims, what defined contemporary anti-abortion arguments? Has the movement, like its men's rights counterpart, continued to deploy "right-handed" anti-victimist discourses

and arguments? Or has their discourse shifted? Ultimately, on the anti-abortion movement's telling, who are the foremost victims of abortion?

3.1 Continued relevance of victim-blaming and making to contemporary anti-abortion activism⁴

In line with the traditional narrative, one would expect to find a strong, anti-victim, punitive, and right-handed anti-abortion voice in contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse. And, to a certain degree, this is true. By deploying narratives that, at times, vilify women that seek abortion, women continue to be represented in the ways described by the traditional anti-victimist narrative. The Toronto Right to Life website, for example, states that abortion makes “pre-marital sex feasible by apparently taking the possibility of consequences out of sex and taking responsibility with it” (TRTL 2010). Echoing the same sentiment, blogger Tanya Zaleski writes, “Don’t want lung cancer? Quit smoking. Don’t want to be obese? Eat sensibly and exercise. Don’t want to be pregnant? ... refrain from having sex outside a committed relationship!” (PWPL May 20, 2008).

Moreover, in tune with the logic of this discourse, women's choices to have abortions continue to be delegitimized in stereotypical ways. Perhaps because they offer a discourse that is often left un-vetted by formal anti-abortion organizations, this trend is particularly evident among anti-abortion bloggers. For example, during a discussion over the frequency of late-term abortions, PWPL blogger Brigitte Pellerin writes, “I wish we’d stop lying to ourselves. Late-term abortions do happen, and they shouldn’t. At least not as ‘lifestyle’ reasons” (May 20, 2008). Pellerin’s framing of the abortion decisions as mere “lifestyle choices” subtly reinforces the age-

⁴ This section is based on work that appear in Saurette and Gordon 2013

old victim-blaming notion that women who choose abortion are selfish, sacrificing the life of a child for superficial and shallow reasons.

More notable, however, is the continued prevalence of victim-making arguments centered on fetal personhood arguments and the fetus-as-victim frame. In our overall study of Canadian anti-abortion discourse, we found that the fetal personhood arguments (i.e. arguments that assert the wrongness of abortion based on the humanity and personhood of the fetus) were used in 37.7% of all cases, thus remaining one of the most significant lines of anti-abortion argumentation. Perhaps even more notable is that the explicit representation of fetus-as-victim also remains a prevalent trend, with 24% of all cases portraying the fetus as a victim of anti-abortion narratives. The fetus-as-victim claim, moreover, is further reinforced in at least two important ways.

First, the visuals used by the anti-abortion movement continue to draw attention to the humanity and victimization of the fetus. Throughout the websites and literature developed and distributed by anti-abortion organizations are visuals that emphasize the humanity, marginalization, and victimization of the fetus. The Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform (CCBR) is perhaps the most representative of this approach. Like its American predecessor (the Center for Bioethical Reform), the CCBR has gained notoriety for adopting an aggressive communications approach – including the use of graphic visuals as well as controversial methods for sharing these images (billboard trucks, giant banners, sidewalk demonstrations near high schools, post-card campaigns targeting even conservative politicians) (Saurette and Gordon 2015). The CCBR's arguments and use of narratives is also more indicative of the traditional narrative and heavily focused on the presentation of the fetus as fully human and, by extension, as brutally victimized by abortion.

One of the most well-known and controversial CCBR campaign, for example, is the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP). The GAP is “a visual display composed of 4x8-foot (or 6x13-foot) billboards which graphically compare the victims of abortion to victims of other atrocities, such as Jewish communities in the holocaust or Black Americans during the civil rights struggle in the US. It is typically exhibited at universities or colleges by campus pro-life clubs. Participants engage passers-by in discussions about abortion and hand out pro-life literature” (CCBR, 2013h). It is the CCBR’s belief that “past genocides occurred because widespread killing of human beings was rationalized on the basis that the victims were subhuman, inferior and non-persons” and their hope is that just as “pictures challenged that thinking about past genocides... they do so now for the debate on abortion” (CCBR 2013h).



Figure 5.1: CCBR’s genocide awareness project (GAP)

Figure 5.1 is just one example of the images used in the GAP. Here, the use of graphic visual representations has two main effects. First, and most obviously, this image draws on and emphasizes arguments of victimization by creating a visual and metaphorical link between the victims of the Rwandan genocide and pictures of aborted (and “butchered”) fetuses in Canada. This strategy has the potential of being particularly effective by fusing a visceral reaction to the graphic imagery to anti-abortion arguments and, in doing so, bypassing any critical consideration

of whether the analogy between the victimization of marginalized communities and aborted fetuses is accurate or not (Saurette and Gordon 2015).

Moreover, the justification the CCBR provides for using the GAP (despite the controversy that surrounds it) draws heavily on the fetus-as-victim frame. The CCBR website, for instance, argues that campaigns such as the GAP are necessary because, “[e]very day, babies are being dismembered, decapitated, and disemboweled” (CCBR 2013). At the heart of this campaign, then, is the traditional framing of the fetus as an ultimate victim, cast in the role of an innocent and powerless victim so as to ground the moral lesson that “the fetus is deserving of our protection” (PWPL December 14, 2007).

The second way that the fetus-as-victim frame remains at the center of the anti-abortion discourse is through the legislative efforts of anti-abortion politicians. In fact, the most frequent tactic of anti-abortion MPs since 1988 has been to extend the Canadian legal definition of “human being” to include the fetus so that it would be covered by the legal protections afforded born human individuals. Given the long history of fetal-right-to-life arguments in Canada and the anti-abortion movement’s failure to convince the courts that the fetus should be granted personhood rights, the anti-abortion movement has since sought to insert that protection explicitly into the law through acts of Parliament.

Since 1988, 18 of the 45 anti-abortion private member bills and motions introduced into Parliament have adopted at least some form of the fetal personhood argument. The first, Bill S-16, was introduced immediately after the Morgentaler decision by Liberal Senator Stanley Haidasz and asked Parliament “to amend the Criminal Code to give full [legal] protection to “unborn children”” (ARCC 2013). This became a fairly standard template for similar bills tabled

over the next several decades, with some other bills going even further and attempting to define abortion as homicide. Liberal MP Tom Wappel's Bill C-275 (tabled in 1989, and then again in 1991 and 1996), for example, not only sought to "redefine "human being" to include an embryo and a fetus" but also proposed, "extending the prohibition against killing a human being to include the killing of fetuses and embryos" (The Interim, n.d.). Moreover, this remains a relevant anti-abortion strategy in Parliament. Most recently, MP Stephen Woodworth's 2012 Motion 312 (M312) called on Parliament to have a Parliamentary committee examine if the Criminal Code's definition of "human beings" should include fetuses (Saurette and Gordon 2015).

Another notable way through which anti-abortion legislative attempts have invoked the fetus-as-victim frame is through the tabling of "unborn victims acts." Over the past 10 years, there have been two attempts in Parliament to pass unborn victim acts (one in 2007 and one in 2016). Both of these bills have attempted to make it a separate crime to kill or harm an "unborn child" during an attack on a pregnant woman. Most recently, the fetus-as-victim frame was central in defending Cathay Wagantall's Unborn Victim's Act in 2016. Colloquially known as "Cassie and Molly's Law," the bill was named after Cassandra Kaake, a 20-year-old pregnant woman who was murdered in Windsor. The bill attempted to make it a separate crime to kill or harm an "unborn child" during an attack on a pregnant woman.

Unsurprisingly, proponents of these bills often framed them squarely in the language of fetal victimhood. For instance, a blog on the CLC site entitled "Molly was a Baby" insists that instead of using the terms "preborn" or "unborn" baby, advocates of the bill should instead simply use "baby." Suggesting that an "unborn baby" is synonymous with an already born baby, the blogger writes,

I mean really, who says unborn? Who says pre-born? When our sisters, daughters, co-workers and neighbours are pregnant, do we not ask: How is the baby? How big is the baby? Is the baby kicking? WHO SAYS UNBORN?

Oh, wait, we do. We say it in the context of abortion. We never say it in our real lives. We say it in our activist lives. All the time. We do it, because we want to humanize the pro-abortion narrative by addressing the fact there is an unborn baby for every born baby. It's the same baby. Baby, baby, baby. There, should I say it more often? Molly was one. A baby. Baby, baby, baby (Brownrigg 2016).

As we can see with this blog entry, contemporary anti-abortion discourse continues to rely on victim-making claims. The entire point of this blog, for example, is to stress the commonsense ways that we know that “babies” are victimized by callous pro-abortion language. Through the framing of fetuses as fully human – and thus victimized by abortion – narratives continue to draw on traditional victim-making claims to advance the position that abortion is wrong.

The contemporary anti-abortion movement persists in its deployment of the inter-related discourses of victim-blaming and making. First, by playing on age-old stereotypes of pregnant women as reckless and ruthless, some anti-abortion discourse continues to invoke tenors of anti-victimism. In particular, anti-abortion bloggers do not shy away from casual and passing digs at pregnant women who choose abortion. Second, and related, is the contemporary anti-abortion movement's continued reliance on the fetus-as-victim frame. Through visual, judicial, and legislative efforts, activists emphasize both the full humanity of the fetus and, by extension, its victimization by abortion. Much of the anti-abortion discourse remains heavily centered on narratives that depict the fetus as under threat and in need of protection. What is clear is that, in many ways, the victim-making claims are relevant to contemporary anti-abortion arguments.

3.2 Signs of change

However, if there is some continuity with traditional narratives around the victim-making and blaming claims made by anti-abortion activists over the past 40 years, there are also substantial and noteworthy differences between the 1980s discourse and the arguments of today's movement. Indeed, as per Figure 5.2, the contemporary movement is largely sanitizing its discourse from anti-woman and anti-victimist tones and arguments.

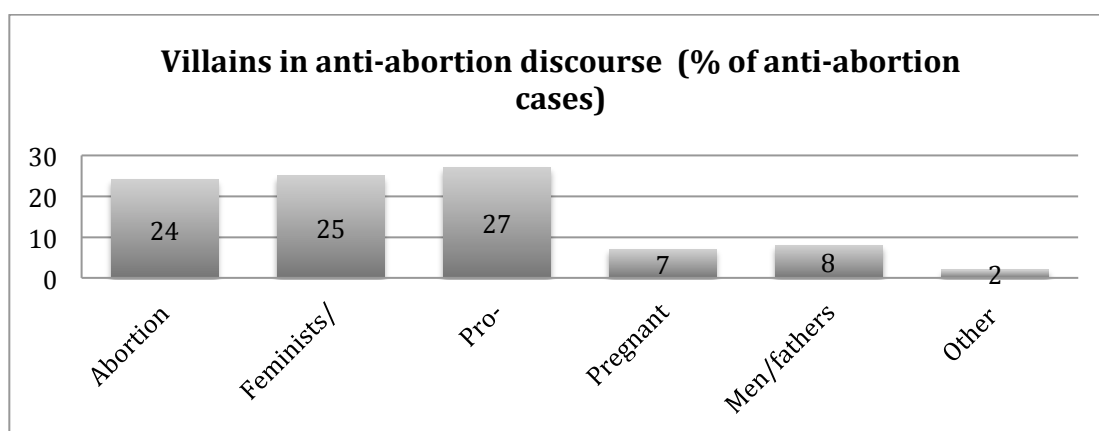


Figure 5.2⁵

Figure 5.2 examines the main “targets of attack” of the anti-abortion movement. One of the most unexpected findings is that, on the whole, the vilification of women is surprisingly absent in anti-abortion narratives, with only 7% of the cases presenting women as the primary villains of anti-abortion narratives. Even more unanticipated is that not one MP vilified pregnant women in any of their Parliamentary interventions. What is more than clear is that women are no longer the main targets of anti-abortion activism and law-making.

Rather than blaming women for their own abortions, it would seem that activists are shifting their focus towards an entirely different cast of villains. This could be the reason why, after a backlash from the anti-abortion movement itself, Trump immediately backtracked his

⁵ Original analysis published in Saurette and Gordon 2015

above comments about women deserving to be punished for abortion (a rare occurrence on the part of the Trump campaign). Within hours of his original comments, the Trump campaign released the following statement: “If Congress were to pass legislation making abortion illegal and the federal courts upheld this legislation, or any state were permitted to ban abortion under state and federal law, the doctor or any other person performing this illegal act upon a woman would be held legally responsible, not the woman” (quoted in Neidig 2016).

Trump’s comments are a clear departure from many of the claims made by anti-abortion activists throughout the 1980s. Recall, for example, that, in the 1970s, Borowski believed that it was women (“third-rate tramps”) who coerced doctors and nurses into performing abortions. Rather, these comments point to a very different anti-abortion narrative, one that presents women not as villains but as the new victims of abortion. Moreover, Trump’s shifting position on abortion does not seem to be a one-off but rather emblematic of the emergence of a new discourse of victimization within anti-abortion activist circles. The fact that less than 10% of the contemporary anti-abortion discourse vilifies pregnant women no doubt raises questions about the continued dominance of anti-victimism in anti-abortion discourse. Moreover, it raises questions about who has replaced women as the primary villains of the movement. Who are these new villains?

Perhaps most noteworthy is the rise of a pervasive pro-abortion society as the new villain of contemporary anti-abortion discourse. In the construction of this villain, opponents of abortion stress that it is not selfish women who are *choosing* abortion that are to blame. Rather, it is that, at every corner, women are *pressured into* abortion. And in 26.7% of all cases, a “pro-abortion society” is identified as the primary villain of anti-abortion narrative. In this argument, pregnant women are portrayed less as villains who should be punished, and more as victims seduced by

the choice offered to them by a pro-abortion society. Moreover, in line with this shifting narrative of victimization, it would seem that the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse has developed a new list of villains: men, feminists and abortion providers.

Let's begin with men. In contrast to the traditional anti-abortion narrative – where men are largely discursively constructed as the heroic opponents to abortion – new narratives increasingly construct men as blameworthy for the pro-abortion culture which is plaguing Canada. Notably, the most common representation of the male subject is that he coerces women into unwanted abortions. Anti-abortion activists argue: “women often state that it was their male partner who decided on the abortion” (LC 2010) and that “many women who have abortions feel coerced or pressured to do so by their boyfriends” (AFLO 2010). In 8.2% of the cases, coercive men were portrayed as the villains.

While this percentage may not seem particularly high or important, two factors suggest that it is nonetheless a key strategy. First, given that the casting of men as villains often happens in conjunction with claims that abortion is analogous to sexual and intimate partner violence, this discourse mimics other feminist tropes, reinforcing the notion that anti-abortion activists are champions of women's rights (a theme we will return to below). Second, if we examine the results of our analysis at a more granular level, we can also see that, while the men-as-villains is not the most dominant narrative overall, it is dominant in one of the most visible and influential sites of discourse: the political realm. In fact, more than one third (37.1%) of the narratives employed by MPs identified men or fathers as the villains (in contrast, it is used in only 4% of the blogs and 10% of organizational cases) (Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 11).

Moreover, the Parliament's defence of unborn victims private members' bills highlights the centrality and prevalence of the new men-as-villain frame. The primary objective of 2007's bill C-484, for example, was to entrench some form of fetal personhood into Canadian law. Unsurprisingly then, MP Ken Epp's justification for the bill drew heavily on traditional fetus-as-victim narratives. However, Epp also offered up a secondary justification for the bill. When defending the proposed law in Parliament, MP Ken Epp argued that "the man should not have power over her [the woman's] body. Usually, not always, the attacker is a man. The man is saying to the victim, 'You want to have your baby? I am sorry, I'm going to prevent that'... Women are not getting justice" (Parliamentary Debates March 3, 2008).

On Epp's telling, it is no longer pregnant women who represent the primary danger to the unborn. Rather, new anti-abortion stories argue that it is men, acting against the wishes of women and the safety of babies, that threaten the fetus. Moreover, Epp is far from alone in using this new villain framing. Once again, in 2016, Cathay Wagantall used the same logic in defending her own private member's bill (Bill C-225). For Wagantall, her bill would serve women by "creat[ing] a legal mechanism that enhances the safety of Canadian women and recognizes the safety of their family" (CBC News February 24, 2016). Although neither bill was passed into law, the tendency to highlight male violence to justify the anti-abortion position has become a popular image and seems likely to grow stronger in the coming years.

Another popular villain that has taken the place of pregnant women in the contemporary anti-abortion discourse is feminism, feminists, and the abortion rights movement. In fact, 24.7% of the cases analyzed characterized feminists as the villains – a rate that is well over triple the frequency of portrayals of the women seeking abortions as the villains. Moreover, the feminist/pro-choice villain often shares the stage with the abortion provider. In 24.1% of the

cases (again, more than 3 times the number of cases where women were portrayed as the villains) abortion providers and doctors were characterized as the villains.

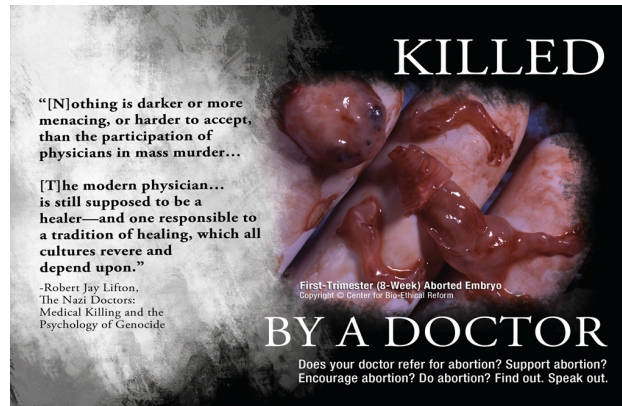


Figure 5.3 CCBR's genocide awareness campaign

To unpack this trend, let us consider the above Figure 5.3, which once again comes from the controversial CCBR. Perhaps most obviously, the visual reinforces the fetus-as-victim frame by its use of graphic imagery. The poster associates abortion with mass murders, once again implying that the (in this case, 8-week-old) fetus is a fully formed person and the termination of a pregnancy is akin to homicide. Most crucially, however, this visual also constructs doctors who participate in abortions as the enemies of the anti-abortion crusade. Analogous to Trump's comments, the CCBR contends that it is the doctors who provide, or even refer, for abortions who are the villains responsible for the killing of millions. Moreover, these are not your run-of-the-mill villains. Rather, the CCBR's poster parallels abortion providers with Nazis, who are willingly and knowingly participating in genocide. This doctor-as-villain frame is further reinforced by the first quotation, which reads, "nothing is darker or more menacing... than the participation of physicians in mass murder."

With this final turn, the shift away from the two-dimensional victim-making-and-blaming argument is complete. The villain in this story is no longer the pregnant woman but rather men, a pro-abortion society, and dangerous abortion providers. As we will see in the following section, this new narrative also creates space for a more welcoming characterization of women that reinforces a more sympathetic orientation towards women. For as pregnant women who consider abortion are represented less and less as the conniving and blameworthy villains of the past, they can be increasingly be cast in the more “pro-woman” role of a helpless victim who must be protected from a new cast of villains (Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 11).

4.0 The rise of “protect women” anti-abortion arguments

The woman is a victim in this case as is the life in her womb. My position has not changed

— like Ronald Reagan, I am pro-life with exceptions

– Donald Trump (quoted in Neidig 2016)

If women are no longer dominantly represented as villains who present an immediate danger to their unborn children, it is because new anti-abortion narratives are constructing women as *victims* of abortion. In fact, women have become the most frequent victims of anti-abortion storytelling.

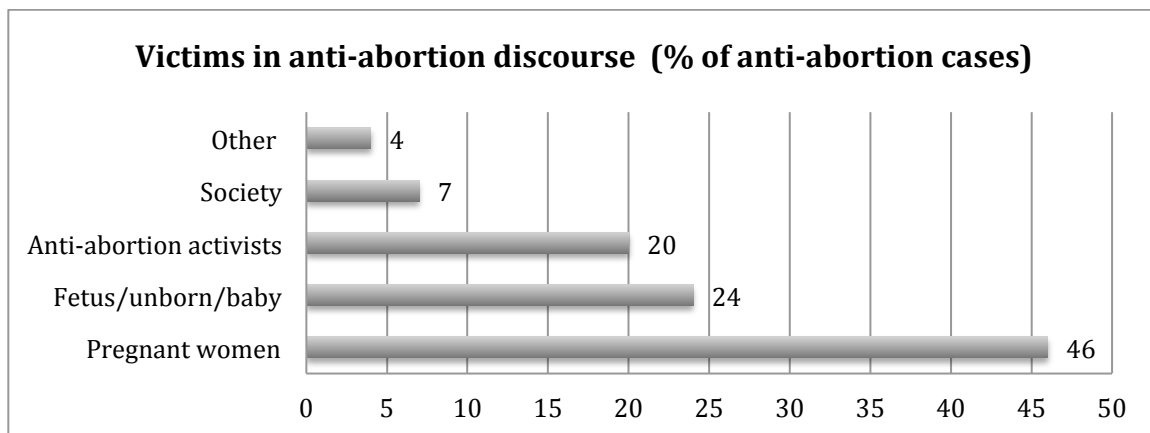


*Figure 5.4*⁶

We see in Figure 5.4 that a surprising 46% of the cases advance women as victims of abortion. This is particularly surprising when contrasted with the only 24% of cases that present the fetus as victim. What this tells us is that anti-abortion stories are no longer revolving around the traditional and age-old anti-abortion story of the irresponsible woman endangering her innocent unborn child. Instead, it would seem that the traditional portrait – as well as the anti-abortion movement's relationship to discourses and arguments of victimization – has fundamentally changed.

The framing of women as the primary victims of anti-abortion narratives is perhaps less surprising when you consider the findings of our overall study of abortion discourse. Our larger analysis of the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion movement found that both the thematic and rhetorical content of the discourse is quite different than that suggested by the traditional portrait of anti-abortion activism. This transformation can be seen in many different dimensions of the contemporary anti-abortion movement and its discourse. We have found, for example, that the anti-abortion movement in Canada, throughout the 2010s, has been a movement in resurgence. It is a movement whose main actors and organizations are increasingly networked and are self-consciously strategic in their vision. The movement has also adopted sophisticated and innovative approaches to strategic communications – including carefully managing how, why and when to engage in public debate; foregrounding a highly visible core of young, female activists as their primary spokespersons; and eliminating the raw public expressions of anger and violence that the movement became associated with during the 1990s (Saurette and Gordon 2015, preface).

⁶ Original analysis published in Saurette and Gordon 2015

We have also found that the thematic and rhetorical content of the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse is quite different than that suggested by the traditional portrait of anti-abortion activism. The contemporary discourse in Canada largely avoids public appeals to religion as a philosophical ground and justification when speaking to audiences outside the movement; increasingly employs a new “pro-woman” argument (the “abortion-harms-woman” argument) in its public discourse; and has both reduced its reliance on traditional fetal-centric arguments and refined its remaining fetal-centric arguments so as to infuse them with “pro-woman” themes and tones (Saurette and Gordon 2015, preface).

Since we have thoroughly outlined the changing face and voice of the anti-abortion movement elsewhere (Saurette and Gordon 2015, 2013; Gordon and Saurette 2017), for the purposes of this chapter I will highlight three of the main ways that the movement tangibly re-frames women as victims and the anti-movement as the protective and compassionate hero of anti-abortion discourse. The remainder of this chapter, then, will examine the ways in which “protect women” anti-abortion arguments have become absolutely dominant within the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion movement, largely re-defining the movement’s relationship with the politics of victimhood.

4.1 The abortion-harms-women argument⁷

The traditional portrait of anti-abortion activism – as well as the movement’s discursive reliance on the fetus-as-victim frame – might lead one to assume that the most important and frequent form of explicit arguments deployed by anti-abortion activists would involve asserting the position that the fetus has an inherent right-to-life. And such an assumption would be (at least

⁷ This section is based on work that was published in Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 5

somewhat) accurate. Indeed, the fetal personhood explicit argumentation was used in a notable 37.7% of the cases. As such, it remains an important argument in contemporary anti-abortion discourse.

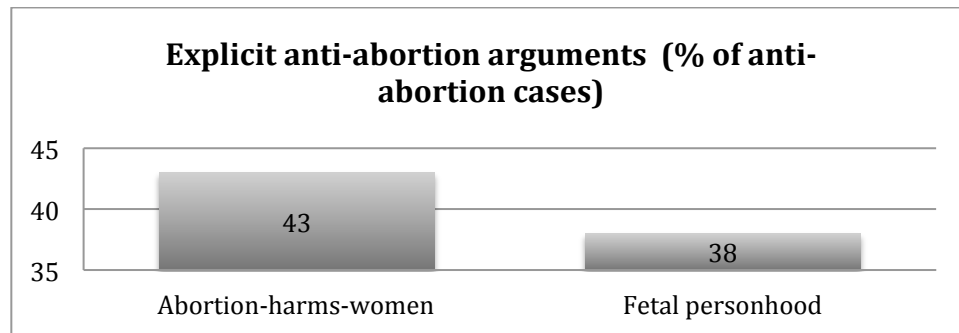


Figure 5.5⁸

However, what is more notable is that, while fetal-centric argumentation remains very relevant in the contemporary anti-abortion discourse, it is no longer the primary or most frequent form of explicit argumentation. In fact, fetal-centric arguments have been overtaken and displaced by a new type of argument, one we call the “abortion-harms-women” (A-H-W) argument. For if fetal personhood arguments are present in 37.7% of all cases, A-H-W arguments are present in 42.9% of all cases analyzed.

The dominance of the abortion-harms-women argument in comparison to the fetal personhood argument becomes even more significant when examined at a more granular level. To this end, we supplement the presence/absence coding with an analysis of the total amount of words devoted to one argument or the other.

⁸ Original analysis published in Saurette and Gordon 2015

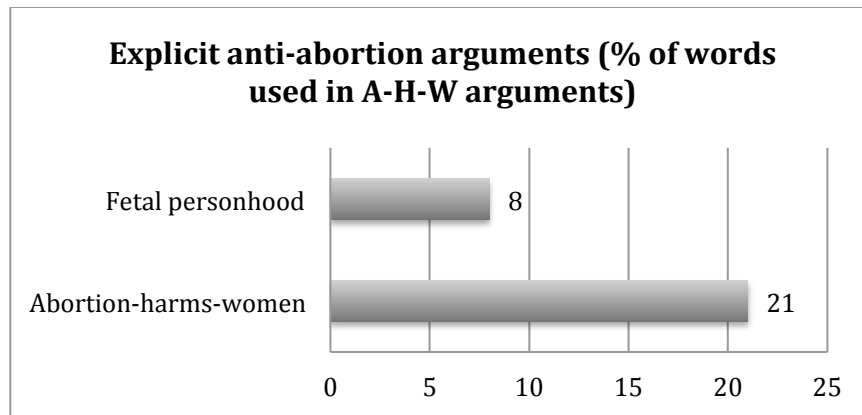


Figure 5.6:⁹

What this revealed is that 21.4% of the total words used in the 401 cases analyzed were devoted to arguing that abortion harms women, whereas only 8.2% of the total words argued from a fetal personhood perspective. This means that the relative weight of the abortion-harms-women argument is more than two and a half times that of fetal-centric arguments.

Given its discursive dominance, let us further unpack this A-H-W argument in order to better understand its discursive contours and its relationship to discourses of victimization. As opposed to traditional fetal personhood arguments, the A-H-W argument opposes abortion not only because it victimizes the fetus, but also (and perhaps more importantly) because abortion is seen to *victimize women*. Many activists believe that the argument that abortion harms women is, indeed, the way forward for the movement. For instance, Rebecca Wahlberg, one of the bloggers at PWPL, argues:

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. It does them physical and psychological harm, which is multiplied by the fact that very few women seeking abortions give their informed consent (PWPL February 4, 2008).

⁹ Original analysis published in Saurette and Gordon 2015

What Wahlberg is arguing here, is that there is a *strategic* advantage to changing the victim script. No longer is it enough to stress the ways that the fetus is victimized by abortion. Implied in her blog, of course, is that the victimization of the fetus remains the most important part of her own personal anti-abortion convictions. However, she also states that she doesn't think activists are going to "change many minds by arguing about that." Rather, by focusing on the ways that *abortion victimizes women*, the movement might better connect with a larger public. With this, we see that there is a strategic benefit to incorporating the women-as-victim frame into the larger anti-abortion discourse.

Moreover, many activists seem to be taking Wahlberg's advice to heart. Our analysis reveals that these types of "pro-woman"-sounding abortion-harm-women arguments are increasingly characterizing even the most traditional strains of anti-abortion activism in Canada. Consider, for instance, the Prince Edward Island Right to Life, whose president recently argued against loosening provincial restrictions on abortion by stating that:

[T]he science is pretty straightforward. Women are being harmed by abortions. It is the best-kept secret in North America. Women suffer in silence following an abortion from a number of different consequences, whether it's a short term risk of infection or a punctured womb from surgery itself, to the later implications psychologically (National Post May 27, 2014).

The above quotation is clear: women are damaged and harmed by abortion, and they are suffering in silence. Moreover, the abortion-harm-women argument is multi-pronged – with abortion victimizing women in a multitude of different ways. In fact, our analysis found that abortion is said to harm women in at least three important ways.

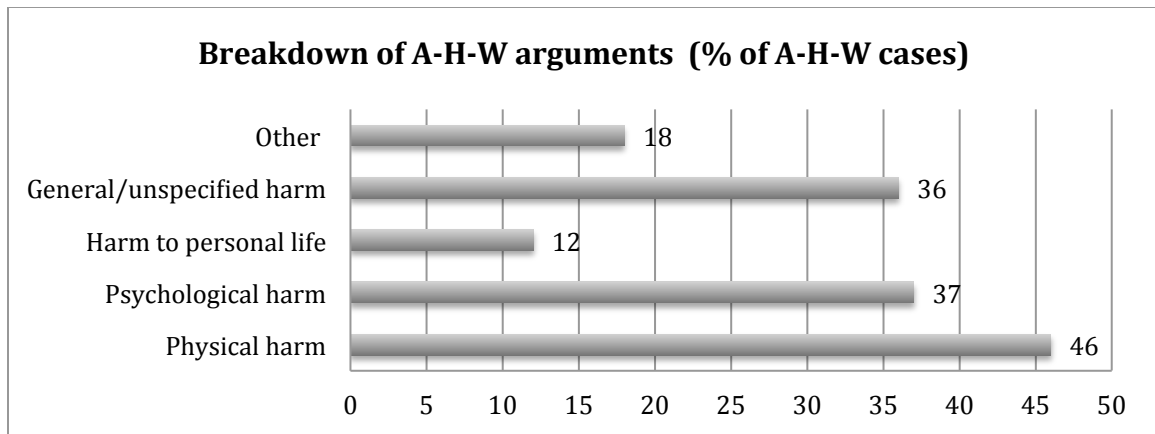


Figure 5.7¹⁰

First, as per the above figure, the most prevalent type of harm asserted is psychological harm – the idea that women are being psychologically harmed and emotionally devastated by abortion. Of all the cases where the A-H-W argument was present, 36.6% argue that abortion causes women to experience long-term and severe psychological harm. Moreover, when we combine this category with the other category we used to track a specific type of primarily psychological harm (personal harm - which was present in 12.2% of the cases), almost 50% of all anti-abortion cases that employed the A-H-W argument focused on the claimed psychological harm (Saurette and Gordon 2013, chapter 8).

Second, the claim that abortion causes women physical and medical harm was also another key argument employed. This physical harm argument is present in 30.8% of instances where the larger A-H-W argument is used. A typical example is an article posted on MP Vellacott’s website, which has the appearance of scientific validity but tends to conflate random correlation with causality: “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

¹⁰ Original analysis published in Saurette and Gordon 2015

pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), uterine haemorrhage, sepsis, pain due to endometritis, retained fetal or placental tissue, and the increasing evidence of an abortion-breast cancer link” (deVeber Institute January 27, 2004). Despite the fact that this study is non-peer reviewed, it is regularly cited as an authority on the issue. A large majority of the top responses to a Google search of the “medical effects of abortion”, for instance, are also anti-abortion counseling sites that reproduce similar claims. There is little objectively generated evidence to support these types of claims, but as James Hoggan has shown in other subject areas, this does not necessarily impede the force of these types of claims in the contemporary public sphere (Hoggan 2009).

Third, and finally, it is also interesting to note that in 36.0% of the abortion-harms-women (A-H-W) cases (only 0.6 percent less than the psychological harm sub-code), the anti-abortion materials simply assert that this is the case, without specifying as to how. Interestingly, this strategy was most prevalent in the blogger’s discourse (44% of the A-H-W cases) and much less so in the case of organizational websites (22%) and politicians (16%). Through these general, non-descript statements, anti-abortion advocates repeatedly assert that abortion is damaging to women. As Drew Westen (1985; 2007) discusses, 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. As the neuro-plasticity literature likes to say: neurons that fire together, wire together. Ultimately Westen is arguing that “the more the repetition, the greater the probability of communicating the message” (Westen 1985).

The pervasiveness and multi-dimensional nature of the A-H-W argument has meant that the fetus is no longer the primary victim of the anti-abortion discourse. Rather, by adopting more compassionate arguments, new anti-abortion discourses of victimization are now centered on the

victimizing of women. This shifts the core of the anti-abortion discourse away from its anti-victimist roots, and, as we will see, towards a discourse that purports to protect women.

4.2 Abortion coercion

A second emerging trend in anti-abortion discourse is the presentation of pregnant women as victims of overt coercion or implicit peer pressure. Consider the coercion plotline implied by the new cast of villainous characters. Here, women are implicitly and explicitly represented as coerced, traumatized and forever affected victims of abortion. Women are no longer framed as autonomous agents making selfishly irresponsible choices. Rather, they are now victims whose decisions are not their own.

Moreover the anti-abortion representation of women as victims often draw in quite active and explicit ways on feminist-sounding analyses of domestic and sexual violence. According to one blog entry, “coercion can be subtle. If a woman is scared her mate will leave her unless she has an abortion, she’s being coerced. If a woman is made to feel guilty, as though she’s choosing an unborn baby over the man she’s currently with, she’s being coerced” (PWPL Dec 3, 2008). Organizational websites and bloggers thus suggest that between 51% (AFLO, 2010b) and 64% (PWPL July 17, 2009) of women “do not feel free in making their [abortion] decision but felt pressured by others” (AFLO, 2010b). The website for Toronto Right to Life similarly reinforces this narrative by comparing this coercion to domestic abuse, suggesting that many women “are forced into an unwanted abortion by husbands, boyfriends, parents, or others. If the woman has repeatedly been a victim of domineering abuse, such an unwanted abortion may be perceived as the ultimate violation in a life characterized by abuse” (TRTL, 2010). In large part, this narrative builds on the men-as-villain frame discussed above. This coercion narrative, for example, was

front and center in the defence of MP Rod Bruinooge's Bill C-510. The 2010 private member's bill – commonly referred to as “Roxanne's Law” after a woman who was killed by her abusive boyfriend for allegedly refusing an abortion – sought to criminalize any person who “coerces a female to procure or attempt to procure an abortion for herself” (Bruinooge 2010). Male coercers were, of course, identified as the primary villains and targets of the bill.

Perhaps the most powerful attempt to extend the anti-abortion position through issue framing, however, is the effort to link it to the issue of sexual assault and intimate partner violence – issues that continue to be foundational for the feminist movement. As we saw above, anti-abortion proponents, such as Sarah Palin, have been charged with being dismissive, insensitive, and anti-victimist to survivors of sexual assault. As a result, most people would imagine that the feminist analysis of sexual violence fits naturally with, and supports, the feminist defence of abortion rights.

Increasingly, however, anti-abortion activists are actively seeking to link their position with this iconic feminist issue in at least two distinct ways. First, anti-abortion discourse frames abortion as an issue that represents a similar level of violence against women as does sexual assault. Anti-abortion activists now frequently extend the feminist sexual oppression frame to include the anti-abortion position by suggesting that “pro-life feminists have also come to see abortion as part of a male agenda to have women more sexually available” (Vellacott November 20, 2009).

Second, and extending this logic further, anti-abortion discourse also claims that the abortion procedure itself is literally sexual assault – and thus suggests that anyone against sexual assault should also fight against abortion access. The Toronto Right to Life (TRTL) website, for

example, informs its readers that “women report that the pain of abortion, inflicted upon them by a masked stranger invading their body, feels identical to rape” (TRTL 2010). The Alliance for Life Ontario (AFLO) website reaffirms this comparison between rape and abortion (in surprisingly similar language) by asserting that abortion is 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 (AFLO 2010).

Here, the feminist argument that rape is a form of violence inflicted on women by men is mapped onto a vivid anti-abortion narrative. In this version, the abortion provider is the violator and the victim is the pregnant woman. The medical provider is 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.

Many images circulated by Canadian anti-abortion activists reinforce this framing even more dramatically. Alissa Golob, the Campaign Life Coalition (CLC)’s youth coordinator, tweeted the following image on June 13, 2013, with the caption “#Abortion is the ultimate exploitation of women – American suffragette/women’s rights activist #prolife #prochoice” (Golob June 13, 2013, 09:39).

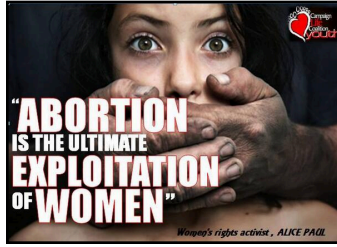


Figure 5.8: Campaign Life Coalition Poster

This image – which quite explicitly links between abortion and sexual assault – is a strategy that is frequently reinforced across much anti-abortion discourse, particularly through the use of frames that imply that after-effects of abortion on women are “identical” to the emotions women experience after being sexually assaulted. A common assertion, for example, is to claim, “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” (TRTL 2010). What is most significant is that these feelings are portrayed to be identical to what women typically feel after rape. In “a sexual rape, a woman is robbed of her purity” whereas “in this medical rape [abortion] she is robbed of her maternity” (AFLO 2010). Both sexual assault and abortion, it is argued, harm women – albeit with a slightly different effect (AFLO 2010). In this framing, abortion only adds to and accentuates the traumatic feelings associated with sexual assault. Rather than easing the psychological burdens of the sexual assault victim, abortion exacerbates them. By focusing on the detrimental effect abortion has on women, anti-abortion discourse flips its former anti-victimist logic. It is not women who are responsible for their own abortions. Rather, it is coercive men and abortion providers who are victimizing women. With this shift, anti-abortion discourse is largely sanitized of its victim-blaming tones and arguments.

4.3 Movement as hero

Finally, if women are the new victims of anti-abortion discourse – desperately in need of protection – who is going to do the protecting. Ultimately, who are the heroes of this tragic story of victimization?

In the anti-abortion discourse of the past, men have traditionally been portrayed as standing at the forefront and it was men who have until recently represented the heroes and martyrs of the anti-abortion movement. In Susan Faludi's defining sketch of the 1980s movement, men fill all the leadership and "warrior" positions of the anti-abortion movement with "the wives and daughters of the 'warriors' lined up in neat rows... their palms raised towards the heavens. 'We're not allowed to speak', one of the women says when approached for an interview" (Faludi 1991, 411). And indeed, this approach continues to structure much of the anti-abortion discourse. In a significant 45% of the cases, the anti-abortion movement continued to be represented as the predominant hero, the one capable of protecting innocent and victimized women (and their unborn babies).

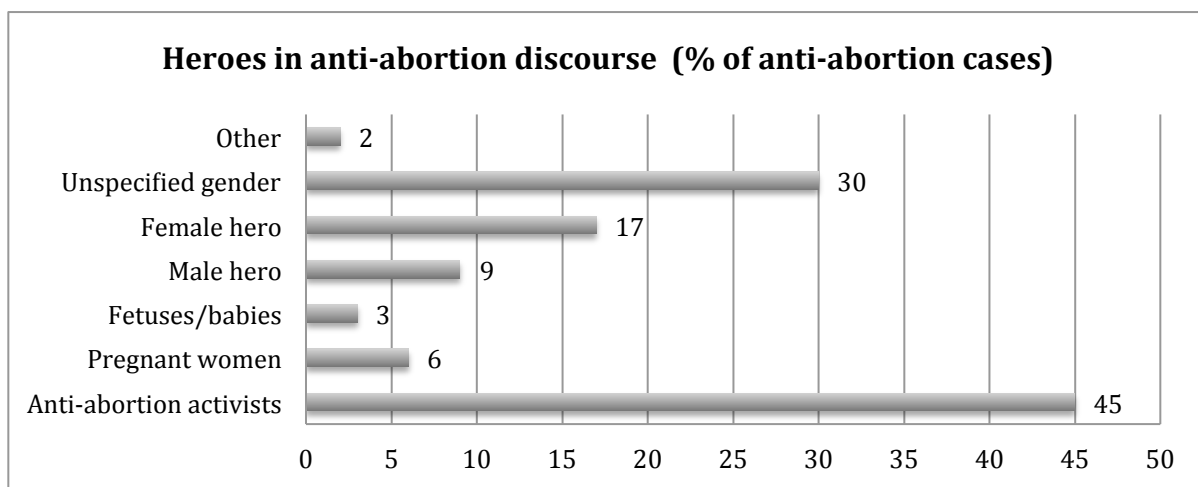


Figure 5.9¹¹

Unsurprisingly, moreover, some of the heroes of anti-abortion discourse continue to be men who have taken a clear public stand against abortion. In 8.7% of the cases, men were identified as the hero of the narrative. A good example of this is PWPL blogger Rebecca Walberg's entry where she offers extensive praise of the anti-abortion efforts of MP Rod Bruinooge:

Bruinooge could curry favour...and set himself up for a smooth climb through the party. He's also got a young family... and therefore no end of claims on his time. But instead of playing it safe and keeping his mouth shut, as the CPC [Conservative Party of Canada] 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.... We need more MPs like him. (PWPL Jan 3, 2009).

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

As is the case with the other categories, however, the contemporary anti-abortion narratives have widened the cast of characters who are portrayed as heroes. Most obvious is the very strong move to tell the stories of heroic anti-abortion women. In fact, the emergence of women as heroes of the anti-abortion movement has become a key rhetoric tactic throughout anti-abortion discourse. PWPL founder Andrea Mrozek writes, "I started ProWomanProLife.org in order to provide a voice for those women who are pro-life because they are pro-woman. I believe ours is a unique approach to the abortion debate" (PWPL June, 2008). In fact, anti-

¹¹ Original analysis published in Saurette and Gordon 2015

abortion discourse repeatedly asserts that the anti-abortion movement is a movement designed *for* women, *by* women. PWPL blogger Rebecca Walberg argues that “there is an excerpt containing the old chestnut that most anti-abortion activists are men, that it's about controlling women, that if men got pregnant this wouldn't be an issue. It's to put this to rest that I think PWPL is so timely and necessary” (PWPL February 23, 2008). Again and again, the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion discourse tells stories of the strong anti-abortion women who represent the cause. Mrozek, for example, writes, “I'm glad to hear about women like Bachman, Palin, Laura Ingraham.... Strong pro-life women are a very scary thing to the pro-abortion side. Not to belabour the point, but they should be worried. We're not just coming. We're already here” (PWPL Oct 21, 2008).

This is a significant strategy as well. In fact, women were identified as the hero of the tale in 16.5% of all cases – more than double the rate of cases that identify men as the hero. This anti-abortion rhetoric portrays women as heroic not simply because they are female, but because on their telling, a female-led anti-abortion movement is a social movement that stands up to protect and empower victimized women. Nowhere is this more dramatically exhibited than in one PWPL blog entry explicitly channeling Martin Luther King's “I have a dream” speech. In it, Andrea Mrozek blogs:

I have a dream! Women, loved and supported, loving and supporting their kids and families. Women, strong women, doing what they choose – aware that sex is also an action to be responsible for, and it is quite often, though not always, linked to having kids. Women, aware that some things simply aren't a choice, and that we don't kill to solve our problems. Women accepting life as it comes, with all the ups and downs. I have this idea that women want to love their kids, even the unplanned ones. And that the minority who don't still don't need to kill those kids (PWPL March 8, 2009).

Drawing on tropes that clearly attempt to link her movement with the women's rights movement and the civil rights movement before it, the contemporary anti-abortion movement seeks to portray itself as a selfless, courageous and compassionate battle against profound social injustice.

This argument upholds the anti-abortion movement as a (female) hero up to the task of protecting women. Not only does anti-abortion discourse claim that women are the new victims of abortion. They also suggest that the anti-abortion movement is the only one that can truly protect victims. Rachel's Vineyard, for example, is an anti-abortion group that holds healing retreats across Canada and the US. The group describes itself as, "a safe place to renew, rebuild and redeem hearts broken by abortion." On their telling, "weekend retreats offer you a supportive, confidential and non-judgmental environment where women and men can express, release and reconcile painful post-abortive emotions to begin the process of restoration, renewal and healing" (Rachel's Vineyard, About Us). Moreover, testimonials on the Rachel's Vineyard website affirms the group's self-proclaimed heroism. Endorsements describe their tragic and regretful experiences with abortion, proclaiming that the support offered to them by Rachel's Vineyard – as well as the larger "pro-life" movement – was the only way that they were able to overcome their overwhelming feelings of regret and sadness.

By positioning themselves as the defenders and protectors of women, the contemporary anti-abortion discourse further shifts away from the anti-victimist and anti-women discourses that previously defined it. The anti-abortion movement is no longer a conservative, regressive, anti-victimist movement out to shame and criminalize pregnant women. On the contrary, the anti-abortion movement of today supports women, represents women, advocates for women. It is a movement made up by women who support the real victims of abortion (women). At the center of this portrayal of anti-abortion activism is a more subtle and nuanced story of victimization:

one that represents both the fetus and women as victims, and the anti-abortion movement as the hero that will protect them.

5.0 Concluding remarks

Most Canadians have a pretty clear picture of anti-abortion activism and its discourse. Accordingly, the traditional narrative of anti-abortion discourse positions the fetus as the main victim of abortion, targeted by dangerous pregnant women. However, this chapter has examined the ways in which this traditional portrait of anti-abortion activism no longer accurately captures many of the arguments and narratives deployed by anti-abortion activists. In fact, the findings of this chapter reveal that the fetus-as-victim frame no longer dominates anti-abortion discourse and that, in its place, an abortion-harms-women argument has become prevalent in contemporary Canadian discourse. Ultimately, it seems that contemporary anti-abortion activists are increasingly employing left-handed arguments and narrative structures that paint women as the victims of abortion rather than the villains.

These findings hold many implications for both the study of abortion politics and the study of discourses of victimization more largely. First, new anti-abortion discourses of victimization have become far more sophisticated and hold the potential of positioning the abortion issue in ways that might appeal more to mainstream voters. In other words, the new victim arguments of the anti-abortion movement might hold the potential of gaining new support among undecided Canadians, who may very well feel uncomfortable with the idea of abortion but have previously been off-put by the anti-victimist and anti-woman orientation of the anti-abortion movement. Moreover, this chapter also provides insight into what might be a much wider trend in contemporary Canadian conservative discourse and communication strategies in

general: the strategy of co-opting, redefining and redeploying traditionally “progressive” values, arguments, and rhetorical tropes (a theme that I will return to in chapters 8 and 9).

However, perhaps more relevant to my larger examination of conservative discourses of victimization is the fact that these new anti-abortion victim argument are very different than the discourses we saw mobilized by the MRM, particular in their respective relationships to the politics of victimhood. For, as we saw throughout chapter 4, the MRM provides a concrete example of the mobilization of more stereotypical and right-handed conservative discourses of victimization. The fact that contemporary men’s rights discourse is centered around arguments about women and feminists being “false victims” certainly signals the MRM continues to be defined by a rightist, backlash, and anti-victim movement ideological and discursive orientation.

By contrast, the victim arguments mobilized by the anti-abortion movement are very different than their MRA counterparts (as well as previous forms of anti-abortion argumentation). In a contemporary context, rather than decrying women and false victims, anti-abortion activists claim to speak *on behalf and in support of* victims. More surprising still is that the primary victims of abortion are not “unborn babies”, but rather pregnant women are being victimized by abortion providers, coerced into abortion by violent partners, and further marginalized by a callous and uncompassionate pro-abortion society. The anti-abortion movement, then, offers a window into the perhaps less dominant – but equally notable – left-handed conservative arguments of victimization deployed by Canadian conservatives. In particular, the anti-abortion case shows that the rise of “protect women/victim” arguments might just be an emerging capacity even within more socially conservative circles of Canadian conservatism.

CHAPTER 6: INTERMEZZO #1: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN

CONSERVATIVE ACTIVISM IN CANADA

The previous two chapters have examined the relationship between discourses of victimization and two key areas of conservative activist politics in Canada. Before turning to an analysis of Conservative Party politics and conservative governance in Part II, this intermezzo will briefly pause and consider a few of the key similarities and differences between these two realms of activism. This chapter will argue that for all the significant ways in which the men's rights movement (MRM) and the anti-abortion movements converge, there are strong indications that the contemporary movements are headed in opposite discursive and ideological directions, in particular in their approaches to victims and gender.

1.0 Similarities

The MRM and anti-abortion movements are marked by two broad sets of similarities. The first relates to the relationships of both movements to discourses and politics and ideology. The second concerns the place of men's rights and anti-abortion movements within larger conservative ideology, politics, and governance in Canada.

1.1 Conservative activism and the politics of victimhood

To begin, both the MRM and its anti-abortion counterpart emerged out of broadly the same anti-victimist backlash to progressive social and political forces throughout the 1970s (see chapter 3 for full discussion). Prior to 1969 – the year that Pierre Trudeau liberalized Canada's abortion laws – there was no such thing as an organized anti-abortion movement in Canada. However, by relaxing many long-standing laws concerning not just abortion, but also

contraception and homosexuality, Trudeau's 1969 omnibus bill provoked a significant reaction among some sectors of Canadian society. One consequence of this reaction was the creation of an explicit anti-abortion movement whose objective was to recriminalize abortion.

Similarly, the MRM also grew out of shifting norms and laws regarding so-called "social" issues. Chapter 4 explored the ways in which early forms of men's activism emerged from, and largely mimicked, second wave feminism. However, by the 1980s, the explicit goal of many American MRAs had shifted significantly, aiming to return to a pre-gay rights and feminist era. In the US in particular, this intensified and professionalized version of the MRM made significant inroads into the Republican Party. And while the MRM would not be as successful in penetrating mainstream party politics in Canada, by the late-1980s, men's rights activists (MRAs) had nevertheless coalesced around opposition to the introduction of feminist-inspired no-fault divorce laws. This resulted in both the proliferation of men's rights groups at the organizational level and the increasing influence of men's rights ideas and arguments on legal debates over Canadian divorce and child custody laws.¹²

Moreover, perhaps because both the men's rights and anti-abortion movements emerged out of a backlash to similar progressive forces, both movements also invoke similar – and at times even identical – victim arguments. This is true in at least four ways. First, at the heart of both movements lies a fundamental reliance on discourses and narratives of victimization. Both chapters 4 and 5, for instance, found that *victim-making arguments* have long characterized both the anti-abortion and men's rights movements. The central claim of chapter 4, for example, is that, since at least the 1970s, a wide-range of different victim arguments defined men's activism.

¹² Fathers' rights organizations such as Dads Canada Family Service, founded in 1993, and Fathers Are Capable Too (FACT) in 1997.

Particularly in Canada where mainstream conservative actors have been reluctant to take up the controversial and often inflammatory tones of MRAs, the argument that men and fathers were the ones being victimized by gender discrimination and an unbalanced legal system gained traction throughout the 1980s and 1990s. And indeed, as discussed in chapter 4, victim-making arguments continue to be the most dominant contemporary men's rights discourse of victimization as well. While the contemporary MRM is no longer mobilized around one concrete issue (such as the 1980s' focus on fathers' rights), my critical discourse analysis (CDA) reveals that MRAs have united around a dominant *victim argument*. In a leading 65.3% of the cases, men are presented as victims of a wide variety of social and political phenomena, including sexism, gender discrimination, the institution of marriage, divorce and child custody laws, free speech violations, and sexual and domestic violence. At the very heart of the men's rights position, then, is the full-scale presentation of men as victims.

Similarly, anti-abortion discourse has also invoked different victim arguments across its over fifty-year history. Most significantly, the foundational "fetal right-to-life argument" of the movement has been a victimist one, presenting the fetus as the 'ultimate' victim of abortion. This has meant that Canadian anti-abortion activists have gone to great lengths to emphasize the full personhood of the fetus. A series of court challenges and anti-abortion legislative attempts, for example, sought to enshrine the rights of fetal personhood into the law throughout the 1980s (albeit unsuccessfully). Moreover, fetal-centric arguments remain a crucial aspect of anti-abortion activism today, with 37.7% of the discourse opposing abortion on the grounds that it violates a fetal-right-to-life. The prominence of fetal-based arguments is further highlighted by the adoption of controversial and inflammatory strategies by some notable anti-abortion organizations. The Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform (CCBR), for example, has gained

both widespread media coverage and increasing notoriety for its own use of graphic fetal-centric imagery. The continuing legislative attempts to enact “unborn victims acts” into law in both Canada and the US also suggests that fetal-centric arguments and strategies will continue to dominate anti-abortion discourse in the future. Much like its men’s rights counterpart, then, at the center of the anti-abortion position lays a victim-making claim: that the fetus is the ultimate victim of abortion.

However, victim-making arguments are not the only discourse of victimization deployed by both the men’s rights and anti-abortion movements. The second similarity between the two movements’ victim arguments is that both men’s rights and anti-abortion activists often reinforce their victim-making claims with *anti-victimist* tones and arguments (although, as we will review in section 2.0, with varying intensities and to different degrees). Most obviously, of course, is the MRM’s discursive (and at times literal) approach to women, and in particular women who claim to have experienced any form of gendered victimization. For example, 36% of men’s rights literature advanced the argument that women are *false* victims, embodying a decidedly anti-victimist ideological approach.

This also seems to be the case for anti-abortion discourse. For the claim that the fetus is the victim of abortion has long been supplemented with victim-blaming tones and arguments that hold pregnant women responsible for abortion. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the anti-victimist ethos of the movement largely characterized the “traditional portrait” of the movement and its strategic orientations. Consider, for example, feminist scholar Janine Brodie’s recounting of an anti-abortion protest outside a Morgentaler clinic on January 28, 1988 (the day that the Supreme Court struck down Canada’s abortion laws): “The pro-life group, decidedly older and more male, kept its vigil waving its familiar placards of mutilated fetuses and chanting ‘Give

Life a Chance'. The pro-choice supporters, almost all women, relished their apparent victory with embraces and cheers" (Brodie 1992, 58). In this portrait, the battle over abortion is literally the struggle between old, religious men and young, vibrant women. On American scholar Susan Faludi's telling, the words of the anti-abortion movement may "praise the lord, but they also curse the women; mingled among the 'amens', the words 'whore' and 'dyke' can be heard more than once" (1991, 409).

In fact, the anti-victimist and anti-woman positions of both movements were so similar that it became commonplace for anti-abortion activists to buttress their cause by invoking explicit fathers' rights arguments. John Willke, the former president of the National Right to Life Committee, for instance, argued that supporting abortion "do[es] violence to marriage [by] remov[ing] the right of a husband to protect the life of the child he has fathered in his wife's womb" (quoted in Faludi 1991, 402). Anger at women's ability to make reproductive choices without consulting their partners and husbands also emerged in the anti-abortion movement's public discourse – becoming particularly explicit in the many fathers' rights lawsuits filed to stop women from obtaining an abortion without the consent of their husbands (Faludi 1991, 402-3). Indeed, as we saw in chapter 5, following the Morgentaler decision a number of fathers' rights organizations supported men who wanted to stop their partners from having an abortion, the highest profile example of which emerged in the 1989 *Daigle vs. Tremblay* case.

This raises a third similarity between the victim arguments of the men's rights and anti-abortion movements: their infusion of the discourse with anti-woman and anti-feminist tenors. As we saw in chapter 3, victim-blaming campaigns are inherently gendered and heavily marked by both anti-women and anti-feminist tones. Not surprisingly, this continues to be the case for both the men's rights and anti-abortion movements (although, once again, to varying degrees and

intensities). In particular, the American anti-abortion movement continues to embody anti-woman arguments and tones. Perhaps one of the most stunning examples of this anti-woman/anti-victimist anti-abortion proclivity came in 2012 when Todd Akin, a Republican member of the US House of Representatives, justified his belief that there should be no rape exception in abortion law by stating: “from what I understand from doctors, that's really rare. If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down. But let's assume that maybe that didn't work or something. I think there should be some punishment, but the punishment ought to be on the rapist and not attacking the child” (Jaco 2012).

Moreover, similar anti-woman tendencies continue to infuse the anti-abortion law-making efforts proliferating at the state-level. In 2013, for instance, Georgia attempted to pass a law that would have had all miscarriages investigated as possible homicides. The same year, Alabama did pass a chemical endangerment law that is being used to prosecute (mostly poor and racialized) pregnant women suspected of taking drugs during pregnancy (Walshe 2013). On the telling of Guardian columnist Sadhbh Walshe, “the effort to undo *Roe v Wade* threatens not just reproductive rights but the very definition of personhood for American women” (Walshe 2013). Moreover, Canadian anti-abortion activists continue, albeit in subtler and more reticent ways, to blame pregnant women for abortion. My analysis of contemporary anti-abortion discourse revealed that 7% of the discourse vilifies pregnant women.

However, while Canadian anti-abortion activists seem more reticent to blame pregnant women for abortions, they remain steadfast in their commitment to attack feminism and its ambassadors. In fact, feminists (24.7%) and abortion providers (24.1%) remain those who are most frequently vilified by anti-abortion activists – at rates that well over triple the frequency of portrayals of the women seeking abortions as the villains. Targeting feminists and abortion

providers as the villains is not particularly new, of course. What is new with the contemporary strategy, however, is the main reason given for *why* they are villainous. Feminists and abortion providers are no longer primarily cast as villains because they are godless or anti-fetus; contemporary discourse intensifies the claim and vilifies feminism for being actively *anti-woman* (Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 11). This narrative charges feminists and abortion providers with being uncaring and sexist. A representative blog post entitled “When you work at an abortion clinic” epitomizes this by arguing that medical professionals at abortion clinics “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” (PWPL March 9, 2009).

While there are signs that the anti-abortion movement is shifting its orientation towards women (a discussion I will return to below), the MRM is much more steadfast, anti-victimist, and “traditional” in its attacks on women and feminism. Both feminists and women also remain the most common targets of attacks by men’s rights activists. Moreover, at times, these attacks are highly personalized and aggressive. In response to the suicide of Calgary MRA Earl Silverman in 2013¹³, for example, prolific MRA and blogger Dean Esmay responded with a list of feminist men, women and organizations he believed were to blame for Silverman’s death, ranging from Alberta Premier Alison Redford, to writers with the feminist blog Jezebel, to professional video-gamer Anita Sarkeesian (Reika 2013).

¹³ For the five years before Silverman died by suicide, he owned and ran Canada’s then-only shelter for men, taking battered husbands and their children into his own house in Calgary so they could escape abusive wives. Prior to his death, Silverman had closed his shelter, sold his home and filed for bankruptcy. On April 27, 2013, his body was found, along with a four-page suicide note—in which he allegedly blamed the federal and provincial governments for indifference toward the suffering of men.

Moreover, Esmay's personalized attack is by no means an outlier. In late 2016, the Canadian Association for Equality (CAFE) rented out Ottawa's "Mayfair Theatre" to show the men's rights film *The Red Pill*. This documentary follows filmmaker Cassie Jaye as she listens to men inside the movement, some of whom compare feminism to white nationalism, argue that men face greater discrimination than women, and uphold that MRAs are punished and ridiculed for voicing their views. However, in response to a vocal and growing backlash against the film – which was intensified by the fact that the event was scheduled two days before the anniversary of the l'École Polytechnique de Montréal shooting that killed 14 women in 1989 – the Mayfair canceled the event.

In the wake of the cancelation, owner of the Mayfair Theatre, Lee Demarbre, received death threats from supporters of CAFE and the film, many claiming censorship. On Demarbre's telling, "[a]ll these women who said these guys [MRAs] spread hate and homophobia—now I've seen that it's true" (Berman 2016). Largely due to the personalized nature of the attacks, Demarbre felt unsafe both at home and at work. In an interview with *Vice*, he even went as far as to say that he felt physically intimidated when he returned the film to CAFE members, stressing the film itself was not part of his reasons for canceling the screening, "[t]his whole decision had nothing to do with the movie, and everything to do with the CAFE society... I don't want those guys in my building" (Berman 2016). These recent examples of men's rights activism further signify that, much more so than Canadian anti-abortion activism, the MRM remains centered on an aggressively anti-woman and anti-feminist platform.

The fourth and final similarity between the victim arguments of both political movements has remained somewhat muted throughout my analysis so far. For both men's rights and anti-abortion activists seem increasingly willing to present *themselves* as the primary victims. This is

perhaps most evident in the case of men's rights activism. As we saw throughout chapter 5, men are the leading and most prevalent victims in contemporary men's rights discourse. However, in a significant 17% of the cases, it is *specifically* MRAs themselves who are victimized.

Moreover, as men's groups have increasingly tried to organize and campaign across university campuses in Canada, the argument that MRAs are the victims of a vast conspiracy of censorship has gained traction. Moreover, the argument that MRAs are harassed and persecuted *because* of their men's rights activism is featured prominently across all four men's rights organizations that were analyzed. The group CAFE, for instance, argues that its efforts to "highlight[t] provocative but overlooked facts that challenge ideological feminism" have led to "massive protest" (Perrins October 8, 2014). On the group's telling, their events attract protestors. "Militants have disrupted events, pulled fire alarms and harassed members of the public" (CAFE, About Us). According to movement leader Paul Elam, one of the central mandates of the movement is to draw attention to the "alarming history of Canadian students' unions, academicians and feminist ideologues undertaking efforts to suppress the free speech and harass those practicing it". Perhaps even more brazen was the response of Men's Rights-Edmonton to the removal of their "Don't be that girl" poster (see chapter 5 for full discussion). In response to the removal of their inflammatory posters (which targeted Professor Lise Gottel for being a "bigot"), MRAs argued that campus police engaged in "an act of brazen censorship [in] taking down the posters" (O'Hara July 10, 2013). The ultimate takeaway of these stories, of course, is that the MRM and its ambassadors are the real victims of gender-based persecution and the rampant suppression of their free speech.

The presentation of anti-abortion activists as victims of extensive censorship also seems to be on the rise. The movement has increasingly sought to present itself as an underdog

persecuted and victimized for speaking truth to power and defending free speech. According to blogger Tanya Zaleski, the anti-abortion movement is fundamentally about naming the elephant in the room that society does not want to acknowledge: “It’s evident that more than one important factor is still being ignored: the act of abortion itself, and the serious mental and physical repercussions to the woman. Talk about a herd of pink elephants!” (PWPL May 26, 2008). Andrea Mrozek also frequently reinforces this identity framing. Referring to a defeated Quebec bill (Bill 34) that would have placed additional medical standards on abortion clinics, for instance, Mrozek writes, “behind the hysteria lies the phenomenon known to pro-lifers everywhere as ‘the abortion distortion’... The abortion distortion dictates that where abortion is mentioned, or even just implied as in this case, a double standard comes into play. Even where women’s health is at stake” (PWPL Oct. 10, 2008).

This has also emerged as a significant strategy at the political level. In 2013, for example, MP Mark Warawa introduced Motion 408 (M408), which asked, “that the House condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination” (quoted in Huffington Post Sept 27, 2012). Although it is fascinating for many reasons (including its reframing of both abortion and women), most relevant for this discussion is that following the tabling of M408, a Conservative-controlled Parliamentary committee ruled it technically unvoteable, which meant that it would not come to Parliament for a vote. This decision ignited a firestorm of controversy. The social conservative base of the conservative movement was furious and responded aggressively – the most visible of which was the CCBP’s campaign to target Prime Minister Harper and four other conservative politicians with an aggressive postcard and billboard attack in their own ridings. Moreover, for the first time, a significant minority of backbenchers in the Harper caucus were willing to openly criticize Harper – with some of them

at the 2013 March For Life explicitly calling on the social conservative base to become much more involved in riding nomination processes for the next election.

Anti-abortion publications also took up the free speech banner. The front page of *Faith Today*, for example, framed it as an issue of gendered suppression of free speech. With the main title asking “Why is it so hard to talk about abortion in Canada”, the cover also featured an arresting image of a young woman’s face with her mouth either taped over or ripped off – suggesting that young women’s very voices were being tyrannically and violently stolen from them (Faith Today May/June 2013). And what was perhaps most notable, however, was the degree to which many in the mainstream media also framed the issue as a question of free speech. Columnist after columnist argued that the conservative government’s decision to rule the motion unvoteable was a travesty of parliamentary tradition and a censorship issue of the first degree. In this process, it was free speech, rather than abortion, that became the major issue (Saurette April 3, 2013). Although they lost Motion 408, the anti-abortion movement arguably achieved something much more important through this debate. For it managed to burnish the image of the anti-abortion movement as censored underdogs, victims of a pro-abortion society. This episode is thus just one more event helping to move the perceived identity of the anti-abortion movement away from the traditional one (i.e. a social conservative attempt to control the behaviour of others) towards a much more progressive one (defenders of free speech and open debate). And this shifts their identity onto terrain that far more Canadians would be sympathetic to.

1.2 The men’s rights and ant-abortion movement’s relationship to Canadian party politics

If the victim arguments invoked by both the men's rights and anti-abortion movements mark a crucial site of convergence between the two movements, so do the movements' place in, and relationship to, larger conservative politics in Canada. In this respect, the anti-abortion and men's rights movements share three additional similarities in their proximities to conservatism more generally.

First, both movements are relatively marginalized within the larger conservative movement and CPC. This is particularly true of the MRM, which has never been considered an overly influential site of mainstream conservative politics in Canada. Scholars, journalists, as well as conservatives themselves, have long considered the Canadian conservative movement as the "big blue tent", made up of various strains of conservative thought and politics, with enough room to house different, and often competing, ideals and conceptions of conservatism (Farney and Rayside 2013, introduction). However, even within its most socially conservative circles – circles that are already considered to be at the margins of mainstream conservative politics in Canada – the argument that men are disenfranchised and discriminated against is marginalized (Farney 2012). Of course, as we saw throughout chapter 4, senators like Anne Cools, academics such as Jordan Peterson, and pundits like Jonathan Kay and Barbara Kay often take up men's rights arguments in vocal and notable ways. However, none of these actors are considered to be overly influential in key conservative policy-making circles, or even within the larger conservative movement. Consider, for example, that not one of the last five Manning Centre Conferences (from 2012-2016) included any panel directly relating to men's rights or men's issues (which is even more surprising when you consider that, for the first time in 2018, the conference held a panel on the state of feminism). Moreover, in Rayside and Farney's recent edited volume on Canadian conservatism (2013), there is no discussion of men's rights

arguments or discourses as being influential in conservative politics. Explicitly advocating for men's rights just does not seem to be a central concern for mainstream conservative activists and politicians in Canada.

This also can be said about the anti-abortion movement in Canada. Canadian scholar James Farney, for example, has argued that the abortion motto of the Progressive Conservative Party was, "the personal is not political" (Farney 2009). Indeed, over the last 40 years, the major political parties have largely treated abortion as a divisive issue to be avoided, rather than a mobilizing and polarizing wedge issue to be exploited. While vocal anti-abortion advocates have been elected as MPs for the Liberal and Conservative parties (as well as the even more right wing Reform Party) and have publicly made their views known, these MPs and their bills have had no legislative success. They have also had little influence in shifting the parties' stance towards an anti-abortion position. In fact, until 2014, the only major federal party to have an official policy on abortion has been the NDP, who has been officially in favour of abortion rights since the early 1970s. Traditionally, the CPC and the Liberal Party have viewed the abortion issue as a question of conscience and, in contrast to most votes in Parliament, have avoided imposing party discipline and allowed individual MPs to decide how they will vote. In May 2014, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau, however, transformed this practice and announced that under his leadership, all Liberal MPs would be expected to vote in favour of pro-choice positions (Saurette May 27, 2014). Moreover, in order to modernize his party, even former Prime Minister Stephen Harper explicitly ruled out reopening the debate under his government. In direct opposition to the US, then, the CPC being outspokenly anti-abortion is generally viewed as a political liability rather than a career-advancing stance.

Given that the men's rights and anti-abortion movements have largely been marginalized by mainstream conservative parties and politics in Canada, it is possibly expected that both movements also are shifting their relationship to conservatism. The second similarity between the men's rights and anti-abortion movements' relationship to conservative politics is that both seem to be rejecting some of the "backlash" and "anti-victimist" characteristics that have come to define conservative ideology and politics.

This is most apparent, of course, with the anti-abortion movement. For the activists in Canada have increasingly employed a public discourse that serves to distance itself from the stereotypical image of the movement as male-led, religiously grounded, focused on criminalizing abortion, fetal-centric, and aggressively anti-woman in its tone. Rather, the anti-abortion movement is increasingly using a variety of rhetorical techniques (including very different arguments, visuals, frames and narratives) in order to present a profoundly different public face and voice to Canadians – one that portrays the anti-abortion position as modern, non-religious, open, sympathetic, and above all, 'pro-woman' and progressive (Saurette and Gordon 2015). It has adopted a new, more compassionate metaphorical tone, and developed new narratives of victimization in order to present the anti-abortion position as consistent with the progressive, 'pro-woman' beliefs and attitudes that many Canadians hold (a discussion I will return to below) (Saurette and Gordon 2013, 2015).

However, this is also true for the MRM, albeit to a lesser extent. For there is some evidence that the movement is distancing itself from some elements of its conservative backlash roots. Certain groups such as CAFE and Honest Ribbon have adopted more modest and restrained approaches. Consider a list of events being held by CAFE in 2018: "Men's Mental Health: A Silent Crisis"; "The Silent Half of Domestic Violence"; "Growing Up Fatherless";

“The Burden of Being Male” (CAFE Events). At least on the surface, none of these events explicitly embody the anti-woman, anti-victim, or anti-feminist tones that one might expect to find at men’s rights events. This is equally reflected in the organization’s official mandate: “We also provide opportunities to engage in furthering this cause by participating in discussions, events and family-friendly activities. We sincerely believe the goal of true equality and human rights is best served by conducting inclusive conversations based on facts and evidence, not by promoting ideology or special interest agendas” (CAFE mandate). All of this suggests that at least some parts of the movement are sanitizing its arguments of the inflammatory and alienating tenors of more extremist MRAs.

Moreover, the fact that none of the main men’s rights groups in Canada are anti-abortion or anti-LGBTQ also distances them from many conservative circles (although arguably fewer than ever before)¹⁴. This is not to say that certain homophobic discursive remnants do not remain elements of some men’s rights activism. Indeed, in August 2017, Honest Ribbon’s Erin Pizzey penned a blog entitled, “Studies show lesbians much more likely to beat, sexually abuse their wives than heterosexual men” (a claim that is not supported by empirical evidence in Canada) (Pizzey 2017). However, interestingly, Pizzey did not take this opportunity to denounce the LGBTQ community but, rather, speculated about how this “fact” would be used and abused by feminists in order to promote their own political and ideological agenda:

I immediately saw this as a weapon that the gender feminists believed they could use to fund their political ideology by selling the idea that ‘all women were victims of men’s violence’ and therefore money should be forthcoming to fund their hi-jacked refuges. The argument that if, as this evidence-based article linked below proves, Lesbian women are indeed as violent and or more violent in their relationships than heterosexual women, the

¹⁴ For example, in 2017, the Conservative Party of Canada reversed its anti-same-sex marriage position.

whole concept of blaming all men as perpetrators against all women falls apart (Pizzey 2017).

While Pizzey's blog could be considered as implicitly homophobic (by implying that lesbians are more violent than other groups), none of Pizzey's blog explicitly attacks lesbians for their sexual orientation (only for their gender). Rather, once again, it is feminists who are accused of "selling" the lie that "all women [are] victims of men's violence".

In fact, many within the movement actively contest the framing of the men's rights movement as one that opposes progressive social values, instead positioning the men's rights and LGBTQ movements as like-minded and connected. CAFE even has a "LGBTQ Committee", which is chaired by a disabled trans-woman who goes by the nickname Genna "Wheelchair" Ross. In response to the decision by Toronto Pride to disallow CAFE to march in the parade (see chapter 4 for discussion), Ross drew on her own social and political positionality to advocate on behalf of the men's organization. In her words, "[a]s a trans-woman, and a person in a wheelchair, it troubles me greatly that Pride would now prove to be my oppressor by telling me that we don't belong... CAFE is an organization with the same core values as Pride — equality, diversity and inclusion — and we believe that this decision violates Pride's own values and procedures" (CAFE June 2014).

Ultimately then, there are indications that both the men's rights and anti-abortion movements are shifting some of their discursive and ideological approaches. No longer are these movements explicitly grounded in the backlash conservatism that defined previous eras of activism. Rather, both men's rights and anti-abortion activism are increasingly seeking to distance themselves from certain elements of conservative ideology and politics. In essence,

albeit to differing extents, the MRM and anti-abortion movements are shifting away from the traditional portraits that stereotype their discourse and activism.

Finally, the third similarity between the two movements is that there are indications that both are political movements in resurgence. To begin, there is good reason to believe that men's rights activism might be a growing site of larger political relevance. The MRM's proximity to the larger alt-right and the rise of Donald Trump in the US, for instance, has meant that men's rights ideas and arguments are receiving more attention than ever before (Hawley 2017). And Canada has not been without its own controversy. During his CPC leadership bid, frontrunner Maxime Bernier was accused of "dog-whistling" to men's rights sympathizers when he tweeted a meme stating: "Take the red pill. Vote Mad Max" (Bell 2017). The term "red pill" was first popularized in the 1999 film *The Matrix* when the main character is given the choice of consuming a blue pill, which would let him stay in the comforting but imaginary world of the Matrix, or a red pill, which would let him escape from the Matrix into a brutal and harsh reality. More recently, however, the metaphor of the "red pill theory" has been adopted by the MRM. Increasingly, MRAs describe their "red pill" epiphany as being the moment they opened their eyes and for the first time realized that men are enslaved by women and legal and social biases that protect male gender inequality. The fact that mainstream politicians (Maxime Bernier came in second in a very close and contentious 13 round leadership vote) are picking up on men's rights metaphors further points to the potential relevance of both men's rights activism and its victim-blaming arguments in conservative politics and ideology in Canada.

Moreover, the proximity of the larger conservative movement to controversial figures, such as Jordan Peterson, might also work to grow space for men's rights arguments within more mainstream conservatism. Men's rights sympathizer Jordan Peterson is regularly invited as a

speaker at annual Manning Centre Conferences (the largest networking event for the conservative movement in Canada). In 2017, after delivering a very controversial talk about what Peterson perceives to be the takeover of university campuses by a victim-obsessed, post-modern left, he was met with the largest standing ovation of the event (Manning Centre 2017, author's observations). The buzz surrounding him throughout the three-day conference really highlighted the degree to which many within the conservative movement admire his aggressive and controversial approach and arguments. At another panel, John Carpay (a lawyer from the right-leaning Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms) even went as far as to position Peterson as a hero and role-model for the movement, arguing that if conservatives "practiced the courage and fortitude that [Peterson] displays on a daily basis we would be in a much better place" (Manning Centre 2017, author's observations). The positive embrace of Peterson by many key actors within the conservative movement signals that discourses of victim-blaming will always have a (albeit limited) home within the larger CPC (Maharaj 2018).

Once again, this also rings true of the Canadian anti-abortion movement. For the contemporary anti-abortion movement is one whose main actors and organizations are increasingly networked and are self-consciously strategic in their vision. The movement has also adopted sophisticated and innovative approaches to strategic communications – including carefully managing how, why and when they engage in public debate; foregrounding a highly visible core of young, female activists as their primary spokespersons; and eliminating the raw public expressions of anger and violence that the movement became associated with during the 1990s.

Moreover, beginning in the mid-2000s, Canada witnessed a proliferation of new anti-abortion groups at the organizational level (including the CCBR and the PWPL blog in 2007).

Most recently in 2017, veteran anti-abortion organizer Alyssa Golob co-founded the group “RightNow” with the mandate “to nominate and elect pro-life politicians by mobilizing Canadians on the ground level to vote at local nomination meetings, and provide training to volunteers across the country to create effective campaign teams in every riding across Canada” (RightNow, Who we are). The group chooses its preferred candidates by first attempting to interview each candidate in the leadership race and asking questions about their stance on abortion and assisted death. RightNow then ranks them based on their answers, voting records, policies, support in caucus and how likely it is they will win. It makes recommendations to supporters on who to vote for by ranking candidates in order of preference, and also helps people buy party memberships. Despite being relatively new to the scene, the group gained significant visibility and media coverage throughout both the federal CPC leadership race and the Saskatchewan Party leadership race (Latimer 2017). Indeed, in both contests, two of RightNow’s “preferred” candidates (Andrew Scheer and Scott Moe) secured the leadership. The increasing organization and professionalization of the movement – as well as its ability to influence some leadership debates – signals that the anti-abortion movement may not be quite as irrelevant as some Canadians might assume.

2.0 Differences

Therefore, there are important similarities between the men’s rights and anti-abortion movements. In particular, the two movements have converged around tactics and discursive approaches to the politics of victimization. Moreover, the fact that both movements have struggled in getting their causes adequately represented within larger conservative politics has meant that the men’s rights anti-abortion causes have been marginalized in mainstream Canadian party politics. However, while the list of similarities between the two movements is relatively

long, their differences might be more pronounced. The remainder of this chapter will explore two fundamental *differences* that distinguish the two movements. In particular, their different approaches to victims and gender can be viewed as emblematic of the larger ambidextrous nature of conservative victim arguments.

2.1 The discursive and ideological approach to women's victimization

The first difference between the victim arguments deployed by the men's rights and anti-abortion movements is a relatively major one: their respective discursive and ideological approach to women's victimization. On the "right" hand, MRAs remain unsurprisingly right-handed in their mobilization of victim arguments, continuing to: (1) blame women for their own victimization, and (2) discount women's experiences of victimization outright. On the "left", however, anti-abortion activism seems to be increasingly distancing itself from this type of backlash, anti-victimist arguments. Rather, the movement invokes left-handed discourses of victimization, representing anti-abortion activists standing with survivors of sexual assault, who are further *victimized* by abortion, abortion providers, and a generally pro-choice society.

Consider, for example, the continued prevalence of men's rights argument about "false victims" within the larger MRM. Consider the following blog posted on the MR-E website:

40-50% of all rape accusations turn out to be false accusations. In those instances, the one accused of being a rapist is actually the victim, and the accuser becomes the perpetrator. Thanks to feminist propaganda and lobbying, the identity of the accused will remain protected in this instance, while the falsely accused will surely have their entire life ruined by the accusation thanks to our... ah, 'rape culture'? (Elam October 27, 2014)

This blog, of course, takes up a very familiar structure and argument, one that was explored in detail throughout chapter 4. On MRA's logic, the majority of accusations of sexual violence are

false, women are ruining the lives of innocent men by lying about rape, and feminists are making the whole situation worse by stoking the proliferation of false accusations and protecting the perpetrator (who in the context is the lying false victim of sexual assault) and destroying the real victim (the man being falsely accused).

Further indicating their right-handed approach to victims and women has been that, even in a post-#metoo era, the MRM has doubled down on this approach. Despite the overwhelming evidence against Harvey Weinstein, for example, movement leader Paul Elam suggested that Weinstein's "alleged" victims are not really victims at all, but rather canny opportunists who hoped a session on Weinstein's "casting couch" would bring them rewards in Hollywood that were denied their uglier rivals — not to mention most of their male counterparts. In Elam's words, "the case against [Weinstein], as it was with Cosby and so many others, is absent a few things we normally associate with sexual assaults. Like police reports and criminal charges. Like any kind of forensic evidence. Like any kind of evidence at all save the word of women who have collected money from Weinstein on the weight of their allegations over the years" (quoted in Futrelle 2017).

Given the findings of chapter 4, none of this is surprising. Indeed, my critical discourse analysis of men's rights discourse confirms that the backlash victimism and anti-woman proclivity that increasingly characterized the MRM throughout the 1980s remains a steadfast element of contemporary discourse today. The MRM's approach to victims, women, and gendered violence thus remains punitive – with the movement continuing to invoke many of the inflammatory language, arguments, and strategies that have long generated the most wide-spread media coverage and popular attention. In this respect, it is rather expected that the MRM continues to mobilize right-handed, anti-victim arguments.

However, while some actors within the anti-abortion movement might continue to draw on anti-victimist proclivities, they are relative outliers, especially in Canada. For, as we saw throughout chapter 5, the anti-abortion movement is increasingly shifting its ideological and discursive orientation towards women and a host of issues that affect them. In this respect, we can see the emergence of a more left-handed conservative approach to victim arguments. By way of contrast, consider Elam's response to #metoo with that of anti-abortion activist, Andrea Mrozek. While Elam's right-handed response embodied all the characteristics of a victim-blaming campaign, prominent anti-abortion activist Andrea Mrozek's responded to the Harvey Weinstein accusations by arguing:

Harvey Weinstein, we learn, as recently as May, gave \$100,000 to Planned Parenthood. What a guy! He was pro-choice, and clearly so very generous! What do his actions matter – he was saying the “right” things and making big movies.

For the record, it is a pro-woman and pro-life thing to point out that men who have lots of sex with not their wives need access to abortion more than anyone – to conceal the result of their despicable ways (PWPL October 11, 2017).

Mrozek's blog is remarkably different than Elam's above response. First and foremost, it differs in its allocation of blame. For Elam, it was ambitious (and perhaps ugly) young women who wanted to pursue fame who were to blame. By contrast, Mrozek stands with the #metoo movement in arguing that Weinstein is “despicable”, steadfast that women (especially “pro-woman, prolife” ones) are not to blame. Indeed for Mrozek, Weinstein himself does seem to be, at least partially, guilty. But Mrozek also suggests that Planned Parenthood – and the larger pro-choice cause – should shoulder some of the blame. For it is the availability and legality of abortion that has allowed men to “have lots of sex with not their wives”.

Moreover, this shift is not an outlier in anti-abortion discourse, but rather emblematic of a larger re-positioning of the anti-abortion discourse towards sexual violence and gender equality more largely. As we saw in chapter 5, anti-abortion discourse now frames abortion as an issue that represents a similar level of violence against women as does sexual assault, extending the feminist sexual oppression frame to include the anti-abortion position by suggesting that “pro-life feminists have also come to see abortion as part of a male agenda to have women more sexually available” (Vellacott November 20, 2009). By contrast, MRAs continue to double-down on the anti-victimist and anti-woman discursive approach that defined much of men’s rights activism throughout the 1980s.

2.2 The performance of gender

The second major difference is in the performance of gender and the public face of the two movements. According to the “traditional portrait”, one might expect that the demographics of both movements would be similar. Indeed, throughout the 1980s, the profile of the most prominent anti-abortion and men’s right leaders was nearly identical: white, male, over 50, and conservative. And, as we saw in chapter 4 that despite growing efforts to present the MRM as run by young men, the old portrait remains accurate.

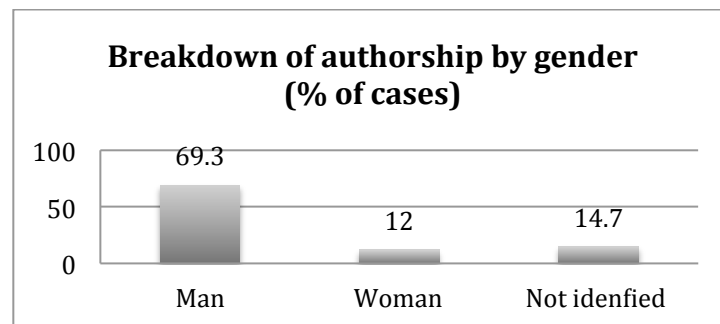


Figure 6.1

For example, as per Figure 6.1, men wrote 52 out of the 75 “cases” of men’s rights discourses that comprised my analysis (69.3%) and women, only 9 (12%)¹⁵.

Moreover, the “maleness” of the movement is reinforced by the most frequent images on the organizational websites, which can be grouped into two categories. The first category, drawing on a long history of violence against women’s campaigns, comprises pictures of victimized and brutalized men. The homepage for Honest Ribbon, for instance, shows a series of pictures of male domestic violence victims, with black eyes and swollen lips (as you can see in Figure 6.2, the photos are evidently staged). CAFE's homepage similarly presents a rotating slideshow of pictures: a sad and dejected man on the steps of a courthouse; happy men golfing together at a CAFE fundraiser; and loving fathers with their happy sons. This is one face of the movement: the sad victimized, yet sensitive, man.

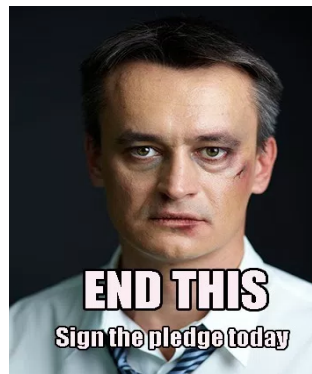


Figure 6.2: Campaign poster from CAFE website

However, there is also a second set of images that frequent men’s rights blogs and organizational materials. These pictures show that it is the women who do the victimizing. One of Voice for Men’s (AVFM) “most popular” articles featured on their homepage, entitled

¹⁵ In 11 cases (14.7% of the cases), the gender of the author was not clear. Given that three or four of the organizations I examined are administered by men, it is more likely that the authors in these categories were also men rather than women.

“Manufacturing female victims, marginalizing vulnerable men”, is accompanied by a picture of a menacing-looking woman aggressively holding a knife in the direction of the camera. Perhaps even more notable was the billboard that CAFE had installed in downtown Toronto:



Figure 6.3: Image of CAFE billboard in downtown Toronto

This billboard appeals to both “victim images”: the victimized man and the abusive and terrorizing woman. In this respect, not only does the organization’s use of images visually reinforce their dual-victim arguments, but also these arguments emphasize the male-face of the movement. At the risk of being too obvious, the *face and brand* of the MRM is male.

However, if this was true of the anti-abortion movement throughout the 1980s, it no longer accurately describes its contemporary face. For not only has the anti-abortion movement’s approach to women and victims changed, but the “who” making these arguments has also changed. And the fact that it is increasingly young women who are the public face of the movement means that the visuals of the movement now seem to actively embody the pro-woman argument of the contemporary discourse. In this respect, there is also a performative dimension of anti-abortionism that is changing, and now it is *women* who are the face of the movement. Consider the “mission statement” of the Canadian blog “ProWomanProlife”: “to develop a

nationwide network of mentors, ‘big sisters’, who can speak confidently to their views on why abortion is not a woman’s right, and help other women to understand the same” (PWPL 2008).

Increasingly, the anti-abortion movement has begun to market visual images of itself that represent it as much more women-led. The May/June 2011 issue of *Faith Today* – the magazine of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada – is symptomatic of this shift. The cover story of this issue is titled “The New Face of the Pro-Life Movement: How Young Women are Having an Influence” (Newman 2013, 18-21), and the cover features four of the most prominent young female spokeswomen of the movement – Andrea Mrozek (founder of PWPL and executive director of IMFC), Stephanie Gray (executive director and founder of CCBR), Faye Sonier (legal counsel, EFC) and Ruth Lobo (of the *Lobo et. al. v. Carleton University et al.* lawsuit).



Figure 6.4: Campaign poster from CAFE website

Ultimately, the face of the anti-abortion movement – in direct contrast to the MRM – is increasingly *female* (Saurette and Gordon 2015).

Here, we can see how the two different victim arguments – one right-handed and one-left handed – are fundamentally gendered. Perhaps it was once true that the two movements emerged

out of the same broad political and socio-cultural factors, and thus performed their “backlash politics” in similar ways throughout the 1980s. However, while the MRM has remained committed to similar avenues of activism and discourses of victimization as its fathers’ rights predecessor, by comparison, the anti-abortion movement has undergone a pretty momentous rebranding. As a result, the movements often look like opposites: angry, alienated, and anti-victimist men’s rights activists vs. young, vibrant, pro-woman anti-abortion women.

3.0 Concluding remarks

Part I examined two realms of conservative activist politics in Canada. Chapter 4 began by looking at men’s rights activism in Canada, revealing that men’s rights arguments largely rest on a hybrid victim discourse – one that merges victim-making arguments with those decrying false victims. Both early forms and therapeutic men’s activism and fathers’ rights activism, for example, were centered on the victim-making claims that men are the true victims of gender discrimination and inequality. However, as the fathers’ and men’s rights movements intensified and professionalized throughout the 1980s, these victim-making arguments were merged with more overtly and openly anti-woman, anti-feminist, and anti-victimist ones. The central claim of chapter 4, then, is that since the 1970s, men’s activism has consistently deployed two key arguments about victims: (1) that men are the *real* victims, and (2) that feminists and women, who themselves are often false victims, are to blame.

By contrast, chapter 5 argued that anti-abortion activism in Canada is undergoing somewhat of a transformation in its relationship to both victims and women. Of course, throughout the 1980s, at the height of the abortion debate in Canada, the anti-abortion movement adopted tenors of anti-victimism. Anti-abortion activists, lawmakers, and judges all drew on

narratives that portrayed pregnant women as villains, murderers, and “third rate tramps”. Moreover, this victim-blaming discourse was merged with fetal-centric arguments that equated abortion with murder. Thus, one of the most iconic conservative victims of all-time emerged: the fetus. However, as chapter 5 argued, the contemporary anti-abortion movement has largely shifted away from this traditional anti-abortion narrative of blame, with the majority of contemporary arguments now opposing abortion on the premise that it harms women. By invoking feminist-sounding language and justifications, anti-abortion advocates have shifted the blame for abortion off of pregnant women and on to a new cast of villains: men, feminists, and abortion providers. The contemporary anti-abortion movement in Canada, through its shifting discourses of victimization, has effectively re-positioned itself as a pro-victim movement that purports to protect victimized and persecuted pregnant women.

Moreover, the re-positioning of the anti-abortion arguments in relation to women and gender makes its discourses of victimization quite distinct from those mobilized by their men’s rights counterparts. Therefore, my analyses in chapters 4 and 5 also raise a number of important implications for my larger study of conservative discourses of victimization. First, my examination of men’s rights and anti-abortion politics make clear that conservative activists – like their progressive counterparts – fundamentally rely on a broad swath of discourses of victimization. In particular, there seems to be an uptick in the representation of the movements *themselves* as victimized, signaling that arguments over “free speech” and “freedom of expression” might be growing trends in the future of men’s rights and anti-abortion activism.

However, it is also notable that the men’s rights and anti-abortion movements hold a very different relationship to the politics of victimhood, thus mobilizing distinctive sets of victim arguments. On the one hand, the MRM has remained relatively static throughout the past 30

years, continuing to mobilize right-handed and stereotypically anti-victimist/woman arguments. On the other hand, however, the anti-abortion movement in Canada has been largely transformed. Its contemporary face is female, and its victim arguments, pro-woman. While they nevertheless shares an aversion for feminism with their men's rights counterpart, anti-abortion activists seem to draw on more feminized and left-handed arguments, mobilizing sympathetic tones and argument about both women and victims. Moreover, as we will see in Part II, these differences between the men's rights and anti-abortion movements also map on to the ambidextrous nature of the mobilization of discourses of victimization and gender in more mainstream conservative politics.

PART II:

CONSERVATIVE PARTY POLITICS, GOVERNANCE, AND THE POLITICS OF VICTIMHOOD

CHAPTER 7: BILL C-10 AND THE HARPER GOVERNMENT'S 'TOUGH ON CRIME'

AGENDA

The last three chapters explored the ways that discourses of victimization are absolutely central to conservative activist discourse, with both men's rights and anti-abortion activists (MRAs) being key producers of victim arguments. Part I, then, established that conservative activist discourse is characterized by complex patterns of victim discourse. While men's rights activists' discourses of victimization share many similarities with their anti-abortion counterparts, the two movements are increasingly marked by important – and perhaps more fundamental – differences with respect to their relationship with the larger politics of victimhood.

However, given the fact that the MRM and anti-abortion movements are located on the fringes of political acceptability, largely operating outside the realm of formal politics in Canada, one might legitimately ask whether these findings are indicative of Canadian conservatism in general. Part II, then, extends my analysis of conservative politics in Canada by examining the discourses of victimization in mainstream Canadian Conservative Party politics. Including both conservative activists and politicians in my analysis allows me to examine relatively underexplored connections and comparisons between different areas of conservatism in Canada and consider how they might work to influence each other, particularly in their relationship with discourses of victimization. My project adds to the existing literature on both conservative social movements and mainstream Conservative Party politics by explicitly considering the discursive and organizational connections between the two realms.

Part II, then asks: what types of discourses of victimization characterize conservative discourse in the realm of electoral politics? Did Stephen Harper's Conservative government take

up more traditional right-handed discourses of victimization (like the men's rights movement)? Or do Conservative politicians have a more nuanced or left-handed approach to the framing of victims (like the anti-abortion movement)? Ultimately, how do various approaches to victims shape the ways that Conservative MPs draft and market policy?

In order to answer these questions, the next three chapters analyze discourses of victimhood in two key pieces of government legislation passed by Stephen Harper's Conservative government over the course of its over 10-year mandate. In this chapter, I first examine bill c-10 ("The Safe Street and Communities Act") – a comprehensive bill that implemented many of the Harper government's "tough on crime" (TOC) initiatives, including controversial mandatory minimum sentencing legislation. In the following chapter (8), I then compare bill c-10 with my second bill of analysis – bill c-36 ("The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act"), which recriminalized sex work in 2014 following the Bedford Supreme Court decision. Chapter 9 concludes Part II by once again pausing to explicitly contrast the victim argument invoked in defence of both bills, examining what insights a direct comparison might raise for larger conservative politics and ideology – particularly in its relationship to gender and race – in Canada. Given the centrality of both bill c-10 and c-36 in the Harper government's legislative history and the amount of debate each generated, both bills mark important events in themselves and can be seen as legitimate indicators of broader tendencies within partisan conservative politics in Canada.

In many ways, the findings presented in Part II map quite closely onto the central argument of Part I. I contend, for example, that particularly in the government's promotion of its TOC agenda, there is continued evidence of discourses of victimization that align with more traditionally and right-handed orientations of Canadian party politics. In particular, Conservative

MPs continue to draw on explicit arguments, narratives, and frames that align closely with old-style understandings of conservatism and its close relationship with populist discourse. However, these are not the only – or perhaps even the most dominant – conservative arguments. As we will see in Chapter 8, when marketing bill c-36, a bill that intersects explicitly with issues of gender, MPs often replace harsher and more traditional conservative arguments with softer and, at times, progressive-sounding tones and arguments around the protection of victims (and in particular female victims). My finding that Conservative politicians are using distinct, and often contradictory, tones, narratives, and arguments to advance policy initiatives – and in ways that are gendered in seemingly incongruous ways – holds a variety of implications for how we understand conservative politics and discourses of persuasion in Canada. It also suggests that much like activists' discourses of victimization, Conservative politicians also draw on ambidextrous forms of victim arguments.

In exploring these themes, this chapter will be structured in five sections. As with the previous chapters, Section 1.0 begins by briefly outlining the methodological choices that shaped my analysis, my coding process, and the reasons I chose bills c-10 and c-36 as my sites of analysis. The remainder of the chapter then presents my examination of bill c-10 (followed by my analysis of bill c-36 in chapter 8). Section 2.0 of this chapter opens my discussion of bill c-10 by offering a brief overview of the context and background for the tabling of bill c-10. Sections 3.0, 4.0, and 5.0 then present the results of my critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the marketing of bill c-10 by considering what explicit arguments, narratives, and evidence politicians deployed in order to underpin their defence of bill C-10. Finally, before turning to my analysis of bill c-36 in chapter 8, I will conclude with a discussion of a few potential implications of my analysis.

1.0 Methodological Choices

1.1 Coding

The next two chapters present the results of a critical discourses analysis (CDA) of every Parliamentary intervention made in defence of bills c-10 and c-36 by Conservative MPs. As discussed in chapter 2, and using the software QDA Miner, I employed a mixed method approach that allowed for the analysis of explicit arguments, the use narratives (and in particular who was accorded to role of “victim”, “villain” and “hero” within these narratives), and the tracking of representations of gender (for the full coding dictionary, see appendices D and E). In total, I coded 202 discrete parliamentary interventions by Conservative MPs over a 16-day period (153 interventions in defence of bill c-10, and 49 in defence of bill c-36).

While the bulk of this chapter will present the results of my CDA, as with the previous chapters, I supplemented my discourse analysis with the qualitative analysis of key policy documents drafted by the CPC prior to the tabling of bills c-10 and c-36, and the participant observation of sixteen Conservative events at which bill c-10 and/or bill c-36 (or their respective issue areas) were discussed (see chapter 2 for a full discussion of CDA and participant observation).

1.2 Case selection

Why focus on these two bills? Of all the lawmaking initiatives undertaken by the Harper government, why are bills c-10 and c-36 worthy and relevant sites of investigation?

First, both bills c-10 and c-36 were keystone pieces of legislation that Stephen Harper’s Conservative government tabled between 2011 and 2015 – the years over which the CPC held

the majority of seats in Parliament. Because of this majority, and as is most often the case with Canada's strict party discipline, the Parliamentary interventions made in defence of both bills by MPs were not about genuine policy debate, persuading opposing parties, or striking a compromise. Rather, Conservative speeches were more about persuading Canadians in order to get the public onside with the Conservative position and party – often presenting and repeating the CPC's key talking points on each file. Examining Parliamentary speeches as a key site of public persuasion makes sense in a new political context where permanent campaigning is increasingly the norm (Marland et al. 2017).

Second, both bills c-10 and c-36 are government bills that were controversial, heavily debated in the media and public realm, and came to represent significant issue areas for Stephen Harper during his tenure as prime minister. A commitment to a “law and order” or “tough on crime” ideology and policy-making agenda was long part of Harper's campaign and governing strategy. Leading up to the 2006 election, for instance, Harper campaigned on the promise to work on a constitutional amendment to forbid prisoners in federal institutions from voting in elections (Webster and Doob 2016, 313). This approach followed Harper into government and, at the beginning of the Conservative government's first mandate in 2006, crime and sentencing reform was identified as one of five policy priorities for the new government. Once again, throughout his 2011 federal election campaign, Harper campaigned on TOC themes and policy and finally, with a majority in hand, was able to pass many of his law and order proposals through Parliament in 2012 (CTV News 2015).

As opposed to bill c-10, the emergence of bill c-36 came as a response to the largely unpredicted Bedford Supreme Court decision, which struck down Canada's existing prostitution laws in 2013. Nevertheless, it became a significant issue area for the Conservatives throughout

2014, just one year before the federal election. Against mounting pressure to decriminalize sex work (from the Courts, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynn, and sex worker advocacy groups), Harper opted instead to maintain the status quo. In some ways, then, bill c-36 echoes the Harper government's larger "tough on crime" approach by placing prostitution back in the Criminal Code. However, as the next chapter will argue, the victim arguments used to market bill c-36 were quite distinct from those invoked in the defence of bill c-10. For example, by fusing public nuisance arguments with discourses that present sex work as a form of oppression against women, the CPC was able to recriminalize sex work by presenting itself as both tough on crime *and* sympathetic towards women and victims. In this sense, bill c-36 not only constituted a legislative victory for PM Harper's government, but the arguments used in its defence were also touted as having the potential of wooing new segments of the Canadian voter base.

Third, both bills have lasting political and practical legacies. While the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) has blocked some elements of bill c-10, most remain in place (Webster and Doob 2015). In fact, despite campaigning on the promise to review and overturn bill c-10 during the 2015 election cycle, Liberal government lawyers continue to defend some of the most widely criticized components of the bill against judicial contestation. In January 2016, government lawyers argued in favour of mandatory minimum sentencing in a court challenge from a man from British Columbia (Stone 2016). While Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould was tasked with reviewing bill c-10 (something that at the time of writing had yet to happen) and continues to criticize the Conservative approach as not being consistent with her government's "commitments, the *Charter* or our values", it remains doubtful that the new Liberal government will overturn and replace all five main elements of the bill (MacLeod 2016).

Bill c-36 seems to have even greater potential of staying on the books for the foreseeable future. To begin, the debate over sex work has always been a muted in Canadian party politics. No government had touched the controversial file since the 1980s, and it was only the result of a tireless, decade-long campaign on the part of sex workers that forced the issue to the SCC, which, in turn, compelled the Harper government to address the issue. Moreover, while the public debate over the legality of sex work intensified prior to the passing of bill c-36, once the bill became law in December 2014 the issue of sex work once again faded from the public eye. For instance, despite all NDP and most Liberal MPs publicly opposing and voting against bill c-36, it received virtually no attention during the lead-up to the 2015 election, which was held less than a year after bill c-36 was passed. Perhaps most telling is that the current Liberal government shows absolutely no signs of re-opening the debate over the legal standing of sex work.

Critics of bills c-10 and c-36 also argue that Canadians are already experiencing negative effects as a result of the implementation of both bills. Academic studies, for instance, suggest that mandatory minimums and other TOC initiatives implemented by bill c-10 are ineffective deterrents and can lead to more prisoners and great costs for the corrections system (DeKeseredy 2009). This was certainly the case in the United States (US) where mandatory minimums, particularly for drug-related crimes, have made the country the world leader in incarceration (DeKeseredy 2009, 308). Opponents also argue that bill c-10's general weakening of prisoners' rights means that in order to avoid automatic jail sentences, more cases are going to trial. This leads to more demands on the courts, Crowns, and legal aid – the result of which is that prisoners are spending longer periods in jail, and in more violent environments. The use of pepper spray in Canadian federal prisons, for instance, increased from 334 uses in 2006-7 (prior to the passing of bill c-10) to 1,005 in just the first nine months of 2013-4 (once the bill became law). Similarly,

from 2009 to 2014, the use of controversial prisoner segregation strategies and force by guards rose 7 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively (Fine 2016).

The re-criminalization of sex work has also had tangible consequences, with experts arguing that bill c-36, like its predecessor, forces sex workers to put themselves in dangerous situations in order to sell their services by driving prostitution underground. Bill c-36's ban on the advertisement of sex work by companies like escort agencies – which can provide increased security for sex workers – means that sex workers are more likely to work alone, on the streets, and in more precarious contexts. Indeed, research conducted on bill c-36 confirms that Canada's new prostitution law has increased sex workers' distrust and fear of police. Sex workers, for instance, often “avoid reporting violence, abuse or exploitation to police” and, by criminalizing the purchase of sex, bill c-36 has led customers to seek out more “isolated, and often more dangerous, locations” (Mandin 2016). Further research also suggests that bill c-36 holds the potential of putting strains on police resources and court systems across the country. With the passing of bill c-36, for instance, the Canadian Bar Association quickly warned of backlog issues in the Canadian justice system (Canadian Bar Association 2014).

The fourth reason that bills c-10 and c-36 are worthy sites of investigation is because of their, at times contradictory, approaches to gender. Take bill c-36. Given that, on average, 75-80% of sex workers are women and almost all clients are men (Cool 2004), it is undeniable that sex work is an issue area that intersects in important ways with gender. In fact, bill c-36 marks one of the rare policy debates where the Harper government engaged openly in discussions of women, gender, and gender inequality. Given that bill c-36 marks one of the infrequent occurrences where Conservatives speak explicitly and openly about women, it offers an infrequent

opportunity to examine what language and arguments are taken up by Conservative lawmakers when gender is at the forefront of their policymaking.

Of course, this is not to say that gender does not underpin Conservative discourse in other issue areas in more implicit and subtle ways. Indeed, as we will explore below, the defence of bill c-10 by Conservative MPs was also marked by the masculinized language of “toughness” and “protection”. For long has it been the case that politicians appeal to masculine ideals of toughness and strength in order to market policy and ideology. Some have even argued that American presidents have waged entire wars in order to fight the “wimp factor” (Ducat 2004). Examining areas of more “traditional” Conservative politics (like war and crime) for the usage of gendered themes and language also provides a crucial site of investigation. Moreover, by comparing bills-10 and c-36, we can examine not only how Conservative narratives draw on multiple – and often opposing – discourses of victimization, but also the ways in which these discourses are inherently gendered in very different ways.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, an in-depth analysis of bills c-10 and c-36 is necessary because, as we will see, discourses of victimization were absolutely central in both the design and the selling of both bills. Consider, for example, that throughout the 16 days that bills c-10 and c-36 were debated in Parliament, Conservative MPs used various iterations of the term “victim” a total of 491 times. An examination of bills c-10 and c-36, then, can help us in both unpacking Conservative strategies and discourses of persuasion, and in understanding the unique role that discourses of victimization play in the development of the Conservative ideology, policy and discourse in Canada.

2.0 Context and background of bill c-10

2.1 The origins of bill c-10 and the rise of penal populism in Canada

Bill c-10, as well as PM Harper's larger approach to crime policy, represents a significant departure from previous eras of policymaking in Canada. As opposed to countries like the US and the United Kingdom (UK), Canada has had relatively stable levels of incarceration since the late 19th century. This is largely due to the fact that, for most of Canada's history, its approach to criminal justice policy has been based on two main tenets: (1) it has viewed prison as a last resort, and (2) it has considered criminality to be the result of social circumstance, and not as individually determined (Webster and Doob 2015).

Moreover, Canada's more "compassionate" approach to criminals has been historically consistent and there has even been significant agreement between political parties in favour of its merit (Webster and Doob 2015). Criminologists Webster and Doob argue that "[p]erhaps the key distinguishing feature of the roughly 75 years prior to 2006 is the remarkable consistency in the value statements about Canada's broad orientation towards offenders and appropriate responses to them as expressed by the policy elite" (2015, 303). Indeed, the view that criminals are victims of their own circumstances and thus deserve our sympathy, and not derision, is apparent in policy documents that are over 100 years old. Consider, for example, the 1914 Report of the Royal Commission on Penitentiaries, which noted that special attention must be paid to those who have had the "misfortune to get into prison" (quoted in Webster and Doob 2015, 303). In this sense, compassion and inclusion have long been considered as appropriate responses to crime by Canada's lawmakers (Webster and Doob 2015, 303; Dekerseredy 2009)

While some may assume that Canada's moderate approach to crime and punishment has been the result of 69 years of Liberal governance over the past century, this does not seem to be the case. Rather, at least at the federal level, Conservative politicians and lawmakers have long converged with Liberal approaches, adopting similar arguments about the causes of crime and its solutions. In 1985, for instance, a Conservative government task force denounced the over-reliance of incarceration as a solution to crime, instead endorsing alternatives to prison as not only "less costly" but also as less "debilitating" (quoted in Webster and Doob 2015, 305). In 1993, the Progressive Conservative Party's electoral platform doubled down on this position, stating, "[i]f we don't get to root causes of crime, we cannot make our street and communities safe. True safety and security are based in caring homes, good schools, shared values and communities where people care about and reach out to one another" (quoted in Webster and Doob 2015, 304). And, perhaps most revealing, in 1990, the Conservative government explicitly asserted that it endorsed the Liberal policy position on criminal justice. In fact, the 1982 Liberal document outlining the party's approach to criminal justice issues was even re-released by the Conservatives when they took government in 1989, with only the preface and the signature of the Justice Minister changed (Webster and Doob 2015, 306).

However, scholars argue that this century-old and more moderate approach to crime was for the first time in Canadian history sidelined when the CPC came to power under the leadership of Stephen Harper in 2006¹⁶. In its place emerged a more partisan, punitive, and prison-centric approach that advocated for harsher punishments. In this sense, Canada has now joined a long list of Western nations that have witnessed upsurges in both discourses and practices of longer and more severe punishments for offenders (Roberts et al. 2002). On Roberts et al.'s telling, this

¹⁶ While a TOC approach did not define Conservative politics at the federal level, some provincial governments did take up 'law and order' agendas, particularly during Michael Harris' premiership in Ontario.

new approach addresses the problem of crime by offering, “punitive (and simplistic) solutions (such as “three strikes” statutes, “adult” sentencing for juvenile offenders, and flat-time (no parole) sentencing) that often violate fundamental sentencing principles and create more problems than they solve” (2002, vii).

Moreover, Prime Minister Harper’s shifting of Canada’s approach to crime and criminality seems to fit into what many scholars argue is the global rise of “penal populism”, which has emerged against the backdrop of larger rightward populist discourses and movements (Roberts et al 2003). Discourses of penal populism tend to be centered on a zero-sum theory of deterrence, promoting the notion that the tougher the punishment for a particular crime the less likely the crime will occur (for a full discussion of populist discourse, see chapter 3). While the central tool of penal populism is imprisonment, it also adopts other more punitive “law and order” measures. Mandatory sentencing, undermining judicial discretion, trying juveniles as adults, shaming and stigmatizing offenders, and increasing maximum sentences are all central features of a penal populist approach (Roberts et al 2003). Interestingly, mounting research suggests that most, if not all, of these measures do not contribute to curbing crime rates. However, by the time research fully demonstrates the futility of many of these solutions, “the parade has moved on [and] the election is over” (Roberts et al. 2003, viii). The policies themselves, however, largely remain in place.

Perhaps most relevant for our larger discussion of discourses of victimization is that penal populism speaks to the perspective that we must be “tough on crime” because criminals have been favoured by the criminal justice system at the expense of crime victims (in particular) and the law-abiding public (in general). The underlying logic of penal populism, then, operates on the premise that crime victims and communities (“us”) have been victimized by dangerous

and over-privileged criminals (“them”). For Webster and Doob, penal populism seeks to impose harsher sanctions to protect the “virtuous ‘us’ from the “dangerous (and permanent) ‘them’” by “separating ‘them’ from society for as long as possible” (2015, 311). Like most populist discourses, then, a special discursive status is often afforded the “victim of crime”.

2.2 Bill c-10 and the “tough on crime” agenda

Much of the implementation of PM Harper’s TOC approach came in the form of bill c-10, the “Safe Streets and Communities Act”, which was passed into law on March 12, 2012. It was a comprehensive, omnibus bill that embodied many of the key characteristics of penal populism by combining nine separate measures, all of which had been tabled in Parliament by minority Conservative governments prior to the 2011 federal election. In essence, the Act sought to “enact the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act and to amend the State Immunity Act, the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, [and] the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act” (Canada 2012).

Bill c-10 contained five main parts, each with an explicit mission to protect and support various “victims of crime.” The first part of the bill targeted “terrorism” by allowing victims of terrorism to sue perpetrators of terrorism and their supporters” (Canada 2012). It also amended the State of Immunity Act in order to prevent listed foreign states from claiming immunity in Canadian Courts with respect to actions that relate to its support of terrorism.

The second section of the bill, which changed Canada’s Criminal Code, is largely considered the most controversial component of bill c-10. Part 2 increased or imposed mandatory minimum penalties for certain sexual offences against children and created new laws against

making sexually explicit material available to a child and/or “arranging to commit a sexual offence against a child” (Canada 2012). It also restricted the availability of conditional sentences (most often parole). This, in effect, curbed the ability of judges to use their own discretion in sentencing and use alternatives to prison (such as house arrest and drug treatment centres). Perhaps even more controversial, however, was bill c-10’s amendment to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to provide minimum penalties for drug offences and to increase the maximum penalty for marijuana possession and production, which, as a result, increased sentences for minor marijuana offences.

Part 3 of the bill made a number of changes to Correctional Service of Canada and the National Parole Board. Perhaps most interesting for our discussion of victims, it “establish[ed] the right of a victim to make a statement at parole hearing and permit the disclosure to a victim of certain information about the offender” (Canada 2012). Introducing controversial victim impact statements into judicial proceedings – something that can be considered part of a larger “Americanization” of the Canadian criminal justice system – marked an important shift in Canada’s approach to victims of crime.

Part 4 of the bill amended the sentencing principle of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as its “provision relating to judicial interim release, adult and youth sentences, publication bans, and placement in youth custody facilities” (Canada 2012). Somewhat in contrast to the second part of bill c-10 – which sought to protect children from crime – part 4 hardened the criminal justice approach to individuals under the age of 18 who are considered to be “violent offenders”. It also lifted the publication ban of (some) offenders under the age of 18 and required police departments to keep records of extrajudicial measures used to deal with young people.

Finally, part 5 of the bill amended the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Following the enactment of bill c-10, officers are now able to refuse authorization of foreign nationals to work in Canada “in cases where to give authorization would be contrary to public policy considerations” (Canada 2012). Somewhat paradoxically, this new provision allows immigration officers to deny work permits to foreigners who they consider to be at risk of being sexually exploited (in order to “protect” them from sexual trafficking).

3.0 Explicit arguments

In the context of this dissertation’s examination of the politics of victimhood, the history of crime law in Canada not only highlights an important shift in the CPC’s approach to crime policy and criminality. It also marks a shift in Conservative representations of victims and victimhood. Previously, Conservative leaders and governments (at least at the federal level) have largely accepted a link between victimization and criminality. For instance, the notion that violence is cyclical and that adult perpetrators of abuse have often been victims of abuse as children meant that Canadian Conservatives would often advocate for “softer” and more rehabilitative approaches to crime policy. As we will see, however, the Harper government’s tabling of bill c-10 largely broke the link between criminality and victim status – instead mobilizing discourses centered on idealized forms of victimhood. On the Harper government’s telling, criminals are never victims. Rather, *victims are real victims*.

The Conservative discourse’s reliance on victim arguments is perhaps most evident when you examine the most common explicit arguments mobilized by Conservative MPs. As per figure 7.1, the five most common explicit arguments made by Conservative MPs in defence of bill c-10 all rest on the underlying logic that *innocent Canadians are being victimized by crime*

and rising crime rates. Through the framing of “law-abiding” Canadians as victims, Conservatives paint a dark portrait of Canadian society – one in which criminals are damaging our communities and our collective sense of security. The Conservatives’ overall message is that criminals are victimizing law-abiding Canadians, and bill c-10 will stop it.

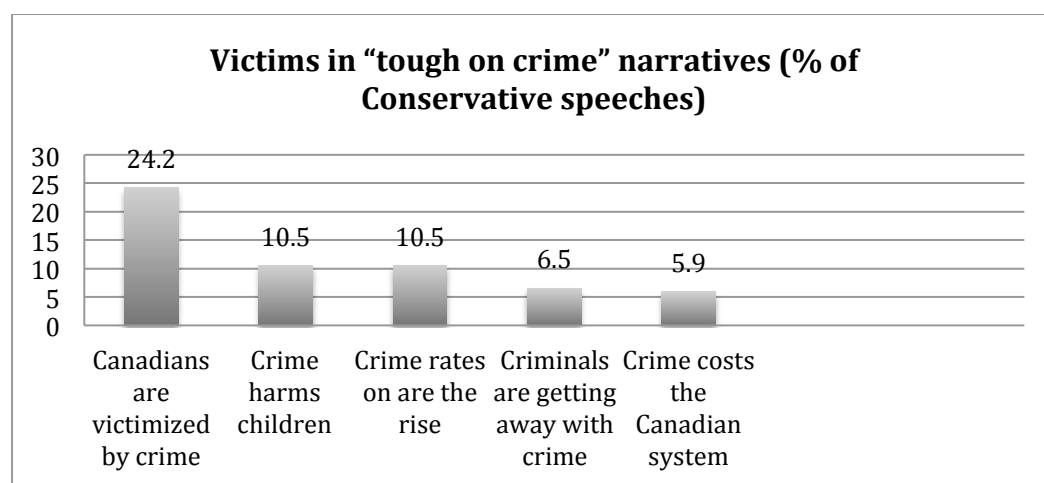


Figure 7.1

The single most common explicit argument forwarded by Conservative MPs is the relatively straightforward assertion that Canadians are being victimized by crime. In 24.2% of the cases, MPs explicitly argue that crime is impacting every area of Canadian society resulting in the victimization of innocent, law-abiding, and upstanding Canadians. Throughout the nine days of Parliamentary debate, the argument that “Canadians who are victimized or threatened by crime deserve the government’s support and protection” was a common Conservative refrain (Seeback November 29, 2011).

The “victim” – a rather abstract yet multifaceted category – is thus central to the majority of the explicit arguments that are made in defence of bill c-10. In fact, victim arguments were so

crucial to the marketing of the bill that appeals to some iteration of the word “victims” appeared 191 times through the nine days of debate over the crime bill. For Rob Nicholson, who was Justice Minister at the time the bill was tabled, “[t]here are countless stories of Canadians who have been victimized” (Nicholson March 6, 2011). Moreover, Conservatives contend that “[m]any do not like to think [bad] things happen in Canada until it happens to them and their loved ones” (Nicholson March 6, 2011). According to this reasoning, everyone is a potential victim and therefore should be supportive of the bill. It is for this reason, argues Rob Nicholson, that “[Conservatives] always ensure that the interests of victims and law-abiding Canadians are protected and that we are standing up for them and their rights” (Nicholson March 6, 2011).

3.1 Crime harms children

The contention that Canadians are victimized by crime can be further broken down into three sets of interconnected arguments. The first of these arguments represents children as being the foremost victims of crime. In just over 10% of Conservative interventions, Conservative MPs argue that bill c-10 is necessary because children are disproportionately harmed by crime, victimized and exploited by dangerous offenders. Pornography, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, pedophilia, terrorism, and the drug trade are all commonly listed by Conservative MPs as key contributors in the victimization of Canadian children. In one revealing example, Nicholson draws on parental fears and shared Canadian values around the protection of children in arguing:

No parent wants their child to fall prey to a pedophile. In fact, parents list abduction and sexual exploitation as two of the three concerns they face with Canadian children. Any story on child pornography, whether it is about the pedophile who perpetrated the act or the one who watched it online, outrages each and every one of us. When involving a child, the

consensus seems to be that sentences must be serious and lengthy (Nicholson March 6, 2011).

By discursively joining parental fears of sexual exploitation with support for increasing prison sentences, Nicholson draws on the common political argument that “we must protect our children”. In this sense, this argument operates on a broad “consensus” that those who victimize innocent children should be punished with “serious and lengthy” prison sentences.

In many ways, this approach takes up the familiar discursive structure of populism, mirroring the larger global trend towards penal population discourses and “tough on crime” lawmaking approaches. Pedophiles and pornographers – the “them” in this populist story – are feared by parents and enrage “each and every one of *us*” (emphasis added). The logical conclusion of this narrative is that there exists a commonsensical agreement between “*us*” that “*they*” should face long and punitive prison sentences. According to Conservative MPs, Canadians understand and agree that it is only by ramping up sentencing and locking criminals away that we can fully protect innocent children.

In completing this penal populist narrative, moreover, Conservatives make use of the familiar themes of zero-tolerance. Not only are increasingly punitive prison sentences going to deter criminals from committing crime, but Conservatives also argue that they are sending a “strong” or “tough” message to criminals that the Canadian government will not tolerate crime. In yet another Parliamentary intervention, Justice Minister Nicholson outlines the ways in which bill c-10 goes after criminals:

I appreciate [bill c-10] is very bad news for drug dealers and people who molest children. They are going to be very upset that we are moving forward on this. It is too bad for them. If they are in the business of molesting children or drug trafficking, bringing drugs into the

country, this bill is bad news for them. However, it is going to come to fruition and it is going to come into law (Nicolson December 2, 2011).

This type of non-linear argument expands the penal populist narrative by representing Conservatives as not only tough on crime but, perhaps more importantly, tough on criminals. Implied in this passage is that it is only “drug dealers and people who molest children” who will be “upset that [Conservatives] are moving forward on [bill c-10].” This links opposition to bill c-10 with criminals (“them”) and subtly negates the legitimacy of any “soft on crime” political opponents of the bill. As we will explore below, this is a relatively common discursive strategy used by MPs in defence of bill c-10.

3.2 Crime costs the system

The second set of arguments of victimization presents unchecked crime and criminals as victimizing Canadian taxpayers and “costing the system.” This fiscal-based argument is particularly interesting given that one of the most common criticisms of bill c-10 put forward by Liberal and NDP MPs is that by increasing and imposing mandatory minimum sentences, incarceration rates would rise and contribute to a growing and increasingly costly prison system. These increasing costs, argued opponents, would do nothing more than burden the Canadian taxpayer (Cohen 2012).

In response to critics, however, 5.9% of Conservative interventions present the argument that while bill c-10 might cost the system it will also unburden crime victims from the surging cost of crime. In one illustrative example, New Brunswick MP John Williamson argues that bill c-10 represents a *worthy* cost-spending measure:

Mr. Speaker, the group I used to work for, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, was primarily opposed to wasteful government spending, which is an altogether different thing

than opposing all government spending. On that note the member has a valid point. For example, the long gun registry sounded like a great idea when we were told it would cost \$2 million, but when the price tag hit \$2 billion, suddenly Canadians no longer agreed with it. The member is correct. Governments can waste money and often do (Williamson November 29, 2011).

By citing the Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) – a prominent libertarian-oriented conservative think tank whose former employees include PM Stephen Harper – the above passage sends a subtle message to grassroots and libertarian conservatives who might be familiar with CTF and its commitment to fiscal conservatism. With this dogwhistle, Williamson aligns himself with other important actors from within the Canadian conservative movement who advocate for economically conservative policy, even if bill c-10 itself might end up costing Canadian taxpayers more. After establishing his credentials as a good fiscal conservative, Williamson makes an important clarification between what he considers to be worthy “government spending” and “wasteful government spending.” Following Nicholson’s logic, even if bill c-10 might contribute to increasing government spending (which it has), it is not “wasteful” like other crime initiatives. Bill c-10, then, stands apart from typical (and often Liberal) cost-spending measures.

This partisan, fiscal line of argument is further supplemented by the contention that it is, simply put, crime that costs the Canadian system. Inferred in this argument is that bill c-10, no matter the price tag, is justified. From a financial perspective, for instance, a “war on drugs” is framed as having the potential of saving Canadians billions of dollars, with one MP arguing that, “[a]ccording to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, illicit drug use costs Canadian society an estimated \$8.2 billion a year” (Nicholson March 6, 2011). Implied in this statistic, while not explicitly stated, is that bill c-10 will combat substance abuse, and its related costs, by

“ensur[ing] we give the tools to law enforcement officials to prevent... crimes from happening” (regardless of the fact that most of bill c-10 targets criminals after crimes have been committed) (Nicholson March 6, 2011).

The costs of crime to Canadians, moreover, are not just financial. Rather, when governments are not tough on crime, argue Conservatives, Canadians are victimized in extensive and widespread ways. In another telling example, the former Justice Minister argues:

My own Department of Justice conducted a comprehensive analysis of the cost of crime in 2008. The analysis included costs to the criminal justice system, for example police, court and prosecution costs; costs to the victims, including health costs, losses to property and losses to productivity; costs to third parties; and intangible costs such as pain, suffering and loss of life. It was estimated that those costs amount to approximately \$100 billion. That is astounding and unacceptable (Nicholson March 6, 2011).

Here, Nicholson highlights the multi-faceted nature of the argument that crime costs the Canadian system. The costs of crime are represented as both wide-ranging (financial, emotional, and deeply personal) *and* as affecting all segments of Canadian society (the criminal justice and healthcare systems, individual citizens, and victims of crime). Conservatives argue that in order to redress such an “astounding and unacceptable” situation, we need to adopt a more punitive and less compassionate approach to criminals. Criminals need to be held accountable.

It is not, however, just that criminals are costing Canada. Rather, this discourse is very much centered on the victims of crime. Yes, law-abiding Canadians are being victimized by crime in general. But, in particular, it is the victims of crime that are expected to bear the high costs of criminality. In this respect, the explicit argument that “crime costs the Canadian system” is framed within a larger discourse in which Conservatives present themselves as standing up for victims. A common refrain in defence of bill c-10 is that, “financially and emotionally the costs

are borne by the victims in this country” (Nicholson November 29, 2011). This allows Conservatives to claim the (not very fiscally conservative) position that by increasing cost on the system, they are saving Canadian taxpayers *and* individual victims of crime from the costs of crime.

3.3 Unchecked, dangerous criminals and rising crime rates

The multiple and interrelated arguments that present crime as victimizing Canadians are further bolstered by two additional arguments: that crime rates are on the rise and that criminals are getting away with crime. In 10.5% of Parliamentary interventions, Conservative MPs argue that rising crime rates mean that Canadians are more and more concerned about the inadequacy of our criminal justice system. Consider, for example, the Parliamentary intervention made by MP Brent Rathgeber:

I live in and represent Edmonton and Edmonton is certainly one of the regions in Canada that has seen an epidemic growth in organized crime and the violence that is associated with it. In fact, anecdotally, last year there were 44 homicides in Canada and, sadly, Edmonton led Canada in that statistic...

There are provisions that deal with serious drug crimes, as well as provisions that deal with amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, ending House arrest for property and other serious crimes and changes to our pardon system. All of these separate but combined pieces of legislation have been demanded not only by police and chiefs of police but also by our constituents, such as the citizens I represent in northwest Edmonton who, sadly, have witnessed a record number of murders, 44 in 2011, and all of the other crimes that are tied into organized crime in the city (Rathgeber March 12, 2012).

There are a couple of things worth noting from this passage that I will return to below in section 5.0. First, Rathgeber argues that the changes proposed by bill c-10 have been demanded by not only “police and chiefs” but “also by our constituents.” As we will see, the framing of bill c-10

as the final result of intense public pressure and demand is a common justification made in defence of the bill. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, Rathgeber draws on an “anecdote” in order to support the position that crime rates are rising. In this sense, and as we will discuss in section 5.0, many Conservative justifications for the contention that “crime is on the rise” rely on the experience, feelings, and anecdotal experiences of Canadians

In a final reinforcing discourse, 6.5% of the cases argue that crime is rampant and criminals are unchecked. At the center of this argument is the assertion that, “the interests of law-abiding citizens should be placed ahead of those of criminals” (Seeback November 29, 2011). Former MP and Alberta Wildrose leader Brian Jean, for instance, is a big proponent of this perspective. Often by drawing on his experience as a criminal lawyer, Jean argues that bill c-10 is “going to ensure we send a clear message to people who commit crime to let them know that if they are going to commit crimes, they are going to do serious time” (Jean November 29, 2011). In fact, the rhyming catchphrase, “those that commit crime are going to do serious time”, reappears 13 times throughout the nine days of Parliamentary debate over bill c-10.

The contention that criminals are getting off easy relies in large part on a penal populist narrative that presents criminals as threatening outsiders who are taking advantage of the generosity of the Canadian system (a representation that we will return to in section 4.0). For MP David Wilks, for example, it is through his experience as a police officer that he has personally witnessed violent criminals victimizing and re-victimizing Canadians:

After 20 years of police work and working within the justice system, I often hear great frustration with our justice system. Even when violent criminals are put behind bars, they never seem to complete their sentences, and before we know it, they are back on the street committing crimes. Meanwhile, the rights of the victims are overlooked and forgotten.

There is something wrong with that picture. Canadians know it, and so does our government.
(Wilks November 29, 2011)

Once again, this passage positions the rights of victims in direct conflict with those of “violent criminals.” Absent from this argument is the notion (once accepted by Canadian Conservative parties) that offenders deserve a second chance and can be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Rather, the only way to truly honour “real” victims – and ensure their rights are not “overlooked and forgotten” – is to demand that criminals stay “behind bars.”

By examining the more generalized explicit arguments mobilized in support of bill c-10, it becomes immediately apparent that – as was the case in Conservative activist movements – the “victim” is absolutely central to the CPC’s discourse. Despite empirical evidence pointing to the contrary (which will be discussed below), the most prominent and predominant explicit arguments forwarded by Conservatives rely on the fundamental logic that crime is *increasingly* victimizing Canadians. Moreover, the explicit arguments explored above also give us a number of hints about just “who” Conservatives consider to be victims (children, taxpayers, Canadians harmed by crime).

4.0 The framing of victims, villains and heroes

However, given this project’s focus on victims, this next section will take a moment to more deeply and explicitly consider the question of “who” are the real victims by investigating the narratives deployed by Conservative MPs in defence of bill c-10. Here, the work of Drew Westen’s on the political salience of “narratives” is particularly helpful. A political psychologist who has spent his career examining the psychological effects of various communication practices, Westen argues that political discourse is often framed by a “narrative” or “story” – and that this narrative frame almost always encourages the audience to accept a certain worldview, replete

with a series of principles, preferences and beliefs. In Westen's view, a politically relevant narrative is "a coherent story [that] has... a protagonist, a problem that sets up what will be the central plot or story line, obstacles that stand in the way, often a clash between the protagonists trying to solve the problem and those who stand in their way or fail to help, and a denouement, in which the problem is ultimately resolved" (Westen 2007, 146).

For Westen, the reason narratives are so politically relevant is because they almost always include implicit lessons we can sense, even if we don't realize it, because they are so familiar to us. In Westen's words, "most stories – and all that try to teach a lesson, as political stories do – have a moral. Many stories are complex with subplots and submorals. But in general, they follow a similar and recognizable structure that gives them their rhetorical power" (Westen 2007, 146). This last point is crucial. As Westen notes, the power of many narratives comes from the fact that they reproduce predictable plots and often rely on recognizable stock characters that communicate the basic moral lesson to the audience almost instantaneously. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that most political narratives are structurally similar to a typical Hollywood blockbuster or childhood fairytales. These stories generally revolve 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.¹⁷ As we will see, it is often simply through the presentation of the characters – and in particular the victim – that the discourse's implicit argumentation is made.

With this theoretical context in mind, I sought to analyze the narrative structures mobilized in defence of bill c-10. Practically, this meant that I coded all cases for a variety of categories designed to track the existing narrative structure and character roles – most

¹⁷ For further discussion, see Saurette and Gordon 2015, chapter 11.

significantly, what type of actors were accorded the role of villain, victim and hero (see appendix D for full coding dictionary).

4.1 Victim frames

It is not surprising that the subtler framing of victims by Canadian Conservatives further reinforces many of the explicit arguments examined above. In an incredibly dominant 68% of their Parliamentary interventions, Conservative MPs invoke some form of “victim frame” – a relatively generic frame that is applied to a broad and wide-ranging category of “victims”. However, before exploring the specificities of who, according to Conservatives, are victims, let us first consider four groups who are *not* portrayed as victims.

To begin, not one Conservative intervention frames criminals as being victims. Once again, this marks not only a departure from 100 years of federal crime policy in Canada, but also from the approach of previous Conservative parties and governments. In the absence of a more substantial and systemic approach to the causes of crime, criminals are framed as dangerous (and often sexual) offenders, preying on vulnerable and victimized Canadians. In line with this framing of criminals is the associated notion that rehabilitation is either not possible or not the best use of federal funds. MP Bernard Trottier, for instance, argues, “Everyone agrees with rehabilitation. But first, do we have the right to provide better protection for victims and children? I think it’s high time we did so” (Trottier November 29, 2011). Implied in Trottiers’ intervention is the notion that rehabilitation is important, however protecting “victims and children” is *more* important. Ultimately, rehabilitation won’t help “keep Canadians safe in their homes and communities” (Trottier November 29, 2011).

Second, there is no mention of any form of gendered violence or crime. Neither women nor LGBTQ minorities are ever specifically mentioned as being victims or victimized by crime, despite both groups being statistically more likely to be the targets of crime (Statistics Canada 2017). As we will see in the section below, women's voices and stories are sometimes used by Conservative MPs to promote bill c-10. However, in most cases, that speaks about women's relationship with crime. It is within their capacities as mothers, victimized because their children have been victims of crime. In one telling example, for instance, MP Phil McColeman argues: "I met with the mother of a son who had been brutally beaten to the point of being severely mentally disabled. This lady came up to me and thanked me for this crime bill" (McColeman November 29, 2011). According to the Conservative portrait of crime in Canada, "lad[ies]" are largely victimized by crime when their children are victimized by crime.

Moreover, at the same time that PM Harper was pushing bill c-10 through the House, he was simultaneously refusing to launch an inquiry or commit resources to investigate the hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. Despite presenting crime as a top five issue for his government, Harper went on the record (a relatively rare occurrence) as saying that the growing list of missing and murdered Indigenous women just "isn't really high on [the government's] radar, to be honest" (quoted in Kappo 2014). Rather, Stephen Harper framed the issue as "a law and order problem", arguing that police and not the federal government are best able to deal with these crimes (Bronskill and Tutton 2015). What registers on PM Harper's "radar" here is telling. According to Conservative MPs, bill c-10 is necessary because criminals are victimizing Canadians. However, none of those victimized are Indigenous women.

Third, arguments around racialized forms of violence are also absent in the debate over bill c-10. On the one hand, there are some arguments that frame racialized people as "exploited

and abused” (James December 2, 2011). Consider, for example, the following intervention by MP Roxanne James:

Each additional day that the opposition delays this bill is yet another day in which people may be smuggled to Canada and exploited and abused, and there is nothing that we as Canadians can do about it. Canada’s immigration officials... need to have the proper tools both to safeguard the system from misuse and to protect vulnerable persons from exploitation (James December 2, 2011).

On the surface, James seems to be standing up for new immigrants who are vulnerable to exploitation. However, when you consider the contents of bill c-10 – which allows immigration officers to deny immigrants work permits when they are considered “a risk” – you see a different logic emerging. Moreover, James insists, “loopholes still exist, allowing those with nefarious aims to exploit both the immigration system itself and also vulnerable people from other countries who wish to work in Canada” (James December 2, 2011). In this respect, there emerges a clear divide between “good” and “bad” immigrants. The ability of bill c-10, or immigration officers, to negotiate these differences is left unclear.

And finally, there is also no mention of sex workers as victims of crime. On the surface, this might seem like a somewhat random observation. However, it will provide important context when exploring the Harper government’s recriminalization of sex work in the following chapter. In the context of bill c-10, however, it is important to note that not one intervention made by Conservative MPs even alluded to the fact that sex workers are victims of crime and deserve government protection and resources.

So, then, who are victimized by crime and criminality? Who, according to Conservatives, are the victims that bill c-10 will protect?

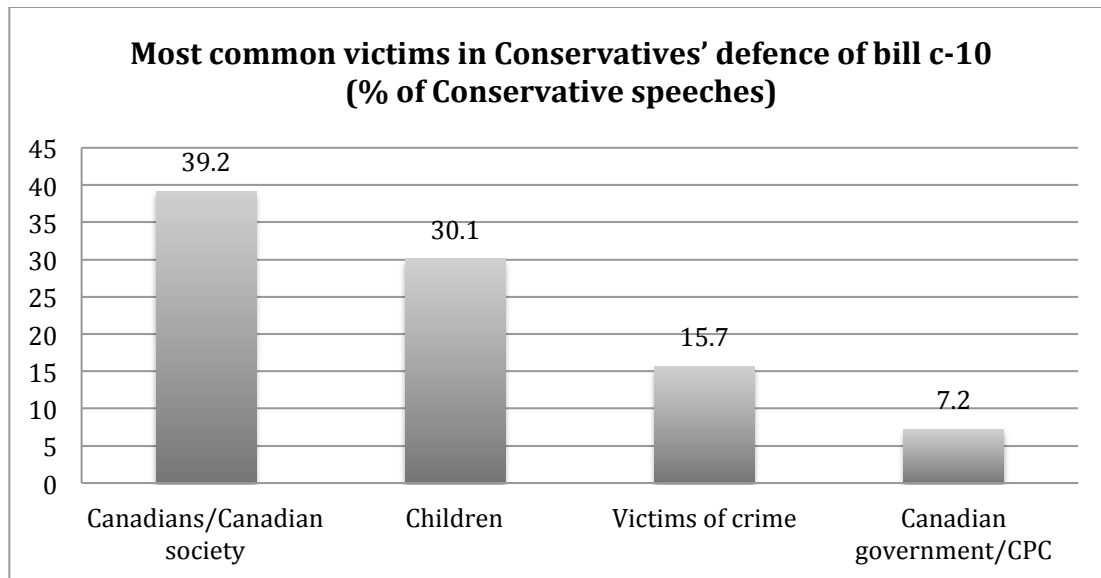


Figure 7.2

Considering the significance of the generalized explicit argument that “crime victimizes Canadians,” it is somewhat expected that the first and most common category of victims invoked by Conservative MPs is also a relatively obtuse frame. In 39.2% of the cases, Conservative MPs speak to a broad and unspecific category of victims: “Canadians.” The framing of all “Canadians” as victims is further supplemented by the almost equally vague, and yet separate, category of victims: the “victims of crime.” With 16% of the cases drawing on this frame, Conservative MPs argue that the victims of crime are the main impetus behind the drafting of the new crime bill. According to MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay, for example, the Conservative government is, “... in a rush to stand up for law-abiding Canadians and keep our commitments to victims of crime who feel they are voiceless in the present system and want those who perpetrate crime to suffer the penalties that are commensurate with the severity of their crimes” (Findlay November 29, 2011). In this context, both the “victims of crime” and the “crime” itself are ambiguous categories. What is unambiguous, however, is the fact that Conservative MPs will protect these victims.

An additional victim frame deployed by the Conservative government is one that frames innocent children as the main victims of crime. On the one hand, the significance of this frame in the defence of bill c-10 is expected. Especially given the long tradition and salience of appealing to the child's well-being in political persuasion generally (Lu 2017) – and its importance in the defence of bill c-10 specifically – it makes sense that in a significant 30% of the cases, Conservative MPs appeal to a child victim frame. It becomes somewhat more interesting, however, when you consider that a significant portion of bill c-10 laid out provisions that hardened the criminal justice approach to minors under the age of 18. As we will see below, then, “young offenders” (a different, and coded language, for children) are also often, and somewhat paradoxically, framed as villains.

Finally, the last victim frame invoked by Conservative MPs presents Conservative MPs as victims. In just over 7% of the cases, it is not just innocent children or victims of crime that are suffering. Rather, it is also Conservatives themselves who are victimized. As we can recall from our discussion of the men's rights and anti-abortion movements in chapters 4 and 5, this is a relatively common strategy in Conservative activist rhetoric, particularly in more traditional and socially conservative circles of the movement. In the context of bill c-10, Conservatives are most often victims of Liberal tactics, incompetence, and partisanship. Within this narrative, the Conservative government is trying its hardest to “stand up for victims” but the Liberals (and NDP to a lesser extent) are spreading “misconceptions and falsehoods” and undermining the government through “fear-mongering” (Goguen November 29, 2011).

4.2 Villain frames

As was the case with explicit arguments of victimization – which rely on a number of different victim frames – four “villain frames” also further buttress explicit arguments about dangerous, unchecked criminals and rising crime rates.

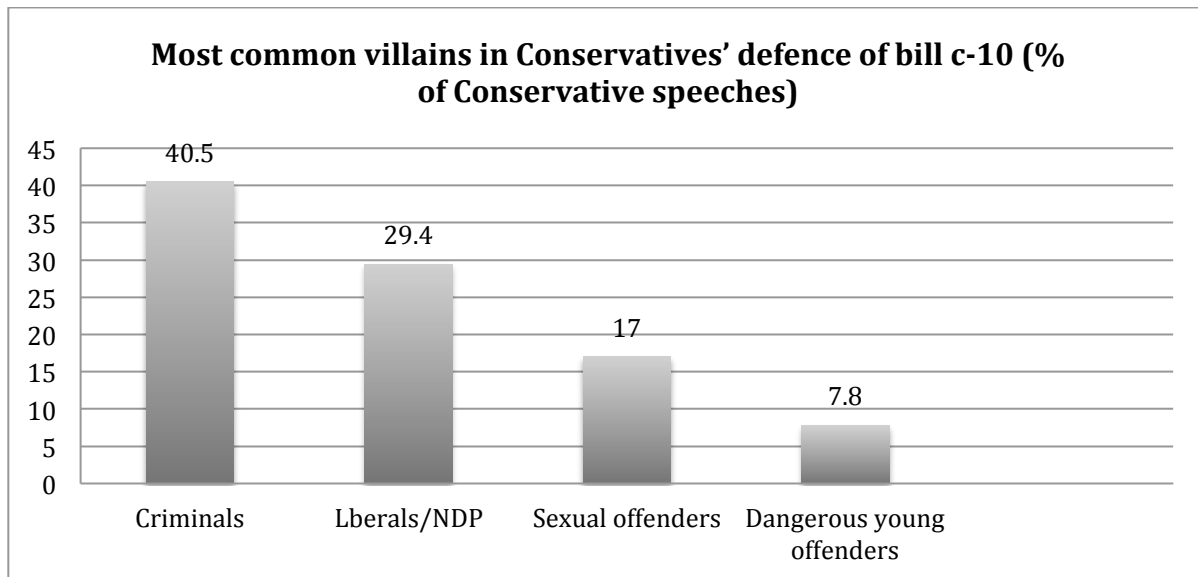


Figure 7.3

Just as the category of “victim” was broad and abstract, so too is the first category of villain. In just over 40% of the cases, Conservatives present unspecified and unnamed “criminals” as the villains of Canadian society. These villains are presented as one of the main impetuses behind the need for bill c-10. They are those from whom the victims must be protected. For then-MP Brian Jean, for example, because criminals victimize society, our approach must be “serious”:

Mr. Speaker, I know that some people have actually expressed that, as the member says, [bill c-10] is not justified. However, that is a small minority of people. It is criminals and the Liberal Party of Canada.

I do not agree with that. I think, frankly, people who commit serious crimes should do serious time because they have taken away something from people. They have violated society as a whole and public policy. There is no question in my mind that a small minority of criminals get caught, but when they are caught, most of the punishments

are, frankly, quite laughable. I have had an opportunity to see it first-hand.

We are not going to take the laughable position of the Liberal Party of Canada, or the laughable position of criminals for that matter (Jean November 29, 2011).

Drawing on explicitly populist themes, the second paragraph of Jean's intervention represents (once again unnamed) criminals existing on the margins of civil society. In contrast to the position of previous Conservative parties – in which criminals might also be represented as victimized and thus deserving of a second chance – Jean takes the position that only by punishing and further segregating criminals from the rest of Canadian society can the CPC truly protect Canadians. Moreover, Jean's comments present any opposition to bill c-10 as being from a “small minority of people” (equally implied is that bill c-10 represents the opinion of the majority of Canadians). For Jean, even worse still is that it is only criminals and the Liberals (who in this context are discursively married) that do not understand why bill c-10 is necessary and justified. Jean completes the narrative by implying that with our being soft on crime, criminals are laughing at law-abiding Canadians and politicians.

Jean's intervention is instructive for at least two reasons. First, it highlights the simplicity of the Conservative government's representation of criminals. For Jean, criminals are not part of society. Rather they exist on the margins as they have “violated society as a whole”. Criminals, within the Conservative narrative, are one-dimensional bad guys. They are not people with lives, communities, families, or relationships, and they certainly haven't been victims of circumstance or been previously victimized (either by other individuals or by systemic discrimination). There is no systemic or nuanced analysis needed. As advised by Prime Minister Harper, Canadians do not need to “commit sociology” by delving into the complexities of crime or the reasons why people are drawn to crime (Fitzpatrick 2013).

Second, Jean's intervention is also notable for it hints at the significance of a second category of villains: their political opponents. In nearly 30% of the cases, Conservative MPs frame opposing parties as villains. While both the Liberal and NDP parties are depicted as villains, Liberal MPs are the most common targets of Conservative attacks (even despite the fact the NDP was in official opposition at the time). Throughout Parliamentary debate, Liberal MPs are regularly depicted as anti-victim, unrepresentative of real Canadians, flip flopping, blindly partisan, and soft on crime (Jean November 29, 2011). This is not to say that the Liberal and NDP parties do not engage in these types of partisan attacks. They most certainly do. Nonetheless, the Conservative framing of Liberals and New Democrats plays an important role in underpinning the framing of conservatives as victims (and eventual heroes).

The third notable villain frame is one that portrays sexual offenders as villains. In 17% of the cases, sexual offenders are argued to be victimizing and terrorizing Canadians and, in particular, Canadian children. Again, here, it is useful to note what arguments are absent. Out of a total of 30 Parliamentary interventions that mention sexual crimes, not one refers to gender-based sexual violence. This, of course, could be because bill c-10 increased or imposed mandatory minimum penalties for certain sexual offences against children (but not women) and created new laws against making sexually explicit material available to a child. Nonetheless, the forms of sexual violence that are *prioritized* as issue areas worthy of legislative intervention are worth noting. Despite the fact that women are far more likely to experience sexual violence by men (Statistics Canada 2015), sexual violence against women goes completely unmentioned by Conservative MPs in their defence of bill c-10.

Finally, the last villain frame is one that presents children as villains (in 7.8% of the cases). At first blush, the presence of this frame seems counterintuitive. As we examined above,

both the explicit argument that crime is increasingly victimizing Canadians – as well as a supporting victim frame – seem to contradict to the framing of children as villains. Since the representation of Canadian children as full-fledged victims of crime is undoubtedly central to the Conservative marketing of bill c-10, how can we make sense of the simultaneous vilification of (some) children?

The children-as-villain frame makes more sense, however, when you consider that the fourth section of bill c-10 ramped up sentencing for individuals under the age of 18, hardening Canada's approach to minors. This shift in approach to minors can be explained, in part, by the influence of penal populism on bill c-10. Along with adopting other more punitive sentencing measures, penal populist agendas also tend to target juvenile offenders, often by advocating for tougher sentencing or even trying juveniles as adults (Roberts et al. 2003). The larger directional shift in criminal justice policy by the Harper government, then, might help explain the notable presence of the children-as-villain frame.

Curiously, Conservative MPs do not spend much discursive energy laying out the ways in which children victimize Canadian society, despite it being an important policy change of the bill and a notable villain frame. Rather, the children-as-villain frame is most frequently presented in passing, often when Conservative politicians are outlining the key components of the bill in Parliament. Moreover, in the rare instances when Conservatives do engage with this frame, they rarely do so using the language of "children." Instead, Conservatives frame juvenile offenders as "youth." In fact, that term "young offender" appeared 10 times throughout Parliamentary debate. This racially coded language conjures up a very different imaginary than does the language of "innocent children", working subtly to distinguish (racialized and classed) gangsters-in-waiting from the "innocent" and "beautiful" Canadian children that deserve our protection.

4.3 Hero frames

Perhaps the most interesting and unexpected frame invoked by Conservative MPs is their use of the hero frame. Not because these frames draw out intricate or even particularly compelling stories of heroism. Rather, because the simplicity of the Conservative hero frame highlights just the opposite: how simple and repetitive the narratives used in defence of bill c-10 actually are. In fact, only one single category of hero showed up in my analysis. This is not because I was not looking for other categories of heroes. Following a preliminary analysis of bill c-10, I coded for instances where police, Canadian society (or various sub-sects of Canadian society), or Stephen Harper might be framed as heroic (see appendix D for full coding dictionary). However, I found no evidence of such framings. This (non) finding once again highlights how the absence of a particular argument or frame in political discourse can often unearth counterintuitive results.

In the context of the government's defence of bill c-10, there is only one hero that emerged: the Conservative government itself. Moreover, the government's heroism is many-sided. Conservatives are heroic because they will stand up for 'real' and victimized Canadians who are tired of feeling afraid in their own homes and communities. They are heroes because they are the only ones that will get tough on criminals, sending them a message that crime won't be tolerated. They are also heroes for standing up to their political opponents, for listening, and consulting Canadians. They are heroes because they are connected with 'real' people – victims of crime, front-line law enforcements, and Canadians. And perhaps most importantly, Conservative MPs themselves are heroes because they stand up for marginalized victims – Canadians who have been victimized by crime while previous governments have done nothing to stop it.

In large part, the Conservatives-as-heroes frame further reinforces the ‘tough on crime and criminals’ message of bill c-10, presenting the government as tough and not backing down. In one intervention, for example, MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay proclaims: “[w]e are not afraid of organized crime. We are not afraid of standing up for our children with respect to drug trafficking as well as child sex offences” (case 10). Conservatives are the brave and trusted heroes that Canadians need in order to protect their children and stand up for their communities. In one particular demonstrative intervention, for example, Brian Jean takes the time to valorize his own party and Conservative colleagues for bill c-10. He argues:

I want to take a moment to compliment the minister for going door to door throughout the country, city to city, and talking to Canadians first-hand to find out exactly what they were interested in so that we, as a government, could do exactly what we are supposed to do, which is to reflect the priorities of Canadians. This bill would do exactly that. (Jean November 29, 2011)

This excerpt of Jean’s speech subtly invokes an old-time portrait of Canadian society, one where the people in power care about ordinary citizens and literally go “door to door” to ask constituents for their input and opinions. Taken with Jean’s previous Parliamentary interventions, this narrative presents criminals as lurking in the shadows, only entering society to cause damage and victimize law-abiding citizens and civil order. The simplicity of this portrait is further underpinned by the heroic status given to Conservative lawmakers. Not only are they responsive and compassionate, they are also tough, willing to stand up to criminals. The solution, moreover, is clear and simple. Get tough on crime. Lock criminals up. Protect victims. Make our streets safe again.

It is not just that Conservative MPs are heroes in their own eyes, however. Rather, according to Conservatives, regular Canadians also see the heroism of the government. In one

telling example, Gary Schellenberger, MP for Perth-Wellington, tells the story of one of his admiring constituents:

Madame Speaker, over the past weekend, on my way home last Friday, I did an interview with our local paper on bill c-10. The article came out on Saturday. On Sunday at church I had already had two calls to my house, and very seldom do I ever get a call on an article. On Sunday after church, a couple I respect very highly took me aside. They do not talk business at church, but the gentleman said, ‘Gary, I’d just like to say thank you so much for standing up for the victims and standing up for the people. I think this bill should go through right quickly.’ He said he recognized he was doing business after church, but he wanted to thank me for getting this bill through” (Schellenberger December 2, 2011).

On the surface, Schellenberger’s personal story lays out a relatively straightforward argument: that Canadians support bill c-10 and the Conservative government. However, below the surface, there are at least three notable components to this passage.

First, Schellenberger highlights the Conservative government’s exceptionalism. Not only is Schellenberger’s phone ringing off the hook with praise, but the “gentleman” who complimented him on bill c-10 is represented as a quiet man, not one who tends to disturb the peace by bringing politics up. Given that the favourable review of bill c-10 is coming from such an apolitical man lends gravitas to his endorsement. There are no partisan politics or ideological games at play here. This is a god-fearing, church-going Canadian and therefore his opinion of bill c-10 must be fair. Second, the MP’s emphasis on the *place* where this interaction occurred is worth noting. The fact that this conversation happened in *church* was mentioned four separate times over the span of only five sentences. This not only represents Schellenberger as a regular Canadian who goes to church with his family on Sundays, it also more implicitly presents bill c-10 as morally upstanding (at thus worthy of an endorsement). Finally, that the “gentleman” believed that bill c-10 should be passed through Parliament “quickly” and without problems once

again reinforces the commonsense nature of the legislation. Implied in such a statement is that only partisanship would hold up such a clearly beneficial bill.

Moreover, in order to really drive the point home, immediately following Schellenberger's comments, his colleague MP Rob Nicholson took time out of his own intervention to repeat the point, doubling down on the presentation of Schellenberger as a hero. According to Nicholson, "it sounds as though the member was doing the right kind of business after church. I congratulate him for that" (Schellenberger December 2, 2011). Once again, the location of the interaction (a church) is repeated. And, perhaps more importantly, Schellenberger is once again represented as a humble hero – just a hard-working, church-going, regular guy who happens to be a hero in his community. The self-representation of the CPC is worth nothing here, very much aligning with the type of discursive, right-handed, orientation one might expect from a conservative party. Through these interventions, Schellenberger is represented a conservative ideal-type: connected to his community, religious, grassroots, responsive to constituents, and perhaps most important, stepping up to support common sense and "tough" legislation that will protect victims.

Taken together with the victim and villain frames, this hero frame highlights how a vague and imprecise *narrative of victimization* provided the basis for the defence of bill c-10 in Parliament. The story put forward by Conservative MPs is a relatively simple one, making it easily recognizable to its audience. It is a story of "ideal" and innocent victims being victimized by exploitative and dangerous criminals and of a "tough" Conservative government stepping up to protect them. At first blush, this narrative might seem overly simplistic and lacking depth, but it is its very simplicity that appeals to our collective common sense and outrage. It makes sense, after all, that we protect children from sexual predators and ensure fair and just legal processes

for those who have had the misfortune of being a victim of crime. It is thus common sense to support bill c-10.

By most discursive markers – and much like many of the men’s rights’ arguments of victimization discussed in chapter 4 – the Parliamentary defence of bill c-10 represents yet another example of a right-handed discourse of victimization. Most aspects of the parliamentary defence of bill c-10 are relatively expected given it was tabled by a conservative government. For example, the omission of any discussions of the root causes of criminality, and the absence of any explanation for why certain groups are more likely to be victimized by crime, are emblematic of a stereotypically right-handed and conservative approach to victims and victimization.

5.0 Forms of evidence and epistemological appeals

However, explicit arguments and narratives are not the only ways in which Conservative MPs deploy right-handed arguments about victimization. Rather, the next section explores the ways that the “types of evidence” mobilized by Conservative politicians further drive home a narrative of victimization. Examining these justifications (or “forms of evidence”) is particularly helpful in exploring the contours of Conservative discourses of victimization because, at a general level, the epistemological positioning of a political actor can subtly activate larger normative and political values and ideas. For instance, and as we will see throughout this section, the epistemological justification offered by MPs allows Conservatives, in different ways, to (1) render some forms of empirical or structural evidence invisible and therefore weaken competing forms of knowledge and policy alternatives, (2) authorize/filter certain voices in/out of political discussions (for example, police, victims of crime, and Conservatives over sociologists,

criminologists, or Liberals), and (3) strengthen and amplify the power of victimhood discourses by focusing our attention on particular anecdotal and narrative appeals.

5.1 Bill c-10: A democratic mandate

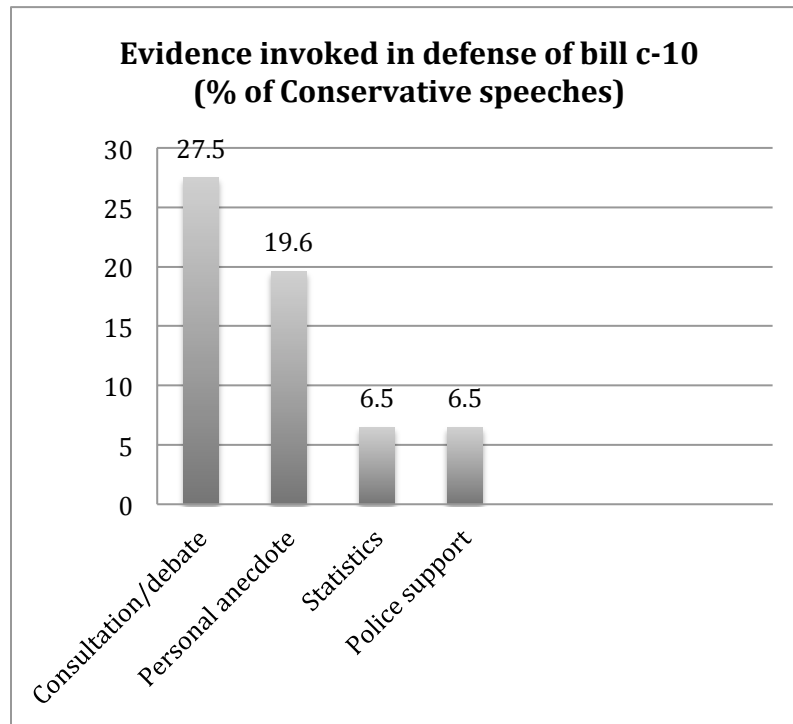


Figure 7.4

As per figure 7.4, we can see that the most common defence for bill c-10 is that it is the result of demand from Canadians, consultation with victims of crime, and debate in the House of Commons. In 27.5% of the cases, Conservatives justify the necessity of bill c-10 by presenting themselves as public servants responding to the opinions and legislative priorities of law-abiding Canadians. Simply put, for Conservatives, bill c-10 is the result of a democratic mandate, broad-scale consultation, and public debate.

However, if indeed crime rates were surging, as Conservative MPs repeatedly suggest, why would MPs not stress the need for bill c-10 with more complete, multi-faceted, and compelling empirical evidence? Why privilege “soft” arguments about being democratically accountable, rather than “hard” forms of evidence, such as reports by Statistics Canada about rising crime rates?

The most obvious reason, of course, is that police-reported crime rates have actually been on the decline in Canada for the past three decades. Since 1962, Statistics Canada has collected information on all criminal incidents, documenting both criminal incidents reported by Canadian police services as well as by victims’ experiences. While fluctuations in crime rates have been recorded from year to year, one broad and overarching trend has been observed: from 1962 to 1991, the crime rate increased steadily, and then started to decline. Moreover, since the early 1990s, crime rates have been falling across the board. While the trend is most notable for property crime, it is also the case for violent crimes and homicides (Government of Canada 2015). In fact, 2011, the year that bill c-10 was tabled, marked the lowest crime rate in Canada since 1972.

In the absence of compelling empirical evidence supporting the need for bill c-10 Conservatives often premise the argument that bill c-10 is part of their democratic mandate by contesting the reliability of statistics. A common refrain advances the position that “Conservatives do not govern on statistics, because you can make them say whatever you want” (Goguen March 6, 2012). In fact, when first tabling the bill in 2011, Justice Minister Rob Nicholson qualified the bill by arguing nearly verbatim, “[w]e don’t govern on the basis of statistics. We govern on the basis of what we hear from the public and what law enforcement agencies tell us” (quoted in Webster and Doob 2015, 309).

Here, Conservatives support bill c-10 is by stressing the idea that Canadians *feel* victimized by crime. Here, we can see that even with the absence of “real victims”, Conservative justifications for bill c-10 still rely on logics of victimization. For example, a single survey done in Quebec that “shows that nearly 80% of Quebecers are in favour of a more repressive justice system” because “Quebeckers in major cities [do] not *feel* safe” is cited four times by Conservative MPs throughout Parliamentary debate (Goguen March 6, 2012). In the lack of compelling evidence about the dangers of rising crime rates, then, Conservative MPs privilege emotions and feelings as an appropriate indicator for the reliability of opinions and fact.

And finally, Conservative MPs buttress support for bill c-10 by suggesting that the 2011 election represented a referendum on TOC policy and bill c-10. Despite the fact that Canadians identified health care as the most important issue throughout the 2011 election cycle (Saurette and Gunster 2011), Conservatives strongly maintain that what the Canadian people actually demanded was criminal justice reform. The notion that bill c-10 “has been studied, it has been debated, it has been discussed” and “Canadians support it” is a recurring idiom. In direct contradiction with available polling, for example, MP Rob Nicholson maintained, “[p]eople in St. Catharines have said that cracking down on criminals and making their community safer is one of their top priorities. People in Niagara and across the country want and deserve to be able to feel safe in their homes and communities, and that means criminals need to be kept off the street. I have heard my constituents loud and clear, and I will stand up and support the bill because they have asked me to do so” (Dykstra November 29, 2011).

Representing bill c-10 as the result of intense public pressure from Canadians allows Conservatives to claim a number of important positions in relationship to the “victim”. First, and perhaps most obviously, this discourse subtly reinforces the narrative of victimization discussed

in section 4. By claiming the voice of Canadians generally, and victims more specifically, Conservatives amplify the power of their victim discourse by focusing our attention on their own ability to speak on behalf of – and represent – victims. Moreover, by discounting statistics, Conservatives position themselves as caring about the lived-victimization of Canadians, and not dry and unfeeling numbers. This allows Conservatives to present themselves as representative and accountable to *real Canadians and victims*, as opposed to their “out-of-touch” Liberal colleagues. And finally, by stressing the *feelings* of Canadians, Conservatives not only claim the voices of those who *feel* victimized, but it also allowed them to implicitly contest the reliability and accuracy of other forms of competing empirical evidence about who are the “real” victims of crime in Canada.

5.2 Police support and testimonials

The argument that bill c-10 represents the best interests and desires of Canadians is further supplemented with the claim that Conservatives are taking their cues from police officers. In 6.5% of the cases, the evidence offered in support of bill c-10 is police support and testimonials. Underpinning this defence is the suggestion that “[p]olice chiefs... [are] begging [the government] to get this legislation passed because they need to get these people off the street, and off the streets longer, so that they are not poisoning our children with their drugs” (Skeeback November 29, 2011).

The use of police support and testimonials is interesting for at least three reasons. First, the notion that the police support bill c-10 also underscores the government’s “tough on crime” approach and its related mandate to “stand up and protect Canadians”. Within this “tough” approach, police testimonials are given a privileged status. For Conservatives, it is only the

police that have the real know-how to understand crime and “better protect Canadians”. They are on the “front-lines” and “are the ones who are dealing with [crime] every day” (case 98). By “stand[ing] and support[ing] police across the country”, Conservatives are, once again, putting the rights of victims before the rights of criminals. Ultimately, for Conservative MPs, it is the police (and not social workers, judges, or prosecutors) that are “the front-line experts when it comes to fighting crime.” Therefore it is a “necessity” to provide them with “more robust legislative tools so they can better protect Canadians” (Nicholson March 6, 2012). In this context, discursive appeals to the police work to authorize certain voices (police) while marginalizing others (for example, sociologists and/or criminologists).

Second, the framing of bill c-10 as a police-approved crime bill is noteworthy as it holds the potential of operating as a vessel for communicating a larger Conservative worldview. Just as the military or veterans are often used to promote Conservative visions of a patriotic and united Canada (Chapnick 2011), appeals to the police can similarly register on an affective and emotional level with constituents. Particularly in a contemporary North American context where the Black Lives Matter movement has been met with slogan-bearing opponents arguing that “blue lives matter” too, appeals to the police fit into a larger ideological divide between the left and the right. While these debates tend to be more heated and intense in the US, Canada is certainly no stranger to this type of political conflict. At the 2016 Manning Centre Conference, for example, three young men under the age of 25 sported Trump’s “Make America Great Again” hats and “Blue Lives Matter” t-shirts (Manning Centre 2016, author’s observations, see image 6.1). Within this hyper-politicized context, it is certain that appeals to the “police” are received by some as a dogwhistle to a larger Conservative ideology and worldview.



Figure 7.5: Photo from Manning Centre Conference, 2017

Third, and perhaps most significantly, the argument that the police are “demanding” and “begging” for bill c-10 once again presents Conservatives as faithful public servants, simply serving the best interests of the Canadian public, hard-working police, and victims of crime (Skeeback November 29, 2011). Moreover, police support for bill c-10 is often explicitly linked with support for victims. According to Conservative MPs, by listening to the police, they are also honouring the victims. MP Kyle Seeback continues, for instance, by arguing: “[t]he people who are on side and support the bill, who say that it is necessary, are people like chiefs of police, victim organizations and victims themselves. Those are the people who think legislation would make a difference and those are the people we are proud to stand with in presenting this bill (Skeeback November 29, 2011). In this respect, police support is positioned within a larger discourse of victimization.

5.3 Personal anecdotes as evidence-based policy

Perhaps unsurprisingly, another form of evidence offered in support of bill c-10 is personal anecdotes. Once again, in the absence of empirically-based evidence, these personalized epistemological appeals draw heavily on personal narratives in order to justify the need for bill c-

10. In a notable 19.6% of the cases, Conservatives use “anecdote-based” justifications to support the crime bill.

5.3.1 First-person anecdotes

The use of first-person anecdotes is quite wide-ranging with Conservative MPs drawing on a long list of diverse experiences throughout their interventions. MPs describe their experiences as fathers, MPs, lawyers, members of the RCMP, police officers, politicians and political campaigners, and simple law-abiding citizens. All of these personal testimonials, however, have one thing in common: they highlight the *need* for Canada to get “tough on crime” and pass bill c-10.

Through first-person narratives, Conservative MPs seek to present themselves as experts in the field of crime policy. MP David Wilks, for instance, primes his endorsement of bill c-10 by informing us that he is speaking “[a]s a retired member of the RCMP” (Wilks November 29, 2011). In a different intervention, Wilks further explains that his “20 years of police work” mean that he knows that “violent criminals are put behind bars, never seem to complete their sentences, and before we know it, they are back on the street committing crime” (Wilks November 29, 2011). Never mind that it seems somewhat apparent that police officers might be likely to run into reoffenders. Just as was the case for police testimonials, Wilks’ personal experience as a RCMP officer gives an elevated ability to judge the necessity of bill c-10.

In a similar vein, MPs also cite their experiences as lawyers as legitimate evidence for bill c-10. This, for example, is a strategy that is commonly used by MP Brian Jean who, before becoming an MP, practiced criminal law in Fort McMurray (of which he reminds Parliament three times through nine days of debate). Jean’s experience as a lawyer is similarly presented as

expertise necessary to judge the worthiness of crime legislation. In one telling example, Jean argues:

I had an opportunity to practice criminal law and to actually be in the trenches in this kind of situation. I had a client who received two years less a day for sexually assaulting two of his daughters over a seven-year period of time. He was able to serve that sentence in a house. I was ashamed of getting that sentence (Jean November 29, 2011).

There are at least a couple of things worth noting in this passage. First, it is interesting to consider Jean's metaphorical use of the term "trenches." This term invokes the masculinized imagery of war and battle, heroes and villains. With this frame, Jean subtly compares crime policy – and dealing with criminals – to war. As we will explore below, the relatively simple representation of criminals as one-dimensional 'bad guys' builds a populist narrative in which regular Canadians are being victimized and only the Conservative government can stop. Moreover, the fact that Jean has been "in the trenches" of battle lends him a sort of credibility. He is not the "out of touch" Liberal elite (to which he refers to later on in his intervention). Rather, he stands with "us", the people. We know he will protect us because he has already done battle.

Second, and returning to our discussion in section 4.3, Jean subtly presents himself as a humble and hard-working hero of sorts. Jean knows the system is broken. He knows because he has been fighting in the trenches. But he is "ashamed" that he has not been able to do more. It is then, his experiences as a lawyer (and not his ideology or party affiliation) that demonstrated the necessity of bill c-10. As was the case with Wilks' experience in the RCMP, the fact that Brian Jean has previously worked in criminal justice lends him reliability, integrity, and authority. In this sense, his backing of bill c-10 is *more* legitimate than that of other MPs (particularly those in opposition).

Moreover, Conservatives are willing to stretch their reliance on first-person anecdote-based evidence quite far. In one intervention, for example, it is MP Bernard Trottier's experience "[a]s a father of young children" that means he welcomes bill c-10 because it "protect[s] the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society" (Trottier November 29, 2011). MP Colin Carrie goes even further, arguing:

I am a chiropractor, and I had many patients who were addicted to different forms of drugs. They told me over and over again to do what I can because it's a slippery slope, that people start taking drugs and once they are addicted it is extremely difficult to get off them. That is why we as a government are focusing on stopping people in the first place (Carrie March 12, 2012).

In the context of Carrie's comments, it is his work as a chiropractor (of all things) that gives him the authority and expertise to comment on the necessity of bill c-10. While Carrie's anecdote-based endorsement does not necessarily map onto the content of the actual bill itself – bill c-10 does not allocate any resources that might help these patients detox and recover from drug addiction – its discursive structure nonetheless operates to present Carrie as a foremost expert on crime reform.

Across the board, first-person narratives function to represent MPs as experts of crime policy in large part due to their experience in relatively masculinized jobs (it is interesting to note, for example, that out of the only 20 interventions made by women MPs – out of a total of 153 – none drew on first-person anecdotes). By predominantly affiliating themselves with the domains of law and law enforcement, MPs present themselves as not only experts but also as prepared to fight in the trenches and get tough on crime. In many ways, these first-person anecdotes are vague and abstract. For example, we do not know the exact details of Brian Jean's experience "in the trenches." However, at a discursive register, the details are unimportant. What

is important is that by citing his experience as a lawyer, Jean presents himself as embodying a unique and privileged expertise. By virtue of their proximity to crime, Conservative MPs present themselves as the most qualified experts of crime policy and a steadfast champion for victims.

5.3.2 Third-person anecdotes

These first-person narratives, however, are heavily reinforced by the recounting of horrific accounts of victimization experienced by other people. In particular, Conservative MPs spend a considerable amount of time drawing on the stories of victims of crime and their families. In contrast to first-person anecdotes, third-person narratives of victimization are often described in great detail. The suffering of victims and their families is recounted, told, and re-told.

At least on one level, third-person anecdotes are the real stories of innocent Canadians who have been victimized by crime. On another level, however, these stories of grief and tragedy are also universally linked with the support for bill c-10. It is not just that these Canadians have been victimized. It is that they are demanding bill c-10 as retribution. According to Conservative lawmakers, what these stories of victimization prove is that bill c-10 holds the potential of repairing the damage done by crime and providing victims with real justice. Consider, for example, the following intervention made by MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay:

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the third reading debate on Bill c-10... I am wearing red today in honour of our troops, never forgotten... Maureen Basnicki, founder and director of the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, who lost her husband in the World Trade Centre tragedy on September 11, 2001, appeared before the justice committee to express her support for these reforms in Bill c-10” (Findlay March 6, 2011).

At a superficial level, this is the story of a widow losing her husband on 9/11. Of course, the killing of one's husband in a terrorist attack is an undeniable tragedy. However, as is commonplace in Parliament, Findlay uses this tragedy and links it to a larger ideological and political project. For instance, by starting her intervention by publicizing her support for "our troops," she is signaling a particular worldview and ideological and political orientation towards the 9/11 tragedy (one that most likely prioritizes military intervention). She then cites the ultimate victim – the grieving widow of a 9/11 victim – and connects this real-life tragedy with support for bill c-10. It is *because* Basnicki is a victim that Conservatives stand with her and are passing bill c-10.

Relatively speaking, the story of Basnicki (which is repeated in two separate interventions throughout the Parliamentary debate) is a vague and uncomplicated example. By comparison, most third-person stories are much longer and graphic. In one illustrative example, Ted Opitz of Etobicoke recounts:

The Cikovic family were refugees from war-torn Sarajevo, with Boris arriving in Canada as an infant. This family worked to escape the horrors of a war where former neighbours preyed upon each other and visited atrocities upon each other in every form imaginable. The family settled in Canada, grateful for the new start they had and grateful for the opportunities that Canada had provided their son.

As Boris grew up in Canada, he became the all-Canadian kid, an athlete and gifted hockey player, a leader on the ice, helping less skilled players score and achieve rather than allow his own talent to dominate. He mentored his teammates. At so young an age, he showed maturity and wisdom that was returned by his large circle of friends with great affection and strong bonds that developed in elementary school and endured through high school and what would have appeared to be beyond university and throughout life. Boris was a leader and one that this close circle rallied around. He was a natural and his future appeared limitless.

Then, on a night in 2008, Boris and his friends were transiting a local park, were accosted and he was shot and killed while being robbed of his backpack and valuables.

The Cikovics are victims, devastated by the tragic loss of their only son who had natural gifts and talents and was on his way to becoming a model Canadian success story. What of the Cikovic family in this? Do they care that Statistics Canada says that crime is down, as the members opposite often cite? I asked the Cikovics that and their response was a resounding no. I challenge any member opposite to look that family in the eye and quote that statistic. The Cikovics are not vengeful people, but they are entitled to justice for their son (Opitz November 29, 2011).

The primary objective of this third-person anecdote is obviously to link this tragic murder of a young and promising man to support for bill c-10. However, it is worth pausing and taking time to unpack just what more subtle arguments the telling of this story communicates to the Canadian public. There are at least three things worth noting.

First, Boris also represents the ideal immigrant. He was well on his way to becoming a “model Canadian success story.” He rightfully assimilated into Canadian culture, even becoming “an all-Canadian kid”, and a “gifted” hockey player. Part of being an ideal immigrant is that he is also an ideal-type man. He is well liked by his peers. He is a mentor and selfless, but he embodies the masculine ideals of being “strong”, “mature”, “wise”, and a “leader.” And, perhaps most importantly, Boris and his parents are “grateful” for the opportunities that Canada has generously afforded them. Not only did the Cikovic family adapt and thrive to the norms of Canadian culture (hockey included), but they did so all the while knowing that without Canadian goodness and generosity they would be nowhere.

Second, Opitz’s intervention is notable in its depiction of Canada and Canadian society. First, Opitz presents Sarajevo as the anti-thesis of Canada: Sarajevo is “war-torn”, it is a place where families “worked to escape the horrors of war”, where “former neighbours preyed upon

each other and visited atrocities upon each other in every form imaginable.” On Opitz’s telling, Sarajevo is Hobbes’ state of nature. A land where everyone is out to get you. Canada, by contrast, is a land of opportunity where your neighbours and communities will help you succeed (this despite the fact that during the 2015 election campaign the Harper government developed and publicized a toll-free line where Canadians could literally report their neighbours for “barbaric” practices). Canada is a land where children – no matter where they came from – can find success, learn hockey, and make friends.

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, Boris’ story of victimization – especially when read in conjunction with those cited above – communicates what a *real* victim looks like for Conservatives. Real victims are at the wrong place at the wrong time. Their victimization is not the result of their actions, as they played absolutely no part in what happened to them. Consider Boris. Not only was he a young victim of war, but after coming to Canada and bravely building a good life, he was killed by dangerous strangers who murdered him for a backpack. The ideal victim, then, is pure, uncomplicated. His story is one-dimensionally tragic.

Absent from these third-person anecdotes, of course, is a clear connection between the victims and how bill c-10 would actually help them (for example, in preventing the victimization in the first place). Rather, victims’ experiences of victimization are presented as an expertise, and their experiences as evidence. Moreover, the unique and powerful role given to victims and the elevation of (certain) victims voices and stories in the public defence of bill c-10 in Parliament also seemed to impact the actual development of bill c-10. Through interviews with senior public servants, for example, Webster and Doob (2015) found that new Conservative legislative approaches (most notably bill c-10) were drafted without the advice of criminal justice experts.

On their telling, “[n]ot only have experts outside of government been marginalized, empirical evidence has often been disregarded” (2015, 309).

In some respects, these third-person anecdotes seem to function as a sort of victim impact statement (something that bill c-10 also introduced to Canadian courts). Victim impact statements are written or oral accounts of victimization that describes the physical or emotional harm inflicted on the victim of an offence. Introduced across North America in the early 1990s – often within larger TOC legislative efforts – the Court is supposed to take the statement into account when an offender is sentenced. Victims rights groups have long advocated for victim impact statements, arguing that they give victims a voice in a criminal justice system where the rights of criminals are favoured. By contrast, critics of victim impact statements worry that the emotional effects of victim statements on judges and juries might risk compromising the objectivity of the judiciary. What both sides do agree on, however, is that victim statements personalize the crime, thereby elevating the status of the victim throughout the legal proceedings. Given that victims of crime are not allowed to participate in Question Period, third-person anecdotes act as a stand-in for more formal first-person-based victim statements. Conservative MPs spend significant energy speaking *for* victims, recounting their stories of victimization, and supplementing the Conservative government’s “tough on crime” message and approach with a softer side – one that empathizes with and supports vulnerable victims. At the center of these narratives, however, is the story of uncomplicated and idealized forms of victimization.

6.0 Concluding remarks

This chapter examined a major shift in both Canadian and Conservative approaches to criminality and crime policy. Bill c-10, which introduced a number of controversial TOC

measures, marked a significant departure from previous eras of Conservative crime legislation by, in large part, breaking the link between victimization and criminality. Whereas previous Conservative approaches to crime policy accepted that crime is cyclical and privileged softer approaches to crime (including rehabilitation), the marketing of bill c-10 relied almost wholly on the representation of criminals as one-dimensional “bad guys.” Within the context of bill c-10, crime was presented as individually determined and as the result of a rational choice on the part of dangerous offenders. Ultimately, the empirical reality is that bill c-10 moved Canada’s laws in one direction: “an unprecedented hardening of responses to criminal behaviour” (Webster and Doob 2015, 311)

After establishing the necessary context in sections 1.0 and 2.0, section 3.0 examined the ways that all major explicit arguments made in defence of the crime bill relied on some form of argument of victimization. Whether the victims are innocent children, the Canadian taxpayer, or regular law-abiding Canadians, Conservative MPs were steadfast in their insistence that crime is on the rise and that Canadians are being victimized by crime from coast to coast to coast.

Section 4.0 then examined the ways in which Conservative MPs make use of one very simplistic, and yet highly repeatable, narrative of victims, villains, and heroes. Largely due to their vagueness and abstract nature, these narratives present Canadian society as a dangerous place where criminals are lurking on the outskirts of society. On the surface, then, these narratives and frames lack depth and contain no meaningful analysis, no specifics, and no details about the ways that Canadians are victimized and *how* bill c-10 will stop this victimization. However, the vagueness of these arguments allows for many different ideas and experiences to be read into them. Who, for example, doesn’t care about children being victimized by sexual offenders? What parent doesn’t fear that their child fall prey to criminals? In this respect, the

simplicity of the Conservative narrative communicates a powerful message: that Conservatives have the same concerns you do and that they will protect you.

And finally, section 5.0 then explored the ways that Conservative MPs defended their position through the use of a variety of different forms of evidence. In the absence of compelling empirical support for bill c-10, MPs instead represented bill c-10 as the result of a democratic mandate and in-depth consultations. In particular, we examined how each form of evidence worked, in often-subtle ways, to advance the Conservative narrative of victimization. By drawing on police support and testimonials and anecdote-based evidence, Conservatives were able to invisibilize certain forms of (empirical) evidence, amplify and privilege particular forms of expertise (for example, by the police), and strengthened the power of victimhood narratives by focusing our attention on particular, dramatized anecdotal appeals.

Far from avoiding discussions of victims and victimization, the victim lies at the heart of the case for bill c-10. Much like their men's rights counterparts, Conservative MPs mobilize rather stereotypically Conservative arguments about hard-working Canadians, taxpayers, victims of crime, and grieving parents. The victims of crime presented in Parliament all represent "old-stock" or right-handed examples of Conservative victims: children, victims of crime, taxpayers, and hard-working Canadians. What these victims all have in common is that they are mobilized, at least in part, because of the uncomplicated and idealized nature of their victimization. These groups of victims are not making any claims of systemic or institutionalized victimization – in fact, the specifics of the process of their victimization are left largely absent from the discussion – rather function as are perfect, ideal-type victims, demanding tough and swift justice.

However, crime policy is not the only site of politics where Conservative politicians have invoked “victim politics.” In fact, it might not even be the most notable. For, as the next chapter will argue, Conservative MPs drew even more substantially on discourses of victimization in their re-criminalization of sex work by way of bill c-36 than they did in defence of bill c-10. Moreover, the victim frames and narratives used by Conservatives in the context of bill c-36 differ quite significantly in both structure and tone from the right-handed populist-driven ones made in defence of bill c-10.

CHAPTER 8: CONSERVATIVE GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS OF VICTIMIZATION:

THE (RE) CRIMINALIZATION OF SEX WORK AND BILL C-36

Chapter 7 explored the ways that discourses of victimization are absolutely central to strategies of persuasion in Canadian mainstream conservative politics. It is not just conservative activist politics that draw on the language of victimhood. Rather, the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) also relies heavily on “victims” to underscore the importance of their legislative efforts largely through the language of penal populism. In particular, the discursive rationales for the CPC’s hardening of criminal justice responses (through bill c-10) were heavily marked by “right-handed” themes and discourses of victimization.

This chapter will explore these differences – along with a number of similarities – through an in-depth examination of the Parliamentary defence of bill c-36 – a Conservative government bill that recriminalized sex work in Canada in 2014. The central argument of this chapter is that while the Conservative MPs drew on stereotypical conservative victim arguments in their defence of bill c-10, the victim frames and narratives mobilized in the context of bill c-36 differ quite significantly in both structure and tone from the populist-driven ones made in defence of bill c-10.

As I have already laid out my methodological choices that shaped my analysis of bill c-36 in section 1.0 of chapter 7, this chapter begins with a brief discussion of the background and context of bill c-36. After setting the necessary background, sections 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 explore the explicit arguments, victim frames, and evidence used by Conservative MPs in defence of bill c-36 in Parliament. I then conclude with a brief discussion of a number of potential implications raised

by my findings before turning to a comparison between bills c-10 and c-36 in the following chapter.

1.0 The history of sex work discourse and law in Canada

1.1 A short history of anti-prostitution discourse in North America

Historically, conservative opposition to the legalization of prostitution¹⁸ has been marked by both moralized and religious justifications. In the United States (US) in particular, the Christian right has “long denounced prostitution as perverse and sinful, a cause of moral decay in society, and a threat to marriage because it breaks the link between sex, love, and reproduction” (Weitzer 2010, 70). Likewise, banning sex work has been represented as part of a larger moral crusade, “that sees its mission as a righteous enterprise to combat a particular condition or activity that is defined as an unqualified evil” (Weitzer 2010, 63). In line with this approach, prostitution bans have often been justified as being needed to protect citizens from the negative moral and/or public nuisance effects of prostitution. For Conservatives, then, it has most often been the well-being and moral standing of “our” communities, children, and families that come under threat when prostitution is legal.

However, conservatives are not the only or even the most vocal opponents of legal sex work. Rather, since the 1970s, the movement against the legalization of prostitution has, somewhat paradoxically, been led by a coalition of two main constituencies: religious conservatives *and* abolitionist feminists. While the two groups may hold opposing views on most social issues – and have traditionally drawn on different discursive rationales for banning sex work – both camps converge in their opposition to legal prostitution.

¹⁸ This chapter will draw on the terminology of “prostitute” (because this is often the language used by Conservative MPs) and “sex work” (the term favoured by sex work activists). Where possible I have privileged “sex work”.

In contrast to conservatives, abolitionist feminists have tended to frame women as the primary victims of prostitution. Particularly throughout the 1980s, second-wave radical feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon became the biggest ambassadors of this perspective. Largely through the language of women's equality and safety, radical feminists argued that prostitution is "an institution of male domination and exploitation", that it "affects all women", and that its legality "justifies the sale of any woman, and reduces all women to sex" (quoted in Weitzer 2010, 71). On Dworkin's telling, for instance, "prostitution per se, without more violence, without extra violence, without a woman being hit, without a woman being pushed. Prostitution in and of itself is an abuse of a woman's body" (Dworkin 2003). For many second-wave feminists, prostitution victimizes not just sex workers but *all* women and therefore society must not condone the practice by decriminalizing it.

Over the past 20 years, however, the clear discursive distinction between conservatives and feminist anti-prostitution arguments has become increasingly blurred in North America. Beginning in the late 1990s, evangelical Christians in the US began to seize on the issue of prostitution – and in particular, the language of abolitionist feminists – in a self-conscious effort to expand their base and political appeal (Hertzke 2004; Shapiro 2004). In a push to be seen as more compassionate to women, religious conservatives began buttressing religious and moralized arguments opposing sex work with more feminist-inspired discourses of victimization. Moreover, new arguments increasingly drew on historically and institutionally embedded ways of telling stories about victims (in particular, about female victims). Stories about the dangers of sex work and trafficking invoked both feminist-sounding arguments about women's equality and safety and "dramatic readings of the captivity narrative's well-rehearsed scripts: the prison-like brothel, the lured or deceived female victim, and her heroic rescuers" (Soderlund 2005, 77). In

one telling example, Republican congressman John Miller warned that groups distributing condoms to sex workers “run the risk of being judged the same ways as some of their 19th century predecessors: health reformers who sought to improve health conditions for slaves on ships while ignoring the slave trade” (quoted in Soderlund 2005, 80).

By comparison, conservatives in Canada throughout the 1990s did not take up the issues of sex work and trafficking with the same intensity as their American counterparts. Rather, debates over the morality and legality of sex work largely remained at the periphery of mainstream Canadian politics and society. However, following a series of high-profile murders of sex workers in Vancouver’s east side and the eventual trial of Robert Pickton, debates over prostitution laws slowly moved into the realm of mainstream politics in the early 2000s. Moreover, as was the case in the US, new conservative rationales for opposing the legalization of sex work also began to emerge in Canada.

1.2 A short history of Canada’s prostitution laws

Sex work has never been illegal in Canada, per se. Rather, laws were largely designed to keep sex work out of public view. To this end, and as was the case with much of Canada’s early criminal law, laws against prostitution were imported from the United Kingdom (UK) and based on the 1824 British Vagrancy Act. According to the Act, criminal sanctions – ranging from a \$50 fine to six months in prison (with or without hard labour) – could be imposed on any “vagrant” who “being a common prostitute or nightwalker is found in a public place and does not, when required, give a good account of herself” (quoted in Parker 1983). By packaging sex work with other “public nuisances” such as begging and homelessness, early opposition was framed squarely in the language of community well-being.

Following Confederation in 1867, Canada consolidated existing laws under the Criminal Code. New laws doubled down on the public nuisance approach of the Vagrancy Act but also criminalized those “living of the avails” of sex workers, the procurement of sex, and the operation of brothels (Ranasinhe 2010). This framework remained in place for the next 150 years, with two notable exceptions. In 1972, the vagrancy offence was amended to “solicitation”, and, once again in 1985, to “communicating for the purposes of sex” (Ranasinhe 2010). Under these laws, either the sex workers or clients could be charged with an offence. In practice, however, the policing of prostitution laws was heavily gendered. While 39% of the women who were charged with an offence were sent to prison, only 3% of the men were. Moreover, men were more likely to receive a fine (56% of the men vs. 32% of the women) and four times more likely to receive a lighter penalty (Cool 2004).

Following the implementation of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the constitutionality of the laws surrounding prostitution was challenged in courts. In 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) ruled that the communications ban did, in fact, violate the constitutional right to freedom of expression, but it refused to invalidate the law. In a 5-2 decision (with both women judges on the bench dissenting), the SCC found such a violation to be justified under the *Oakes* test, arguing that “abolishing prostitution” was a legitimate and worthy legislative objective (Choudhry 2006). The status quo thus remained in place throughout the 1990s and sex work lingered at the margins of mainstream Canadian politics and policy debate.

Beginning in the 2000s – and in large part due to the increasingly high profile Robert Pickton trial in British Columbia – the issue of sex work slowly began to gain traction in the public realm. Debates over the societal and legal marginalization of sex workers, distrust between sex workers and the police, and the precarious nature of illegal sex work attracted

growing attention from the Canadian media. In the wake of the public outcry over the mishandling of the Pickton case by the police, a new *Charter* challenge by three sex workers also began to make its way through the courts (Sampson 2014, 141). In 2009, Terri-Jean Bedford, Amy Lebovitch, and Valerie Scott challenged the constitutionality of the four key provisions of Canada's prostitution laws: sections 210 and 211 (which banned the operation of bawdy houses), section 212 (which prohibited the procurement of sex), and section 213 (the ban on communicating for the purposes of sex). These four provisions were argued to deprive sex workers of their right to security by forcing them to work in secret.

In 2012, the Court of Appeal for Ontario ruled that some, but not all, of the laws were unconstitutional. However, on appeal, the SCC struck down all four sections of the law in 2013. In a unanimous decision penned by Justice Beverly McLachlin, the Court invalidated the provisions on the ground that they violated the security (and to a lesser extent, the liberty) of sex workers under section 7 of the *Charter*. The SCC, however, suspended the declaration of the provisions' invalidity, leaving Parliament one year to draft a new law. Justice McLachlin's decision argued that while Parliament does have the power to regulate public nuisances, it cannot do so "at the cost of the health, safety and lives of prostitutes" (quoted in Sampson 2014, 143).

1.3 Bill c-36: The re-criminalization of sex work in Canada

In response to the Bedford decision, then-Justice Minister Peter MacKay tabled bill c-36 in June 2014. Named the "Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act", bill c-36 was passed into law by the Senate in November, and came into effect on December 6, 2014 (which in Canada is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women). Unlike previous legislation, the new prostitution law was modeled on the Swedish (or Nordic) approach,

which targets the buyers of sex by criminalizing the purchasing (and not the selling or sellers) of sex. Bill c-36, then, “prohibits purchasing sexual services or communication in any place for that purpose” (Parliament of Canada 2014). With this, the Conservative government placed prostitution back in Canada’s Criminal Code with one major difference: the primary legislative target was now clients, and not sex workers.

According to the Conservative government, bill c-36 was designed to “enac[t] new prostitution offences and modernize old ones” and did so through the introduction of five main legislative components (Government of Canada 2014). The first part of the bill – which criminalized the purchasing of sexual services but “protected” those selling those services from criminal liability – was the most celebrated and publicized dimension of the legislative change (Government of Canada 2014). The penalty for purchasing sex from an “adult victim” ranges anywhere from a mandatory minimum fine of \$500 to 5 years in jail.

The second part of the bill created an “advertising offence” for the first time in Canadian history. This component of bill c-36 banned any person or company from “knowingly advertising an offer to provide sexual services for consideration”, including in print media, on websites, or in locations that offer sexual services for sale, such as massage parlours or strip clubs (Government of Canada 2014, 2). Once again, however, those who sell their own sexual services (sex workers) are protected from criminal liability under bill c-36.

The third component of bill c-36 criminalized “receiving a financial or other material benefit obtained by or derived from the commission of the purchasing offence” (Government of Canada 2014, 2-3). This part of the law, built on the “living off the avails” elements of previous Canadian prostitution bans. Moreover, the penalty for living off the avails of a sex worker was increased

by bill c-36, with the potential of a 10-year prison sentence. The new prostitution bill did, however, lay out exceptions to this law, including legitimate living arrangements (for example, children or spouses of sex workers, in theory, cannot be charged under bill c-36).

Doubling down on the “living off the avails” component of bill c-36, the fourth part of the law criminalized “procuring a person to offer or provide sexual services for consideration” (Government of Canada 2014, 4). This offence, in essence, criminalizes “active” involvement in the prostitution of others (as opposed to the “passive” involvement of one who might be living off the avails of a sex worker). The distinction laid out by bill c-36, in this respect, is interesting. According to the government, “a ‘classic pimp’ is likely to be guilty of both the procuring offence and the material benefit offence... In contrast, a ‘bouncer, who works at a strip club, knowing that prostitution takes place there... would only be guilty of the material benefit offence” (Government of Canada 2014, 4).

And finally, the last section of bill c-36 re-created a “communicating offence,” banning “communicating for the purposes of offering or providing sexual services for consideration in public places that are or are next to school grounds, playgrounds or daycare centres” (Government of Canada 2014, 4). Under this part of bill c-36, both sex workers and clients can be charged and sentenced to 6 months in prison. As we will explore below, this part of the law is largely defended in the name of “protecting children” (Government of Canada 2014, 4).

The overall stated objectives of bill c-36 are also interesting to note. The Conservative government argues that bill c-36 represents a shift in Canadian lawmaking because it treats “prostitution as a form of sexual exploitation that disproportionately impacts on women and girls” (Government of Canada 2014, 1). Its stated mandate is three-fold: (1) to “protect those who sell

their own sexual services”, (2) to “protect communities, and especially children, from the harms caused by prostitution”, and (3) to “reduce demand for prostitution and its incidence” (Government of Canada 2014, 1). Ultimately, according to the Conservative government, bill c-36 creates a “new criminal law regime [that] seeks to protect the dignity and equality of all Canadians” (Government of Canada 2014, 1).

Conservatives largely celebrated this as a major shift in Canada’s approach to prostitution and supporters of the bill argued that it will help improve safety for sex workers by investing \$20 million over 5 years to help sex workers get out of the trade. However, many elements of bill c-36 also strongly mirrored previous prostitution bans. Despite the SCC ruling, for example, bill c-36 created an offence “that prohibits receiving a material benefit that derived” from sex work, something that strongly resembled “living off the avails of prostitution” ban of previous legislation (Parliament of Canada 2014). Moreover, while clients were the primary targets of the new bill, sex workers were not completely decriminalized. Rather, bill c-36 created “an offence that prohibits communicating... in a public place, or in any place open to public view, that is or is next to a school ground, playground or daycare centre”, under which either clients or sex workers could be charged (Parliament of Canada 2014).

2.0 Explicit arguments used in defence of bill c-36

Mr. Speaker, our laws are there for a variety of reasons. We have laws on the books that are broken, violent offences, like murder and manslaughter, still take place, but what laws represent is, in many ways, an attempt to discourage these activities, to show society’s condemnation of some conduct. In this case, we are trying to show condemnation to exploitation around prostitution (O’Toole September 26, 2014).

As was the case with the explicit arguments used in defence of bill c-10, the government’s endorsement of bill c-36 relies heavily on themes and discourses of victimization.

Once again, the most prominent arguments used in defence of bill c-36 rest on the basic premise that sex work *victimizes* Canadians and Canadian society. However, unlike the Harper government's defence of bill c-10, Conservative MPs' arguments do not only (or even predominantly) rely on right-handed populist-inspired conservative discourse. Rather, as we will explore in detail below, these older-style conservative arguments are heavily supplemented by newer left-handed arguments. Moreover, these different arguments address and frame sex work, women, and gender equality in ways that hold the potential of challenging our traditional understandings and theorizations of conservative discourse and ideology.

2.1 The persistence of old-style arguments

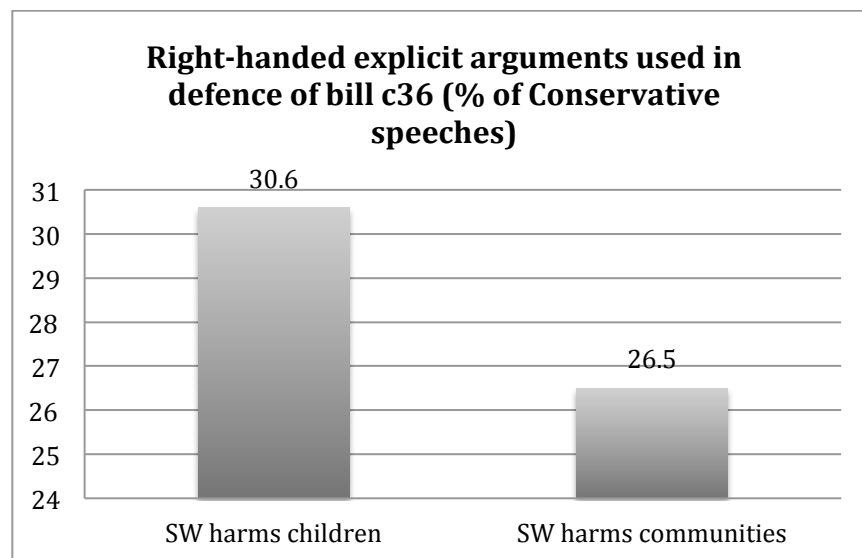


Figure 8.1

Perhaps expectedly, reverberations of previous eras of anti-prostitution discourse remain important staples in the CPC's defence of bill c-36. Indeed, some of the populist-inspired themes and discourses used in defence of bill c-10 also buttress contemporary anti-prostitution arguments and there is strong evidence that stereotypical and old-style forms of Conservative

argumentation heavily influenced the marketing of bill c-36. In particular, Conservative MPs advance two inter-related, right-handed arguments: (1) the argument that the legalization of sex work will harm children, and (2) the argument that sex work harms Canadian communities.

2.1.1 *Think of the children*

The argument that “sex work harms children” was both a significant rhetorical argument made in defence of bill c-36, as well as a policy element of the proposal itself (which allows the police to arrest and charge sex workers in areas where children are likely to be present, such as schools, pools and parks). As was the case with Conservative crime legislation, the argument that sex work in some way harms Canadian children is used in a significant 30.6% of the Conservative Parliamentary interventions. This is not overly surprising given that the appeal to “think of the children” is a relatively common and classical element of all political discourse, with strong roots in traditional conservative positions, arguments, and narratives (Eloe 2014).

Despite not being the most important or dominant argument, Conservatives nevertheless spent a significant amount of discursive energy detailing the various ways in which sex work harms children. In fact, it is even used in 20% more cases than it was used in defence of bill c-10, making it an even more significant and frequent rhetoric appeal. According to Conservatives, bill c-36 is necessary “because we do not want to expose [our children] to used condoms or to an otherwise unacceptable social activity” (MacKay June 12, 2014) and because the bill ensures “parents do not have to sweep away syringes and condoms from the school grounds of their children” (Goguen September 26, 2014). In developing the argument, MPs further appeal to traditionally conservative discourses of morality and innocence by likening sex work to other

corrupting social nuisances (often of a sexual nature). This argument presents public nuisances as specifically victimizing young, innocent children.

Echoing the Harper government's tough on crime discourse, the Conservative defence of bill c-36 paints children as the “innocent” victims of sex work and the criminality associated with the “sex trade”. According to Joy Smith, for instance, “[t]he fact of the matter is that Canadians agree that children should be protected” and “[m]ore and more Canadians in communities across Canada are starting to understand that they are also protecting their own beautiful and vulnerable children with the passing of bill c-36” (Smith September 22, 2014). As was the case for bill c-10, bill c-36 is largely justified as necessary in ensuring we fulfill our “fiduciary duty to protect... our children”, sometimes in quite literal ways.

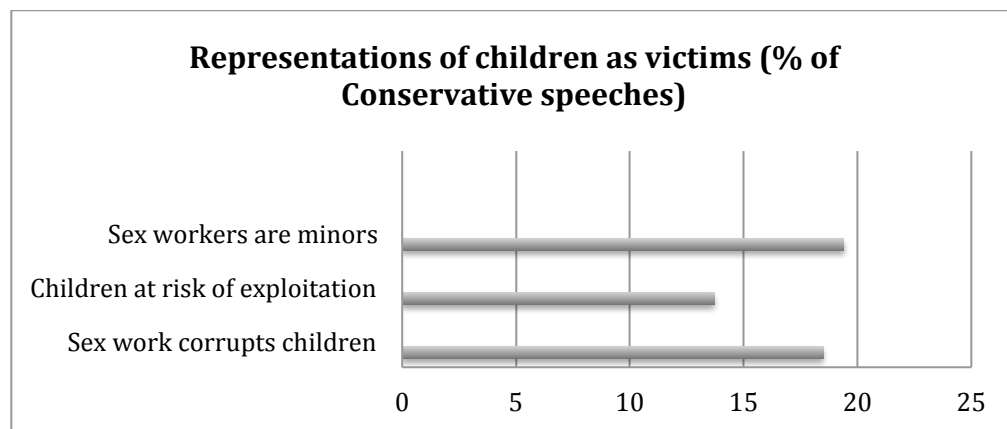


Figure 8.2

The ways in which children are represented as victims, moreover, are multifaceted. In 18.5% of the cases, the “sex work harms children” argument took up the more moralized language of corruption. Often linked with arguments about community harms, this discourse represents children as “young” and “innocent,” and therefore easily corruptible. Consider one

representative intervention made by Joy Smith, in which she tells the story of an innocent and unsuspecting schoolboy:

I met [a] little boy, and we found out that a whole school division, and other school divisions all across this country, had porn popping up on their computers. It was not because they wanted it, but because the system is set up in a way that porn inadvertently pops up at random. It has happened on everybody's computer. It is a type of conditioning, a type of acceptance.

We should not accept, in any way, shape, or form, the exploitation of our youth. We should not do that. However, let us be careful. The world is watching what we are doing as parliamentarians here in the Parliament of Canada, on all sides of the House. They all know. It is not a partisan thing (Smith October 3, 2014).

By conflating sex work with Internet pornography, Joy Smith advances the traditionally right-handed argument that society is over-sexed, that our children are being “condition[ed]” to accept this over-sexualization, and are thus being corrupted. As was the case with bill c-10, Conservatives also present this as the result of broad countrywide consensus, and “not a partisan thing.” While it is unclear, at a practical level, how criminalizing sex work will prevent Internet pornography from popping up on school computers, a tacit connection is made between opposing sex work and the advancement of a larger moralized and socially conservative worldview. Under this political rationality, children play a crucial role – presented as the foremost victims of a corrupted culture and, in the case of bill c-36, as victims of sex work and sex workers.

Another claim that advances the larger “sex work harms children” argument is that children will be at an increased risk of exploitation by pimps and johns if sex work were legal (present in 13.7% of the cases). Smith, once again, illustrates by example the imminent and ever-present danger that sex work poses to young girls, “I was a school teacher for 23 years, and people had to report to the office when they came in. There were pedophiles outside the fence

who would lure the older girls. With this bill, we would be protecting the children too” (Smith June 12, 2014). This framing presents children – but in particular girls – as vulnerable and in need of protection (a theme we will explore in more detail below). In this context, it is bill c-36 that criminalizes pedophilia (which prior to the passing of bill c36, of course, was already criminalized in Canada). Here, we also see strong parallels between this narrative of innocence and protection and the arguments put forward by Conservatives in the marketing of bill c-10. Yet again, the Conservative government portrays Canadian society as a dangerous and shady place – one in which criminals lurk outside school fences waiting for the opportunity to exploit our young girls. And, once again, it is only by supporting Conservative policy that we can truly protect our children from an increasingly dangerous Canadian society.

Finally, the last way Conservatives argue that sex work harms children is through the representation of sex workers as being predominantly underage minors. As we will see, this discursive trend foreshadows the significant emergence of newer and left-handed Conservative anti-prostitution discourse. In 19.4% of the cases, sex workers are presented as underage – with minors comprising the vast majority of sex workers. Joy Smith, once again, is a major proponent of this argument – stating at various points throughout the Parliamentary debate that, “[t]he majority of trafficked victims are underage” (Smith October 3, 2014) and that the “average age of entry into prostitution in this country is between 14 and 16 years of age” (Smith June 12, 2014). This statistic, moreover, is cited three times throughout the debate – despite competing and peer-reviewed research demonstrating the average age of entry into sex work in Canada is 24 years old (Brown 2014). On Smith’s telling, however, “[t]hese are children” (Smith June 12, 2014).

2.1.2 Sex work harms communities

The argument that children are victimized by sex work is further supplemented with the claim that sex work harms our larger communities. Not only is this logic emphasized by the bill's title – the “*Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*” – but in 26.5% of the cases, Conservatives also articulated it as an explicit argument. By fusing arguments about children and community harm, these arguments draw out the multiple reasons why legal sex work would victimize Canadian neighbourhoods. According to Peter MacKay, for instance:

Communities are also negatively affected by all forms of prostitution. Used condoms and drug paraphernalia may be discarded in public places, such as parks, playgrounds, or school grounds. Other community harms may include noise, impeding traffic, children witnessing acts of prostitution, harassment of residents, unsanitary acts, and unwelcome solicitation of children by johns (MacKay June 12, 2014).

Here, we see that prostitution can cause minor nuisances, such as noise and traffic, but its legalization might also lead to more serious consequences – forcing our children to witness “acts of prostitution.” For MacKay, legal sex work would mean that prostitution would become so rampant that it could “imped[e] traffic” and would lead to the “harassment of residents” and the “unwelcome solicitation of children by johns.” His choice of language in describing prostitution is also interesting to note. Not only would the effects of decriminalization mean “acts of prostitution” would proliferate in our neighborhoods, sex work is also fundamentally an “unsanitary act.” This framing activates familiar and commonsense sentiments about the uncleanness of sex workers.

The significant presence of the “sex work harms communities” argument suggests that public nuisance rationales continue to constitute important elements of Conservative anti-prostitution discourse. Many of these arguments rely on a “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) logic, thus appealing to the lived reality of individual Canadians. According to Conservative MPs, if

sex work were to be legalized, it would occur in our neighbourhoods, on every street corner, and in front of (or even directly involving) our children. For MPs, in addition to corrupting children, prostitution disrupts and victimizes our communities. Once again, we see the continued centrality of narratives of victimization in Conservative anti-prostitution arguments.

Also apparent in the above intervention is the ways the two right-handed anti-prostitution arguments (that sex work victimizes children *and* communities) work together. Both, for instance, rest on a basic yet political salient populist-style argument of victimization. While the Conservative defence of bill c-10 used tones and arguments of penal populism in much more explicit and obvious ways, arguments made in favour of bill c-36 also, at least in part, rely on the same logic. The “sex work harms communities” argument lays out the common sense argument that appeals to “regular” Canadians (because who would want to have syringes and condoms in their neighbourhood?). These interlocking arguments – that sex work victimizes Canadian children and communities – appeal primarily to a more “old-stock” conservative constituent. For many Canadians, and in particular those who might feel uncomfortable about the prospect of legal sex work because of its gendered dimensions, arguments that implicitly frame sex workers as unclean and a nuisance (or even a danger) to Canadian communities might come across as tone-deaf and as of a past era. However, for other more traditional and perhaps socially conservative constituents, this argument holds the potential of speaking to their larger culture-war-type concerns.

2.2 New Conservative anti-prostitution arguments

The continued Conservative reliance on older-style conservative arguments in defence of bill c-36 is not overly surprising. The dovetailing arguments that Canadian children and

communities are victimized by sex work fits into a long tradition of Conservative anti-prostitution discourse. By framing prostitution as something that corrupts and exploits our children and holds the potential of transforming our streets and communities into brothels, Conservatives continue to rely on a traditionally and historically conservative justification for the criminalization of sex work. However, before assuming that bill c-36 is simply Conservative business as usual, there are a few things worth considering.

As we saw in chapter 6, noting the absence of certain arguments and narratives can somewhat counter-intuitively unearth important revelations. In the context of bill c-10, the fact that certain types of crime and violence (for example, male violence against women or violence against racialized communities) were nonexistent in Parliamentary debate was notable. This omission signaled the (non)-priorities of the Canadian government, something made explicit by PM Stephen Harper when he declared that the over 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada were just not “on his radar” (Kappo 2014, see chapter 7 for full discussion).

Before exploring the arguments used by Conservative MPs in support of bill c-36, then, let us once again first briefly consider what arguments were *not* used. Based on the historical anti-prostitution discourse espoused by Conservatives, one might assume that MPs would draw on more traditionally conservative-oriented and moralized arguments rather than second-wave feminist arguments that advocate the criminalization of sex work because of its effects on women. There might then be an expectation that at least some religious arguments, themes, and tones would be used to highlight the ways by which sex work harms Canadians by jeopardizing our moral righteousness and social fabric.

However, my critical discourse analysis revealed that, similarly to anti-abortion MPs, not one single Conservative MP implicitly or explicitly referred to any form of religious argument. In fact, arguments about morality (in a traditionally conservative sense) were virtually non-existent in MPs' defence of bill c-36. Claims, for example, that legal prostitution harms the institution of marriage simply do not appear in any of the government's justifications for the bill. Moreover, while sex work is at times represented as "unsanitary", it is never described using the religiously infused language of "sin" or "evil".

Perhaps more notable still is that in developing the argument that sex work victimizes Canadians and Canadian communities, Conservatives very rarely direct blame towards sex workers themselves. Rather, 22.4% of the interventions place the blame of victimization squarely on pimps and johns (which is also reflected in the legislative target of the new law). Conservative arguments seem to suggest that sex workers are not responsible for the victimization caused by sex work – a surprising discourse given the one-dimensional representation of "criminals" in the context of bill c-10. In contrast to their approach to criminals in the marketing of bill c-10, Conservatives present sex workers as victimized not by their own choices, but instead by predatory pimps and johns and, as we will see, a host of other progressive-sounding intersecting oppressors. While this might seem like a superficial or minor discursive shift to some, I would suggest that it actually represents an important change not only in the Conservative approach to the issue of sex work, but also to the Conservative approach to women, gender, and discourses of victimization more largely.

Moreover, signs of this discursive shift have been evident for some time. On the one hand, the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC)'s position on prostitution – that is, the CPC's wholesale opposition to any form of decriminalization – is both historically consistent and an outlier in

Canadian partisan politics. However, for some time now, Conservatives have been adopting new, more progressive-style arguments to support this anti-prostitution position. In 2004, for instance, a Parliamentary subcommittee was created with a mandate to “review the solicitation laws in order to improve the safety of sex-trade workers and communities overall (quoted in Sampson 2014, 150). After extensive testimony from over 300 witnesses across Canada, the majority report by the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois, and the New Democratic Party “accepted the distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution” and suggested a pragmatic approach that would “increase services for those wishing to leave prostitution and address underlying concerns of poverty and social inequality” (quoted in Sampson 2014, 150). The CPC disagreed with the findings of the majority report, arguing that sex work should be prohibited entirely because, “any effort by the state to decriminalize prostitution would impoverish all Canadians – and Canadian women in particular – by signaling that the commodification and invasive exploitation of a woman’s body is acceptable” (quoted in Sampson 2014, 151). The report’s deployment of second-wave feminist logic hints at a new Conservative strategy – one that draws on new and gender-based discourses of victimization to oppose legal sex work. It seems as though Conservatives are supplementing older-style anti-prostitution arguments with more updated, modern, and pro-woman sounding arguments.

2.2.1 Sex Work harms Sex Workers

With this context in mind, is it perhaps not surprising that 28.6% of the Parliamentary interventions justified bill c-36 by invoking the argument that sex work victimizes sex workers, making it just 1.4% less significant than the “sex work harms children” argument. In fact, despite the continued prevalence of the public nuisance arguments discussed above, MPs argue quite

explicitly that they are not concerned with the potential nuisances caused by sex work, but rather about sex workers themselves.

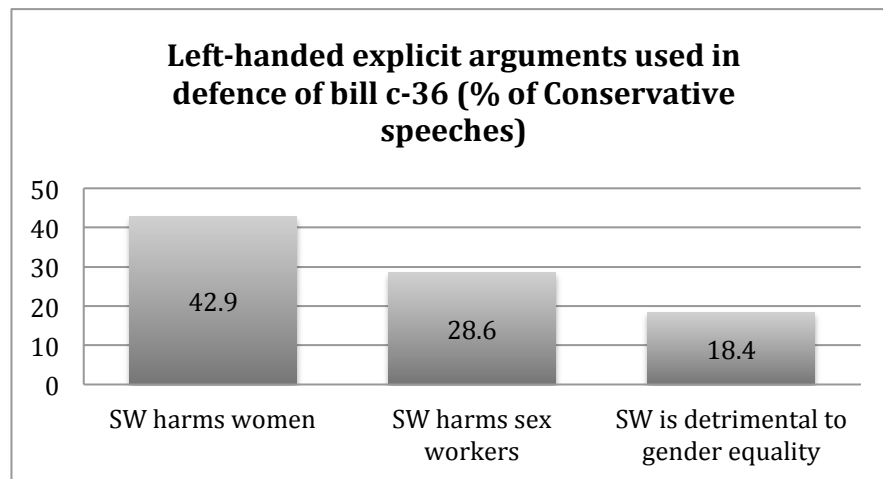


Figure 8.3

According to MP Robert Goguen, for example:

No longer would the law focus on addressing the nuisance aspects of prostitution. Bill c-36 is clearly targeted at addressing the exploitation involved in the practice and the harms it causes to those involved, communities and to society at large by normalizing a practice that targets those who are disadvantaged, including because of gender, race, youth, poverty or a history of abuse (Dechert October 3, 2014).

This Parliamentary intervention presents the larger discursive shift in Conservative logic for opposing sex work. Not only does it depart from right-handed anti-prostitution justifications, but Goguen's argument also diverges significantly in both tone and content from the more populist-inspired arguments used in defence of bill c-10. Whereas perpetrators of crime in the context of bill c-10 were represented as one-dimensional "bad guys", perpetrators of sex work are victims who are "targets" – disadvantaged and marginalized because of their "gender, race, youth,

poverty [or] history of abuse.” With respect to bill c-36 – and in direct contrast to the arguments made in defence of bill c-10 – perpetrators of crime (and according to bill c-36, sex work *is* a crime) are driven to criminality because of a host of contingent factors that are largely beyond their control and, therefore, they are less culpable.

According to MPs, the harms experienced by sex workers are multifaceted: they are physical, emotional, and systemic. Sex workers, MPs argue, are “often beaten regularly by the pimps. They are made to become addicted to drugs. They are coerced in many other ways.” (Dechert October 3, 2014). Consider the following intervention made by MP Kelly Block:

These are the reasons why Bill c-36 says “no” to prostitution. Put simply, there are too many risks associated with this practice. A burgeoning sex industry means: an increase in vulnerable persons selling their own sexual services because of lack of meaningful options, or through force; a corresponding increase in the violence and trauma caused by subjection to prostitution; an increase in associated crime, such as drug related offences and human trafficking; and the normalization of a gendered practice that implicates the equality of those vulnerable groups so at risk of subjection to it (Block September 26, 2014).

This intervention hits all of the key tenets of abolitionist feminist arguments, and could easily be mistaken for a speech given by the likes of Andrea Dworkin or Catharine MacKinnon rather than a Conservative politician. Sex work, it is argued, can never be a choice that is freely chosen. Rather, it occurs only through coercion. Further, and in accordance with many feminist thinkers, coercion is not only enacted “through force” (although that is also an important dimension of Block’s argument). Rather, coercion occurs in subtler and structural ways – when sex workers, for example, “lack meaningful options.” Block also abstractly invokes arguments about “the normalization of a gendered practice”, and “equity.” While the specifics of this argument are quite vague, her use of terminology sends a strong message: that Ms. Block understands violence against women, and that she stands with victims.

The Conservative use of feminist language and arguments extends far beyond Kelly Block's passage. One particularly interesting argument that emerged regularly is the notion that sex workers were at increased risk of sexual violence. Recall that in their defence of bill c-10 – an omnibus bill that sought to fundamentally reshape Canada's approach to crime – not one Conservative MP even once mentioned sexual assault as an issue facing Canadians. Even though Conservatives drew heavily on often dramatic re-tellings of Canadians' experiences with crime, never once was sexual violence or larger gender-based violence ever mentioned, not even in passing.

By contrast, in the context of prostitution, the same Conservative government repeatedly presents the issue of sexual violence as a pressing one. In 34% of the interventions, MPs use the term "sexual assault" and in 22%, "sexual violence." On the government's telling, Conservatives are deeply concerned with the issue of violence against women and they have the language and expertise to back it up. Consider the following speech made by Michelle Rempel:

Mr. Speaker... we have difficulty both in getting sex workers to report incidents of sexual assault and then convictions. We need to say there is an issue in obtaining consent in a sex trade transaction. Boundaries can be broken easily, and then the person who is being assaulted is in the position of trying to show the burden of proof that this did occur. By saying that we as a country do not support the purchase of sexual services and it is illegal, we are going to help raise awareness that sexual assault does occur in these situations (Rempel September 22, 2014).

Rempel's intervention echoes popular feminist arguments: that sex requires consent, that when boundaries are broken consent is revoked, and that survivors of sexual assault are often misbelieved. Moreover, on Rempel's telling, bill c-36 will facilitate to "help raise awareness" around sexual assault. Once again, the specifics of Rempel's arguments are hazy. But her choice

of arguments and language depart quite significantly from previous forms of anti-prostitution arguments, as well as many of the public nuisance arguments taken up by her colleagues.

It is also notable that Rempel avoids using the typical language of “prostitution”, instead adopting the feminist terminology of “sex work” – something often mirrored by many of her colleagues (18.3% of the interventions use the language of “sex work/ers”). The term “sex work” was originally coined by sex worker activist Carol Leigh in 1978 and has since spread into much wider use. It is currently the favoured term of most NGOs, academic publications, most labour unions, and the World Health Organization. The intended purpose behind this linguistic shift was to de-stigmatize the “prostitute” – a term that had come to be conflated with disease, addiction, and social stigma. The expression was also meant to inject sex worker’s agency and ability to make individual career choices into the debate over the legal and moral acceptability of prostitution. That Rempel chooses to use “sex worker” – a term that has strongly been affiliated with advocacy to decriminalize and de-stigmatize sex work – sends a nuanced message. Yes, she might support the criminalization of sex work, but she is also understanding and sympathetic to the plights of sex workers.

While some Conservative MPs might draw on the language of “sex work”, others avoid choosing between the terms “prostitution” or “sex work” altogether. Rather, in completing their argument that prostitution harms sex workers, many Conservative politicians simply conflate prostitution/sex work with sex trafficking. In fact, a significant 24.5% of the cases use “prostitution” and “sex trafficking” interchangeably, or adopt the explicit argument that the decriminalization would lead to increased sex trafficking. Moreover, the term “trafficking” is used in 32% of the interventions (and a total of 63 times), further indicating its relevance to Conservative anti-prostitution arguments.

In some interventions, Conservatives argue very explicitly that “decriminalization is linked to growth in the sex industry and higher rates of human trafficking for sexual exploitation” (MacKay June 18, 2014). By this logic, criminalizing sex work will “reduce the demand for prostitution of other people, which reduces the demand of human trafficking. If there are less people trying to buy those services, there will be less young girls being trafficked” (Dechert October 3, 2014). However, the explicit link between sex work and trafficking is also advanced in subtler ways by presenting sex work as being the *sole* result of human trafficking. In order to bolster this position, a particular portrait of prostitution is implicitly presented. Consider this relatively uninteresting Parliamentary intervention made by Joy Smith:

Mr. Speaker, as I rise today, I am pleased to say that we are in third reading on Bill C-36, one of the most important bills this country has ever had in this Parliament. I will tell you why. It is because so many innocent victims are being lured into the sex trade under human trafficking. We have numerous cases all across this country (O’Toole September 26, 2014).

This intervention does not openly argue that decriminalization leads to trafficking. Rather, it thinly forwards a narrative of sex work that eliminates any potential for sex work to occur consensually and by choice. The only representation of a sex worker advanced by Smith is that of the “innocent victim[s]” being “lured into the sex trade under human trafficking.”

Moreover, Joy Smith’s intervention is particularly instructive given her high profile relationship with bill c-36. Smith has been a life-long activist against human trafficking and was a key participant in drafting the content and marketing strategies behind bill c-36. Her passion and dedication to combatting human trafficking has shaped much of her career trajectory and choices. While an MP, Smith founded the Joy Smith Foundation – a non-profit with a mandate to “ensure that every Canadian man, woman and child is safe from manipulation, force, or abuse of power designed to lure and exploit them into the sex trade or forced labour” (Joy Smith

Foundation, Mission statement). In 2015, she made the decision to not seek re-election in order to devote herself full-time to the Foundation.

By virtue of her experience and activism, Smith was presented as the leading expert of sex work in Canada by the Conservative government. Despite being an unpopular figure among sex worker advocacy groups, she was represented – by virtue of her vast expertise – as having insider knowledge into the best interests of sex workers. In her words, “I know the victims. I know the police officers who work with them. I know the families who have to endure the aftermath of human trafficking” (Smith December 9, 2014). Her self-proclaimed expertise meant she largely became the face of bill c-36 – doing media interviews, public appearances, and events in support of the bill.

In 2014, Smith participated on a panel on prostitution at the Manning Centre Conference where she debated noted libertarian and *Toronto Star* pundit Andrew Furey. Throughout the panel, Smith’s passion for the issue was apparent. By contrast, Furey seemed to find the entire debate somewhat amusing and his approach risked being read as dismissive. He did not engage in the gendered dimensions of the debate and really did not speak much about the issue of sex work itself. Rather, he methodically laid out a defence of his larger libertarian worldview. “I want people to be able to go out and do what they think will make them happy”, explained Furey with a grin. He continued by espousing his argument for diminished governmental intervention in politics and society. His logic was unsurprising given the fiscally conservative mandate of the Manning Centre, and drew heavily on a long tradition of Hayekian thought. “Government is a tool for maximizing liberty” and his “opposition to any form of governmental intervention” were both dominant themes. Ultimately for Furey, the decriminalization of prostitution is “the natural

position for conservative-minded people” because of conservative ideology’s “commitment to liberty” (Manning Centre Conference 2014, author’s observations).

Smith was noticeably (and perhaps rightfully) upset by both Furey’s somewhat dismissive approach to the debate and his position on the issue. She introduced herself as a “leading anti-trafficking activist” and passionately advanced her own narrative of prostitution. On her telling, prostitution “is not the oldest profession” but rather the “world’s oldest form of exploitation against women.” She acknowledged that previous Conservative governments had approached the issue as something that must be kept “out of public view.” However, she argued that this is not enough. Canada’s goal should be to the complete abolition of prostitution because the practice is “modern day slavery” (a phrase Smith repeated numerous times throughout the debate). Prostitution is “not Pretty Woman, “ Smith proclaimed, “it’s brutal and it’s terrible” (Manning Centre 2014, author’s observations). On Smith’s telling, prostitution, “dehumanizes and degrades”, “reduces people to commodities”, and is a “direct attack on vulnerable women and girls.”

Smith’s narrow framing of the issue of sex work largely became a template in the marketing strategy used to promote bill c-36. In her defence of bill c-36 in Parliament, for example, Smith very rarely referred to the issue as “prostitution” (and never as “sex work”). Rather, she spoke of the bill predominately through the lens of “trafficking. On Smith’s telling, “[m]any in this Parliament do not understand human trafficking. They talk about prostitutes, the rights of others to set up shop and control a bunch of women, and young men now, in Canada, control and force them into the sex trade. It is the most devious, under-the-surface kind of crime that people now, finally, are starting to understand” (Smith October 3, 2014).

The conflation between “sex work by choice” and “coerced slavery through trafficking”, at least in part, functions as a way for Conservatives to circumvent discussions about many of the nuances of the actual practice of sex work (for example, those who might participate in sex work by choice and have clients that respect their boundaries and rules). Of course, even the harshest critics of bill c-36 would agree with Smith that it should be illegal to force anybody “into the sex trade.” However, rather than engaging with competing narratives of sex work (as a choice, for example), MPs simply bypass sex worker’s claims of agency by framing sex workers almost entirely as “exploited persons”.

2.2.2 The framing of sex workers as victims

Left-handed explicit arguments made in defence of bill c-36 are centered on reframing sex workers as victims. Therefore, in addition to the significant presence of the “sex work harms sex worker” argument, Conservatives also draw on more subtle rhetoric frames that support their wholesale representation of sex workers as victimized. In a very significant 58.1% of the cases, for example, the predominant representation of the “sex worker” is as a victim. In the words of Joy Smith, Conservatives “believe these women are victims” (Manning Centre Conference 2014, author’s observations).

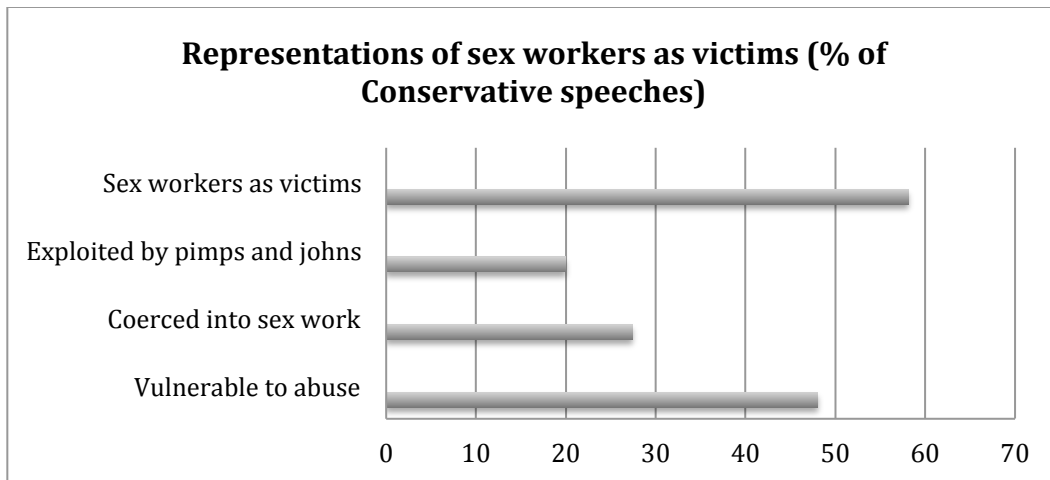


Figure 8.4

The Conservative promotion of bill c-36 is thus premised on the argument that the new prostitution law is “all about protecting the victims of prostitution” and that, for the first time, the law would represent “prostitutes themselves as victims, which predominantly they are” (Smith June 12, 2014). This premise is bolstered by numerous supporting frames, which further emphasize the victimization of sex workers. In 27.4% of the cases, sex workers are represented as forced or coerced into sex work, and in 20%, as exploited by pimps and johns. Perhaps most notable, however, is the significant framing of sex workers as “vulnerable.” In a relatively dominant 48% of the interventions, Conservatives present sex workers as “vulnerable,” a term that is repeated 66 times throughout the Parliamentary debate over bill c-36.

This discourse of vulnerability is somewhat cyclical. Sex workers are vulnerable to being victimized, yes. But those who are vulnerable are also at an increased risk of being trafficked into sex work. In this sense, vulnerability begets vulnerability. Consider the following representative intervention by Kelly Block on behalf of bill c-36:

Research shows that decriminalization is linked to growth in the sex industry and higher rates of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. That means an increase in vulnerable

people being drawn into prostitution, an increase in abuse of those in positions of vulnerability, an increase in use of coercive practices to draw the vulnerable in and keep them in, and at the end of that continuum of exploitative conduct, an increase in human trafficking. Bill C-36 would prevent the harmful effects of decriminalization (MayKay June 14, 2014).

Central to Block's speech is the (three time repeated) notion that sex work revolves around the "vulnerability" of those involved. At the center of this notion of "vulnerability", is a powerful discourse of victimization. It is *because* sex workers are vulnerable (both prior and during the act of sex work) that they the ultimate victims.

Intimately tied to these ideas of vulnerability and victimhood, moreover, is that of "protection." In fact, as was the case with the term "vulnerable", Conservatives also draw heavily on themes of protection, with various iterations of "protect" being used 50 times throughout debate. Of course, feminist scholarship has long addressed the ways in which discursive appeals to notions of "vulnerability" and "protection" are closely connected (Enloe 2004). In a somewhat extreme example, Andrea Dworkin's 1978 classic *Right Wing Women* suggests that women support right-wing ideology and policy only because the conservative movement offers women safety in return for their political allegiance. Effectively, for Dworkin, women involve themselves in conservative movements to camouflage into patriarchy. She writes, "like the chameleon, the woman must blend into her environment, never calling attention to the qualities that distinguish her, because to do so would be to attract the predator's deadly attention" (Dworkin 1978; 19). Performing deferent and submissive femininity is one of the primary ways that Dworkin believes women can secure this protection. In this respect, "performing" or "embodying" traits of vulnerability, on Dworkin's telling, might actually be a survival tactic used by women to obtain protection from other men.

Despite Dworkin's own vocal opposition to the legalization of sex work, her analysis nevertheless seems to be at least somewhat relevant to the Conservative government's use of victim frames in relation to bill c-36. For instance, notions of vulnerability and protection are often discursively linked by MPs. According to the government's logic, it is *because* sex workers are vulnerable victims that they are deserving of our protection. On Royal Galipeau's telling, for example, bill c-36:

... protect[s] the most vulnerable people in society. We are doing this, not by punishing them but by punishing all those around them who profit from their misery. I wish that the ideology of those who would want to objectify women would get out of the way and help us to do this and protect them (Galipeau September 25, 2014).

There are a couple of things worth noting from this speech. First, while this passage addresses how bill c-36 will affect sex workers, never once does Galipeau actually explicitly refer to "prostitutes" or "sex workers." Rather, sex workers are coded as "vulnerable people in society." The replacement of the language of "sex worker" or "prostitute" with that of "vulnerable people" is a very common occurrence throughout the debate on bill c-36. Second, it is *because* sex workers are "vulnerable people" and in "misery" that they do not deserve to be punished. Rather, opponents are best to "get out of the way and help [Conservatives] protect them." It seems, then, to be the "vulnerable" status of sex workers that determines whether or not they are *worthy* of consideration and protection.

In another representative example, Kelly Block argues:

I stand with those survivors, some of whom courageously testified before both committees and detailed the horrific abuse they suffered in prostitution. They have told their stories again and again to ensure that this type of abuse stops. They also told the committee that Bill C-36 would send a message. The message is that we are all deserving of dignity,

equality and respect. The law should not allow the powerful to use and abuse the less powerful (Block September 26, 2014).

Here, once again drawing on feminist-preferred terminology, she frames sex workers as “survivors.” However, the rest of the passage does not necessarily map onto a survivor script. Rather, Block heavily emphasizes the ways in which sex workers are *victims*: they have been subjected to “horrific abuse”, have “suffered in prostitution” and are victims of “the powerful.” Regardless of Block’s appeal to the language of “survival”, her speech demonstrates quite explicitly the ways in which discourses of “vulnerability/victimhood” and those of “protection” are closely connected. The condition of support for sex workers seems to be own acceptance of their victimization. It is because sex workers have “detailed” their victimization and “told their stories again and again” that they deserve to be protected.

However, when a sex worker refuses this victim status, Conservatives feel very differently about approaching them with “dignity, equality and respect.” Consider the following speech given by Erin O’Toole:

It reminds me of philosopher John Stuart Mill, who said, “No person is an entirely isolated being”. Ms. Bedford and a few sex workers who may feel that they are empowered and that there are no social harms from their participation in the sex trade do not speak for homeless aboriginal youth in Winnipeg. They do not speak for abused women who have been forced into sex work by pimps, in some cases by ex-boyfriends. They do not speak for the vulnerable, and the vulnerable are the vast majority of people drawn into prostitution (O’Toole September 26, 2017).

On O’Toole’s telling, Ms. Bedford (of *R. v. Bedford*) might be a sex worker but her experience is not valid. She may “feel that [she is] empowered” but that is a false consciousness. Implied in his argument is that Bedford is engaging in the debate in bad faith by claiming to speak for all sex workers. But O’Toole is clear about who actually speaks for sex workers: Conservatives. For it

will be bill c-36 that will stand up and speak for the experiences of the “vulnerable” majority “who have been forced into sex work.”

In a different Parliamentary speech, Bob Dechert draws this logic out even further, arguing:

I acknowledge that there are some individuals who will say that they have freely chosen to sell their sexual services. The two committees heard from some witnesses who wanted the law to recognize a profession that they called “sex work”, who wanted the law to help them earn a living selling their own sexual services. They wanted the law to allow them to run commercial enterprises in which sexual services would be sold so they could capitalize on the prostitution of others (Dechert October 3, 2015).

Dechert begins by “acknowledg[ing]” that some sex workers might not agree with bill c-36. In paraphrasing the argument for decriminalization, however, he is quite open about his skepticism for the pro-‘sex worker’ position. Moreover, here we see a different representation of (some) sex workers: as *victimizers*. It is not only that so-called “sex workers” want to “earn a living selling their own sexual services.” It is that they also want to “capitalize on the prostitution of others.” Once again, sex workers who refuse a victims status are implicitly presented as, at best, engaging in the debate over prostitution in bad faith, and, at worst, victimizing the vulnerable by directly profiting off the “prostitution of others.”

The premise that prostitution harms sex workers rests in large part on the near monolithic framing of sex workers as victims. This discourse of victimization works to circumvent any discussion of the nuances and variation in women’s experiences with sex work. Through the infantilized language of “victim” and “vulnerability,” Conservatives present themselves as standing with exploited victims in order to protect them. When sex workers speak out and do not conform to the victim mold, their experiences are marginalized and dismissed. Ultimately, it is

only when sex workers submit to conservative arguments and can be framed as innocent, vulnerable, and victimized that they are worthy of our sympathy and protection.

2.2.3 *Sex work harms all women*

It is perhaps not that surprising that Conservative arguments in support of bill c-36 present prostitution as a dangerous and high-risk activity for sex workers – especially given that bill c-36 was a response to the Bedford decision. As is often the case in politics, this might be an example of the Conservative government using the successful arguments and frames of their opponents. Given that the SCC struck down previous prostitution laws as unconstitutional based on their risk to the “safety” of sex workers, it is not unexpected that Conservatives might respond by borrowing the language of the other side. This is just smart politics that recognizes that we are much more likely to be persuaded when the one doing the persuading draws on language and arguments that resonate within our own worldview.

What is perhaps less expected, however, is the length to which Conservative MPs go to in order to make their point. In their defence of bill c-36, MPs who, for example, celebrated the CPC’s cuts in funding to women’s groups and equality-seeking organizations such as the Court Challenges Program, now take up overtly feminist and progressive sounding rhetoric. In fact, in 42.9% of the cases, MPs explicitly argue the feminist notion that the legalization of sex work would harm *all* women. This makes it by far the most important and dominant argument used by MPs in the defence of bill c-36.

At a basic level, the argument that the decriminalization of sex work will harm all women is premised on the notion that Conservatives understand the needs of women. What do Conservatives know? According to Joy Smith, they know that:

... women do not want to service up to 40 men a night. Women do not want to be coerced into the sex trade. Women do not want to give their money to people who beat them if they do not. This is not what women want. What women want in this country is to be safe. They want to be able to grow up. They want to be able to have a life they can be proud of, and grow and prosper like anybody else (Smith October 3, 2014).

Once again, Smith advances a rather extremist portrait of prostitution. Sex work, on her telling, is “servi[cing] 40 men a night,” its being “coerced into the sex trade,” getting beat up, and not being able to be proud or grow or prosper. While this argument claims to speak for women, it also implicitly frames certain women (in particular, those who participate in sex work) as both living in shame while also being helpless, abused victims.

While Smith’s intervention speaks on behalf of women, other Conservative arguments seem to claim to speak for feminism. The following intervention by Michelle Rempel is one such example:

I am also very proud of the work of the University of Calgary's consent, awareness, and sexual education club. They ran a “Consent is Sweet” campaign to bring this more accurate, in my opinion, concept of sexual consent to their student body.

Since time immemorial, empowered, educated, enthusiastic sexuality, particularly female sexuality, has been written into literature, social mores, and religious practice as an evil, something to be avoided for fear of ripping the very fabric of society. It has only been in very recent decades that western culture, particularly through the feminist movement, has enshrined a new view of consent into our consciousness, yet we still struggle to protect this, from “rapey” chants at frosh week to requests for female airport security officers to be segregated.

We as a culture are still challenged with the full acceptance of empowered, equitable sexuality. Furthermore at the heart of this new notion of sexual consent is the concept of equality, the concept that all parties are in equilibrium from a power dynamic perspective. I feel as such, the “what two consenting adults do” argument is flawed, as here is an

overwhelming burden of proof that a large majority of sex workers are not in an equitable position (Rempel September 22, 2014).

Even on a superficial reading, there immediately emerges some very counterintuitive language in Rempel's speech. The fact that a Conservative MP (in a party led by Stephen Harper no less) uses slang like "rapey" is noteworthy.

Also unexpected is that Rempel is "very proud" of the work being done by a student's union. For at Conservative events throughout the country, student unions are very often presented as one of the primary challengers and enemies of the Conservative movement. The Canadian Conservative movement's grandfather, Preston Manning, has been a frequent opponent of student unions – repeatedly presenting them as a thorn in the side of his movement. On Manning's telling, student unions represent a threat to Conservatives, interested "in training" and "brainwashing" Canadian youth (Manning Centre Conferences 2014, 2015, author's observations). A central goal of the Manning Centre is, in fact, to increase the presence of Conservatives and youth-led Conservative groups on university campuses, in part to combat the presence and influence of student unions (Manning Centre, Students and Youth). In 2017, Manning Centre Conference speaker Jordan Peterson took this anti-union position even further. According to Peterson, not only are student unions "indoctrinating" students, but also are "absolute snake pits" that should be immediately "defunded" (Manning Centre Conference 2017, author's observations). These comments were met by waves of applause from the audience (Peterson's talk was one of the best attended of the 2017 conference).

While Rempel is not necessarily representative of most Canadian Conservative politicians – and certainly a very different type of Conservative than Jordan Peterson – the fact that she cites the work of a student union in a positive light (and their work on the "feminist"

issue of consent and sexual violence no less) represents a stark departure from the position held by many of the most influential Conservative politicians and activists. Given her Conservative credentials, Rempel's larger argument is equally surprising. From her framing of female sexuality as something that has been historically viewed as a threat, to her implicit condemnation of "'rapey' chants at frosh week", Rempel positions herself very much on the feminist side of debates over sexual violence awareness and law. Again, her speech could easily be mistaken for a feminist training brochure on the concept of positive consent. In fact, she positively cites the "feminist" movement for having "enshrined a new view of consent into our consciousness."

Moreover, following a feminist logic, Rempel is correct in her analysis. Indeed, her suggestion that a model of consent based on the "'what two consenting adults do' argument" does not take gender-based power imbalances into account has long been at the center of feminist campaigns and activism. Consider the recent #metoo campaign, which encouraged women to publicize their experiences of sexual harassment and violence in order to highlight the magnitude of the problem. The campaign quickly gave way to global discussions about the ways that men's power over women was used to both sexually harass and humiliate women, but also used to cover up bad and abusive behaviour on the part of powerful and influential men. In this context, Rempel's argument seems very persuasive on *feminist* grounds. While the right-handed arguments discussed in section 2.1 might speak to more socially conservative-minded Canadians, these newer, updated arguments clearly are designed to resonate with more progressive, student union-supporting Canadians.

Buttressing the "sex work harms women" argument is an even more explicitly feminist discourse – one that opposes the "legalization and normalization" of sex work because it "would be disastrous for women's equality and for our aboriginal populations and other populations"

(Smith June 12, 2014). This discourse not only positions sex workers as victims of prostitution but also sees all women as victims of gender-based discrimination when sex work is tolerated. In 18.4% of the cases, Conservative MPs argue that just the presence of legal sex work would be detrimental to gender equality, and risks “turn[ing] the clock back years for women’s equality” (Smith June 12, 2014). Given that Stephen Harper’s government became notorious for denying the very existence of gender inequality in Canada (Brodie 2008), this shift in both tone and approach is remarkable.

In elaborating this argument, MPs draw heavily on second-wave feminist arguments. Sex work, for example, is referred to as a “harmful gendered practice” (Block September 26, 2014), “modern day slavery” (Smith September 22, 2014), as “escalat[ing] gender inequalities by turning women’s bodies into a commodity to be bought, sold, rented, and exploited by men” (Smith June 12, 2014). Some MPs even go as far as to engage in what some feminists might consider an “intersectional approach.” Favorably quoting the testimony of Professor Benedet – a law professor at the University of British Columbia – MP Bob Dechert suggests that those engaged in sex work are there because “there are usually many other inequalities at work, including some combination of gender, colonialism, poverty, and addiction” (Dechert October 3, 2014). His inclusion of the word “colonialism” – a concept that many conservatives simply do not accept – is, to say the least, surprising.

The explicit arguments and supporting victim frames used in defence of bill c-36 clearly advance a relatively cohesive narrative of victimization. On the one hand, Conservative MPs argue that our children and communities would be victimized by any societal toleration of sex work. If sex work were legal, it would occur at every street corner, outside of schoolyards – endangering the well-being and safety of our children. More importantly, however, is that the

legalization of sex work would also victimize Canadian women. Yes, specifically it would harm women directly engaged in sex work – who would be at increased risk of violence and sexual assault. But it would also affect *all* Canadian women. Without criminalization, young girls would become easier targets of human trafficking, which on the government’s telling is the only means through which sex work occurs. It would perpetuate gender inequality by sending a message to all Canadian women that their bodies are commodities to be bought and sold.

At the center of these explicit arguments, of course, is the presentation of a victim in need of protection. Whether the victim is an innocent child, a trafficked woman, or a hard-working Canadian woman who just wants to be treated equally, every notable argument used to market bill c-36 is premised on the notion that Canadians are in some way victimized by sex work.

3.0 Evidence

Chapter 7 examined the ways that privileging certain epistemological appeals over others can subtly activate larger normative and political values and ideas. In the context of bill c-10, for example, first-person anecdotes are presented as a form of expertise, and their third-person narratives of victimization as evidence. The powerful role given to victims worked to elevate the discursive status of the “victim of crime”. And indeed, in the context of bill c-36, Conservative MPs continue to draw heavily on public consultations (15.3%), expert studies (18.4%), and personal testimonials (26.5%) as forms of evidence.

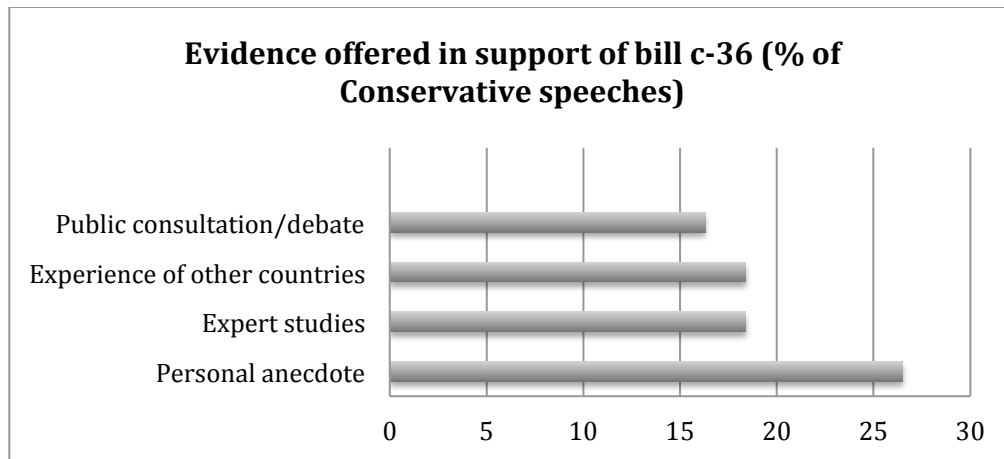


Figure 8.5

Perhaps the most striking similarity between the evidence offered in defence of bills c-10 and c-36 is the ways in which Conservatives recount harrowing third-person testimonials of abused sex workers in order to bolster support for bill c-36. There is, for instance, the story of “Samantha” who “was trafficked by her boyfriend” and lost her “dignity” and “confidence” (Smith October 3, 2014). Similarly, Bob Dechert recounts word for word the testimonial of Bridget Perrier – who was “lured and debased into prostitution at the age of 12 because he thought that “all who hear it [would] be [emotionally] moved” like he was (Dechert October 3, 2014).

The use of third-person testimonials by Conservatives in defence of bill c36 is very similar in both tone and discursive structure to those examined in the context of bill c-10. Once again, the testimonials drawn on by Conservatives are the emotional stories of real Canadians who have been victimized by crime and involuntary and non-consensual prostitution. By recounting the horrific details of women’s experiences with sexual abuse and trauma, these stories, yet again, register on an emotional level – describing the victimization experienced by sex workers in great detail. The stories recounted by MPs in Parliament were further buttressed by press events put on by the government. At one such publicity event held prior to a day of

Parliamentary debate over bill c-36, former sex worker Katarina MacLeod recounted “a harrowing story of abuse, rape, and exploitation starting at the age of five when she was molested, and it lasted through her 15 years as a sex worker” (Dechert June 12, 2014). Central to her message, of course, was that “if the government's proposed prostitution legislation had been around when she was a sex worker, there would have been no demand and no supply and that maybe she would be less scarred today” (Dechert June 12, 2014).

While the testimonials used in defence of both bills c-10 and c-36 draw upon dramatic tones and forms of story telling, they also differ in significant ways. Recall from our discussion in chapter 7 that anecdotes used in defence of bill c-10 often drew on police testimonials or first-person narratives that linked MPs’ expertise on crime legislation with masculinized work (see chapter 7 for full discussion). Indeed, citing police support for bill c-36 is still a common political strategy (police support for bill c-36 is mentioned in 17% of the cases). However, unlike in the defence of bill c-36, no MPs outline the stories of the police or represents the police as the forefront expert in sex work, as they were in relation to crime policy. Rather, every single third-person testimonial presented is the story of a *woman*. While in the context of bill c-10, men – and particularly men tied to traditionally masculine fields of work – were presented as the experts. In the context of bill c-36, it is now *women* who are the experts. This represents a pretty remarkable shift in the government’s approach to gender – something that will be further explored in the following Intermezzo.

A final interesting piece of evidence that is offered in defence of bill c-36 is the experience of other countries (present in 18.4% of the cases). With respect to most issues, social democratic countries such as Sweden and Norway would certainly not be prototypes for conservative governments to imitate. In the context of prostitution, however, it seems as though

they provide a role model for Conservatives in Canada. Even on Conservative leader candidate Erin O'Toole's telling, in drafting bill c-36, the government "look[ed] at the successes and the approach that many countries with similar economies, similar population, like Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and others have tried to reduce the social harm" (O'Toole September 26, 2014). Throughout the Parliamentary debate over the bill, this logic was repeated in relation to "Nordic" countries seven times, Sweden four times, and Norway three times.

The reasons why the CPC modeled itself after these countries are also interesting to note. For Dechert, Nordic countries serve as the ultimate role model both because they are "European countries we have strong relationships with" and they are "free and democratic societies" (O'Toole September 26, 2014). What is perhaps most interesting about these comparisons is the way they are used to present Canada as a "progressive" society. Following the Nordic model, for instance, is crucial for Joy Smith. In fact, it presents the "only option for a progressive society" Her reasoning? "A truly progressive society encourages the equality and dignity of women, not the prostitution of women. I want to build a Canada that targets predators and pimps, helps vulnerable individuals escape prostitution, and upholds the dignity of women. We can do better for women, and we must" (Smith June 12, 2014). Smith's use of the word "progressive" and the values it implies (the equality and dignity of women) is particularly surprising and noteworthy coming from a Conservative MP. It is not only that bill c-36 will "encourage the equality and dignity of women," it will also push Canada in a "progressive" direction.

On the one hand, the evidence provided to justify bill c-36 is very similar to that used in the context of bill c-10. Both bills are presented as the result of intense public consultations and as demanded by the Canadian public. Similarly, justifications for both bills draw heavily on the graphic third-person accounts of victimization and are both celebrated as being supported by

victims. On the other hand, however, there are important differences in the justifications offered for each bill. For instance, in the defence of bill c-10, Conservatives were much more likely to discount the validity of statistics and expert studies. Drawing on populist appeal, rather, bill c-10 responds to the *feelings* of “regular” Canadians. By contrast, Conservatives are much more likely to present bill c-36 as legislation designed by women for women. By positively citing the experiences of progressive (and largely Nordic) countries, the government portrays bill c-36 as proudly embodying the pro-woman ideal of gender equality and dignity for all.

4.0 Concluding remarks

This chapter has examined how in its re-criminalization of sex work in 2014, Stephen Harper’s Conservative government draws heavily on discourses and arguments of victimization. However, as opposed to their defence of their tough-on-crime agenda (as explored in chapter 7), their justifications for bill c-36 represent a marked shift in Conservative justifications and argumentations. Rather than relying on discourses of penal populism, their case for bill c-36 instead draws strongly on ‘protect victim/women’ themes and arguments. While right-handed arguments about the victimization of children and Canadian communities linger, most Conservative MPs take up the progressive language of women’s safety and equality to argue for the criminalization of sex work.

This chapter began by outlining the history of anti-prostitution discourse and lawmaking. Of course, beginning in the 1980s, opposition to legal sex work has been composed of two seemingly opposing camps: religious and social conservatives and radical, second-wave feminists. Moreover, at least historically, each faction has drawn on opposing logics – with conservatives drawing on religious and moralized justifications and feminists drawing on

arguments about women's rights and equality. However, this chapter argues that the justifications used to support bill c-36 narrowed the gaps between these two seemingly opposing discourses. While bill c-36 upholds the pre-*Bedford* and wholesale criminalization of sex work, new legislation, for the most part, targets pimps and johns rather than sex workers themselves (except in areas where children are likely to be present). In supporting this legislative shift, Conservatives espoused left-handed and feminist-sounding arguments that could easily be mistaken for second-wave feminist interventions.

This is not to say that right-handed anti-prostitution discourse has been completely ejected from the Conservative prostitution ban. Rather, MPs continue to draw on arguments about the victimization of children and Canadian communities. If sex work were legalized, Conservatives argue, it would occur in every neighbourhood and on every street corner, it would lead to increased drug use, and it would mean dirty condoms and used syringes in our parks and communities. Moreover, legal sex work would also contribute to the corruption and exploitation of Canadian children. Not only because children might be forced to “witness acts of prostitution” but also because, on the government's telling, sex workers are almost exclusively underage. This argument, of course, foreshadows more dominant and frequent arguments about the negative effects of sex work on sex workers and women.

In this respect, right-handed arguments are buttressed by newer, updated, and feminist-sounding conservative arguments. The argument that sex work harms sex workers themselves, for instance, is nearly as prevalent as older style arguments about the victimization of children. By portraying sex work as exclusively occurring through violence and coercion, sex work is represented as inherently incompatible with sex worker's choices, safety, and rights. This explicit argument about the victimization of sex workers, moreover, is reified by more implicit

representations of sex workers as agency-less victims and the conflation of sex work and trafficking. Through the telling and re-telling of the third-person narratives of women victimized by sex work, Conservative narratives completely exclude any competing conceptions or experiences of sex work.

Even more significant than the argument that sex work harms sex workers is the related notion that sex work victimizes *all* Canadian women. Drawing on second-wave feminist arguments, Conservatives argue that legal sex work is most problematic at the symbolic level. For legal sex work would signal that the government does not care about women or gender equality. What is perhaps most surprising is the extent to which Conservatives espouse feminist language and frames of analysis in drawing out this argument. For instance, by drawing on the experiences and legal strategies of social democracies like Sweden and Norway, Conservatives present Canada as *progressive* (a very unexpected frame given it is coming from a *Conservative* government). Even more notable, perhaps, is the ways that Conservative MPs use feminist and progressive language, arguments, and frames of reference. It is undoubtedly notable that MPs draw on the expertise of student unions, women, and feminists to buttress their case for bill c-36.

What this analysis indicates is that Conservative politicians and lawmakers do not only rely on the traditionally conservative discourse of victimization (as we saw in chapter 7). Rather, with respect to bill c-36 and the issue of sex work, Conservatives are shifting the stories they tell and their approach to both (1) women, and (2) victims. Moreover, there is evidence that these differences in Conservative justifications are not just one-offs but rather representative of larger differences in both Canadian Conservatives' approach to victims, and their approach to gender.

With this in mind, the following chapter more explicitly considers the relationship between older and newer discourses of victimization used to justify Conservative governance strategies in Canada. In particular, chapter 9 addresses questions about the relationship between the marketing of bills c-10 and c-36, asking: What similarities and differences can be drawn between the Conservative government's defence of bills c-10 and c-36. What do these similarities and differences tell us about the CPC's approach to victims and victimization? And, what might they unveil about the CPC's approach to gender and political persuasion more largely?

CHAPTER 9: INTERMEZZO #2: THE AMBIDEXTERITY OF CONSERVATIVE POLITICS IN CANADA

The previous two chapters highlight just how central discourses of victimization are in mainstream Canadian Conservative political discourse and governance. Quite simply, the “victim” is at the heart of the promotion of two of the most important of the Harper government’s legislative initiatives: criminal justice reform (bill c-10) and the re-criminalization of sex work (bill c-36). On the one hand, these findings underline the ways that traditional “right-handed” discourses of victim-making still play a crucial and active role in the development of Conservative political language, discourse, and arguments. On the other hand, however, it is clear that like their anti-abortion counterparts, Conservative politicians also buttress more stereotypical populist-style arguments of victimization with newer, revised, and left-handed “protect victim” arguments, particularly in their defence of bill c-36. The results of my critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Conservative discourse at the governmental level, then, raise potentially counter-intuitive findings that challenge mainstream theorizations of Conservative discourse, ideology, and governance in Canada. In fleshing out these conclusions, this chapter considers the key differences and similarities between the marketing of bills c-36 and c-10, arguing that, given the prominent role of gender and women in bill c-36, Conservatives were more likely to take up softer tones and arguments around victimization.

1.0 Similarities

Of course, the most significant similarity between the marketing of bills c-10 and c-36 is that both *fundamentally* rely on discourses, representations, and arguments of victims and victimization. It is not just that discourses of victimization are supplementary or reticent

elements of Conservative political persuasion. It is not that discourses of victimization work to buttress other more traditional and expected Conservative approaches and arguments – such as fiscal or socially conservative-based rhetoric. Rather, themes and appeals to “victims” are absolutely central in and of themselves to almost every argument, frame, or narrative used to market *both* bill c-10 *and* bill c-36. In the context of bill c-10, for example, not only was the “victim” the focal point of the vast majority of explicit arguments made in defence of the bill, but nearly 70% of the speeches also invoked at least one victim frame. Effectively, the defence of Conservative legislation is in itself the *practice of victimhood politics*.

Moreover, while the representations of victims used in defence of bills c-10 and c-36 do vary and diverge at times, they also share important similarities. For example, justifications for both bills often invoke arguments about the victimization of both Canadians/Canadian communities and children. With respect to discourses of community harm, both bills are justified using a populist logic that represents “regular” Canadians and communities as victimized. Whether it be by the fear of crime or the public nuisance of prostitution, it is in large part Canadians themselves who are the injured party.

More notable still is the significant role that children play as foremost victims. In the context of both bills, it is particularly children that are victimized by pedophilia, human trafficking, crime, sex work, drug dealers, and pimps and johns. Of course, this line of argument fits into a long tradition of political persuasion, which is perhaps expected given that children often represent the ideal model of victimhood (Lu 2017). Consider the incontestability of the presentation of children as victims. Children embody innocence and purity, and cannot bring harm onto themselves. Children represent an archetypical victim: one who in no way can be held responsible for its own victimization.

Echoing traditional and moralized Conservative tones, moreover, the danger being posed to children is often of a sexual nature in the context of both bills c-10 and c-36. On the government's telling, it is only by passing Conservative legislation that we can protect our children from becoming victims of molestation, pedophilia, and trafficking for the purposes of prostitution. Bill c-36, for example, is presented as a risk to children because they might be subjected to witnessing "acts of prostitution" or come across used condoms at the playground. On this logic, children deserve protection, in part, because of their wholesomeness. It is because of a (often sexualized) purity and innocence that children make the perfect category of victim for politicians to buttress their larger political claims.

Of course, the findings examined throughout chapters 7 and 8 also raise interesting and important questions about the ways that political arguments are often – and perhaps more powerfully – articulated through subtle and implicit forms of political persuasion rather than, for instance, explicit and easily discernible forms of argumentation. Rather than only relying on the fully articulated argument that crime/sex work victimized Canadians, Conservative lawmakers (like their activist counterparts) also activate more subtle and embedded frames and narratives. For example, the discursive reliance on anecdote-based evidence marks another important point of similarity across both bills. As discussed in chapter 6, these testimonials function as a sort of public victim impact statement. Often by recounting the graphic details of the victims' experiences of violence and abuse, third-person testimonials inject the experiences and emotions of "real" victims into Parliamentary debate. At the center of these stories is the endorsement of bills c-10 and 36 by victims themselves. The message implicit in this recounting of a victim's harrowing accounts of victimization is that victims support Conservatives and Conservatives support victims. Moreover, it is only by passing Conservative legislation that we can send

victims “the message” that they are being listened to, served, and protected. This couched presentation of Conservative policy as being endorsed by victims, then, lends a particular credibility to Conservative politicians and their policies.

Another point of convergence in the cases for bills c-10 and c-36 are the ways that both discourses were buttressed by a reliance on frames and evidence that drew on tones and themes of penal populism. Much of the evidence presented by Conservatives in defence of bill c-10 draws on what Saurette and Gunster have called “epistemological populism” (2011). According to Saurette and Gunster, epistemological populism borrows heavily from the rhetorical patterns of political discourse of populism to valorize knowledge of “‘the common people’, which they possess by virtue of their proximity to everyday life” (2011, 199). Their analysis of conservative talk radio in Canada, for instance, revealed that Conservatives are increasingly relying on discourses and narratives of epistemological populism through at least five “rhetorical techniques and assumptions”: (1) the presentation of first hand experience and expertise as a much more “reliable form of knowledge than those generated by theories and academic studies” (199), (2) valorizing certain types of experiences as particularly reliable and legitimate, (3) privileging emotions and feelings as an “indicator of the reliability of opinions” (199), (4) the use of populist-inspired discourse, and (5) appealing to “‘common sense’ as a discussion-ending trump card” (199). All five of the characteristics of epistemological populism identified by Saurette and Gunster seem to map quite closely onto my own findings in relation to Conservative Party politics, law-making, and governance.

A final point of similarity that emerged – or perhaps more accurately failed to emerge – throughout my discourse analysis lies in certain racialized dimensions of Conservative discourse that one might expect to be present in Conservative-orientations justifications. This is especially

relevant given the hyper-charged and politicized discussion around race and policing just south of the border. For in the United States (US), it has long been the case that the discussion around criminal justice reform has been permeated by both explicit and implicit appeals to race. It is for good reason, for instance, that the successor to the Civil Rights Movement has been Black Lives Matter – a movement born out of police brutality against Black communities and demands for police accountability. Of course, the debate over whether police officer Darren Wilson should have been indicted in the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson is only one (albeit crucial) lens through which larger claims about race and systemic and institutionalized racism are being made. However, there are compelling reasons criminal justice reform has structured the form and content of both historic and contemporary forms of Black activism in the US. For not only are Black men five times more likely to be incarcerated in the US, but also the tough on crime approach that has shaped so much of American criminal justice policy has always been infused with racialized language and justification (Lopez 2015). This has long been true for Presidents, both Democrat and Republican. It was Republican Ronald Reagan who ran against “welfare queens,” but it was Democrat Bill Clinton who launched racially coded attacks against welfare and “super predators” (Lopez 2015). Even more explicit was Richard Nixon, whose chief counsel said that a “subliminal appeal to the anti-black voter was always present in Nixon’s statements and speeches” (Kohn 2016). These trends, moreover, are supported by racially coded media coverage portraying Black Americans as “dangerous, less deserving of sympathy, and less capable of rehabilitation” than their white counterparts (Henry and Tator, 164).

Given the infusion of tough-on-crime discourse with racialized tones and themes in nearly all levels of American politics – as well as much higher rates of incarceration among racialized and Indigenous Canadians – observers might also expect to find similar themes in

Canadian debates over crime and punishment. And of course, as explored in chapter 7, the significant presence of arguments about “youth offenders” holds a similar potential of conjuring images of racialized Black “youth”. This language invokes very different imagery and emotional appeal than does speaking about innocent and victimized children. However, writ large, my analysis of both bills c-10 and c-36 found very little traces of these racialized dimensions in Canadian lawmaking. For many scholars, this will be a very surprising finding. As such, it is crucial to note right off the top that the whole story is more complex than the preceding sentence suggests. As such, it is worthwhile spending a little bit of time discussing this finding more fully.

It seems that while bill c-10 Americanized some elements of Canadian crime policy by toughening criminal justice responses, it did not import the same racialized tough-on-crime language as in the American context (at least not at the level of Conservative governance). Other than arguments about “youth”, there were no signs of significant implicit appeals, or explicit arguments, about criminals being racialized. In fact, the majority of villain frames deployed by MPs in defence of both bills were not explicitly, or even implicitly, racialized. Rather, as explored in both chapters 7 and 8, Conservative politicians framed criminals and perpetrators in abstract and unspecific ways. Moreover, despite an active search for other racialized, law and order “dog-whistles” (such as, “inner-city”, “thug”, “gang”, “gun violence”), my analysis turned up few results. In perhaps the most obvious example, MP Bernard Trottier proclaimed that with bill c-10, the “government has taken action to crack down on drive-by shooting and other intentional shootings that demonstrate a reckless disregard for the life or safety of others” (Carrie November 29, 2011). Of course, “drive by shooting” invokes the racialized imagery of gang violence. Moreover, the term “law and order” – which itself might be considered a dog-whistle – was only mentioned 10 times throughout the entire Parliamentary debate.

By in large, the Conservative defence of bill c-10 is not defined by an implicitly or explicitly racialized discourse. Rather, one of my most unexpected finding is that references to race were often more likely to occur in discussions about the victimization of marginalized communities. In the context of bill c-10, for example, Conservatives often present their crime bill as standing up for new immigrants who are vulnerable to exploitation. On Rob Nicholson's telling, bill c-10 is necessary because it "prevents the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable immigrants" (Nicholson March 12, 2012). Moreover, these types of appeals to immigrant safety were evident in 13 separate Conservative interventions, far outweighing speeches that explicitly or implicitly vilify racialized communities.

This trend was even more pronounced in the context of bill c-36, where the racialized tones that emerged were around vulnerability and protection, particularly around the "plight" of Indigenous women. On Erin O'Toole's telling, "Ms Bedford and a few sex workers who may feel that they are empowered and that there are no social harm from their participation in the sex trade do not speak for homeless aboriginal youth in Winnipeg" (O'Toole September 26, 2014). This intervention, of course, draws a distinction between "bad sex worker" (those who "may feel empowered") and those worthy of our compassion and protection (in particular "aboriginal youth"). The fact that it is the Conservative government that is the one protecting Aboriginal youth, however, is noteworthy.

Moreover, as discussed in chapter 8, MP Joy Smith often stood as a key ambassador of this type of updated Conservative argument. In one rather surprising intervention in defence of bill c-36, Smith went as far as to claim an Indigenous identity in order to drive her point home, arguing: "I am an honorary chief. I have been on reserves. I have the red shawl from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. My own family is aboriginal. I have such a heart for the murdered

and missing women” (Smith September 22, 2014). In completing her point, Smith urges us to consider that “a shift towards the legalization or normalization of prostitution... would be disastrous for women’s equality and for our aboriginal populations... It would turn the clock back years for women’s equality” (Smith September 22, 2014). For Smith, it seems that signaling the Conservative support for Indigenous women is not enough. Rather, Smith epistemologically positions herself *as* Aboriginal. While this might be an extreme example, it certainly hints at an, albeit perhaps superficial, shift in the positioning of the CPC in relation to Indigenous issues.

Regardless of the empirical reality of whether bills c-10 and c-36 do indeed protect immigrants, Indigenous women, and racialized minorities – and mounting evidence indicates that they do not – what is clear is that Canadian Conservative justifications of these bills are very different than older traditional Conservative appeals, and particularly those used by conservatives south of the border. This, of course, is not to say that race does not matter in Canadian politics, or even that race matters less than it does in the US. In fact, the differences between American and Canadian conservatives’ orientation towards crime and race might be an indication that we should pay *more* attention to race and the more subtle and implicit ways politics are racialized in Canada (Tolley 2016). This is especially true given that there is ample evidence that Conservatives in Canada are undergoing a self-conscious strategy shift on their approach to diversity and race (MacDonald 2004).

For example, reconciliation with Indigenous people has emerged as an, albeit reticent, theme at a number of Manning Centre Conferences throughout at least the past five years. The most explicit example of this shift came at the 2016 Manning Centre Conference, shortly following the Conservative Party’s electoral defeat to Trudeau’s Liberal Party. For the time in its

history, the Conservative networking event hosted a panel on Indigenous issues entitled, “Aboriginal Affairs: A Win/Win Solution.” At first blush, the use of the word “Aboriginal” – rather than First Nation, Native or Indigenous, the preferred term of most advocacy organizations – hints at an outdated, and potentially out-of-touch approach to reconciliation. By contrast, however, the content of the actual panel was somewhat surprising. For instance, the panel ended with a speech from a Metis elder who provided advice to Conservative activists about how to “create a friendship” with Indigenous Canada. While, unsurprisingly, the key take-away from his speech was that this friendship could be created through “economic and resource development,” he nevertheless gave advice and invoked a tone that was relatively unexpected given the Conservative venue. He argued, for instance, that Indigenous Canadians are “not just another group” but “a people with constitutional rights” and that in order to forge a better relationship between Indigenous and settler Canada, white Canadians would have to “acknowledge the Indigenous worldview” and demonstrate a “willingness to change based on consensus building” (Manning Centre Conference 2016, author’s observations). Perhaps even more surprising still was the inclusion of former NDP MP from Saskatchewan, John Richards, on the panel. Richards went even further, arguing that there needs to be a new and intense focus on Indigenous poverty, education, and employment.

Even more relevant to a discussion about Conservative politics, however, were the comments delivered by lawyer and Conservative activist Brian Lee Crowley. Crowley began his speech by waging a common critique of former Prime Minister Harper: there “is a sense,” argued Crowley, “that [Harper] is out of step with Canadian values,” that he is “hard and mean” (Manning Centre Conference 2016, author’s observations). This, Crowley further said, has caused Canadian Conservatives to be facing a “brand” crisis, and that the contemporary

Conservative movement needs to change, and change quickly. Most notable is that according to Crowley one of the most effective ways to lead this re-branding would be for Conservatives to “embrace Aboriginal Canada.” Moreover, on Crowley’s telling, the Canadian state’s relationship with First Nations is a “stain on the conscience of the country” and thus the “Truth and Reconciliation findings are important.” And no longer can Conservatives be “grumbling dissenters.”

Both the inclusion and substance of this panel at the Manning Centre Conference point to a very different discourse on race and race relations than we see in the United States. Moreover, post-merger, the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) has at times gone to great lengths to speak to “new” immigrant Canadians. For example, under Stephen Harper, former minister and current Alberta United Conservative Party leader Jason Kenny has been widely credited with undertaking what Marci MacDonald termed “one of the most ambitious projects of partisan outreach in recent political history: wooing immigrant voters to the Conservative fold” (MacDonald 2014). This, in large part, has involved sanitizing Conservative policy and discourse from explicitly anti-immigrant rhetoric that infused previous eras of Conservative policy-making. According to MacLeans, “Kenney is the architect of the Conservative majority, having worked discreetly, yet tirelessly, for the past five years to build bridges with Canada’s ethnic communities (Castonguay 2013).

Of course, the sanitization of both bills c-10 and c-36 from explicit, and even implicit, racial appeals might not reflect a genuine shift in ideology and approach to issues of race and race relations but rather a cynical instrumentalization of race and First Nation issues in Canada. Moreover, the continued popularity of figure like Doug Ford among conservatives in Canada indicates that insensitivity and ignorance to issues relating to race and racism remain in the

contemporary conservative movement (as well as throughout Canadian politics more largely). In this sense, the inclusion of a panel of Indigenous issues at the Manning Centre Conference (a one-off to date) might have been due to an increased openness to new ideas on the part of conference organizers given the beat-down the Conservatives received in the 2015 election that preceded the conference (after all, the theme of the larger conference was “Recharging the Right”). The following year, for example, the 2017 conference seemed to take a turn hard to the right following the election of Donald Trump in the US. The conference included speakers such as Doug Ford, Jordan Peterson, and Trump campaign organizer Georganne Burke (who wore a red “Make America Great Again” hat throughout her presentation). Perhaps more likely still, is that the shifting Conservative movement’s discourse on race and Indigenous issues – and in particular in the context of bills c-10 and 36 – is the result of a combination of both shifting norms around race *combined with* cynical political persuasion. Regardless, however, the fact that Conservatives are not using the same racialized tones and arguments as their American counterparts is notable for it both challenges many of our assumptions about Conservative discourse and ideology and holds the potential of resonating differently with voters and citizens.

2.0 Differences

It is undeniable that, in the context of bills c-10 and c-36, the discourses of victimization underpin the vast majority of Conservative arguments. The discursively elevated and idealized status of the victim is something that is remarkably consistent throughout Conservative discourse, at both the activist and policy levels. This finding certainly challenges many assumptions made about the anti-victimist and right-handed orientation of conservative discourse and ideology in North America. However, there are also important differences between the *types* of victim arguments used in defence of bills c-10 and c-36. Differences that highlight the varying, multiple,

and at times competing, nature of Conservatives' claims of victimization. In this respect, the victim-making claims made in defence of bill c-10 tend to differ from those made to promote bill c-36 in at least five significant ways.

First, arguments in defence of bill c-10 tend to position dangerous criminals ("them") as over-privileged by the criminal justice system at the expense of innocent victims of crime and regular law-abiding Canadians ("us"). This rightist populist narrative builds on traditional discourses of victimization invoked by other parts of activist politics in Canada's Conservative movement. The contention that criminals are getting off easy rests on the basic populist logic that criminals are threatening social outcasts who are taking advantage of the generosity of Canadians and the Canadian criminal justice system. This discourse, by contrast, is largely absent in the Conservative defence of bill c-36. While "pimps and johns" are the most frequent villains of Conservative narratives about sex work, little discursive energy is devoted to detailing the ways in which they deserve legal punishment.

Second and similarly, compared to their defence of bill c-36, Conservative MPs are much more likely to invoke right-handed populist-style attacks against their political opponents in making their case for bill c-10. According to the Conservative government, the Liberal and NDP's "elite" and "out-of-touch" status means that they cannot understand the real experiences of real Canadian people. Moreover, Canadians are also being victimized by this ignorance. While their political opponents might have statistics on their side, Conservatives are the only ones that can understand the *feelings* of Canadians. Conservatives understand that Canadians want to be safe, want victims and children to be protected, and want criminals to be held accountable. In the context of bill c-10, Conservatives come to self-represent as the side of common sense.

By contrast, the narratives put forward in support of bill c-36 are very different in structure. For instance, Conservatives were much less likely to attack the elitist politics of their political opponents. Once again, recall that a very significant 30% of the interventions justifying bill c-10 positioned the Liberals/NDP as villains. By stark contrast, only *one* speech made in defence of bill c-36 targeted the Liberals/NDP. Rather, as we saw above, Conservatives instead sought to present themselves as embodying the progressive values of equality and respect for women. Attacking opposing parties for being “soft on crime” does not seem to fit into a larger narrative that presents Conservatives as being advocates for women and gender equality.

It is not only the Conservative Party’s denigration of their opponents that differentiates the case for bills c-10 and c-36, however. The fourth point of divergence between the marketing of bills c-10 and c-36 is, then, is in the Conservative use of narratives and discourses of *vilification*. Recall from chapter 6 that discourses of victimization used to justify bill c-10 largely drew on the narrative victim-villain-hero narrative structure of penal populism. It was “us” – Canadians in general and victims of crime in particular –who are being victimized by dangerous and omnipresent criminals (“them”). The specifics around criminals (and criminality) are largely omitted from the narrative, but the broad strokes are in place: criminals are menacing, likely to re-offend, and exist on the outskirts of society. Criminals are not products of their communities or experiences, but rather they are one-dimension villains that must be segregated from society, punished for breaking the social contract. The Harper government’s adoption of the language of penal populism, of course, is equally reflected in PM Harper’s shift towards a zero-tolerance approach and the hardening of Canada’s criminal justice responses.

By contrast, in the context of bill c-36, Conservatives are much more opaque about the villains who victimize sex workers. While the penal populist narratives used in defence of bill c-

10 present crime as the result of dangerous and unchecked criminals, the stories told about sex workers emphasize their harrowing journeys, their experiences of victimization, and, most of all, their vulnerability. In contrast to Conservatives' representation of criminals as dangerous villains in bill c-10, sex workers are rather the victims of unfortunate circumstance – or worse yet, violence against women – and therefore are in need of compassion and protection. In fact, my discourse analysis revealed that when defending bill c-10 in Parliament, MPs were much more likely to adopt a “punitive” tone – presenting themselves as a strict father-type, fully capable and willing to crack down on the bad guys. Conversely, when addressing the issue of prostitution, Conservatives assumed a much more compassionate and benevolent tone, recognizing that support in leaving sex work and rehabilitation were key in combatting crime. In eight separate Parliament interventions, for instance, Conservatives celebrated bill c-36's allocation of \$20 million dollars to fund organizations that help sex workers exit prostitution.

In order to attempt to measure the tenor invoked by Conservative MPs, I coded each Parliament intervention according to what tone best described each Parliamentary speech. Each case was examined and coded in one of four ways: (1) as embodying a “strict/punitive” tone, (2) as embodying a “nurturing/compassionate” tone, (3) as embodying both tones, or (4) as embodying neither tone. If, for instance, a particular intervention was calling for criminals to be held accountable for the victimization they caused, that case would be coded as embodying a “strict/punitive” tone. If the MP called for compassion and understanding – or for us to understand, for example, that perpetrators of crimes can be victims too – it would be coded as “nurturing/compassionate” (see appendices D and E for full coding dictionaries). In coding, I paid special attention to the values Conservatives invoked. If values such as respect, authority, tradition, accountability, or toughness were invoked, an intervention would be coded as

“strict/punitive.” If, rather, the speech invoked values of equality, dignity, protection of the vulnerable, women’s rights, or compassion, the intervention would be coded as “nurturing/compassionate.” Of course, some speeches appealed one tone, both tones, and some to neither.

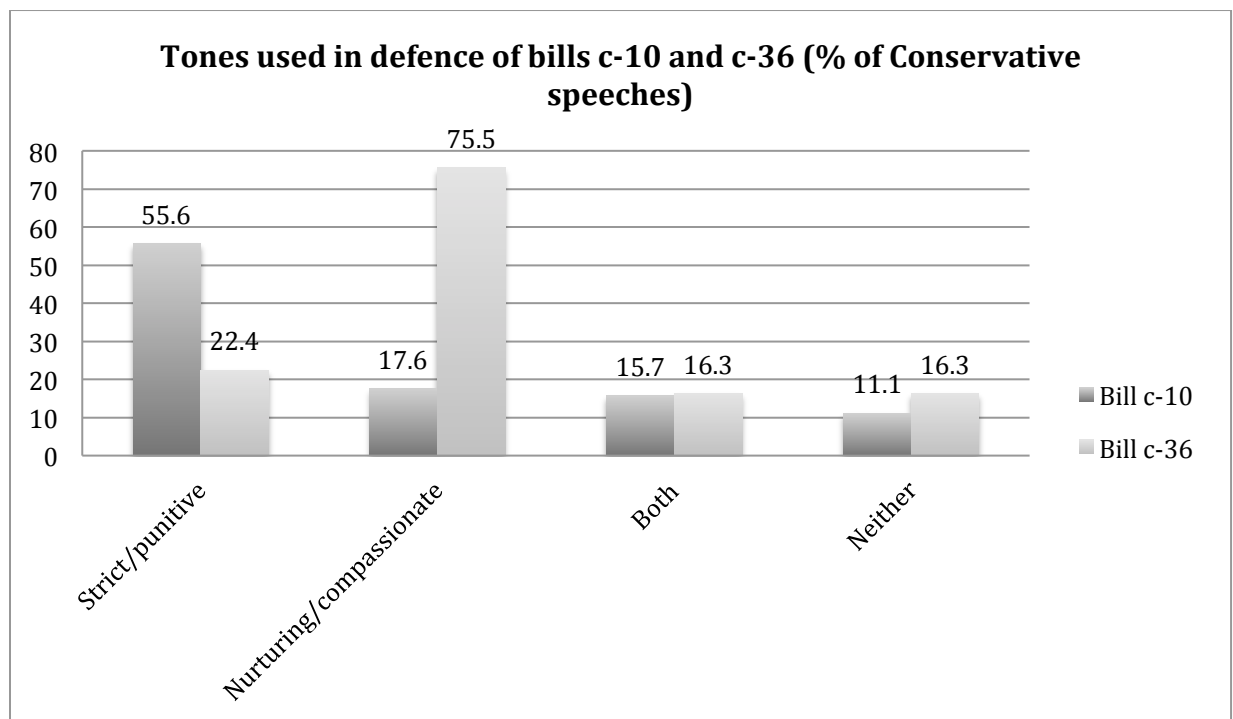


Figure 9.2

My discourse analysis reveals a nearly complete inversion in the tones used to support bills c-10 and c-36. The Conservative defence of bill c-10 was much more likely to take up a “Strict Father” and punitive orientation and tone, and in 55.6% of the cases, Conservatives invoke themes of accountability and toughness (as opposed to a mere 17.6% which invoked Nurturant Parent themes). This is perhaps expected given that the mandate of bill c-10 was to get tough on crime. On Rob Nicholson’s telling, “through four elections now [the CPC] have been very clear that we would get tough on the people who bring drugs into the country or are in the

business of sexually exploiting children. We make no apology for that” (Nicholson November 29, 2011). Indeed, themes of toughness, accountability, and strictness are the dominant orientation taken up by MPs in the context of bill c-10. Conservative MPs insist that the new crime bill will, “hold criminals accountable (Nicholson November 29, 2011), “support tougher measures”, “get tough with [criminals]” (Moore November 29, 2011), and meet the demands of the majority of Canadians who “would like our justice system to be more strict” (Goguen March 6, 2011).

In direct contrast, however, Strict Father themes were more muted in the Parliamentary marketing of bill c-36, present in less than one quarter of the cases (22.4%). Rather, at the center of the defence of bill c-36 lies a very different discourse – one of nurturance, compassion, and understanding. In a dominant 75.5% of the cases, MPs summon a Nurturant Parent metaphorical tone and orientation and, rather than appeal to tones of toughness, evoked tenors of protection and compassion. In line with this different, softer approach, it is the Conservative government that, “protect[s] vulnerable persons from oppression” (Goguen September 26, 2014), “help[s] people to transition out of sex work” (O’Toole September 26, 2014), and does “not allow the powerful to use and abuse the less powerful” (Block September 26, 2014). On the government’s telling, “[t]he paradigm has shifted. We now look at the survivors, the victims of human trafficking, with dignity and compassion. That is what our government has done. It has showed compassion” (Smith June 12, 2014).

Moreover, the relatively infrequent interventions in defence of c-36 that invoke punitive tones of “toughness” are almost exclusively directed at the clients of sex workers, and not at the workers themselves. In one demonstrative example, MP Royal Galipeau argues that bill c-36 will protect the most “vulnerable people in society... not by punishing them but by punishing all those around them who profit from their misery” (Galipeau September 26, 2014). Echoing her

colleague's sentiments, Joy Smith assures the Canadian public that "there is no arresting of the prostitutes" (Smith June 12, 2014). While some interventions made on behalf of bill c-36 clearly invoke the Strict Father tones of crime and punishment, it is not at sex workers (who are the "vulnerable people in society"). Rather, the law – and the CPC's strict punitive sensibility – is directed at the "violence [that] is perpetrated by johns and pimps" (Smith June 12, 2014).

What my comparison of bills c-10 and c-36 highlights is that the Conservative government, at various times throughout its tenure, invoked *very* different types of discourses of victimization. On the right hand, we have the government's marketing of bill c-10. Yes, at the center of bill c-10 is the notion that the CPC was going to protect regular Canadians from being victimized by criminals. However, this argument was very much buttressed by a Strict Father sensibility – one that celebrated toughness, authority, punishment, and severity. On the other hand, there is the government's tabling and left-handed defence of bill c-36. This discourse of victimization was, conversely, centered on a Nurturant Parent tone, one that decried the suffering and victimization of sex workers and vowed to protect them. Arguments in defence of bill c-36, then, drew heavily on themes of dignity, respect, women's rights, protection of the vulnerable, and compassion.

Moreover, these differences in tone also map onto broader differences in the bills' approaches to, and performances of, gender. The fifth and final difference between the marketing of bills c-10 and c-36, then, is the role of gender in their defence. Not only was the Conservative defence of bill c-36 much more likely to invoke explicitly gendered arguments and themes, but women were also more likely to speak in its defence and invoke "feminized" tones in doing so.

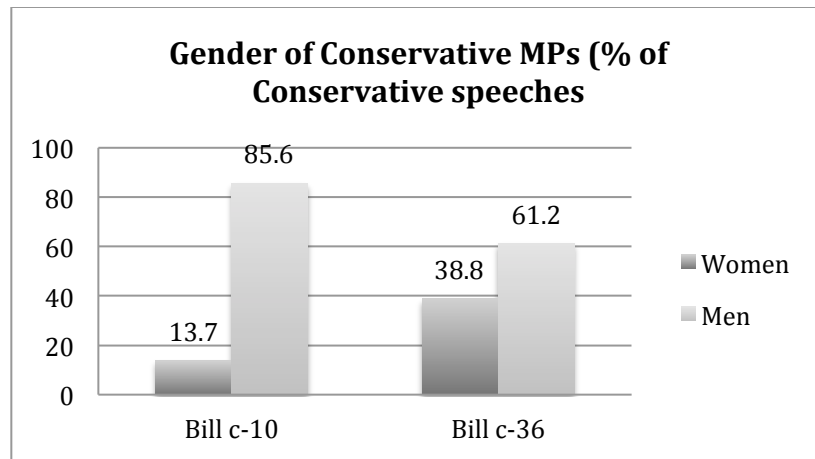


Figure 9.3

Consider the above figure 9.2. What is first evident from the graph is the extent to which women's voices in Parliament are under-represented across both bills. In the Parliamentary defence of both bills c-10 and c-10, women did not come even close to reaching the 50% mark of interventions. However, what the graph also highlights is that the under-representation of women's voices is much more evident in the defence of bill c-10. In a rather astonishing 85.6% of the cases, it was male MPs who spoke on behalf of bill c-10 in Parliament, in contrast to a very small 13.7% of the interventions given by women. At the time that bill c-10 was debated, 25% of the MPs were women. That means that even with respect to the already underwhelming representation of women in Parliament, women's voices were disproportionately absent in the debate over bill c-10.

Moreover, as we explored in chapter 7, male politicians were more likely to cite their experience in male-dominated fields (such as law enforcement and criminal law) to buttress their support for bill c-10. It is once again also interesting to note what issues are not addressed or taken up by bill c-10. For example, male violence against women, hate crimes against marginalized communities, or any forms of explicitly gendered and/or racialized violence were

completely absent from the legislative changes brought about by bill c-10 or in the government's defence of the bill. In many respects, Conservative discourse operates quite squarely within traditional spheres of masculine and male politics.

In comparison, female MPs were much more likely to speak in Parliament in defence of bill c-36, with female MPs delivering a total of 38.8% of the Parliamentary interventions. This means that, in relation to the number of female MPs in Parliament, women's voices were actually disproportionately over-represented in the debate over bill c-36. Moreover, as we explored in detail throughout the previous chapter, the fact that women were more likely to give speeches in support of bill c-36 also maps onto other important gender dimensions of the Conservative defence. For example, as we explored in chapter 8, many Conservative interventions could easily have been mistaken for speeches delivered by second-wave abolitionist feminists. And bill c-36 was regularly lauded as combatting "gender inequalities and normalizing the treatment of primarily women's bodies as bought and sold" (Blaney June 12, 2014).

Perhaps, these findings should not surprise us. For it has long been the case that women's involvement in politics has largely been through their involvement in traditional 'feminized' realms, such as family policy. Consider, for example, that the Suffragette movement in Canada fought for the vote not on the grounds of women's equality, but because they wanted to inject a "mother's touch" into politics (Pankhurst 2015). Moreover, the fact that the female MPs were more likely to defend bill c-36 – a bill that intersects in explicit ways with women's rights and safety – is just good politics. Having women speak on behalf of women allows political parties to create better optics and make more convincing claims of representation.

Regardless of the motivations behind this gender split, however, it is nonetheless a notable finding. What these differences suggest is that the CPC is ambidextrous, mobilizing two very different sets of Conservative justifications. Depending on the gendered context, the Conservative government was very capable of shifting not only its arguments and narratives, but also its tone, sensibility, and performance, in order to more persuasively market Conservative legislation. Consider, for instance, the way that these two hands of the Conservative government activate two very different sets of emotions from its audience: toughness vs. softness, outrage vs. compassion, punishment vs. understanding. Perhaps more notable still is that the ambidextrous nature of Conservative discourses of victimization is also inherently gendered; its one face is strong, severe, and male, and its other, sensitive, compassionate, and female. In these ways, the discourses of victimization mobilized by the Conservative government are both centered on victim-making claims *and* fundamentally shaped by gender.

3.0 Concluding remarks

Chapters 7 and 8 examined the ways in which Stephen Harper's Conservative government practiced the politics of victimhood through legislation and the discursive defence of those laws. We explored the various ways in which the vast majority of Conservative arguments made in defence of bills c-10 and c-36 were underpinned by both explicit arguments of victimization, as well as more implicit discursive frames and narratives. Moreover, the Conservative defence of both bills converged in important ways: both appealed to populist discourses; were centered on a children-as-victim argument; and largely re-positioned racialized Canadians as the victims, and not perpetrators, of crime. Equally important, however, is that the justifications offered in defence of both bills also diverged in significant ways. For instance, female MPs were much more likely to speak in defence of bill c-36 than bill c-10. Moreover,

while MPs relied more heavily on populist appeals and attacks in the context of bill c-10, they were more likely to avoid discourses of vilification with respect to bill c-36. And finally, perhaps the most notable difference is in the tones used to promote the two bills. My analysis revealed that Conservative discourse is two-handed, comprised of both a strict masculine ethos and a compassionate feminine one.

The next question, of course, is what does all of this tell us about larger trends in the politics of victimization in the Conservative movement in Canada? Do these differences and similarities map onto broader trends in Conservative political persuasion? It is to these questions that the final chapter now turns. In addition to summarizing the key findings of these dissertation, the final chapter will now explore these questions by examining the implications by analysis hold for Canadian conservative ideology, activism, and politics, as well as the implication by study holds for future research.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

Over the course of this dissertation, I argued that the conservative mobilization of discourses of victimization is complex, multi-faceted, and often counter-intuitive, *and* absolutely central to conservative political arguments, policy, and ideology in Canada. My findings suggest this is as true in conservative activist circles as it is in official Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) discourse. Moreover, while many “right-handed” discourses of victimization are perhaps expected forms of conservative rhetoric, other “left-handed” forms deeply challenge our understandings of conservative ideology and discourse in Canada. At the center of my argument, then, is the claim that the debate over the politics of victimhood is not a battle between anti-victim conservative and pro-victim progressives. But rather, conservatives, like their progressive counter-parts, also frequently mobilize discourses of victimization and “claim” victim status. In summarizing these findings, this final chapter concludes by outlining my main arguments and results and raising four key implications for both the study of conservative politics in gender in Canada.

1.0 Key arguments and findings

This dissertation advanced two additional and related arguments about the ambidextrous nature of conservative victim politics and discourse in Canada. The first is that *conservative activists and politicians mobilize two seemingly distinct sets of discourses of victimization*. One victim discourse is “right-handed”, most often invoking sensibilities of toughness, strictness, and anti-victimism. These right-handed forms of victim arguments largely deflect discussions of systemic forms of victimization, rather privileging individualized and vague accounts of victimization. As we saw throughout chapters 4, 7 and 8, common right-handed victims include

men, fathers, innocent children, hard-working Canadians, and victims of crime. These victim arguments are often buttressed by populist discourses, which seek to vilify women, feminists, criminals and predators for the victimization of Canadians.

Equally notable, however, is that conservative activists and politicians also summon more “left-handed” arguments and victims and victimization. These arguments are more likely to consider systemic forms of gendered and racialized victimization, often mimicking feminist, progressive, and anti-racist refrains. Moreover, left-handed conservative victim narratives often appeal to more distinctive sensibilities than their right-handed counter-part, expounding tones of compassion, understanding, and protecting – particularly towards women. Chapters 6 and 9, for example, considered the ways in which the right and the left hand of conservative discourses of victimization can evoke very different forms, structures, tendencies, and tones.

My second claim is that one cannot fully understand the ideological contours and discursive effects of conservative discourses of victimization without taking gender into account. In this respect, the ambidexterity of conservative victim arguments is also *integrally and fundamentally gendered*. For instance, both chapters 6 and 9 examined the ways in which the gendered circumstance (i.e. both the gender of who is speaking and the gender of the “victim”) seem to heavily influence the broad ideological and emotional orientation of conservative discourse. In particular, when women are framed as “victims” within conservative discourse, activists and politicians are more likely to adopt sympathetic, left-handed approaches to victims and processes of victimization. These gendered differences also mapped onto the conservative *performance* of victim politics, with women being underrepresented in the more “masculinist” domains of men’s rights activism and crime policy, and overrepresented in the “feminized” debates over abortion and sex work.

In elaborating these arguments, my dissertation offered a detailed analysis of the relationship between discourses of victimization and conservative activism and politics in Canada. Chapter 3 began this task by considering what role the “victim” has played in the formulation of conservative discourse and ideology in North America throughout the past three decades.

- Chapter 3 argued that over the past 30 years, North American conservatives have deployed three key discourses of victimization: discourses of victim-blaming, victim-making, and protecting the victims.
- To begin, discourses of victim-blaming have largely come to represent the most stereotypical and prototypical conservative discourses of victimization. Emerging out of the larger backlash against the rise of progressive and identity-based social movement, victim-blaming arguments often decry the rise of dangerous and predominant “cultures of victimization”, seeking to deconstruct and delegitimize (particularly systemic and progressive) claims of discrimination and victimization. While a victim-blaming ideological orientation continues to define much of contemporary American conservative politics, its impact has been much more restrained (although not completely absent) in Canadian politics.
- The second conservative discourses of victimization explored in chapter 3 are arguments and narratives of victim-making. Often operating in conjunction with victim-blaming, conservative discourses of victim-making construct a new category of “real” or “true” victims. In both Canada and the US, the rise of right-wing populism throughout the 1980s has opened up the discursive space for new victim-making arguments, in at least two notable ways. First, drawing on increasingly salient

neoliberal and market-oriented logics, conservatives suggest that taxation, wealth redistribution, and government handouts are victimizing “ordinary”, “middle-class”, and “tax-paying” citizens and families. Second, through the language of backlash populism, the language of the “Other” often supplements that of the “elite”, playing more to social conservative values of social order, ethno-nationalism, respect for tradition, and Christian morality.

- And finally, chapter 3 offered a preliminary examination of the rise of a new form of conservative discourse of victimization: “protect victim/women” arguments. Of course, protect women discourses have a long history in conservative politics, with roots in nineteenth century arguments that championed colonialism, as well as contemporary justifications for war-making. The framing of women as frail, submissive, and naïve victims by conservative advocates and politicians, then, can be traced far back in history. However, chapter 3 suggested that there are strong indications that these “protect victim/women” arguments are becoming increasingly prevalent and salient in contemporary conservative discourse, particularly in Canada.

Given the history of conservative discourses of victimization, Part I sought to examine to what degree discourses of victimization effect the formation of conservative *activist* arguments. Chapters 4, 5 and 6, then, compared the mobilization of discourses of victimization by two realms of conservative activism: the men’s rights movement (MRM) and the anti-abortion movement.

- My historical overview of North American men’s activism in chapter 4 revealed that contemporary men’s rights activism is marked by a number of notable differences from its fathers’ rights predecessor. In particular, my CDA offered evidence that the

MRM is organized online, not centered around one principal issue (such as fathers' rights), and, rather, defines itself through its oppositional and acrimonious relationship to feminism. The contemporary movement also actively eschews religious and conservative partisan identification, further distancing itself from both its American counterpart and fathers' rights predecessors.

- However, despite these differences, chapter 4 argued that men's rights activism is perhaps more importantly marked by similarities across time – especially in its relationship to the politics of victimhood. In particular, my analysis revealed both the historic and contemporary centrality of intertwining victim-blaming and victim-making discourses. Popular men's rights arguments, then, insist that it is men who are the “true” victims of violence and abuse; suffer at the hands of feminism; face legal and societal prejudice; and that no institutions are set up to help them. In this sense, MRAs continue to dual victim arguments.
- Chapter 5 began by arguing that, like its men's rights counterpart, the anti-abortion movement has also long mobilized anti-victimist tones and arguments. Particular at the height of the abortion debate throughout the 1980s, North American anti-abortion activists regularly blamed pregnant women for legal abortions in North America. Indeed, this was largely the case throughout all realms of Canadian politics – with activists, politicians, and judges deploying anti-victimist and anti-woman arguments.
- However, the central claim of this chapter was that while some anti-abortion arguments continue to rely on a fetus-as-victim frame, most contemporary victim arguments reposition women as the primary victims, rather than villains, of abortion. For instance, anti-abortion activists are much more likely to frame women as victims

than fetuses; the new dominant anti-abortion argument is the abortion-harms-women argument; and the “face” of the movement is increasingly female.

- Chapter 6 paused to explicitly compare men’s rights and anti-abortion discourses of victimization. I suggested that even though the men’s rights and anti-abortion movements emerged out of broadly similar political and social forces – and are marked by important policy and argument similarities – the two realms of conservative activism nevertheless deploy very distinct victim arguments. On the “right” hand, MRAs are much more likely to espouse anti-victimist tones and arguments, decrying women, feminism, and a matriarchal society than their anti-abortion counterparts. By contrast, anti-abortion activists draw on softer left-handed arguments that present women as victims by a pro-abortion society and dangerous men, feminists, and abortion providers.
- And finally, Part I concluded by arguing that the ambidexterity of conservative activist arguments map onto larger differences in the two movements’ respective approaches towards women and gender. While men’s rights arguments have remained relatively constant in its mobilization of anti-woman tenors and arguments, the anti-abortion movement, by contrast, has begun to market visual images of itself that represent it as much more women-led.

Part II extended my analysis by examining the discourses of victimization in mainstream Canadian Conservative Party politics. Indeed, the central arguments of chapters 7, 8 and 9 map quite closely onto those of Part I, for also at the heart of the Harper Conservative government’s law-making efforts lay a debate over “victims”.

- Chapter 7 began this investigation through a CDA of the CPC's defence of bill c-10 – a Conservative government bill that introduced a number of “tough on crime” measures into Canadian law. Despite the “victim” appearing in 68% of Conservative speeches, I contended that the Conservative defence of bill c-10 remains a relatively clear example of a right-handed conservative discourse. To use Stephen Harper's words, the victims described by Conservatives were “old-stock”: children, taxpayers, victims of crime, and hard-working Canadians (Gollom 2015). Further, I examined how the “form of evidence” offered by Conservative politicians worked, in often-subtle ways, to advance the Conservative narrative of victimization. By drawing on police support and testimonials and anecdote-based evidence, Conservatives amplified and privileged particular forms of expertise (for example, by the police), and they marginalized (empirical) evidence. Ultimately, chapter 7 revealed that there is continued evidence of discourses of victimization that align with more traditional and right-handed orientations of Canadian party politics. In particular, Conservative MPs continue to draw on explicit arguments, narratives, and frames that align closely with right-handed understandings of conservatism and its close relationship with populist discourse.
- However, these right-handed victim arguments were not the only – or perhaps even the most dominant – ones raised by my analysis. Chapter 8 argued that when marketing bill c-36 – a bill that recriminalized sex work in Canada – MPs often swapped right-handed arguments for softer left-handed ones. Of course, discourses of victimization about innocent children and Canadian communities remain a present and important element of the marketing of bill c-36. However, surpassing them in

frequency and dominance were arguments about victimized, exploited, and vulnerable sex workers. Perhaps even more surprising was the extent to which Conservative MPs linked arguments about victimized sex workers with larger discourses about gender inequality, Indigenous women, and the experiences of “progressive” countries like Sweden and Norway. The result is a starkly different approach to both women and victims than we saw in the context of bill c-10.

- And finally, chapter 9 outlined many of the similarities and differences between the marketing of bills c-10 and c-36. In both cases, for example, “children”, “communities”, and “hard-working Canadians” operated as ideal-types and abstract victims. The fact that the nature of the victimization experienced by children is sexual implies that morally-charged right-handed conservative discourse remains an important staple of contemporary conservative discourse. However, chapter 9 also argued that discourses of victimization invoked by Conservatives are fundamentally different from stereotypically right-handed forms. Moreover, the gendered dimension of both victim arguments is perhaps even further evident within the CPC. In defence of bill c-10, for example, Conservative speeches (overwhelmingly delivered by male MPs) relied on a penal populist narrative – where the rights of dangerous criminals were being privileged over those of suffering victims. By contrast, new left-handed speeches (most frequently delivered by female MPs) drew heavily on compassion and narratives about “victims” who deserve a second chance, appealing to gendered conceptions and framings of “vulnerability” and protection”.

2.0 Implications for the study of gender and Canadian conservative politics

My analysis holds four key implications for the ways that we understand conservative political ideology and discourse in Canada. First, my findings raise some interesting insights about the similarities and differences between victim politics at the activist level vs. the party level. Of course, my analysis revealed that both activists and politicians draw heavily on discourses of victimization – and both in ambidextrous ways. However, while the CPC’s right-handed “tough on crime” arguments often draw on masculinist forms of evidence – and are disproportionately delivered by male MPs – they are also fundamentally different than the anti-victimist and anti-woman arguments mobilized by MRAs. Not one Conservative speech, for instance, attacked women for flooding the justice system with false allegations of sexual violence or were explicitly sexist or racist. While the defence of bill c-10 maps onto the larger masculine characteristics and discourses of politics, it could by no means be accused of being overtly anti-woman. Therefore, it is fair to say that, at least in their marketing of conservative policy, there is very little relationship between the right-handed arguments of the MRM and those of Conservative politicians.

As I argued in chapter 4, there does seem to remain some appetite for backlash men’s rights arguments within the larger conservative movement. For example, controversial men’s rights figures like Jordan Peterson maintain active ties with members of the Conservative Party, regularly appearing at Conservative events and on Conservative media outlets. Moreover, this more right-handed part of the conservative movement seems to hold some power over larger conservative politics. The varying success attained by Conservative candidates like Doug Ford, Kevin O’Leary, and to a lesser extent Maxime Bernier, suggests that the MRM could soon be looking at a more sympathetic cohort of conservative politicians. However, as long as a “Harper

Conservative” like Andrew Sheer is in charge (a man who self-identifies as a feminist), explicit men’s rights arguments and tones will be sanitized from the party (Boesveld 2017). While Stephen Harper-type Conservatives may have regularly mobilized market-based, and at times backlash, populist discourses, their arguments rarely – if ever – contain explicitly anti-woman tones.

However, if the connections between the MRM and the CPC are relatively weak, we see a much closer connection between the anti-abortion movement and party politics. Of course, these ties should not be overstated. As James Farney has argued, it has been party politics to avoid the explosive “abortion issue” in Canada (2012). The fact that even Jason Kenney – who started his career as a militant anti-abortion activist – skipped a recent vote on creating protective buffer zones around Albertan abortion clinics is indicative of Farney’s point (Graney 2018). That Kenney would avoid voting rather than risk political backlash indicates that the anti-abortion movement’s relationship with mainstream Conservative Party politics is a precarious one.

However, the anti-abortion movement has nevertheless had a number of recent “wins”, with vocal anti-abortion activists securing a number of important Conservative leadership positions. Currently, the CPC, Alberta’s United Conservative Party, the Saskatchewan Party, and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party are all led by men who have been outspoken in support of more restrictive legal regulations on abortion care in Canada. Moreover, recent events – for instance, the debate over Rachael Harder’s chairing of a House of Commons’ Status of Women committee and the backlash over Justin Trudeau’s de-funding of anti-abortion internship programs – suggest that their shifting approach to discourses of victimization could very well be building them public support within conservative parties, as well as with the larger Canadian public.

Second, my analysis raises a number of interesting insights with regard to the ideological contours of conservatism in Canada. For instance, my findings highlight the way Conservatives deploy a wide assortment of different discourses and arguments about victims that are diverse and, at times, contradictory, a reminder that political and social movements are fragmented, strategic, and multi-vocal. In this respect, my research offers theoretical insights into the variety of ways that contemporary political persuasion functions in a political movement – especially in regard to their relationship to the politics of victimhood and gender. These findings remind us that despite the fact that many observers tend to view them as homogenous and slow to change, many conservative political and social movements are marked by important internal differences and comprised of seemingly contrasting discursive and ideological approaches.

Third, my analysis of the multitude of conservative discourses of victimization contributes to, and expands on, our understanding of conservative politics, social movements, and political persuasion. My findings suggest that conservative discourse *fundamentally* relies on discourses, representations, and arguments of victims and victimization. It is not just that discourses of victimization are supplementary or muted elements of conservative political persuasion. It is not that discourses of victimization work to buttress other more traditional and expected conservative approaches and arguments – such as fiscal or socially conservative-based rhetoric. Rather, themes and appeals to “victims” are resolutely central to the practice of conservative politics in Canada. My findings, then, contribute to further academic understandings of Canadian conservatism, especially in its relationship to gender, suggesting that many conservative arguments are not primarily framed in free-market, neoliberal, social conservative, or populist discourse, as much of the existing literature contends. But rather, Conservatives also actively appropriate and redeploy many progressive and feminist arguments

about victimization. This counter-intuitive finding holds implications about the way we approach and study conservative politics in Canada.

In some ways, my analysis of conservative discourses of victimization confirms what the vast majority of the literature argues about conservative ideology – that it is more blue tory than red, populist than elitist, and law and order, rather than “compassionate conservative”. In particular, I foresee the victim-making claims of penal populism being an increasingly prevalent trend in Canadian conservatism. While former conservative parties and governments largely converged with the Liberal Party’s more moderate approach to crime legislation – often adopting nearly identical policy platforms (Webster and Doob 2015) – the contemporary CPC seems firmly committed to a more punitive and tough on crime approach. The party’s “tough on crime” credentials, for example, are prominently featured on its website and were a key component of leader Andrew Sheer’s leadership bid (Payton 2017). Moreover, it seems this shift has influenced the policy platforms of more progressive parties. Whereas earlier NDP campaign platforms stressed rehabilitation and restorative justice, beginning in 2011 under Jack Layton, the NDP platform has increasingly committed to introducing tougher punishments and hiring more police officers as the primary mechanisms for reducing crime (CBC News April 19, 2011). Both the influence of the tough on crime agenda on Canadian party politics and ideology, and its relationship to larger discourses of victimization, make it an area of increasing influence in the future.

However, my analysis also adds to the literature on conservative ideology and politics in Canada by examining how gender influences conservative arguments and politics. Over the past decade, both scholars and journalists have tracked the rise of a right-handed Canadian conservatism, which has largely distinguished itself from past forms of “red tory” conservatism through its

endorsement of a new individual populist ideology under the leadership of politicians such as Preston Manning and Stephen Harper (Saurette and Gunster 2011, 2013; Farney 2013; Farney and Rayside 2012; Laycock 2002; Martin 2010; MacDonald 2010; Nadeau 2011; Flanagan 1995, 2001, 2007; Malloy 2009). However, discussions about the role that women and gender have played in contemporary conservative politics and arguments have largely been left out. In this context, my findings raise implications about the ways in which gender and women are mobilized within conservative political movements and parties, in particular in their relationship to discourses of victimization.

And finally, my findings hold implications for the realm of electoral politics as well – for if the discourses of victimization in conservative politics are shifting, in particular in their relationship to women, this may impact long-term electoral trends in Canada. This is particularly relevant given that since the 2015 election, the CPC has been in a “phase of re-building and re-branding” (Manning Centre Conference 2016, author’s observations). For instance, in a speech given in 2016, conservative lawyer and activist, Brian Lee Crowley, argued that the CPC lost the 2015 election because there was an ever-persisting “sense” that PM Stephen Harper “is out of step with Canadian values,” and “hard and mean” (Manning Centre Conference 2016, author’s observations). This, Crowley furthered, has caused Canadian conservatives to face a “brand” crisis, which points to the contemporary conservative movement’s need to change, and change quickly. For Crowley, one of the most effective ways to lead this re-branding would be for Conservatives to stop being “grumbling dissenters” that are perceived as “anti-woman, anti-climate change, and anti-Aboriginal” (Manning Centre Conference 2016, author’s observations). Moreover, these types of conversations are relatively common in conservative circles. Over the last few years, for instance, we have seen an increasing willingness on the part of female

Conservative politicians to highlight their own experiences of victimization (Ambrose 2017; Rempel 2016). For the most part, these accounts have been met with support from the CPC, perhaps indicating that the shifting norms and approaches in Canadian Conservative's framing of victims – and women – are developments well worth observing.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF CONSERVATIVE EVENTS ATTENDED

Date	Event	Location of event	Organizer of event
2012 (May 10)	March for Life	Parliament Hill, Ottawa, ON	Campaign Life Coalition
2012 (May 11)	Pro-Life Annual Youth Conference	Hamptons Inn, Ottawa, ON	Campaign Life Coalition
2013 (May 9)	March for Life Catholic Mass	St. Patricks Basilica, Ottawa, ON	Association for Reformed Political Action
2013 (May 9)	March for Life	Parliament Hill, Ottawa, ON	Campaign Life Coalition
2013 (May 10)	Pro-Life Annual Youth Conference	Hamptons Inn, Ottawa, ON	Campaign Life Coalition
2013 (September 23)	Welcome back to Parliament Event	The Metropolitan, Ottawa, ON	Equal Voice
2013 (October 26)	Fraser Institute Student Seminar	Courtyard Marriot, Toronto, ON	Fraser Institute
2013 (November 1)	An evening with Barbara Kay	Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON	Free Thinking Film Society
2013 (November 6)	Women's inspiration series: The Rt. Hon. Kim Campbell	Social Sciences Building, University of Ottawa	Equal Voice and the University of Ottawa
2014 (May 8)	March for Life	Parliament Hill, Ottawa, ON	Campaign Life Coalition
2014 (May 9)	Pro-Life Annual Youth Conference	Hamptons Inn, Ottawa, ON	Campaign Life Coalition
2014 (February 27-28)	Manning Centre Conference	The Ottawa Convention Centre, Ottawa, ON	The Manning Centre
2015 (March 6-7)	Manning Centre Conference	The Ottawa Convention Centre, Ottawa, ON	The Manning Centre
2015 (November 11)	Barabara Kay Speaks in Ottawa! "A question of honour: Sexuality and culture in the political crosshairs"	University of Ottawa	Canadian Association for Equality
2016 (February 26-27)	Manning Centre Conference	The Ottawa Convention Centre, Ottawa, ON	The Manning Centre

2017 (February 24-25)	Manning Centre Conference	The Ottawa Convention Centre, Ottawa, ON	The Manning Centre

APPENDIX B: CODING DICTIONARY FOR THE MEN’S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

I. Demographics

1. What is the **gender** of the author?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Not specified
2. Is the author a **regular contributor** to men’s right forums?
 - Regular blogger
 - Semi-regular blogger
 - Guest contributor
 - Not specified
 - Other (specify)
3. What is the **nationality** of the author?
 - Canadian
 - American
 - Not specified
 - Other (specify)
4. What is the **approximate age** of the author (based on picture, in-text description, etc)?
 - Under 30
 - Between 30 and 50
 - Over 50
 - Not specified
5. What is the **race/ethnicity** of the author (based on picture, in-text description, etc)?
 - White
 - Black
 - Asian
 - Indigenous
 - Other (specify)
 - Not specified
6. What is the **class/income** of the author (based on available information)?
 - Low income/lower class
 - Medium income/middle class
 - High income/upper-middle class
 - Other (specify)
 - Not specified

7. What are the **political inclinations** of the author (based on available information)?
- Conservative
 - Progressive
 - Liberal
 - Libertarian
 - Humanist
 - Not specified
 - Other (specify)
8. What is the **religion** of the author (based on available information)?
- Catholic
 - Evangelical
 - Christian
 - Jewish
 - Atheist
 - Other (specify)
 - No religion
 - Not specified

II. Gender representation/construction

9. How does this piece represent female feminists?
- Representatives of a dominant ideology
 - Representatives of an extremist ideology
 - Representatives of a minority ideology
 - Correct (right facts/analysis)
 - Misguided (wrong facts, no attribution of blame)
 - Purposefully untruthful (wrong facts, attribution of blame)
 - Anti-male
 - Pro-male
 - Out of touch with reality (elites/radicals/etc)
 - Representative of Canadian values (positive)
 - Representative of Canadian values (negative)
 - Hateful
 - Loving
 - Rageful
 - Respectful
 - Weak
 - A conspiracy/agenda, etc.
 - Other (specify)
10. On the whole, are the representations of women in this piece **negative or positive**?
- Positive
 - Negative
 - Both
 - Not applicable

11. How does this piece represent male feminists? **[code any that applies]**

- Representatives of a dominant ideology
- Representatives of an extremist ideology
- Representatives of a minority ideology
- Correct (right facts/analysis)
- Misguided (wrong facts, no attribution of blame)
- Purposefully untruthful (wrong facts, attribution of blame)
- Anti-male
- Pro-male
- Out of touch with reality (elites/radicals/etc)
- Representative of Canadian values (positive)
- Representative of Canadian values (negative)
- Hateful
- Loving
- Rageful
- Respectful
- Weak
- A conspiracy/agenda, etc.
- Other (specify)

12. On the whole, are representations of men in this piece **negative or positive**?

- Positive
- Negative
- Both
- Not applicable

III. Explicit Argumentation

III (a) Issues and positions:

13. Does piece advance a **clear/comprehensible issue/position**?

- Yes
- No
- At times

14. What is/are the **issue(s)** being discussed?

- The men's rights movement strategy
- The men's rights movement (general)
- Media bias
- Pick up culture
- Suicide
- False allegations of sexual assault
- Sexual assault (against men)
- Sexual assault (against women)
- Custody issues
- Male's legal inequality
- Male's social inequality
- Women's legal inequality

- Women's social inequality
- Fatherhood (general)
- Motherhood (general)
- Reproductive rights
- Domestic Violence (against men)
- Domestic Violence (against women)
- Misandry (general)
- Misogyny (general)
- Men's health
- Women's health
- Sexual abuse of boys
- Sexual abuse of girls
- The decline of boys (general)
- Gender gap in education system
- Homelessness
- Chivalry
- Censorship
- Men in the military
- Women in the media
- Women in men's spaces
- Men in women's spaces
- Sexual frustration
- Femininity (general)
- Masculinity (general)
- Event advertisement
- None
- Other (specify)

15. What **policy solution (if any) is advanced?**

- Free speech
- Retrenchment of the welfare state
- Expansion of public services
- The need for individuals to take responsibility
- The need for the nuclear family to take responsibility (or to be given more freedom to take responsibility)
- A return to tradition/history
- More governmental action
- Less governmental involvement
- Law and order approach
- Culture Change
- More education
- None
- Other (specify)

16. What **ideal strategy (if any) does the men's rights movement advocate in this piece?**

- Legislative approach (we need to change laws)
- Hearts and mind approach (we need to change culture)
- Consciousness-raising approach (we need male spaces for men to speak about being men)

- Moderation/prudence/compromise (we need to use mainstream/sanitized language)
- Hard-line/no compromise/fight for principle approach (we need to push the envelop to force people to finally listen)
- Other (specify)

17. Is the bulk of this piece about the issues/position identified? (i.e. if the piece raises the issue of male suicide, does most of the piece actually speak to the issue of suicide)
- Yes
 - No (specify)

III (b): Arguments and justifications:

18. If the piece raises one or more concrete issue, does it advance one or more **justificatory arguments**?
- Yes
 - No

35. If yes, **what argument/justification** is advanced?

- Feminism harms boys/men
- Feminism harms children
- Feminists are liars
- Women (general) harm boys/men
- Women harm children
- Women (general) are liars
- Mothers harm boys
- Mothers are liars
- Wives/partners harm men
- Wives/partners are liars
- Divorce harms children
- Not seeing both parents harms children
- Not seeing your father harms children
- Our status-quo system harms boys/men (i.e. the courts, political system, culture, schools etc.)
- Men are under-represented in certain areas of society (need better representation)
- Men have less choice than women in Canadian society (need more choice)
- Men have less resources than women (need more resources)
- Men are ignored by society
- Other (specify)

IV. Values

19. What **values** are being invoked?
- Negative freedom (i.e. freedom from intervention)
 - Positive/substantive freedom (i.e. freedom from structural limitations)
 - Privacy (idea that the private realm should not be subject to moral regulation)
 - Responsibility/accountability (people should be held responsible/accountable for their decisions)
 - Formal equality (i.e. equality of opportunity, equality before the law)
 - Substantive equality (i.e. more robust understanding of equality, equality of access that allow individuals to thrive)

- Patriotism/Nationalism (appeal to a common ‘Canadian’ identity)
- Cosmopolitan solidarity (appeal to a common community or global humanity)
- Respect for authority
- Tradition/convention
- Stability/order
- Diversity/pluralism/tolerance
- Dignity/respect
- Progress
- Fairness
- Choice
- Human rights (appeal to human rights in a global sense, i.e. ‘men/women’s rights are human rights’)
- Other (specify)

V. Framing

20. Does this piece **frame the men’s rights position** as a return to the past, preservation of status quo, or change/revolution?
- Frame supported position as return to past (nostalgic)
 - Frame supported position as preserving status quo
 - Frame supported position as instituting change/revolution/overthrow of status quo
 - Other (specify)
21. How does this piece **frame** the men’s right movement?
- Persecuted
 - As a growing movement
 - As a shrinking movement
 - As a mainstream movement (representing the moral majority)
 - As a progressive movement
 - As a traditionalist movement
 - As an equalist/humanist/equality movement
 - As a (necessary) counter movement to feminism
 - As a result of feminism
 - As a continuation of feminism
 - As a populist movement
 - As a crusade
 - Other (specify)
22. What is this piece’s **orientation towards women/gender equality**?
- For gender equality, because women are disadvantaged/discriminated against
 - For gender equality, because men are disadvantaged/discriminated against
 - Gender equality has already been achieved
 - Women and men are both unequal in different ways, equality should not be the goal (i.e. men should be masculine, women should be feminine)
 - Other
23. What is this piece’s **orientation towards feminism**? [code any that applies]
- Anti-(all) feminism

- Pro-(all)feminism
- Defending earlier forms of feminism (suffragettes, equality before the law)
- Anti-suffrage/anti-equality before the law
- Attacking 2nd wave
- Defending 2nd wave feminism ('equality of opportunity' feminism, pay equity, etc.)
- Attacking 3rd wave
- Defending later forms of feminism (3rd wave)
- Attacking feminist men
- Defending feminist men
- Feminism is an ideology of discrimination (i.e. analogies to racism etc.)
- We are past the need of feminism (post-feminist)
- No explicit reference to feminism
- Other (specify)

24. What (if any) **political/social movements** are analogized with the men's rights movement (i.e. identity-frame extension)?

- The Women's Movement
- Civil Rights Movement
- The Gay Rights movement (1980s)
- LGBTQ/Queer Movement (current)
- The Disability Movement
- The Conservative Movement
- The Labour Movement
- None
- Other (specify)

25. What (if any) **political/social issues** are analogized with the men's rights movement (i.e. issue-frame extension)?

- Human rights (general)
- Civil Rights (general)
- LGBTQ Rights (general)
- Disability Rights (general)
- Women's Rights (general)
- Ageism
- Gay marriage
- Discrimination against LGBT in workplace
- Gay bashing (verbal/physical)
- Gay adoption
- Underrepresentation of LGBT in politics
- Suffrage
- Contraception
- Equal pay for women
- Discrimination against women in the workplace
- Underrepresentation of women in politics
- Abortion rights
- Domestic abuse against women
- Equality of education for women
- Sexual harassment against women

- Sexual violence against women
- Abolition of slavery
- Equality of education against racial minorities
- Equal pay for racial minorities
- Discrimination against racial minorities in the workplace
- Underrepresentation racial minorities in politics
- Other (specify)

VI. Tones and emotion

26. Does this piece use **emotional language**?

- Yes
- No

27. What **type of emotional language** does this piece invoke?

- Language that expresses strong positive emotion (i.e. solidarity, progress, hope)
- Language that expresses strong negative emotion (i.e. rage, anger, frustration)
- Neither

28. Which type of **positive emotion**?

- Solidarity
- Progress
- Hope
- Pride
- Joy/happiness
- Gratitude/appreciation
- Peace
- Love
- Satisfaction
- Relief
- Admiration
- Compassion
- Courage
- Excitement
- Other (specify)

29. Which type of **negative emotion**?

- Anger
- Rage
- Grief
- Hate
- Annoyance
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Impatience
- Frustration
- Outrage
- Shame

- Depression
 - Bitterness
 - Desperation
 - Discourage
 - Disgust
 - Jealousy
 - Sadness
 - Other (specify)
30. Does this piece use significant **ad hominem** attacks or defences to support its position?
- Yes
 - No
31. If yes, what **type of ad hominem attack/defence** does this piece invoke?
- Ad hominem attack (negative use to discredit a person/institution/author/etc. based on personal characteristics)
 - Ad hominem support (positive use to support a position based on the positive virtues of a person/institution/author/etc.)
 - Other (specify)
32. Does the piece contain **populist overtones**?
- Yes
 - No
33. If yes, what **type of populism** does this piece evoke?
- Political populism (repurpose political institutions from elite)
 - Market populism (government should stay out of the market)
 - Backlash populism (directed at social/cultural targets, i.e. political correctness)
 - Nationalistic populism (anti-immigration, in the name of national unity)
 - Other (specify)
34. Does this piece invoke **humour** to support its position?
- Yes
 - No
35. Does this piece invoke a **Strict Father (punitive) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?
- Yes
 - No
 - About what (specify)
36. Does this piece invoke a **Nurturant Parent (compassionate) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?
- Yes
 - No
 - About what (specify)

VII. Narratives

37. Does this piece use any part of a **narrative structure** to make its case?

- Yes
- No

38. Who is the **hero**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Men's rights activists
- Women not in the men's rights movement
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- Mothers
- Single mothers
- Married mothers
- Women without children
- Single women
- Married women
- Divorced/separated women
- Fathers
- Single fathers
- Married father
- Men without children
- Single men
- Married men
- Divorced/separated men
- Feminists
- Anti-feminists
- The MRAs/Men's rights movement
- Conservatives/traditionalist
- Progressives
- The Canadian state
- The current government
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

39. Who is the **villain**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Men's rights activists
- Women not in the men's rights movement
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- Mothers
- Single mothers

- Married mothers
- Women without children
- Single women
- Married women
- Divorced/separated women
- Fathers
- Single fathers
- Married father
- Men without children
- Single men
- Married men
- Divorced/separated men
- Feminists
- Anti-feminists
- The MRAs/Men's rights movement
- Conservatives/traditionalist
- Progressives
- The Canadian state
- The current government
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

40. Who is the **victim**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Men's rights activists
- Women not in the men's rights movement
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- Mothers
- Single mothers
- Married mothers
- Women without children
- Single women
- Married women
- Divorced/separated women
- Fathers
- Single fathers
- Married father
- Men without children
- Single men
- Married men
- Divorced/separated men
- Feminists
- Anti-feminists
- The MRAs/Men's rights movement

- Conservatives/traditionalist
- Progressives
- The Canadian state
- The current government
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

VIII. Epistemology

41. How does this article **persuade**?

- Narrative
- Brand Identity
- Issue Identity
- Standpoint (male)
- Standpoint (female)
- Explicit argument
- Value-based
- Other (specify)

42. What **types of evidence** are provided to support the positive of this piece?

- Expert studies
- Science
- Authoritative texts
- Religious texts
- Standpoint (men)
- Standpoint (women)
- Other (specify)

43. Do they use any of the following **techniques of ‘rhetorical’ moralization**?

- Explicitly evoke a ‘moral frame’ (“we” are morally right/superior/good)
- Explicitly evoke an ‘immoral frame’ (“they” are immoral/inferior/evil)
- Evoke “natural” grounds by appealing to biology/human nature
- Evoke ‘transcendent’ moral grounds by appealing to religious authority
- Frame as family values
- Frame as Canadian values
- Frame as Western values
- Other (specify)

IX. Race and the Canadian nation

44. Is there any **explicit mention of race**?

- Yes
- No

45. Is there any **implicit suggestion of race**?

- Yes
- No

46. Is there anything **interesting in relation to race**?

- Yes (specify)
- No

47. Does this piece invoke a “**Canadian identity**” in any way?

- Yes (specify)
- No

48. If so, **how is Canada represented** by this piece?

- Kinder and gentler Americans
- Competent
- Strong
- Muscular internationalist
- Peacekeeper
- Peace enforcer
- Superpower
- Benevolent
- White knight/rescuer
- Embodiment of the right (western) values
- Noble
- Middle power
- Civilized
- Part of a western brotherhood
- Other (specify)

X. LGBT Issues

49. Is there any **explicit mention of sexual orientation**?

- Yes
- No

50. Is there any **implicit suggestion of sexual orientation**?

- Yes
- No

51. Is there anything **interesting in relation to sexual orientation**?

- Yes (specify)

XI. Miscellaneous

52. How **interesting** is this piece?

- 1-5
- 5-8
- 8-10

53. Is this piece **comprehensible**?

- Yes

- No
- At times

Does this piece describe any **woman's physical attributes**?

- Yes (specify)
- No (specify)

55. Does this piece describe any **man's physical attributes**?

- Yes (specify)
- No (specify)

APPENDIX C: CODING DICTIONARY FOR THE ANTI-ABORTION MOVEMENT

I. Demographic

1. What is the **gender** of the MP?
 - Male
 - Female
 - No specified gender
2. What is the **approximate age** of the MP?
 - Under 30
 - Between 30 and 50
 - Over 50
 - Unknown age
3. What is the **race/ethnicity** of the author (based on picture, in-text description, etc)?
 - White
 - Black
 - Asian
 - Indigenous
 - Other race/ethnicity (specify)
 - Not specified

II. Explicit arguments

4. What **anti-abortion arguments** are advanced in defence of the anti-abortion position?
 - Fetal personhood
 - Abortion harms women
 - Abortion harms society
 - Abortion harms men
 - Wrong side of history argument
 - Other
5. What **types of harm** does the ‘abortion-harms-women’ argument assert abortion causes?
 - Physical/medical harm
 - Psychological harm
 - Harmful to personal life
 - General, unspecified
 - Wrong side of history argument
 - Other

III. Evidence

6. What types of **evidence** does anti-abortion discourse provide to support its position?
 - Expert/research study/statistics
 - Appeals to religious faith or sources
 - Narrative/personal experience/individual story
 - Other

IV. Tone and Narratives

7. Does this piece invoke a **Strict Father (punitive) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - About what (specify)
8. Does this piece invoke a **Nurturant Parent (compassionate) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - About what (specify)
9. Do anti-abortion activists draw on **narratives** (or any part of the narrative structure) to support its position?
 - Yes
 - No
10. Who is the **hero** of the narrative?
 - Anti-abortion activists/the anti-abortion movement
 - Mothers
 - Pregnant women
 - Fathers/men
 - Fetus/unborn children/babies
 - Other
11. Who is the **victim** of the narrative?
 - Anti-abortion activists/the anti-abortion movement
 - Mothers
 - Pregnant women
 - Women (more generally)
 - Fathers/Men
 - Fetus/unborn children/babies/pregnancy
 - Society
 - The traditional family
 - Other
12. Who is the **villain** of the narrative?
 - Abortion providers
 - Feminists/ Feminism
 - Society
 - Mothers
 - Pregnant women
 - Fathers/Men
 - Other (any other character that did not fall into the above characters – specifics of each case were noted)

APPENDIX D: CODING DICTIONARY FOR THE DEBATE OVER BILL C-10

I. Demographic

1. What is the **gender** of the MP?
 - Male
 - Female
 - No specified gender
2. What is the **approximate age** of the MP?
 - Under 30
 - Between 30 and 50
 - Over 50
 - Unknown age
3. What is the **race/ethnicity of the author** (based on picture, in-text description, etc)?
 - White
 - Black
 - Asian
 - Indigenous
 - Other race/ethnicity (specify)
 - Not specified

II. Representation of gender in ‘tough on crime’ debate

4. How are **women represented**?
 - Negative representation
 - Positive representation
5. How are **men represented**?
 - Negative representation
 - Positive representation
6. How does this piece **represent the police**?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Violent
 - Non-violent
 - Trustworthy
 - Untrustworthy
 - Tough on crime
 - Soft on crime
 - Physically strong
 - Physically weak
 - Humble
 - Arrogant
 - Possessing integrity
 - Lacking integrity
 - Courageous
 - Fair and balanced

- Protective
- None
- Other

III. Explicit Argumentation

7. What **explicit argument(s)** is/are used to advance bill c-10?
 - Organized crime/gangs harming Canadians/communities
 - Drugs harm Canadian/communities
 - Trafficking harms Canadian/communities
 - Slippery slope (need early and tough intervention)
 - Canadian/communities are victimized/victims of crime
 - Youth/children are harmed/victimised
 - Crime rates are increasing
 - Crime costs the system
 - Women/girls harmed
 - Men/boys harmed
 - Other explicit argument
8. How is bill c-10, specifically, **defended**?
 - Supports victims
 - Stops/prevents terrorism
 - Tough on drugs
 - Tough on violence/serious crime
 - Tough on human trafficking
 - Tough on sentencing/punishment (deterrence)
 - Canadians support it
 - Victims support it
 - The police support it
 - Stops/prevents victimization
 - Stops/prevents crime
 - Treats addiction/helps addicts
 - Protects communities
 - Other defence
9. Does this article make **explicit reference** to:
 - The CPC
 - The conservative movement
 - Conservative values
 - Conservative MPs/party members/etc.
 - Bill c-10 as a conservative bill
 - Other conservative-related mention
10. How is the **Conservative party's position** presented?
 - Traditional
 - Common sense
 - Libertarian
 - Religious
 - Egalitarian

- Feminist
- For women's equality
- As a protector of women
- As protectors
- Progressive
- Other conservative mention

IV. Values

11. What **values** are being invoked?

- Negative freedom (i.e. freedom from intervention)
- Positive/substantive freedom (i.e. freedom from structural limitations)
- Privacy (idea that the private realm should not be subject to moral regulation)
- Responsibility/accountability (people should be held responsible/accountable for their decisions)
- Formal equality (i.e. equality of opportunity, equality before the law)
- Substantive equality (i.e. more robust understanding of equality, equality of access that allow individuals to thrive)
- Patriotism/Nationalism (appeal to a common 'Canadian' identity)
- Cosmopolitan solidarity (appeal to a common community or global humanity)
- Safety
- Respect for authority
- Tradition/convention
- Stability/order
- Diversity/pluralism/tolerance
- Dignity/respect
- Non-violence
- Progress
- Fairness
- Choice
- Human rights (appeal to human rights in a global sense, i.e. 'men/women's rights are human rights')
- Other (specify)

V. Framing

12. How does this piece **frame** Conservative MPs?

- Democratic
- Protectors of women
- Heroes
- Rescuers
- Feminists
- Non-feminists
- Humanitarians
- Moral crusaders
- Traditionalists
- Conservatives
- Progressives Moral majority
- Other rep of opponents

13. What is this piece's **orientation towards women/gender equality**?
- For gender equality, because women are disadvantaged/discriminated against
 - For gender equality, because men are disadvantaged/discriminated against
 - Gender equality has already been achieved
 - Women and men are both unequal in different ways, equality should not be the goal (i.e. men should be masculine, women should be feminine)
 - None
 - Other
14. What is this piece's **orientation towards feminism**?
- Anti-(all) feminism
 - Pro-(all)feminism
 - Defending earlier forms of feminism (suffragettes, equality before the law)
 - Anti-suffrage/anti-equality before the law
 - Attacking 2nd wave
 - Defending 2nd wave feminism ('equality of opportunity' feminism, pay equity, etc.)
 - Attacking 3rd wave
 - Defending later forms of feminism (3rd wave)
 - Attacking feminist men
 - Defending feminist men
 - Feminism is an ideology of discrimination (i.e. analogies to racism etc.)
 - We are past the need of feminism (post-feminist)
 - No explicit reference to feminism
 - Other (specify)
15. What (if any) **political/social issues are analogized** with the defence of bill c-10?
- Human rights (general)
 - Civil Rights (general)
 - LGBTQ Rights (general)
 - Disability Rights (general)
 - Women's Rights (general)
 - Ageism
 - Gay marriage
 - Discrimination against LGBT in workplace
 - Gay bashing (verbal/physical)
 - Gay adoption
 - Underrepresentation of LGBT in politics
 - Suffrage
 - Contraception
 - Equal pay for women
 - Discrimination against women in the workplace
 - Underrepresentation of women in politics
 - Abortion rights
 - Domestic abuse against women
 - Equality of education for women
 - Sexual violence against women
 - Abolition of slavery

- Equality of education against racial minorities
- Equal pay for racial minorities
- Discrimination against racial minorities in the workplace
- Underrepresentation racial minorities in politics
- Other (specify)

VI. Tones and emotion

16. Does this piece use **emotional language**?

- Yes
- No

17. What **type of emotional language** does this piece invoke?

- Language that expresses strong positive emotion (i.e. solidarity, progress, hope)
- Language that expresses strong negative emotion (i.e. rage, anger, frustration)
- Neither

18. Which type of **positive emotion**?

- Solidarity
- Progress
- Hope
- Pride
- Joy/happiness
- Gratitude/appreciation
- Peace
- Love
- Satisfaction
- Relief
- Admiration
- Compassion
- Courage
- Excitement
- Other (specify)

19. Which type of **negative emotion**?

- Anger
- Rage
- Grief
- Hate
- Annoyance
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Impatience
- Frustration
- Outrage
- Shame
- Depression
- Bitterness

- Desperation
- Discourage
- Disgust
- Jealousy
- Sadness
- Other (specify)

20. Does this piece use significant **ad hominem** attacks or defences to support its position?

- Yes
- No

21. If yes, what **type of ad hominem attack/defence** does this piece invoke?

- Ad hominem attack (negative use to discredit a person/institution/author/etc. based on personal characteristics)
- Ad hominem support (positive use to support a position based on the positive virtues of a person/institution/author/etc.)
- Other (specify)

22. Does the piece contain **populist overtones**?

- Yes
- No

23. If yes, what **type of populism** does this piece evoke?

- Political populism (repurpose political institutions from elite)
- Market populism (government should stay out of the market)
- Backlash populism (directed at social/cultural targets, i.e. political correctness)
- Nationalistic populism (anti-immigration, in the name of national unity)
- Other (specify)

24. Does this piece invoke a **Strict Father (punitive) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?

- Yes
- No
- About what (specify)

25. Does this piece invoke a **Nurturant Parent (compassionate) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?

- Yes
- No
- About what (specify)

VII. Narratives

26. Does this piece use any part of a **narrative structure** to make its case?

- Yes
- No

27. Who is the **hero**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Abolitionists
- Female abolitionists
- Male abolitionists
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- The Canadian state
- The Conservative government
- The Conservative Party of Canada
- Stephen Harper
- Peter MacKay
- Joy Smith
- The conservative movement
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

28. Who is the **villain**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Sex workers
- Reformed sex workers
- Underage sex workers
- 'Happy hookers'/happy hooker myth
- NDP
- Liberals
- Johns
- Pimps
- Police
- Anti-prostitution advocates/groups
- Sex worker rights advocates/groups
- Abolitionists
- Female abolitionists
- Male abolitionists
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- The Canadian state
- The Conservative government
- The Conservative Party of Canada
- The Conservative movement
- Peter MacKay
- Joy Smith
- Conservative MP/member/etc.
- Canadian society

- Other (specify)

29. Who is the **victim**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Sex workers (general)
- Reformed sex workers
- Underage sex workers
- Canadian children (corrupted)
- 'Happy hookers'/happy hooker myth
- NDP
- Liberals
- Johns
- Pimps
- Police
- Anti-prostitution advocates/groups
- Sex worker rights advocates/groups
- Abolitionists
- Female abolitionists
- Male abolitionists
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- The Canadian state
- The Conservative government
- The Conservative Party of Canada
- The Conservative movement
- Peter MacKay
- Joy Smith
- Conservative MP/member/etc.
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

VIII. Epistemology

30. How does this intervention **persuade**?

- Narrative
- Brand Identity
- Issue Identity
- Standpoint (male)
- Standpoint (female)
- Explicit argument
- Value-based
- Other

31. What **types of evidence** are provided to support the positive of this piece?

- Expert studies
- Science

- Authoritative texts
 - Religious texts
 - Standpoint (men)
 - Standpoint (women)
 - Other
32. Do they use any of the following **techniques of ‘rhetorical’ moralization**?
- Explicitly evoke a ‘moral frame’ (“we” are morally right/superior/good)
 - Explicitly evoke an ‘immoral frame’ (“they” are immoral/inferior/evil)
 - Evoke “natural” grounds by appealing to biology/human nature
 - Evoke ‘transcendent’ moral grounds by appealing to religious authority
 - Frame as family values
 - Frame as Canadian values
 - Frame as Western values
 - Frame of feminist values
 - Other
33. **Who** is defending abolition/bill c-10?
- Former sex worker
 - Current sex worker
 - Spokesperson of the conservative government
 - MP
 - Minister
 - Peter MacKay
 - Joy Smith
 - Prime Minister
 - Feminist
 - Parents
 - Police/Law enforcement officer
 - Social worker
 - Other

IX. Race and the Canadian nation

34. Is there any **explicit mention of race**?
- Yes
 - No
35. Is there any **implicit suggestion of race**?
- Yes
 - No
36. Is there anything **interesting in relation to race**?
- Yes (specify)
 - No
37. Does this piece invoke a **“Canadian identity”** in any way?
- Yes (specify)
 - No

38. If so, **how is Canada represented?**

- Kinder and gentler Americans
- Competent
- Strong
- Muscular internationalist
- Peacekeeper
- Peace enforcer
- Superpower
- Benevolent
- White knight/rescuer
- Embodiment of the right (western) values
- Noble
- Middle power
- Civilized
- Part of a western brotherhood
- Other (specify)

X. LGBT Issues

39. Is there any **explicit mention of sexual orientation?**

- Yes
- No

40. Is there any **implicit suggestion of sexual orientation?**

- Yes
- No

41. Is there anything **interesting in relation to sexual orientation?**

- Yes (specify)

42. Does it use **gender-neutral** language?

- Yes (specify)

XI. Miscellaneous

43. Is there any reference to **religion?**

- Yes (specify)
- No

44. Does this piece describe any **woman's physical attributes?**

- Yes (specify)
- No

45. Does this piece describe any **man's physical attributes?**

- Yes (specify)
- No

46. Any interesting use of **discourses of "victimization"**?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX E: CODING DICTIONARY FOR THE DEBATE OVER BILL C-36

I. Demographics

1. What is the **gender** of the author?
 - Male
 - Female
 - No specified gender
2. What is the **approximate age** of the author?
 - Under 30
 - Between 30 and 50
 - Over 50
 - Unknown age
3. What is the **race/ethnicity** of the author (based on picture, in-text description, etc)?
 - White
 - Black
 - Asian
 - Indigenous
 - Other race/ethnicity (specify)
 - Not specified

II. Representation of gender in prostitution

4. How does this piece **represent women**?
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Victim
5. How does this piece **represent of men**?
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Victim
6. How does this piece **represent sex workers**?
 - Female
 - Male
 - Victims
 - Survivors
 - Vulnerable
 - Not a sex worker by choice (not the 'happy hooker')
 - Sex worker by choice/consenting adult
 - Dangerous
 - In danger
 - Trafficked
 - Passive/lured/deceived victims
 - Vulnerable (in need of protection)
 - Coerced into prostitution

- Prisoners/sex slaves (cannot escape)
- Minors/underage
- Sexually 'loose'
- Sexually irresponsible
- Sexually responsible
- Sexually dangerous
- Health threats
- Moral/sexual threats/deviants
- Moral
- Immoral
- Public nuisances
- Predators
- Drug users/addicts
- Indigenous
- Racialized
- Grateful (of rescue)
- Ungrateful (of rescue)
- Stigmatized
- None
- Other

7. How does this piece **represent pimps/madams**?

- Male
- Female
- Dangerous
- Violent
- Predators
- Rapists
- Foreign
- White (Canadian)
- Exploitative
- Traffickers
- Rich
- Poor
- Positive representation (i.e. caring)
- No representation
- Other

8. How does this piece **represent johns/clients**?

- Dangerous
- Violent
- Immoral
- Predators
- Rapists
- Pedophiles
- Racialized
- Indigenous
- White (Canadian)

- Foreign
- Rich
- Poor
- Exploitative
- Good client (nice guy)
- Other positive representation
- No representation
- Other representation

9. How does this piece **represent sex work**?

- As work/labour
- As 'buying women'/transaction
- As rape
- As violence against women
- As unnatural
- As inherently harmful/violent/dangerous
- As a public nuisance
- As a human rights abuse
- As trafficking
- As slavery
- As prison
- As patriarchy
- As exploitation
- As perpetuating gender inequality
- Other

10. How does this piece **represent the police**?

- Male
- Female
- Violent
- Non-violent
- Trustworthy
- Untrustworthy
- Reliable
- Unreliable
- Willing to compromise
- Unwilling to compromise
- Tough on crime
- Soft on crime
- Physically strong
- Physically weak
- Humble
- Arrogant
- Possessing integrity
- Lacking integrity
- Courageous
- Passionate
- Strict

- Nurturing
- Fair and balanced
- Protective
- None
- Other

III. Explicit Argumentation

11. What **explicit argument(s)** is/are used to oppose the legalization of sex work/promote the ‘nordic model’?

- Prostitution harms all women (general)
- Prostitution harms sex workers
- Prostitution harms communities
- Prostitution harms men
- Prostitution harms children (corrupts)
- Prostitution exploits children
- Prostitution harms families
- Prostitution harms marriage
- Prostitution harms society (moral decay)
- Prostitution harms society (public nuisance)
- Prostitution is detrimental to gender equality
- Prostitution is trafficking
- Prostitution is wrong for religious reasons
- Prostitution is immoral
- Prostitution goes against Canadian values
- Prostitution is not a choice
- Prostitution is inherently dangerous
- Prostitution is exploitative
- Other

12. How is **bill c-36, specifically, defended**?

- Dissuades sex work
- Protects women
- It targets men (clients) and not women (sex workers), thus protecting women
- Protects communities
- Protects families
- Protects children
- Other countries use this model
- It targets pimps/clients and not women
- Helps sex workers leave the trade
- It is constitutional
- It’s a ‘made-in-Canada’ solution
- No explicit defence of bill c-36
- Other argument for c-36

13. What **ideal strategy** (if any) is advocated in banning sex work?

- Abolish prostitution completely
- Law and order approach (advocates enforcement)
- Encouraging sex workers to leave prostitution(promoting exit programs)

- Consciousness-raising approach/educational approach (hearts and minds)
- Hybrid approach (education and laws)
- Other (specify)

14. Does this piece include a **counterargument**?

- Yes
- No

15. What is the **counterargument**?

- Bill c-36/Nordic approach won't work
- Bill c-36/Nordic approach harms women
- Bill c-36/Nordic approach harms sex workers
- Law should not regulate morality
- It is the oldest profession
- Sex worker choose sex work
- Nordic approach has not worked in other countries
- Sex work should be considered labour
- Other counterargument

-

16. Does **this article make explicit reference** to:

- The CPC
- The conservative movement
- Conservative values
- Conservative MPs/party members/etc.
- Bill c-36 as a conservative bill
- Other conservative-related mention

17. How is the **Conservative party's position presented**?

- Traditional
- Common sense
- Libertarian
- Religious
- Egalitarian
- Feminist
- For women's equality
- As a protector of women
- As a protector of sex workers
- Progressive
- Other conservative mention

IV. Values

18. What **values** are being invoked?

- Negative freedom (i.e. freedom from intervention)
- Positive/substantive freedom (i.e. freedom from structural limitations)
- Privacy (idea that the private realm should not be subject to moral regulation)
- Responsibility/accountability (people should be held responsible/accountable for their decisions)
- Formal equality (i.e. equality of opportunity, equality before the law)

- Substantive equality (i.e. more robust understanding of equality, equality of access that allow individuals to thrive)
- Patriotism/Nationalism (appeal to a common 'Canadian' identity)
- Cosmopolitan solidarity (appeal to a common community or global humanity)
- Respect for authority
- Tradition/convention
- Stability/order
- Diversity/pluralism/tolerance
- Dignity/respect
- Non-violence
- Progress
- Fairness
- Choice
- Human rights (appeal to human rights in a global sense, i.e. 'men/women's rights are human rights')
- Other (specify)

V. Framing

19. How does this piece **frame** opponents to legal sex work?

- Protectors of women
- Heroes
- Rescuers
- Feminists
- Non-feminists
- Humanitarians
- Moral crusaders
- Traditionalists
- Conservatives
- Progressives Moral majority
- Other rep of opponents

20. What is this piece's **orientation towards women/gender equality**?

- For gender equality, because women are disadvantaged/discriminated against
- For gender equality, because men are disadvantaged/discriminated against
- Gender equality has already been achieved
- Women and men are both unequal in different ways, equality should not be the goal (i.e. men should be masculine, women should be feminine)
- None
- Other

21. What is this piece's **orientation towards feminism**?

- Anti-(all) feminism
- Pro-(all)feminism
- Defending earlier forms of feminism (suffragettes, equality before the law)
- Anti-suffrage/anti-equality before the law
- Attacking 2nd wave
- Defending 2nd wave feminism ('equality of opportunity' feminism, pay equity, etc.)

- Attacking 3rd wave
- Defending later forms of feminism (3rd wave)
- Attacking feminist men
- Defending feminist men
- Feminism is an ideology of discrimination (i.e. analogies to racism etc.)
- We are past the need of feminism (post-feminist)
- No explicit reference to feminism
- Other (specify)

22. What (if any) **political/social issues** are analogized with the anti-prostitution (i.e. issue-frame extension)?

- Human rights (general)
- Civil Rights (general)
- LGBTQ Rights (general)
- Disability Rights (general)
- Women's Rights (general)
- Ageism
- Gay marriage
- Discrimination against LGBT in workplace
- Gay bashing (verbal/physical)
- Gay adoption
- Underrepresentation of LGBT in politics
- Suffrage
- Contraception
- Equal pay for women
- Discrimination against women in the workplace
- Underrepresentation of women in politics
- Abortion rights
- Domestic abuse against women
- Equality of education for women
- Sexual violence against women
- Abolition of slavery
- Equality of education against racial minorities
- Equal pay for racial minorities
- Discrimination against racial minorities in the workplace
- Underrepresentation racial minorities in politics
- Other (specify)

VI. Tones and emotion

23. Does this piece use **emotional language**?

- Yes
- No

24. What **type of emotional language** does this piece invoke?

- Language that expresses strong positive emotion (i.e. solidarity, progress, hope)
- Language that expresses strong negative emotion (i.e. rage, anger, frustration)
- Neither

25. Which type of **positive emotion**?

- Solidarity
- Progress
- Hope
- Pride
- Joy/happiness
- Gratitude/appreciation
- Peace
- Love
- Satisfaction
- Relief
- Admiration
- Compassion
- Courage
- Excitement
- Other (specify)

26. Which type of **negative emotion**?

- Anger
- Rage
- Grief
- Hate
- Annoyance
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Impatience
- Frustration
- Outrage
- Shame
- Depression
- Bitterness
- Desperation
- Discourage
- Disgust
- Jealousy
- Sadness
- Other (specify)

27. Does this piece use significant **ad hominem** attacks or defences to support its position?

- Yes
- No

28. If yes, what **type of ad hominem attack/defence** does this piece invoke?

- Ad hominem attack (negative use to discredit a person/institution/author/etc. based on personal characteristics)
- Ad hominem support (positive use to support a position based on the positive virtues of a person/institution/author/etc.)

- Other (specify)
29. Does the piece contain **populist overtones**?
- Yes
 - No
30. If yes, what **type of populism** does this piece evoke?
- Political populism (repurpose political institutions from elite)
 - Market populism (government should stay out of the market)
 - Backlash populism (directed at social/cultural targets, i.e. political correctness)
 - Nationalistic populism (anti-immigration, in the name of national unity)
 - Other (specify)
31. Does this piece invoke **humour** to support its position?
- Yes
 - No
32. Does this piece invoke a **Strict Father (punitive) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?
- Yes
 - No
 - About what (specify)
33. Does this piece invoke a **Nurturant Parent (compassionate) tone** (using Lakoff's strict father/nurturant parent distinction)?
- Yes
 - No
 - About what (specify)

VII. Narratives

34. Does this piece use any part of a **narrative structure** to make its case?
- Yes
 - No
35. Who is the **hero**?
- Sex workers (general)
 - Reformed sex workers ('hooker with a heart of gold')
 - Reformed underage sex workers
 - 'Happy hooker'
 - Johns
 - Pimps
 - Police
 - Anti-prostitution advocates/groups
 - Sex worker rights advocates/groups
 - All Men
 - All Women
 - Abolitionists

- Female abolitionists
- Male abolitionists
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- The Canadian state
- The Conservative government
- The Conservative Party of Canada
- Stephen Harper
- Peter MacKay
- Joy Smith
- The conservative movement
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

36. Who is the **villain**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Sex workers
- Reformed sex workers
- Underage sex workers
- 'Happy hookers'/happy hooker myth
- NDP
- Liberals
- Johns
- Pimps
- Police
- Anti-prostitution advocates/groups
- Sex worker rights advocates/groups
- Abolitionists
- Female abolitionists
- Male abolitionists
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- The Canadian state
- The Conservative government
- The Conservative Party of Canada
- The Conservative movement
- Peter MacKay
- Joy Smith
- Conservative MP/member/etc.
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

37. Who is the **victim**?

- All Men
- All Women
- Sex workers (general)
- Reformed sex workers
- Underage sex workers
- Canadian children (corrupted)
- 'Happy hookers'/happy hooker myth
- NDP
- Liberals
- Johns
- Pimps
- Police
- Anti-prostitution advocates/groups
- Sex worker rights advocates/groups
- Abolitionists
- Female abolitionists
- Male abolitionists
- Conservatives
- Progressives
- Non-feminists
- Feminists
- The Canadian state
- The Conservative government
- The Conservative Party of Canada
- The Conservative movement
- Peter MacKay
- Joy Smith
- Conservative MP/member/etc.
- Canadian society
- Other (specify)

VIII. Epistemology

38. How does this article **persuade**?

- Narrative
- Brand Identity
- Issue Identity
- Standpoint (male)
- Standpoint (female)
- Explicit argument
- Value-based
- Other (specify)

39. What **types of evidence** are provided to support the positive of this piece?

- Expert studies
- Science
- Authoritative texts
- Religious texts

- Standpoint (men)
 - Standpoint (women)
 - Other (specify)
40. Do they use any of the following **techniques of ‘rhetorical’ moralization**?
- Explicitly evoke a ‘moral frame’ (“we” are morally right/superior/good)
 - Explicitly evoke an ‘immoral frame’ (“they” are immoral/inferior/evil)
 - Evoke “natural” grounds by appealing to biology/human nature
 - Evoke ‘transcendent’ moral grounds by appealing to religious authority
 - Frame as family values
 - Frame as Canadian values
 - Frame as Western values
 - Frame of feminist values
 - Other (specify)
41. **Who** is defending abolition/bill c-36?
- Former sex worker
 - Current sex worker
 - Spokesperson of the conservative government
 - MP
 - Minister
 - Peter MacKay
 - Joy Smith
 - Prime Minister
 - Feminist
 - Parents
 - Law enforcement officer
 - Social worker
 - Other

IX. Race and the Canadian nation

42. Is there any **explicit mention of race**?
- Yes
 - No
43. Is there any **implicit suggestion of race**?
- Yes
 - No
44. Is there anything **interesting in relation to race**?
- Yes (specify)
 - No
45. Does this piece invoke a “**Canadian identity**” in any way?
- Yes (specify)
 - No
46. If so, **how is Canada represented** by this piece?

- Kinder and gentler Americans
- Competent
- Strong
- Muscular internationalist
- Peacekeeper
- Peace enforcer
- Superpower
- Benevolent
- White knight/rescuer
- Embodiment of the right (western) values
- Noble
- Middle power
- Civilized
- Part of a western brotherhood
- Other (specify)

X. LGBT Issues

47. Is there any **explicit mention of sexual orientation**?
- Yes
 - No
48. Is there any **implicit suggestion of sexual orientation**?
- Yes
 - No
49. Is there anything **interesting in relation to sexual orientation**?
- Yes (specify)
50. Does it use **gender-neutral** language?
- Yes (specify)

XI. Miscellaneous

51. Is there any reference to **religion**?
- Yes (specify)
 - No
52. Does this piece describe any **woman's physical attributes**?
- Yes (specify)
 - No
53. Does this piece describe any **man's physical attributes**?
- Yes (specify)
 - No

APPENDIX F: SITES OF ANALYSIS FOR CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Area of conservative discourse	Time frame of analysis	Sites of analysis	Total number of cases
<i>Men's right's movement</i>	May 2013- December 2014	A Voice for Men (AVFM)	11
	May 2013- December 2014	Honest Ribbon (HR)	12
	May 2013- December 2014	Canadian Association for Equality (CAFE)	23
	May 2013- December 2014	Men's Rights Edmonton (MR-E)	30
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