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Canadian Christian Nationalism?: The Religiosity and Politics of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada

by

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DISSERTATION

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Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario

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Abstract

In this dissertation I examine the worldview and concerns held by members of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada (CHP) as a means of understanding Canada's Christian Right. I present a perspective of Canada's Christian Right that challenges assumptions made about this religio-political ideology by showing how the political choices made by members of the CHP make sense within the members' context. The CHP is a federal political party, first registered in 1986, that markets itself as "Canada's only pro-life party." Although the party was initially developed by a group of conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics, the majority of its members are Dutch-Canadians who attend Dutch Reformed (Calvinist) Churches.

The main questions addressed in this dissertation are: 1) how do various social networks and identity characteristics correlate with individuals investing themselves in this religious-political movement, and 2) how do these individuals manage their identity and worldview in the face of on-going opposition and challenges both within and external to the CHP? In other words, what is it about the CHP that makes the party "common sense" to its members, when it seems less than common sense to the majority of Canadians? In order to answer these questions, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 79 party members across Canada and observed various party events between August 2010 and July 2012.

Each chapter of this dissertation highlights a major theme that arose from the ethnographic data I collected. These themes include: 1) comparisons with the American Christian Right, 2) the implications and significance of the Dutch-Canadian majority in the party, 3) links between the party's name and its Christian identity, 4) the CHP's pro-life identity (particularly regarding its pro-capital punishment stance and the positioning of Roman Catholics within the party), 5) the role of education in the lives of party members, and 6) the perceived

enemies of the party, namely, secular humanism, the “homosexual agenda,” and radical Islam. Overall, these themes illustrate the construction and maintenance of the members’ particular social conservative Christian identity, and a tension within the party between upholding the members’ Christian principles and being a pragmatic, electable political party.

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The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of many individuals. I would like to thank the members of the Christian Heritage Party for their involvement in my study. Without their participation, this would have been a significantly diminished project.

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Introduction

In October 2006 Marci McDonald published “Stephen Harper and the Theo-Cons: The Rising Clout of Canada’s Religious Right” in *The Walrus* magazine.¹ This article eventually got expanded into a book, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*.² Published in 2010, it quickly became a bestseller. For a sense of the deep seated fear of the Christian Right (CR) in McDonald’s writing we only have to look to the preface of *The Armageddon Factor*, where she discusses the “two diametrically opposed worldviews” of Canada’s “mainstream” and “conservative Christians.”³

On one side are those who inhabit what is regarded as the mainstream—sophisticated, secular and urban, smugly assuming that everyone, given the facts, would share their reverence for tolerance and their taste in television shows. On the other is an increasingly self-sufficient conservative Christian cosmos, largely planted in Canada’s suburbs and rural outposts, which believes the world is going to hell in a handbasket and is preparing for that divinely ordained eventuality.⁴

This “us versus them” mentality—with McDonald placing herself as guardian of the mainstream—recurs throughout the book.

Although McDonald mentioned a couple of individuals associated with the Christian Heritage Party (CHP)—primarily Tim Bloedow and Tristan Emmanuel—she never mentioned the party itself. And it was obvious why she did not discuss the CHP. Doing so would have undermined her assertions that the American CR has covertly crossed the border and infiltrated Canada’s conservative Christians and the Conservative Party. Social conservative Christian Canadians have had a political outlet in the form of the CHP since 1987, but the party has never

¹ Marci McDonald, “Stephen Harper and Theo-Cons: The rising clout of Canada’s religious right.” *The Walrus.ca*. Last modified October 2006, accessed Dec. 3, 2014, <http://thewalrus.ca/stephen-harper-and-the-theo-cons/>

² Marci McDonald, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: Random House, 2010).

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

been electorally successful in the traditional sense and would therefore not fuel McDonald's journalist hyperbole about a surreptitious takeover of Canadian politics by a frightening, apocalyptic CR.

McDonald tries to convince her readers that individuals aligned with the CR are scary people, more concerned with the end-times than anything in this life, who have unprecedented power in Ottawa. I am presenting an alternative way of thinking about the Canadian CR here with my research on the CHP. Rather than maintaining McDonald's fear-mongering approach to the CR, I challenge this perspective and strive to make sense of the political choices made by members of the CHP, individuals who openly align with CR politics.

The two main questions guiding this research are: 1) how do various social networks and identity characteristics correlate with individuals investing themselves in this religious-political movement, and 2) how do these individuals manage their identity and worldview in the face of on-going opposition and challenges? The big question that I see connecting these two is what is it about the CHP that makes it "common sense" to CHPers?⁵ In other words, can I adequately explain to individuals who are not members of the party how being involved with the CHP makes perfect sense to its members? In CHP correspondences, such as the weekly single-topic *Communiqué* newsletters, and in my interactions with CHPers I found it was regularly stressed that being a member and supporting the party was simply common sense. Yet, it is clear that what is common sense to one person is not so for another. The fact that the CHP has remained an unelected fringe party throughout the decades since it formed suggests that it is not a common

⁵ CHPers is a term used throughout the dissertation to refer to members of the CHP. Also, my use of "common sense" refers to a "taken-for-granted character" of knowledge about one's everyday reality, as described in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 34. I am not suggesting that a singular objective "common sense" exists, but instead argue that "common sense" is created through subjective positioning and is in the eye of the beholder.

sense political choice for the majority of Canadians—but it is for its members, and I seek to explain why.

The decision to be a member of any political party sets CHPers apart from the general Canadian populace. Drawing on a spring of 2000 survey completed by members of the five major federal political parties at that time—that is, the Liberals, Progressive Conservatives (PC), Canadian Alliance (CA), New Democratic Party (NDP), and the Bloc Québécois (BQ)—William Cross and Lisa Young found “fewer than 2 percent of voters belonged to any of” these parties.⁶ Another study conducted in 2000 found that 16 percent of Canadians claimed to be a member of provincial and/or federal parties at some point in their lives.⁷ Although Cross and Young’s survey did not take into account the membership of “fringe” parties, such as the CHP or the Green Party, there is no doubt that only a small percentage of the Canadian population ever choose to become members of a political party.

The decision to openly combine religion and politics is exceedingly unpopular in Canada.⁸ Unlike the legislatively enshrined separation of church and state seen in the American Constitution, Canada has never had an official separation; however, the idea of this separation has been embraced by the Canadian public. Although the CHP officially argues in support of the separation of church and state, a common argument against the party is that it contravenes this ideal. I delve into the issue of separation of church and state in greater detail in Chapter One. For now, it suffices to say the belief that the CHP is somehow un-Canadian because it is a Christian political party works against the party. These two issues—the unlikelihood of any Canadian

⁶ William Cross and Lisa Young, “The Contours of Political Party Membership in Canada,” *Party Politics* 10, no. 4 (2004): 430. In December 2003 the PCs and CA merged to form the current Conservative Party of Canada (CPC).

⁷ Paul Howe and David Northrup, *Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The Views of Canadians* (Montreal: Institute for Research in Public Policy, 2000), 89.

⁸ The desire to avoid publicly combining religion and politics, even among Canada’s evangelical Christian population, is discussed in great detail in David Haskell, *Through a Lens Darkly: How the News Media Perceive and Portray Evangelicals* (Toronto: Clements Academic, 2009): 54-8.

joining a party and the sense that the CHP does not belong in Canadian politics—mark the CHP as an anomaly in the contemporary Canadian political and religious landscape.

In addition to these conceptual issues, there are many facets of the Canadian federal political structures, such as the voting system, the requirements to register parties, and finances associated with party politics, that also impinge upon the CHP's political goals. I discuss some of these particular systemic challenges in greater detail in Chapter One. Many members regularly defend and justify their involvement with the party in light of these challenges. Yet despite these diverse obstacles, the party has persisted and its members still see it as common sense.

Applications Beyond the CHP

In many ways this research is an exploratory study of the CHP and the central issues driving the party. That being said, this project contributes to a variety of areas beyond simply learning more about this little-studied group. In a very broad sense, examining the CHP adds to the literature on Christianity and party politics in liberal democracies beyond the well-studied American CR and the European Christian Democratic movements. Canada has not developed a Christian Democratic movement like those seen in continental Europe. Although Canada is arguably more influenced by British and French political structures—we do have a Westminster parliamentary system because of our British Commonwealth heritage—the CHP is more influenced by a tradition of Christian politics coming out of the Netherlands. This is because, as discussed in Chapter Two, the CHP is primarily composed of Dutch Reformed Christians. This Dutch influence is part of the reason why the CHP stands out within the Canadian political system.

Additionally, Canadian culture is highly influenced by our American neighbours, but the CHP draws on different points of reference out of American culture than the broader Canadian

populace. Certain parts of American culture, such as mainstream media and the idea of separation of church and state, are simply accepted in Canada, while other aspects of American culture, such as evangelical Christianity and increased access to guns, are seen as foreign. Simply supporting the parts of American culture that are marked foreign is enough to be considered un-Canadian by some, and the CHP can be seen as an example of this.

As noted at the beginning of this introduction, this study offers a different perspective and additional insight into Canada's CR. By emphasizing the humanity of the individuals involved in this social conservative Christian movement and by de-emphasizing the idea that Canada does not have a CR because it is not the same as the American CR, we can see Canada's CR in a more humane and equitable light. To be clear, promoting an equitable understanding of the positions and rationale for the CR is not the same as supporting these positions. Canada has a much smaller social conservative Christian population than the United States, and our political structures do not offer the same venues for political engagement. Because of these factors, we should not expect Canada to have a CR that replicates the American CR, even while we can see overlaps in social conservative Christian concerns (i.e. abortion issues and criticisms of public education, particularly around sex education issues and evolution). This study offers the CHP as an example of Canada's CR that challenges these assumptions about this religio-political movement.

This project also offers a close examination of one of Canada's fringe political parties. As noted by Cross and Young, "we know little about the grassroots members of Canada's federal parties."⁹ When Cross and Young made this statement they were only referring to the major elected federal parties, not all of the federal parties, and certainly not the unelected fringe. This

⁹ Cross and Young, "Political Party Membership," 427.

study therefore adds to our collective knowledge on the motivations and actions of everyday members of a federal political party, and to the general knowledge on fringe parties in Canada.

Three other applications of this study are: 1) research on the Dutch Reformed community, particularly from an outsider's perspective; 2) understanding the diversity of Canada's pro-life movement; and 3) making sense of the educational practices of Canada's conservative Christians. Much of the research on the Dutch Reformed community in North America, as seen in select works by Herman Ganzevoort, Corwin E. Smidt, and James D. Bratt, have been conducted by individuals from that community.¹⁰ I am contributing to this field inasmuch as the CHP reflects a facet of the Dutch Reformed community in North America and I am an outsider to this community.

Much of the literature I found on pro-life issues presents a strong pro-life or pro-choice bias, is based in the United States, and/or emphasizes the legislative, political, and ethical history of abortion.¹¹ While I touch on the legislative history of abortion in Canada, particularly how this relates to the development of the CHP, my position highlights the different definitions of what it means to identify as pro-life from within a self-proclaimed pro-life organization. The diversity of definitions for this term has real implications for groups that present themselves as pro-life, such as the CHP. Negotiations need to be made regarding what type of pro-life—predominately

¹⁰ Herman Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land: The Dutch Experience in Canada, 1890-1980* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988); Donald A. Luidens, Corwin E. Smidt, and Hijme Stoffels, ed., *Reformed Vitality: Continuity and Change in the Face of Modernity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998); and James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984).

¹¹ Some examples include Denise Mountenay, *Forgiven of Murder... A True Story* (Morinville, AB: C. Reality Publishers, 2007) [This text is promoted by the CHP and Mountenay is a member of the party]; Stephen D. Schwarz with Kiki Latimer, *Understanding Abortion: From Mixed Feelings to Rational Thought* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012); Melody Rose, *Safe, Legal, and Unavailable?: Abortion Politics in the United States* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2007); Chris Meyers, *The Fetal Position: A Rational Approach to the Abortion Issue* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2010); and Ted G. Jelen, ed. *Perspectives on the Politics of Abortion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995).

evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Anabaptist—any organization professing this identity will be, although these negotiations are rarely publicly acknowledged.

Lastly, the discussion of the educational practices and choices made by CHPers adds to our knowledge of conservative Christians and education in Canada. Lois Sweet's *God in the Classroom* offers some good insight into the issue of religion, in a very broad sense, in Canadian schools. Unfortunately, the broadness of Sweet's scope means that she gives little information about the practices of conservative Christians in particular.¹² More recently Cardus, a conservative think-tank, produced an education survey that primarily explores the outcomes of non-government school attendance (read private Christian schools).¹³ This is an excellent source on the relationship between private Christian schooling and civic engagement, but it does not explore conservative Christians' reasons for the educational choices they make for their children. My discussion of the rationale given for educational choices by the conservative Christian members of the CHP, which range from public schools, both secular and Catholic, to private Christian schools to homeschooling, adds to this literature.

Structure of the Dissertation

Each of the core chapters of this dissertation is thematically oriented. Because these themes are quite diverse, I have foregone the tradition of having a separate literature review in my introduction or as its own chapter. Instead, I chose to integrate the literature reviews into the chapters in which they are applicable. This, I feel, makes more sense than having a free-standing literature review, since it helps maintain this thematic structure.

Chapter One asks the question that most people outside of the CHP want to know—is the CHP a Canadian manifestation of the American CR? While the other chapters highlight major

¹² Lois Sweet, *God in the Classroom: The Controversial Issue of Religion in Canada's Schools* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 1997).

¹³ R. Pennings et al., *Cardus Education Survey: A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats* (Hamilton, ON: Cardus, 2012).

points of concern among CHPers, this chapter emphasizes an outsider's concern about the party: the perception that a conservative Christian political party in Canada is somehow more American than Canadian. This is not an issue among CHPers, because they are well aware of their own Canadian-ness and the significance of Christianity in Canada's history. The fact that outsiders to the party might assume that the CHP is the result of American influences says more about perceptions of what is and what is not Canadian than the actual religious and political history of this country. The main subsections within this chapter explore scholarly comparisons of the American and Canadian CR, CHPers' perceptions of the United States, and my own comparisons of the CHP to the American CR in a broad sense and more specifically to American Christian parties.

Whereas Chapter One focuses on a question posed by people who are not overly familiar with the CHP, Chapter Two explores a question asked by people who are more familiar with the party—why does the CHP predominantly consist of conservative Dutch Reformed individuals? I explore this question by breaking it into smaller parts. Are Canadians of Dutch heritage in fact over-represented in the party? What are the reasons for this over-representation? How does this affect the nature of the CHP, and is it a problem or not? We cannot fully understand the party without acknowledging the significance of the conservative Dutch Reformed community on its development and maintenance. In many ways this strong Dutch-Canadian presence in the party is both a blessing and a curse, as this portion of the membership provides a strong and lasting foundation for the party, but also hinders the party's ability to grow beyond that ethno-religious group.

In Chapter Three, where I analyze the significance given to the name of the party, the tensions between being a principled Christian party versus a pragmatic political party are pushed

to the foreground. The seemingly perpetual debates within the CHP on the party's name make questions about the significance of this debate unavoidable. It is not unheard-of for a Canadian federal party to change its name—the NDP and the former Canadian Alliance are prime examples—but the idea of such a change for the CHP is distressing for some members. Because the debates about the name frequently circle around the desire to be marked as Christian, this chapter is also the ideal place to further examine the Christian nature of the party. More specifically I discuss the positioning of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, otherwise known as Mormons, within the CHP.

Besides identifying first and foremost as Christian, the CHP also brands itself as Canada's only pro-life federal political party. The centrality and parameters of the party's pro-life identity are therefore the subjects of Chapter Four. Beyond outlining the history of abortion legislation in Canada and how this relates to the development of the party, I frame the chapter around three main questions: 1) Is the CHP the only pro-life federal political party (i.e. the only one of that kind) or is it only a pro-life party (i.e. a single-issue party)?; 2) How do the CHP and its members define being pro-life, especially in relation to the party's position on capital punishment?; and 3) What is the value of claiming to be the only pro-life party? The second question takes up the majority of the chapter and expands the examination of the party's Christian nature, seen in the previous chapter, to consider the position of Roman Catholic CHPers.

Where Chapters Three and Four examine how the CHP brands itself, Chapter Five explores the role of education as an aspect of the particular Christian identity of CHPers. Admittedly, on the surface this is an odd topic to discuss in relation to a federal political party. In Canada education is under the jurisdiction of provincial governments, so a party that has been

solely federal until quite recently should not be all that concerned with education. While the party does not have a strong official policy on education, it was apparent through my interaction with CHPers that education, especially at the primary and secondary level, is a location where their Christian identity is reaffirmed and/or challenged. My discussion of the relationship between education and the CHP is divided into three main areas: 1) the education of CHPers and the educational choices made for their children (i.e. what kind of schools do they attend?); 2) CHPers' perceptions of public education; and 3) CHPers' activism regarding public education.

The last of the core chapters explores the perceived enemies of the CHP, namely secular humanists, proponents of the (so-called) homosexual agenda, and radical Muslims. These enemies are primarily ideological and not other political parties. I argue that these enemies are amorphous and get constructed by the party in a way that fosters an "us versus them" group mentality in the party, thereby strengthening the social conservative Christian identity of the CHP and the rationale for the party's existence. Although I initially thought feminism would be perceived as a notable enemy of the CHP, it did not appear so based on my data. For this reason, Chapter Six also includes an explanation as to why this is the case.

Of all of the topics covered here, I suspect that this chapter contains points that CHPers may disagree with the most, in part because it is critical of the reality of these perceived enemies. Otherwise, it is my hope that any party members who read this dissertation will generally agree with my portrayal of the CHP. I have sought to present the party in a fair light that illustrates both its strengths and weaknesses. Overall, I have been impressed with the generosity and charitableness of the CHPers that I have met throughout this project. Although I do not necessarily agree with the position of the party and its members, I appreciate the concerns they

have about the state of this country and the substantial time and energy they invest in their communities.

Theory

My theoretical approach to this study has been shaped by lived religion and identity politics, as well as grounded theory, which has largely informed my methodological approach. Lived religion, as developed by David Hall, Robert Orsi and Meredith Maguire, offers a means for making sense of everyday religious practices and beliefs beyond religious institutions.¹⁴ They are concerned with the whole religious lives of individuals rather than the institutionally prescribed religion set by religious elites. “The emphasis in the study of lived religion,” according to Orsi, “is on *embodied* practice and imagination, as men, women, and children exist in and move through their built and found environments.”¹⁵ In other words, the emphasis is placed on religion as practiced rather than religion as prescribed.

The introductions to the second and third editions of Orsi’s now classic text, *The Madonna of 115th Street* illustrate the development of the lived religion approach as a corrective to “popular religion.” When Orsi first published *The Madonna of 115th Street* in 1985 the concept of lived religion had not yet developed. Although the book has since become understood as a foundational text for the lived religion approach, he originally described the work as “a study of popular religion.”¹⁶ At the time Orsi was critical of popular religion’s limitations and the tendency for this term to be negatively defined as “all those crazy things that people do and all

¹⁴ See David Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious World People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, 3rd ed. (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2010 [1985]); and Meredith Maguire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Orsi, *The Madonna*, xxxix. Original emphasis.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, lvii and lxii.

the crazy ideas they have outside the structures of an organized and properly ordered church.”¹⁷

In the introduction to the second edition he restates his frustration with popular religion, stating the term, “was unclear, misleading, and tendentious” and that it “served to seal off certain expressions of religious life from an unspecified but obviously normative ‘religion.’”¹⁸ In the case of Orsi’s work on the festa of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, identifying with popular religion implies that this Italian-American Catholic practice is somehow outside of “a normative American religiosity.”¹⁹ Similarly, a popular religion perspective on the CHP could support assertions that the party is outside of Canadian religiosity, thereby contradicting my theoretical framing of the party.

It is in the introduction to the second edition of *The Madonna of 115th Street* where Orsi discards the frame of popular religion and reintroduces his book as a work of lived religion. He states,

The study of lived religion explores how religion is shaped by and shapes the ways family life is organized, for instance: how the dead are buried, children disciplined, the past and future imagined, moral boundaries established and challenged, homes constructed, maintained, and destroyed, the gods and spirits worshiped and importuned, and so on. Religion is approached in its place within a more broadly conceived and described lifeworld, the domain of everyday existence, practical activity, and shared understandings, with all its crises, surprises, satisfactions, frustrations, joys, desires, hopes, fears, and limitations.²⁰

In this way, this dissertation is a study of the CHP as lived religion. The party is very much a political party, in that it has registered party status, *and* it is religious organization, in that it is a site where the everyday work of religion takes place.

Lived religion as a theoretical framework developed out of an anthropological and historical approach to the study of religion. A second theoretical framework that developed out

¹⁷ Ibid, lvii.

¹⁸ Ibid., xxxii.

¹⁹ Ibid., xxvi

²⁰ Ibid., xxxi-xxxii.

of sociology that could work equally well for making sense of the CHP is Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's work on the social construction of reality and universe-maintenance.²¹ In their classic treatise, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann present a grand systematic theory to explain how knowledge becomes taken-for-granted—that is, how ideas become “common sense”—through practices of universe-maintenance, primary and secondary socialization, and the formation/reification of identity. Berger followed *The Social Construction of Reality* with *The Sacred Canopy*, which applies these theories of knowledge more specifically to religion.²² Based on the language used by Berger and Luckmann, the CHP can be understood as a social organization or institution where “reality-maintenance” of the particular social conservative Christian identity and worldview of CHPers takes place.²³ Although this is an apt theory regarding my approach to the CHP, I have relied more heavily on lived religion throughout this dissertation to explain the role of the party in the lives of its members.

While this project does not offer a close examination of the whole religious lives of individual members of the CHP, it does frame the party as a site where CHPers publicly perform religion and reaffirm their religious identity as social conservative Christians. The party is one part of the lived religion of CHPers that exists outside of church institutions; it is a political/religious organization. The party was developed by the laity—everyday self-identified Christians—not religious elites such as ministers and priests. Although there are certainly some ministers who are members of the CHP, and a minister generally holds the unusual executive position of Prayer, Ethics and Personnel (PEP) Director, religious elites within the party are not

²¹ See Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

²² Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1967). As if to prove the close relationship between Berger's theories on the social construction of reality and lived religion, Orsi cites Berger in the subsection “The Study of Lived Religion” in the introduction to the second edition of *The Madonna of 115th Street*. Orsi, *The Madonna*, xli.

²³ Berger and Luckman, 168-74.

inherently party elites. To my knowledge, no other political party in Canada has a position that is equivalent to the PEP Director. Their job requirements include leading prayers at national party events and managing the completed “integrity analyses,” which are required of all candidates and executive members at the provincial and national levels. The contents of the integrity analysis, which includes a set list of interview questions that must be asked by other members who have already completed their own integrity analysis, as well as a criminal and credit check, is examined in greater detail in Chapters One and Three.

I have looked to lived religion as an explanatory tool in this research because it helps make sense of how CHPers mold their practices and understanding of what it is to be Christian through their involvement with the party. Thinking of the party as part of the lived religion of CHPers means that the party is a site where religious identity is constructed, challenged, and modified. The interdenominational nature of the CHP leads to challenging perceptions of what it means to be Christian by various members, particularly those who are outside of conservative Dutch Reformed denominations, and sometimes forces negotiations of the individual members’ religious or political identity. In other words, the CHP exists as a site for the formation and maintenance of a particular social conservative Christian identity. Individual members who do not necessarily fit the Christian identity created by the CHP must either make personal changes so they do fit, live with the discomfort of feeling like an incomplete member of the party, or eventually leave the group.

An example of this approach to identity politics is seen in the harsh criticism that Bob, a Pentecostal candidate in Southern Ontario, received from some of his conservative Dutch Reformed constituents after sending a party-related email on a Sunday.²⁴ In the minds of the

²⁴ Bob and the other names used throughout this dissertation to refer to interviewed CHPers are pseudonyms. Interview #8, August 25, 2011; and Interview #9, August 25, 2011.

perturbed constituents, Bob's practice of emailing on a Sunday put into question his Christian character, since Sunday is a day of rest to be spent with one's family. From Bob's perspective the harsh criticism he received regarding his piety was unfounded as he had attended church that morning and was at home with his family when he sent the email in question. This example is fleshed out in greater detail below. For now, it suffices to say internal debates among CHPers about appropriate behaviours, beliefs and other practices for Christians illustrate how the party shapes and reaffirms the religious lives of its members. The close proximity of different types of social conservative Christians within the CHP forces negotiations of acceptable Christian ways of being.

These internal debates and necessary negotiations around assorted Christian practices and beliefs led to the development of the party's "denominational protocol" during Mr. Jim Hnatiuk's tenure as party leader (2008-2014). Developed by the national executive, the denominational protocol is a top-down response to issues like those experienced by Bob. The protocol opens by stating, "It is the intention of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada to respect the dignity of all individuals and the varied practices within different Christian denominations while participating within the political arena."²⁵ The document does not strictly outline how members should behave regarding denominational and theological differences other than to say, "Every effort should be made to avoid causing offence or being offended by the actions of other members as we conduct ourselves as Christians within our own denominational practices and/or walks of faith."²⁶ It is clear that this document illustrates the desire to lessen confrontations like the one between Bob and his constituents. While this is an admirable desire, it is unclear how effective the denominational protocol has been in actualizing this goal.

²⁵ "CHP Canada's Denominational Protocol," *CHP Canada*, accessed January 5, 2015, <https://www.chp.ca/about/denominational-protocol>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Looking at the CHP through a lens of identity politics also explains some of the recurring themes present in the party. The two central identity markers for the party are Christianity and party politics. While I would not argue that religion and politics are inherently in tension with each other, for there are innumerable examples of religion and politics combining seamlessly, the CHP struggles to strike a balance between these two aspects of its identity. The CHP is very literally a Christian political party in that it is a registered federal political party (and provincial party in British Columbia) and it has religious requirements limiting its membership to Christians. The party does maintain these two aspects of its identity, but they are also in tension with each other largely because of the need to negotiate what it means to be Christian given that the party has members from a variety of denominations, and because of the political landscape in which the party exists, which frowns upon publicly combining religion (especially conservative Christianity) and politics. Throughout this dissertation I refer to this central tension as “principled versus pragmatic.” The CHP’s desire to uphold its Christian principles (hence “principled”) while being a viable, electable (“pragmatic”) political party is at the core of many of the party’s recurring debates.

This principled versus pragmatic theory explaining the CHP’s identity politics developed out of a grounded theory approach to this study. Although I did initially perceive and continue to maintain that the CHP is part of the lived religion of its members, the recurring central concern of affirming Christian principles while being a pragmatic political party arose out of the data I collected on the party. Many of the CHP’s internal debates I witnessed rotated around this recurring concern; the struggle to be first and foremost a principled Christian organization or to be a viable political party.

In some cases it was not clear whether the issue being argued would actually foster the electoral goals of the CHP, such as the perennial debate around changing the name of the party (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three). My emphasis on the principled versus the pragmatic does not hinge on the actual potential electoral benefits of the supposedly pragmatic changes being suggested, but on the way these suggestions are presented by the membership. By way of example, the recurring debate around changing the name of the party (or even just considering changing the party's name) is presented by those in support of this change as a way to potentially attract more members and more votes. Although I did not meet any supporters of this change who want to see any substantive alterations made to the Christian character of the CHP, they did generally express a belief that another name, such as Canadian Heritage Party, could attract more people to the party. I have no way of testing this hypothesis and I suspect this change, even without any other alterations made to the party, could initially damage the CHP more than help it. But that is beyond the point. The crux of the principled versus pragmatic theory is that it reflects how these debates are presented within the party.

Debates about the name of the party take place at most of the party's national conventions, but other less perennial contentions also highlight this principled versus pragmatic concern. Some of these disputes include: an official statement increasing the flexibility of the party's pro-capital punishment platform in order to attract more Roman Catholic pro-life members, and using the initialization of the party's name rather than the full name spelled-out on campaigning tools (i.e. pamphlets and signs). In the case of the latter example, the national executive made this change prior to the 2011 election, between national conventions, only to have the lay members pass a resolution that all party advertisements *must* include the full name of the party at the following 2012 convention. The resolution hinged on the lay members' desire

to be publicly presented as Christian first and foremost, over any considerations of the expense accrued by the party to produce new campaign tools or the marketability of the party. The decision on the part of the national executive to use the initialization “CHP” was seen as a challenge to the Christian principles by the lay members, even while it was understood as a pragmatic political decision by the executive.

To summarize, theories based on identity politics are useful for explaining the phenomenon of the CHP. There are two main theses in particular that come out of the particular identity politics of the CHP. The first is that the party functions as a site where the Christian identity of individual party members are challenged, affirmed and modified in order to construct that social conservative Christian identity of the party more broadly. The second is that many of the significant debates within the party hinge on the concern of being a highly *principled Christian* political party or being an electable *pragmatic political party*. This tension between being principled versus pragmatic is the central recurring theme in the majority of the internal debates in the party, especially when the perceived image of the party is at stake.

Methodology

This project is largely ethnographic with a heavily reliance on interviews, participant observation of selected events, and assorted texts developed or promoted by the party elites (i.e. members of the national or provincial executives). I strive to present a Geertzian thick description of the CHP here. Due to the nature of the CHP, my opportunities for participant observation were limited. The CHP does not have regular public events, and many—if not most—of the Electoral District Associations (EDAs) do not hold monthly meetings. The national leadership team appear to meet regularly—two to four times a year—although these meetings are more on technical matters and do not offer much insight into the lay membership. These issues

and my interest in the rank-and-file CHPers are why I largely gravitated towards interviewing as my primary method for data collection.

My fieldwork took place between August 2010 and July 2012. During that period I conducted sixty-four interviews with seventy-nine CHPers (as well as one non-member). I also attended seven leader visits (which were sometimes combined with the annual general meeting for the local EDA) and two town hall-style meetings, all of which took place in Southern Ontario. In Abbotsford, British Columbia, I attended the party's national convention, which included a national executive meeting as well as a celebration for the party's 25th anniversary. While in British Columbia I also was invited to sit in on an EDA meeting that took place in the Greater Vancouver area.

In addition to the interviews and attending events, I gathered campaign pamphlets, tracked the party's website (including candidates' websites during the election), subscribed to the CHP's email list to receive the *Communiqué* and gathered books promoted by the party, such as Ed Vanwoudenberg's 1989 manifesto for the party, *A Matter of Choice*, and Timothy Bloedow's *State vs. Church: What Christians Can Do to Save Canada from Liberal Tyranny*.²⁷ I subscribed to receive the *Communiqué* in early 2010. This subscription occasionally includes "call[s] to action" on timely events, such as parliamentary petitions on abortion issues. Because these texts are largely produced by party elites, I interpreted them as representing the official stance of the CHP, whereas data collected via interviews was more representative of the lay members. All of my methods for data collection were approved by Wilfrid Laurier University's Research Ethics Board, with particular emphasis placed on my interview methods.

²⁷ Ed Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice* (Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1989); and Timothy Bloedow, *State vs. Church: What Christians Can Do to Save Canada from Liberal Tyranny* ([United States?] n.p.: printed by author, 2007).

My approach to data collection, particularly with the structure of my interviews, drew on an intuitive grounded theory approach. I had to submit a list of potential interview questions to the Research Ethics Board in order to have my fieldwork approved, but I did not have a clear sense of the major concerns of the party at that time. I knew that some of my questions would be shaped by the geographical location and denomination of the CHPers being interviewed, so I used semi-structured interviews, in which the questions sometimes changed slightly depending on the interviewee. By way of example, it made little sense to ask CHPers outside of Ontario if they are members of the Family Coalition Party of Ontario (FCP)—a provincial party that shares much of the CHP’s social conservative values, but exists solely in Ontario. When I had completed approximately two-thirds of my interviews I altered the officially approved interview questions to more adequately reflect the questions actually being asked. This largely meant removing questions about feminism and including questions about education.

Through interactions with CHPers, the data collection, and my proximity to the data—writing of field notes and transcribing all of the interviews—certain central themes arose. It was clear that in order to adequately present the CHP to others I needed to discuss these themes—the Dutch quality of the party, debates around the name, what it means to be pro-life, thoughts on education, and the perceived enemies of the party. These themes became the dominant topics in each of my core chapters. I will now elucidate my approach to each type of data collection completed for this project.

Interview Methods

Given my interest in the regular members of the CHP and the relatively infrequency of party-organized public events, my project draws quite heavily on interviews as the primary method of data collection. I began conducting interviews in August 2010, starting with CHPers

that I knew prior to this research. Because this was my first excursion into interviewing, this allowed me greater familiarity with the initial interviewees and gave the added benefit of having them vouch for me when I contacted other members to interview.

I did not give a lot of consideration to party protocols for garnering approval to interview members when I started contacting interviewees. Rather than contacting the national executive to attain their approval to contact CHPers, I went directly to the CHPers I already knew to get their permission. At least one of these individuals told me around the time I interviewed them that they had discussed our interview with key members of the national executive and they were given consent by the party elites to participate in my research. Needless to say, I am thankful that this oversight did not harmfully affect my ability to recruit interviewees.

I recruited interviewees at party events and by requesting other recommended interviewees at the end of the interviews. This system worked very well. In my proposal I stated that I intended to interview at least eighty members, and although I did not interview quite that many—I stopped at seventy-nine—I found I had saturated the pool of potential interviewees.²⁸ By the time I interviewed seventy-nine CHPers I found I was not gathering significant information that I had not already heard from another member.

Despite some stereotypes of social conservative Christians being distrusting of academia and “ivory tower” scholars, I sensed very little opposition by individual CHPers to partaking in this study. The acceptance of my presence at party events and my attempts to recruit interviewees was helped by the open acknowledgement of my project by Mr. Hnatiuk, who was leader during my fieldwork, and other executive members at most of the events I attended. While there were certainly some people who were not interested in being interviewed, I did not face any notable opposition. Even when I solicited interviews via email to members I had not

²⁸ I interviewed eighty individuals, but one of these was not a member of the CHP.

previously met at an event, I was far more likely to receive a positive response than a negative response or no response at all. In at least one case I had to tell someone who wanted to be interviewed that I was not interested in interviewing them because they live in Ontario and by that time I was actively recruiting interviewees who lived outside of Ontario.

Although my method for recruiting interviewees was somewhat passive—there were very few CHPers that I had predetermined I *needed* to interview—I did my best to collect interviews from CHPers across the country and from a variety of denominations. Based on the province in which they resided at the time, I interviewed CHPers in Ontario (fifty out of the seventy-nine), British Columbia (ten), Alberta (seven), Nova Scotia (four), Manitoba (three), Quebec (two), Saskatchewan (two), and Prince Edward Island (one). The various denominations represented by the CHPers I interviewed are discussed in Chapter Three. Most of the CHPers interviewed came from assorted Dutch Reformed denominations, which should not be surprising considering the high representation of this ethno-religious group in the party. Due to my interest in collecting a wide range of perspectives, I did place concerted effort into accessing interviews from non-Dutch Reformed CHPers, especially Roman Catholic, Mormon, and Greek Orthodox members. Generally this effort was made when asking for other recommended contacts at the end of the interviews, where I would specify that I was looking for individuals who were not Dutch Reformed.

Whenever possible I conducted the interviews in person, preferably in the CHPers' homes. Slightly less than two-thirds of the interviews (thirty-nine in total) were conducted in person, which were recorded on a portable digital recorder and later uploaded as an MP3 onto my computer. Of these face-to-face interviews, twenty-six (or 40.6% of all the interviews) took place in the family home, and thirteen (or 20.3%) took place either at the interviewee's

workplace or in a public location, such as a coffee shop. The remaining twenty-five interviews (39.1%) were conducted via Skype to phone and recorded using free Skype-compatible call-recording software.

All but one of my sixty-four interviews were digitally recorded in this manner and later transcribed. The one interview that was not recorded was because of a technical issue with the call-recording software.²⁹ I would have attempted to reschedule the interview after I had resolved the issue, but it was one of the few cases where I had difficulties initially scheduling the interview and I was concerned that attempting to reschedule would have resulted in no interview. Because of this I went ahead with the interview, but let the interviewee know that I was unable to record and frantically wrote down as many details as possible while the interview took place.

In total I collected slightly more than 105 hours of recorded interviews. The length of the interviews varied greatly, with the shortest recording time being forty-six minutes and the longest being three hours forty-two minutes. The majority of the interviews lasted between one to two hours. As one might imagine, after transcribing all of the interviews I had hundreds of pages of data to analyze. This data was coded by searching for significant terms associated with the major recurring themes and then files were created based on the results of those searches. In the case of the themes in Chapter One where the American-quality of the CHP is questioned, I used search terms “American,” “United States,” “States” and “USA” and created a document based on those results. I then sifted through that document to determine who initiated the discussing of the United States (me or the interviewee) and patterns in the interviewees’ discussions of the United States. Once it became apparent that the United States was frequently discussed in relation to ideas of separation of church and state and capital punishment, I coded

²⁹ I had updated Skype prior to the interview, which momentarily made my call-recording software incompatible with Skype. This was resolved immediately after the interview by updating the call-recording software.

the data for those themes. A similar process was repeated for all of the major themes discussed in each of the chapters below.

One final note about my approach to the interviews regarding anonymity and pseudonyms; in the consent form I promised all of the interviewees anonymity. This promise carries important decisions about how to portray interviewees. Should the interviewed CHPers be presented as a number or another coded fashion, should they be described with no name attached, or should they be given pseudonyms? I feel strongly that presenting interviewees as a number mainly contributes to their dehumanization. Because of this and my impulse to present CHPers as fully human as possible, I have used pseudonyms. The requirement of anonymity and the use of pseudonyms only applied to individuals who were interviewed and only when I am drawing on information gathered through interviewing. I have used individuals' actual names when discussing publicly accessible information about candidates and other elite party members.

Participant Observation

As noted above, the CHP offers few opportunities for participant observation. During my two-year period conducting fieldwork, I attended all of the local (i.e. within an approximately two-hour radius from my home) publicly advertised party events that I could find. The party's website includes a section where they post events, but this section is irregularly maintained. Leader visits and the occasional speaking event are sporadically posted, but few other gatherings appear on the site. In total, I was able to be present at ten events that were publicly advertised by the party, plus an EDA meeting that I was privately invited to attend. I did not gather any audio recording at these events, but instead relied on my handwritten field notes.

The first CHP events I attended were the leader visits that took place in Ontario between April 4 and 15, 2011. All of these visits took place within a two-hour radius of Kitchener-

Waterloo, so they were not a significant inconvenience to attend. Additionally, these visits were planned prior to the May 2011 election being called. This means they had the unintended benefit of being campaigning events for the local candidates during that election and they became one of my main opportunities to witness the campaigning practices of the party.

The leader visits were advertised on the party's website, although not all of the information (i.e. time and location) was given. I therefore contacted the national office both to ensure I had permission to attend the visits and to get this information. The response I received from the executive director, Mrs. Vicki Gunn, was positive and I sought out the people organizing each event to attain their permission to attend as an external researcher. Like my attempts to recruit interviewees the responses I received were largely positive, although one ranks high among my few jarring experiences with the party.

One of the organizers of a leader visit responded to my email requesting permission to attend by informing me that I was welcome to come if I was interested in the party, but—and I am paraphrasing—if I caused any kind of disturbance they would contact the police immediately. This response was shocking. I still do not fully understand why I received such a sharp response when I had explained that I wanted to attend as part of my doctoral research. I wrote the organizer back to assure him that I did not plan to cause any disturbance and that I would be happy to talk with him on the phone before the event, if that would allay any of his concerns. We did have that phone conversation, which was surprisingly pleasant, and that particular organizer eventually became an excellent resource for my research. Over half a year later, when I managed to interview one of the other organizers of that event I learned that sometime between when I was sent the initial response and when I talked to the first organizer they had googled me. One of the things that they found from this brief investigation—thanks to a website about a friend's

wedding in which I was a bridesmaid—is that I am an avid knitter. The fact that I am a knitter and was an attendant in this wedding apparently made me “non-threatening” and okay to attend the event.³⁰

Other than the fact that the leader at the time, Mr. Hnatiuk, gave roughly the same speech at all of these visits, there was a lot of variety in their form and locales. A couple of the events were held in church meeting rooms and Christian school gymnasiums. Others were held in publicly available rental spaces, such as an agricultural hall, a room above a public library, and a large concert hall. A couple of these visits were held in conjunction with the local EDA’s annual general meeting, and three were tied to a dinner (two with a fixed price, and one by donation). One of the events included a speech by the leader of the FCP, and one charged a fee for listening to Mr. Hnatiuk’s speech. Some of the events included a table with books for sale on topics like abortion, the need to protect traditional (read heterosexual) marriage, and general threats to Christianity, while others just included free campaigning brochures. All of the leader visits, even those with a charged dinner, included requests for donations to the party. This type of request occurred at all of the party events, including the national convention.

Nearly all of the leader visits included a singing of the national anthem, which frequently included the less commonly sung fourth verse of the original poem written by R. Stanley Weir in 1908.³¹ This verse, which contains strong religious references, is not part of the official lyrics of the national anthem, but from the poem that the English version of the anthem is based upon. Prayers were also a common occurrence at these events. Indeed, nearly all CHP events are opened and/or closed with a prayer.

³⁰ Interview #26, November 14, 2011.

³¹ “National Anthem: O Canada,” *Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage*, last modified February 5, 2014, accessed Jan. 7, 2015, <http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1359402373291/1359402467746#a1.1>.

Attending the leader visits was a huge boon to my fieldwork for multiple reasons. Beyond getting to see the party in action for their only election campaign during my study, it also greatly increased my access to future interviewees and marked me as a non-threatening researcher. The latter was especially helped when Mr. Hnatiuk, who I have known my whole life and lives in my hometown, offered to introduce me to the attendees after seeing me at the second leader visit. At the remaining five visits, Mr. Hnaituk announced my presence, explaining that I was a “familiar face” because of our hometown connection, that many of them would know my aunt (who is also a member of the party), and that I was looking for individuals to interview. At least a few interviewees commented on these connections, particularly if they had met my aunt, and in some cases they thought my aunt, who shares my last name, was my mother. I corrected this familial mistake whenever it was made.

Beyond the leader visits, I also attended two town hall-style meetings in Bowmanville and Beamsville, both in Ontario, on November 10 and 11, 2011 respectively. These meetings were public forums where Mr. Hnatiuk introduced some changes to the party and collected opinions on these changes in preparation for the national convention, which took place the following March. These events helped me stay abreast of changes within the party (such as the creation of the CHP of British Columbia), and led to more contacts for future interviews. Like at the leader visits, Mr. Hnatiuk or Mrs. Gunn, the national executive director, introduced me to the attendees and informed them that I was looking for interviewees for my research.

The national convention, held March 2012 in Abbotsford, British Columbia, was also a fruitful site for data collection. There I had the opportunity to meet CHPers who live west of Ontario, I saw regular members present and debate resolutions affecting party policy and practices, and I attended a national executive meeting. The ability of EDAs and individual

members to not just vote on resolutions, but also present and debate them is key to the CHP's assertion of being a grassroots party. Some of the more heated debates from the convention appear as vignettes in the chapters below. During the few scheduled periods of free time at the convention I conducted interviews, which were almost entirely with CHPers who live outside of Ontario. After the convention I stayed with friends and family in Vancouver, thereby allowing me to conduct a few interviews in the greater Vancouver area and attend an EDA meeting.

Obtaining permission to attend the national convention was more complicated than for the other CHP events that I attended. Although the national board approved my attending the convention, I needed to negotiate the parameters of my presence with the organizing committee. This included negotiations on my convention fees—I ended up paying half of the full fee—and a list of the closed events that I could not attend—a luncheon thanking candidates and the in camera portions of the national executive meeting. It was also noted that as a non-member attending the convention, I could not debate or vote on resolutions, or vote in the election of various positions on the national executive. These limitations were acceptable and the opportunity to attend the national convention was an invaluable asset to this project. Because of my limited participation at the convention I was not guaranteed a convention package, which included a massive binder containing all of the resolutions, the most up-to-date copy of the party policy, the contents of the integrity analysis, and an abundance of other useful information. Thankfully, shortly after I arrived the organizers found they were able to give me one of these packages.

Other Data Sources

If interviews were my primary form of data collection, and attending CHP organized events were secondary, then the remaining sites for data collection were tertiary. These included:

collecting *Communiqués*, campaigning pamphlets, a printed copy of the party policy, the convention package, and other media produced by the party, such as DVDs of the national convention and YouTube videos, as well as tracking the party's website; news articles about the party and its members; and events that were not organized by the party, but gave insight into the group. The two non-CHP events I attended were a candidates' debate in which a CHP candidate participated, and a regular Sunday service at a Christian Reformed Church with the adult child of one of my interviewees. My experience attending the candidates' debate is highlighted in the vignette that opens Chapter Two. The second of these two events may seem somewhat out of place, but given that I had never previously attended a Reformed service of any kind, I jumped at the chance when I was invited. That opportunity afforded me some additional insight into the church lives of some CHPers, even though it was not a service at a Canadian Reformed Church, which is the denomination most frequently represented in my pool of interviewees.

The data collected through these sources have supplemented the primary and secondary data, especially regarding how the party presents itself and how it is perceived by others. One example of how these sources have been applied in this project is seen in Chapter One. During the interviews I did not directly ask many questions regarding opinions on or the influence of the American CR, so I did not have a lot of data to analyze on that issue. In order to supplement this data, I drew on discussion of the United States present in the *Communiqués* published during 2013 and the content of a CHP-produced YouTube video released in January 2014. Similarly, Chapter Five, on education and the party, has a section that draws very heavily on news articles to add details regarding CHPers' activism relating to public education. These sources add a level of detail that would otherwise be missing from this project.

Why the CHP?

When I began my doctorate in 2009 I had no intention to study the CHP. My academic background is in religious studies (primarily focusing on Christianity) and women's studies. Drawing on both areas, I thought I might study REAL (Realistic, Equal, Active, for Life) Women of Canada. This social conservative lobby group presents itself as a non-feminist alternative to Status of Women Canada. My interest in the group was related to the religious identities of regular members and how they relate their religiosity to participating in this lobby group. While it is generally acknowledged that REAL Women holds a "Judeo-Christian" worldview—in other words, a conservative Christian perspective—the description given on the group's website says "REAL Women of Canada is a non-partisan, *non-denominational* organization of women (and men) from all walks of life..."³² This is the only mention of religion in the "About Us" section of REAL Women's website. I had heard plenty of criticism of this group in my women's studies circles since I was an undergraduate in the early 2000s and the fact that they do not publicly embrace their Christianity piqued my curiosity about the group; however two things occurred in my preliminary research on REAL Women that led to my research on the CHP.

First, I found Kristin Blakely's 2008 doctoral dissertation on REAL Women, titled "Women of the New Right in Canada."³³ Blakely is very forthright about the difficulties she had accessing regular members of the group while conducting her fieldwork. She initially intended to interview female lay members of REAL Women in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, but it quickly became apparent that this was not possible. In Blakely's words, "Access to the lay membership outside of the national conference [...] was not welcomed by the

³² "About Us," *REAL Women of Canada*, accessed December 16, 2014, <http://www.realwomenofcanada.ca/issues/> (my italics).

³³ Kristin Blakely, "Women of the New Right in Canada" (PhD Diss., Loyol University Chicago, 2008).

leadership of the organization.”³⁴ The leadership was well aware of the harsh criticism REAL Women has received within academic circles over the years and developed tight gatekeeping mechanisms to ensure that lay members would not have contact with academics or researchers of any kind.³⁵ Given Blakely’s lack of success on this front, I did not believe I would have any greater success.

Second, around the time I found Blakely’s dissertation I was doing Internet searches to locate groups that had connections to REAL Women. While doing these searches I noticed there was a hyperlink to REAL Women on the CHP’s website.³⁶ Although I knew that the hyperlink did not necessarily mean that REAL Women endorsed the CHP, it did indicate some overlap between the two groups. Furthermore, I already had some familiarity with the CHP and some of its members. I first learned of the CHP in 2004 when a man, Mr. Jim Hnatiuk, who I knew from my hometown in Nova Scotia, ran as a candidate for the party. Around the same time, one of my aunts and a couple of other people I knew got involved with the party. At that time I heard various people make critical comments about the CHP, but I did not know much more about it. These two coincidences started me in the direction of studying the CHP. I knew that people outside the party thought it was strange or, more disparagingly, crazy, and I wanted to find out why people chose to be involved in the party.

My Relationship to the CHP

By the time I came to the realization that I wanted to study the CHP—in the spring of 2010—Mr. Hnatiuk was the leader of the party. Growing up in a fairly small town, I knew Mr.

³⁴ Blakely, “Women of the New Right in Canada,” 57.

³⁵ Other works on REAL Women of Canada include: Erin Steuter, “Women Against Feminism: An Examination of Feminist Social Movements and Anti-feminist Countermovements,” *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 29, no. 3 (August 1992): 288-306; and Bruce Wayne Foster, “New Right, Old Canada: An Analysis of the Political Thought and Activities of Selected Contemporary Right-Wing Organizations” (PhD Diss., University of British Columbia, 2000).

³⁶ Since that time the CHP has updated its website and no longer include links to other organizations.

Hnatiuk in a variety of ways. His wife and my mother had been roommates before Mr. Hnatiuk and his wife got married, and he had been an active member of the community while I was growing up. I knew him through his involvement with a men's group at the local church and through a Christian youth group that he helped organized at a different church, which I occasionally attended while I was in high school. These prior interactions with Mr. Hnatiuk, as well as my aunt's involvement with the party, gave me useful points of connection when I was interviewing party members, as described above.

To be clear, although I have some personal connections to key members of the CHP, I am undoubtedly an outsider to the party. I have never been a member, I have no desire to join the CHP, and I have no Dutch or Calvinist background—not that the latter would have precluded me from joining the party. Before I started my fieldwork my supervisor, Jeff Wilson, explicitly told me that I was not allowed to join the party, as this would call into question my ability to objectively analyze the CHP. This enabled me to use Dr. Wilson as a scapegoat when CHPers asked me if I was a member of the party or if I planned to join. There was at least one instance where this became very useful, while I was at the party's national convention in Abbotsford, British Columbia in March 2012. The day after interviewing Jack and Christine, a married couple from a prairie province, I was casually talking with Christine and it became apparent that she had thought I was a member of the party.³⁷ She discovered I was not a member when she asked me if I was planning on being on the party's executive someday. I quickly responded, "No. I'm not a member of the party." After a moment of silent consideration Christine asked me, "Why?" I initially responded by explaining that I am not a member of any political party and gave reasons why this was the case before I interrupted myself to say that my supervisor said I

³⁷ Interview #46, March 16, 2012.

was not allowed to join the party while I was studying it. This appeared to be a satisfactory response for Christine, and she did not ask me for further details.

Religious Identity and Being an Outsider

While having the ability to point to my supervisor as the reason why I was not a member of the CHP was useful, I also would not fulfill the requirements that are set by the party to become a CHPer. The party has five unalterable principles that all prospective members are required to uphold in order to join the party. The guiding principles are delineated on the CHP's website thusly:

Christian Heritage Party of Canada Party principles are based on these Biblical ethics and are unalterable:

We Believe:

- There is one Creator God, eternally existent in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Bible to be the inspired, inerrant written Word of God and the final authority above all man's laws and government.
- Civil government to be under the authority of God.
- The purpose of civil government is to ensure freedom and justice for a nation's citizens by upholding law and order in accordance with Biblical principles.
- Decision-making processes by civil government must not in any way contravene these Biblical ethics.³⁸

These principles, which were regularly displayed on CHP membership forms until around the time I started my fieldwork, are in part intended to maintain the particular Christian characteristics of the party's membership and, by extension, the party more generally. From within the party, these party principles are presented as a safeguard for ensuring that the CHP's Christian principles are never eroded. The national executive's decision to remove the party principles from the membership form was seen as problematic by many of the lay members, as is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. Given that I am a lapsed Catholic with some Jewish

³⁸ "About CHP: Guiding Principles," *CHP Canada*, accessed Dec. 17, 2014, <https://www.chp.ca/why/category/guiding-principles>.

heritage who has not regularly attended church or personally identified as Christian for over a decade, I could not in good conscience sign in support of these principles.

My lack of Christian identity made for interesting encounters with CHPers, particularly while I was conducting interviews. I knew before I entered the field, based on Scott Grills' research on the party and James Bielo's ethnographic work on evangelical Bible study groups, that party members would inevitably ask about my religious identity.³⁹ Both Grills and Bielo had the benefit of being able to state in good conscience that they are Christian, although both noted that simply identifying as Christian still required further negotiations. Sometimes their denomination marked them as not Christian enough for their research contacts or, in the case of Bielo, he found that the question "Are you a Christian?" meant different things depending on the denomination of the person asking the question.⁴⁰ Sometimes his contacts really wanted to know if he simply identified as a Christian, but other times they wanted to know his particular denomination, or if he identified as born-again or charismatic.

In any case, I did not have the benefit of being able to identify as Christian and I was concerned that my Catholic background might be considered less than Christian by some Protestants in the CHP. I therefore had to carefully consider how I would describe my religious identity to CHPers. In the end my go-to response to the question, "Are you Christian?"—and the various incarnations of that question—was, "I was raised in a Christian household, but I do not currently attend church." I was pleasantly surprised how frequently this, and casually mentioning

³⁹ (Charles) Scott Grills, "Designating Deviance: Championing Definitions of the Appropriate and the Inappropriate Through a Christian Political Voice" (PhD Diss. McMaster University, 1989); and James Bielo, *Words Upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). Leah McKeen, "'Are You a Christian?' Negotiating Religious Identity in Fieldwork" (conference paper, The Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, MD, November 24, 2013) was given on this issue.

⁴⁰ Bielo, *Words Upon the Word*, 33-8.

that I knew Mr. Hnatiuk through a church youth group, was taken as sufficient details about my religious identity.

The only cases where I broke from this rote response were the few times that I either interviewed Roman Catholic CHPers or when the individuals being interviewed pushed me for more details. With the handful of Catholics I interviewed I felt disclosing my own Catholic background helped to forge connections with those members. That is to say, it was a strategic disclosure of information on my part. In the instances when CHPers pushed me for more information I had to manage my response on a case-by-case basis.

There are two particular examples of CHPers seeking more information about my religious background that stand out in my mind. The first is my interview with Richard and Susan, a middle-aged married couple in Southern Ontario.⁴¹ I met them at a leader visit/annual general meeting in their area in April 2011 and interviewed them in their home in September of that year. Susan and Richard were very hospitable and shared a meal with me while I interviewed them. During the interview Richard became very interested in why I chose to do religious studies. He was not overly concerned with the fact that I did not attend church, but he could simply not understand why I was studying religion if I was not Christian. After Richard had come back to this point a few times, I told him that besides finding religion incredibly interesting, I got involved in religious studies in part to make sense of my family since my mother is Catholic and my father is Jewish. This made sense to him, as can be seen in this excerpt from our interview:

Richard: I could understand how you would have to make sense of that.

Leah: When I was younger I was like “I don’t understand what’s going on?” Like “How come this is normal for them and this is strange for them?”

⁴¹ Interview #12, September 14, 2011.

Richard: “Why does Mom give me rosemary beads and Dad says I get twelve gifts at Christmas? I don’t get it.”⁴²

Although Richard’s response illustrates a lack of familiarity with Catholicism and Judaism—calling rosary beads “rosemary beads” and thinking Hanukkah is twelve days long instead of eight—the idea that my particular background pushed me towards religious studies was a sensible explanation to him. He did not ask me any additional information about my religious identity.

The second example comes from my interview with Veronica and Douglas, who I met briefly at a leader visit/annual general meeting in April 2011 and interviewed in their home in Ontario the following February.⁴³ My rote response about my religious identity was acceptable to Veronica, but later when Douglas joined the interview he pushed indirectly for more information. When Douglas and Veronica were offering suggestions of other people to interview Douglas commented that many of the recommended people had names with “a Dutch twang to them” and he asked Veronica to explain why this might be. This led to a brief discussion of Abraham Kuyper, Groen van Prinsterer, and the Anti-Revolutionary Party, out of which Douglas asked me, “So if you saw a church that said Abraham Kuyper Church, is that something you’d be intrigued about attending sometime? Just out of curiosity.”⁴⁴

Although I wish I had answered the question a bit more graciously, I muttered that I probably would not, or that I would primarily out of curiosity regarding what the service was like, but that if I was going to attend a church regularly it would probably be a Catholic Church because that is what I grew up with. Rather than continuing with questions about my religious beliefs, the conversation shifted into a comparison of the institutional structures of the Catholic

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Interview #43, February 1, 2012.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Church verses their Reformed Church. All of this is to say, despite my initial concerns about my position as a religious outsider to the party, it did not pose anything like the challenge that I had anticipated.

Chapter One: Is the Christian Heritage Party a Canadian manifestation of the American Christian Right?

For a Canadian, to be mistaken for an American is to have one's sense of cultural identity threatened. The desire within Canada to represent an alternative, the tendency to find definition through opposition, is coupled with a deep uneasiness that this distinction is not really evident, at least not to those outside Canada. Reinforcing that fear is the fact that, although the longing to be differentiated from the United States begins as soon as Canadian history begins, Canadians have repeatedly had to deal with the failure of the American side to remember that there is a difference.⁴⁵

If the we-are-different-from-Americans sentiment is a mainstay of Canadian national identity (witness the wild popularity of Molson beer's "Joe Canada" TV commercial, in which "Joe" delivers a rant touting Canada's distinctiveness from and superiority to the United States), when it comes to religion, no specter haunts Canada as much as American "fundamentalism."⁴⁶

Most Canadians can identify with the first statement above, particularly if they have any experiences travelling abroad. The desire to be recognized as Canadian—and not be mistaken for American—is a central quality of Canadian identity, yet social conservative Christians are continually told their religio-political identity is inherently more American than Canadian. As Michael Wagner comments in his insider book, *Standing on Guard for Thee: The Past, Present and Future of Canada's Christian Right*, “the debate over same-sex marriage during 2005 awakened the media to the presence of a Christian Right in Canada. Many saw the Christian Right as a new phenomenon here. Even worse, it was alleged by some to be an American import, infusing American values into Canadian politics.” Wagner goes on to argue, “in fact, the Christian Right is neither new nor American-inspired. Home-grown Canadian activists have been involved at least since the early 1970s, and in some cases their efforts received national attention

⁴⁵ Russell Brown, “The Written Line,” in *Borderlands: Essays in Canadian-American Relations*, ed. Robert Lecker (Toronto: ECW Press, 1991), 3. Original emphasis.

⁴⁶ Dennis R. Hoover, “A Religious Right Arrives in Canada,” *Religion in the News* 3, no.2 (Summer 2000): 14.

during that decade.”⁴⁷ As someone who is openly an insider to the Canadian CR, Wagner is clearly frustrated with assertions that this religio-political ideology is maligned as American because it draws on “American counterparts for advice and support.”⁴⁸

This message, in the negative form, is reiterated in Marci McDonald’s bestseller *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*, which was released in 2010 when I was still in the very early stages of this project.⁴⁹ Unlike Wagner, McDonald is squarely outside of the Canadian CR and is highly suspicious of those she perceives to be within that group. *The Armageddon Factor* argues that Canadians should be concerned about American-style Christian nationalism in Canada, particularly within the Conservative Party.⁵⁰ Upon the release of this book, friends and colleagues who knew of my research were recommending I read it. Based on the title alone it fit so well with my research I was initially concerned that McDonald had undercut my project, albeit in a journalistic rather than scholarly fashion. McDonald had lived in the United States and wrote about the American CR in the 1980s. When she moved back to Canada she was shocked to discover how much of the rhetoric she associated with the American CR was being used in Canada.

McDonald’s concerns over the rise of the CR are largely tied to both the presence of conservative Christianity in national politics and her sense that the general Canadian public is unaware of this group’s powers. She writes as though she were the lone voice in the wilderness warning Canadians to be aware that we are slowly becoming like the U.S.; however her emphasis is misplaced. McDonald is so concerned with the hidden powers of Christian nationalists within the Conservative Party that she fails to recognise the CHP at all. She even

⁴⁷ Michael Wagner, *Standing on Guard for Thee: The Past, Present and Future of Canada’s Christian Right* (St. Catharines, ON: Freedom Press, 2005), 2-3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁹ McDonald, *The Armageddon Factor*.

⁵⁰ McDonald, “Stephen Harper and the Theo-Cons.”

refers to two former CHP candidates, Tim Bloedow and Tristan Emmanuel, as figures tied to Christian nationalism in the Conservative Party, but never notes their connections, past or current, to the CHP.⁵¹

I find McDonald's ignorance or avoidance of the CHP troublesome, but it is equally problematic that she is starting from the position that Christian nationalism or the CR does not naturally belong in Canada. Rather than taking a nuanced approach to Christian nationalism, understanding that it can arise in a variety of contexts and draw on numerous influences, McDonald understands this ideology as having a singular origin—the United States. Part of the problem with the supposed rise of Christian nationalism in Canada is that it signifies Americanization. I hear similar associations between the United States and Christian nationalism and the CR in the questions I frequently receive about my research. Although the questions are asked with variations on wording, they boil down to one concern: Is the CHP a Canadian manifestation of the American CR? Even though the majority of the people that I talk to know very little about the CHP, once I begin describing the party there is immediately some curiosity or trepidation that the party is more American than anything else. The major exception to this rule is when I talk to Dutch-Canadians, people who live in areas with a large Dutch-Canadian population, or people already familiar with the party, but the reason for their different response will be examined in the subsequent chapter.

This chapter theorizes why this is the central question asked about the CHP and strives to answer the question—is the CHP a manifestation of the United States' CR? Before I delve into this question I give some basic background on the development of the CHP. Then, in order to get

⁵¹ Tristan Emmanuel ran as a candidate for the CHP and the FCP, but by 2005 had formally ended his official ties to either party. In a June 2005 *The Globe and Mail* cover story on Emmanuel, Michael Valpy writes, "[...]now he [Emmanuel] thinks third parties are political dead-ends." Michael Valpy, "Spreading the Gospel of Political Evangelism," *The Globe and Mail*, June 13, 2005. Bloedow continues to maintain some connections with the CHP, although it is not clear if he is still a member.

to the heart of this question, I discuss certain idiosyncrasies of Canadian identity that allow the question of Americanness to be asked in the first place. Canadians tend to compare their country to the United States—almost to an obsessive level—yet Canadians (arguably) primarily identify as “not Americans.” Although Canadians adopt various aspects of American political rhetoric and culture easily, certain aspects appear “too American” and are therefore avoided. I also draw attention to significant scholarship that compares Canada and the United States, and examine what this scholarship tells us about Canadian identity. While I illustrate the breadth of these comparisons, I am more narrowly concerned with the scholarship on evangelicals and Christian politics. To be clear, I am not arguing that the CHP is not influenced by the American CR, but challenging the idea that an American influence makes this political party and its religio-political identity inherently less Canadian.

Members of the CHP are no less Canadian than the general population and are not exempt from making Canadian-American comparisons or drawing on American sources. I therefore discuss CHPers’ perceptions of the United States, which is broken down into thematic subsections. It is important to note that although I initiated some comparisons with the United States, none of my pre-planned interview questions mentioned that country. Despite this, the United States was discussed or at least mentioned in the majority of my interviews, most frequently in relation to separation of church and state, capital punishment, and influential media.

Questions about the American-quality of the CHP are generally asked by individuals outside of the CHP or unfamiliar with the party. There is no question in the minds of CHPers that the party is Canadian—they would undoubtedly be frustrated by assertions that they are more American than Canadian—but they are also somewhat envious of the social and political positions of likeminded American social conservative Christians. Beyond the interviews, I also

examine American content in the weekly, single-topic *Communiqué* newsletter, specifically those published during 2013. My examination of the *Communiqué* is particularly focused on the American personalities discussed therein.

My analysis of perceptions of the United States then shifts to the final major section of this chapter, where I examine the functional similarities and differences between the CHP and the American CR. The first part of this section strikes comparisons between the party and the American CR in the broadest sense. Simply sharing talking points and social conservative concerns does not make the CHP inherently more American than Canadian. The functional differences between the CHP and the American CR mark a distinction based on their national political milieu. There are a variety of ways that Christian nationalist and social conservatives can choose to engage with their national government. In the United States the CR has largely functioned as lobby groups or intra-Republican participation. While some Canadian proponents of the CR, such as those highlighted by McDonald and various lobby groups such as the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) and REAL Women of Canada have taken this more American approach, the CHP opted to form its own party. This approach is markedly different than the traditional political strategy of the American CR.

This is not to say there are no political parties in the United States that arguably fit under the umbrella of the CR. Therefore, the second part of the last section draws more specific comparisons between the CHP and contemporary Christian political parties in the United States. Two such parties, the Constitution Party and the Christian Liberty Party, share certain social conservative qualities with the CR. In many ways they offer a more viable American comparison to the CHP than the entire American CR movement, therefore a large part of the final section of this chapter compares and contrasts the CHP with these parties. As will be seen, comparisons

with these parties serve as evidence for how the chosen political party structure of the CHP does not originate with United States' CR.

Background on the Christian Heritage Party of Canada⁵²

The idea of the CHP developed in the homes of politically frustrated conservative Protestants and Roman Catholics in British Columbia during the mid-1980s. Shifts towards the legalization of abortion, Sunday shopping, and disappointment in the Progressive Conservative and the Social Credit Parties motivated these individuals to form a political party that would truly align with their religious worldview. Furthermore, this party would recognize the Christian heritage of Canada, which was apparent to the founding members, but seemed to be increasingly eroded and brushed aside by others.

The CHP was registered as a federal political party in June 1986. According to Scott Grills, who used the CHP as the central case study in his 1989 doctoral dissertation, in order for a new federal political party to officially register at that time 125 individuals had to affirm their willingness to join the party. Their signatures, as well as “the party name and accompanying identifiers [such as the party’s logo and colours] were then presented to the electoral office in Ottawa.”⁵³ Many of these early members, such as founding leader Ed Vanwoudenberg, Gerhard Herwig, and Bill and Heather Stilwell, were based in Southern British Columbia, but they adeptly drew on their church and prolife networks and quickly mobilized across the country. Vanwoudenberg in particular drew on the highly organized networks of his Canadian Reformed denomination and its sister Reformed churches. By the fall of 1987 the party had a membership

⁵² Parts of this section were presented in my paper: Leah McKeen, “Voting with a Christian Conscience” (conference paper, Seventh Biennial Symposium on Religion and Public Life at the Henry Institute Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, April 26, 2013).

⁵³ Grills, “Designating Deviance,” 150.

of over 5000.⁵⁴ That same fall the party held its founding convention in Hamilton, Ontario, attracting over 500 delegates from across the country.

In November 1988 the CHP ran its first election and, according to Grills, by that time the party's membership since the convention had tripled.⁵⁵ The party ran sixty-three candidates, which remains their record for the number of candidates in any election, and had at least one candidate in every province and territory except for Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Eleven of these sixty-three candidates won more than 5% of the votes in their riding, but none received 10% or more of the votes in their electoral district. This was the CHP at its height.

During this early period for the party, while Vanwoudenberg was still the leader, a group of people in New Zealand who were interested in starting a similar party in their country contacted CHP organizers. This group from New Zealand sent delegates to the CHP's founding convention and later Vanwoudenberg and others went to New Zealand to counsel allies there on forming their own Christian political party.⁵⁶ This relationship led to the formation of a Christian Heritage Party of New Zealand in 1989. CHP New Zealand managed to have a Member of Parliament for a brief period in 1999 when a previously elected MP crossed the floor to join the party.⁵⁷ This means that CHP New Zealand has had a greater parliamentary presence than has ever been experienced by CHP Canada. CHP New Zealand formed a short-lived coalition with another Christian party (the Christian Democrats) and rebranded as Christian Heritage New Zealand before disbanding in October 2006.⁵⁸ Although the development of this party and its modest success could be seen as a feather in the cap of CHP Canada, the New Zealand history

⁵⁴ Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice*, 11-2.

⁵⁵ Grills, "Designating Deviance," 155.

⁵⁶ Martin J. Freeman, "The Christian Political Parties of New Zealand" (master's thesis, University of Auckland, 1998), 14-6 and 36; C. Scott Grills, telephone conversation with author, 2010.

⁵⁷ Paul Freston, *Protestant Political Parties: A Global Survey* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 59.

⁵⁸ A major contributing factor to the demise of CHP New Zealand was the negative press that the party attracted when its former leader, Graham Capill, was convicted for committing sex crimes against minors.

was barely acknowledged in my encounters with CHPers. Nevertheless, that fact that the CHP was at one point able to influence the development of a party in another country further illustrates that the latter half of the 1980s was the party's high point.

Vanwoudenburg maintained his position as party leader until 1991, and his stepping down led to a four-year period of instability in the leadership of the CHP. Between 1991 and 1995 the CHP had three short-lived party leaders—Charles Cavilla, Heather Stilwell (an interim leader and the leader during the 1993 election), and Jean Blaquièrè—before Ron Gray, a journalist from British Columbia, was elected to the position in 1995. Gray's leadership brought some stability to the party, although it did not necessarily eliminate all of the party's problems. Two particularly difficult events for the CHP during Gray's tenure were the financial and public burden of an official human rights complaint lodged against the party and its leader, and the momentary loss of official party status in 2000 when the CHP failed to run the required minimum candidates during an election.⁵⁹ Gray ushered the party through these crises and stepped down as leader in 2008 when Jim Hnatiuk assumed the mantle. Hnatiuk, an entrepreneur in Nova Scotia, was the leader until early 2014. Because Hnatiuk stepped down before the convention held in November 2014, the national executive had to select an interim leader. They chose David Reimer, a Pentecostal minister and long-term executive member from Manitoba. At the leadership convention Rod Taylor, Hnatiuk's former deputy leader who lives in Northern British Columbia, was elected the current leader.

In the most recent (May 2011) federal election the CHP ran 46 candidates, none of whom received even 5% of the votes in their electoral district. As of this election, with Elizabeth May becoming the Green Party's first MP, the CHP is now the largest unelected federal party in

⁵⁹ The requirement of running a minimum of fifty candidates in order to maintain party status has since been eliminated.

Canada. The party has approximately 6000 members nationwide. During Hnatiuk's tenure as leader the CHP made a historic shift from solely federal politics into both federal and provincial politics. This shift started with the formation of the British Columbia Heritage Party in 2010 and became official when this provincial party officially became a branch of the federal CHP in 2012, changing its name to CHP British Columbia.⁶⁰ This provincial party ran its first election in May 2013. It ran candidates in two of British Columbia's eighty-five provincial electoral districts—neither candidate won. Around the same period that the provincial branch in British Columbia formed, CHPers in Manitoba began efforts to form a provincial party there, although little has developed on this front.

The long-term effects of these provincial developments are yet to be seen, however in the short term it has caused some tensions in British Columbia and Ontario, two of the three provinces with the largest CHP membership (Alberta being the third). CHPers in British Columbia commented that they felt the development of the provincial branch was rushed and will drain the already overworked members. In Ontario the prospect of a provincial branch has increased tensions between the CHP and the already existing de facto Christian provincial party, the FCP, which has a notable membership overlap with the CHP.

Thus far this background on the CHP touches on some of the highs and lows of the party, but it does not get into great detail on its religious aspects or the central issues driving its membership. When compared to the general Canadian population, the CHP's membership disproportionately consists of individuals of Dutch heritage who attend conservative Reformed Churches. The Reformed Church is a branch of Calvinism popularized in the Netherlands, similar to the other major branch of Calvinism, Presbyterianism. The Reformed denominations

⁶⁰ "Christian Heritage Party of British Columbia" *Student Vote British Columbia*, last modified 2014, accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.studentvote.ca/bc2013/parties/christian-heritage-party-of-bc/>.

most commonly represented in the CHP are the more conservative ones: the Canadian Reformed, the Orthodox Reformed, the United Reformed, the Netherlands Reformed, and, arguably the least conservative of these, the Christian Reformed. There are certainly members of other ethnic backgrounds and who attend other churches, but this particular ethno-religious group can be understood as the foundation on which the party sits. This Reformed Dutch-Canadian membership has been the majority since the party was founded, for a variety of reasons that are examined in depth below, in Chapter Two.

Although the founding members were Protestant and Roman Catholic, the party has a strong conservative Calvinist flavour that could be understood as conservative evangelical or fundamentalist. While colloquially the term fundamentalist may be used in a derogatory manner as a catch-all expression for religious extremists of all stripes, I am not using this term in such a broad or inherently negative sense. The origins of the term fundamentalist is tied to series of early twentieth-century publications called *The Fundamentals*, which reflect a conservative Protestant reaction to the development of modernist Protestant theology. According to Barry Hankins, a scholar of American evangelicalism, these publications “dealt with issues of evolution and higher criticism of scripture, the relationship of evangelical Christianity to science more broadly, daily Christian living [...] and so forth.” Hankins goes on to state, “the volumes popularized the term fundamentals, leading to [Baptist preacher and magazine editor, Curtis Lee] Laws’s coining the term ‘fundamentalist’ a few years later.”⁶¹

The CHP embraces some of the beliefs expressed in *The Fundamentals*, such as the inerrancy of the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ, and rejects others, such as a strong opposition to Roman Catholicism. Since the term was first developed Christian fundamentalists

⁶¹ Barry Hankins, “Introduction,” in *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Barry Hankins (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 5.

have come to be understood as an evangelical subgroup that holds three main characteristics: biblical literalism, militancy, and separatism.⁶² Although there are some members of the CHP who embrace these characteristics, I do not recall any CHPers self-identifying as a fundamentalist, which is understandable given the negative associations with this term.

There is also a Roman Catholic presence in the party, but there are certain positions promoted by the party, particularly regarding definitions of what it means to be pro-life, that could be perceived as a barrier for Catholics. The CHP promotes itself as “Canada’s only pro-life, pro-family federal political party.” It is clear that being pro-life is a defining feature of the group, and yet one of the largest pro-life demographics in Canada, Roman Catholics, is not overwhelmingly attracted to the CHP. This tension between being pro-life and attracting (or failing to attract) Roman Catholic pro-lifers is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, where the pro-life position of the CHP is examined.

Comparing Canada and the United States

Academic comparisons of Canada and the United States are nothing new, especially within the field of sociology. There is no shortage of sources that compare Canada and the United States regarding religion and politics, religious conservatism (especially evangelical Protestantism), and civil religion, particularly since the 1990 publication of Lipset’s seminal text, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada*.⁶³ Particularly

⁶² See David Haskell, “Use of the Term ‘Fundamentalist Christian’ in Canadian National Television News,” in *Fundamentalism and the Media*, ed. Stewart M. Hoover and Nadia Kaneva (London: Continuum, 2009), 113-6; and George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4-8.

⁶³ See Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Andrew E. Kim, “The Absence of Pan-Canadian Civil Religion: Plurality, Duality, and Conflict in Symbols of Canadian Culture,” *Sociology of Religion* 54, no. 3 (1993): 257-275; Dennis R. Hoover, “The Christian Right under Old Glory and the Maple Leaf,” in *Sojourners in the Wilderness: The Christian Right in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Corwin E. Smidt and James M. Penning (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 193-215; Dennis R. Hoover, “Conservative Protestant Politics in the United States and Canada” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1997); Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant*

significant for this research is the plethora of scholarship comparing conservative Christian politics in the United States and Canada. Dennis Hoover took up this scholarship in the mid-1990s, publishing “The Christian Right under Old Glory and the Maple Leaf” as a chapter in Corwin E. Smidt and James M. Penning’s edited volume *Sojourners in the Wilderness* and writing his doctoral dissertation, “Conservative Protestant Politics in the United States and Canada.” However, the scholarship comparing evangelicalism in Canada and the United States did not truly flourish until the twenty-first century, with Samuel Reimer’s detailed study *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, published in 2003. This thorough study examines many aspects of the evangelical subcultures in Canada and the United States, including politics.

Even more on point is Bean, Gonzales and Kaufman’s 2008 article, “Why Doesn’t Canada Have an American-Style Christian Right?” This article starts with the assertion that an American-style CR has failed to take hold in Canada and evaluates why this may be the case. Bean, Gonzales, and Kaufman offer no discussion of the CHP, presumably because they feel it does not fit into their classification of “an American-style Christian Right”—a point with which I agree.⁶⁴ The CHP is not representative of the American CR. It may draw on American influences—as do many Canadian political parties and other cultural institutions—but the party is undoubtedly Canadian. It was developed in Canada and only exists in this country. The members are all Christian, but they are also proud Canadians who place a high value on their citizenship. All of these scholars are trained as sociologists, but more recently Canadian political scientist Jonathan Malloy has also taken up comparisons of Canadian and American evangelical

Subculture in Canada and the United States (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003); Lydia Bean, Marco Gonzales, and Jason Kaufman, “Why Doesn’t Canada Have an American-Style Christian Right? A Comparative Framework for Analyzing the Political Effects of Evangelical Subcultural Identity,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 4 (2008): 899-943; and Jonathan Malloy, “Bush/Harper? Canadian and American Evangelical Politics Compared,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 39 (2009): 352-63.

⁶⁴ Bean, Gonzales, and Kaufman, “Why Doesn’t Canada.”

politics.⁶⁵ Most of these studies start with American Conservative Christian politics as normative and attempt to make sense of why similar trends do not develop in Canada. There is frequently an underlying assumption that conservative Christian politics are more natural in an American context.

The premise that Canadian identity centers on not being American is so popular that it has become a joke. As stated by Lipset, “Canadians have tended to define themselves not in terms of their own national history and traditions but by reference to what they are *not*: Americans. Canadians are the world’s oldest and most continuing un-Americans.”⁶⁶ Indeed, Canadians adopt and embrace various aspects of American culture regularly—so long as it does not seem *too* American. Anecdotally, there are countless stories of Canadians thinking that American legal and political structures are equally Canadian. A surplus of American police and courtroom television dramas has misled Canadians to think that if they are arrested they will be read their Miranda rights or that in court they can “plead the fifth”—that is, the amendment securing the right to protect oneself against self-incrimination—even though neither exist in Canadian law. Perhaps even more surprising is that higher courts in Canada have drawn on American jurisprudence since the mid-1800s.⁶⁷ Lest this be overstated, Canada is not alone in drawing on American jurisprudence—Australian and South African Supreme Courts have also drawn on American Supreme Court decisions regarding constitutions—although the United States’ Supreme Court is less likely to return the favour.⁶⁸ Furthermore, since the Canadian

⁶⁵ Jonathan Malloy, “The Impact of Institutions on the Politics of Canadian Evangelical Christians” (conference paper, Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Winnipeg, MB, June 2004). <http://cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2004/Malloy.pdf>; and Malloy, “Bush/Harper?”

⁶⁶ Lipset, *Continental Divide*, 53.

⁶⁷ Gérard V. La Forest, “The Use of American Precedents in Canadian Courts,” *Maine Law Review* 46 (1994): 211. Also see, Peter McCormick, “American Citations and the McLachlin Court: An Empirical Study,” *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* (47) 2009: 83-129.

⁶⁸ Cody Moon, “Comparative Constitutional Analysis: Should the United States Supreme Court Join the Dialogue?” *Journal of Law and Policy* (12) 2003: 229-47.

Supreme Court became the final court of appeal in 1949 the court has consistently referred to itself, other Canadian courts and English courts more often for judicial authority than the United States' courts.⁶⁹

In the realm of politics Canadians also confuse our political structures with those in the United States. In an attempt to clarify the Canadian system, Senator Eugene Forsey wrote the educational booklet, *How Canadians Govern Themselves*, first published in 1980 and now available on the Parliament of Canada's website.⁷⁰ This informative booklet includes a chapter titled "Canadian and American Government," that offers multiple points of difference between the functioning of these governments. The preface of this booklet includes a disclaimer that "the ideas and opinions expressed in this document [...] do not necessarily reflect those of Parliament."⁷¹ Nonetheless, it speaks volumes that Senator Forsey felt it was necessary to include a chapter explicitly comparing the Canadian and American governments, but not the Canadian and British or French governments that directly influenced the formation of the Canadian system.

Another more recent example of these issues is highlighted in a 2008 Ipsos Reid poll that found 51% of Canadians surveyed "believe the Prime Minister is directly elected."⁷² This belief indicates that roughly half of Canadians think that our electoral ballots are structured like those in the United States where individuals vote for the President and their local representatives—but

⁶⁹ McCormick, "American Citations," 92.

⁷⁰ Eugene A. Forsey, *How Canadians Govern Themselves*, 8th ed. (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, Canada, 2012 [1980]), http://www.parl.gc.ca/about/parliament/senatoreugeneforsey/book/assets/pdf/How_Canadians_Govern_Themselves_8.pdf

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, i.

⁷² Ipsos Reid, "In Wake of Constitutional Crisis, Survey Demonstrates that Canadians Lack Basic Understanding of our Country's Parliamentary System: Half of Canadians (51%) Believe the Prime Minister is Directly Elected by Voters and Three in Four (75%) Don't Know Who Canada's Head of State Is," news release, December 15, 2008 https://www.historicacanada.ca/sites/default/files/PDF/polls/dominioninstitutedecember15factum_constitutional_crisis_en.pdf, 1.

this is not the case. In Canadian federal elections, individuals vote for their local Member of Parliament; the Prime Minister is simply the leader of the party that happens to elect the most MPs to office. The same Ipsos Reid poll found, at 70%, Quebecers were the most likely to hold this incorrect belief.⁷³ The May 2, 2011 election offered real-life repercussions of this misunderstanding as a few Quebec voters reportedly left their polling station without voting because they did not see Jack Layton, the NDP leader at the time, on the ballot.⁷⁴ This incident indicates a misplaced belief that they could have voted directly for Layton, even though they lived outside of his riding. Although Layton would have become the Prime Minister if the NDP had won that election, the only people who were able to vote for him were the constituents in his Toronto-Danforth riding.

Perceptions of the separation of church and state become another touchstone for American realities being adopted in the Canadian psyche. As will be discussed in greater detail both later in this chapter and again in Chapter Six, many Canadians have embraced the American ideal of separation of church and state, despite it never being officially instituted by the government. This is especially the case in Anglophone Canada, whereas ideas of church-state relations in Quebec are more closely aligned with France's *laïcité*, or secularity. The misplaced embracing of separation of church and state in Canada leads to a particularly strong aversion to public connections between religion and politics, which is in turn perceived as very American. As stated by Malloy, "It is common to see assertions that mixing religion – especially evangelical Christianity – and politics is 'unCanadian.'"⁷⁵ Another way to interpret this trend is, despite these numerous examples of American influences on Canadians, one group that is

⁷³ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁴ Article by New1130.com, accessed October 16, 2011. <http://m.news1130.com/National/article/258353>(article discontinued).

⁷⁵ Malloy, "Bush/Harper?," 352.

frequently considered too American are conservative Protestants, that is evangelicals and fundamentalist Christians. And this group is especially considered too American when they attempt to integrate their religious worldview and politics.

Given the size and influence of the American evangelical population it is not surprising that this subculture is considered especially American. Jonathan Malloy, in summarizing the scholarly attempts to enumerate evangelicals in Canada and the United States, suggests that 10-12% of the Canadian population and 25-33% of the American population are evangelical.⁷⁶ Sam Reimer's comprehensive comparisons of evangelical subculture in the United States and Canada, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, finds that evangelicals in America and Canada are broadly speaking remarkably similar; however, there are some notable differences, particularly "in the realm of politics."⁷⁷ Where American evangelicals are more politically conservative, Canadian evangelicals are less likely to correlate their religious and political beliefs. More significant to my study, Reimer found that "not even half of the core evangelicals in the United States feel very close to the CR, and the percentage is predictably lower in Canada."⁷⁸ This suggests that while the American CR garnered a lot of attention, it never really attracted the evangelical demographic to the degree that it claims.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, evangelicalism has become tainted in public perception with conservative, nationalist politics in both Canada and the United States.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Malloy, "Between America and Europe: Religion, Politics and Evangelicals in Canada" (paper given at "Does God Matter? Representing Religion in the European Union and the United States" Conference, Aston University, Birmingham, UK, November 12-13, 2010), 4-5,

http://www.jonathanmalloy.com/uploads/4/0/3/2/4032854/aston_paper_malloy.pdf. Malloy is drawing on research by Bowen, Gatehouse, Hoover et al., Smith, and Wald. He finds Hoover et al.'s approach the most convincing.

⁷⁷ Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide*, 125.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁷⁹ This is strongly supported, if not overstated, by Steve Bruce in *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America 1978-1988* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Members of the CHP belong to a fairly small demographic within the social conservative Christians—not exclusively evangelical Christians—who align themselves with the CR ideology in Canada. As noted by Michael Wagner when discussing the larger Canadian CR community, “many of these people [...] are evangelical in their outlook and theology, but others are not.”⁸⁰ Wagner argues, much like Reimer, that evangelicals and the CR should not be collapsed into each other. Indeed, Wagner asserts that while many evangelicals can be subsumed under the banner of the CR, so too can some conservatives in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. And, although Wagner is discussing the Canadian CR more broadly and not the CHP specifically, we see the same demographic variety within the party.

CHPers’ willingness to draw a direct correlation between their religious identities and political ideologies mark them as more similar to their American counterparts than other conservative Protestant Canadians. Additionally, many of the concerns and talking points of the American CR are manifested within the CHP. However, I argue it is inappropriate to suggest that concerns about abortion, same-sex marriage, and other social conservative issues central to the CHP are somehow the direct result of an American influence. Just because the loudest voices on these issues tend to be American does not mean that the American CR caused the Canadian CR—and the CHP by association—to develop. Furthermore, these issues have been raised by social conservatives—not just conservative Christians—in a variety of geo-political contexts beyond the United States. Social conservative Americans do not have a monopoly on “pro-life,” “traditional family,” and anti-multiculturalism topics; these concerns are shared by social conservatives around the globe. Indeed, holding these concerns dear is a marker of this political ideology.

⁸⁰ Wagner, *Standing on Guard for Thee*, 1.

CHP Perceptions of the United States

In the latter half of this dissertation I examine the CHP's position on core social conservative issues, specifically abortion (Chapter Four), education (Chapter Five), secularism, the so-called homosexual agenda, and radical Muslims (Chapter Six). However, the sources drawn on to support the CHP's position on social conservative issues regularly include American conservative personalities. In this section, I elucidate how the United States was discussed by interviewees and the various ways the States was mentioned in the weekly *Communiqués* released in 2013. As noted above, none of my guiding interview questions specifically mentioned the United States. This did not stop the United States from being brought up in the interviews. In seventeen of the sixty-four interviews—just over 25%—the United States was either not significantly mentioned or I was the person who mentioned America. This means that in nearly 75% of my interviews, the interviewees mentioned the United States in some significant fashion (more than simply stating the name of the country).

The subsections below explore and analyze the most common points of discussion that tended to include the United States. In a few cases, discussions of the party's relatively recent "fair tax" policy would invoke discussion of the United States, but these discussions were not substantial enough to garner their own subsection. The new tax policy, officially adopted at the 2012 National Convention, is remarkable similar to the tax system proposed by former Arkansas Governor and 2008 Republican presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee. This tax system seeks to eliminate income tax—instead collecting all taxes at the point of consumption—and has also been publicly embraced by Tea Party Republicans.⁸¹ Greg, an influential party member in British Columbia who helped draft the CHP's tax policy, noted that a similar policy has been proposed

⁸¹ "Tea Partiers descend on D.C.," *Reuters*, April 15, 2010. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/04/15/us-tea-partiers-descend-on-dc-idUSTRE63E63I20100415>

by Ron Paul, Rick Santorum, and Michelle Bachman. However, he also insisted that, while others who initially suggested the policy may have been aware of its presence in the United States, he did not know about this connection until he became more involved with drafting the policy.⁸²

Separation of Church and State

One topic that was especially linked to the United States by CHPers was the separation of church and state. As noted above, Anglophone Canada has largely adopted an American approach to religion and politics as enshrined in the U.S. Constitution—“Congress shall make no law respecting an established religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”—ensuring no established state religion and the freedom to practice the religion of one’s choice. The misguided belief that Canada legally shares this stance on religion and politics leads to criticism that the CHP is somehow contravening separation of church and state by the fact that it is a political party linked to a specific religious worldview. Although this separation may be forged into the psyche of Canadians, Canada does not have a history of legislatively enshrined separation of church and state. Religious freedom was only formally included as a fundamental freedom when the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was adopted in 1981, and Canada continues to lack a history of a legislatively requisite separation of church and state.⁸³ A more detailed history of the relationship between church and state in Canada is given in Chapter Three.

Because the concept of “separation of church and state” is used as a talking point and rarely defined, one of my standard interview questions was, “what is your stance on separation of church and state and how would you define it?” The CHP is officially pro-separation, although in a very particular sense that draws heavily on Abraham Kuyper’s idea of sphere sovereignty

⁸² Interview #48, March 18, 2012.

⁸³ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, s 2, Part I of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982 (UK)*, 1982, c 11.

(discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapter). In fact, the party's integrity analysis—an institutionalized interview process required of all executive members and candidates—asks “What do you understand is meant by the phrase, ‘separation of Church and State’?”⁸⁴ The inclusion of this question highlights the party elites' desire to standardize public CHP discourse on this issue. Given the relatively similar responses I received from party elites on questions on separation of church and state, the party has succeeded in this goal.

A notable number of CHPers described the various ways that one could interpret separation of church and state and contrasted that with the definition that they—and the party—preferred. Based on these responses, the incorrect way to think of this separation is that the church (in the sense of religion more broadly, although members tended to emphasize Christianity) should be wholly unable to influence the government. Rather, the correct framing of this separation is that the church and government are independent, in the sense that one does not control the other, but they can also influence each other, and—most importantly—Christians should not be silenced in the political sphere.

When describing the origins of the concept of separation of church and state, many CHPers pointed to the United States. Although one interviewee seemed unclear about these American origins, many others gave thorough details linking this separation to America.⁸⁵ As a group, the CHPers' knowledge of the history of the separation of church and state as a concept is

⁸⁴ CHP Canada, “#15: Resolutions Concerning Integrity Analysis and Solomn [*sic*] Pledge Forms,” Integrity Analysis Questionnaire, Part II-Qualifications, question #13, in *Setting Our Sails for Tomorrow: CHP 2012 Convention* [2012 convention package] (n.p.[British Columbia?]: CHP Canada, 2012), Section 4, “Resolutions,” 30.

⁸⁵ Sean, a CHPer from Manitoba, was the exception. He got these American origins somewhat mixed-up, linking the concept with Great Britain and the Anglican Church more than the United States. Sean incorrectly claimed that separation of church and state is “not really enshrined in the American law,” although the “American constitution refers to God and even their coinage refers to ‘In God We Trust.’” To be clear, the American constitution does not include any references to God, although the country's official motto, adopted in 1956, is “In God We Trust.” According to Sean, the concluding significance of the separation of church and state in America was that “there's no particular church that's influencing the government” (Interview #47, March 17, 2012). Other than this singular response, those who mentioned the United States in relation to the separation of church and state were very clear about its American origins.

quite staggering. Numerous interviewees pointed specifically to the American Constitution as the origins of separation of church and state, and one person even paraphrased the establishment clause of the first amendment of the Constitution—an impressive feat.

While the American Constitution is certainly linked to the concept of separation of church and state, the origin of that particular phrase is attributed to Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist association of Connecticut. In this letter, Jefferson describes the religion clause as “building a wall of separation between Church and State,” hence the expression.⁸⁶ Although the phrase “separation of church and state” has become common parlance, its Jeffersonian origins are not exactly common knowledge. For this reason, I was surprised when Lucas, a middle-aged CHPer who has been involved with the party at least since the founding convention, discussed “the original letter from Jefferson” when talking about the separation.⁸⁷

In another surprisingly detailed and articulate response, Michael, a relatively new member from British Columbia, described “two different understandings of the separation of church and state. One comes out of the American Revolution and [...] one comes out of the French revolution.”⁸⁸ He went on to describe the French sense of this expression as requiring individuals, “to assume a secular-atheistic worldview in order to operate in government,” whereas the American sense “is the exact opposite [because] people of faith must carry influence in the state.” He concluded that his understanding of this separation “is of the American sense, not of the French sense.”

⁸⁶ Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptists Association, CT, 1 January 1802, Digital Collection, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>.

⁸⁷ Interview #14, October 3, 2011.

⁸⁸ Interview #58, May 17, 2012.

Michael's response was unique in that he noted that this secularist understanding of separation was not inherently incorrect or a misinterpretation of the original American intentions, but that it has French origins. By and large those who pointed to the American origins noted that the popular interpretation—the secularist understanding, more closely aligned with the French origins or the establishment clause—is not how the phrase was originally intended. The interpretive claim being made by members is that although they recognized that separation of church and state is American (something that arguably most Canadians do not recognize), they embrace the originally intended meaning. The implication, which was never stated in as many words, is that others who claim to embrace the separation of church and state have bastardized the meaning of this phrase. This type of sentiment is especially emphasized in Harry's description of separation of church and state, seen below.

Harry, a notable CHPer who I had heard of prior to formally meeting him at the National Convention in Abbotsford, has been a party member since 1987 and has run in nearly every election since. He has also been on the National Executive of the party for the better part of twenty-five years, so he has had plenty of experience publicly representing the CHP. These experiences helped shape Harry's discourse on the separation of church and state. His response to questions on this separation included the following statement.

Now the original intention of separation between church and state was that the government would not intervene or overstep their boundaries in making decisions about religions or what religious views should be promoted in society. There was supposed to be protections, like the churches were supposed to have protection from infiltration or intrusion by government. So that was the original intention of the separation between church and state, and now it's maligned or it's been redefined so that we're saying, "okay. Christians should remain quiet, remain silent and keep their views to themselves and government should not become engaged in areas of morality." That's how we're defining it today, but actually it

[is] the exact opposite of the way that it was originally intended and it was an American institution or American definition in the first place.⁸⁹

There are a few rhetorical moves occurring in Harry's line of argument that recurred in many of my interviews. First, by pointing to the American history of separation of church and state, he shows that he, and the CHP in general, knows more about this concept than the average Canadian (which is most likely the case). Although he is asserting that it is not a Canadian concept, it does not mean that he is disregarding the value of separation—rather, he is showing his authority on this topic. Second, by asserting knowledge of the “originally intended” meaning of separation of church and state Harry claims his (and the party's) understanding of this concept is true to the original intention. This stance therefore strongly implies that any other interpretations of separation of church and state are incorrect. Indeed, only Michael charitably suggested that a secularist interpretation of separation may not be incorrect, but have other, non-American origins.

No one suggested or observed that the party's approach places heavier emphasis on free exercise over establishment in the sense of Christianity as an established religion, and not a particular Christian denomination. Such a suggestion would remove CHPers' ability to claim a singular “correct” interpretation of this popular, but vague, concept. However, this goes well beyond the focus of this chapter. Regarding interviewees' discussions of separation of church and state, the United States was mentioned not to discredit the value of Canada upholding this separation, but as a rhetorical device to present the CHP as more authoritative on this issue than the broader Canadian populace.

⁸⁹ Interview #59, May 18, 2012.

Envyng American Christians

Beyond the separation of church and state, other topics that tended to encourage discussion of the United States were capital punishment, personal entertainment (e.g. what individuals read, listened to, or watched for fun), and social comparisons. By social comparisons, I mean moments when CHPers would spontaneously discuss how Canada and the United States are different. These comparisons usually hinged on the perceived public acceptance of Christianity in politics and national pride in the United States. During one of my longer interviews with an Ontarian couple, Douglas and Veronica, they brought up the “timid” quality of Canadian Christians and how American Christians are bolder, while we were chatting around their kitchen table. Douglas, a jovial mature farmer, commented, “I think that we, as Christians, are often very timid. I just think that’s not a good policy. Be bold. Don’t be shy, even though it gets you in trouble sometimes.”⁹⁰ This comment caused all three of us to laugh, but then Veronica became more serious. “I think you see it more in Canada maybe than in the States,” she said, “there’s a cone of silence over us Christians—that we choose not to speak because it’s not politically correct, because of fear of being weird or being seen as intolerant. I think, as Christians, we need to be more courageous in speaking the truth. We have to do it in a gracious manner, but we shouldn’t be afraid to.”⁹¹

The sense that Canadian Christians are silenced whereas American Christians are vocal arose in multiple interviews. Oscar, a disenchanted former Reform Party member who has thrown his energies into the CHP, was even more direct about the political implication of this silence.

Within the Republican Party—I mean the GOP [Grand Old Party]—the Christian element is a significant factor and a significant influence in the GOP in America,

⁹⁰ Interview #43, February 1, 2012.

⁹¹ Ibid.

but where are the So-Cons [social conservatives] in the Conservative Party of Canada? They're relegated to the sidelines. They're not allowed to speak. Harper won't let you speak about abortion or traditional marriage or anything that's important to people with traditional values, and yet he claims to be a Christian himself.⁹²

Oscar supported the Reform Party through its transition into the Canadian Alliance Party in the early 2000s, but left the party around the time it merged with the Progressive Conservatives to become the contemporary Conservative Party. He left the party in large part because he felt Stockwell Day, the penultimate leader of the Canadian Alliance, was thrown under the bus due to his overt evangelical Christian worldview. In Oscar's comparisons of the treatment of Christians in politics in the United States and Canada it was clear that he felt the Republicans and the CHP have taken the correct approach, allowing and encouraging the melding of Christianity and politics.

These comparisons with the United States usually showed America in a positive—if not envious—light from the perspective of the CHPers. This is not to say that CHPers want Canada to become the United States. Being impressed with the more powerful position of American conservative Christians is not the same as wanting to be American or desiring Canada to be more like America. If anything CHPers are fiercely proud of their country. Even Oscar, who commented that he should have been born in Texas because he likes their gun laws so much, was equally open about his love of Canada's constitutional monarchy. He made it quite clear that if Canada ever became a republic like the United States that he would leave the country. Just because CHPers like certain aspects of the United States does not decrease their love of Canada or make them less Canadian.

⁹² Interview #21, November 2, 2011.

Capital Punishment

There were many times that comments and comparisons with the United States were initiated by me and not by the CHPers interviewed. One topic frequently linked to this trend was capital punishment, where promoting comparisons to the United States helped to clarify the individual's position on this policy. The CHP is pro-capital punishment, but does not clearly define how this punishment would be determined. My discussion of the party's stance on capital punishment here is limited to examining associations with the United States. A detailed analysis of the party's stance on capital punishment is given in Chapter Four, where it is contrasted with the CHP's pro-life perspective.

When I discussed the United States in relation to capital punishment it was to see if the CHPer felt that Canada should adopt the American approach. Admittedly, I was not incredibly familiar with the details of American capital punishment during the majority of these interviews, but this approach mostly made it clear that individual CHPers are also not overly familiar with contemporary statistics on capital punishment in the United States—not that these statistics are easy to follow. As was noted by Harry, mentioned above, comparing the possibility of the death penalty in Canada to the reality in the United States is “not really a fair comparison because [...] every state has their own authority to execute individuals.”⁹³ Indeed, just as it is difficult to discuss education in Canada due to variations across the provinces, capital punishment is drastically different across the states and is frequently changing. When I interviewed Harry in May 2012, he estimated that twenty-three or twenty-seven states still had capital punishment on the books. At that time, thirty-three states allowed for capital punishment, but since then that number has dropped to thirty-two.⁹⁴

⁹³ Interview #59, May 18, 2012.

⁹⁴ “States With and Without the Death Penalty,” Death Penalty Information Center, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/states-and-without-death-penalty>.

Robert, a three-time CHP candidate in Quebec, also noted that comparisons with the United States are inappropriate, although for different reasons. In Robert's words, "The first thing you have to do when you're talking about somebody's view of the death penalty is say, 'Look. We're not talking about the United States. We're talking about in theory here.'"⁹⁵ Unlike Harry's desire to avoid American comparisons due to the complexity of the issue, Robert wanted to avoid the reality of capital punishment in the States in order to maintain his theoretical application of this punishment in Canada. Robert also oversimplified the American approach to the death penalty, morbidly joking that someone in the United States might be sent to the electric chair for stealing a piece of pizza and how that is unquestionably wrong. Yet, his attempt to remove the reality of death from our discussion of capital punishment inadvertently highlighted the hypothetical quality of this party policy. The CHP has a pro-capital punishment policy because the majority of its members understand capital punishment as biblically mandated, but that does not mean they have thoroughly considered how this punishment would or should be meted out. Insisting that the state has the right to wield the sword is very different than determining who will wield the sword on behalf of the state and what the "sword" will be in practice—that is, determining the mode of execution.

CHPers were also vague and inconsistent in their estimates of how often state-sanctioned executions took place in the United States. Very few people offered specific numbers, preferring to imply that it does not happen very often or that it would be even less frequent in Canada. Harry initially mentioned the United States in this context, saying that while he feels the Bible permits capital punishment in a democratic society, he does not believe that it should be "as common a practice as it is in the United States."⁹⁶ On the other hand, Joseph, a long-time party

⁹⁵ Interview #32, December 11, 2011.

⁹⁶ Interview #59, May 18, 2012.

member in Southern Ontario, dramatically underestimated the rate of capital punishment in the States, saying, “It seldom happens. Some states have capital punishment and it’s not that every week somebody is killed, maybe once or twice a year.”⁹⁷ It is not clear if his, “maybe once or twice a year” is referring to each state with capital punishment or the entire country. If it was intended to mean the latter, then this is a dramatic underestimation. According to the executions database managed by the Death Penalty Information Center, the U.S. had 46 executions in 2010, 43 per year in 2011 and 2012, and 39 in 2013.⁹⁸ If Joseph is referring to the former—executions per state per year—then his estimation is not far off, but this is not clear. In the broadest sense, the CHPers discussion of capital punishment in the States was vague. When pushed if individuals wanted to adopt the American approach to capital punishment I primarily received a negative response. However, the details given about the American capital punishment system also reflect a lack of familiarity—both on my part and the part of the interviewees—with how this system is enacted.

Media and Personalities

The last major topic that regularly invoked the United States, in a less overt fashion, was personal entertainment or popular sources for information. This came up both in interviews and in party publications. Near the end of most interviews I would ask what the individual(s) read for fun, what radio stations they listened to, or what websites they frequented. This is where the least direct, but quite regular, discussions of the United States took place. A common source for these books, radio stations and/or websites was the United States, which is not that surprising considering how much media present in Canada is developed in the States. However, the particular sources embraced by CHPers are reflective of their conservative Christian and social

⁹⁷ Interview #29, November 30, 2011.

⁹⁸ “Execution Database,” Death Penalty Information Center, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/views-executions>.

conservative identities. The media consumed by CHPers is heavily swayed by conservative Christian influences. By way of example, when discussing radio shows they enjoy, many pointed to radio ministries, such as John MacArthur's *Grace to You* ministries and *Focus on the Family*. Although both of these ministries have Canadian websites, their radio shows are produced in the United States and syndicated internationally. Similarly, many websites discussed by CHPers were either Christian ministries, or social conservative (right-wing politics) news sources or blogs. Likewise, a notable number of books mentioned by CHPers were either overtly American-focused, such as Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, or were written by Americans.⁹⁹

I was initially surprised how many CHPers also referred to magazines that they regularly read and the common titles mentioned, namely *World Magazine*, *Creation Magazine*, and *Christian Renewal*. All of these magazines are distinctly Christian, and sometimes specifically aimed towards creationist theology (as is the case with *Creation Magazine*, a publication of Creation Ministries International) or conservative Reformed theology (such as *Christian Renewal*). In two separate interviews *World Magazine* was explicitly compared to the Canadian *Maclean's*, as well as the American *Newsweek* and *Time Magazine*, but with a Christian perspective.¹⁰⁰

Those CHPers attending Reformed Churches were especially likely to read magazines affiliated with their denominations—in some cases these are published by the denomination. The reason I mention these magazines is that all of them, despite their international readership, are published in the United States. This is because many of the Reformed churches are bi-national,

⁹⁹ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

¹⁰⁰ Interview #43, February 1, 2012 and Interview #62, June 4, 2012.

with their denominational headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Indeed, Grand Rapids is effectively the center for all things Reformed in North America.

CHPers do not limit themselves to American-produced media and implying that they do would unfairly represent the party members. *Maclean's*, a popular Canadian weekly news magazine, was mentioned fairly regularly by CHPers, although the sentiments regarding the magazine were mixed. The political leanings of *Maclean's* are difficult to pin down as the magazine employs both right- and left-leaning columnists. This may help explain why there were such divergent opinions on *Maclean's* among CHPers. Rebecca, a twenty-something CHPer in Ontario, told me how excited she was about receiving a subscription to *Maclean's* as a gift and other members of various ages told me they read the magazine regularly.¹⁰¹ However, Rick, a middle-aged CHPer living in the prairies, bemoaned the disappearance of Ezra Levant's *Western Standard*, which stopped publication in 2007. *Western Standard* was an unabashedly conservative national news magazine produced in Alberta. Its demise left *Maclean's* as Canada's primary weekly news magazine. To this end, Rick said, "I miss that magazine [*Western Standard*] dreadfully because *Maclean's* is garbage."¹⁰² With the exception of *Maclean's*, the majority of the magazines mentioned by CHPers were American.

Discussions of American books, radio shows, magazines and individuals were not limited to my interviews with CHPers. Sources developed by the national executive for party members and the public, namely the weekly *Communiqué* and Youtube videos, include similar references to American media and personalities. That is to say, in these informational and promotional sources the United States is most frequently included through discussions of American personalities and texts. The *Communiqué* is a weekly single topic newsletter sent to anyone who

¹⁰¹ Interview #40, January 18, 2012.

¹⁰² Interview #62, June 4, 2012.

chooses to subscribe, not just CHP members. The vast majority of these newsletters are written by members of the party's national executive. Thirty-six of the fifty-two *Communiqués* in 2013 were written by the party leader during that period, Jim Hnatiuk, six were written by the then deputy leader, Rod Taylor, and one was written by the national executive director, Vicki Gunn. Four of Taylor's *Communiqués* were reprints from ChristianGovernance.ca, a Canadian-produced, conservative Christian political site run by Tim Bloedow (mentioned above), to which Taylor is a regular contributor. Only nine *Communiqués* published in 2013 were written by non-national executive members: six were written by notable former leader, Ron Gray (who also sits on a national committee, but is not officially on the national executive), two were by Jim Enos, and one was by Irma De Vries. Enos and De Vries have both run as CHP candidates and are significantly involved with their local electoral district associations.

Of the fifty-two *Communiqués* published in 2013, twenty-two (or 42%) contained some American reference. This does not mean that the primary focus of the *Communiqué* was the United States, but either the country or a citizen of that country was invoked. This may initially seem like a lot, but nearly 30% of the *Communiqués* that year mentioned or focused explicitly on abortion issues. Furthermore, all of these newsletters, with the possible exceptions of a tribute to Nelson Mandela after his death and the annual Christmas-themed *Communiqué*, had explicit Canadian references.¹⁰³

The individual American mentioned most often in *Communiqués* in 2013 was David Kupelian, a conservative writer and editor of the politically conservative news site, WND.com

¹⁰³ Jim Hnatiuk, "Mandela," *Communiqué* 20, no. 50 (December 10, 2013); and Hnatiuk, "It's Christmas," *Communiqué* 20, no. 52 (December 24, 2013).

(formerly WorldNetDaily.com).¹⁰⁴ Kupelian was only mentioned in *Communiqués* written by Hnatiuk, which suggests that the former party leader is a regular reader of Kupelian's WND articles and books. WND.com is an "independent" news source, meaning it is not directly aligned with any major news conglomerates such as Comcast (MSNBC), Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox, or Time Warner (CNN). The news site has a clear conservative bent and encouraged public speculation about President Barack Obama's birth certificate. Besides promoting WND.com, Hnatiuk has also explicitly recommended Kupelian's book, *The Marketing of Evil* to CHPers.¹⁰⁵ It is evident that Hnatiuk feels Kupelian is a reliable source of information and hopes that others in the party will share this opinion. However, using the *Communiqué* to spread this idea is questionable as many CHPers disclosed during interviews that they do not regularly read the newsletter.

Gary North of The Tea Party Economist website was also quoted in a *Communiqué* from July 30, 2013.¹⁰⁶ North is also a well-known Christian Reconstructionist and the son-in-law of Rousas John Rushdoony, the founder of that fundamentalist Calvinist movement. The particular *Communiqué* referring to North was written around the time Detroit filed for bankruptcy and used that event as a cautionary tale for the Canadian economic situation. Drawing on Gary North is not the only association made between the CHP and the American Tea Party movement. A more notable connection is found not in the *Communiqués*, but in the party's new "Fair Tax"

¹⁰⁴ Jim Hnatiuk, "'Abandonment' Overdose," *Communiqué* 20, no. 5 (Jan. 29, 2013); Hnatiuk, "Hook Line and Sinker," *Communiqué* 20, no. 7 (Feb. 12, 2013); Hnatiuk, "White Smoke," *Communiqué* 20, no. 12 (March 19, 2013); and Hnatiuk, "You're Talking to Whom?" *Communiqué* 20, no. 29 (July 16, 2013).

¹⁰⁵ David Kupelian, *The Marketing of Evil: How Radicals, Elitists, and Pseudo-Experts Sell Us Corruption Disguised as Freedom* (Nashville, TN: WND Books, 2005). WND Books is the publication wing of WorldNewsDaily. Hnatiuk inserted a link to this book and described it as "certainly a recommended read" by Hnatiuk, "Hook Line and Sinker."

¹⁰⁶ Hnatiuk, "Detroit's Lessons for Canada," *Communiqué* 20, no. 31 (July 30, 2013); Gary North, "Detroit's City Pensioners Finally Figure It Out After 40 Years: No Pensions," *The Tea Party Economist* (blog), July 22, 2013, accessed September 27, 2013, <http://teapartyeconomist.com/2013/07/22/detroits-city-pensioners-finally-figure-it-out-after-40-years-no-pensions/>.

policy adopted at the 2012 National Convention discussed above. This policy promotes a type of progressive sales tax—where the tax rate increases with the expense of the items sold—which was first conceived in the United States. The fair tax system was a campaigning platform for Tea Party darling Mike Huckabee during his 2008 and 2012 presidential runs. Although the wording of the CHP’s tax policy resolution does not acknowledge any connections to the Tea Party, it does include the assertion, “[Fair Tax] is gaining wide support in the US and is widely recognised by economists to be the most equitable form of taxation.”¹⁰⁷ However, other than with the CHP, the Fair Tax system appears to have little appeal outside of the United States. I am aware of no other political parties either in Canada or internationally that have officially endorsed this tax system.

Despite drawing on American personalities such as Kupelian and North, one should not assume that the CHP draws on American sources more than Canadian sources. The majority of the *Communiqués* refer to Canadian MPs and bills under consideration that support the CHP’s social or economic conservative positions. Additionally, conservative-leaning Canadian cable channel Sun News commentators Ezra Levant and Michael Coren are popular in the CHP, both as public speakers and personalities cited in the *Communiqué*. Coren was the keynote speaker at the 2012 convention Gala dinner, and spoke about being a pro-life public figure. Levant, who used to run the *Western Standard* magazine mentioned above, was quoted in numerous *Communiqués* throughout 2013.

Another Canadian figure even more closely aligned with the CHP is Tim Bloedow, who runs the website ChristianGovernance.com (formerly ChristianGovernance.ca and ChristianGovernment.ca) and was pointed to by Marci McDonald as an important individual

¹⁰⁷ CHP Canada, “#13: CHP Platform (*Better Solutions*) for Taxation,” in *Setting Our Sails for Tomorrow*, Section 4, “Resolutions,” 20-21. This statement did not include any supportive sources.

among Canadian Christian nationalists. Rod Taylor, the former deputy leader of the CHP and current leader of the CHP BC, is a regular contributor to Bloedow's website. Bloedow, a resident of Ontario, ran as a candidate for the CHP during the 2004 election. He has also written self-published books on a variety of social conservative issues and leads tours of Ottawa that highlight Canada's Christian heritage as imprinted on the Parliament buildings.¹⁰⁸ His books have been promoted at various times at CHP events and as a fundraiser event in the *Communiqué*. Additionally, some homeschooling CHPers have participated in his Ottawa tours.

The CHP also occasionally posts videos to its Youtube channel, "christianheritage." Here one can find videos of the former leader explaining CHP policy linked on the party's website, a general greeting by the former leader not linked to the website, and clips from significant events for the party. As of January 2014, the party had posted seventeen videos, with the most recent being a leader's address titled, "Canada's Political Future – 2014 & Beyond."¹⁰⁹ In this three-minute video Hnatiuk quotes three notable Americans—John F. Kennedy, Benjamin Franklin, and Ronald Reagan, in that order—but does not mention any Canadians by name.¹¹⁰ Although the video does mention the Reform Party, inasmuch as the dramatic changes that the leader envisions for the party do not include compromising party identity—the leader's "vision of the party does not follow in the steps of the Reform Party"—it is striking that only Americans are

¹⁰⁸ Timothy Bloedow, *Environmentalism and the Death of Science* (St. Catharines, ON: Freedom Press Canada, 2008); Bloedow, *State vs. Church*; and Christian Governance, *The Biblical Legacy of Canada's Parliament Buildings* (Russell, ON: ChristianGovernance.ca, n.d. [2011?]). Although Bloedow is not credited, I strongly suspect that he is the author of *The Biblical Legacy of Canada's Parliamentary Buildings*. For information on the Ottawa tours see "Parliament Hill and Canadian Christian History Tours," *ChristianGovernance*, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://christiangovernance.com/parliament-hill-and-canadian-christian-history-tours/>.

¹⁰⁹ Jim Hnatiuk, "Canada's Political Future – 2014 & Beyond," YouTube video, 3:02, posted by "christianheritage," December 31, 2013, accessed January 23, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2u_x8E6C7iQ&list=UUuRr-Efuo13z2XcA5eEw6vg&feature=share.

¹¹⁰ The sayings attributed to each are: John F. Kennedy, "Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth"; Benjamin Franklin, "Without continual growth, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning"; and Ronald Reagan, "There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits to human intelligence, imagination, and wonder." The only quotation that is included in text form in the video is the one attributed to Franklin, which was most likely an editing decision.

quoted. Considering that publicly accessible Youtube videos are one of the party's options for public outreach and concerns from outsiders that the party is more American than Canadian, it seems like a poor decision to cite only American figures. Admittedly the CHP's videos have a very low view count, with most receiving well under 1000 views, but one is left wondering why the former leader chose to quote solely American individuals.

Hnatiuk most likely feels that these are inspirational expressions from notable figures and simply overlooked the fact that they all happen to be American. The broader emphasis in the video is that the CHP is changing and is seriously needed in the Canadian political sphere. The sayings are no more than a garnish on the main dish, but they are distracting nonetheless. As noted above, Canadians are not immune from conflating American and Canadian culture and the members of the CHP, including the party leader, are no different. Unfortunately the Canadian-ness of the party appears questionable when the sources of inspiration appear to be primarily American.

What is certain based on the interviews and these party-developed sources is that the United States is a reference point for the CHP. This is not shocking or even surprising since the United States is a reference point for Canada at large. What makes this situation different for the CHP is that the party has more at stake by being associated with the United States than the broader Canadian public. The party is very strongly tied to faith in Canada's Christian heritage and an identity linked to that heritage, yet it is frequently perceived as very American. The assumption that the party is more influenced by the United States than the general Canadian public is not based on the realities of CHPers consuming American media, but on the widespread belief that conservative Christian political ideology is uniquely American. In the following

section I challenge this assumption by illustrating how the CHP functions differently than the American CR.

Comparing the CHP to the United States' Christian Right

Thus far I have discussed the tendency to compare Canada to the United States—particularly conservative Christians and their politics—as well as how CHPers perceive the States. Now I will make the more direct comparison between the CHP and the American CR. Although the CHP certainly shares the American CR's concerns regarding abortion, “traditional families,” and the rise of secularism, the party has chosen a different path than that associated with the American CR. The intention of this section is to illustrate that while on the surface the CHP and the American CR have many similarities, they function quite differently. The assertion that the CHP is nothing more than American conservative Christian politics in Canada ignores the European influences on the party—especially the Dutch influence, which is examined in the subsequent chapter—and disregards the *modus operandi* of the CHP, as well as the fervent Canadian nationalist identity of party members.

As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, “CR” refers to a broad group encompassing a set of shared values and a social conservative Christian identity. Although the CR is frequently associated with the United States—where the American CR is treated as archetypal—this ideology is not unique to the United States. In Canada and the United States the CR began as a reaction to the perceived moral decline of society, understood as beginning in the late 1960s, with the sexual revolution, with mounting concerns developing with the push for homosexual rights and the legalization or decriminalization of abortion into the 1980s. The specific dates of significant abortion-related legislation and battles over homosexual rights are given in later chapters. These dates are not the same in Canada and the United States, but they

are fairly close, so it is not surprising that the political ideology arose during the same era in both countries. Because the legislative changes associated with the shifting of societal norms took place during a similar period, although not on the same dates, the CR in Canada and the United States developed during roughly the same time.

Any comparisons between the CHP and the American CR will be disproportionate for a couple of reasons. Firstly, because the American CR has more sway—there are simply far more individuals with far more clout in the United States who subscribe to the CR ideology—than in Canada. This is part of the reason why the CR is so strongly associated with the United States—this ideology has garnered more influence in that country than in most other western nations. Given that the entire Canadian population is slightly more than one tenth the size of the American population, it is very likely that the number of American individuals ascribing to CR ideology is larger than Canada’s entire population. Secondly, the CR is an ideology that encompasses a variety of organizations, whereas the CHP is one organization that fits under the CR umbrella. Therefore, attempting to compare the American CR to the CHP is like comparing modes of transportation in general to a Honda Civic LX sedan; one is very broad and the other is very specific.

The American CR is frequently discussed as a singular monolithic movement, but in actuality it is a collection of individuals and groups that mobilized over a shared Christian social conservative political perspective. Some scholars emphasize the pro-life aspects of the CR. A prime example of this trend is Jon Shields’ *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right*, where he studied pro-life organizations and extrapolated his findings for all of the American CR.¹¹¹ Other scholars focus more specifically on direct political engagement, such as Steve Bruce’s approach in *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right*. Bruce was quick to interpret Pat

¹¹¹ Jon A. Shields, *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Robertson's failed bid as the 1988 Republican presidential candidate as a nail in the coffin of the American CR.¹¹² Although some of Bruce's assertions about the decline and failure of the New Christian Right are questionable, his designation of the "New Christian Right" is wise because it emphasizes that this period is not the origins of the CR. Instead, the "New Christian Right" is Bruce's way of indicating that the rise of the movement in the 1970s is a revival of an older religio-political ideology.

Key figures and organizations in the American CR include, but are by no means limited to, Jerry Falwell (1933-2007) and the Moral Majority, Pat Robertson (and his Republican presidential campaign in 1988), Anita Bryant, Phyllis Schlafly and the Eagle Forum, and James Dobson, the founder of Focus on the Family. Many of these individuals and organizations became publicly associated with the CR during the 1970s and 1980s and mobilized in different ways. Bryant became politically active on issues of homosexuality, Dobson emphasizes "traditional" Christian family values, and Schlafly organized in opposition to the potential ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Furthermore, their modes of engaging with politics differed. Robertson famously ran for the Republican presidential candidate for the 1988 election, choosing to throw himself into the thick of politics, while Falwell organized the Moral Majority and actively promoted candidates aligned with CR values.

Like the American CR, the Canadian CR also consists of a variety of key figures and organizations, although not nearly as many who have gained the level of recognition of their American counterparts. In Canada we have Ken Campbell (1934-2006) and Renaissance Canada, Gwen Landolt and REAL Women of Canada, Tristan Emmanuel and the Equipping Christians for the Public-square Centre (ECP), as well as Campaign Life Coalition, the Canadian Family Action Council, and the CHP. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) is arguably the most

¹¹² Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right*, vii-x.

politically influential conservative Christian organization in Canada, but the group's leadership—especially since Brian Stiller led the EFC in the 1980s—has been actively opposed to association with the CR.¹¹³ As stated by Michael Wagner in his insider's history of the Canadian CR,

The EFC certainly made its presence felt in opposing many of the harmful trends in Canadian politics and society such as abortion, homosexual rights, and pornography. In this respect it would be easy to pigeon hole the EFC as being part of Canada's Christian Right. But a more careful analysis would avoid such an easy labeling of the EFC. As Brian Stiller points out, the evangelical community in Canada contains people of diverse political views. And the EFC under Stiller's leadership consciously strove to differentiate Canada's evangelicals from the American Christian Right.¹¹⁴

Just like those in the American CR, the key figures in the Canadian CR became mobilized over a variety of issues. Prior to founding REAL Women of Canada in 1983, Gwen Landolt had already made a name for herself in Canada's pro-life movement. Ken Campbell did not become politically active until he discovered "that the recommended reading list of the English department at his children's high school included immoral materials."¹¹⁵ All of these individuals shared issues that easily fit under the umbrella of CR concerns, but it is not wholly correct to assume that all supporters of the CR became politically active for the same reasons.

In both Canada and the United States we see the CR engaging with politics on a variety of levels. There are individuals like Pat Robertson, Ken Campbell, and Tristan Emmanuel who, at some point or another, ran as politicians. There are lobbying groups, which attempt to sway voters in a particular direction or influence elected politicians regarding particular legislation. There are individuals and groups that get involved in the court system in an attempt to challenge or redefine current interpretations of laws that do not uphold the CR worldview. Many of the key

¹¹³ Wagner, *Standing on Guard for Thee*, 83-9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 88-9.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40 and 93. Wagner does not specify what the "immoral materials" were.

figures and groups in the CR engage with politics on many levels, while emphasizing one more than others. Generally, in Canada and the United States, lobbying is seen as the most effective mode of political engagement, and this is where we see the most notable difference between the American CR and the CHP.

I argue that one of the most significant differences between the CHP and manifestations of the American CR is in their *modus operandi*—that is to say, the CHP by definition is its own distinct political party, whereas the American CR has primarily functioned as pressure or lobby groups. When Jerry Falwell formed the Moral Majority, he did not create a new political party, but attempted to influence voters to choose candidates based on their Christian, social conservative ideals. When Pat Robertson ran for President in 1988, he did not run as an independent candidate or form a new party, he ran as a Republican. Conversely, the CHP did not form as a conservative Christian group to promote its own candidates within a pre-existing party or to push their ideal Progressive Conservative—or later, Reform, Canadian Alliance, or Conservative—candidates. The CHP was created as a new party that competed with this party and eventually the other conservative parties that followed. If the CHP had followed the most common forms of American CR it would have chosen to become a lobby group, rather than its own political party.

The CHP and Christian Political Parties in the United States

While the United States has a strong dual-party system, this does not mean that smaller parties cannot be formed. When I embarked on this research I had mistakenly assumed that the dual-party system in the United States meant that only the Democrats and Republicans existed, but this is very much not the case. The Green Party, the Libertarian Party, and the Constitution Party regularly run candidates in more than half of the fifty states, but they are generally shut out

from televised debates and the ballots, and therefore rarely win elections. Besides these parties there are a myriad of even smaller parties that run in a handful of states. This is notably different than the Canadian federal political system where there are currently five elected parties—the Conservatives, the New Democratic Party, the Liberals, the Bloc Quebecois, and the Green Party—and a total of seventeen registered federal parties (including the CHP). Although it is exceedingly rare for smaller parties to win elections, since the formation of the CHP the Reform Party rose to the position of Official Opposition from 1997-2000 and more recently, in 2011, the Green Party won its first seat.¹¹⁶ This is to say, while it is certainly difficult for smaller parties to win seats in Canada and the United States, it is significantly less difficult in the Canadian setting.

The ballot systems in Canada and the United States contribute to the increased difficulties for a minor party to gain elected representation. In Canada all registered parties with a candidate in a given riding will have their name and party on the ballot; so long as a party can register a candidate in a riding, they will be on the ballot. Contrasted with this, in the United States the vast majority of minor party candidates do not appear on the ballot, but need to be written in. This means the voter needs to know the name of the minor party candidate prior to voting, effectively curtailing spontaneous voting for any party other than the Republicans or Democrats. In Canada, all registered parties not only get on the ballot so long as they have a candidate, they also determine how their name is displayed on the ballot. This allows for an increased level of awareness of minor parties at the time of voting that is practically nonexistent in the American setting.

The vast majority of the writing that I have encountered on the American CR emphasized the lobbying aspects of this movement and its ability to control the Republican Party. This has

¹¹⁶ The Reform Party changed its name to the Canadian Alliance in 2000 and held the position of Official Opposition until 2004 when it merged with the Progressive Conservatives to become the contemporary Conservative Party.

arguably been the most effective strategy for the American CR, which is why the groups that adopt this mode of operation have attracted public and scholarly attention. It is difficult to compare the CHP to these most recognized American CR movements because their political strategies are markedly different. Yet, there are political parties in the United States with members that most likely self-identify as part of the American CR that offer valuable comparisons to the CHP. In conducting this research I became aware of two parties that offer parallels to the CHP—namely the Constitution Party (CP) and the Christian Liberty Party (CLP)—that I discuss in greater detail below. Both of these parties are rarely mentioned in texts about the American CR.¹¹⁷ In contrast, the CHP regularly garners passing recognition as part of the Canadian CR movement. By way of example, John Stackhouse acknowledges the CHP in “Bearing Witness,” his examination of Canadian Christian political engagement since the 1960s, and Michael Wagner included a section on the party in his book on the Canadian Christian Right.¹¹⁸ Although both the CP and the CLP overtly embrace the ideals of social conservatism, neither garner scholarly attention as part of the American CR, in part because they are effectively immobilized by the American political system—even more than the CHP is limited by the Canadian political system. Regionalism is also an issue for the CLP, which has primarily been present in Washington State.

In part because of my inaccurate assumptions about American political parties, I struggled throughout this research to locate adequate American comparisons to the CHP. I

¹¹⁷ Discussion of the American Heritage Party, the precursor to the Christian Liberty Party can be found in: Andrew Appleton and Michael Buckley, “Washington: Christian Right Setbacks Abound,” in *Prayers in the Precincts: The Christian Right in the 1998 Elections*, ed. John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 187-206; and William Lunch, “The Christian Right in the Northwest: Two Decades of Frustration in Oregon and Washington,” in *The Christian Right in American Politics: Marching to the Millennium*, ed. John C. Green, Mark J. Rozell, and Clyde Wilcox (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 231-53.

¹¹⁸ John G. Stackhouse, Jr. “Bearing Witness: Christian Groups Engage Canadian Politics Since the 1960s,” in *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America*, ed. David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000): 123; and Wagner, *Standing on Guard for Thee*, 124-5.

occasionally expressed this frustration to my interviewees, which is how I learned of the CP. During one of my earlier interviews I told a young urban CHPer that I was having some difficulties thinking of a group or party in the United States that is comparable to the CHP. He suggested that the CP might be the closest thing in the United States to the CHP.¹¹⁹ This was the only time that the CP was mentioned by any of my interviewees.

The U.S. Taxpayers' Party, the precursor to the CP, was formed in 1992 and changed its name to the Constitution Party in 1999.¹²⁰ Like the FCP, the CP does not self-identify as a Christian party or actively limit its members to Christians. Instead, like the FCP, its Christian social conservative position is suggested in its policies and principles. Two of the CP's seven principles in particular emphasize a social conservative position, namely "Life: For all human beings, from conception to natural death" and "Family: One husband and one wife with their children as divinely instituted."¹²¹ These two principles indicate that the CP is strongly social conservative, but—unlike the CHP—does not make any faith claims that would inherently limit its membership to Christian social conservatives. Size-wise, the CP appears on the surface to be quite similar to the CHP inasmuch as it is one of the larger unelected parties in its country.

Another American party that offers a more apt comparison to the CHP is the Christian Liberty Party (CLP). This party was not mentioned by any of my interviewees and I did not learn of it until well after I had concluded interviewing members of the CHP. By its own description, the CLP is "the only confessional Christian political party" in the United States.¹²² This party is notably smaller than the CP and first formed as the American Heritage Party, a break-away from

¹¹⁹ Interview #7, August 9, 2011.

¹²⁰ "History," Constitution Party, accessed September 27, 2013, <http://www.constitutionparty.com/the-party/history/>.

¹²¹ "Our Principles," Constitution Party, accessed September 27, 2013, <http://www.constitutionparty.com/our-principles/seven-principles/>.

¹²² "FAQ: Why Doesn't the CLP Merge with Other Third Parties for Greater Influence?," Christian Liberty Party, accessed April 30, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/faq#B1>.

the CP around 2000, before changing its name to the CLP in 2010.¹²³ Like the CHP, the CLP limits its membership to Christians and requires its leaders and candidates to give evidence of their church affiliation. Presumably because the CLP developed out of the CP there is a lengthy response to “How does the CLP differ from the Constitution Party?” in the frequently asked questions section of the CLP’s website.¹²⁴ This section, as well as the rest of the FAQ portion of the website, is also very useful for determining how the CLP is similar and yet quite different from the CHP.

The CLP outlines seven points where it diverges from the CP: “party vision, founding principles, strategy, membership, leadership qualifications, party government and uniformity.” I will now summarize how each of these points compares to the CHP’s position. Regarding founding principles, the CLP emphasizes that it is “an explicitly Christian Party,” unlike the CP which “is primarily constitution-centered.”¹²⁵ The CHP certainly emphasizes its Biblical principles, but individual members are mixed on whether or not the party was first and foremost a Christian party or if the party is primarily emphasizing Canada’s Christian heritage. I discuss this tension within the CHP in Chapter Three. Because the CHP has internal struggles about their identity as a Christian party, I place it somewhere between the CP and the CLP on this point.

The party strategy of the CLP is quite different than the CHP and the CP. Although individuals in the CHP have negotiated the traditional definition of political success to include running candidates—discussed in greater detail later in this dissertation—the party publicly presents its primary goal as winning elections. The CLP on the other hand is clear that it

¹²³ “FAQ: How Does the CLP Differ from the Constitution Party?,” Christian Liberty Party, accessed April 30, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/faq#B1>; and Daniel Eby, “Name Change,” last modified November 18, 2010, accessed May 2, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/name-change>. The American Heritage Party may have been a state affiliate of the CP—this is not entirely clear from the party’s website.

¹²⁴ “FAQ: How Does the CLP Differ from the Constitution Party?,” Christian Liberty Party, accessed April 30, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/faq#B1>.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

questions the value of winning elections and directly affecting government in that manner. Instead, belief in the Lordship of Jesus Christ is central in a way that discredits any secular—including the current—approach to government. In this vein, one of the four tenets of the CLP’s political strategy is “redefining the political debate from a secular ‘liberal vs. conservative’ framework to the Christian Biblical perspective of ‘faith vs. unbelief.’”¹²⁶ This tenet makes no sense in the CHP worldview, which strongly self-identifies as Christian social conservative. Because both the CHP and the CP share a desire to win seats, they are more similar to each other than to the CLP on this point.

As noted above, the CHP and the CLP are similar in their membership and leadership requirements. The CP, on the other hand, has no religious requirements of its members. The CHP has its five unalterable principles, outlined in the introduction of this dissertation, which all members must affirm. Additionally, all candidates and individuals in leadership positions must submit to the integrity analysis, as noted above. The CLP arguably has even more stringent requirements for its leaders and candidates than the CHP because it requires these individuals to participate in its Studies in Christian Statesmanship™ program. Lest this seem like a small commitment, the program has three levels that contain a total of eighty or more lectures or texts.¹²⁷ By comparison the required Studies in Christian Statesmanship™ program makes the integrity analysis process seem like a cakewalk, although both are highly unorthodox requirements for any political party.

Regarding party government or structure, the CLP is critical of the CP for being “convention based [in that] the party’s platform and direction are determined through democratic

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Catalog [*sic*],” Christian Liberty Party, accessed May 2, 2014. <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/catalog>.

consensus among delegates.”¹²⁸ The convention structure is the standard for political parties in Canada and the United States, if not in all democratic countries, therefore it is shocking that the CLP rejects this structure. The party frames the convention model, which uses democratic consensus to set the party’s policies and principles, as a threat to their biblical principles. While the CHP holds fast to its unalterable principles set at the party’s founding convention, it is clear that the triennial convention is central to the grassroots identity of the CHP. Where the CHP strongly links the grassroots democratic process with their Christian worldview, the CLP interprets this process as a threat to Christ’s authority. Therefore party structure is another point where the CHP is more similar to the CP than the more outwardly Christian CLP.

When the CLP discusses the differences in “uniformity of party” between itself and the CP, it is primarily emphasizing the need to share the same name and principles among all party affiliates. Whereas the CLP places great significance on uniformity, it sees the CP as being somewhat lackadaisical on this issue, possibly leading to internal conflict and party instability. The CHP shares this concern with the CLP, as evidenced by the formal requirements the party sets for any potential provincial branches. In order to form a provincial branch of the CHP, beyond fulfilling the provincial requirements for registering as a political party, organizers must sign a contract with the federal party. This tight control of the federal party over potential provincial parties is not the standard practice in Canada, where federal and provincial parties of the same name are not necessarily directly affiliated. The CHP’s unalterable principles also indicate their concern for unchanging uniformity. The party’s policies and platforms can change overtime, but they must always adhere to the principles and voting delegates at CHP conventions are aware of this. All of this is to say that, of the seven points by which the CLP marks itself as

¹²⁸ “FAQ: How Does the CLP Differ from the Constitution Party?,” Christian Liberty Party, accessed April 30, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/faq#B1>.

distinct from the CP, the CHP shares approximately half of these points with the CLP and half with the CP.

But what of the American CR and how do these two American parties fit with this political movement? The CP appears to fit easily within the CR movement ideologically, although it is not the most politically effective part of the CR. Rather than continuing in the tradition of lobbying and working from within the Republican party, it broke away to start a party of its own. The CLP appears on the surface to be also part of the American CR, yet it is openly critical of the CR for conforming to the secular world. As stated on the party's website,

Today, the Christian right covets its place at the Republican table and frowns on any other pathway to political reform. As the goal of their activism becomes the election of republican [*sic*] majorities, they throw their support and prayers to the most "electable" republican [*sic*] candidate. Every election becomes "the most important election in a generation." "Now" is never the right time to consider Bible-believing Christian candidates of other parties, who are systematically ignored or even shunned as "spoilers." Thus the "Christian Right" reaffirms its image before the secular world as just another special interest group beholden to the political influence of the Republican Party.¹²⁹

The traditional political markers of conservative and liberal are also deemed overly secular by the CLP, as noted above. The party is simply too fundamentalist in its Christian worldview to want to be included in the CR. The CHP, on the other hand, does not reject the CR or political conservatism. For a short period CHP's slogan was "The *right* conservatives" and members constantly challenge the social conservative credentials of the Conservative Party. Additionally, the CHP understands itself as part of the Canadian CR, although CHPers struggle to understand why other facets of the Canadian CR, and the conservative Christian Canadian population more broadly, fail to support the party.

¹²⁹ "FAQ: Why Should Christians Abandon the Republican Party?," Christian Liberty Party, accessed April 30, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/faq#B1>.

The final point I want to make about the American CR and these two comparable American parties is the influence they had, or did not have, on the formation of the CHP. As discussed above, the new CR as a movement arose in Canada and the United States during the same period. Because of the sheer size and influence of the American CR, CHPers do sometimes draw on their American co-ideologues. However, the impetus to start a distinctly Christian political party in Canada did not take its cue from United States. The CP, which is questionably a Christian party, and the CLP, which rejects the CR, both developed after the formation of the CHP. In order to have a clearer sense of why the founders of the CHP chose to form a political party we must look at the Dutch, not the American, influences.

Chapter Two: Trying to Be Not Too Dutch: The Significance of the Dutch Reformed in the Christian Heritage Party

Public Perceptions of the CHP as Dutch

On a Wednesday in late April 2011, I found myself at a Chinese buffet in a strip plaza attending a lunchtime Rotary Club meeting. The Rotary Club in Hamilton, Ontario was hosting a public all-candidates' meeting for the upcoming federal election that May and, not being a member of the club, I had requested permission to attend. I was hoping to see a CHP candidate in action at this meeting. There were no CHP candidates in my riding during that particular election, so attending a local all-candidates' meeting offered little to no insight into the party. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for a CHP candidate to be a "paper candidate" meaning that their name is on the ballot, but they do little, if anything, in the way of campaigning. Luckily, I had met Bob, the CHP candidate running in this Rotary Club's riding, earlier in April when he hosted a leader visit/campaigning event at a United Reformed Church in the Hamilton area. From this encounter and a telephone conversation I knew that Bob was an especially active candidate and would be attending all-candidates' meetings whenever possible. I contacted Bob to let him know that I was planning to attend this meeting and to ensure that he would be present – and it was a good thing too, because he did not seem to know about this meeting. This is understandable since many all-candidates' meetings exclude fringe party candidates, but he was definitely going to be there and so was I.

After everyone at the meeting had a chance to go through the buffet and pick up our assorted chicken balls, egg rolls, honey-garlic ribs and fried rice, the chairman opened the Rotary Club meeting. It became quickly apparent that he was not familiar with the CHP, which he repeatedly referred to as "the CHP party." This, and the fact that the chairman never once said

the full name of the party, led me to believe that he most likely did not know what the letters CHP represented. Of the nearly thirty people at the meeting, I appeared to be one of the youngest people in the room and one of a handful of women present. Because I was there for research purposes and the only other person that I knew was the CHP candidate, I sat at a table near the back of the area in the restaurant sectioned off for the Rotary Club. Two other non-club members shared my table, both older men: one a retired factory worker, the other a worker for the NDP candidate.

Once the regular business of the Rotary Club was completed, the chairman introduced each of the candidates and called them to the microphone located at the left end of the head table to give a short speech. All of the candidates were sitting at the head table and one-by-one, from left to right down the table, they were called up; first the Conservative, then the Liberal, the NDP, the CHP, and finally the Green Party. While the chairman concluded his introduction for the CHP candidate the retiree at my table whispered to the NDP worker, “What’s CHP?” “The Christian Party,” responded the NDP worker in a not so quiet voice. “Oh. Dutch,” said the retiree, as the nondescript, middle-aged, Caucasian CHP candidate—who is neither Dutch nor Reformed—approached the microphone to give his speech.

What is at Stake with Being Perceived as Dutch

My experience at this all-candidates’ meeting highlights two publicity problems faced by the CHP: either general ignorance of the party as illustrated by the chairman of the meeting—also highlighted in the assumption that the CHP is innately American, discussed in the previous chapter—or pigeon-holing the party as being “Dutch,” even in this case where the individual representing the party had no Dutch ancestry. In this chapter I examine the significance of the Dutchness of the CHP. In contrast with external concerns that the CHP is American, the prospect

of being branded the “Dutch party” has been a concern within the CHP since its inception. Scott Grills notes in his research during the party’s founding period that this concern led to “party executives [...] checking the list of nominated candidates for the relative proportion of ‘Anglo’ sounding names. In addition, speakers with Dutch names and accents often emphasized their status as ‘Canadians by choice,’ or simply as ‘Proud Canadians.’”¹³⁰ Despite these measures, twenty-five years later the CHP has unintentionally maintained its Dutch brand. But what does it mean for the CHP to be branded as “Dutch”? How did this branding come about? What kind of “Dutch” is the CHP? Is this a problem, and if so why is it a problem?

The simple answer to these questions is that the CHP membership has been disproportionately made up of Dutch-Canadians associated with Reformed or orthodox Calvinist churches since it was established, and that this is a problem for the CHP if the party ever hopes to see electoral success. However, these simple answers are not that clear. How we determine the disproportionate Dutch membership of the party and why Dutch Reformed Canadians would be attracted to the party more than other ethnic or religious groups requires greater attention and detail. Even the potential problem of being the “Dutch party” begs for greater analysis because this limitation can also be understood as one of the party’s strengths.

The most notable problem with being branded Dutch is that this branding is more of an indelible mark than a quality that is intentionally promoted. The Dutch quality of the party has been permanently etched into its metaphorical skin and is not something marketed as a selling feature of the CHP. Moreover, the Dutch aspect of the party is very much tied to an orthodox Dutch Reformed, or more specifically Neo-Calvinist, type of Christianity. In Canada this type of Christianity encompasses the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the Orthodox Reformed

¹³⁰ Grills, “Designating Deviance,” 158.

Church (ORC), the United Reformed Church (URC), the Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC), and the Netherland Reformed Church (NRC).¹³¹

Despite the fact that Canada's Dutch immigrants have largely come from four groups, Reformed (*Hervormde* – relatively liberal and sometimes described as the unofficial national church of the Netherlands), orthodox Reformed (*Gereformeerde* – Neo-Calvinists), Roman Catholic, and non-religious, Dutch ethnicity in Canada has become primarily associated with the orthodox Reformed. Herman Ganzevoort, an historian of Dutch immigration to Canada, states, “[e]ven though the Christian Reformed church members [the largest of the various orthodox Reformed churches] make up less than one-fifth of the Dutch-Canadian group [circa 1980s], they have had an effect on the community out of all proportion to their membership. The reason lies in their solidarity and their identification as a ‘Dutch’ church.”¹³² That being said, the CHP is not represented solely by the orthodox branches of the Dutch Reformed church nor should it be considered representative of all Dutch Canadian immigrants.

Despite its Dutch branding, the CHP strives to present itself as Canadian and broadly Christian. Two examples of this can be seen in the “About the CHP” section of the party’s website. The first example of promoting the various groups attracted to the party can be found under the heading “Is CHP membership broad-based?” The response is affirmative. “CHP members include Anglicans, Baptists, Brethren, Catholics, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Mennonites, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Reformed – and probably many others; we don’t keep track.”¹³³ The fact that the party does not keep track of the denominational affiliations of its members leaves room to feign ignorance about the actual presence of members from these groups. While it may be true that the party has members from all of these denominations, I did

¹³¹ The ORC is sometimes referred to as the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church [OCRC].

¹³² Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*, 115.

¹³³ “About the CHP,” *CHP Canada*, accessed August 16, 2012, <http://www.chp.ca/party/about/>.

not personally encounter any CHPers who were currently Anglican, Christian & Missionary Alliance, or Mennonite throughout this research; although I did meet the rare member who had been associated with these churches in the past. I met one CHPer, in total, who identified as Brethren. Specifically, he attends an Open Brethren Church, a denomination that is sometimes called “Plymouth Brethren” and is noted for its lack of clergy.

The second and longer passage from “About the CHP” is found under the heading “Is the CHP trying to impose Christianity on those of other faiths?” This is a significant question for the party because a common criticism from outsiders is that the CHP is an attempt at theocracy, or at least an inappropriate conflation of church and state. Besides asserting that the party is compiled of “politicians, not evangelists,” they go on to state:

The Secularist [*sic*] minority in Canada dominates four powerful institutions that shape all our lives; government, courts, the public education establishment, and the major news and entertainment media. The best defense of the religious freedom and intellectual liberty of the minority faiths (which at 4% all together total only about 1/3 of the 12% who are Secularists) is to make a common cause with the 83% of Canadians who identify themselves as Christian. We are thus a bulwark defending religious liberty – for everyone – against a militant Secularist juggernaut that seeks to exclude all faiths from the public square.¹³⁴

This passage draws on data from the 1991 Statistics Canada census. The impression the party is trying to give is that it represents all “Canadians who identify themselves as Christian,” however this is demonstrably not the case. If this were the case the party would undoubtedly have a much larger membership than the estimated 5000-6000 individuals and attract a far greater diversity of Christians. Furthermore, as was noted in the introductory chapter, Canadians of any stripe (Christian or otherwise) are unlikely to support vocally religious politicians. Vociferous Christian politicians are frequently avoided because of the American associations

¹³⁴ Ibid.

outlined in the previous chapter. The desire for a secular, or at least non-religious, government is not limited to those classified by the party as “secularist.”

Additionally, the statistics given here have seen notable changes. According to a Statistics Canada report on the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), “Of the roughly 32,852,300 people represented in the NHS, about 22,102,700, or just over two-thirds (67.3%), reported that they were affiliate with a Christian religion.”¹³⁵ 7.2% of the population reported affiliation with a religion other than Christianity (such as Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism), those religions that the CHP classified as “minority religion.” Another 23.9% (or nearly one-quarter) of the population indicated that they had “no religious affiliation,” which is nearly double the “secularist” population claimed by the CHP above.¹³⁶

Furthermore, the census does not offer an option of declaring oneself a “secularist.” The party has taken the liberty to assume that those who were categorized as having “no religion” are “secularists.” Of the 3,386,365 Canadians placed in this category during the 1991 Census, 3,333,245 described themselves as having “no religion.” However, 10,635 of those under the category of “no religious affiliation” were designated as having some sort of religion or spirituality that was “not elsewhere classified.” While the small number of individuals who classified themselves as specifically Atheists, Humanists or Free Thinkers may be tentatively classified as “militant secularists,” they do not amount to what could be considered a juggernaut. The broader Canadian culture may have adopted secularist traits, but that does not necessarily mean that there is an organized or structured group orchestrating these changes. The CHP’s

¹³⁵ Statistics Canada, *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada, National Household Survey 2011*, Analytical document, Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011001 (Ottawa, 2013), 20. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.pdf>.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

perceptions of “secular humanism” are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, along with other significant perceived enemies of the party.

All of this raises a conundrum for the party; the CHP wants to present itself as representative of Christian Canadians, but the reality is that the party is largely composed of members from a relatively small Christian community, the orthodox Dutch Reformed.¹³⁷ And even then, the CHP appears to attract only the most conservative of the politically inclined individuals within that community. The CHP calls for the Canadian public to reclaim its country’s “Christian heritage,” yet the Dutch Reformed churches have not been an especially significant group within this heritage. That is to say, the main problem with being so Dutch is that the CHP is a better example of the Dutch heritage of pillarization than the Canadian Christian heritage the party strives to reclaim.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter I expound upon the issue of the Dutch branding and how the party can be understood as a facet of the orthodox Calvinist pillar in Canada. I do this by first giving detailed evidence that the CHP is currently over-represented among the orthodox branches of the Reformed church and compare this to Grills’ findings on the ethnicity of CHPers during the party’s early years. This section also explain why among members of the CHP it is appropriate to associate the Dutch-Canadian ethnicity with Reformed Christianity rather than the other Dutch groups mentioned above. As will be seen, there have been notable changes in the estimated percentage of Dutch-Canadian CHPers, therefore this section includes potential reasons for this fluctuation.

¹³⁷ The top three Christian groups according to the 2011 National Household Survey are Roman Catholics (38.7% of the total population), United Church (6.1%), and Anglicans (5.0%). This accounts for 49.8 of the 67.3% of the population that identifies as Christian. This leaves 17.5% of the population as Christians affiliated with all other Christian groups, of which the Reformed churches are one of many. *Ibid.*, 20-1.

Second, I examine reasons why orthodox Dutch Calvinists would be disproportionately attracted to the CHP. In this section I present three interrelated factors for this: 1) trends in Dutch immigration to Canada (i.e. who came from the Netherlands and during what period); 2) the pillarization of Dutch society and how some aspects of this pillarization transferred into the Canadian setting; and 3) the history of Christian politics in the Netherlands, especially noting the significance of the Anti-Revolutionary Party.

Third, I give examples of how the Dutch Reformed quality of the CHP goes beyond the party's membership. Examples here are taken from party policy and general practices. Fourth, expanding on the examples from the previous section I outline how this overall Dutch Reformed quality creates tensions within the party. The primary tensions that I focus on are the pressures placed on the generally newer, non-Dutch Reformed members to conform and the unwillingness of the Dutch-Canadian CHPers to compromise on what they perceive as broadly Christian principles. The latter can also be understood as a tension between the desire to be *pragmatic* in ways that might attract more members versus *principled*, as in maintaining so-called Christian principles.

Finally, I conclude this chapter by outlining what the on-going Dutch Reformed quality of the party can tell us about the future of the CHP. I argue that the CHP is a Canadianized facet of the orthodox Reformed Dutch pillar. This makes the party particularly attractive to some within the Dutch-Canadian community, which is an especially tight-knit, although geographically dispersed, ethno-religious enclave.¹³⁸ Understanding the CHP as a facet of the orthodox Reformed pillar goes far in explaining why this particular ethno-religious group is

¹³⁸ This language is borrowed from Mark Noll, who briefly discusses Dutch Protestants as one of many "European Ethnic Enclaves," in *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 481-3.

disproportionately represented in the party and why it is difficult for the party to develop beyond its Dutch branding.

Bringing Forth the Evidence

As noted above, the CHP does not keep any statistics on the religious affiliation or ethnic background of its members. Despite this fact, it is generally acknowledged among the members that the party's base consists primarily of Dutch-Canadians. Early on in this research I became aware of the strong Dutch associations with the party. Scott Grills' dissertation, which I read prior to conducting fieldwork, states, "During the party's first year of existence, approximately 75% of members were from a Dutch ethno-cultural heritage. While current [circa 1989] estimates place the proportion close to 30 or 40% of the membership base, promoters show a continuous concern over being identified as the 'Dutch Party.'"¹³⁹ Lucas, a CHPer who attended the party's founding convention as a young adult, also commented on the Dutch presence at that time saying, "there were 500 people there [at the convention], which a lot of the people were elderly people, mostly Dutch, especially from Ontario, who were committed to this idea of a political party."¹⁴⁰

Despite knowing about the Dutch history of the party, prior to conducting fieldwork I hypothesized that the Dutch presence within the party had decreased. My primary reason for thinking this was that my initial introduction to the CHP had no Dutch-Canadian connections. Former party leader Jim Hnatiuk had run in my hometown riding in Nova Scotia. Mr. Hnatiuk, who has Eastern European ancestry, has been a member of a few different churches, but never a Reformed church. None of the Nova Scotian CHPers I knew prior to conducting this research were Dutch-Canadian or Calvinist. However, the party base primarily resides in Ontario, British

¹³⁹ Grills, "Designating Deviance," 157-8.

¹⁴⁰ Interview #14, October 3, 2011.

Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba, which also happen to be the four provinces with the largest Dutch-Canadian populations according to the 2011 National Household Survey.¹⁴¹ Therefore once I began my fieldwork in Southern Ontario it was quickly apparent that the party continues to be overwhelmingly Dutch-Canadian.

Thus far I have primarily given anecdotal evidence that the CHP is quite Dutch-Canadian, but beyond this how can I prove that the party is over-represented by this group? One of the strongest ways to prove that the CHP is over-represented by Dutch-Canadians is through comparisons with the broader Canadian population. According to the 2011 National Household Survey 3.2% of Canadians claimed Dutch ancestry, therefore if more than 3.2% of CHPers have Dutch ancestry then the party is over-represented by Dutch-Canadians.¹⁴² This requires an accurate estimate of the current percentage of Dutch-Canadian CHPers, which I can determine based on two sources: a list of the candidates who ran in the May 2011 election and the interviews that I conducted with seventy-nine CHPers.¹⁴³

Just as the early party organizers used candidate lists to keep tabs on the Dutch appearance of the party, I can also use this list in my attempt to determine the Dutch presence in the party. During the May 2011 election the CHP ran forty-six candidates. Of these forty-six candidates, nineteen (or 41.3%) either had recognizably Dutch surnames (i.e. DeVries, Vande

¹⁴¹ According to the 2011 National Household Survey Ontario is home to 508,595 individuals of Dutch ancestry, British Columbia is home to 204,965, Alberta is home to 182,265, and Manitoba, 54,990. Statistics Canada, "2011 National Household Survey: Data Tables: Ethnic Origin (101), Age Groups (10), Sex (3) and Selected Demographics, Cultural, Labour Force, Education and Income Characteristics (327) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2011 National Household Survey," Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011036. Last modified March 4, 2104, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?TABID=2&LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=107647&PRID=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>.

¹⁴² Canada, Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011036, (Ottawa, 2014).

¹⁴³ Eighty individuals were interviewed for this research, but one of the interviewees was not a member of the CHP.

Stroet, Elgersma) or I learned of the candidate's Dutch ancestry through fieldwork. Although surnames are certainly not a conclusive indicator of ethnic heritage, Dutch surnames in Canada are an especially good sign of Dutch ethnicity because the community is so tight-knit.

Individuals in the orthodox Reformed community are more likely than other Dutch-Canadians to marry within their ethno-religious group. While other Dutch-Canadians have been quite open to intermarriage with other Canadians, Ganzevoort states, “[o]nly in the more orthodox Calvinist group has this tendency been opposed, and then only on religious [rather than prejudicial] ground.”¹⁴⁴

A more significant potential issue with relying on a list of candidates is that the party may intentionally seek out non-Dutch candidates in order to reduce the apparent Dutchness of the party. An example here can be taken from Manitoba, where the candidates and executive members frequently have non-Dutch surnames. I initially took this as an indication that CHPers in Manitoba might be less Dutch than Ontario, Alberta, or British Columbia. However, Harry, a long-term executive member in that province, estimated that two-thirds of the party supporters in Manitoba were Canadian or Christian Reformed, meaning they were Dutch Canadians.¹⁴⁵

I believe that it is the case that the general CHPers are more Dutch-Canadian than the list of candidates suggests and my interviews with party members confirms this. Of the seventy-eight CHPers I interviewed forty-five (or 57.7%) have Dutch ancestry, meaning that they, their parents, or their grandparents had immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands. In most cases this meant that both sides of the family had originally come from the Netherlands. Only one Dutch-Canadian interviewee noted that one of their parents did not have Dutch ancestry. Furthermore,

¹⁴⁴ Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*, 125.

¹⁴⁵ Interview #59, May 18, 2012.

of the thirty-three non-Dutch-Canadian CHPers that I interviewed, three were men who had married Dutch-Canadian women.

When drawing on my interviews for developing an estimate of the Dutch-Canadian CHPers a few things should be noted. I found interviewees through a sample of convenience. I interviewed CHPers that I previously knew or whom I met at advertised party events and then snowballed from there, asking interviewees to suggest others that I should contact. This means that my data set is not necessarily representative of the overall party membership. By relying on recommendations I may have been limited to those CHPers that my interviewees were most familiar with, such as their fellow church members. I countered this tendency by making it clear that I was also looking for contacts that were not Dutch-Canadian. In at least one case, an interviewee, Betty, had a particularly difficult time thinking of any non-Dutch members to recommend, although she was pleased that I was reaching out to these particular members. Betty has been involved with the CHP since she was a young woman, when the party was founded. Her father and brother have both run as candidates, and while she has not run as a candidate, she has held many important behind-the-scenes positions. After a long moment of intense consideration and consultation with Mark, her husband, she eventually thought of a name or two, but her initial reaction was to apologize and say, “I don’t know any non-Dutch people involved in this area [the Niagara region].”¹⁴⁶

Because I intentionally sought out non-Dutch-Canadian, non-Reformed interviewees my interviews most likely reflect a slightly lower percentage of Dutch-Canadians than the broader membership. Given this fact, I estimate that at least 60% of current CHPers have Dutch ancestry. This is substantially more than the 3.2% of Canadians who claimed Dutch ancestry in the 2011 National Household Survey or the 30-40% of CHPers that Grills noted in 1989. It is fair to say

¹⁴⁶ Interview #22, November 3, 2011.

that the CHP is overwhelming represented by Dutch Canadians. Before considering why the percentage of Dutch-Canadian CHPers would have fluctuated so greatly in the past 25 years, I will first discuss those interviewees of Dutch ancestry in greater detail. What churches do these CHPers attend? How many of them are immigrants, or the children or grandchildren of immigrants? And when did their families come to Canada?

Spotlight on Dutch-Canadian CHPers

Throughout this chapter I have discussed Dutch ancestry and orthodox Reformed religious affiliation as interconnected among CHPers, but I have not given any evidence to support this. Yet the church affiliation of the Dutch-Canadian CHPers is of particular significance for one of my key arguments in this chapter, that the CHP can be understood as a facet of the orthodox Reformed pillar in Canada. If these CHPers were not members of the various orthodox Reformed churches—the Christian Reformed Church, the United Reformed Church, the Canadian Reformed Church, the Netherlands Reformed Church, and the Heritage Reformed Church—then my argument would fall flat. However, all of the Dutch-Canadian CHPers interviewed had ties to orthodox Reformed churches; none of the interviewees had connections to the more liberal Reformed (*Herevormde*) or the Roman Catholic Church. The connection between Dutch familial background and membership in orthodox Reformed Churches was apparent among the interviewees.

Across the board, all of the interviewees of Dutch heritage were raised attending an orthodox Reformed Church. Although three of these individuals eventually left the Reformed church for a non-Calvinist denomination (two Pentecostal and one Baptist), it was far more common for Dutch Reformed interviewees to have left the CRC in particular for the more conservative factions of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC) or the United

Reformed Church (URC). The histories of the OCRC and URC are somewhat convoluted. The OCRC broke from the CRC in the late 1970s, and the more recent denominational split of the URC began in the mid-1990s. Since then these two particular denominational factions federated under the URC of North America (with the exception of a few individual OCRC congregations).

Other than staying within the Reformed tradition, a few Dutch-Canadian CHPers shifted from the Reformed church of their youth to Presbyterian churches. Both Reformed and Presbyterian denominations belong in the larger Calvinist family and are therefore more similar than Reformed and non-Calvinist churches. Those who made this change by and large gravitated towards the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—a more conservative branch of the Presbyterian churches. One notable exception was Maxwell, a middle-aged CHPer from Ontario, who has raised CRC, then became OCRC as a young adult. By the time I met Maxwell he was attending a local Presbyterian Church of Canada, primarily due to the expense of traveling to the closest OCRC. He was quick to inform me that if an Orthodox Presbyterian Church had been locally available he would have chosen that church, “but there is no such church anywhere even close to” where he lived.¹⁴⁷

Out of all the Non-Dutch-Canadian CHPers interviewed, one attends a CRC and one attends a URC. The first of these two interviewees, Sarah, did not hide the fact that her church was quite Dutch and joked that once her family became established at the church their fellow church members would add the prefix “van” or the suffix “sma” to her surname, “just to make us sound Dutch.”¹⁴⁸ The second interviewee, Daniel, married into a Dutch family.¹⁴⁹ If the non-Dutch-Canadian CHPers attended any Calvinist churches regularly they were more likely to be

¹⁴⁷ Interview #44, March 15, 2012.

¹⁴⁸ Interview #10, August 31, 2011.

¹⁴⁹ Interview #7, August 9, 2011.

Presbyterian than Reformed. By and large, the non-Dutch CHPers more often associated with non-Calvinist churches, such as Pentecostal and Roman Catholic churches.

It is appropriate to note here that studies of the CRC, the largest of the Reformed denominations in Canada, consistently find the denomination to be remarkably ethnically homogenous. Sam Reimer and Michael Wilkinson's "A Demographic Look at Evangelical Congregations" shows the CRC as being 93.3% white, although they do not embellish what ethnic groups are present in this category.¹⁵⁰ Stuart McDonald offers an even higher estimate, stating, "According to the 2001 Census, the Christian Reformed Church almost exclusively (98.6 per cent) is comprised of people who are not 'visible minorities.'"¹⁵¹ McDonald goes on to discuss in great detail the Dutch as the sole ethnic group associated with the Reformed denominations.¹⁵² The whiteness of this church appears to have carried over into the CHP. Out of all of the party events that I attended, including the CHP's National Convention, I have seen at most two or three individuals who were visible minorities. Like the CRC, the CHP is remarkably white.

The Dutch-Canadian CHPers interviewed fit into three categories: first generation/immigrant, second generation, and third generation. The category of first generation Dutch-Canadian CHPers can be further divided into two groups, those who immigrated during the height of Dutch immigration to Canada in the decade following World War II, and those who immigrated after this period, primarily in the 1960s and 1970s. Only one interviewee—Moe, an older farmer from Alberta—noted having ancestors who immigrated to Canada in the early 1900s; his family was involved with developing the Dutch Reformed colony of Neerlandia,

¹⁵⁰ Sam Reimer and Michael Wilkinson, "A Demographic Look at Evangelical Congregations." *Church & Faith Trends* 3, no. 2 (Aug 2010), 11, accessed July 19, 2012, <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/page.aspx?pid=7329>.

¹⁵¹ Stuart McDonald, "Presbyterians and Reformed Christians and Ethnicity," in *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada*, ed. Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 174.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 178-81.

Alberta prior to World War I. Given the time frame of immigration, all of the interviewees in this first category were in their fifties or older, with the younger immigrants arriving as children with their families after the 1950s. Of the forty-five Dutch-Canadians interviewed, at least thirteen, or nearly one-third, are immigrants. The second generation Dutch-Canadian CHPers represented the broadest age group, ranging from their twenties into their sixties. Finally, the third generation—with the notable exception of Moe—were primarily under thirty.

One difficulty in determining the exact number of second and third generation Dutch-Canadians interviewed is that while the orthodox Dutch Reformed tend to marry within their community, they do not necessarily marry within their generational status. A prime example is Moe—one of his parents was born in Canada shortly after his grandparents had immigrated; his other parent was a Dutch immigrant. He went on to marry Phyllis, who emigrated from the Netherlands with her family as an infant. Therefore their children could be classified as second, third and fourth generation Dutch-Canadians.

The primary point to take from this examination of immigration trends among Dutch-Canadian CHPers is that many of these individuals would have some direct, personal experience of the Netherlands. While their children were born and raised Canadian, they maintained a fairly insular community based on church and familial connections. Betty, a CHPer who belongs to this religious-ethnic community, described this as the “Dutch bubble”—that despite being born and raised in Canada, she felt that she only socialized with other Dutch-Canadians.¹⁵³ I draw on these immigration trends again when I discuss reasons why the orthodox Reformed Dutch-Canadian community would be disproportionately attracted to the CHP. For now, we come back to the

¹⁵³ Interview #22, Nov. 3, 2011. I discuss this “Dutch bubble” in greater detail later in this chapter and in the chapter on education.

question of why there has been such a dramatic fluctuation in the estimated percentage of Dutch-Canadian CHPers over the party's twenty-five years.

Why the Drastic Changes?

It is quite a notable change to go from an estimated 75% in the first year to 30-40% in the second or third year to more than 60% Dutch-Canadian in the party's twenty-fifth year.¹⁵⁴ Why would there have been such drastic fluctuations in the percentage of Dutch-Canadian members in the CHP's first twenty-five years? What can account for these drastic changes? I hypothesize three reasons for these changes: 1) political competition and internal party conflicts which led to significant membership decline in the early 1990s, 2) high birth rates among the Dutch-Canadian CHPers, and 3) Neo-Calvinist theology integrated into the party's policies and platforms, as well as strong connections made with that community, maintaining the interest of orthodox Reformed Dutch-Canadians.

The first reasons, political competition and internal party conflicts, are arguably the most significant factors in the decline of party membership in the early 1990s. The populist and primarily western-based Reform Party, a competing federal political party, was founded the same year as the CHP. As noted by Paul Freston, "The CHP's chances in western Canada have not been helped by another party launched the same year, the Reform Party led by Preston Manning, a prominent Protestant from Alberta."¹⁵⁵ I was told in interviews and passing conversations with CHPers that these two parties nearly merged very early on, but the Reform Party members would not agree to adopt the CHP's "five unalterable principles," causing the potential merger to fail. Despite the fact that neither the CHP nor the Reform Party won any seats in the General Federal election of 1988, the Reform Party won a seat in a 1989 by-election in the Alberta riding of

¹⁵⁴ It is not clear how Grills determined his estimates, therefore I cannot know if our measurements are identical.

¹⁵⁵ Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*, 58.

Beaver River.¹⁵⁶ This win proved significant for the Reform Party and they went on to win 52 seats in the 1993 federal election.¹⁵⁷

At the same time that the Reform Party was on the rise, the CHP's leadership underwent a period of instability. In August 1991 various national board members proposed a merger with the Reform Party. According to Myrna Allen, in her dissertation on Canadian fringe political parties, "After rejecting the proposal, the national board forced the resignation of seven board members who endorsed this idea. The following day, the entire Ontario board stepped down and Ed Vanwoudenberg announced his intention to resign."¹⁵⁸ While I agree that 1991 is when the party first experienced major instability, and I was told in interviews about the attempt to merge the CHP with the Reform Party, the party presents an alternative history explaining Vanwoudenberg's 1991 resignation. Former leader Ron Gray notes in his history of the CHP that, "Ed [Vanwoudenberg] stepped down in an effort to broaden the Party's appeal beyond its Dutch roots."¹⁵⁹ Gray gives no indication that Vanwoudenberg's resignation was connected to the proposed merger. In retrospect Vanwoudenberg's resignation appears to have exacerbated the party's instability, and the leadership position changed hands three times before Ron Gray brought a long period of stability starting in 1995. Furthermore, the period of instability that came with Vanwoudenberg's resignation did not fulfill its intentions of helping the party attract non-Dutch Canadians.

¹⁵⁶ "History of Federal Ridings since 1867: By-Elections, 34th Parliament [1989]," Parliament of Canada, accessed September 11, 2012, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Bres&ridProvince=0&genElection=0&byElection=1989%2F03%2F13&submit1=Search>.

¹⁵⁷ "History of Federal Ridings since 1867: General Election, 35th Parliament [1993]," Parliament of Canada, accessed September 11, 2012, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Gres&genElection=35&ridProvince=0&submit1=Search>.

¹⁵⁸ Myrna J. Allen, "Outside Looking In: A Study of Canadian Fringe Parties," (master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 1997), 66.

¹⁵⁹ Ron Gray, "History of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada," December 2004, accessed August 7, 2011. <http://www3.telus.net/chp/faq.htm>.

Charles Cavilla, a Roman Catholic immigrant from Gibraltar who was working as a librarian at a Catholic school in Alberta, initially replaced Vanwoudenberg. Cavilla was eventually asked by the party's National Executive to step down after it became clear that there was a difference of opinion about the requirements of the party leader.¹⁶⁰ This led to tensions between Cavilla and the party, which some interviewees referred to as "the Cavilla affair," and supporters of Cavilla left the CHP. Given that Cavilla was Roman Catholic this conflict most likely affected the Roman Catholic (non-Dutch-Canadian) membership more than the Dutch Reformed members.

Internal conflicts within the party during this period of instability combined with the rise of the Reform Party led to hemorrhaging of CHP membership as the initial excitement of starting a party based on biblical principles waned. I suspect that the majority of the members who left the party at this time were not Dutch-Canadians. This is not to say that the Dutch-Canadian CHPers at that time did not become disenchanted with the party, but I hypothesize that they would have been less likely to leave the party. Given that the party was so heavily Dutch-Canadian early on, it is likely that those members would have felt a stronger sense of commitment to the party than those who joined after the first year.

The second reason mentioned above is high birth rates among Dutch-Canadian CHPers. The average number of children per interview (not per interviewee, but over the sixty-four interviews) was 2.9 children. When I remove the interviews with people who reported having no offspring that number rises to 3.7 children. However, when the interviews are divided into CHPers of Dutch ancestry and CHPers with no Dutch ancestry, we can see that the former have

¹⁶⁰ Allen reports, "Cavilla resigned in order to spend more time with his family." This is not how Cavilla's resignation was described to me by informants, but I suspect this is how it was described publicly. Allen, "Outside Looking In," 156.

more children on average.¹⁶¹ The interviews with CHPers of non-Dutch ancestry averaged 2.4 children, whereas interviews where at least one individual was Dutch-Canadian averaged 3.3 children. The differences between these two groups expand when the interviews with no children are removed—3.0 children for the non-Dutch-Canadians and 4.2 children for those with Dutch ancestry.

This higher birth rate among the Dutch-Canadian members has afforded this particular group the advantage of being able to raise more children into the CHP. Alice, a younger Dutch-Canadian CHPer in her twenties, was very proud of the fact that she could say she attended the founding convention insomuch as her mother was pregnant with her at the time.¹⁶² She is now grown, has a family of her own, and remains actively involved. Odds are that at least some of Alice's children will also be involved with the party in the future. Nearly all of the younger CHPers (those who were under thirty) who I encountered were Dutch-Canadian. These younger CHPers commented that they participated in campaigning activities, such as door-knocking and putting up signs. They grew up actively involved with the CHP and strongly identifying with the party.

The third reason for the fluctuation in Dutch-Canadian membership is that the party draws on Neo-Calvinist theology in its policies and platforms and overt connections made to that particular community. Although I will be drawing out examples of this in greater detail below, the primary point that I am pushing here is that the high percentage of orthodox Reformed in the party's first year placed that particular group in a stronger position for their particular theology to be embedded in party policy and platform. This means that the party would already reflect the religious beliefs of the orthodox Dutch Reformed community in ways that it may not for other

¹⁶¹ For my purposes I have grouped the interviews where at least one parent has Dutch ancestry into the former.

¹⁶² Interview #16, October 13, 2011.

Christian groups, such as Catholics or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, connections within the Dutch Reformed community go even further, influencing the locales of party events. Many of the public events that the party held during the 2011 election period took place in orthodox Reformed Churches or in private Christian schools initially developed by the Dutch Reformed community. Although these locations do not preclude the attendance of non-Dutch-Canadians, they are locales that may be more familiar and inviting to the Dutch Reformed community.

These three factors combine in such a way that the fluctuation of Dutch-Canadian CHPers can be understood as follows. Early party organizers were able to attract orthodox Dutch Reformed individuals to the party more so than other Christian groups prior to the party's founding convention. This accounts for the high estimation of 70% Dutch membership at that time. Shortly after the party was founded, the numbers of Dutch-Reformed attracted to the party levelled out and other conservative Christian Canadians had joined the party, thereby decreasing the overall percentage of Dutch-Canadian members. However, poor election results and internal conflicts led more of the non-Dutch-Canadian members to leave the party during the first decade. This, combined with the Dutch-Canadian members repopulating the party with children raised into the CHP, contributes to the current estimate of more than 60% of the membership coming from this particular ethno-religious community.

All of this helps us make sense of the dramatic changes in the percentage of Dutch-Canadians in the CHP since the party was founded. However, the big question that must be asked now is, why is it that the orthodox Dutch Reformed were, and remain, disproportionately attracted to the formation of a Christian political party?

Why the orthodox Dutch Reformed?

Many of the notable founding members of the CHP, particularly Bill and Heather Stilwell and Gerhard Herwig, were Roman Catholic and not Dutch-Canadian. Just because the CHP has been historically over-represented by Dutch-Canadians of Reformed persuasion does not mean that other ethnic and Christian groups were not involved early on. However, it was members of the orthodox Dutch Reformed community who were the quickest to get on board to start up this distinctly Christian party. Given the relatively small Dutch-Canadian population in Canada and the current left-leaning liberal stereotypes of the Netherlands, it seems particularly odd that a conservative Christian fringe political party in Canada would be over-represented by Dutch-Canadians. However, knowledge of the history of Dutch immigration to Canada as well as the political history and culture of the Netherlands goes far to explain this situation.

In this section I argue that understanding the major wave of Dutch immigration to Canada and the Dutch culture that those immigrants left behind helps us understand why orthodox Dutch Reformed-Canadians were the most significant group attracted to the CHP. Additionally, highly developed church networks allowed word of the developing CHP to spread quickly within this particular community. This early over-representation of orthodox Reformed Dutch-Canadians then created a mould for the party, of which it has not been able to break out. Many of the key aspects of Dutch culture that are discussed here are interconnected. By way of example, the concept of pillarization is largely attributed to politician, theologian, and writer Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), who also promoted the doctrine of “sphere sovereignty.” Kuyper was Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905 and leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP). The “anti-revolutionary” concept, framed as a response to the French Revolution and highlighted by the name of the ARP, was developed by politician and historian Guillaume Groen

van Prinsterer (1801-1876).¹⁶³ While I am using immigration and the transfer of Dutch pillarization to Canada as my starting point, I am fully aware that pillarization, the ARP, Kuyper, van Prinsterer, and spheres of sovereignty are better thought of as an interconnected web than a linear list of influences.

The first pieces of this puzzle are the trends in Dutch immigration to Canada. Although some Dutch immigrants had arrived in Canada prior to the early 1940s, Dutch immigration shifted dramatically during the decade following World War II. Prior to World War II there was a small, but regular, stream of Dutch immigrants arriving in Canada. The war brought an end to immigration, but the close ties between Canada and the Netherlands during wartime opened the door to Dutch immigrants as soon as the war was over. While the United States maintained its pre-war quota on Dutch immigrants, Canada allowed and encouraged a large wave of these immigrants to enter the country during the post-war decade. As noted by Ganzevoort, “Canada was one of the few countries in the immediate post-war period prepared to accept Dutch immigrants.”¹⁶⁴

This dramatic wave of Dutch immigration is made especially clear when we look at information compiled by Statistics Canada. By the 1990s the Dutch accounted for less than 1% of the immigration to Canada; however, in the early 1950s this same group represented approximately 10% of all the country’s immigrants. “In 1952 and 1953, for example, a total of over 40,000 immigrants arrived in Canada from the Netherlands.”¹⁶⁵ The immigration patterns of Dutch-Canadian CHPers discussed in the previous section reflects these shifts in the overall Dutch immigration to Canada.

¹⁶³ Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*, 65-6.

¹⁶⁵ Canada, Statistics Canada/Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Profile: Netherlands*, Immigration Research Series (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, 1996), 3.

As noted above, Dutch immigrants came primarily from four distinct religious groupings: the (liberal) Reformed associated with the *Hervormde Kerk* in the Netherlands, the orthodox Reformed associated with the *Gereformeerde Kerk* in the Netherlands, the Roman Catholics, and the non-religious. By the time the major wave of immigration took place each of these groups had their own distinct “pillar” in Dutch society. Each *zuil*, or pillar, was a collection of political and social institutions tied together by denomination, such as denominational specific schools, trade unions, newspapers, television networks and political parties, among other organizations.¹⁶⁶ The height of pillarization was from the early 1900s into the 1970s.¹⁶⁷ By the time the majority of Dutch immigrants arrived in Canada they were so thoroughly embedded in the *zuilen* (pillarized) expression of society that the separate pillars did little co-mingling once in Canada.¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, the different pillars integrated into Canadian society in different ways. The Roman Catholic immigrants found a pre-existing church community, which arguably helped that pillar integrate into the broader Canadian setting. Although there were no Canadian equivalents to the liberal (*Hervormde*) Reformed Church, “prior to the early 1950s they had been encouraged by their home churches to align themselves with Canadian mainline churches such as the Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Canada, but many Reformed immigrants found such advice unacceptable.”¹⁶⁹ Eventually connections were made with the Reformed Church of America to fulfill the spiritual needs of this group.

¹⁶⁶ Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*, 69.

¹⁶⁷ Rudy B. Andeweg, “Parties, Pillars and Politics of Accommodation,” in *Elites in Divided Societies: Political Parties in Consociational Democracy*, ed. Kurt Richard Luther and Kris Deschouwer (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1999), 119.

¹⁶⁸ Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*, 99.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

However, the orthodox Reformed immigrants made connections to the Christian Reformed Churches in the United States much earlier than their more liberal counterparts and could find orthodox Reformed communities (such as Neerlandia, Alberta and Holland Marsh, Ontario) that were established before the post-war wave of immigrants arrived. They were already on their way to establishing a Canadian version of their orthodox Reformed pillar. Once the post-war wave of immigrants arrived they were quick to develop parallel “Christian” institutions. Michael Fallon, in his dissertation on post-World War II Dutch Reformed immigration, succinctly outlines the institutions developed by this particular group.

In a period of approximately forty-five years they have established four independent educational systems with over one hundred elementary and secondary schools, augmented by undergraduate and graduate institutions. They have founded health care facilities, newspapers, a farmer’s association, a businessman’s organization, a labour union and in recent years, a federal political party.¹⁷⁰

This transferring of the orthodox Reformed pillar into the Canadian setting is also described as the community illustrating a high level of “institutional completeness.”¹⁷¹ Stuart McDonald describes the Christian Reformed Church, the largest of the orthodox Reformed churches in Canada, as “institutionally complete” and marvels,

The institutional separateness is quite remarkable, as it was achieved [...] despite the fact all of these [Christian Reformed] groups normally functioned in the language of the dominant culture. To maintain this institutional autonomy, it was necessary to use or develop a theological rationale, which might be more significant than any structure based on language. Languages tend to fade away, but it is not clear yet that such theological rationales will.¹⁷²

This institutional completeness is very much tied to theological rationales, yet we do not see the same devotion to pillarization or institutional completeness among other Dutch-Canadian groups.

¹⁷⁰ Michael Fallon, “People of the Covenant: Dutch Reformed Immigration into Canada After World War II,” (PhD diss., University of Guelph, 2000), 2-3. Although Fallon does not overtly name the federal political party founded by this community, it is undoubtedly the CHP.

¹⁷¹ Fallon “People of the Covenant,” 3; and McDonald, “Presbyterians and Reformed Christians and Ethnicity,” 190.

¹⁷² McDonald, “Presbyterians and Reformed Christians and Ethnicity,” 190.

As noted above, one aspect of pillarization was the development of denominationally specific political parties in the Netherlands. The most notable parties that represented the three religious pillars in Dutch society were the ARP, the Catholic *Katholieke Volkspartij* (KVP) and the liberal Reformed *Christelijk-Historische Unie* (CHU). These three parties merged in 1980 to form the current *Christen Democratische Appèl* (CDA).¹⁷³ The merging of these pillar parties can be understood as part of the broader depillarization of the Netherlands, although as noted by Rudy Andeweg, “In 1968, when the size of the religious subcultures had not yet been adversely affected, the loyalty to the religious parties started to crumble.”¹⁷⁴

Besides these major parties there have also been smaller orthodox Reformed political parties in the Netherlands: the contemporary *ChristenUnie* (CU), which formed in 2000 when the *Gereformeerde Politiek Verbond* (GPV) and *Reformatorische Politieke Federatie* (RPF) merged; and the *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (SGP). The connection to the orthodox (*Gereformeerde*) Reformed church is made apparent by the names of most of these parties. Unlike the creation of the CDA, these parties “are firmly entrenched in their own pillar network.”¹⁷⁵ However, what is most significant for the study at hand is that those CHPers who emigrated from the Netherlands would have been familiar with these parties, if not directly involved with them. The fact that the Netherlands has a history of Christian political parties was noted by numerous interviewees, and two interviewees, Hans and Joseph, commented on being a member of the youth branch of the ARP and campaigning for GPV respectively.¹⁷⁶ Even in Ron Gray’s history of the CHP he discussed how “previous experience[s] of Christian politics in

¹⁷³ Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*, 13.

¹⁷⁴ Andeweg, *Parties, Pillars and Politics of Accommodation*, 115. The on-going depillarization and decreasing influence of Christianity on voting in the Netherlands can be seen in the recent electoral record of the CDA, who in the past three elections, from 2006 to 2012, has gone from leading the government and holding forty-one seats (out of 150) in Parliament to holding thirteen seats.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁷⁶ Interviews #8, August 25, 2011; and Interviews #29, November 30, 2011.

Europe” influenced the development of the party. More telling is the fact that the only party Gray explicitly mentions as an influence is the ARP and Kuyper’s role therein.¹⁷⁷

The Netherlands has also employed a proportional representation electoral system since 1918, which tends to allow greater electoral success to smaller parties than the single-member proportional, or first-past-the-post, system we have in Canada.¹⁷⁸ This means that even the most conservative parties, such as the SGP, who only allowed women to be members as of 2006, can still manage to win seats in the Dutch House of Representatives. Not surprisingly, the CHP supports electoral reform that might bring proportional representation or mixed-proportional representation (like the electoral system employed in New Zealand) to Canada.

Familiarity with the Dutch political system made it difficult for some immigrants to adjust to the Canadian mode of politics. Ganzevoort describes this situation for the orthodox Reformed quite clearly.

Accustomed to proportional representation and politics based on ideology, the new Dutch Canadians found it hard to accept the winner-takes-all philosophy of the Canadian system. To many, no real difference existed between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Both seemed motivated solely by the accumulation of power for power’s sake. The orthodox Calvinists, who had passionately supported “anti-revolutionary” forces in the Netherlands, found liberalism of any degree or kind unpalatable. The socialist philosophy of the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the precursor to the New Democratic Party] was even worse, since it was regarded as basically humanistic and irreligious and therefore to be shunned.¹⁷⁹

Ganzevoort goes on to say that the orthodox Reformed immigrants were drawn to the now defunct Social Credit Party, which gave some nominal recognition to conservative Christian beliefs. The CHP developed after the heyday of the Social Credit Party, as was discussed in the introductory chapter, and by the mid-1980s the de-regulating of abortion, which will be

¹⁷⁷ Gray, “History of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada.”

¹⁷⁸ Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*, 22.

¹⁷⁹ Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*, 121.

discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, helped motivate the orthodox Reformed to reclaim the Christian party ideals of their Dutch heritage.

The history of Christian political parties in the Netherlands is closely tied to Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper, and Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty. Kuyper, being the most prominent figure in the history of the orthodox Dutch Reformed, was mentioned the most by interviewees, although it was van Prinsterer's opposition to the heritage of the French revolution that brought forth "Anti-Revolutionary Voters' Clubs" that evolved into the ARP. Van Prinsterer very much paved the way for Kuyper, but he is not as celebrated as Kuyper and therefore was only mentioned by a few interviewees.

The influences of Kuyper and his brand of Neo-Calvinism on the Dutch Reformed community are frequently highlighted as a defining quality of this group.¹⁸⁰ Michael Fallon is particularly critical of this tendency in his examination of Dutch Reformed immigrants, when he argues that it is more appropriate to focus on this group's Calvinist philosophies of covenant. While this may be so when examining the broader Dutch Reformed immigrant community, I argue that Kuyper is of particular significance for the Dutch Reformed members of the CHP given Kuyper's political activity. As mentioned above, Kuyper was Prime Minister of the Netherlands, while leader of the ARP, from 1901 to 1905. Besides being a prominent politician, he also founded two newspapers, helped found the Free University of Amsterdam, and led the *Gereformeerde Kerk* in splitting off from the *Hervormde Kerk*.¹⁸¹ He also promoted denominational segregation, which came to fruition with the pillarization of Dutch society. Numerous CHPers, both in interviews and in casual conversation, recommended that I read some of Kuyper's work as part of my research.

¹⁸⁰ For an example of this in the American setting, rather than Canadian setting, see Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*.

¹⁸¹ Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*, 14-5.

However, more than van Prinsterer or Kuyper, Kuyper's doctrine of sphere sovereignty was mentioned repeatedly by interviewees, especially in response to questions about the separation of church and state. Kuyper discusses this doctrine in *Lectures on Calvinism*, delivered as the Stone Lecture series at Princeton University in 1898. In the lecture, "Calvinism and Politics," Kuyper outlines the ultimate sovereignty of "*the triune God over the whole Cosmos*, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible. A *primordial Sovereignty* which radiates [*sic*] in mankind in a threefold deduced supremacy, viz., 1. The Sovereignty of the *State*; 2. The Sovereignty in *Society*; and 3. The Sovereignty in the *Church*."¹⁸² Although this passage does not mention the role of family directly, the premise of Kuyper's approach to politics and society was that "the basic unit of society was the family."¹⁸³ Sarah, who was mentioned earlier in this chapter, is one of the rare non-Dutch Canadians who attends a Reformed Church. She described the spheres of sovereignty as follows:

I don't know if all Christians or Reformed Christians, I know we believe in spheres of sovereignty, like the family is sovereign over what goes on in the home. The church doesn't walk in, the pastor doesn't walk in and say, "You've got some dirt on the floor. You want to go clear it up please." I mean that would be absolutely ridiculous. He has no authority in my home and the same way the church doesn't go into the government and say, "Well guys, we're enacting this legislation today." However, the church can certainly lobby the government to bring about righteous legislation and that's certainly right and proper. So that sort of goes with individual, family, civil and church spheres of government [sovereignty], which is sort of recognized from scriptural models that are set up for us.¹⁸⁴

The takeaway point of this passage, beyond the fact that Sarah drew on a variation of sphere sovereignty to explain the importance of separation of church and state, is that she is unclear if

¹⁸² Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1931 [1898]), 79 (original italics).

¹⁸³ Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, 26.

¹⁸⁴ Interview #10, August 31, 2011.

this is a doctrine specific to the Reformed churches. I argue that it is, at least in origins, and has been adopted by some non-Dutch-Reformed CHPers, such as Sarah, via party interactions.

Given the period that the major wave of Dutch immigrants arrived in Canada and the Dutch culture with which they would have been familiar, it is not that shocking that this group would be disproportionately attracted to the concept of a Christian political party. The children of immigrants may not have had the same personal experiences with a pillarized society, but in most cases with Dutch-Canadian CHPers, they were raised within a Canadianized orthodox Reformed pillar which promoted Kuyperian doctrines rationalizing the importance of Calvinist Christianity in everyday life, including politics. Having outlined some of the qualities associated with the orthodox Reformed community that might lead them to form the CHP, I will now bring forth some examples how the policies and practices of the CHP maintain a particular orthodox Dutch-Calvinist quality, after which I discuss some of the problems that the Dutchness of the CHP has created for its non-Dutch-Canadian members.

Being Orthodox Reformed Beyond Party Membership

Although there are certain difficulties in proving that the CHP membership is disproportionately Dutch-Canadian, it is the easiest way to illustrate how the CHP is a representation of the orthodox Calvinist pillar in the Canadian setting. However, it seems unlikely that the Dutch Reformed quality of the party is limited to the demographics of its membership. What can we point to beyond the membership that indicates a Dutch quality to the CHP? In this section I argue that various party practices and policies have a Dutch-Reformed quality to them. Furthermore, it is the policies and practices that could potentially be changed in order to attract a broader membership, therefore I give some examples of how the party has attempted to mitigate its Dutch quality here.

A few interviewees commented about a general aura of the Reformed church within the CHP. Although some of the Dutch-Canadian members were aware of this, others were not. When discussing the difference between the CHP and the FCP, Hans, a Dutch-Canadian CHPer made the following comment:

Now you give me a little bit of insight there, and so did Jeff this morning. The short time we talked together he says, “Hans, when I became a member of the CHP it looks like the Christian Reformed Church,” he says. He had, “confess your Lord and Saviour” and many other sayings that he mentioned to me, and I was sort of flabbergasted or [it was] new to me [...] I did not know.¹⁸⁵

Jeff was a fairly new, non-Dutch Reformed, CHPer.

As noted above, the CHP regularly holds public meetings in Reformed churches or Christian schools founded by those of the Reformed faith. By way of example, in April 2011 the party hosted a leader tour with eight events held across Southern Ontario. Of these eight events, two were held in Reformed churches and two were held in Christian Schools. None of these events were held in non-Reformed churches. Aaron, a non-Dutch CHPer from Ontario, pointed to this practice as something that could be changed in order to potentially attract a wider variety of Christians to the party.

I said at the meeting the other day [held in a Christian school], somebody was asking me and I said, “but how are you going to reach out to people who are of different faiths when every meeting you have is in the Christian Reformed school [...]. I said, “you got to break out of this and meet at legion halls and things like this, different denominational churches. If you are going to meet, sure you want to be identified with people of faith, fine, different denominations. Why can’t you meet in a Catholic church?¹⁸⁶

Additional party practices include the unwritten rule of not conducting party business on Sundays. Admittedly the practice of setting aside Sunday as a day of worship and for family is not limited to the Dutch Reformed, but the maintenance of this is particularly strong within this

¹⁸⁵ Interview #8, August 25, 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Interview #25, November 14, 2011.

group. As will be seen in the following section, those CHPers who do not take this stance on avoiding party business on Sundays are sometimes chastised or made to feel guilty.

Within party policy we can also see language reminiscent of Calvinist theology and changes made to lessen this. A prime example is the party's policy on capital punishment. The original policy from when the party was founded was worded as follows:

We affirm that man was created in the image of God, and that justice therefore required the ultimate deterrence and punishment for shedding of innocent blood. Government is that minister of God invested with the power of the 'sword' to punish evildoers and promote the good. We believe that the law should provide for justice which includes capital punishment for those found guilty by a unanimous verdict of judge and jury of offenses so heinous in character as to be termed 'capital.'¹⁸⁷

However the most recent incarnation of this same policy is worded thusly:

We affirm that man was created in the image of God and therefore all human life should be protected by laws that require the ultimate deterrence and punishment for the shedding of innocent blood. Government has a God-given responsibility to use its power to punish those who commit crimes and to protect those who are innocent. The law should provide justice which includes capital punishment for those who commit first-degree, premeditated murder.¹⁸⁸

Changes in the language used in this policy illustrate a move away from emphasizing the Calvinist belief that God invested the government with the "sword" to wield over the people. However this language remains present in policy 6.7.8, "The use of Violence in Protest," which begins with the statement, "The government has been entrusted by God with the use of 'the sword' for the protection of the citizens and the punishment of evil."¹⁸⁹

Many of the party's policies employ the practice of "proof texts" to illustrate the biblical support for the policy at hand, yet this reference to "the sword" does not. This is telling, as it

¹⁸⁷ CHP Policy and Program in Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice*, 136.

¹⁸⁸ CHP Canada, *CHP Party Policy: A Blueprint for Restoration* (n.p.: CHP Canada, 2008), 45.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

assumes that the reader is aware of this particular biblical reference, most likely Romans 13:4.¹⁹⁰ What is more telling is that the idea of God entrusting the civil government, and not just “the rulers,” with the sword is developed by John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in the chapter on “Civil Government.”¹⁹¹ This suggests that Dutch Reformed—Calvinist—CHPers may be more accustomed to this particular language or religious doctrine.

The party’s policy of “Spheres of Responsibility” also reflects the Kuypertian sphere sovereignty discussed above. This policy states, “We affirm that man operates within various spheres of responsibility which may sometimes overlap or be shared. Private enterprise by individuals or group associations, government, industry, and labour, therefore, have distinct and different functions and each must respect the jurisdiction and authority of the other.”¹⁹² In essence the “Spheres of Responsibility” policy appears to be little more than an affirmation of Kuypert’s doctrine.

The encoding of the Dutch Reformed or Neo-Calvinism on the CHP’s practice and policy is more subtle than the overwhelming physical presence of the Dutch-Canadian membership. Unless one is familiar with Calvinist and Kuypertian doctrines they might miss these references altogether. However, while those outside the Dutch Reformed community might feel put off by these references without necessarily realizing their origins, those within the community, like George, may find comfort in these aspects of the party, not realizing that it is reflecting their specific denomination. Let us now turn to the effect these Dutch qualities of the party have on some of the non-Dutch-Canadian CHPers.

¹⁹⁰ “For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.” Rom. 13:8 (NIV).

¹⁹¹ Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, bk. 4, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 1498-500.

¹⁹² CHP Canada, *CHP Party Policy*, 21.

Tensions for Non-Dutch-Canadian CHPers

I suggested early in this chapter that the Dutch Reformed qualities of the CHP are problematic for the party. More specifically in this section, I argue that a significant problem caused by this Dutchness is the tension that it creates for those CHPers who are not part of the Dutch Reformed community. Expectations are placed on these CHPers to conform to Dutch Reformed norms or to stand as representatives of the party to help attract non-Dutch members and voters. This is not to say that all the non-Dutch Reformed members feel this tension, but that as minorities in the party they may be more aware of these issues. In this section I give examples of how Non-Dutch Canadian CHPers have been pressured to conform or expected to go above and beyond. Even during my own casual encounters with the party I was told the adage, “If you’re not Dutch, you’re not much.” Although I was assured that I should take this in a joking manner and respond with some similar praise of my own ethnic heritage, it is not hard to see how it might be difficult for those outside that community to fully integrate into the party.

I was in the fortunate situation of being able to attend numerous party events in Ontario and therefore met a broader array of CHPers in this province than in other provinces, where most contacts were made either through attending the National Convention or those who had run as candidates or those who were recommended by others. One Ontarian couple I interviewed, Richard and Susan, were on the verge of letting their party membership lapse, in large part due to frustrations with the sense that they could never be fully accepted in the party because they are not Dutch Reformed. Below are some excerpts from that interview that highlight this sentiment.

Richard: So here, I guess my problem with the CHP is if I wanted to vote for the Liberals, I can be a Christian and I can belong to any church I want and I can play up the Liberal platform and no one’s going to try and change me. I can do that with the NDP and I can do that with pretty much any party, but when I get to this party I feel like I got to become Dutch Reformed to become part of the group.

Susan: To be accepted.

Richard: And I'm thinking, "Whoa! Wait a minute! I signed up. I'm a Christian and I go to church. I don't want anyone telling me what kind of Christian I got to be and what kind of church I got to go to." You know, that's me. That's the freedom of being in the country and suddenly I come into this and it's like, "Oh no. We're Dutch Reformed and this is how you're going to do it."¹⁹³

Here Richard and Susan have both expressed how they have not been able to integrate into the CHP. Richard clearly attributes this to the fact that he and Susan are not Dutch Reformed. Later in the interview he discussed in greater detail how he expected the party to be broadly Christian, based on its name, compared to his experience of the party in practice.

And basically, you think about Christian Heritage Party, what do they stand for? Right. It says it right in the name, Christians. And then the word "Heritage." You put those two words together. I don't get Dutch Reformed out of that. I get a history in Canada of Christians collecting and unifying the churches and presenting a wholesome platform for the individuals out there who have families, who want to promote the family unit. That's kind of what I got from the pamphlets and the website and stuff, right. So that's what they're pushing. We just talked about [how] you can see there's a definite, definite distinction of Dutch Reformed in this party and then they start getting out there, and let's say they do gain some popularity. Let's say they get up there and suddenly the smaller parties are in the spotlight, in the news, and they start probing these people. Well, how's that going to look for the Christians when you've got the Catholics and the Protestants and the Baptists and they're all getting together and saying, "Oh, no, no, no. We don't support that. We support this."¹⁹⁴

This second excerpt highlights the disjuncture between how the party attempts to present itself and how the party actually functions. Richard also raised issues with the name of the party, which was a recurring topic raised by interviewees that will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. Although Susan and Richard used much stronger language than any other interviewees about how the tight-knit Dutch Reformed presence within the party made them feel unwelcomed, it is unlikely that they are the first people to leave the party for this particular reason.

¹⁹³ Interview #12, September 14, 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Other non-Dutch-Canadian CHPers commented on the Dutch Reformed history or quality of the party, although these comments tended to be more neutral and acknowledged that the party is attempting to change. Examples of this more neutral sentiment can be seen in the following excerpts taken from interviews:

Bob: My feeling is that they only wanted Christian Reformed people at the beginning. Now they recognize that there's a few Christians outside of the Christian Reformed Church.¹⁹⁵

Nick: My understanding of the history of the Christian Heritage Party is that it was very much driven by the Christian Reformed community. I think a lot of the early members were related to Christian Reformed and they've always been really strong advocates for being active in these areas, in education and politics and that sort of stuff.¹⁹⁶

Bob and Nick have both collapsed all of the orthodox Dutch Reformed churches onto the Christian Reformed Church, which may not be an accurate portrayal of the early Dutch CHPers. The split of the United Reformed Church from the CRC occurred after the formation of the CHP so there certainly would have been more CRC CHPers earlier on; however, the founding leader, Ed Vanwoudenberg, is Canadian Reformed, as are a notable group of members in the Niagara Region. It is likely that these interviewees have used the CRC as a stand-in for all of the orthodox Dutch Reformed churches because it is the largest denomination within that group so they are more familiar with it.

As noted in the previous section, certain unofficial party practices around “appropriate” activities on Sundays tend to put non-Dutch Reformed CHPers in uncomfortable situations. Two interviewees, Hans and Bob, recounted the same situation of a candidate who sent emails to CHPers on Sundays. The candidate, Bob, who was described at the beginning of this chapter and is not Dutch-Canadian, received sermonizing emails from some of his Dutch-Canadian

¹⁹⁵ Interview #9, August 25, 2011.

¹⁹⁶ Interview # 13, September 16, 2011.

constituency criticizing his actions and possibly questioning his standing as a Christian. Bob was clearly bothered by these negative responses and sought guidance from a Dutch Reformed CHPer, Hans. The advice he received was to “just apologize and leave it be,” that “Reformed folk, they don’t appreciate things that are done on a Sunday.”¹⁹⁷ In other words, Bob was told that he should avoid the practice of emailing CHPer on Sundays because the Reformed members feel it is un-Christian.

In another similar case Dennis, a Dutch Reformed CHPer in Ontario, recounted an instance where Pentecostal members, who have presumably since left the party, were made to feel bad because they suggested that a local party meeting be held on a Sunday. Dennis felt quite certain that the practice of banning party business on Sundays and asserting these types of Reformed values isolated some party members. He phrased this concern in a manner that paralleled Richard and Susan’s sentiments.

You keep pushing them out, you know, slowly but surely. I’ve seen it several times with several different people that kind of get in the party and they get kind of excited and they want to this and they want to do that, but then [they get told] “oh, we don’t do that here. We don’t do that. This is the way we do it.” And blah, blah, blah, and slowly but surely, they fade away.¹⁹⁸

These situations recounted by interviewees illustrate a lack of openness, if not occasional hostility, experienced by non-Dutch-Canadian CHPer when their ideas and practices do not conform to those of the Dutch Reformed. This is not to say that this reflects the experiences of all non-Dutch Reformed members, but this restrictive behaviour would certainly feel jarring and unexpected to a new, enthusiastic CHPer seeking greater involvement in the party.

On the opposite side of this pressure to conform is that non-Dutch-Canadian CHPer might also be encouraged, more so than Dutch-Canadian members, to take on more public roles

¹⁹⁷ Interview #8, August 25, 2011.

¹⁹⁸ Interview #35, January 11, 2012.

in the party, such as being a candidate or on the party's national board, in order to boost the broadly Canadian appearance of the party. Scott Grills' observation of early party organizers keeping tabs on the number of candidates with Dutch surnames corroborates this, as well as comments I received in interviews and casual conversation. Additionally, as noted above, Ron Gray stated in his history of the party that the founding leader, Ed Vanwoudenberg, "stepped down in an effort to broaden the Party's appeal beyond its Dutch roots."¹⁹⁹ The fact that Vanwoudenberg has been the only Dutch-Canadian leader was described as particularly positive by some interviewees.

As for candidates, James and Ella, a couple in Ontario, reminisced about a candidate they once had that they were especially fond of, in part because he was younger and not Dutch.²⁰⁰ Dennis, a Dutch Reformed CHPer mentioned above, made the following comments about his particular riding and their most recent candidate:

You get all these Dutch people in the [party], because, like in our riding association over here, we're all predominately from the same church. We got lucky now, we got John King [his candidate] and he's not Dutch. He's the only one. Now, he seems really interested in the party so he's working hard. I'm hoping that he's slowly but surely going to bring other people in so that Dutch people will be kind of the minority.²⁰¹

This suggests that non-Dutch CHPers may be held up as public representatives of the party, while behind the scenes they are at higher risk of being castigated for non-Dutch Reformed practices. Although some of the Dutch Reformed CHPers appear aware of this situation, it seems unlikely that these tendencies will change soon.

¹⁹⁹ Ron Gray, "History of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada."

²⁰⁰ Interview #6, August 6, 2011.

²⁰¹ Interview #35, January 11, 2012.

Being Dutch Reformed While Trying to Appear not Dutch Reformed

The CHP faces the conundrum of wanting to be broadly Canadian, but being over-represented by a specific ethno-religious group since its inception. The overwhelming Dutch Reformed presence in the party has been a blessing because it means that there is a small, but highly motivated, group dedicated to maintaining the party. However, this is an intense and highly dedicated group with very particular ideas of what it means to be Christian, which makes it difficult at times for other conservative Christians to integrate into the party. Although the party has made some attempts to portray itself as having a broad base—as seen on the party’s website, its presentation on pamphlets and its preference towards non-Dutch-Canadian candidates—this does not necessarily help those non-Dutch-Canadian CHPers conform to the mould of the party.

The institutional completeness or Canadianized pillar of the orthodox Dutch Reformed community has reinforced the tight-knit quality of this community. One Dutch-Canadian couple, Mark and Betty, referred to this as “the bubble”:

Betty: Because, you know, we grow up with the same people in the same Christian school. We go to the same Christian high school with everybody. We go off to our Christian colleges. We get our education, what do we come back to? We come back to teach at our own Christian schools in our communities, or we come back to work for our own parents, or we come back to work for this Christian group or this Christian business...

Mark: And you’ve never met someone who isn’t a Dutch Reformed Christian in your life.²⁰²

This is decidedly problematic for the CHP because it means that the people within the Dutch Reformed community, with the habit of naming the institutions within their pillar “Christian,” may be less willing to compromise on perceived “Christian” versus “non-Christian” practices or beliefs.

²⁰² Interview #22, November 3, 2011.

As “the bubble” language suggests, those individuals within the Dutch community tend to be very connected to one another. I found this in my interviews, where in a few cases I discovered family connections among interviewees in the middle of the interview. This even happened in situations where I was introduced to the interviewees in very different locations. By way of example, a non-Dutch CHPer in Nova Scotia recommended Alex and Wendy, a retired Dutch-Canadian farming couple in the same province, as future contacts when I was quite early in my fieldwork. When I managed to meet with Alex and Wendy over a year later while visiting Nova Scotia, it was not until I was interviewing them that I discovered I had met their son-in-law, Rodger, and some of their grandchildren at a CHP event outside Toronto.²⁰³ By that time I had already initiated arrangements to interview Rodger, which eventually took place approximately a month after my interview with Alex and Wendy.

The Dutch-Canadian community actually makes a game of this intense interconnection, “Dutch Bingo,” a degrees-of-separation game played to determine connections between individuals. It begins by determining that both parties have a Dutch surname, where they are from, which church they attend, and who they might be related to until a connection has been made. These intense interconnections among those in the Dutch Reformed community would exacerbate the difficulties of someone outside of this community fully integrating into the CHP. This does not mean that it is impossible for non-Dutch Reformed individuals to become full members in the party, but that those outside the community may unwittingly encroach on topics understood by the majority Dutch Reformed members as non-debatable, such as the name of the party and the party’s stance on capital punishment.

Beyond the difficulties of integrating into the party culture, non-Dutch Reformed CHPers may be expected to go above and beyond the Dutch Reformed membership, by running as

²⁰³ Interview #34, December 17, 2011.

candidates or holding executive positions. It is hoped that by having non-Dutch Canadian members hold high profile positions that the Dutch branding of the party will be offset and that more non-Dutch Canadian individuals will be attracted to the party. However, it is clearly not this easy. Over two decades of this strategy have done little to increase the non-Dutch Canadian presence in the party.

One of the most significant facets of the Dutch-but-not-too-Dutch conundrum of the party is the legalistic/principled approach taken by the Dutch Reformed members.²⁰⁴ Party policy and platforms are set at the triennial national conventions via resolutions brought forth by the national executive, electoral district associations and individual members and voted as adopted or not by the delegates present. When the majority of delegates present share Dutch Reformed heritage, qualities of that ethno-religious group become imprinted onto the party as a whole. As will be seen in the following chapters on debate about the party's name and the CHP's pro-life qualities, the unwillingness of the Dutch Reformed contingency to compromise on what they perceive to be universal Christian values further shuts the door on many potential non-Dutch Reformed members. However, if the party were somehow able to alter the approach taken on these particularly divisive issues they would surely lose a significant portion of their base. This leaves the CHP stuck between a rock and a hard place, where I suspect they will not see any significant growth in their non-Dutch-Canadian membership unless unforeseen changes take place, which could in turn lead to a greater overall loss in membership if these changes repel the Dutch Reformed members.

The Dutch branding of the CHP comes through in the legalistic, principles-based approach taken by the party at large. This principled stance frequently butts up against pragmatic

²⁰⁴ My use of "legalistic/principled" here is intended to convey that points that may be understood as part of the principled Christian position by the Dutch Reformed members may be interpreted as legalistic by CHPers outside of that ethno-religious community.

options that could potentially help grow, or at least diversify, the party. In the next couple of chapters I examine two recurring debates that highlight the tensions between the CHP being principled versus pragmatic, namely debates around the name “Christian Heritage Party” and the party’s pro-life/pro-capital punishment stance.

Chapter Three: What's in a Name?: The Significance of the Party's Name on Internal Perceptions of Christian Identity

Internal Debates and Resolution #25 – “Resolution to Strike a Committee to Study CHP Name Change”

March 14-17, 2012 the CHP held its triennial convention at the Ramada Plaza Hotel and Convention Centre in Abbotsford, British Columbia. It was a particularly special event, as the party was celebrating its 25th anniversary, and I felt very fortunate to be able to attend. While at the convention and afterwards CHPers regularly asked me if it had been what I expected. Having never attended a political convention, I harboured few preconceptions. However, there were certain debates, explicitly about the name of the party and the party's stance on capital punishment, which I anticipated witnessing at the convention and I was not disappointed. Debates about the name of the CHP—whether or not it should be changed—are such a regular occurrence at conventions that various interviewees had forewarned me that there would be discussion about the name. Indeed, there were two resolutions presented at the 2012 convention regarding the name: resolutions #44 “Resolution to use full name ‘CHRISTIAN HERITAGE PARTY’” [*sic*], which I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter; and #25 “Resolution to Strike a Committee to Study CHP Name Change,” which I will expound on now.

The plenary sessions, where resolutions and other voting matters occurred, were held in a large ballroom in the Ramada. It was the kind of ballroom that could be easily divided using hidden, movable partitions into smaller rooms when concurrent workshops were taking place, as found in most hotel-convention centres. During each plenary session three delegates, all men from Ontario, sat at a rectangular table on a low stage located front and centre in the room. Their jobs were to ensure that all of the delegates followed the rules of order during the sessions and properly record the proceedings. Tom Kroesbergen, the CHP president at the time and a farmer

from southern Ontario, co-chaired the sessions with Dave Bylsma, a highly committed Ontarian CHPer. They took turns at the podium next to the head table, reading the resolutions and managing any ensuing debates. The plenary sessions took place over the two full days of the convention—March 15th and 16th. However, there was not enough time scheduled to debate all the resolutions so just before noon on March 16th, at the end of the plenary session, all but one of the remaining resolutions—which will be discussed in greater detail below—were removed from the agenda.

In the middle of this last plenary session resolution #25, “Resolution to Strike a Committee to Study CHP Name Change,” was presented for debate. This resolution was lengthy compared to most, taking up nearly two full pages single-spaced, and containing eleven “whereas” and five “be it resolved” clauses. Although resolution #25 did not present any alternative names to Christian Heritage Party, it strongly suggested that a certain quality to the name of the party contributes to the fact that the CHP have never been elected. The general theme of these “whereas” statements was that political parties seek electoral success and while the CHP has maintained its biblical principles throughout its 25 years, it has failed to attract enough supporters to get elected. The final clause pointed to a conflict between the party evangelizing rather than seeking political office, stating, “Whereas, while most of our members are active in various Christian Churches, our role as a political party is not the role of Evangelists, but rather the role of Politicians seeking to form a Government, or at least elect some Members of Parliament who will be able to bring our Christian values to the House of Commons.”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ CHP Canada, “#25: Resolution to Strike a Committee to Study CHP Name Change,” in *Setting Our Sails for Tomorrow*, Section 4, “Resolutions,” 53-54.

Unlike most of the other resolutions, which were primarily moved by the national board, the constitution committee, or by an Electoral District Association (EDA), this one was moved by two individual party members—one from Alberta, who was not present at the convention, and Wilf Hanni, a relatively new CHP member who was integral to the development of the provincial CHP British Columbia. Although Hanni was fairly new to the CHP, he was no stranger to politics. Throughout the late 1990s into the early 2010s he stood as the leader for three different provincial parties in British Columbia—The Reform Party of BC, The BC Conservative Party, and the BC Heritage Party. In 2012 Hanni signed an agreement with the CHP to reframe and rename the BC Heritage Party to the CHP-BC.

While Hanni was certainly no stranger to political conventions, given his political record, it was unlikely that he had attended a CHP convention before. It was also unlikely that he was fully aware of how sensitive long-term CHPers are to the suggestion that the party's name should be changed. As is the protocol, when resolution #25 was presented to the convention delegates Hanni was invited to one of the two microphones set up on ballroom floor—one on either side of the head table—to speak to his resolution. By this point Hanni most likely had received some comments about the old guard's frustrations about changing the name of the party because his introductory speech emphasized that the resolution did *not* propose changing the name, but *just* to develop a committee to look into the potential value of a name change.

Despite Hanni's attempts to allay concerns about his resolution, a heated and impassioned debate ensued, largely dominated by those opposed to resolution #25. The majority of these critics stated similar arguments against the resolution: they were concerned that it would force a name change and they saw it as a waste of the party's time and effort. Gerhard Herwig, one of the party's founding members, gave the most impassioned speech in opposition to

resolution #25. Herwig, a German immigrant from British Columbia who is in his late 70s or early 80s, detailed how the founding members originally chose the name of the party.

Additionally, he noted that this resolution was facing a lot of opposition and there was no point in having this debate. In response, Herwig's speech won boisterous applause and cheering from the delegates.

There were a few individuals present that spoke in favour of the resolution, but they were greatly outweighed by those who opposed. When Hanni returned to the microphone to give his closing appeal he broke tradition and rather than seeking support, he spoke against his own resolution. This also drew cheers from the delegates. In the end the resolution was defeated almost unanimously; only the few who had spoken in support voted in favour, and this did not even include Hanni, who had co-drafted the resolution.

After the convention, when I told some interviewees that I had anticipated the debate about the name of the party I was informed of the ways that resolution #25 was different from earlier debates. Other resolutions on the name of the party usually promoted changing the name to one suggested in the resolution, such as Christian Democratic Party or Canadian Heritage Party. Despite the fact that resolution #25 did not recommend an alternative name and was arguably quite democratic by recommending a committee be formed on the matter, this did not prevent it from raising the ire of most of the convention delegates. It was made pointedly clear in the debate over resolution #25 and the subsequent conversations about it that challenges to the name of the party are a recurring point of contention among the CHPers.

What's in a Name?

As seen through the vignette above, the name "Christian Heritage Party" is perceived by some within the party to be a stumbling block for electoral success. This sentiment arose

repeatedly in interviews; however, a much larger portion of the membership feel the current name is integral to the Christian identity of the party and its membership. In this chapter, I argue these debates around the name of the party, and by extension the need to assert “Christian” identity, are further examples of the pragmatic versus principled tensions underlying the CHP. Debates around the name of the party highlight this tension because those who support changing the name frequently frame it in pragmatic terms: they believe changing the name of the party will attract those who are put off by the name of the party. These members feel that changing the name will somehow help the party grow. Those who oppose this change primarily point to their Christian identity as the core reason to keep the current name: for them the push to eliminate “Christian” from the party’s name indicates disassociation from one’s Christian identity. Removing the word “Christian” is interpreted as deceptive and compromising one’s Christian principles.

Given that conflict around the name of the party is strongly tied to a claim of Christian identity, a second significant argument in this chapter is despite the fact that the CHP strives to make a universal claim of “Christian identity,” in practice this identity is far more particular. This secondary argument relies on some of the information presented in the preceding chapter on the Dutch qualities of the party as a foundation, but expands beyond this in two ways. First, although the party harkens back to Canada’s Christian heritage, this heritage was largely shaped by denominations that are either not represented or are a notable minority within the party—namely Anglicans, Roman Catholics and the United Church of Canada. Second, not all groups that self-identify as Christian are accepted by the CHP. Most significantly, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly referred to as Mormons, who might

otherwise be attracted to the CHP, are effectively banned from holding positions on EDAs and the national board, or running as CHP candidates.

I preface my examination of the issues at stake in this on-going debate by discussing prominent examples of federal political parties that have changed their names and the reasons for these changes. Here I also restate my position as an external researcher and evaluate the significance of this debate. However, in order to get to the heart of the opposition to changing the name I examine the reasons given for the name “Christian Heritage Party of Canada.” Specifically, drawing primarily on founding leader Ed Vanwoudenberg’s book, *A Matter of Choice*, and interviews, I discuss how the name of the party was chosen and the intentions behind the name.²⁰⁶ This section includes some exploration of Canada’s “Christian heritage” and the significance that the CHP attributes to that history.

Second, I explore criticisms voiced about the current name in interviews. Criticisms or concerns about the name of the party centred on the words “heritage” and “Christian,” with the majority of interviewees focusing on the latter term. As will be expounded below, many CHPers discussed how, in their opinion, some potential members avoided the party because of its overt religious identification. Considering the connections made by the general Canadian public between Christianity, politics, and the United States, these CHPers may not be that far off the mark. However, the negative implications and associations made with the word “heritage” were not given nearly as much consideration by CHPers. Over the course of this research I had more than one non-CHPer confuse the party with the notorious Canadian white supremacist organization, the Heritage Front, therefore it is quite surprising that the word “heritage” draws so little criticism from CHPers. As an extension of this section, I discuss the alternative names that were mentioned in interviews and reasons given for those alternatives.

²⁰⁶ Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice*, 13-28.

In the third section, I examine arguments given by CHPers in support of the current name. Although I discuss the criticisms first, the majority of interviewees who discussed debates about the name of the party support the use of Christian Heritage Party. This section therefore outlines reasons given for maintaining the status quo and how these supporters perceive those who challenge the party's name. The subsequent section further illustrates the strong attachment some CHPers have to the party's name by recounting backlash against the national board's decision to use "CHP Canada," rather than the fully spelled-out name, on promotional materials during the 2011 federal election.

Finally, I conclude this chapter by attempting to define the Christian identity of the CHP. Much of the on-going debates around the name of the party centre on expressing a Christian identity, yet I witnessed little introspection by members regarding what type of Christian identity they are striving to maintain. Here I question if and how the CHP's presentation of Christianity—through platforms and membership—reflects the Christian heritage of Canada. More concisely, how is "Christianity" presented by the CHP? This is also where the treatment of Mormonism by the party is given explicit attention.

A Christian Political Party by Any Other Name

As an external researcher, I am not in a position to pick sides on this on-going internal debate. There is value to both keeping and changing the party's name, and it is easy to oversimplify either position or falsely present this as an all-encompassing polarizing issue for the membership. If anything this debate, with its occasional variations, appears to be a recurring annoyance for the highly committed CHPers. From my perspective, the significance of this debate is not whether or not the name will change, or if there is in fact a positive relationship

between the name and the size of the party. The significance is what this debate tells us about the formation and maintenance of the CHP's identity from the perspective of party members.

The premise that changing the name of the party may attract more support is not a novel idea. It is not entirely unheard of for Canadian political parties to change their names, or at least rebrand themselves. The two best-known examples are: the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which combined with the Canadian Labour Congress to become the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961; and the Reform Party, which became the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance—commonly known as the Canadian Alliance—in 2000 and eventually merged with the Progressive Conservatives in 2004 to become the current Conservative Party of Canada (CPC).²⁰⁷ In both cases these changes marked an attempt to broaden the appeal of largely regional parties and included other substantive changes to the marketing of the party.

This regional to national rebranding is particularly apparent with the Reform/Canadian Alliance. The first slogan for the Reform Party, in the late 1980s, was “The West Wants In,” explicitly drawing on a sense of political alienation in the western provinces. When the party gained some electoral success, but failed to attract supporters in the Eastern provinces, they started to rebrand themselves as a Canada-wide “United Alternative,” hence the new name, Canadian Alliance.²⁰⁸

Although the CHP's membership is certainly found in regionalized pockets, it does not face the same type of regional problem experienced by the CCF, which was tied primarily to Saskatchewan, and the Reform Party, which was strongest in Alberta. Instead, the CHP faces a myriad of challenges that keep their numbers of supporters low—not the least of which is the Canadian public's aversion to combining religion and politics, as discussed in Chapter One.

²⁰⁷ Rand Dyck, *Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches* (Scarborough, ON: Nelson, 2004), 298-300.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 300.

Those CHPers who argue for a name change do so based on the purportedly pragmatic claim that it would increase party membership, but no one suggested altering the religious ideology or core principles of the party. In this sense, any suggestions to change the name appear largely superficial. Although these suggestions are not tied to any substantive changes to the party's policies, platforms, or principles, they are perceived as a very real attack by those who oppose the change. I cannot know what the results would be if the name of the party were changed, but I strongly suspect that such a change would be detrimental to the party in the short term. This suspicion is primarily based on the comments made by those who prefer the current name of the party, who would most likely take a name change as an affront.

Aaron, a member of the FCP and the CHP, gave one of the more nuanced descriptions of the complexity of this name debate. His comments about the debate were closely tied to his concerns about the Calvinist (read Dutch-Canadian) majority in the party. When discussing these issues he said, “[T]hey see changing the name as the silver bullet, you know, to solve their problems, but they’re still not going to be allowing people into the membership who are non-Christian. They’re still not going to be allowing anybody who’s not Calvinist into leadership.”²⁰⁹ We can see in this excerpt that Aaron is more aligned with the FCP than the CHP, since he refers to members of the CHP as “they,” and he is critical of the strong Calvinist presence in the CHP. Although his assessment of only Calvinists being in leadership position in the CHP is questionable, Aaron’s evaluation of a name change as a “silver bullet” for some in the party is very perceptive. Changing the name would be a superficial alteration with serious implications for the party’s membership. Even if the name of the party is what deters many non-supporters, presumably the platforms and policies of the party or the requirements of members could be just as much of a deterrent.

²⁰⁹ Interview #25, November 14, 2011.

Why the “Christian Heritage Party of Canada?”

The founding members of the CHP set the name of the party before the first convention because they had to have a name when they registered the party in 1986. This means the name was determined at least a year before the founding convention in 1987 and was then affirmed by the delegates at that convention.²¹⁰ At least four people would have been integral in setting the name of the party: Ed Vanwoudenberg, Gerhard Herwig, and Bill and Heather Stilwell.²¹¹ The most extensive source I have on the origins of the name is Vanwoudenberg’s book, published after the party’s first election.

Although the first chapter of Vanwoudenberg’s book is titled, “Why the Christian Heritage Party?” he is not asking why that particular name, but three other questions; “1. Why a Christian-based political party?, 2. Why not work from within the existing parties?, [and] 3. What do you hope to achieve?”²¹² Fortunately there is a small subsection, “what is the meaning of our name?” that deals more directly with the question at hand.²¹³ The first three paragraphs of this section are particularly on point and are, therefore, presented here:

Christian Heritage must be read as *one* expressed thought and not be split into *two* separate words or made to express two distinct ideas (one work expressing religious exclusiveness, Christian, and the other work historical development, Heritage). Instead, both words are one entity and must be inseparably connected, the subject being ‘*heritage*’ and ‘*Christian*’ being descriptive of the subject.

The Party has chosen this name with the express purpose of reminding all Canadians that from the time of Confederation we have a heritage that has shaped our country, formed the basis of our laws and Constitution, determined the course of Canada’s history and influenced the development of our culture and education.

This heritage does not find its origin in one particular Christian denomination but in the contributions of many. A unique blend of cultures has contributed to Canada’s Christian heritage. Similarly, the membership of the CHP is made up of a wide variety of people of diverse backgrounds and cultural origins, united in the

²¹⁰ Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice*, 11.

²¹¹ Bill and Heather Stilwell both passed away when I was in the early stages of this research project.

²¹² Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice*, 13.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 15. This subsection takes up slightly less than a page and a half.

firm resolve to offer Canadians a political program based upon universally held Christian views.²¹⁴

The idea that the words “Christian” and “heritage” are intended to be inseparable was impressed on me during my very first interview. At that time I had two interview questions about the name of the party, “what does the ‘Christian’ in CHP mean to you?” and “what does the word ‘heritage’ in CHP mean to you?” After asking the former question I was told in short order of the inseparability sentiment outlined by Vanwoudenberg, and I subsequently discarded those questions, thinking they were not useful.²¹⁵ For the first few interviews after that initial one I did not ask any questions about the name of the party, but found that this topic would be raised without solicitation, so I reframed my approach. Eventually I began to ask more specifically if the member was aware of debates around the name of the party and if they had a position on that issue.

The broader concern raised in Vanwoudenberg’s elucidation of the party’s name is that Canadians need to be reminded of the country’s Christian history. This precious heritage is perceived by members of the CHP to be increasingly under attack, which is why the party strives to defend it. There is most certainly an assumption being made that this is a heritage worth upholding. It is easy to suggest that the party is being naïve, presenting Canada’s origins as an indicator of how it should be in the future. There are many features of Canada’s heritage that have changed, such as the outlawing of slavery and giving women and visible minorities the right to vote, that most people do not want to reverse. Indeed, no CHPers referred to these changes when discussing the precipitous decline of Canada’s heritage. Instead, they focused on the decriminalization of homosexuality and abortion, or the legalization of Sunday shopping—all

²¹⁴ Ibid., 15 (original italics).

²¹⁵ In retrospect keeping these particular questions probably would have been useful since not all members are familiar with Vanwoudenberg’s explanation of the name and it would have required interviewees to talk more explicitly about their understanding of Christianity.

changes taking place since the 1960s. Harry, a long-term CHPer from Manitoba, proudly discussed his activism in maintaining a ban on liquor sales in his town.²¹⁶ I received no indications that the party opposes all societal changes or that the members think that Canada should have remained culturally stagnant since Confederation. Upholding Canada's Christian heritage is far more about keeping (or making) social conservative Christian ideals as a standard than reverting to an earlier point in history.

Beyond the value that the CHP gives to Canada's Christian heritage, it should be noted that the assertion of Canada being historically influenced by Christianity, that there is a "Christian heritage," is a valid and well-grounded assertion on the part of the party. Paul Bramadat describes the significance of Christianity in Canadian history in "Beyond Christian Canada: Religion and Ethnicity in a Multicultural Society," the introduction to *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*.²¹⁷ He states,

It is difficult to understand the historical, or even the present, social structures in this country without knowing, among other things, that for roughly a century prior to World War II, the Roman Catholic and several Protestant (especially the Anglican) churches enjoyed a kind of de facto (and in some institutions, de jure) status as established (i.e. formally favoured) denominations.²¹⁸

Bramadat continues with numerous examples of the influences Christianity had on the treatment of Aboriginal people, the name "Dominion of Canada," educational systems, health care, and welfare agencies.

Roger O'Toole points even more explicitly to the overwhelming influence of Victorian Christianity on the Canadian cultural landscape. This includes "the political party system, the welfare state, foreign policy goals and a distinct 'law and order' bias [that] arguably originate, at

²¹⁶ Interview #59, May 18, 2012. Prior to this interview I had not realized there were areas in Canada that had maintained any form of alcohol-related prohibition.

²¹⁷ Paul Bramadat, "Beyond Christian Canada: Religion and Ethnicity in a Multicultural Society," in *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*, ed. Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2005), 1-29.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

least in part, in religious ideas, attitudes and structures which are not quite unfamiliar to contemporary Canadian Christians.”²¹⁹ O’Toole pushes the fact of Canada’s Christian history even further by emphasizing that for most of Canada’s history until the 1970s two-thirds of the population identified as either Roman Catholic, Anglican, or a member of the United Church. He asserts that the Canadian Christian heritage is such “a fact that it appears almost redundant.”²²⁰ Thus, while scholars of Canada’s religious history agree that Canada does have a Christian heritage, the significance given to this history by scholars and the CHP is quite different. Scholars are not asserting that this means the future of Canada should be guided down a particular path, but that its present continues to be shaped by this history.

As noted by O’Toole, Canada’s Christian heritage appears to get little recognition by the broader Canadian populace, and simply stating this reality in the name of the party does little to disseminate this information. The party does attempt to take it a step further by including supporting documents on its website. One essay, which has since been removed from the party’s website, is “Canada’s Christian Heritage” written by Rod Taylor, the former deputy leader.²²¹ This essay concludes by recommending for further reading, “Canada, A Christian Country: A Christian Heritage Party Publication.”²²² This second document notes that “[m]any Canadians think Canada is not a Christian country and that all religions carry equal weight” and then attempts to prove Canada’s “Judeo-Christian foundation” by listing 33 supporting facts. Another source used within the party to support this claim about Canada’s history is *The Biblical Legacy*

²¹⁹ Roger O’Toole, “Religion in Canada: Its Development and Contemporary Situation,” in *Religion and Canadian Society: Traditions, Transitions, and Innovations*, ed. Lori G. Beaman (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2006), 8-9.

²²⁰ Ibid., 9.

²²¹ Rod Taylor, “Canada’s Christian Heritage,” *CHP Canada*, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://www.chp.ca/party/why-chp-canada/canadas-christian-heritage/> (site discontinued).

²²² Lesley Bartley and Frank Hillier, “Canada, A Christian Country: A Christian Heritage Party Publication,” [January 2011?], accessed April 17, 2013, <http://www.chp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/canada-christian-country-v-7-1.pdf>.

of Canada's Parliament Buildings, an undated booklet produced by ChristianGovernance.ca.

This website is run by Tim Bloedow, who ran as a CHP candidate in 2004, and regularly features Rod Taylor as a contributor. The booklet catalogues the biblical references found on and in the Parliament buildings, especially on the Peace Tower—the iconic clock tower attached to the Centre Block—and the Memorial Chamber therein.²²³

Given that these sources are primarily publicized through the party's website, it remains questionable how widely disseminated the CHP-produced information supporting the claim of Canada's Christian heritage may be. If the members who feel that the name of the party is a detractor for potential supporters are correct, then it seems unlikely that individuals who are ambivalent or unsupportive of the party would take the effort to locate these sources. That being said, I will now look at the arguments raised against the current name of the party and alternative names suggested by CHPers.

Internal Criticism of “Christian Heritage Party”

As noted above, the name of the party was discussed in many of the early interviews even after questions directly about the name were discarded. In fact Kenneth and Paul, my fourth and fifth interviewees, both suggested alternative names for the party—the Canadian Heritage Party and the Pro-life Party respectively. Throughout the interviews four alternative names were suggested (in order of frequency from lowest to highest): Pro-life Party and Christian Evangelical Party (both mentioned once), Christian Democratic Party, and Canadian Heritage Party. Of these names Pro-life Party and Christian Evangelical Party are the most anomalous.

²²³ The follow excerpt, describing the stained glass windows in the Memorial Chamber, illustrates the tone of *The Biblical Legacy of Canada's Parliament Buildings*: “Among the imagery of the windows are some short quotations, most of them coming from the Bible. The East window, *The Call to Arms*, contains three verses: 1 Corinthians 15:57, 1 Corinthians 16:13 and Psalm 18:39.” The author goes on to list the biblical references on the remaining stained glassed windows, and then gives an exegeses of each passage. ChristianGovernance, *The Biblical Legacy of Canada's Parliament Buildings*, 7.

The name Pro-life Party is counter-intuitive to the ideal that changing the name will help grow the CHP because it effectively restricts the party to a single issue.²²⁴ Paul, the Ontarian CHPer who suggested that name, was very open about the fact that he joined the party first and foremost because of its pro-life stance. He felt that changing to the Pro-Life Party might encourage non-Christian Pro-lifers to support the party. In subsequent interviews I mentioned this suggested name to see how other members would react, and, as was expected, most saw this name as less than ideal. The reactions to the name Pro-Life Party are described in greater detail in the next chapter.

The name “Christian Evangelical Party” was also suggested by one person but I did not draw on it as an example of an alternative name in other interviews. Alan, the member who suggested that particular name, was a relatively new Canadian from Africa, therefore I think this name reflects his lack of familiarity with Canadian demographics.²²⁵ Of all the CHPers that I interviewed Alan undoubtedly had the most hands-on experience with a variety of Christian political parties in both Europe and Africa, and he made some very astute observations about the CHP. However, given the size of the Canadian evangelical population and its lack of willingness to be defined as a political group, using a name that refers only to them has the potential to be even more limiting than the current name.

Alan also suggested Christian Democratic Party (CDP) as a “powerful name” and noted that the CDP in Germany is the ruling party. Fred, another CHPer who was concerned with the current name, suggested CDP as well. He especially liked this name because it might make it “very easy for people to understand what we are; we’re Christian and we’re democratic.”²²⁶ Fred also felt the name would have brand recognition given the popularity of the European CDPs,

²²⁴ This topic is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

²²⁵ Interview #17, October 14, 2011.

²²⁶ Interview #41, January 25, 2012.

while acknowledging that “they might not always hold the same platform that we do.” It is precisely the difference in platform that makes this alternative non-viable for the CHP. Although few members directly criticized CDPs, there is a popular sentiment among social conservative Christians that European CDPs are only Christian in name. That is to say, there are strong concerns that these parties do not reflect “Christian principles” in their platforms and actions. The fact that this name contains the word Christian is outweighed by the type of Christian identity associated with CDPs—not socially conservative Christianity.

Finally, by far the most frequently suggested alternative name was Canadian Heritage Party. The purported benefits of this name include: 1) it continues to reflect the significance of Canada’s history, 2) it eliminates “Christian” as a potential deterrent, and 3) it allows the party to maintain the initials CHP. Kenneth, mentioned above, touched on the latter two benefits when he discussed the party’s name. “Why don’t we call it the Canadian Heritage Party?” he said. “Don’t change the acronym or CHP Canada, [...] but... I think that the word Christian does create a stumbling block.”²²⁷ Additionally, there is already some confusion from potential supporters about the party’s name. As Matthew, a younger CHP candidate in Ontario, noted, “you know what’s funny is I repeatedly had people unable to remember whether it’s the Christian Heritage Party or the Canadian Heritage Party.”²²⁸ This alternative seems to be the most viable and seriously considered of all of the names suggested in interviews. Even members who were generally opposed to changing the name had less animosity towards this alternative than the others.

With all of the suggested alternative names there were two central issues at stake with the current name: implications of the words “Christian” and “Heritage.” In most cases, with the

²²⁷ Interview #4, July 27, 2011.

²²⁸ Interview #16, October 13, 2011.

exception of the Pro-life Party, the alternative name indicated which word the member found more problematic. Concerns that the word “Christian” was a major deterrent was expressed most frequently, but it was paired with a vague sense that Canadians would support the party more if Christian was not in the party’s name. The negative implications associated with “Heritage” were more specifically tied with white supremacy, although this was rarely acknowledged by my interviewees. Only Oscar and Fred—two CHPers who both happen to be non-Dutch Reformed individuals living in Ontario—indicated they had seen other people making this particular association.

Oscar remarked somewhat crudely that although he likes the word, he has “heard a few people say that they [...] have a problem with the word “heritage” ‘cause it reminds them of people throwing white sheets over the heads,” invoking imagery of the Ku Klux Klan.²²⁹ Fred, on the other hand, avoided any references to the Klan. Instead he noted that he lives in “a very white area” and he found—presumably while he was running as a candidate in 2011—“when you talk to people and you say the ‘Christian Heritage Party’ to them it sounds like heritage means ‘the white Christian Party.’ The white, almost like fascist party.”²³⁰ This implication makes sense since the Heritage Front, a neo-Nazi white supremacist group, was active primarily in Ontario from 1989 to 2005.²³¹ Yet, no one I interviewed gave any indication that they were familiar with the Heritage Front.

The fact that potential associations with white supremacists did not arise more often illustrates a disconnection between party members’ and others’ perceptions of the name. When I

²²⁹ Interview #21, November 2, 2011.

²³⁰ Interview #41, January 28, 2012.

²³¹ For details about the Heritage Front see, Canada, Security Intelligence Review Committee, *The Heritage Front Affair: Report to the Solicitor General of Canada*, December 9, 1994, File No.: 2800-54. I know of no official connections between the Heritage Front and the CHP. However the report suggests there were some links between this organization and the Reform Party, inasmuch as the Heritage Front infiltrated the Reform Party despite the party’s efforts to stop this from happening.

discussed the party with non-members, second to assumptions about the American-ness of the party was associations with white supremacist groups. One of my colleagues regularly got the CHP confused with the Heritage Front. From an outsiders' perspective the CHP might inadvertently get associated with white supremacists in part because, as noted in the previous chapter, CHPers are overwhelmingly white. However, given the infrequency of this association with "heritage" being made by CHPers this appears to be primarily an external, rather than internal, concern.

By far, the most common concern expressed by CHPers was that the word "Christian" in the name of the party is somehow detrimental, but this was not strongly tied to a single negative association like "heritage." Some members talked about doing door-to-door campaigning and seeing people tune out when the full name of the party was given, assuming that this was because of "Christian" in the name. They theorized that outsiders had preconceived notions of what that name might mean that prematurely ended dialogue. Along a similar vein, Len, a long-term CHPer in BC, discussed in detail how using the initials CHP offers a starting point for a conversation with potential supporters. When talking specifically about using the full name of the party compared to the initials Len said, "I think it's a million times better to have a business card that says 'CHP' and then people go, 'Cool, what's that stand for?' I've got all the options [...] in how to control that conversation [...] I think using the acronym is brilliant."²³²

Those potentially deterred by the current name of the party were grouped into two broad categories, Non-Christians and Christians. Various members suggested that non-Christians might feel like they should not vote for the party. Even those CHPers who wanted to keep the original name pointed to this criticism. As noted by Graham, a member from B.C. who lives in a notably diverse riding,

²³² Interview #49, March 19, 2012.

I think that there are people within the party that are saying in order for us to [...] market our name and to get more people involved we have to get rid of this name “Christian” because it, people are being turned off right away. As soon as they hear Christian they say, ‘you’re not going to get the Sikh vote or the Muslim vote, right. But I think we just need to explain our party isn’t trying to force religion on people, but it is trying to [...] strengthen the Christian heritage that built this country, because that is why people are coming here.’²³³

Kenneth, who was the first to suggest Canadian Heritage Party to me, fits Graham’s description of those in the party presenting this argument. Kenneth drew on a discussion with a Muslim friend, who was paraphrased as saying, “he would think that it would be more palatable to call it a Canadian Heritage Party, which is Christian, but it doesn’t sound exclusive [exclusionary] to people like him.”²³⁴ The fact that Canada’s heritage is Christian was a strong enough assertion of the Christian identity of the party for Kenneth and he felt it would help open the party to individuals like his Muslim friend.

Then there are those who feel that it is primarily Christians who take offence to the name of the party. Phyllis, a highly committed CHPer from Alberta who I met at the national convention, interpreted the on-going conflict around the name in the following manner: “The interesting thing is it’s Christians that are more offended by the name than non-Christians, and mainly for pragmatic reasons, [that’s] why they want they want the name changed.”²³⁵ She felt very strongly that the party should keep its current name, but was aware that those pushing for a change saw it as pragmatic. The bigger problem in her opinion is that there are too many negative stereotypes associated with the word Christian. As stated by Phyllis, “[U]nfortunately in today’s society the connotation is anything Christian is bigoted, you know. ‘They are hateful. They are homophobes. They’re this. They’re that.’ We’re all these ugly things, when in actuality

²³³ Interview #50, March 20, 2012. Graham was not the only CHPer who discussed the misconception that Muslims and Sikhs, in particular, cannot vote for the party.

²³⁴ Interview #4, July 27, 2011.

²³⁵ Interview #45, March 15, 2012.

it's a ploy used in essence to shut-up the Christian voice."²³⁶ The idea is that this perspective has become so prevalent that Christians have internalized it and therefore do not want to be attached to a party with that word in the name.

Despite all the criticisms of the current name of the party, the majority of CHPers I talked with strongly supported the current name. They would discuss, like many of the examples already given, how other people took issue with "Christian Heritage Party" and then conclude with why they really like that name. I now turn to the arguments in support of the present name.

Support for "Christian Heritage Party"

The two most popular positions presented in interviews for supporting the current name of the party centred on two ideas: maintaining the status quo and identity. The status quo position primarily relied on the name of the party always being Christian Heritage Party. These types of arguments emphasized how needlessly troublesome it is to change the name of the party, that no better names have been presented, and that things are fine as is. A key example of this position was presented by Richard, a member in his late twenties who has been involved with the party nearly his entire life. When asked his opinion on the debates around the name he said,

If the name of the party should change I'd want to see a better name put forward. I don't want to just [...] change for the sake of change. I want change for the sake of something that is better and so far we haven't. There've been a few things floated maybe, but nothing that really has caught any traction, so I'm not looking to change the name. It would have to be a definite improvement and that would be a challenge.²³⁷

If this position on the name says anything it is that humans are creatures of habit. I do not feel it really says much about the core issues of the CHP. This is why the argument to keep the name based on identity speaks so much to the central concerns of CHPers.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Interview #33, December 12, 2011.

Those who supported the current name based on presenting a Christian identity described the premise of removing “Christian” as a means of attracting voters offensive. From this perspective changing the name is primarily about attempting to conceal their Christianity for the pragmatic ends of gaining votes. If there was a unified voice on this issue it was that avoiding the word Christian simply for the possibility of gaining votes indicated that one was either ashamed to identify as Christian or that one was being wilfully deceptive about the party’s Christian principles; neither of which are qualities that CHPers want associated with the party.

Emphasis on the importance of the word Christian recurred throughout most of the discussions on the name of the party. Those who support the current name, those who felt the name should change, and those who were ambivalent about a change almost always stated the importance of keeping the word Christian. A vivid example of this comes from one of the only CHPers I talked to who said they were unaware of any debates about the name. Alex, a gentleman in his late seventies or early eighties, has been a member of the party since it was founded. Unfortunately for Alex, he lives in an area in Nova Scotia that has fielded a CHP candidate in only half of the eight elections since the party began.²³⁸ In many ways he is quite isolated from the regular activities of the CHP although he has remained an ardent supporter and life member. When I asked Alex his opinion about the on-going debates over the party’s name he said that he did not think “that there have in anyway been discussions about that;” however, he admitted that he has thought to himself, without discussing with others, “Is there not a better name for the Christian Heritage Party?”²³⁹ I eventually pressed Alex on this topic, asking if he had thought of any alternative names. He had never thought about it that far, but he was very clear about the need to keep the word Christian.

²³⁸ Those elections were in 1988, 1992, 2004, and 2008.

²³⁹ Interview #34, December 17, 2011.

But to leave the word Christian out is... [It] would not be appropriate because then you are denying what you are all about, and I think that maybe sometimes it would be easier for some people to compromise in that respect. I wouldn't be surprised that that would be a possibility that people would, you know, shy away from the word Christian in order to get more people, and I don't think that would be right.²⁴⁰

The sentiment expressed by Alex was voiced over and over again by members of the CHP. It is of great significance that the party is clearly marked as Christian for the majority of CHPers.

Marketing versus Members: When is a name change not a name change?

The significance of using the full name of the CHP and publicly identifying as Christian came to a head at the 2012 convention with resolution #44—"Resolution to use full name "CHRISTIAN HERITAGE PARTY" [*sic.*]. This resolution was a direct response to a marketing decision made by the CHP's national board prior to the 2011 federal election. Rather than spelling out the full name of the party on promotional materials, "CHP Canada" was used. By way of example, on one promotional pamphlet with a detachable membership application "CHP Canada" appears eight times, whereas "Christian Heritage Party of Canada" appears only once as part of the mailing address for the party. Similarly, any large signs produced by the national office and used by candidates during the 2011 election displayed "CHP Canada," not "Christian Heritage Party."

Nearly all of the party's promotional materials that I collected were made after these changes, so I was not aware that there were any issues or changes made until CHPers began to mention it in the interviews. Even then, in the first couple of interviews where CHPers discussed the shift towards "CHP Canada" I initially missed the significance of these comments. This was in part because those members were not opposed to the shift, so they did not focus on it. It was not until my sixteenth interview that it started to become clear how significant this change was

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

among the membership of the party. When I asked Matthew and Alice, a young couple in Ontario, for their opinions about the name of the party or if the name should change Matthew responded, “Christian Heritage Party of Canada or CHP Canada, like they rebranded it recently.” In his longer response to the questions he discussed this rebranding, which he did not have a problem with, much more than potential alternative names.

Other members were far less accepting of this rebranding and interpreted the change as an attempted by the national board to hide the full name, particularly the word Christian. Thomas, a relatively new, but heavily involved CHPer in Ontario, described some problems that arose from the rebranding in detail. Although he did not personally take issue with the change, he described the change as a “misstep” and “mishandled” because it alienated a large number of CHPers. Besides the negative effect on the group cohesion of the party he also noted that this change was, “perceived by many members as being a form of Christ denial. See a lot of members took that as, ‘well, you’re trying to take the Christian out of the CHP. What you’re trying to do is conceal our Christian character.’”²⁴¹ Thomas noted that these people were not completely wrong, given that the change was promoted as giving more room for discussion before potential supporters heard the whole name of the party.

Robert, a candidate in a province that has historically run few CHP candidates, was very annoyed about this change, feeling that “CHP Canada” made others less educated about the party and concealed the fact that the party’s candidates are Christian. After recalling how a scrutineer—a person affiliated with one of the parties who confirms the ballot count on election day—did not know what CHP Canada was, Robert exclaimed,

People didn’t even know what it was. If it had been the “Christian Heritage Party,” it would have been “Ah, it’s the God-darn Christians!” You know, at least they would have been educated. We did all this work and people didn’t even

²⁴¹ Interview #26, November 14, 2011.

realize that there were some Christians trying to do something. It was just “CHP Canada” because that’s the legal name of the party, and that was like, oh God. If I want to hide the fact that I’m a Christian while still being a Christian and trying to do it in an underhanded way, I would join the Conservative Party.²⁴²

From Robert’s perspective this rebranding not only attempted to hide his Christian identity, but was also counter-productive to spreading the word of the party.

To be clear, the party did not legally change its name. Christian Heritage Party of Canada has always been the full name of the CHP; however, every registered federal party has a short-form name. It is the short-form name that appears on the ballots.²⁴³ It is not clear if the CHP’s short-form name has always been “CHP Canada,” but the party did not start using this version of its name for marketing purposes until 2010. It was this shift in marketing and not the presence of the short-form name that led to a push back from the regular CHP members. This negative reaction culminated with resolution #44—“Resolution to use full name “Christian Heritage Party.”

Resolution #44 was the last resolution voted on at the national convention—the one that was not discarded that was mentioned in the opening vignette of this chapter. Not enough time had been set aside to debate and vote on all of the resolutions brought to the convention, and despite numerous expunged resolutions scheduled before it #44 was moved to ensure that it would receive a vote. A relatively short resolution, #44 states:

Whereas, the Christian Heritage Party of Canada is still unknown to many voters.

Whereas, the term “CHP-CANADA” alone does not make it clear that this is a Party that bases its policies on Christian Principles.

Whereas, on recently printed pamphlets, signs and voting ballots, the full name of the Party was replaced with “CHP-CANADA.”

²⁴² Interview #32, December 11, 2011.

²⁴³ “Registration of Federal Political Parties,” Elections Canada, accessed January 15, 2015, <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=pol&dir=pol/bck&document=index&lang=e>.

Be it resolved that, in addition to “CHP” or “CHP-CANADA” all future printed material, signs, banners and any other promotional material and Election ballots use the full name CHRISTIAN HERITAGE PARTY [*sic.*].²⁴⁴

Lest it go unacknowledged, the second “whereas” statement highlights some of the significance that the drafters of this resolution place on the use of Christian in the party’s name. Individuals unfamiliar with the party might assume that a Christian Heritage Party is Christian inasmuch as its members are Christian, or that it wants Canada to be for Christians alone. They may not necessarily infer from seeing the name on a sign that the party strives to base its “policies on Christian principles.”

The presence of resolution #44 at the convention brought to the fore tensions between the pragmatic need of marketing a political party and the principled stance of being Christian above all else. This is not to say that marketing and Christian identification are exclusive of each other, but that this is an instance where these perspectives experienced friction. The grassroots democratic approach of the CHP means certain resolutions that, if passed, could dramatically alter the everyday operations of the party could be drafted by members or EDAs (Electoral District Association). In the case of resolution #44, an EDA in British Columbia drafted it and it was strongly supported by members across the country. Because of this grassroots approach resolutions like #44, which effectively binds the national board to limited marketing strategies and requires the expense of producing all new marketing supplies, are completely possible.

Due to unfortunate timing, resolution #44 was not allotted a full debate period. Although there were many individuals who wanted to speak both in support and in opposition, the resolution was pushed to the vote by the plenary session’s chair. In the end, the resolution was carried by a narrow margin. Within months of the convention the party changed its short-form

²⁴⁴ CHP Canada, “#44: Resolution to Use Full Name ‘CHRISTIAN HERITAGE PARTY,’” in *Setting Our Sails for Tomorrow*, Section 4, “Resolutions,” 80.

name to “Christian Heritage Party,” so that is what will appear on any future ballots. It is not clear how long it will take or how much it will cost the party to produce new promotional materials.²⁴⁵ What is clear is that the deciding factors for those who supported resolution #44 did not rest on the ease of marketing or the expense to the party, but on a very intense emotional connection to being publicly identified as Christian.

The Christian Identity of the CHP

By taking the name, “Christian Heritage Party” the CHP is suggesting not only that Canada has a Christian Heritage, but also that the religious identity of the party is representative of this Christian heritage. Here I explore the particular Christian identity of the party and how this identity compares to Canada’s religious heritage. An integral part of this is examining the fact that there are effectively limits on the type of Christians that can join the party. For my purposes I draw on the demographics of CHPers to illustrate which types of Christians are more attracted to the party and membership requirements to indicate which Christians the party excludes.

In the previous chapter I examined in great detail the Dutch Reformed flavour of the CHP. Despite the fact that the party states on its website, “CHP members include Anglicans, Baptists, Brethren, Catholics, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Mennonites, Pentecostals, Reformed and probably many others,” this is more a reflection of the party’s desire to claim a universal Christian identity than the party’s membership.²⁴⁶ In my encounters with party members I have not knowingly met any CHPers currently attending Anglican, Christian & Missionary Alliance, or Mennonite churches, and only one who attended an Open Brethren

²⁴⁵ It is not clear if “other promotional material” is limited to texts, such as pamphlets and campaigning tools, or includes items for purchase on the CHP’s website, such as baseball hats, lapel pins, and various t-shirt.

²⁴⁶ “About the CHP,” *CHP Canada*, accessed August, 16, 2012, <http://www.chp.ca/party/about/>.

Church.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, it is worthwhile to note that one of Canada's largest denominations, the United Church of Canada, an especially liberal church, is not included in this list made by the party, nor are Mormons.

My interactions with the CHP suggest that the membership is represented by the following denominations (in order from highest to lowest representations): Dutch Reformed (any of the denominations outlined in the previous chapter, 38 of the 79 interviewed or 48%), Pentecostal (11 or 14%), Presbyterian (8 or 10%), Roman Catholic (5 or slightly more than 6%), Non-denominational (also 5 or slightly more than 6%) and miscellaneous (12 or 15%).²⁴⁸ I do not deny that these denominations have been significant in Canada's history; however, it is well recognized among religious studies scholars and Canadian historians that the three denominations that have been the most influential in Canadian culture are the Anglicans, the Roman Catholics and the United Church of Canada. The influence of these particular denominations is not only tied to the fact that they are historically the three largest churches, but also that they were treated as established churches at times. A prime example of this "establishment" is seen with the government funding of church-run residential schools from the mid-1800s until 1996. Only a handful of churches were given governmental authorization to run these schools: the Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterians, and Methodists (and eventually the United Church of Canada, formed in 1925 from the unification of Methodists, Congregationalists, and most Presbyterians). This means the government not only condoned but also financed the forceful conversion of the country's aboriginal population to these particular denominations.

²⁴⁷ Since writing this I have met, but did not interview, a CHPer who identified as Anglican.

²⁴⁸ Miscellaneous refers to any denominations that accounted for three or fewer of my interviewees. These were: Baptist (3), Church of the Nazarene (2), Torah-observant Christians (2), Mormon (2), Greek Orthodox (1), Open Brethren (1), and Free Methodist (1). The singular non-CHPer interviewed, who was not accounted above, identified as Pentecostal.

Even more explicitly, from 1791 to 1854, prior to Confederation, the Clergy Reserves Act marked a period of the Church of England being the legally established church of Upper Canada.²⁴⁹ This act set aside crown land “for the Support and Maintenance of a Protestant Clergy” and followed the earlier practice in Lower Canada/New France of allotting land to the Catholic Church.²⁵⁰ Although “a Protestant Clergy” was not clearly specified, the Clergy Reserves Act only benefitted the Church of England until the 1820s when the Church of Scotland (Presbyterians) gained these benefits.

Although much of the party’s resources defending Canada’s Christian heritage point to the Confederation era, at that time the Dutch Reformed—the denomination most heavily represented in the CHP—would have barely had a presence in this country. The vast majority of Dutch Reformed Canadians, as noted in the previous chapter, did not immigrate to Canada until the decade after World War II. The Dutch Reformed community certainly made a notable impact in Canadian society, especially with the relatively quick development of their pillar (i.e., schools, labour unions, lobbying groups, etc.) in areas where they settled. Yet this impact has not been as pervasive or wide-ranging as the impact of the Anglicans, Catholics and United Church on Canadian society. The notable lack of these denominations in the CHP, with the possible exception of Catholics, raises significant questions about the implicit claim that the CHP is representative of Canada’s Christian Heritage. This is especially so when the party emphasizes the era of Confederation.

One possible counter-argument here is that the Christian worldview presented by the CHP is a fairly accurate representation of those held by the major denominations in Canada until the post-World War II era. Since the 1950s the mainline Protestant churches in Canada have

²⁴⁹ Alan Wilson, *The Clergy Reserves of Upper Canada*, the Canadian Historical Association Booklets, no. 23 (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association c/o Public Archives, 1969).

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

undergone significant liberalization. A notable example of this shift can be seen in Kevin Flatt's study of the United Church of Canada, *After Evangelicalism*.²⁵¹ In this book, Flatt thoroughly illustrates the United Church changing from an evangelical denomination in the 1930s into a predominantly liberal Protestant church by the 1970s. Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau's edited volume, *The Sixties and Beyond*, also offers numerous case studies of the changing (and declining) role of Christianity in Canada since World War II.²⁵² Combined, these sources present compelling evidence that, despite the fact that the CHP's demographics do not reflect Canada's denominational history, the party does reflect a certain evangelical worldview that used to be dominant in Canada.

Beyond the issues of whether or not the Christianity of the CHP reflects that of Canada's heritage there are questions of the universality of the Christianity represented by the party. In the previous chapter I examined the passage, "Is the CHP trying to impose Christianity on those of other faiths?" from the "About the CHP" section on the party's website. In this section the CHP gives the impression that it represents all "Canadians who identify themselves as Christians" and I illustrate how this is questionable.²⁵³ Rather than continue in that direction, let us look at ways that the party restricts its Christian identity, particularly with regard to Mormons.

The Christianity of the CHP is socially conservative with a strong fundamentalist and evangelical flavour. The term fundamentalist, as noted in the Introduction, originally had direct associations to the religious beliefs professed in *The Fundamentals*—a series of essays published between 1910-1915 that promoted certain Protestant Christian ideas about Biblical inerrancy, the virgin birth and divinity of Jesus, and opposition to Darwin's theory of evolution, higher biblical

²⁵¹ Kevin Flatt, *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).

²⁵² Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds. *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization in North American and Western Europe, 1945-2000* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

²⁵³ "About the CHP," *CHP Canada*, accessed August 16, 2012, <http://www.chp.ca/party/about/>.

criticism, and liberal theology.²⁵⁴ Many of the ideas promoted in *The Fundamentals* continue to shape Protestant evangelicalism in North America, therefore referring to these texts as a means of differentiating evangelicals and fundamentalists is insufficient. Since the 1990s, it has become widely accepted among scholars of evangelicals and fundamentalist Christians that the latter are a subgroup of the former. Furthermore, contemporary Christian fundamentalism is largely defined by: 1) its emphasis on Biblical literalism, 2) its militant or aggressive response to non-believers, and 3) its separatism, or self-enforced segregation from mainstream culture.²⁵⁵ While both groups are generally considered conservative Protestants, Christian fundamentalists as a whole are more right wing than evangelicals.

Mormons in the CHP

Wariness about Mormons and a lack of willingness to consider them fully Christian is present in *The Fundamentals* and continues to be held by many evangelical Christian groups, including some within the CHP.²⁵⁶ Yet, politically Mormons seem to be ideal bedfellows for the party. Unlike the evangelical adage to be “in the world but not of it,” Mormons have a strong history of encouraging political engagement, particularly on moral or social conservative issues. The LDS Church asserts that the Church itself is politically neutral, in that it does not align with a particular party or candidate and does not allow political functions in church buildings. But this

²⁵⁴ Hankins, “Introduction,” in *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, 5.

²⁵⁵ A detailed summary of the scholarship on the differences between evangelicals and Christian fundamentalism can be found in Haskell, “Use of the Term ‘Fundamentalist Christian,’” 112-5.

²⁵⁶ For example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) was listed as a cult on the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s website until mid-October, 2012. The removal of Mormonism from this list was linked to Billy Graham’s endorsement of Mormon Mitt Romney’s presidential campaign and fuelled a media-frenzy about evangelical perspectives on Mormonism. For some examples see Daniel Burke, “After Romney Meeting, Billy Graham Site Scrubs Mormon ‘Cult’ Reference: BGEA Says It Wants to Stay Out of Politicized Theological Debate,” *Christianity Today*, October 16, 2012, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/october-web-only/after-romney-meeting-billy-graham-site-scrubs-mormon-cult-r.html>; Regina Wang, “Graham No Longer Thinks Mormonism Is a Cult: The Evangelical Leader Removed Mormonism From a List of ‘Cults’ on his Website After Handing his Endorsement to GOP Candidate Mitt Romney,” *Time*, October 19, 2012, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/10/19/billy-graham-no-longer-thinks-mormonism-is-a-cult/>.

institutional neutrality does not carry over to its members, who are told they should “participate in the electoral process” and “back the candidates of their choice.” Mormons are incited by their Church to be active and informed voters, particularly concerning “moral issues.”²⁵⁷ A video explaining the Mormons’ official statement on “political neutrality” even uses the same language as the CHP, telling its members to “vote their conscience.”²⁵⁸ If the CHP is serious about growing the party membership, reaching out to the Canadian Mormon population seems like an ideal place to start. However, institutionally imposed limitations make it difficult for Mormons to become CHPers and impossible for them to run as candidates or be executive members.

Of the seventy-nine CHPers that I interviewed, two were Mormons. Both openly discussed how their involvement within the CHP is limited because of their religious identity. Joanna, who lives in British Columbia, has long supported the CHP and even worked on some of the party’s early campaigns, but did not become a member until the last few years. I met Joanna at the 2012 convention, which was her first CHP convention. In our interview she discussed how hesitant she was about becoming a member because the party’s “unalterable principle” concerning the trinity does not reflect her Mormon understanding of God.²⁵⁹ This unalterable principle states, “There is one Creator God, eternally existent in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”²⁶⁰ This is a fairly standard mainline Christian understanding of the trinity. Mormon doctrine, on the other hand, describes the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as the “Godhead,” and differentiates their understanding of

²⁵⁷ “Political Neutrality,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/official-statement/political-neutrality>. The heavy involvement of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with California’s Proposition 8 campaign, to overturn same-sex marriage in 2008 is a prime example. See Jesse McKingley and Kirk Johnson, “Mormons Tipped Scale in Ban on Gay Marriage,” *New York Times*, November 14, 2008, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/15/us/politics/15marriage.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

²⁵⁸ “Political Neutrality.”

²⁵⁹ Interview #57, May 16, 2012.

²⁶⁰ “Guiding Principles,” *CHP Canada*, accessed August 16, 2012, <http://www.chp.ca/party/why-chp-canada/guiding-principles/>.

the trinity thusly; “Latter-day Saints believe God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are one in will and purpose but are not literally the same being or substance, as conceptions of the Holy Trinity commonly imply.”²⁶¹ It was only after a lot of soul-searching and conversations with national board members that Joanna felt she could in good conscience sign the required statement to become a CHPer.

Unlike Joanna, Luke, who lives in Alberta, has been a CHPer since the early days of the party and has attended most—if not all—of the conventions, including the founding convention.²⁶² I was informed by other CHPers that Luke regularly makes public statements at national conventions about the limitations placed on Mormon CHPers and the 2012 convention was no different. Although Luke has fewer issues than Joanna with the unalterable principles, he is particularly critical that aspects of the integrity analysis required of all candidates and board members effectively bans Mormons from those positions.

There are two parts of the integrity analysis that may be problematic for Mormons: 1) a witnessed affirmation of the party principles, which includes the statement of belief in the trinity; and 2) affirmation that one attends “a Christian Church regularly.”²⁶³ The integrity analyses must be witnessed by two current CHPers “who have successfully completed the Integrity Analysis.”²⁶⁴ The requirement of witnesses most likely increases the difficulties of Mormons committing to the statement on the trinity. Additionally, because, as mentioned above, many conservative Christians do not consider Mormons to be Christians, it may be difficult to find witnesses who would confirm that a Mormon is regularly attending a Christian Church.

²⁶¹ “Mormonism 101: What is Mormonism, Do Mormons Believe in the Trinity?,” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormonism-101#C5>.

²⁶² Interview #64, July 19, 2012.

²⁶³ CHP Canada, “Integrity Analysis Questionnaire,” in *Setting Our Sails for Tomorrow*, Section 4, “Resolutions,” 27-33.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

Luke seems hopeful that things might be opening up for Mormons in the CHP. He feels that recent national executive members are more willing to accept Mormon CHPers. Luke explicitly referred to two other CHPers, Chris and Oscar, who both are opposed to Mormonism, but take very different positions on the place of Mormons in the party. Both Chris and Oscar fit squarely in the evangelical camp; Chris describes himself as holding to an “evangelical, Baptist-type theology” and Oscar attends a non-denominational church.²⁶⁵ While both of these men theologically understand Mormonism to be a cult, this has a very different impact on how they feel Mormons should be treated within the CHP. Regarding the issue of Mormons, Chris and Oscar are the embodiment of the staunchly principled and the more flexible pragmatic positions respectively. Chris was described by Luke as being staunchly opposed to Mormons being given a position higher than regular members. Furthermore, Chris’s strong principled stance, seen in his opposition to Mormon involvement in the CHP, carries over to other aspects of the party. Although he has run as a CHP candidate five times, he chose to run as an independent in the 2011 election citing his opposition to the five unalterable principles being removed from the membership form, among other things.²⁶⁶

Oscar, on the other hand, is a much newer member of the CHP than Chris and has been moving up the ranks of his provincial council. Despite the fact that Oscar, according to Luke, has picketed the Hill Cumorah Pageant that takes place at the Mormon pilgrimage site in Palmyra, New York, he is very open to Mormons being more involved with the CHP. I had interviewed Oscar before Luke and therefore heard his position on Mormons first hand. When I interviewed Oscar he talked about his discomfort with the party’s practice of excluding non-Christians—not

²⁶⁵ Oscar, Interview #21, November 2, 2011; and Chris, Interview #53, May 1, 2012.

²⁶⁶ Interview #53, May 1, 2012.

just Mormons, but also Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, “or whatever”—from running as candidates and how the party needs to differentiate between faith and politics.

There’s your faith, which is a spiritual thing, and then there’s this party, which is a political effort, which has some correlation, at least in its values to the faith thing, but at the end of the day the party is a political entity and it has to be different than that. So when you exclude Mormon—and I mean, I don’t agree with Mormonism, I think it’s a cult as well, and I think that they have the wrong Gospels and everything like that—but I don’t think that should exclude them from being a member of the party or being a candidate for the party, because I know that Mormons have good, strong family values and they would stand up for the beliefs of the party. And even Sikhs and Buddhists, I... you know, as long as you have traditional values, you know, and you’re a small “c” conservative, fiscal and social conservative, I don’t see any reason why you shouldn’t have full membership in the party.²⁶⁷

Oscar takes a very pragmatic stance on this issue. Although he is not willing to describe Mormons as Christians, he does not see this as a reason for them to be excluded from being full members of the CHP. As will be seen in Chapter Six, on the perceived enemies of the party, this willingness to embrace other religious individuals who share the CHP’s social conservative perspective is not held consistently by CHPers.

When we re-examine the list of denominations present among CHPers the exclusion of the United Church of Canada indicates the CHP’s desire to disassociate liberal forms of Christianity from the party’s social conservative Christian identity. This distinction between liberal Christians and “real” conservative Christians is not unique to the CHP, but is a recurring feature of Protestant debates since the early formation of Protestantism. The further demarcation of Mormons, who generally fit the social conservative ideal of the CHP, as less than Christian, and therefore not permitted to be full members of the CHP, indicates a triumph of conservative Protestant Christian identity and principles over pragmatic politics.

²⁶⁷ Interview #21, November 2, 2011.

Summary

Although the CHP tries to present itself as the remnant of Canada's Christian Heritage, the reality is far more complex. The party illustrates this aspect of Canada's heritage in factoids that rarely indicate the particular significance of Anglicans, Catholics, and later the United Church. While the CHP may reflect the dominant evangelical worldview that was held by Anglicans and the United Church prior to World War Two, highlighting these denominations could also raise questions about the position of a party with a Dutch Reformed majority claiming to be the protectors of this past.

It should not be surprising that the Christian identity of the CHP is a point of contention among party members, as seen in the recurring debates about the party's name. The CHP wears its Christian identity on its metaphorical sleeve and tensions around keeping it that way fuel internal debates. Is the CHP first and foremost Christian or a political party? For the majority of the members these are not mutually exclusive. Yet, the vociferous debates around maintaining or altering the name of the party, highlighted at the 2012 convention with resolutions #25 and #44, indicate struggles between the principled attachment to Christian identity and the pragmatic desire to be a viable political contender. More particularly, the need to have the word Christian clearly spelled out in the public presentation of the party is a line in the sand for many members. Another is the religious requirement for members, effectively limiting who counts as Christian according to the party. In the following chapter I examine the pro-life identity of the party, which can be understood as an extension of this exploration of the party's Christian identity. Where this has largely emphasized the exclusion of Mormons as part of the Christian identity of the party, the following chapter argues that the CHP's pro-life stance is less hospitable for Roman Catholics than one would initially expect.

Chapter Four: On Being Pro-life: Examining the Party’s Pro-life Identity “Canada’s Only Pro-life Federal Political Party”

The CHP very clearly markets itself as “Canada’s *only* pro-life federal political party.” These words appear in large font on the party’s website and this idea was regularly emphasized at the party events I attended. One of the ways that the CHP enacts its pro-life identity is by bolstering the occasional private member’s bills relating to pro-life issues, usually presented by Conservative MPs. Since I embarked on this project in 2010 three such bills were presented in Parliament: Winnipeg South MP Rod Bruinooge’s C-510—referred to as “Roxanne’s Law” by supporters—in April 2010; Kitchener Centre MP Stephen Woodworth’s M-312 in March 2012; and Langley MP Mark Warawa’s M-408 in September 2012. All of these bills were discussed in my interviews and the CHP’s website continues to publicly endorse the latter two bills.²⁶⁸ In order to give the reader a sense of what this support looks like, here is a detailed description of how the CHP responded to Woodworth’s M-312.

While I am not a member of the CHP, I am on their email list, meaning I receive the weekly *Communiqué* newsletter and other sporadic notifications from the party. Between March 2012 and May 2014 the CHP sent nine emails mentioning Woodworth’s M-312. Seven of these emails were regular *Communiqués* and two were electronically personalized letters—the kind that addresses you by your first name even though it is clearly a form letter. The first correspondence—one of the personalized letters—was sent on March 24, 2012. M-312 is described in this email as a “motion to review the Definition of a Human Being, as declared in Subsection 223(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada” and “a marvellous opportunity for pro-life

²⁶⁸ Vicki Gunn, “Support for MP who supported M312,” *CHP Canada*, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.chp.ca/front-page/support-for-mp-who-supported-m312/>; and “CHP Supports M-408 to End Gendercide,” *CHP Canada*, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.chp.ca/front-page/chp-supports-m-408-to-end-gendercide/>. Both of these webpages were discontinued when the CHP’s website was updated around the end of 2014.

Canadians to push for some incremental changes to our Canadian laws.”²⁶⁹ More explicitly, M-312 sought the development of a 12-member committee to examine the question of when life begins and the legal impact on the current criminal code if it is determined that life begins before complete birth.²⁷⁰ The CHP’s email called on individuals to print off copies of a petition, collect signatures, and send said petition to their local MP or to Woodworth to be presented during the first round of debates on M-312 in mid-April.²⁷¹ The party did not send a follow up on the success of the petition, but the Hansard—the official transcript of parliamentary debates—on the day of the debate, April 26th, has no record of Woodworth mentioning the petition. The only MP who mentioned the petition described by the CHP was the Conservative Party’s Garry Breitkreuz of Yorkton-Melville, Saskatchewan—a riding that has never had a CHP candidate.

M-312 was discussed in a couple of *Communiqués* prior to the motion’s final debate (September 21) and its vote (September 26), primarily reminding readers of the significance of the motion and to contact their local MPs on the issue. Yet, the only other form letter regarding the motion was sent after M-312 failed the vote. This form letter was a direct result of backlash due to a particular Conservative cabinet member voting in support of the motion. Of the 294 MPs who voted on M-312, 91 voted in favour, including some high profile Conservative cabinet members, such as Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism) and, most surprisingly, Rona Ambrose (Public Works Minister and Minister responsible for Status of Women).²⁷² Minister Ambrose’s vote, given her position of Minister responsible for the

²⁶⁹ Vicki Gunn (Executive Director of CHP Canada), e-mail message to author, March 24, 2012.

²⁷⁰ Stephen Woodworth, “Motion 312 – Full Text,” *StephenWoodworth.ca*, accessed January 17, 2015, <http://stephenwoodworth.ca/motion-312/motion-312-full-text/>.

²⁷¹ Based on Hansard – 111 (the Parliamentary record for April 26, 2012) Woodworth did not publicly present any petitions during the initial debate of M-312. Canada, “Special Committee on Subsection 223(1) of the Criminal Code,” *House of Commons Debates*, April 26, 2012, accessed Aug. 11, 2014, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=5524696>.

²⁷² “Vote By Numbers: Woodworth’s ‘When Life Begins’ Motion; Wednesday’s Commons Vote on M-312 Provides Insight into Status of Abortion Debate,” *CBC*, September 27, 2012, accessed February 1, 2013,

Status of Women, led to a public outcry culminating in a petition to have her step down from that particular office. In response, the CHP national executive sounded a rallying cry—the form letter mentioned here—providing Ambrose’s parliamentary email address and urging CHPers to personally thank her for the position that she took on M-312.²⁷³

The CHP’s support of Minister Ambrose was short-lived though. A few months later in the February 5, 2013 *Communiqué*, current BC leader and past national Deputy Leader Rod Taylor wrote a scathing critique of Minister Ambrose regarding her position on abortion.²⁷⁴ In the *Communiqué*, titled “Status (Quo) of Women,” Taylor describes how Minister Ambrose “was singled out for special appreciation” because her vote on M-312 expressed her previously private pro-life position, the delicate nature of her role as Minister of Status of Women, and the initial public outcry for her to resign. So why did Taylor pen this newsletter critiquing Ambrose? Because “on January 29, 2013, Rona Ambrose expressed her current opinion that abortion should be: ‘safe, legal and rare.’”²⁷⁵ This opinion, whose wording Taylor disapprovingly attributes to Hillary Clinton, indicates that Minister Ambrose either altered her assumed pro-life position or her stance was not as strictly pro-life as those in the CHP had thought.

Since and during the debating period for M-312 the CHP has repeatedly drawn on Prime Minister Harper’s public opposition to the motion, in addition to his open aversion to any debates about abortion, to bolster the party’s claim that they are the only pro-life party. In the first *Communiqué* following the parliamentary vote on M-312, then national leader Jim Hnatiuk wrote,

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/09/27/pol-woodworth-m-312-life-begins-numbers.html>; and Kady O’Malley, “#M312: The full list of yeas vs. nays (203-91),” *Inside Politics* (blog), *CBC*, September 27, 2012, accessed February 1, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/newsblogs/politics/inside-politics-blog/2012/09/m312-the-full-list-of-yeas-vs-nays-203-91.html>.

²⁷³ Vicki Gunn (Executive Director of CHP Canada), e-mail message to author, October 1, 2012.

²⁷⁴ Rod Taylor, “Status (Quo) of Women,” *Communiqué* 20, no. 6 (February 5, 2013).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

“Harper = not conservative” [a concept promoted within the CHP] was never so evident as it was last week when the PM used his influence as party leader to ensure the defeat of the Hon. Stephen Woodworth’s Motion 312. The Harper majority government’s “*Abortion is closed to Debate*” neon sign burned brightly last Wednesday as 63% of his cabinet voted *nay* to having a debate on the protection of the preborn; this bill received less support than “Roxanne’s Law” [MP Rod Bruinooge’s anti-coercion pro-life private members’ bill C-510] received under a minority Conservative Government in 2010. It begs the question: what was the point of electing a Conservative majority?²⁷⁶

While it may be true that 63% of Harper’s cabinet ministers voted against Woodworth’s motion, nearly 54% of the 160 Conservative MPs in the House of Commons that day voted in favour of M-312—a fact that is not readily acknowledged by the CHP.²⁷⁷ Instead the party elites emphasize Harper’s position on abortion and his role as leader of the Conservative Party to highlight the fact that the CHP is the only federal party openly committed to pro-life issues, while at the same time individual pro-life Conservative MPs are praised and supported in their particular efforts. There is a sense of dismay among CHPers that pro-life Conservatives would stay with that party when the leader repeatedly states that he is not interested in pro-life legislation, as reflected in the excerpt above. Yet the drive to support pro-life legislation trumps the CHP’s general frustrations with the Conservative leadership. The CHP clearly does not support the Conservative Party, but it will show support for individual Conservative MPs when they happen to align with CHP causes, and pro-life issues are one of those causes.

Key Issues Relating to the CHP’s Pro-life Position

Given that the CHP presents itself as “Canada’s only pro-life federal party,” examining what exactly this means is integral to making sense of the party as a whole. In this chapter I examine the significance of pro-life issues for the overall brand of the CHP and how CHPers

²⁷⁶ Jim Hnatiuk, “Motion 312,” *Communiqué* 19, no. 40 (October 2, 2012).

²⁷⁷ Chris Hanay, “How They Voted: A Breakdown of the Woodworth Motion,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 28, 2012, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/how-they-voted-a-breakdown-of-the-woodworth-motion/article4574281/>.

understand what it means to be pro-life. I argue there are three notable tensions that arise from the CHP marketing itself as “Canada’s only pro-life federal party.” First, this branding raises questions of whether the CHP is the *only* federal pro-life party or if it is *only* a pro-life party. That is to say, to what degree does emphasizing the pro-life position of the party unintentionally restrict the CHP? Second, this branding emphasizes the significance of how the party and its membership define what it means to be pro-life. This tension is especially heightened by the fact that the party claims to be both pro-life and pro-capital punishment—a position understood as contradictory by many pro-lifers, particularly Roman Catholics. Third, by branding itself as the only federal pro-life party the CHP is required to prove that the other federal parties are not pro-life. This claim is not always as apparent to other Canadians as the CHP would like and is not necessarily a selling point for the majority of voters. A July 2014 Angus Reid Global report states that 59% of adult Canadians polled were fine with the current lack of abortion laws in Canada, while only 6% felt abortion should be restricted to incidences where the mother’s life is at risk.²⁷⁸ Moreover, the value of claiming to be the only pro-life party is not necessarily enough to attract self-identified pro-life voters when they have a more viable pro-life Conservative or Liberal candidate. As stated on the website of Campaign Life Coalition, a national pro-life organization, “It doesn’t make any sense for pro-life voters to oppose a candidate who defends the sanctity of human life, simply because of party affiliation.”²⁷⁹

This chapter is broken down into four main sections. First and foremost is the fact that the CHP was founded in large part because of the liberalization of Canadian abortion legislation; this is something that cannot be brushed aside even by members who do not rank pro-life issues

²⁷⁸ Shachi Kurl, “Canadians Express Little Desire to Re-introduce Abortion Laws in Their Country,” news release, *Angus Reid Global*, July 22, 2014, accessed August 29, 2014, <http://www.angusreidglobal.com/polls/canadians-express-little-desire-to-re-introduce-abortion-laws-in-their-country/> (site discontinued).

²⁷⁹ “Evaluating the Partys [*sic.*],” Campaign Life Coalition, last modified 2009, accessed February 24, 2013, http://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/index.php?p=Evaluating_the_Partys.

as their top concern. I outline the historical context of Canadian abortion legislation leading up to and shortly after the formation of the CHP. Because of the motivating factor that pro-life issues played in the development of the party, as well as its pro-life branding, the CHP risks being a single-issue party. There are tensions within the party about whether it is preferable to be “the pro-life party” or a party with a more fully developed platform.

Second, given that the CHP is defined by its pro-life stance it is valuable to assess how members define this ambiguous term. Ziad Munson found in his research on American pro-life activists that many refer to themselves as “pro-life” without necessarily having a strong understanding of the term or being involved in pro-life activism.²⁸⁰ My findings support Munson’s assertion that complex understandings of what it means to be pro-life are correlated with long-term involvement in pro-life organizations, such as the CHP. Because the CHP is not solely a pro-life organization, high profile CHPers (i.e. candidates and executive members), who may have initially become involved with the party for other reasons, must develop thorough definitions of pro-life. While some of the rank-and-file members do not have a fully developed understanding of pro-life, by and large CHPers have complex and differing definitions of this term.

Third, the CHP is in tension with many, especially Catholic, pro-life organizations in Canada because of its pro-capital punishment platform. As will be seen, there is some recognition within the party, particularly by Protestant members, that its position on capital punishment deters some Catholic pro-lifers. Catholic CHPers, at least the ones I interviewed, hold a wide range of opinions on the Catholic teachings on capital punishment. While there is a notable minority who question the value of retaining a pro-capital punishment position, there is

²⁸⁰ Ziad W. Munson, *The Making of Pro-life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

little willingness on the part of most members to compromise on this platform. This section also continues the examination of the CHP's Christian identity seen in the previous chapter. The CHP asserts its particular Protestant identity by holding onto this pro-capital punishment policy, thereby marking pro-life Catholics—as well as others opposed to the policy—as less than ideal members.

Finally, as illustrated above, the CHP strives to show that the Conservatives, framed as their primary competition, are not pro-life, while at the same time supporting pro-life initiatives by individual Conservative MPs. These kinds of cooperative actions with the electoral competition not only emphasize the CHP's commitment to pro-life issues, but also potentially erode the party's claim to be the only pro-life party. It is true that the Conservative Party does not have an official pro-life position and the current leader is emphatic that he is not interested in this issue, but the Conservatives also have a fairly large pro-life contingent in Parliament, as seen by the vote for Woodworth's M-312. All of these tensions are bound together by the ambiguous, yet strongly held, pro-life stance of the CHP and its members.

A Brief History of Canadian Abortion Legislation

To be clear, prior to the decriminalization of abortion in 1988 this procedure was not always illegal in Canada. Abortion became a criminal offence in 1869 when Canada adopted the British 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which made all abortions illegal.²⁸¹ In England abortion after the initial quickening—the first foetal movements felt by the mother—was made a capital offence in 1803. In 1837, both the requisition of quickening, as well as the punishment of

²⁸¹ Melissa Haussman, "Of Rights and Power: Canada's Federal Abortion Policy 1969-1991," in *Abortion Politics, Women's Movements, and the Democratic State: A Comparative Study of State Feminism*, ed. Dorothy McBride Stetson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 65.

death, was removed, thus making all abortions illegal.²⁸² Other than my own assumptions about Victorian morality, the institutionalization of medicine (including recent discoveries about fertilization and conception), and Protestants taking on the traditionally Catholic opposition to abortion during this period, I am not certain what led to the criminalization of all abortions.

Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren suggest in their history of contraception and abortion practices in Canada that the removal of quickening from British law illustrates the fairly new concept that life—at least foetal life—begins at conception. As stated by McLaren and McLaren, “What one finds in examining the abortion issue is that doctors were seeking to instill in the public a new belief in the vitality of foetal life from the moment of conception.”²⁸³ Although they do not speculate why doctors sought to shift the public’s thinking on this issue, the emphasis on foetal life—and thereby human life—beginning at conception has become a core talking point for pro-lifers. The significance of this talking point is examined in greater detail below; for now we return to shifts in abortion legislation.

Before 1969 there were references to abortion present in three sections of the Criminal Code of Canada. Raymond Tatalovich succinctly describes these sections in his comparative study of abortion politics in the United States and Canada, as seen here:

Section 237 made abortion an offense for the person who procured it and performed it. Section 209 made the killing of an unborn child a crime but did not extend to the person who, in good faith, considered it necessary to ‘preserve the life of the mother.’ And Section 45 stipulated that anyone who performed a surgical operation to benefit that person, given the state of health and other circumstances of the case, was protected from criminal liability if the operation was done with reasonable care and skill.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Canada, Law and Government Division, *Abortion: Constitutional and Legal Developments*, report prepared by Mollie Dunsmuir, August 18, 1998, accessed August 13, 2014, <http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/CIR/8910-e.htm>.

²⁸³ Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1997*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 39.

²⁸⁴ Raymond Tatalovich, *The Politics of Abortion in the United States and Canada: A Comparative Study* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 30.

Although the punishment for procuring an abortion changed during the previous 100 years, it was not until 1969 that the laws on accessing abortion in Canada were liberalized with the restructuring of the Canadian Criminal Code.

It is sometimes difficult to differentiate legislation in Canada from that of the United States, in part because of the geographical proximity and the significant flow of American information into Canada. Legislation on abortion falls into this trap when emphasis is placed on *Roe v. Wade* as the legal turning point. In his study Tatalovich describes Canada and the United States as both having two phases in liberalizing access to abortion.²⁸⁵ In Canada this first phase was the 1969 passing of an omnibus bill in Parliament, which allowed access to abortion in cases where the mother's life or overall wellbeing was at risk. This led to hospital-organized panels where physicians would assess the risk and viability of the abortion. In the United States the first, and far more famous, phase of liberalizing of abortion was the 1973 Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade*. In fact, *Roe v. Wade* is so iconic for the pro-life movement that in some cases CHPers were more familiar with the date of that case than the passing of the omnibus bill in Canada. A prime example is of Matthew, who had an “Abort73.com” sticker that I saw in his house while interviewing him. Abort73.com is a U.S.-specific anti-abortion campaign seeking to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Although Matthew had no problem recalling the 1973 date of *Roe v. Wade*, he could not recall significant Canadian dates relating to abortion and had to look them up online.

It is important to note in relation to abortion legislation that in Canada the federal government has jurisdiction over adopting and amending criminal law, while the provincial governments have jurisdiction over healthcare. In practice this means that the 1969 omnibus bill passed by the federal government had the ability to allow an exception for abortions for health reasons, but could not mandate or allocate funds for hospitals to form the required panels or

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

make the procedure available. The jurisdictions of the federal and provincial governments in relation to abortion have not been overlooked by pro-life organizations, which may seek both a re-criminalization of certain types of abortions via the federal government and limiting of provincial healthcare funding of abortion.

The second phase of abortion policy in the United States, according to Tatalovich, was the less iconic 1989 “Supreme Court case, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, which gave states more latitude to regulate abortions.”²⁸⁶ However, the second phase in Canada took place slightly earlier and centered around a figure forever connected with abortion in Canada, Dr. Henry Morgentaler. The 1988 Supreme Court decision for *Morgentaler v. The Queen* found the previous criminalization of abortion unconstitutional and effectively left Canada without any abortion law. This means that Canadian pro-life activists are correct when they point out, as they frequently do, that Canada has no legislation on abortion. To summarize, while the judgment of Morgentaler’s case is the moment when Canadian law officially decriminalized abortion, the liberalizing of this procedure really began in the mid-1960s.

The reasons for the initial liberalizing of abortion are multifaceted. It was not an overwhelmingly popular decision. As noted by Alister Browne and Bill Sullivan, “Canada’s legal position on abortion [...] originated not from any societal decision, but from the courts striking down attempts to interfere with the liberty of women. The longer Parliament does not step in and fill the legal vacuum, however, the more that position becomes societally chosen.”²⁸⁷ This sentiment is also expressed by Tatalovich, stating, “As in the United States, abortion reform

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 4.

²⁸⁷ Alister Browne and Bill Sullivan, “Abortion in Canada,” *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 14 (2005): 289.

in Canada was due less to a groundswell of public opinion than to a lobbying campaign from above [...]"²⁸⁸

It is certain that the thalidomide scare of the early 1960s was used to bolster the pro-abortion reform position. As described by Mary Ann Glendon, "A *cause célèbre* is always useful to law reformers, and the abortion reform movement found one in the thalidomide scandal of the 1960s. This drug, which has a high potential for causing severe deformities in children of women who take it during pregnancy, was never approved for sale in the United States, but it appeared on the market in several countries."²⁸⁹ In Canada thalidomide was available from late 1959 until early 1962. While the availability of this drug had ceased by the time the omnibus bill that liberalized abortion was passed through Parliament, the results of that crisis was still well known, with law suits from families affected by the drug occurring worldwide from the late 1960s into the 1970s.²⁹⁰

Additionally, prior to the 1969 omnibus bill many of Canada's largest Protestant churches publicly declared their support for abortion reform. Not surprisingly, the United Church of Canada—one of the most liberal of the mainline Protestant churches—was one of the first; by 1960 this Church "favored abortion for health reasons but not socio-economic ones."²⁹¹ The Canadian Anglican Church was also supportive of some liberalization and the Presbyterian Church of Canada, while opposed to legalizing abortion for a variety of reasons, adopted a resolution in 1967 that "recommended that the Criminal Code be revised to legalize therapeutic abortions" when maternal health and life were on the line.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Tatalovich, *The Politics of Abortion*, 43.

²⁸⁹ Mary Ann Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 12. This is also discussed by Tatalovich, *The Politics of Abortion*, 32 and 35.

²⁹⁰ "Thalidomide: The Canadian Tragedy," Thalidomide Victims Association of Canada, accessed August 21, 2014, <http://www.thalidomide.ca/the-canadian-tragedy/>.

²⁹¹ Tatalovich, *The Politics of Abortion*, 49.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 49.

Christian Opposition to Abortion

Although opposition to abortion today is heavily associated with conservative forms of Christianity, we should not assume this correlation existed throughout history. While conservative Protestants are now at the forefront of many pro-life organizations, the Roman Catholic Church in particular stands out for its early opposition to abortion. As stated by Daniel C. Maguire in his examination of approaches to abortion and contraception in various religions:

[Roman Catholic] Church teaching on contraception and abortion developed before the late modern era has been consistently negative, though by no means uniform. Both contraception and abortion were generally forbidden. The only licit means of decreasing fertility were sexual abstinence and breastfeeding. No direct method of abortion was permitted after the fetus received a soul, the timing of which event was accounted to happen at various times ranging from 40 days after conception [the Aristotelian approach] to early in the fifth month [around the time of quickening].²⁹³

Prior to the 1800s the Catholic Church perceived abortion and contraception as the same sin—at various points equal to the sin of homicide—and associated both with witchcraft and magic.²⁹⁴

Early understandings of abortion in the Catholic Church hinged on determining the moment of ensoulment—when the foetus gained a soul and was therefore understood to be a person. Theological debates about ensoulment were, for better or worse, resolved with initial scientific discoveries regarding fertilization as part of human reproduction. As described by Maguire,

The nineteenth-century discovery of the ovum and the process of fertilization, together with the rudimentary science of genetics, were almost immediately seized upon in the Catholic church as evidence that completely individuated human life—a person—is present from fertilization of the ovum. The church therefore decreed that human life begins at the “moment” of conception. This has led to some irreconcilable differences with later scientific discoveries, especially the discoveries that fertilization, and therefore conception, is an extended process, not a moment, and that individuation is not necessarily complete for weeks (since

²⁹³ Daniel C. Maguire, *Sacred Rights: The Case for Contraception and Abortion in the World's Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 60.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

identical twins may not separate for 12–14 days after conception and genetic material from the mother continues to be absorbed into the blastocyst/embryo for many weeks after fertilization).²⁹⁵

For these reasons, it is not surprising that when the legalization of abortion began looking like a viable option in the latter half of the twentieth century Catholics were leading the charge against such legislation. This is especially the case in the United States, where the National Right to Life Committee, one of the largest pro-life organizations, began as a “subordinate of the [United States] Catholic Conference.”²⁹⁶ Campaign Life Coalition, a comparable Canadian organization, does not state on its website if it has predominantly Catholic origins or not; however, the FCP, an Ontario provincial pro-life party, did start as primarily—although unofficially—Catholic in 1987.

While the Catholic Church has a tradition of opposing abortion it should not be assumed that Catholics have always been at the forefront of anti-abortion activism. Unlike in the United States, where Catholics certainly led the way, it appears the pro-life movement in Canada has more mixed origins. McLaren and McLaren state that prior to the decriminalization of abortion and contraceptives, “in the late nineteenth century the most vociferous opponents of birth control in Canada were Protestants. Catholics, in lashing out at abortion and birth control in the interwar period [the 1920-30s], were often taking up positions that had been originally established and only recently vacated by their Protestant brethren.”²⁹⁷ When discussing the development of the modern pro-life movement, since the late 1960s, McLaren and McLaren question public assumptions about Catholics being the majority of pro-lifers even more.

Though the pro-life cause was assumed by the media to be an arm of the Catholic Church, Catholics were split on the issues, some complaining that they were

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 69.

²⁹⁶ Robert N. Karrer, “The National Right to Life Committee: Its Founding, Its History, and the Emergence of the Pro-Life Movement Prior to *Roe v. Wade*,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 93, no. 2 (July 2011): 556.

²⁹⁷ McLaren and McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 130.

caught “between the devil and the Holy See.” In practice Catholics were just as likely as Protestants to avail themselves to abortion services, and Quebec was the province that manifested the nations’ most liberal views on the subject.²⁹⁸

Chandler et al. also noted this potentially unexpected trait in that predominantly Catholic province and state that it is “largely attributable to the lower levels of church attendance that characterize Quebec.”²⁹⁹ In any case, whether Catholics were at the fore of the pro-life movement in Canada or not, the catechism was clear—the Roman Catholic Church opposes abortion.

Protestant opposition to abortion is more difficult to succinctly describe, largely due to Protestantism’s pluralistic nature. Early Protestant reformers, particular Martin Luther and John Calvin, in the words of Maguire, “inherited views about sexuality that had become dominant within the western Catholic Church over a period of fifteen hundred years.”³⁰⁰ As Protestantism continued to develop—especially pertinent to this discussion, allowing their clergy to marry and procreate—and form diverse denominations, ideas regarding sexuality, contraception, and abortion also became more diverse. That is in part how we get to the point by the twentieth century that mainline Protestant churches openly supported liberalizing abortion reform, while other more conservative Protestants were actively opposed to legalizing abortion—as discussed above.

Evangelicals, Protestant fundamentalists, and Pentecostals have especially become publicly aligned with the pro-life cause in the latter half of the twentieth century. The reasons attendees of these churches tend to oppose abortion are not quite the same as their Catholic brethren. Based on their study of the reasons for American Christians taking a pro-life stance in

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 146.

²⁹⁹ Marthe A. Chandler et al., “Abortion in the United States and Canada, A Comparative Study of Public Opinion,” in *Abortion Politics in The United States and Canada: Studies of Public Opinion*, ed. Ted G. Jelen and Marthe A. Chandler (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 140.

³⁰⁰ Maguire, *Sacred Rights*, 86.

the early 1990s Tamney, Johnson and Burton found, “what distinguished the Catholics from the conservative Protestants is that while only the former perceived abortion in the context of defending human life generally, only the conservative Protestants understood abortion within a puritanical or traditionalist framework.”³⁰¹ They give their findings that conservative Protestants held more rigid and extreme positions on abortion, such as being unwilling to accept any forms of legalized abortion, as an explanation of this framework.

I will return to how Catholic and conservative Protestant understandings of abortion differ later in this chapter when discussing the capital punishment position of the CHP. For now, we must look at the development of the contemporary abortion debate in Canada and how this relates to the development of the party.

Canadian Abortion debate and the development of the CHP

McLaren and McLaren state, “As early as 1967, with talk of reform of the abortion law in the air, the pro-life forces began to assemble.”³⁰² Those opposed to abortion—self-designated pro-lifers—had plenty of time to organize by the time Morgentaler’s case was decided in 1988. The CHP grew out of this climate. According to Melissa Haussman, the Canadian pro-life movement really strengthened during the second phase, or what she calls the “second debate,” including not just *Morgentaler v. The Queen*, but since the 1970s with Morgentaler’s other court cases, as well as *Tremblay v. Daigle* and *Borowski v. Canada* of 1989.³⁰³ *Tremblay v. Daigle* centered on the right of the male partner to stop the woman’s access to an abortion, while *Borowski v. Canada* marked “a direct attempt [on the part of Borowski] to force the Canadian

³⁰¹ Joseph B. Tamney, Stephen D. Johnson, and Ronald Burton, “The Abortion Controversy: Conflicting Beliefs and Values in American Society, and within Religious Subgroups,” in Jelen and Chandler, *Abortion Politics in The United States and Canada*, 53.

³⁰² McLaren and McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State*, 146.

³⁰³ Haussman, “Of Rights and Power,” 77. Tatalovich refers to *Morgentaler v. The Queen* (1988), *Tremblay v. Daigle* (1989), and *Borowski v. Canada* (1989) as the “trilogy of abortion cases,” in Tatalovich, *The Politics of Abortion*, 79.

Supreme Court to grant legal protection to the unborn.”³⁰⁴ Borowski, a former NDP MP from Manitoba, was a public fixture in Canadian pro-life circles. His case attracted significant attention and support from pro-life organizations, but was eventually dismissed as moot based on the decision of *Morgentaler* (1988).³⁰⁵

Opposite to Borowski, Morgentaler became a public figure in the fight to liberalize abortion as early as the 1970s, openly announcing his abortion practices and going across the country to open—at that time illegal—clinics offering the procedure. He continued to wear down the legislation criminalizing abortion and by the mid-1980s, when the founders of the CHP began to organize, the question of fully legalizing abortion would have been a significant concern for pro-life oriented Roman Catholics and conservative Protestants. In fact, two of the best-known Canadian pro-life organizations—CampaignLife Coalition and REAL Women of Canada—developed in the early 1980s, only a few years earlier than the CHP.³⁰⁶ Moreover, the CHP’s founding convention was held while *Morgentaler v. The Queen* was still in court and only months before the judgment was made.

The development of the party, which led to this particular timing, had twin motivations which are expressed in its origin story told on the party’s website by founding leader, Ed Vanwoudenberg. One motivation, and in many ways the most obvious, is that the CHP was founded to uphold “the Judeo/Christian principles upon which Canada was founded,” hence the name “Christian Heritage Party.” The other motivation “[...] was the compassion felt by all for the most vulnerable in Canadian society; the unborn child and the lack of any legal protection for

³⁰⁴ Tatalovich, *The Politics of Abortion*, 79.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

³⁰⁶ Haussman, “Of Rights and Power,” 77.

them.”³⁰⁷ It cannot be denied that the issue of abortion is a central motivating factor for the development of the party and for those who participate in the party.

When I asked CHPers what they felt was the defining policy or platform for the party the majority made some reference to being pro-life or the abortion issue. In some cases, such as the example below of Vern, the member personally preferred to focus on other policies, but felt that most of the members would emphasize the pro-life policies. Vern, who was roughly a decade younger than the average CHPer I interviewed, has been involved with the party since it first began. Indeed much of Vern’s family has been heavily involved in the CHP since it was founded. I managed to meet his parents and at least one of his siblings at various party events. Despite the fact that I got Vern’s contact information just before the spring 2011 election, I was not able to schedule an interview with him until late fall that same year; and that was only because he happened to be in my area for a family event. I met up with him near the end of his family’s gathering and we found a relatively private place where I could interview him.

Vern was keenly aware of the role Canadian abortion legislation played in the formation of the party. While he initially answered the question about the defining policy/platform by stating that his “personal favourite [policy] is the abolition of income tax,” he immediately followed that saying, “I know what most would say, if I would tell you what I think the majority would say it would be our pro-life issues.”³⁰⁸ By that point I had already done over twenty interviews, so I agreed with him, noting that that was what I had been finding. Vern continued in this vein, adding that pro-life issues were “the impetus behind the formation” of the party. Although he incorrectly attributed the formation of the CHP to the 1991 failure of the

³⁰⁷ Ed Vanwoudenberg, “CHP’s History,” *CHP Canada*, accessed February 2, 2013, <http://www.chp.ca/party/chps-history/> (site discontinued).

³⁰⁸ Interview #26, November 14, 2011.

Conservatives' Bill C-43, he definitely linked the founding of the CHP with pro-life issues, stating:

The result was the formation of the CHP in B.C., so that has been our flagship policy because it is such a clearly defined moral issue in Canadian culture or any culture. It's a moral, it's like a watershed issue, with it are tied all kinds of secondary issues. You know, if mothers have the rights of their children, then children have the rights over their aged parents, then people have rights over their own body or their family or infant children or youth. It's kind of a watershed issue. You can define a culture, I guess, by how they treat their weakest members and we kill ours. But for me, [I'm] pro-life and I defend it all the time, but for me what I spend my life [on] is more economics.³⁰⁹

Present in the House of Commons from 1989-1991, Bill C-43, tabled by Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government, sought to recriminalize abortion after the Morgentaler case. Jake Epp (PC, Provencher, Manitoba – 1972- 1993), a vocal pro-life MP who was mentioned by Vern in a section not included above, helped draft C-43. This bill was criticized by both pro-lifers and pro-choicers, primarily because while C-43 sought to recriminalize abortion it did not seek to ban abortions altogether.³¹⁰ In other words, the recriminalization of abortion was opposed by the pro-choice MPs and the incremental approach to restricting abortion was opposed by many pro-life MPs. After many votes and failed amendments, Bill C-43 narrowly passed through the House of Commons and eventually died in the Senate with a tie vote.

While Bill C-43 was certainly a significant moment for pro-life issues in Canada, the founding of the CHP predates the tabling of the bill. This means that although Vern is very clear that the formation of the CHP was related to pro-life issues, earlier abortion-related court cases and legislation would have been more significant to the initial development of the party. However, it should be noted that the defeat of Bill C-43 effectively reinforced the CHP's pro-life identity in opposition to the PC government at that time. Initial supporter of Bill C-43, Kim

³⁰⁹ Interview #24, November 12, 2011.

³¹⁰ Tatalovich, *The Politics of Abortion*, 87.

Campbell, the Attorney General at that time and eventual Prime Minister, announced after the bill's failure, "that the [PC] government would not make another attempt to formulate a new law on abortion."³¹¹ This has essentially been the stance of the Progressive Conservative Party's elite, and its Conservative Party successors, ever since.

Vern was not the only person who pointed to the significance of the pro-life stance, while admitting that it is not the primary concern motivating their involvement with the party. Trisha, a relatively new member of the CHP in Alberta, gave a similar response. She became a member of the Christian Heritage Party around the same time that I started this research project in 2010. We met at the National Convention and I eventually interviewed her by phone. When I asked Trisha about the defining policy of the party, she initially stated, "I know you are looking for abortion."³¹² Only after I told her that I was not looking for any particular answers, Trisha let me know that, "obviously as a Christian [she does not] agree with abortion," but it was the party's immigration policies that defined the party for her.³¹³

Unlike Vern, who assumed what other interviewees would say, Trisha assumed that I was looking for abortion as her response instead of what she personally saw as the defining policy. Once it became clear that I was not looking for one particular response to the question, she asserted that she has a Christian opposition to abortion, but that the party's immigration policies—specifically the moratorium on immigration from countries with Sharia law—were more significant for her. Repeatedly interviewees who preferred other policies gave a nod to the importance of being pro-life for the CHP, indicating the internalization of this party line and the need to repeat it, even when the individuals do not exactly agree.

³¹¹ Ibid., 94.

³¹² Interview #55, May 10, 2012.

³¹³ Ibid.

Other interviewees clearly understood abortion and pro-life issues to be primary qualities of the party. Being pro-life was described as “the foundation” of the party, as one of three cornerstones (the sanctity of life, the sanctity of marriage, and the sanctity of the family), and second only to the supremacy of God; the latter was one of the most common responses and connected with an emphasis on Canada’s Christian heritage. More often than not, interviewees gave multiple responses and did not point to one single defining policy. That being said, it was rare for the pro-life policy to be completely excluded from any CHPers’ response.

The *Only* Pro-life Party or *Only* a Pro-life Party?

Not surprisingly, there are also a few CHPers who understand the pro-life cause not only to be the foundational policy of the party, but as the sole issue of importance. One of the first people that I met at my first CHP event in April 2011 fit this description perfectly. Paul and I met in the parking lot of a Christian Reformed Church in a small town North of Toronto before the organizers of the event had arrived. Neither of us was familiar with the church so we had arrived early independent of each other because of a shared concern about finding it. Paul is a diminutive, but very feisty, Roman Catholic octogenarian. We had a generally pleasant conversation before the meeting began and I looked forward to meeting with Paul again later to interview him. When the interview took place a few months later it quickly became apparent that Paul was involved with the CHP for one reason above all others, the fact that the CHP is pro-life.

Paul is a member of the CHP and the FCP, the provincial pro-life party. He is also an active supporter of Campaign Life Coalition, a national pro-life organization with a strong Catholic flavour, subscribes to the pro-life magazine *The Interim* and, despite his age, bussed to Ottawa in 2010 to participate in the annual March for Life rally—this would have been approximately a 5-hour drive each way. Paul made it very clear that he joined the CHP because

of the party's pro-life position. In fact, Paul was fairly adamant that it would be better if the CHP was called the "Pro-life Party," in part because then pro-life individuals of any religion, including Buddhists and Muslims, might join the party.³¹⁴

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are ongoing debates about the name "Christian Heritage Party." Paul, a general member who has not attended any of the conventions where undoubtedly the most heated debates about the party's name occur, felt that the word "Christian" was divisive and limits the range of party membership. In his perspective, being pro-life is more significant and central than the Christian identity of party members. While Paul was unique in that he was the only person to suggest the "Pro-life Party" as a potential name for the CHP—most members I discussed this name with felt it unnecessarily restricted the party to a single issue—he was not the only person who believed that the pro-life aspects of the CHP should be emphasized more.

Michael, a relatively new member in British Columbia, was also very vocal about the primacy of the pro-life stance. In the 2011 federal election, Michael was very involved as the campaign manager for his local CHP candidate. His stance is different than Paul's in that Michael was very clear that he opposed changing the name of the party. Yet, Michael was quite adamant that the party should campaign, almost solely, on its pro-life position. A major aspect of this campaigning would be to use party funds towards pro-life marketing, rather than marketing the party. The benefit for the party would be that it is promoting a cause that it cares deeply about and it would be a selfless gesture, by Michael's description:

There's no party out there that's going to just run campaign ads about an issue and not talk about the party, right. They're only going to talk about the party [...] When people, our natural supporters and among people who the party thinks should be supporting the party, namely other Christians, pro-life Christians who don't currently support the party, who actually believe that the Conservative Party

³¹⁴ Interview #5, August 3, 2011.

are a better way to achieve those ends. Well you can actually, if you totally isolated that [pro-life issues] from we're going to promote the party to we're just going to talk about the issues, people will make those donations and then the value there is that you are seen to be doing something for [this issue, rather than for the party]. And as a side effect they will start to support the party because you're seen to be actually doing something on an issue that they care about and not about promoting the party. Right, it's a completely selfless act in some ways, and using the law to do something completely selfless. [...] I think that's probably the most effective means that the party has.³¹⁵

The idea that the CHP should advocate for particular social/moral causes without necessarily promoting the party is well taken. Independent of Michael's riding in British Columbia, an EDA (electoral district association) in Southern Ontario has employed some aspects of this strategy, using party funds to pay for pro-life bus stop ads and a billboard ad. However, this EDA has not limited itself to pro-life issues and I suspect that members of that EDA board would see limiting the party to pro-life issues as antithetical to developing broad support. Yes, they want to make it clear that the CHP is concerned with pro-life issues, but this is not the party's sole concern.

The positions of Paul and Michael raise questions about the identity of the CHP. Can the CHP promote itself as being the only federal pro-life party without being reduced to being only a pro-life party? Clearly there are some within the party who understand being primarily a pro-life party as preferable and being pro-life is certainly a point of cohesion among party members; I have yet to find a single CHPer who would not subscribe to being pro-life, even if definitions of what that means vary. However, if electoral success is the end goal of the CHP then becoming a single-issue party, or promoting itself as such, is a metaphorical shot in the foot on top of other challenges the party faces. As a general rule of thumb, single-issue parties do not get elected in Canada. At both the federal and provincial level (in British Columbia), the Green Party could be held up as an exception since it is a single-issue party (regarding environmentalism) that has recently managed to elect an MP (Elizabeth May in 2011) and an MLA (Andrew Weaver in

³¹⁵ Interview #58, May 17, 2012.

2013).³¹⁶ However, it is more common that single-issue parties are relegated to a fringe position with little hope for electoral success.

In order to mitigate the possibility of being framed as a single-issue party the CHP has developed an array of policies and platforms that go well beyond pro-life issues. By way of example, in the most recent federal election the party promoted its family care policy as a key plank and turned an eye to immigration policies.³¹⁷ Candidates in the 2011 election certainly did not shy away from referring to the CHP as the only pro-life party, but they also drew upon numerous other policy concerns held by the party.

Defining “Pro-life”

The term "pro-life" is relatively vague and ambiguous. It is popularly understood as an opposition to abortion. Indeed, the glossary of *The Religious Right: A Reference Handbook*, by Glenn Utter and John Storey, defines the “pro-life (right-to-life) movement” only in the context of individuals “opposed to abortion.”³¹⁸ However, as noted by Dallas Blanchard when describing his preference for the term “anti-abortion” over “pro-life:” “Some segments of the anti-abortion movement are closer to a broad pro-life stance, opposing not only abortion but also the death penalty, euthanasia, and the construction and deployment of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.”³¹⁹ I would also add opposition to suicide and embryonic stem-cell research to

³¹⁶ On Andrew Weaver’s historic win for the Green Party see “B.C.’s Greens Win First Provincial Seat: But Historic Victory in Oak Bay-Gordon Tempered by Party Leader Jane Sterk’s Defeat” *CBC*, posted May 14, 2013, last updated September 18, 2013, accessed August 25, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-s-greens-win-first-provincial-seat-1.1322651>.

³¹⁷ The family care policy seeks to augment the income of a dual-parent household where one parent stays home to care for children 18 and younger, an aged parent or a disabled family member. The party proposes to give such families \$1000 per month. “Platform: Family & Life; Family Care,” *CHP Canada*, accessed January 17, 2015, <https://www.chp.ca/platform/category/life-family/family-care>.

³¹⁸ Glenn H. Utter and John W. Storey, *The Religious Right: A Reference Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Millerton, NY: Grey House, 2007), 479.

³¹⁹ Dallas A. Blanchard, *The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiercy Protest* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1994), 1.

Blanchard's list, and note that I will continue to use the term "pro-life" because it is the preferred word for the CHP.

The language used in abortion discourse is very polarizing and seeks to vilify the opposing perspectives. Those who support and seek to maintain legalized abortion frame themselves as being "pro-choice," while those who perceive abortion as the murder of pre-born babies frame themselves as being "pro-life." The reality of the matter is that neither side of this debate understands itself as anti-choice or anti-life, rather these monikers are primarily rhetorical. Additionally, one can see a spectrum of pro-life/pro-choice positions, where some pro-lifers are willing to accept abortion in particular circumstances and likewise, where some pro-choicers would prefer some restrictions to accessing abortion. Given this ambiguity and the fact that party identity is so closely tied to this word, I feel it is valuable to illustrate both how party policy and individual CHPers define "pro-life" and how CHPers are involved in pro-life activities.

Party Policy

The party's official position on abortion and pro-life issues is fleshed out in two subsections of the party's policies on "Individual Human Worth," as well as a policy regarding the "Protection of the Pre-born Child." The latter invokes the expression "from conception to natural death," which I will discuss in greater detail shortly, and seeks to alter the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I will now focus attention more directly on the subsections explicitly referring to abortion. Subsection 6.3.1, "Sanctity of Human Life," states,

We affirm that human life exists and is sacred from conception and has God-given value, regardless of race, age, gender, or physical or mental handicap. We believe that the human body is the property of God, and that no one but God has the authority to terminate human life except in accord with the express provisions

of the Bible. No person, institution, or government shall tolerate, encourage, or decree death by means such as abortion, euthanasia, or suicide.³²⁰

This policy, while not using the term “pro-life,” outlines the party’s opposition to abortion, euthanasia and suicide. It should be noted that there are no policies with a heading referring to the latter two in the 2008 policy booklet. The issue of euthanasia is dealt with, although not explicitly named, in section 6.3.5, “Care For the Suffering,” which primarily highlights the need for codes of conduct “for medical, palliative and hospice care.”³²¹ It is not apparent how the party would seek to legislate suicide, or attempts thereof, as there appears to be no further discussion of that particular issue in the party policy. Abortion, on the other hand, garnered its own subsection detailing the party’s approach to that particular pro-life concern. That section reads as follows,

We favour the elimination of all public funding of organizations that advocate or perform abortion. Abortion is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being, and therefore is a crime against God, the pre-born child, the mother and father, and society. It should be treated as such by the Government and must not be permitted or supported. The pre-born child has the right to life, liberty and security of the person from the moment of conception. These rights of the pre-born must be protected in Canada’s laws through appropriate amendments to our Criminal Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Once this protection is in force, any person who performs or assists in an abortion, or arranges for a woman to have an abortion, should be charged with a criminal offence. Any medical practitioner convicted of performing an abortion, or assisting in an abortion, or arranging for a woman to have an abortion should have his or her license suspended. Any individual or corporation that manufactures, distributes, sells, or administers any drug or device for the purpose of procuring an abortion should be charged with a criminal offence. The Government has a moral responsibility to provide financial assistance to social, community, and volunteer agencies which provide care and support for women during and after crisis pregnancies. Medical treatment which is necessary to prevent the deaths of either the mother or the pre-born child, or both, but which results in the unintended death of either or both,

³²⁰ CHP Canada, *CHP Party Policy: A Blueprint for Restoration* (n.p.: CHP, 2008), 39. Many of the CHP’s policy employ biblical proof texts. This particular policy draws on the following biblical passages: Exodus 4:11, Genesis 9:6, Leviticus 24: 17, and Galatians 3:17.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

should not be considered a criminal offence. Every effort should be made to save both lives.³²²

The fact that the party is much more thorough in its policies about abortion than other potential pro-life issues, such as euthanasia and suicide, and given the events that led to the party's development it is fair to say that pro-life, at least in policy, refers primarily to abortion.

At town hall meetings organized by the national executive in the fall of 2011, leading up to the 2012 National Convention, it was announced that the party intended to develop incremental pro-life platforms. This announcement marked a notable change from the official party policy that promotes a complete ban on abortion. I was able to attend two of these eight meetings, both held in Ontario and both led by Jim Hnatiuk, the party leader at that time. At these meetings Mr. Hnatiuk referred to Private Member's Bill C-510, also known as Roxanne's Law, which sought to amend the criminal code to prevent the coercion of women to have an abortion, as a prime example of this incremental approach.³²³ Roxanne's Law, presented by Conservative MP Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South), was active in Parliament throughout most of 2010. In December of that year the vote was called and the bill was defeated 97 to 178.³²⁴ Mr. Hnatiuk also suggested legislation that would require pre-abortion counselling or prevent healthcare workers from being forced to perform abortions if it is against their conscience. While this incremental approach appears to soften the party's hard line on abortion it is important to also note that over a year after these meetings no official changes had been made to the party's

³²² Ibid., 39-40.

³²³ Private Member's Bill C-510, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Coercion)*, also known as *An Act to Prevent Coercion of Pregnant Women to Abort (Roxanne's Law)*, sponsored by Rod Bruinooge, 3rd sess. 40th Parliament, March 3, 2010 – March 26, 2011, accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/LegisInfo/BillDetails.aspx?Mode=1&billId=4329129&Language=E>.

³²⁴ Private Member's Bill C-510, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Coercion)*, also known as *An Act to Prevent Coercion of Pregnant Women to Abort (Roxanne's Law)*, sponsored by Rod Bruinooge, 3rd sess., 40th Parliament, March 3, 2010 – March 26, 2011, accessed February 13, 2013, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/LegisInfo/BillDetails.aspx?Mode=1&Language=E&billId=4329129&View=5>. Note that there were slightly more votes supporting this bill than Woodworth's bill described at the beginning of this chapter.

policy. No incremental policies on abortion were presented or voted on at the National Convention. Whether these changes to the policy will take place remains to be seen.

But policy only tells us the party's official stance, not the opinions and definitions given by party members. In the following section I discuss similarities and variations among the definitions of pro-life given by party members.

Individual Members

Ziad Munson's research on mobilization of pro-life activists found that the ability to thoroughly define "pro-life" was tied to mobilized pro-life activism. Many of Munson's respondents described themselves as being pro-life, but did not necessarily have a developed understanding of what that meant. He found, "Non-activists used the term *pro-life* very loosely, not as a label describing a particular set of beliefs about abortion."³²⁵ In other words, "To say that one is 'pro-life' in these contexts seems more a statement of socio-cultural identity than a reflection of an individual's beliefs or moral understanding about abortion. Saying one is 'pro-life' is a statement about the kind of person one is, not necessarily a commitment to a certain set of beliefs."³²⁶

My familiarity with Munson's work and the fact that pro-life quality is an integral aspect of CHPers' identity led me to ask members: if you met someone who was unfamiliar with the term "pro-life" how would you define that term for that person? I also asked questions about participation in pro-life activities, such as the annual national March for Life organized by Campaign Life Coalition held in Ottawa in May or locally organized Life Chain protests held in September or October, or if they were members of any pro-life organizations. At least one party member wisely noted that the CHP could be considered a pro-life organization and that is a point

³²⁵ Munson, *The Making of Pro-Life Activists*, 43.

³²⁶ Ibid. It is clear that Munson is referring solely to abortion activism in this research. Presumably this was done as a means of narrowing his dataset.

with which I agree. However, my line of questions was intended to determine how invested the CHPer is in this issue. As already noted, not all CHPers see the pro-life aspect of the party as the issue they are most concerned about, therefore simply being a member of the CHP generally indicates that a person identifies as being pro-life, but does not necessarily mean they are heavily involved in pro-life activities.

I received a few types of responses to the question about defining the term pro-life. I will unpack these responses starting with the type of response I received least often to the kind of response I received most often. There was the odd person who gave an answer that did not easily fit into any of the topics touched on in “The Sanctity of Human Life” policy; that is to say, these respondents did not overtly mention abortion, euthanasia or suicide. Instead they made general comments about being life-affirming or attempted to subvert the question.

An excellent example of the latter is Aaron who explained at length why he avoids the term.³²⁷ His reasons for avoiding pro-life hinged primarily on his experience that “within secular realms and circles, media, etc. [the term] has such negative connotations” and the polarizing effect of using that term. He also admitted that he takes “criticism from the pro-life community for not using the term.” Later in the interview Aaron mentioned how he even tries to avoid the word abortion because it is so divisive and ends conversations with potential constituents. Rather than discuss the defunding of abortion, he promotes “funding *only* of medically necessary procedures.” This cautious use of language is how he attempts to attract more moderate voters, while keeping the attention of pro-lifers.

The least common and least expected responses were those that did not overtly discuss abortion at all. This type of response can be broken down into two smaller categories. The smallest group referred to the sanctity of life or used the expression “from conception to natural

³²⁷ Interview #25, November 14, 2011.

death” without further explanation. The other group referred to euthanasia or assisted suicide primarily when defining what it meant to be pro-life. Some of those in this second group gave “from conception to natural death” as part of their answer, but then embellished the “natural death” aspect without mentioning abortion or unborn babies.

The fact that euthanasia was discussed, yet abortion was excluded, was not all that surprising. In some of these cases the party member discussed family situations where an end of life decision had to be made, so it is fair to assume that personal familiarity with this issue increased their likelihood to mention it over abortion. I suspect another factor is that while I was conducting interviews there were occasionally high profile news stories about Gloria Taylor and her Supreme Court of British Columbia case challenging the Charter for her right to “die with dignity.” Taylor’s case had hearings held in November and December 2011, as well as April 2012, and was determined in June 2012.³²⁸ Besides coverage in the mainstream media, Taylor’s story would have been covered on pro-life websites such as LifeSiteNews.com and TheInterim.com, and the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition of Canada’s website, a group known by many CHP members that also had representatives testify at Taylor’s case. While I cannot say for certain that this court case swayed the answers I received, it is very likely that CHPers would have been familiar with it. In fact, the *Communiqué* for June 19, 2012 (“Euthanasia Has Arrived!”) was specifically about Taylor’s case and the *Communiqué* for November 22, 2011 (“Doctor Please Kill Me!”), while Taylor’s case was being heard, focused specifically on euthanasia although it did not name the case.³²⁹

³²⁸ Carter v. Canada (Attorney General), 2012 BCSC 886 (CanLII), accessed January 17, 2015, <http://canlii.ca/t/frpws>. Taylor died on October 4, 2012 as a result of an infection.

³²⁹ Jim Hnatiuk, “Doctor Please Kill Me!,” *Communiqué* 18, no. 47 (Nov. 22, 2011); and Jim Hnatiuk, “Euthanasia Has Arrived!,” *Communiqué* 19, no. 25 (June 19, 2012).

In relation to the Dutch quality of the party, the Netherlands was brought up a couple times as a negative example because of its legalization of euthanasia. The primary focus of the *Communiqué* titled “Doctor Please Kill Me!” was criticism of euthanasia in the Netherlands. In interviews discussion of the Netherlands’ approach to euthanasia was mentioned in two different ways. First, when discussing euthanasia as part of her response to the question about defining pro-life, Sarah, a non-Dutch-Canadian CHPer, gave the Netherlands as a negative example. More explicitly, Sarah asserted that in the Netherlands people “carry cards saying they don’t want to be euthanized because it’s just done,” as though people there are euthanized indiscriminately.³³⁰ Second, Douglas and Veronica, a couple with Dutch ancestry, talked about how the legalization of euthanasia, as well as same-sex marriage, marijuana, and prostitution, are things that make them ashamed of their Dutch heritage. As stated by Douglas, “When we see euthanasia happening in the Netherlands we are not proud of our Dutch heritage.”³³¹ Other than the fact that many CHPer have Dutch heritage, this was one of the only topics that was frequently connected to the Netherlands.

The two most common types of responses to the question about defining pro-life either focused specifically on abortion or discussed both abortion and euthanasia. These kinds of responses accounted for over two-thirds of all of the definitions I received. The definitions that were limited to abortion were comparable in number to those that discussed abortion and euthanasia. Both of these types of responses included very rudimentary definitions and highly detailed definitions. Examples of rudimentary definitions include those that did not expand past anti-abortion or that simply referred to the sanctity of the life of the unborn. However, many of these definitions were more fully realized.

³³⁰ Interview #10, August 31, 2011.

³³¹ Interview #43, February 1, 2012.

One CHP candidate, Kenneth, openly compared his personal stance on assisted suicide and abortion with the official party policy. Based on other CHPers' definitions of pro-life, Kenneth would not fit the description for reasons that appear in the following statement: "Even with abortion, we have to be considerate, understanding of the situation. [...] I think the CHP's been very, it makes basically this strong broad statement, but I think we have to allow [a] certain amount of interpretation of circumstances into how it's implemented."³³² Kenneth began his definition of pro-life by emphasizing a belief "in the sanctity of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death," but he is less strict about enforcing this or condemning those who have gone to abortion or assisted suicide than any other person that I interviewed. Although Kenneth is personally opposed to abortion, he does not appear willing to completely exclude that option for others. By Munson's standards this would classify as a non-activist definition of pro-life; however I argue that the inclusion of pro-life issues beyond abortion illustrates a higher level of understanding than simply equating pro-life with anti-abortion.

In contrast with Kenneth's definition, Oscar's definition of pro-life easily fits Munson's activist category. Oscar, a relatively new CHPer, is clearly a pro-life activist. When I arrived at his house for our interview there was a sign in his yard about defunding abortion that he had used at a rally at Queen's Park, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. In addition to being a member of the CHP, he is also an active member of the FCP. Oscar's definition of pro-life was very much limited to abortion and highlighted his frustration with so-called pro-life Christians like Kenneth. Oscar responded to the question of defining pro-life thusly:

I would just tell them that it's the recognition that a baby is a real human being and needs to be protected from the moment it's created inside the mother's womb until it finally comes out of the uterus [...] or out of the birth canal [...]. A

³³² Interview #4, July 27, 2011.

problem with a lot of Christians is that they'll say that "I personally am pro-life, but I don't think that the government should be telling people that they can't have an abortion if they want to get one." So really, what that person is saying is that [they're] pro-choice though, right, 'cause if you're saying, "well, my choice would be life, but that person can have a choice" that's pro-choice. That's exactly what the mantra of pro-choice is, that everyone should be allowed to choose for themselves and if they want to have one then they should have access to it, but a true [...] pro-life person is one that would not allow abortion because we recognize that it is the taking of a real human life.³³³

I have chosen to highlight the definitions given by Kenneth and Oscar because they exemplify two very different approaches to explaining what it is to be pro-life. Kenneth offers a more broad-based understanding of pro-life that goes well beyond simply being anti-abortion, however his willingness to compromise on who can access abortion and euthanasia raises questions about his pro-life commitments. Oscar, on the other hand, is very staunchly in the conservative traditionalist camp that pro-life means opposition to abortion and compromise on that opposition means that one is not pro-life.

“From Conception to Natural Death” and “the sanctity of life”

There are two expressions or slogans that have been employed by the pro-life cause, “from conception to natural death” and “the sanctity of life.” The origins of “from conception to natural death” are not certain, but there are strong indications that it was based in the Roman Catholic pro-life movement. Emphasis on conception—that is the initial merging of the egg and sperm—as the point of ensoulment has been part of the Catholic catechism, as discussed in the section on Christian opposition to abortion, since the late 1800s. Although Pope Paul VI used the term “conception,” it has been suggested that Pope John Paul II was the first Pope to use the expression “from the moment of conception to death.”³³⁴ The earliest papal reference for this expression seems to be in an “Address to a Meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Science” in

³³³ Interview #21, November 2, 2011.

³³⁴ Dr. Dianne N. Irving, e-mail message to author, October 28, 2011.

1983.³³⁵ However, the earliest use of the expression “from conception to natural death” that I could locate appears in a “Call to Action” put forth by an American Catholic group by the same name in at a conference held in Detroit in 1976.³³⁶ This group makes reference to a 1975 “Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities” statement issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, suggesting that “from conception to natural death” was first used by these bishops. However, I could not locate an instance of this expression in the 1975 statement.³³⁷

Based on this information and the fact that the Catholic Church led the theological charge against legalized abortion, it seems highly unlikely that this concept had Protestant origins. Rather, it is more likely that Protestant pro-lifers adopted slogans taken from the intricate Catholic teachings opposing abortion, in part because Protestant churches developed their positions on this issue after the Catholics.

Despite its particular Catholic origins, “from conception to natural death” has been adopted as the mantra of the pro-life movement in general. I found it striking early in the interview process how many CHP members automatically drew on the expression “from conception to natural death” when defining pro-life. This expression appeared in approximately half of my interviews. Usually “from conception to natural death” was preceded by “protection of life,” “valuing life” or “sanctity of life,” which taken literally could mean a wide range of things. Protecting life from conception to natural death has a stronger anti-abortion connotation than valuing life, since valuing life could refer to the quality of life as much as its existence.

³³⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation Replies to Certain Questions of the Day: Note 29,” *The Vatican*, accessed February 15, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html.

³³⁶ Maureen Fiedler and Dolly Pomerleau, *Are Catholics Ready? An Exploration of the Views of “Emerging Catholics” on Women in Ministry* (Mt. Rainer, MD: Quixote Centre, 1978), 28 and 31.

³³⁷ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities,” *Priests for Life*, November 20, 1975, accessed February 18, 2013, <http://www.priestsforlife.org/magisterium/bishops/75-11-20pastoralplanforprolifeactivitiesnccb.htm>.

The sanctity of life, as in “respecting the sanctity of life from conception to natural death,” is also a vague expression that has been picked up by the pro-life cause. The claim that life is sacred or inviolable is not something limited to those who identify as pro-life. Being pro-life is really a matter of how one interprets life as sacred and the repercussions of that sacredness. Presumably those who identify being pro-life as opposition to abortion and euthanasia understand the repercussions of the sanctity of life to be that you do not end life prematurely. However, what qualifies as a premature or “unnatural” death is highly contested among pro-lifers.

Just like from conception to natural death, the sanctity of life appears to have Catholic origins. When discussing this slogan in his dissection of pro-life and pro-choice arguments, philosopher Chris Meyers states:

Many nonphilosophers [*sic*] believe that abortion is morally wrong because they accept what we have called the *sanctity of life* principle. The sanctity of life principle states that the intentional killing of any human being is morally wrong. This principle comes from the Catholic Church, although it is also held by some, but not all, Christians of other denominations.³³⁸

Meyers’ dissection of these arguments intentionally excludes theological claims and subsequently avoids any substantive discussion of why Catholics or Protestants deem life sacred. The Catholic Church teaches that the possession of a soul is the defining feature of life’s sacredness. As well, Protestants understand possessing a soul as an important part of this sacredness, but they also draw heavily on biblical sources to illustrate the unique sacredness of human life. The diversity of Protestantism and preferences towards particular parts of the Bible leads to multiple justifications for the sanctity of life. Is human life sacred because humanity was

³³⁸ Meyers, *The Fetal Position*, 47 (original italics).

created in God’s image or because of the Commandment that thou shall not kill?³³⁹ And is the sacredness of human life connected to its innocence? The inherent tensions in these questions and how the answers shape personal interpretations of pro-life will be examined in greater detail in the following section about being pro-life and pro-capital punishment. For now, I want to draw the focus back to “from conception to natural death.”

The CHP employs this pro-life expression in its promotional literature. In fact, the most recent application form, besides asking for standard contact information, requires new members to agree to the following affirmation:

I/we affirm that Canada’s heritage, culture, and rule of law, as referenced in the preamble to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, are rooted in the understanding that the term “supremacy of God” refers to the God of the Bible. I/we agree that the purpose of civil government is to ensure security, freedom, and justice for all of its citizens, from conception until natural death, by upholding just laws.³⁴⁰

The previous incarnation of the membership application required affirmation of the party’s unalterable principles, which were given in the introductory chapter. These principles do not include any overt comments about the party’s pro-life position. It seems likely that the abbreviated statement on the recent membership forms is intended to attract new pro-life members to the party.

Although some members limited their definition of pro-life to “from conception to natural death,” as if it were self-explanatory, others used the phrase as a reminder that pro-life is more than just anti-abortion. The definition of pro-life given by Susan and Richard, who were

³³⁹ Depending on the version of the Bible being used, this commandment is translated to “Thou shall not kill” or “Thou shall not murder.” I am using the former here because it reflects the language used by CHPers in interviews. Maxwell, a CHPer from Ontario, even discussed the translation differences for this particular commandment during our interview. After quoting the “Thou shalt not kill” translation he noted, “if you look at the Hebrew word for kill that is more accurately translated to murder, and you are seeing that kind of translation in some of the newer modern translations. New International Version isn’t all that new, but that have murder for instance, whereas the King James Version, of course, has “thou shall not kill.” Interview #44, March 15, 2012.

³⁴⁰ CHP Canada, *Better Solutions for Better Government* [party pamphlet], (n.p.: CHP Canada, Revised February 2010).

previously described in Chapter Two, offer a good example of the latter. Susan and Richard have been learning more about the pro-life cause since recently becoming members of the party.³⁴¹ It was clear that they were working through their definition while they were describing it to me. They hummed and hawed at first about how tricky it is to define pro-life. Susan eventually said, “I think if I have to define it, I’d have to say that ‘pro-life’ is the idea that all life comes from God and [...] it’s not our choice to end it. From conception to natural death.”³⁴² Then Richard began to describe a graphic anti-abortion video he had seen recently and how much it bothered him. Susan eventually chimed in, “But pro-life is more than just abortion. Pro-life is also natural death, so the concept that...” “Euthanasia,” Richard interjected. Susan expounded, “Euthanasia is not an acceptable practice.” This led them to discussing what exactly could be defined as a “natural death,” to which Richard concluded that the natural death aspect of being pro-life is more “shady” than the abortion side.

I mean if I stop eating I die of natural causes, but I choose to stop eating so did I kill myself? I find that one really, really shady. Now sticking a tube up someone’s uterus and sucking the child out, okay, that’s just plain-old black and white. There is no shady in that. It’s either you say yes or you say no to that.³⁴³

Given this response and others, I argue that while “from conception to natural death” does not necessarily say much about the personal definition of pro-life held by the individual, it does function as a trigger to remind them of the spectrum of topics subsumed by the pro-life concept.

Being Pro-life and Pro-Capital Punishment

If pro-life means protecting life “from conception to natural death” then supporting capital punishment raises questions about what constitutes a natural death and if one can be pro-life and pro-death penalty. As noted above, the CHP maintains a pro-capital punishment policy,

³⁴¹ Interview #12, September 14, 2011.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

despite the fact that many Christians, particularly Catholics, interpret being pro-life to include opposition to capital punishment. However, it is not just Catholic pro-lifers who oppose the death penalty. In actuality, there is no Christian consensus—even among evangelical Protestants—on if one can biblically support being pro-life and pro-capital punishment.³⁴⁴

Many CHPers are aware that the party's pro-capital punishment stance deters some pro-lifers who might otherwise be natural supporters. This tension is dealt with by CHPers in a variety of ways, and I will highlight two: 1) attempting to change party policy, and 2) developing pro-life definitions that clearly allow for capital punishment. I will detail these approaches below, but first we should look at the CHP's official policy on capital punishment, which reads as follows:

We affirm that man was created in the image of God and therefore all human life should be protected by laws that require the ultimate deterrence and punishment for the shedding of innocent blood. Government has a God-given responsibility to use its power to punish those who commit crimes and to protect those who are innocent. The law should provide justice which includes capital punishment for those who commit first-degree, premeditated murder.³⁴⁵

This policy draws on two arguments for the death penalty, 1) the need to protect the innocent, and 2) the government's responsibility to mete out justice.

On an individual level the pro-life/pro-capital punishment approach of the party is more convoluted. As might be expected, nearly half of my interviewees pointed to the Bible as mandating capital punishment and more than a handful insisted that supporting capital punishment is a pro-life stance. Martin, a Dutch Reformed thirty-something from the Niagara region, exemplified both of these positions. We sat at his family's kitchen table while I

³⁴⁴ David P. Gushee, Richard Land, and Glen Stassen, "How Biblical is it to be Pro-life and Support the Death Penalty?," *Christianity Today* 56, no. 2 (February 1, 2012), accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/february/howbiblical.html>.

³⁴⁵ CHP Canada, *CHP Policy*, 45. This policy does not rely on any proof texts.

interviewed him and his wife, Rachel. When I asked them if they felt there was a relationship between the party being pro-life and pro-capital punishment Martin answered,

I understand how people have issues with that [... The CHP] is a party that tries to base itself on the Bible, principles in the Bible. It's clear from Romans 13 that the government is the only one allowed to punish in that way [...] That doesn't mean that you're anti-life when you hold onto capital punishment because capital punishment is basically punishing someone that's usually killed many others [...] That issue is a pro-life one. Capital punishment is, in the end, pro-life when you work it out. When you explain that capital punishment is punishing those that kill others. So if you punish those that kill others, then life has a better chance all around.³⁴⁶

Rachel did not add much, other than to say that she agreed with Martin's understanding of this relationship. When I reiterated how other CHPers had described the pro-life stance as connected to innocent life—that someone who has murdered others is no longer innocent and capital punishment protects society—Martin agreed. “That's it in a nutshell. That's basically it. In the end capital punishment is a pro-life stance.”³⁴⁷ Another CHPer who shared Martin and Rachel's perspective even argued that the contradiction lies in being pro-life (anti-abortion) and opposed to capital punishment, since the Bible mandates that Christians hold both perspectives.³⁴⁸

Yet a handful of members noted that they personally find it contradictory for the party to be pro-life and pro-death penalty. Even more noted that while it was not personally an issue for them, they could see that it caused tensions for or deterred some pro-lifers. In six of my interviews CHPers indicated that Catholics might find the party's position contradictory.³⁴⁹ The idea that being pro-life means opposing capital punishment is reflected in the Catholic

³⁴⁶ Interview #19, October 26, 2011.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Interview #7, August 9, 2011.

³⁴⁹ Interviews #21, November 2, 2011; Interview #27, November 18, 2011; Interview #40, January 18, 2012; Interview #44, March 15, 2012; Interview #53, May 1, 2012; and Interview #56, May 14, 2012.

interpretation of the sanctity of life. In the remainder of Chris Meyers' description of this principle he states:

According to this view it is wrong to intentionally end the life of any human being, even one who is not yet fully developed or no longer capable of thought or experience, or even if the human being in question deserves it. Some who hold the sanctity of life principle are inconsistent on this last point, but the Catholic Church officially disapproves of capital punishment because it violates the sanctity of life.³⁵⁰

Another term that reflects the Catholic pro-life position in relation to capital punishment is the “seamless garment.” According to Maguire, “the ‘seamless garment’ argument arose from somewhat liberal Roman Catholic sources attempting to link opposition to various forms of ‘violence,’ such as capital punishment and abortion (but not war). It has found receptive ears among some liberal Protestants.”³⁵¹ Unlike the sanctity of life, the concept of the seamless garment was not mentioned in any of my encounters with the CHP.

Beyond Catholic opposition to the death penalty, two party members—Sean, who lives in an area with a large Mennonite population, and Greg, who used to attend a Mennonite church— noted that Mennonites would never support the party's stance on capital punishment.³⁵² Indeed the pacifist position of the Mennonites translates into a profound pro-life stance, which includes not only opposition to abortion and capital punishment, but also warfare and military actions. Greg openly supported the CHP's stances on capital punishment and military preparedness while he still attended a Mennonite Church.³⁵³ This led to some tensions between Greg and other members of that church and eventually Greg and his wife changed denominations.

³⁵⁰ Meyers, *The Fetal Position*, 47.

³⁵¹ Maguire, *Sacred Rights*, 98. Also see Bradley R. Hertel, “Attitudes toward Abortion and Capital Punishment: Pro-life, Prochoice, Seamless Garment, and Inconsistency,” in Jelen and Chandler, *Abortion Politics in the United States and Canada*, 161-84.

³⁵² Interviews #47, March 17, 2012; and Interview #48, March 18, 2012.

³⁵³ Interview #48, March 18, 2012.

Although Catholics were the most common example of a group that would oppose the death penalty, the five Catholic CHPers I interviewed did not easily fit into this category. Unfortunately not all of the Catholic CHPers I interviewed were asked if and how they understand capital punishment and being pro-life relating to each other. However, those who were asked fit vastly different categories, from understanding pro-life and pro-death penalty as opposed to seeing them as one and the same, pointing to both Catholic catechism and biblical supports. Having illustrated some of the complexities associated with the CHP being pro-life and pro-death penalty, I will now examining the ways that members attempt to resolve this tension.

Resolving Tensions Between Being Pro-life and Pro-Capital Punishment

One approach is attempting to alter the CHP's capital punishment policy. It was suggested in interviews that there have been multiple attempts to elucidate this policy or make it more palatable for anti-capital punishment pro-lifers. I had the privilege of witnessing one of these attempts at the 2012 National Convention where the "Resolution to Increase CHP Membership Among Pro-Life Canadians" was presented.³⁵⁴ Although this resolution did not mention Catholic pro-lifers explicitly, it notes, "a significant portion of the pro-life movement does not embrace the concept of capital punishment and have not been persuaded to change their views."³⁵⁵ Furthermore, when the member who presented this resolution spoke in defense of it he acknowledged the fact that this was intended to help draw Catholic pro-lifers to the party. This resolution ultimately sought to change the party's capital punishment policy to the following (emphasis has been placed on the differences from the current policy):

We affirm that man was created in the image of God and therefore all human life must be protected by laws that provide deterrence from and punishment for the shedding of innocent blood. Government has a God-given responsibility to use its

³⁵⁴ CHP Canada, "#31: Resolution to Increase CHP Membership and Support Among Pro-Life Canadians," in *Setting Our Sails for Tomorrow*, Section 4, "Resolutions," 62.

³⁵⁵ Ibid. Original emphasis.

power to punish those who commit crimes and to protect those who are innocent. *Because the taking of any human life—even for the sake of punishing the guilty, protecting the innocent and providing deterrence—is a matter of conscience, the Christian Heritage Party allows for freedom of conscience in regard to the issue of capital punishment. On this topic, every CHP Member of Parliament shall be encouraged to speak and vote according to the biblically-informed dictates of his or her own conscience.*³⁵⁶

This resolution adeptly drew on a claim made by CHPers repeatedly in my encounters with them—the claim that the CHP is different from other political parties because members can act on their conscience and are not forced to toe a party line.

Not surprisingly, this resolution garnered substantial debate and heavy opposition. Those opposed asserted the importance of teaching Catholics that their catechism is not anti-capital punishment, that this is a misconception among Catholics (this was pushed by a non-Catholic). The claim here is that although the United States and Canadian Conferences of Catholic Bishops have openly opposed capital punishment, there have been no papal encyclicals that declare the Catholic Church officially opposed to it.³⁵⁷ However, it should be noted that the Catholic Church’s catechism does have a statement on capital punishment, which leans more in opposition to, or at least heavy restriction of, the death penalty than in support of it. Below is the statement found in the Catholic catechism:

Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ For examples of the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops’ opposition see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Death Penalty/Capital Punishment (list of news releases),” accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/death-penalty-capital-punishment/>. Given that capital punishment continues to be practiced in the United States, it is not surprising that the USCCB is far more vocal on this issue than the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. However, the CCCB released a statement on December 11, 2007, deploring Prime Minister Harper for “accepting the execution of Canadians by the jurisdiction of other countries.” Most Reverend V. James Weisgerber, “The Canadian government must oppose capital punishment,” news release, *Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*, December 11, 2007, accessed February 19, 2013, <http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/archives/public-statements/2007/2547-the-canadian-government-must-oppose-capital-punishment>.

If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.

Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitely taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity "are very rare, if not practically nonexistent."³⁵⁸

The last quotation is taken from Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*.

Therefore, while it may be true that the Catholic Church does not have an all-out ban on capital punishment, it is also true that the Church does not generally support that action.

Those opposed to the capital punishment resolution drew on biblical passages, such as Romans 13, which describes the state as wielding the sword (mentioned in Chapter Two), and the Ten Commandments, particularly "Thou shall not kill." They argued that it is pro-life to support capital punishment—something that was oft repeated in interviews—and that it is the government's responsibility to bring justice. Although there was both strong support and opposition for this resolution, the majority of people who were approaching the microphone to speak were opposed. Another notable feature of the debate on this resolution was that many executive members spoke in favour of the resolution. The resolution was moved by a member of the national board and a former national board member spoke out in favour of it. Presumably they were more aware of the deterrent the capital punishment stance held for potential pro-lifer membership. Individuals who have been CHP candidates spoke to both sides of the debate.

The question at the root of the resolution was, should the party make their pro-capital punishment stance an issue that needs to be supported by all candidates or should they uphold the ideal that future CHP MPs can vote on such issues with their conscience? Which of these

³⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2267, accessed February 19, 2013, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a5.htm.

positions is most central to CHP identity? Given the party's lack of electoral success and the fact that capital punishment was abolished in Canada in 1976 and not practiced since 1962, the support of capital punishment appears to be more a rhetorical stance and identity marker than an issue of legislative consequence.³⁵⁹ By supporting capital punishment the CHP is marking itself as a particular kind of conservative Christian group, to the potential detriment of growing party membership. The resolution acknowledged this and sought a compromise. However, the resolution failed to pass. Because the resolution sought to alter party policy it required two-thirds majority support by the convention delegates, but received roughly half of the delegates' support. In the end, this was one of the most heated and narrowly defeated resolutions presented at the entire convention.

Resolutions such as the one just described seek to alter the party's policy in order to attract anti-capital punishment pro-lifers to the party. Another facet of attracting these pro-lifers is convincing them to vote for the party, rather than become party members. One way to do this is to have individual members, especially high profile members such as candidates, develop a pro-life argument for capital punishment. The party's capital punishment policy offers a route for the candidates to do this by emphasizing the importance of protecting innocent life. If taking the life of an innocent person is murder then abortion and euthanasia are murder, but capital punishment is not. I was very impressed the first time that a CHP candidate noted that being pro-life meant protecting innocent life. That candidate, who tends to run in an urban area in Ontario, was keenly aware of the perceived contradiction of being pro-life and pro-capital punishment and therefore his definition of pro-life allowed a caveat for capital punishment. If he had focused

³⁵⁹ Canada, Correctional Services, "Abolition of the Death Penalty 1976," last modified December 18, 2012, accessed February 18, 2013, <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/rht-drt/08-eng.shtml>.

on the image-bearer pro-life argument he would have less leeway for illustrating that his understanding of being pro-life does not contradict supporting capital punishment.

Another popular approach is to illustrate how restrictive the party's capital punishment policy is. In many of these cases the CHPer would state that only individuals convicted of premeditated first-degree murder, where there are two or more eyewitnesses and the judge and jury agree, could receive capital punishment. This is generally stated as official party policy, however as the capital punishment policy above shows, the only aspect included in the official policy is that capital punishment would be allocated to those guilty of "first degree, premeditated murder." There is no discussion of two or more eyewitnesses or the judgment of the judge and jury. That claim is unofficial party policy.

To expand on the restrictive quality of the party's capital punishment policy some CHPers would add that very few, if any, murders would qualify. Time and time again the most infamous Canadian serial killers—namely Clifford Olson, Robert Pickton, Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka—were given as potential candidates for capital punishment by party standards. In a few cases CHPers would even suggest that there would not be enough or appropriate evidence to allow for capital punishment in those particular cases. In general, the restrictive argument relied on the necessity of having a pro-capital punishment policy because it is biblically mandated, while at the same time suggesting that the death penalty functions would rarely, if ever, be employed. This approach presumably seeks to placate anti-capital punishment pro-lifers with the assurance that this particular policy would have very little practical implications.

There is also a third approach to describing the party's stance on capital punishment that I interpreted as deflecting attention. This approach manifested in two ways. The first would be to

highlight the abortion policies, or lack thereof, of the major parties. In these cases the CHPer does not shirk the fact that the CHP supports capital punishment, but frames other political parties as supporting a more heinous and unjust form of capital punishment via abortion. This approach can be seen in the following excerpts.

Moe: The way I see it [...] all of the other parties are in favour of capital punishment. The CHP is the only party that limits it to criminals. The rest of them all reserve it for the unborn.³⁶⁰

Greg: The other argument I used at the doorstep [while campaigning] is simply to say, “The fact is that every political party in Canada favours the death penalty. The difference is the CHP would limit it to the most heinous of the guilty and the others are willing to apply it 110,000 times a year to the innocent in abortion.”³⁶¹

By reframing abortion as a form of capital punishment, this approach essentially posits that the CHP’s stance is more just than other parties that pro-lifers might support, since no other parties condemn abortion outright.

The second way that the deflection approach was manifested is in the individual’s perspective on capital punishment. Although one interviewee made it quite clear that part of what attracted him to the CHP was the fact that the party is pro-life and pro-capital punishment, many more CHPers emphasized that capital punishment was not a central issue for them. Sure, they may personally agree that the death penalty should be an available option, but this was not a central feature of the party or something that inspired them to be involved. This would sometimes be paired with the restrictive approach. In those cases the interviewee would say something to the effect that the CHP supports capital punishment, but it is only in rare and extreme cases, and it is not like we want to go around executing people. Many times this approach would be coupled with the insistence that supporting the death penalty is a biblical principle. Therefore at the core of this approach is a sense that although the individual CHPer

³⁶⁰ Interview #45, March 15, 2012.

³⁶¹ Interview #48, March 18, 2012.

may not like the idea of capital punishment, it is biblically mandated and quite restrictive, therefore it must be a party policy even if it repels some pro-lifers. Although the Bible describes capital punishment being given for crimes other than murder and outlines specific methods that are no longer considered appropriate in developed democratic nations, no CHPers acknowledge those passages when asserting the necessity of this biblically mandated policy.

Of the strategies and approaches examined above, only the attempt to alter party policy offers a concrete change to the CHP that may help attract pro-lifers. Formulating an understanding of being pro-life and pro-death penalty in order to convince pro-lifers to support the party appears to be more for the benefit of current CHP members than potential pro-life supporters. This stance helps reaffirm that being pro-life and pro-death penalty is a reasonable and appropriate part of the overall Christian identity of the CHP and its members.

Is Being the Only Pro-life Party Enough?

Beyond the capital punishment policy, the CHP has another major factor impeding its potential attractiveness to pro-life voters. Although the CHP may be the only federal political party that announces itself as pro-life, there are certain non-CHP candidates who openly identify as pro-life. Furthermore, pro-life candidates in the major political parties, particularly Conservatives or Liberals, are more likely to get elected than a CHP candidate. The CHP does not attempt to deny the fact that there are elected pro-life MPs. Since the decriminalization of abortion in Canada, bills such as Woodworth's, frequently brought forth by Conservative backbenchers, are perennial in the House of Commons. The CHP repeatedly supports these efforts while maintaining the claim that they are the only officially pro-life party.

The last non-private members' bill put forth by a sitting government was by Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government from 1989-1991. Bill C-43, mentioned above,

sought "to reinstate criminal penalties for abortion." This bill managed to pass through the House of Commons, but died in Senate where it received an insufficient tie vote, marking the end of any major party attempts to legislate abortion. It is curious to wonder what would have happened to the CHP had C-43 passed. The Conservative response to that failure has given the CHP space to legitimately assert that the current Conservative Party and its earlier incarnations are not formally pro-life. If the Progressive Conservatives had managed to pass C-43, would the CHP have been able to stake that claim? It is impossible to know, but it seems unlikely.

As it currently stands, the CHP must compete against the reality that Conservative candidates can easily identify as pro-life, even though the current Conservative leader insists that he is not interested in that debate. It apparently does not matter to pro-lifers that the Conservative Party does not have a pro-life or anti-abortion policy. In practice it is a party where individual pro-life candidates regularly get elected. The party and leader report cards on *The Interim* and Campaign Life Coalition's website for the 2011 federal election support this assertion. *The Interim* develops a report card on certain party leader's positions on pro-life issues for each election.³⁶² Campaign Life Coalition borrows those report cards and, additionally, develops a more detailed evaluation of the parties. It is unclear how *The Interim* decided to order the leaders, as it is not alphabetical by party or leader name. Not surprisingly, the leaders of the two biggest parties prior to the May 2011 election—the Liberals and the Conservatives—received the most detailed description, followed by the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party, the CHP, and the NDP (in that order). The only two leaders that did not receive an F were Stephen Harper (C+) and Jim Hnatiuk (A+). For reasons that are not entirely clear, when this information was adopted by the Campaign Life Coalition's website Mr. Hnatiuk's grade drops slightly to an A, while

³⁶² "Party Leader Report Cards," *The Interim*, April 24, 2011, accessed April 30, 2011, <http://www.theinterim.com/features/party-leader-report-cards-2/>.

Harper maintains his C+.³⁶³ Additionally, the order of the party leaders is shifted to Conservatives, NDP, Liberals, the Bloc, CHP, and the Green Party.

More telling is Campaign Life Coalitions' "Evaluating the Partys [*sic.*]." This section offers evaluations of the Conservatives, the Liberals, the NDP, the Bloc, and the CHP (in that order). It should be noted that this evaluation does not appear to be up-to-date. The most recent dated information given comes from 2005 and Ron Gray, who stepped down in 2008, is shown as the party leader. The evaluation of the CHP is limited to three sentences.

The Christian Heritage Party is the only party whose principles are derived from Scripture and whose platform includes respect for the sanctity of human life and the uniqueness of traditional marriage. The men and women who stand for the CHP at election time are able to highlight social conservative issues in a way that even some pro-life candidates from the major parties, do not. Where there is no pro-life candidate among the main parties a vote for the CHP sends a clear message that none of those parties' candidates represent your first priorities of life and family.³⁶⁴

Although Campaign Life clearly appreciates the CHP's stance, it does not appear willing to fully throw its support behind the party. Instead, voting for the CHP is suggested as a last resort when one has no other pro-life candidate for which to vote. The fact that the CHP is the only self-declared pro-life party is not enough for Campaign Life to fully back the party. The reasons for this are not certain, but I suspect that the CHP's electoral record, as well as its policy on the death penalty, is at least part of the reason.

Campaign Life Coalition also published an analysis of the "Results of [the] Federal Election on May 2, 2011." This analysis emphasizes the pragmatic approach taken by Campaign Life. It acknowledges that three prominent pro-life MPs retired at the time of the 2011 election (Stockwell Day, John Cummins, Chuck Strahl - all Conservative MPs). However, it also

³⁶³ Campaign Life Coalition, "Party Leader Report Cards – From The Interim," accessed August 28, 2014, <http://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/index.php?p=Party+Leader+Report+Card>.

³⁶⁴ Campaign Life Coalition, "Evaluating the Partys [*sic.*]," last modified 2009, accessed February 24, 2013, http://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/index.php?p=Evaluating_the_Partys.

acknowledges in a hopeful manner that a significant number (nearly sixty) new MPs were elected, offering potential growth for the pro-life cause. As stated in the article, "This large group probably contain[s] individuals with pro-life leanings, or others who can be brought around with education and lobbying by their pro-life constituents."³⁶⁵ Campaign Life then called on citizens to actively lobby and educate those new MPs, stating, "regular visits to their office and a sustained lobbying effort is required."³⁶⁶

The CHP also endorses this kind of citizen-driven pro-life lobbying, which appears to be one of the few places where we can see principled concerns of the CHP developing a pragmatic approach, although not in a manner that develops the party electorally. The primary concern becomes supporting pro-life legislation—even if it comes from the electoral competition—rather than winning votes. Beyond the example at the introduction of this chapter, the party has also openly endorsed Conservative MP Mark Warawa's Motion 408. This non-legislative, "anti-discrimination," Private Members' Motion moved by the Conservative MP for Langley, BC, seeks "that the House condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination."³⁶⁷ Beyond posting a banner on the CHP's website calling for support of M-408, the party also emailed members and supporters requesting that they sign a petition in favour of the motion and contact Warawa to directly show him their support. Warawa's motion, which was tabled the day after voting on Woodworth's bill took place, was deemed non-votable by a parliamentary sub-committee in March 2013. This led to a further "call to action" email sent by former Deputy Leader, Rod Taylor, on March 25 of that year. Taylor writes, "the decision is

³⁶⁵ Campaign Life Coalition, "Results of Federal Election on May 2, 2011," accessed February 25, 2013, <http://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/index.php?p=Federal>.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Mark Warawa, "A Message from Langley MP Mark Warawa on M408," news release, MarkWarawa.com, December 5, 2012, accessed February 2, 2013, <http://www.markwarawa.com/stop-gendercide/news-releases/a-message-from-langley-mp-mark-warawa-on-m408->.

being appealed to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs” and pleads with the recipients of the email, “Please, take a moment right now and write to the committee members and ask them to reverse this unjust ruling.”³⁶⁸ Additionally, to make this action easier, Taylor included a sample letter, the email addresses of the Prime Minister and all the committee members, and a link to a website to get contact information for one’s local MP. He effectively streamlined this letter writing campaign to make it as easy as possible for any motivated reader.

These kinds of pragmatic actions, promoting support of current pro-life legislation, raise questions about the electoral value of the CHP asserting itself to be the only pro-life party. The CHP appears unwilling to take pragmatic steps on issues that have the potential of increasing their pro-life vote count, yet are willing to support pro-life MPs in other parties. As an extreme example of how much the CHP is concerned with pro-life issue over being a standard political party, CHP candidates will choose not to run against Conservative candidates who have adequately presented themselves as pro-life. I became aware of this unusual strategy when a candidate told me that he opted to run outside of his riding in order to avoid competing with his incumbent pro-life Conservative MP. Lest this seem like a singular case, in an August 1, 2014 article published by *The Interim* on the CHP’s November 2014 leadership convention, Rod Taylor, who successfully ran for the position, discussed this strategy in detail. Here is an excerpt from that article describing this approach:

Yet Taylor is also proposing something radical for political parties: strategically not running candidates where another party is putting forth a candidate that largely shares the CHP’s commitment to protect the unborn. Taylor said, “there are a handful of devout and devoted men and women serving the unborn and serving the Lord without compromise.” He calls these MPs heroes – naming Maurice Vellacott, Brad Trost, Mark Warawa, Stephen Woodworth, and Rod Bruinooge – that have both the voting record and a history of being vocally pro-life. Taylor said, “we want to be strategically sensitive to those who have put their careers on the line.”

³⁶⁸ Rod Taylor, “Call to Action on M-4081,” e-mail message to author, March 25, 2013.

He also said the CHP wants to “run candidates where they can do the most good.” Taylor said this is a guideline, “not an eternal promise,” and that the party leadership would not prevent a strong, working EDA from running candidates if that is what the grassroots wanted. He stressed that the party leadership would not deliberately seek candidates to challenge pro-life MPs.

In June, the CHP did not run a candidate in the Scarborough-Agincourt by-election, stating that they deferred to Campaign Life Coalition’s qualification of a pro-life candidate for the Conservative Party.³⁶⁹

Besides simply outlining the rationale for this approach, the recent example of choosing not to run in the Scarborough-Agincourt riding shows that CHP has enacted this strategy. To this end, the CHP is more pragmatic about its pro-life stance than it is about being a nationally elected political party.

Christian Pro-life Principles or Pragmatic Politics

It is undeniable that the pro-life identity of the CHP is integral to the party's brand. The centrality of the pro-life identity creates various tensions within the party. Can the CHP market itself as the only federal pro-life political party without being reduced to only a pro-life party? Given the ambiguity of the term "pro-life" can the CHP develop a coherent definition and approach that is shared by its members and the broader pro-life community? The fact that the CHP asserts itself as pro-life while maintaining a pro-capital punishment policy places it in stark contrast with many pro-lifers. Finally, what is the overall value of the CHP promoting itself as the only pro-life federal political party, when this is apparently not enough to make the party the top choice of Canada's major pro-life organizations?

My sense is that the central issue at stake with the pro-life claims and actions of the CHP is that of group cohesion through a shared pro-life identity. The party’s particular pro-life identity reinforces strong boundaries of who is in (Christian pro-capital punishment pro-lifers)

³⁶⁹ “Christian Heritage Party seeks new members and a new leader,” *The Interim*, August 1, 2014, accessed August 28, 2014, <http://www.theinterim.com/features/christian-heritage-party-seeks-new-members-and-a-new-leader/print/>.

and who is out. While I agree with Munson that asserting that one is “pro-life” is more about identity than personal understanding about abortion, in the case of the CHP it is inherently connected to a particular understanding of what it means to be pro-life. Even if the individual member does have a developed understanding of what it means to be pro-life, their membership in the party marks them as a pro-life, pro-capital punishment Christian. That is to say, the CHP presents itself as a very particular—predominantly Reformed, Pentecostal and Evangelical Protestant—flavour of pro-life. For that group it is important to identify as pro-life and pro-capital punishment based on their biblical principles, even if that combination seems contradictory or off-putting to other types of pro-lifers.

Although a shared pro-life identity was a major contributing factor to the development of the party, the CHP attempts to maintain a broader appeal by not limited itself to only pro-life issues. Asserting itself as the pro-life party functions to help maintain group cohesion through that shared identity, but this singular identifier is not enough to maintain a political party. Even if the CHP does not get elected, if it ever wants to be taken seriously as a political party it has to have more than one issue.

Continuing with the theme of identity maintenance the following chapter examines the role of education in the lives of CHPers and their children. Although education is under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, the members of the CHP frequently voice concerns about the state of education, particularly public education. This disparaging view of public education is especially curious because the majority of CHPers employ private Christian schools or homeschooling for their children. This means that the party members have few personal interactions with public school systems and they are involved with a party that, even if elected, would not be able to alter the educational system.

Chapter Five: Education and the Christian Heritage Party³⁷⁰

Initial Encounters with Homeschooling CHPers

A chapter on education in a dissertation about a primarily federal political party may seem a bit odd considering that education is under the jurisdiction of provincial governments.³⁷¹ This means that even if the CHP got elected it would have limited ability to alter education in Canada. However, this research is mainly concerned with making sense of the members of the Christian Heritage Party—not necessarily the potential effectiveness of the party—and that requires an examination of education practices and perspectives on public education since these are an important concern for CHPers. Repeatedly, even when unsolicited, education was discussed in interviews and at party events, which were regularly held in Christian schools. Besides the fact that education plays a significant role in maintaining worldviews and group cohesion, it was apparent in my interactions with CHPers that public education was understood as representative of the secularization of Canadian society.

When I began developing this research project I gave the significance of education little consideration. As was the case with so many other issues that are of central concern to CHPers, I became aware of my oversight when I attended the April 2011 leader visits-cum-campaigning events in southern Ontario. Although I had conducted two interviews prior to these events, they involved some discussion of public schools and sex education, but no data on Christian schools or homeschooling. While both interviewees had their children educated in public schools and

³⁷⁰ Some of the ideas expressed in this chapter were presented by the author at the following conferences: “Education and Conservative Politics” (paper, Religion and Religion and Public Life conference, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, March 2012); and “Education and Conservative Christian Politics” (paper, Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion-Eastern International Region, University of Waterloo/Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, May 2012).

³⁷¹ Canada, Department of Heritage, *Canadians and their Government: A Resource Guide* (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, n.d. [1990s?]), 22.

were critical of public education, the fact that they did not homeschool or use Christian schools marks them as different from the majority of CHP parents. In other words, those two interviews did not fully prepare me for the approach to education by CHPers that I witnessed at these party events and in later interviews.

All of the April 2011 leader visits showcased a presentation given by the leader at that time, Jim Hnatiuk. In some cases the presentation coincided with a fundraising dinner and/or the local EDA's annual board meeting; other times Mr. Hnatiuk's speech was bookended with coffee, tea, assorted sweets and general conversation.³⁷² All of the events offered some occasion to chat with fellow attendees before and after the presentation. At the first event, already described in the previous chapter, I had a conversation with Michelle and her daughters, Katie and Jessica. Katie and Jessica stuck out quite a bit at this event, just as young people at any of the party's events were a rare sight. I was not fully aware of this at this first meeting, but after attending the first few events sitting in the back of the room, seeing a sea of grey, white, and balding heads, it was clear that a even handful of teens or children at CHP events was exceptional.

Given that I was also one of the youngest people in the room—a decade older than Katie, the older of the two sisters, but most likely over a decade younger than others in the room—I gravitated towards Katie and Jessica. In the usual formalities of conversation (e.g. “How are you doing?” “Where are you from?” “What do you do?”), it came up that the sisters had been or were currently being (in the case of Jessica) homeschooled. Michelle, a mother of seven in her late fifties, quickly joined our conversation. It was clear that Michelle was proud of how involved her family has been in Christian politics, both provincially and federally. She let me know that

³⁷² All of the presentations concluded with a request for donations, either for the EDA's candidate or for the party in general.

beyond actively participating within the CHP, her family was also involved with the FCP. During one election a few year back, seven members of her immediate family—Michelle included—ran as candidates for the FCP.

It was also very clear that Michelle and her family were heavily invested in Christian homeschooling. All seven of Michelle’s children were homeschooled and she was the first, but certainly not the last, to tell me about OCHEC, the Ontario Christian Home Educators’ Connection, a group I was previously unaware of. OCHEC organizes annual conventions where Christian homeschoolers can learn about different Christian-centred curricula, hear lectures by homeschool advocates, and network. The organization also encourages smaller, local homeschooling groups and other resources, such as a membership with the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), for godly families interested in home education. HSLDA is an international non-profit organization established to support and defend the right of Christians to homeschool their children.³⁷³

At the fifth leader visit I attended, later in the same month that I had met Michelle and her daughters, Mr. Hnatiuk informally introduced me to a group of five teenagers—four girls and one boy. While I was mildly surprised to see such a large group of young people at a CHP event—especially after attending other meetings with very few, if any, younger people—I was even more amazed to discover that all of the teens were being homeschooled. They, in turn, seemed somewhat taken aback that I had not been homeschooled nor had any familiarity with that educational process. In my excitement and ignorance, I asked them many inappropriate (e.g. “do you get to socialize with other kids?”—it is frequently assumed that homeschooling is paramount to forcing children to be shut-ins) and ill-advised questions (e.g. asking for a

³⁷³ Mitchell Stevens, *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 119-20.

comparison to public education, even though they had no experiences with public education).

These frequent encounters with homeschooling CHPers fascinated me and made it apparent that I needed to consider the significance of education for party members.

Key Issues Relating to CHPers' Positions on Education

This chapter delves into three areas relating to education: first, the education of CHPers and their children, particularly regarding the choice of how to educate CHP children; second, the perceptions of public education held by CHPers; and third, actions taken by individual party members with regards to public education. Unless otherwise noted, education in this chapter refers to primary and secondary education. While there was some passing discussion of post-secondary education, party members were more concerned with these lower levels of education. Two notable exceptions were Joel and Greg, two older gentlemen who discussed higher education in greater detail. Joel, a retired professor, was particularly emphatic regarding the need for a “two-model” system when teaching about evolution.³⁷⁴ That is to say, he was a very vocal proponent of teaching creationism or intelligent design, which he simply referred to as “creation,” in the university classroom. Greg, on the other hand, discussed the downfall of higher education in a much broader sense, pointing to the criticism raised by Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*.³⁷⁵ Otherwise, post-secondary education was not discussed in notable detail.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Interview #61, May 24, 2012.

³⁷⁵ Interview #48, March 18, 2012.

³⁷⁶ It should be noted that party members were not fearful nor appeared to distrust me due to my level of education or the fact that I am doing doctoral research on the CHP. When I described my research to a high-level administrator at my university he insisted that party members must be wary of me as a university researcher. Despite all my reassuring that this was not the case—I had no problems accessing interviewees and encountered many members with post-secondary and graduate degrees—I could not convince him otherwise. Although there were certainly concerns expressed by some interviewees, such as Joel and Greg, that post-secondary institutions have a liberal bias, this did not translate into a general distrust of everyone with a post-secondary degree.

The first of the three core sections of this chapter offers a condensed history of primary and secondary education in Canada and an examination of the education of CHPers and their children. Because education is closely tied to worldview maintenance and the party is concerned with maintaining (or recovering) a Christian Canada or at least being presented as Christian, it should not be surprising that the educational practices of CHPers are connected to their Christian identity. As will be seen, the choice of how to educate one's children, be it Christian schools, public schools or homeschooling, is connected with the particular Christian identity of individual CHPers. This first section includes both demographics of the education of CHPers and their children and discussions from interviews about the process of deciding how their children would be educated.

Building on this examination, the second section offers a close analysis of CHPers' perceptions of public education. During interviews I was frequently informed of the negative qualities of public education. Even the CHPers who sent their children to public schools tended to assess these schools negatively. Much of their criticisms related to concerns about the increasing secularization and immorality of Canadian society, particularly through the removal of Christianity from schools and the promotion of sex education.

The third section explores actions taken by various CHPers to protest or attempt to alter public education. These actions are particularly unexpected when done in the name of the CHP because the federal government, the chosen political stage of the party, has no jurisdiction over education. Three case studies of individual CHPers' activism regarding public education came to light during my fieldwork. The first is the case of Bob, a Niagara region candidate who had been discussed in previous chapters.³⁷⁷ Bob's activism has primarily focused on his local school board and the accessibility of sex education resources. Second is G. J. Rancourt, a 2011 CHP candidate

³⁷⁷ Interview #9, August 25, 2011.

who helped orchestrate protests of the so-called “Mosqueteria”—where Muslim students were given a space for Friday noon-time prayers in the Park Valley Middle School, a Toronto public school.³⁷⁸ In the summer of 2011 Mr. Rancourt participated in protests of the Toronto District School Board facilitating an area for Muslim students to pray in their school rather than have the students leave school grounds. Third is the case of Jeff, an Ontario parent who is suing his local school board for refusing to inform him when his children would be taught about sexual practices that he and his wife oppose on religious grounds.³⁷⁹ None of the media reports I found about Jeff’s case indicate that he is a member of the CHP, although he is named on the party’s website in such a way that indicates he is a CHPer. This last case is more difficult to fit into the frame of this discussion. Jeff has not publicly announced his connections to the CHP and I do not intend to suggest that he has taken this action as a representative of the party. Instead I include this latter example because it highlights the very strong concerns that regular members of the CHP have about the state of public education, even if not all of the regular CHPers take this path.

By focusing on the topic of education we can get a clearer picture of some of the central concerns of members of the CHP. The party has little, if any, official policies on education, but this does not prohibit CHPers holding shared concerns on this issue. The fact that party members disproportionately have their children homeschooled or sent to private Christian schools and hold general negative opinions of public education tells us something about the Canadian Christians that come together in the CHP. These positions on education highlight how members of the CHP stand apart from the broader Canadian population.

³⁷⁸ I did not interview Mr. Rancourt, but instead I am relying on publicly accessible sources and my field notes from CHP events for this case study.

³⁷⁹ Interview #26, November 14, 2011. At the time I interviewed Jeff he had not publicly disclosed his involvement in this court case, however since then his name has appeared in the public records about this case. In order to maintain Jeff’s anonymity, as promised on the interview consent form, I have not included citations for any sources that disclose Jeff’s identity.

Public, Private Christian, and Home Education in Canada

It is difficult to discuss education in Canada in a generalized and coherent manner. Part of this difficulty lies in the fact that every province regulates its own education system, leading to notable differences in the funding, classifications, and curriculum of public and private/independent schools across provinces. That being said, there are a few generalizations I would venture to make about education in Canada. For the majority of Canada's history since Confederation it was assumed that public education was Christian education, or at least steeped in Christian culture.³⁸⁰ By this I mean, religious practices, such as reciting the Lord's Prayer, and religious education were accepted as part of public education. The *British North America Act* of 1867 allowed for major, recognized Christian groups, such as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and eventually the United Church, to have control over public education. Ontario approached this by creating a public, non-denominational Protestant system with a parallel, public-funded, Catholic system, while the Maritime Provinces maintained singular public school boards. In Quebec the public system was essentially Catholic with a smaller Protestant system.

Since the 1960s the culture of public education in Canada has become increasingly secularized. In Ontario, the legacy of the dual systems can be seen with the on-going presences of the publicly-funded Catholic School board, despite the secularization of the formerly Protestant public school boards. This Catholic School board is also called "separate Catholic" schools in order to indicate that they are distinct from independent or private Catholic schools. The line between public- and private-funded schools becomes more blurred depending on the province. Although Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan do not have a fully funded Catholic School board, these provinces do continue to offer some funding for these schools.

³⁸⁰ David Seljak, "Education, Multiculturalism, and Religion," in Bramadat and Seljak, *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*, 181.

“Moreover,” as noted by David Seljak, “several provinces fund, directly or indirectly, independent religious schools although there is no constitutional or legal requirement to do so.”³⁸¹ While Ontario withholds funds from religious schools outside the Catholic board, “British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec fund qualified, independent religious schools up to 60 percent of the amount given to public schools.”³⁸²

When looking at independent Christian schools in Canada one cannot avoid discussing the Dutch Reformed community. As noted in Chapter Two, the large wave of post-World War Two Dutch Reformed immigrants made short work of developing their conservative Reformed pillar in Canada. One of the key aspects of that pillar was forming Christian schools. Although at the time Canadian public schools, especially outside of Quebec, would have had a Protestant flavour, they did not sufficiently replicate the pillar system familiar to those Dutch Reformed immigrants. As noted by Roger Rice and Gordon Van Harn in their examination of Christian schools in North America, these private Christian schools “were established at a time when the public schools were basically Protestant in nature, with Bible reading and prayer as regular activities. Consequently, their formation was not a reaction to any perceived lack of religion in the public schools.”³⁸³ In any case, the community embarked on developing an expansive network of Christian primary and secondary schools wherever they settled in large enough numbers.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 182.

³⁸² Ibid. For greater detail on some of the provincial differences regarding public and private education see: Canada, Council of Ministers of Education, “UNESCO Seventh Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, Report for Canada,” September 2007, Accessed June 5, 2013, 12-16. <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/105/Canada-report-antidiscrimination-2007.en.pdf>.

³⁸³ Roger R. Rice and Gordon L. Van Harn, “Reformed Communities as Functional Communities: Social Capital, Christian Schools, and Reformed Community Vitality,” in Luidens, Smidt, and Stoffels, *Reformed Vitality*, 52. The push to develop Christians Schools was contentious within the Christian Reformed Community because some were concerned that these schools promoted isolationism or separatism from the broader culture. For more see: Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*, 97-8.

The Christian schools particular to the Christian Reformed community maintain religious standards through their membership in Christian Schools International (CSI), “which requires affirmation of a Reformed Christian understanding of the Scriptures and a commitment that this expression of faith should shape the school in its community and curriculum.”³⁸⁴ Another international organization with a similar structure and intention is Association of Christian Schools International.³⁸⁵ Rice and Van Harn assert that, “CSI schools could be characterized as primarily ethnic and denominational in nature because, initially, ethnically Dutch Christian Reformed parents supported them.”³⁸⁶

Before shifting to homeschooling and the education of CHPers and their children, I want to discuss two notable and conflicting tendencies among these private Christian schools with Dutch Reformed origins. These tendencies are the desire to: A) attract students from outside the traditional Dutch Reformed community, and B) limit the student body to the more conservative groups amongst the Dutch Reformed. These schools generally lean towards one of these tendencies over the other. Those reflecting the first tendency have attempted to branch out to accept non-Reformed Christians (primarily Protestants) more broadly. Sometimes the names of these schools give away their Reformed heritage, such as John Knox Christian School in Woodstock, Ontario or Calvin Christian Schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba; other have changed their name—such as the Guelph Community Christian School, formerly John Calvin Christian School—to indicate that they are not just for the Reformed community.

While some of these historically Dutch Reformed schools have been moving towards broadening their scope, this is not universally the case. One counter example is Guido De Brès

³⁸⁴ Rice and Van Harn, “Reformed Communities as Functional Communities,” 52. Also see: Christian Schools International, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.csionline.org/>.

³⁸⁵ See Association for Christian Schools International, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.acsiglobal.org/>.

³⁸⁶ Rice and Van Harn, “Reformed Communities as Functional Communities,” 52.

Christian High School (GDBCCHS) in Hamilton, Ontario. I am drawing on this example in particular because I interviewed some CHPers who either attended this school or sent their children there.³⁸⁷ GDBCCHS does not appear to be a member of either CSI or the Association of Christian Schools International, yet it is certainly placed within the Reformed tradition. This school fits squarely into the second tendency because, as stated on GDBCCHS's website, it exclusively "serves the Canadian and United Reformed communities."³⁸⁸ As noted in Chapter Two, the Canadian and United Reformed Churches are on the more conservative end of the Dutch Reformed churches. This community has little interest in drawing students from outside their ethno-religious group, and instead covers a large territory spanning from Toronto to Rockway, just outside of St. Catharines (over 100 kms apart).

The fees for private Christian schools can vary greatly, but, as we can see by examining a couple of the schools mentioned above, overall they are not cheap. Calvin Christian Schools in Winnipeg (CCS) encompasses an elementary and high school and receives some provincial funds. It is classified as an independent school by its province and as such CCS "receive[s] about 50% of the Manitoba per student education cost in the form of a government grant."³⁸⁹ Determining the school fees is a complex process. There is a fee per student that varies depending on the grade, ranging from \$2000 for kindergarten to \$4300 for grades 9-12, capped at \$8600. Then there are miscellaneous additional expenses, such as transit (which can go as high as \$1300 for the first child, if one lives in a rural area), a mandatory \$100 "Capital improvement fee" and graduation fees if you have a child in grade 12. CCS attempts to offset these expenses

³⁸⁷ Interviews #15, October, 7, 2011; Interview #18, October 15, 2011; Interview #19, October 26, 2011; and Interview #29, November 30, 2011.

³⁸⁸ Guido de Brès Christian High School, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.guidodebres.org/>.

³⁸⁹ Calvin Christian Schools, "About Us – Is the school funded by the government?," accessed June 6, 2013, <http://calvinchristian.mb.ca/more-about-us/>.

by offering a family discount of up to -\$2100 for three or more children and an early-bird discount of up to 2% if fees are paid in total in advance.³⁹⁰

GDBCCHS has an equally complex fee structure, with six categories; “parents with children only in Guido”; “parents with children at Guido and elementary school”; “parents with children in grade 6 for the first time”; “parents whose children have graduated from Guido”; “general membership fee” (presumably for the Guido De Brès Canadian Reformed School Society); and “senior and students.” There is no additional description given for these categories or any mention of a family discount. It is also unclear if these fees are per family or per child, although I suspect that they are per family. The fees associated with each category range from \$88-807 per month for a twelve-month period.³⁹¹ By my calculations, parents could easily pay upwards of \$10,000 per year to send their children to GDBCCHS. Although GDBCCHS does not receive government funds, it collects regular donations from the fourteen Canadian Reformed Churches associated with the school society. Furthermore, the school’s website includes a link to donate directly to GDBCCHS or to Harvest Endowment Foundation, which gives funds to the fourteen Canadian Reformed associated Christian schools, including a teacher’s college, in southern Ontario.³⁹² These donations help to mitigate the school fees incurred by parents.

Homeschooling has become a more popular educational practice in Canada since the early 1980s.³⁹³ In their article, “Homeschooling and Canadian Educational Politics,” Scott Davies and Janice Aurini state, “Homeschooling is generally seen to have been pioneered by two

³⁹⁰ This information is based on the tuition forms for the 2013-2014 school year available through CCS’s website, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://calvinchristian.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Tuition-Payment-2013-14.pdf>.

³⁹¹ This information is for the 2012-2013 school year and is available through GDBCCHS’s website, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://www.guidodebres.org/community/fees.html>.

³⁹² Harvest Endowment Foundation, “The Funds,” accessed June 6, 2013, <http://www.harvestfoundation.ca/funds.php>.

³⁹³ Patrick Basham, John Merrifield, and Claudia R. Hepburn, *Home Schooling: From the Extreme to the Mainstream*, 2nd ed. Studies in Education Policy, accessed January 20, 2015 (Vancouver: Fraser Institute, October 2007), 9 <http://www.fraserinstitute.org/publicationdisplay.aspx?id=13089>.

vastly dissimilar groups: Protestant Fundamentalists and John Holt-inspired ‘unschoolers.’³⁹⁴ Homeschooling is one of those rare locations where the far left and the far right come together, although for markedly different reasons. While the “unschoolers” tend to disapprove of public education because it is perceived to stifle children and force standardization, conservative Protestants are generally assumed to homeschool for more ideological, religious reasons.³⁹⁵ For the purpose of this research the latter group is more significant. The connection between conservative Protestants and the rise of homeschooling is fairly well recognized, especially in the United States.³⁹⁶

It is surprisingly difficult to access national statistics on the percentage of children who are publicly, privately and home educated. This is for a variety of reasons including, as repeatedly noted, that education is under the jurisdiction of provincial government, which leads to discrepancies across provinces. A 2012 report by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada states, “Public and separate schools systems that are publicly funded serve about 93 per cent of all students in Canada.”³⁹⁷ A key example of publicly funded separate schools is the Catholic school system in Ontario. It is not apparent from this report how this number was

³⁹⁴ Scott Davies and Janice Aurini, “Homeschooling and Canadian Educational Politics: Rights, Pluralism and Pedagogical Individualism,” *Evaluation & Research in Education* 17, no. 2-3 (2003): 64. They are drawing on ideas expressed in Stevens, *Kingdom of Children*.

³⁹⁵ Arai argues that the assertion that either of these groups chose to homeschool due to either pedagogical or ideological reasons is only a partial truth; that it more often is a combination. A. Bruce Arai, “Reasons for Homeschooling in Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 25, no. 3 (2000): 204-217.

³⁹⁶ See Stevens, *Kingdom of Children*; Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006); and Randall Balmer, “Homeschooling Endangers Democracy,” in *Homeschooling*, ed. Heidi Williams, At Issue series (Detroit, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2007), 16-24. Originally published in Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

³⁹⁷ Canada, Council of Ministers of Education, “Promoting Equality of Educational Opportunities: Canada Report for the UNESCO Eight Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education,” 2012, accessed June 5, 2013, http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/289/2012.11_Promoting_Equality_of_Educational_Opportunity_EN.pdf.

calculated, but it is fair to say that the vast majority of Canadian children receive publicly funded education.

Regarding private education, a 2001 Statistics Canada report, “Trends in the use of private education,” drawing on data collected from 1987/1988 to 1998/1999 found that, “In 1998/1999, 5.6% of all children in elementary and secondary schools in Canada were enrolled in private schools, up from 4.6% in 1987/1988.”³⁹⁸ This report groups together all “schools operated and administered by private and individual groups” in its definition of private schools, therefore we can determine that less than 5.6% of all Canadian children attended private Christians schools. There is also a special note in the report outlining the definition of private and public schools. This report does not include any calculations on home schooling or “schools in institutions” other than to say, “Less than 0.5% of all children in the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth attend home or institutional schools.”³⁹⁹

In 1997 Statistics Canada released, “A profile of home schooling in Canada,” which states, “In the 1995-1996 school year, there were approximately 17,500 registered homeschoolers in Canada. This represented about 0.4% of total elementary and secondary student enrolment.”⁴⁰⁰ However, determining the percentage of Canadian children homeschooled always runs the risk of inaccuracy because parents may not register their children or the province, in the case of Quebec, may not collect information on this group.⁴⁰¹ It is fair to assume that the percentage estimated by Statistics Canada is a little low, and most research estimates that

³⁹⁸ Canada, Statistics Canada, “Trends in the use of private education,” *The Daily*, July 4, 2001, accessed June 2, 2013, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/010704/dq010704b-end.htm>.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Jacqueline Luffman, “A Profile of Home Schooling in Canada,” *Education Quarterly Review*, Statistics Canada, 4, no. 4 (1997): 30.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 38; and Basham, Merrifield, and Hepburn, “Home Schooling,” 9.

1% of all Canadian children were being home educated.⁴⁰² Again, like the percentage given for private schooling, this percentage does not take make a distinction between those who homeschool for primarily Christian or secular reasons.

The Education of CHPers and Their Children

After my early encounters with homeschooling CHPers I thought it was wise to ask about the education of the CHPers and their children. Because of the strong Dutch Reformed presence in the party I had anticipated that many CHPers and their children would have attended private Christian schools. The data that I gathered on education from the interviews is not parallel to that gathered by Statistics Canada or the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. I do not have the years that the CHPers or their offspring attended schools. The information I gathered is more reflective of their lifetime and what they were willing to disclose. In some cases I know the initial responses of the interviewees were simplified. By way of example, when interviewing Kenneth, a former CHP candidate in Ontario, I first asked if he went to a public school or a Christian school.⁴⁰³ “Public school,” he responded, “Public school all the way.” I followed up by asking, “And your children?” “They went to Christian school,” he said quickly. However, later in our conversation—and I do not think that Kenneth was in any way attempting to withhold information—when I asked him what he thought about homeschooling he said, “Well, we did homeschooling too.” Kenneth’s work led to his family living in various locations around the world and his wife tended to homeschool when they were living outside of Ontario. If I had not asked Kenneth his opinion of homeschooling I may not had learned this information.

Additionally, I was much more likely to ask the interviewees about the education of their children than how they were educated. While my data is certainly not flawless, it offers

⁴⁰² Luffman, “A Profile of Home Schooling in Canada,” 37-8; Basham, Merrifield, and Hepburn, “Home Schooling,” 9; and Davie and Aurini, “Homeschooling and Canadian Educational Politics,” 63.

⁴⁰³ Interview #4, July 27, 2011.

compelling evidence about the lives of, and choices made by, CHPers. Most importantly, trends in education among CHPers illustrate one of the ways that CHPers are notably different from the broader Canadian populace.

It should also be noted that due to the fact that I asked broadly, what type of school the CHPer or their children attended, the numbers do not evenly match the total interviewees. I interviewed a total of seventy-nine CHPers, but some changed schools, attending a Christian elementary school and then a public high school for example. Out of the seventy-nine, over forty attended public schools, thirty attended private Christian schools, nine were homeschooled, and twelve are unknown. CHPers were slightly more likely to have dropped out of school than to have attended Catholic schools. That being said, at least twenty-five interviewees had some post-secondary education, be it college, undergraduate or graduate degrees.

As noted in my summary of education in Canada, public education historically had a Christian flavour. This means that although a majority of CHPers have personal experiences within the public school system odds are high that this would have been during a time when prayer and Bible-reading were part of the curriculum. It is even possible, if not likely depending on the province, that they could have had Catholic nuns for teachers even if they attended a public school. This will be significant to keep in mind when I elucidate CHPers' perceptions of public education.

It is also worthy to note that the nine CHPers who were homeschooled were among the younger individuals I interviewed. The age range of homeschooled members interviewed was approximately nineteen to mid-thirties. In fact, all but two of the CHPers under the age of thirty that I interviewed had some experience being homeschooled, even if they had also attended Christian school or public school at some point. The two who were not homeschooled attended

only private Christian schools. This suggests that there is a generational gap in the CHP between those older members who are more likely to have personally attended public schools and those younger members who are more likely to have been homeschooled or privately educated. Furthermore, all of the homeschooled party members that I interviewed lived in Ontario. While this could suggest that Ontarian CHPers are more likely to be home educated, I suspect it is more a reflection of the members that I happened to access in this province.

Acknowledging trends in CHPers' education can help us make sense of their worldview and experiences, but it is unlikely that CHPers' had much choice in what type of school they attended. In order to gain a stronger sense of their positions on education as adults we need to examine the choices CHPers make regarding the schooling of their children. But before examining those numbers, we should consider the fertility rate of CHPers. As might be expected, party members have a high fertility rate. The average number of children per interview was 2.9.⁴⁰⁴ Like the statistics on education, these numbers do not have a strict parallel to Statistics Canada, which record the fertility rate as "the average number of children per woman."⁴⁰⁵ Between 2007 and 2011 the total fertility rate peaked at 1.68, with only Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut reaching a rate higher than 2.⁴⁰⁶ Looking back further to 1981, the fertility rates in Canada were not significantly different; 1.65 for the nation and only Saskatchewan, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories with rates higher than 2.⁴⁰⁷ All of this is to say, CHPers have a notably higher fertility rate than the national average.

⁴⁰⁴ Of the interviews with two people only two were not with married couples. One of these interviews was with a mother and daughter. The other was with two co-workers, one of whom was not a member of the CHP and I did not take the non-CHPers children into account when calculating the fertility rates.

⁴⁰⁵ Canada, Statistics Canada, "Births and total fertility rate, by province and territory (fertility rate)," last modified March 19, 2013, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/hlth85b-eng.htm>.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Canada, Statistics Canada, "Total fertility rate in Canada, provinces and territories, 1981 and 2005," last modified January 25, 2008, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-003-x/2007001/t/4129898-eng.htm>.

This fertility rate for interviews with one or two individuals of Dutch ancestry was even higher, at 3.3 children per interview. Like the comparison to the broader Canadian population, this fertility rate is higher than that calculated by Statistics Canada for “immigrant women from the Netherlands living in Canada.”⁴⁰⁸ Statistics Canada found that, “Dutch immigrant women ages 15-44 who had ever been married had an average of 2.3 children as of 1991, compared with 1.8 for their counterparts among all immigrant women and 1.6 for those born in Canada.”⁴⁰⁹ My calculation for the CHP is not limited by age or just to those who immigrated from the Netherlands, but any interviews where at least one person had any Dutch heritage. In this respect my grouping is broader than Statistics Canada, and yet more limited since my data set contains only conservative Protestant Dutch-Canadians. All of this is to say, the fertility rate of CHPers, no matter if it is compared to the broader Canadian populace or Dutch immigrants, is higher than average.

Based on my sixty-four interviews I gathered data on 187 children of CHPers. The ages of the children varied greatly from adult children with kids of their own to infants less than a year old. As reported in the interviews, eighty-six of the children were currently enrolled in or had attended private Christian schools, sixty-five had homeschooling, fifty-three had a public education, and sixteen attended Catholic school. Fourteen of the children were either not school age or are missing data. This information suggests that CHPers are more likely to have attended public school at some point than their children.

Yet, simply counting the number of CHPers’ children attending particular types of schools offers one interpretative lens of this data. When we take into account how frequently

Given that Nunavut was not officially separated from the Northwest Territories until April 1, 1999, the rate for the Northwest Territories in 1981 include Nunavut.

⁴⁰⁸ Canada, Statistics Canada/Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Profile: Netherlands*, 6.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

these types of educational choices were reported during the interviews we gain a new perspective on this information. The decision to have one's children privately educated at a Christian school was reported twenty-five times, whereas public school was reported twenty-one times, home school fourteen times, Catholic school seven times, and data was not available seven times. This means that although a larger number of CHPers' children were homeschooled, overall the decision to homeschool was made less frequently than public school. Furthermore, even though substantially more CHPer's children attended private Christians schools than public schools, the choice of the former was only reported a few more times than the latter.

The discrepancy between the number of children being educated in a particular way and the frequency of that type of education being chosen by the parents is largely due to the size of the individual families. The majority of the families that home educated were the largest among my interviewees. Of the fourteen families that had chosen to homeschool, the average number of children was 4.9. The average number of children in the families that chose to use Christian schools was slightly lower at 4.4; however, this number is slightly skewed as the two of the largest families (eight and nine children) sent at most three children to a Christian school. Of the families that chose public school the average number of children was notably lower at 3. This indicates a strong correlation between family size and educational choices made by CHPers, although it is not predictive. Just because a CHPer has more than five children does not mean they will necessarily choose to homeschool their children.

Another factor to take into consideration is the educational choices made by interviewees of Dutch ancestry. Given that Dutch-Canadians are historically linked to the development of private Christian schools we would expect that they are more likely to chose that type of education for their children. Thirty-seven of the interviews were with at least one person of

Dutch ancestry. Out of these interviews eight had no children and four had children that were too young to be attending school. The decision to use private Christian schools was reported twenty times, followed by homeschooling (twelve times), public school (eight times), and lastly Catholic school (once). Dennis, the one Dutch-Canadian CHPer who had children that attended Catholic school, was quite anomalous among all my interviewees regarding educational choices; he was the only CHPer that I interviewed who had children sent to public school, publicly funded Catholic school, private Christian school and homeschooled.⁴¹⁰ Otherwise, as predicted, Dutch-Canadian CHPers are more likely to send their children to private Christian schools.

The choice to go outside of the private Christian schools for Dutch-Canadian CHPers illustrates how some of these CHPers deviate from the norm for their religious-ethnic community. Given that after Christian schools, Dutch-Canadian CHPers were more likely to choose homeschooling over public schools illustrates some of their opposition to public schools. That being said, the fact that Catholic schools were the least likely to be chosen by this community, despite being Christian and no additional expense in Ontario, reflects their very particular Dutch Reformed culture. There was little discussion given in interviews about the option of publicly funded Catholic schools, but I hypothesize that avoiding Catholic schools is a carryover of the pillar system and a sense that these schools would be inappropriate for Protestants.

The decision to not use the Christian schools was especially controversial for any CHPers of Dutch ancestry. In the most extreme case Sonya, a Dutch-Canadian CHPer who homeschooled her two children, eventually left the Reformed Church that she grew up attending in part because of the flack that she received for not sending her children to the local Christian school. Sonya chose to homeschool her children for financial and familial reasons; her husband's

⁴¹⁰ Interview #35, January 11, 2012.

employment took him away from the family a lot, so having a flexible school schedule allowed her children to see their father more often. As she described it, “most of the kids who went to the church we went to all went to the Christian school [...] especially because they were the first ones that we, I kind of took a lot of the heat for, you know, taking kids out of the Christian school, and the ones that left the Christian schools after, you know, took a little heat for that.”⁴¹¹ Although the negative reaction to her decision to not use Christian schools was not the only reason that Sonya’s family left the Reformed Church, it was certainly a contributing factor.

Despite these types of experiences, it was clear from the number and from conversations with Dutch-Canadian CHPers that homeschooling was always preferable to public schools, if Christian schools were not an option. In the case of Lucas, the expense of his divorce led to his youngest children being homeschooled rather than attending Christian school.⁴¹² The possibility of sending his children to public school went unmentioned in our conversation, even though the expense would be comparable to, or less than, homeschooling.

Janice, who homeschooled her eight children, was even more explicit about public school not being a viable option, and the potential opposition her family faced for not using her local Christian school. According to Janice, she and her husband,

[...] both did not see public school as an alternative at all for [our children]. It was homeschool or we would have sent them to private [Christian] school. And we still supported private school in the beginning because we did not want to do it [homeschool] as a protest. We did not want the school to look as us and say, ‘What have we done wrong?’ We just wanted to say that this is an alternative that we feel strongly about.⁴¹³

Although Janice did not mention her church as negatively judging her choice to homeschool, it is fair to assume that there is an overlap between the members of her church and individuals

⁴¹¹ Interview #51, April 23, 2012.

⁴¹² Interview #14, October 3, 2011.

⁴¹³ Interview #31, December 2, 2011.

involved with her local Christian schools. The concern that individuals from the school would perceive her choice to homeschool negatively carries over to others in her church.

In interviews I regularly asked CHPers who chose to homeschool how they came to that decision. Occasionally I would ask how individuals chose to use public schools, but I rarely, if ever, asked why they chose Christian schools. This may have been an oversight on my part because I was working with the assumption that Christian schools were the most obvious choice for CHPers. Although homeschooling appeared to be a somewhat controversial choice for some, there was a certain appeal associated with this choice. A few interviewees commented that if they could do things over they would have chosen to homeschool and a few of the people without children commented that if they did have children they would want them to be homeschooled. Two couples interviewed with children under five years old affirmed that they intend to homeschool their children.

As was the case with Sonya and Lucas, many individuals homeschooled or used public schools because of the expense of Christian schools. The case of Clarissa, who I met at a leader visit event and later interviewed by phone, offers another example. Clarissa had homeschooled her twin boys up until middle school when one of the boys decided that he wanted to go to school. She did not seem distraught by the prospect of sending one of her sons to school. In her own words, she said, “He wants to have friends [...], to associate with kids and everything else, and the other one wants to stay home and learn, so that’s okay with me. I have no problem.”⁴¹⁴ However, she was not immediately forthcoming about the type of school the son would be attending, so I asked if he was going to be going to a Christian school. “No. It’s public,” she said. “Oh, public school,” I responded, a little surprised. “Yeah,” said Clarissa, matter-of-factly, “I can’t afford Christian schools.”

⁴¹⁴ Interview #3, July 21, 2011.

Clarissa's inability to afford to send her children to Christian schools is completely understandable considering, as outlined above, it could easily cost parents over \$10,000 per year to send their children to these schools. Another couple, Susan and Richard, commented that part of the reason they send their two boys to public school rather than the local Christian school is that on top of the regular school fees they would have to pay for an educational assistant for their son who has physical and learning disabilities. These additional expenses effectively removed the option of using their local Christian school.

The cost prohibitive aspect of Christian schools was not only discussed in relation to educating CHPers' children. Regarding the education of CHPers themselves, at least two individuals mentioned that they were sponsored, either anonymously or by family members, to go to Christian school otherwise they would have been educated in another manner. None of the parents disclosed if their children were being sponsored, that is if someone else was paying for their children to go to Christian schools. Although sponsoring illustrates an attempt to offset the expense of these schools, it clearly is not available to everyone.

Beyond expenses other reasons given for homeschooling frequently highlighted the perceived shortcomings of the public education system. Michelle, discussed in the introduction of this chapter, was wary about sending her first child on a long bus ride through an area that she felt was unsafe to get to the closest public school.⁴¹⁵ She described the idea to homeschool the oldest of her seven children taking root after hearing Raymond Moore, an early advocate of Christian home education and co-author of *Home-Spun Schools*, featured on a Focus on the Family radio broadcast in the early 1980s.⁴¹⁶ However, she also admitted that homeschooling gave her a route for avoiding the problems associated with sending her child to the public school.

⁴¹⁵ Interview #11, September 12, 2011.

⁴¹⁶ Raymond Moore and Dorothy Moore, *Home-Spun Schools: Teaching Children at Home; What Parents are Doing and How They are Doing It* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982). Also see Stevens, *Kingdom of Children*, 26.

Similarly, Ella and James chose to homeschool because of safety issues. According to James his children would have had, “to cross a four-lane road and, at the time, four railway tracks, and then go to a school where [he] knew at least one of the teachers was using coke.”⁴¹⁷ Sending their children to Christian school was not an option at the time because James did not yet consider himself a Christian when their children started going to school. The added benefit of a personalized education for their children was a bonus that they would not have received in the public school and at that time they could not afford a private school of any kind. Religion was rarely, if ever, given as a primary reason for choosing homeschooling, although the avoidance of public schools had implicit connections to concerns about the secularization of public education. In order to support this assertion, we now turn to examining CHPers’ opinions of public school.

Opinions of Public Schooling: “It’s not an option for us.”

One of the largest families that I interviewed, the Dekkers, was also one of the few instances that I had the wherewithal to ask how they had decided on Christian school rather than homeschooling or public school for their children.⁴¹⁸ Albert and Eleanor Dekker, who live in the Niagara region, have nine children between the ages of one and fifteen. All of their children who were old enough attended Christian schools. When I asked the question about choosing schools for their children, Albert immediately responded, “Well, the public schooling is... it’s not an option for us.” He went on to explain that things have changed since he went to high school and from what he has read about public school today, “it wasn’t really an option.” The fact that the Dekkers are Canadian Reformed and live in the area covered by Guido De Brès Christian High School and associated Christian elementary schools was not given as part of the reason for this choice, although it certainly would have been a significant contributing factor.

⁴¹⁷ Interview #6, August 6, 2011.

⁴¹⁸ Interview #15, October 7, 2011.

Overwhelming, CHPers made negative assessments about public education in the interviews. They bemoaned the removal of Christianity, God, and in some cases nationalism, from the public schools, frequently recounting how things were when they went to public school. As noted by Bob, “They were still reading Bible stories to us [...] from morning openings, when I was a kid, in school [...]. Lord’s Prayer and Bible readings, and even if your family wasn’t Christian, the school held the Christian values and they held you to it too.”⁴¹⁹ In a similar vein Jeff commented, “I went to public school in a time when we prayed in class. I went to a public school during the era where Christian Christmas carols we sang actually [...] mentions Jesus as God, not just trips to the shopping mall.”⁴²⁰

Another common example of how Christianity has been removed from public schools is the banning of the Gideons from giving free copies of their Bibles to students. This was discussed in interviews and, more surprisingly, in a *Communiqué* written by Jim Hnatiuk and published on September 25, 2012.⁴²¹ In the *Communiqué*, Hnatiuk discusses the banning of the Gideons from distributing Bibles in public schools in Nova Scotia and Ontario. In both cases the banning of the Bibles was credited to a single complaint to each of the respective school boards. Furthermore, the move to ban the Gideons from distributing their Bibles in schools was described as indicative of the removal of Christianity from Canada’s history. As stated by Hnatiuk, “The powers that be don’t only want to restrict our children’s access to a Gideon Bible but they are going so far as to rewrite the history books to remove any references that show the importance of our Judeo-Christian foundations.”⁴²²

⁴¹⁹ Interview #9, August 25, 2011.

⁴²⁰ Interview #26, November 14, 2011.

⁴²¹ Jim Hnatiuk, “They Don’t Have a Clue!” *Communiqué* 19, no. 39 (September 25, 2012).

⁴²² *Ibid.*

Rita, a Nova Scotian CHPer, offered quite a few examples of the secularization and removal of nationalism from her local public school. She criticized that, “they’ve taken anything to do with God out of schools,” pointing to the lack of religion classes—Nova Scotia, unlike Ontario and Quebec, does not offer world religion courses in public school curriculum— and the supposed banning of lunchtime prayer groups.⁴²³ Associating these changes with a lack of nationalism, she said, “I want to see things change back again. I want to see, right from the bottom line, the [students in the] schools being able to sing “O Canada.”⁴²⁴ The assumption is if the schools encouraged nationalism, such as the singing of the national anthem, then they would also be more likely to support public expressions of Christianity.

Let me be clear, I did not challenge any of the claims made by CHPer about public schools and I am not about to verify the validity of these claims. It is generally accepted, as was pointed to by Seljak, that since the 1960s Canada’s public education has become increasingly secularized. Given that CHPer who are middle-aged and older are more likely to have attended public school than their younger counterparts it is highly probably that the schools are less inherently Christian than when they attended school. As for the removal of singing the national anthem, this varies greatly across the country, within provinces and sometimes school districts.⁴²⁵ The perceptions that CHPer have about public education are more significant to this study than determining if these perceptions and opinions are based in reality. A shared negative

⁴²³ Interview #2, August 12, 2010.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ A January 28, 2009 CBC report examined a New Brunswick public Elementary school where the principle decided to cease the daily morning ritual of singing the national anthem. The report notes “nearly all elementary students in the district sing the anthem every day. But that decision is up to each school.” “N.B. School silences O Canada,” *CBC*, January 28, 2009, accessed June 7, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/story/2009/01/28/nb-o-canada.html>. More recently, as of April 2012, the Toronto District Catholic School Board decided it was not enough for their students to listen to a recording of the national anthem each day with the option to sing along. The students are now required to sing the anthem a cappella every morning. Ian Vandaele, “School board makes singing O Canada mandatory,” *The National Post*, April 20, 2012, accessed June 7, 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/04/20/school-board-makes-singing-o-canada-mandatory/>.

opinion of public education, pointing to the lack of Christianity as a sign of secularization, helps foster the sentiment among CHPers that Canada needs reclaim its Christian past.

The negative perception of public schools also came through when CHPers discussed the educational choices for their children. Many of those who sent their children to public schools appeared to do so as a last resort, like the case of Clarissa, and others described above, who could not afford the Christian schools. Arguably the public Catholic system in Ontario was even less of a viable option, but little to no discussion was given to this type of school, unless the CHPer was Catholic. Furthermore, many CHPers who had children in public schools described this as a good way for their children to learn how to be “in the world, but not of the world.” Nick, a Pentecostal CHPer in Ontario whose two children went through public schools, describes it like this:

I think the Bible teaches us that we need to be in the world but not of it, and I think kids need to learn that early on in life as well. How do you balance your beliefs with what you're hearing and seeing every day, and how do you defend your beliefs, or learn to at least reconcile what you're seeing with what you believe?⁴²⁶

Similarly, Richard, another non-Dutch Canadian CHPer said, “[...] the problem I have with taking [my sons] out of the public system [is] how can I tell them about the things that are wrong with the world if they're not right there seeing them? Experiencing them?”⁴²⁷

There are two issues at play in these types of comments about public schools: 1) the parents are attempting to make the best of a less than ideal situation; and 2) the parents have an idealized picture of Christian schools. It is clear to these CHPers that bad things happen in public school, so if their children are going to be there they will at least learn how to defend their Christian worldview in a hostile environment. The second issue is an implicit assumption that

⁴²⁶ Interview #13, September 16, 2011.

⁴²⁷ Interview #12, September 14, 2011.

their children would avoid, or at least be less likely to encounter, “things that are wrong with the world” if they attended Christian schools. It seems worthwhile to note that both of these parents attended public schools and have no personal experiences with Christian schools. Furthermore, at least a couple interviewees who did attend Christian schools had such negative experiences that they were withdrawn from the schools and/or choose to homeschool in part because of their negative experiences.⁴²⁸ This is not to say that Christian schools are highly problematic, but that they are certainly not problem-free. No interviewees indicated that they removed their children from Christian schools because of personal issues beyond finances.

Presumably the fees associated with Christian schools could be alleviated if the schools received some or more—depending on the province—public funds. However, the strings attached to public funds were described as potentially threatening the religious authority and community control over the schools. This negative association with accepting public funding was one of the few ways that Ontario’s Catholic schools were discussed by interviewees. Kenneth, whose children did not attend Ontario’s Catholic schools, said in relation to public funding, “I think if you start getting provincial government money you are losing control of what is taught in your school, and gradually it’ll erode into being a public school—even the Catholic school board, which is an amazing institution in Canada.”⁴²⁹ Again, we can see the negative perceptions of public schools highlighted by the use of “erode.” Although Kenneth has generalized the provincially specific Ontario Catholic school board to the entire country, he also sees those schools at risk because of public funds.

Staying on the example of Ontario’s Catholic schools, during my fieldwork the provincial legislature passed Bill 13, also known as the Accepting Schools Act or “anti-bullying”

⁴²⁸ Interviews #22, November 3, 2011; and Interview #44, March 15, 2012.

⁴²⁹ Interview #4, July 27, 2011.

legislation.⁴³⁰ Prior to passing this bill on June 5, 2012, the Accepting Schools Act drew a lot of attention, both within the CHP and the general media, because it mandates that students in publicly funded schools are allowed to start Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) using that specific name. This was seen as particularly troublesome for the Catholic School boards, which objected to being told they had to allow these groups in their schools.⁴³¹ This concern was echoed by former leader Hnatiuk in the October 16, 2012 *Communiqué*. In that *Communiqué* Hnatiuk also condemned the interpretation of bullying given by Laurel Broten, the Minister of Education at the time the bill was passed. Broten is reported in the *Communiqué* as saying in a press conference that the Accepting Schools Act “also means that Catholic schools should not be teaching that abortion is wrong, because it takes away from a woman’s right to choose and that is one of the harshest acts of bullying against girls.”⁴³² However, the core problem with Bill 13, from the perspective of CHPers, was not that it strives to reduce bullying. The problem was that it dealt with bullying associated with homophobia, racism, sexism, and ableism, but avoided issues of religious discrimination.⁴³³ The fact that the provincial government could force these kinds of changes onto the Catholic system was expressed as a negative example of what happens when schools are public funded.

Directly related to the Accepting Schools Act, issues of sexuality and “inclusiveness” were regularly given as negative examples associated with public education. Interviewees would

⁴³⁰ Ontario, Ministry of Education, “Safe and Accepting Schools,” last modified October 25, 2012, accessed June 9, 2013, <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/safeschools.html>; and Jim Hnatiuk, “Thou Shalt Not!,” *Communiqué* 19, no. 42 (October 16, 2012).

⁴³¹ For examples of how this issue was covered by the national media see: Christina Blizzard, “McGuinty’s Bullying Policy Causes Rift with Catholic School,” *Toronto Sun*, February 2, 2012, accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www.torontosun.com/2012/02/02/mcguintys-bullying-policy-causes-rift-with-catholic-schools>; Martin Regg Cohn, “Catholic Trustees Snub Dalton McGuinty on Gay-Straight Alliances,” *Toronto Star*, January 30, 2012, accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/politics/article/1123916--catholic-trustees-on-a-collision-course-with-ontario-s-catholic-premier-dalton-mcguinty>; and Chris Selley, “Dalton McGuinty’s Gay Headache,” *The National Post*, January 28, 2012, accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www.nationalpost.com/opinion/columnists/Dalton+McGuinty+headache/6065876/story.html>.

⁴³² Jim Hnatiuk, “Thou Shalt Not!”

⁴³³ Ableism is discrimination in favour of able-bodied people.

refer to sexually graphic videos or course content that young students were supposedly exposed to in public schools. Going back to the example of Michelle, she asserted that public schools are “trying to teach that homosexuality is normal” and “they are not showing [the students] the outcomes of that lifestyle.”⁴³⁴ Veronica, who attended public school and sent her children to Christian school, discussed an inappropriate project that required grade 5 students to research gay pride parades. A grandmother and perennial CHP candidate, she described this project as teachers telling students to look at sexually graphic images that, in her opinion, “will destroy their minds sexually.”⁴³⁵ Furthermore, she explained, exposure to sexually graphic imagery leads to young people being unable to have “a long-term traditional marriage.” These examples indicate the sentiment among CHPers that sex education—particularly that associated with homosexuality—is connected to the decline of “traditional families” and Canada’s moral decline.

Bob was also very critical of how “inclusive” gets used in the public school system. He used inclusiveness in a doublespeak way to illustrate how public schools do not include a Christian worldview or perspective. In this regard he said, “When we say public education that means all of the public. Talk about the most exclusive schools is the one which is inclusive [*sic*]; includes homosexuals and everyone else shut up. What’s so inclusive about that?”⁴³⁶ The connections made between inclusiveness and the exclusion of their Christian worldview were frequently aligned by Bob, Victoria, and other CHPers with the “homosexual agenda” present in public schools. The sense that the so-called “homosexual agenda” as antithetical to the Christian worldview held by CHPers will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter on the constructed enemies of the party. The negative opinions of public education held by members of the CHP, such as the treatment of Christianity and the potential promotion of sex in all its

⁴³⁴ Interview #11, September 12, 2011.

⁴³⁵ Interview #43, February 1, 2012.

⁴³⁶ Interview #9, August 25, 2011.

varieties, has led some to take action. I will now give three case studies that illustrate how CHPers have attempted to alter public education.

Taking it to the Streets: CHPers and Activism Related to Public Education

Despite the fact that up until the recent development of the provincial branch of the CHP in British Columbia the party was solely federal and had no jurisdiction—beyond the fact that it has never been elected—to alter public education, this has not stopped CHPers from trying to effect changes to public schools. In this section I will offer three very different examples of how CHPers in Ontario specifically have been actively involved with public education in their province. It should also be noted that none of the members discussed in this section are of Dutch-Canadian ancestry.

Bob, our first example, is undoubtedly one of the most active CHPers I encountered in regards to public education and has been the most successful in enacting changes to his local school board. He has been a candidate for both the CHP and the FCP. When Bob's now grown children were attending public school he was appalled to discover graphic videos being used for sex education. There was no elucidation in our interview about what was present in the offending videos, but it was enough to push Bob to help start a group to remove them from the school. By his own description, he helped form the group,

[...] around unacceptable sex ed videos [that were] being shown in public schools. We formed our council around that issue and they were banned. They were red-marked, red labeled and put down in the library's [storage], down deep in the system where nobody could find them anymore. And if you wanted to get it out for your classroom you had to go get the parents' permission, from every parent in the class, to view it. It wasn't worth the effort.⁴³⁷

When it became clear that Planned Parenthood had sponsored one or more of the offending videos, and that the provincial and municipal governments were giving money to

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

Planned Parenthood, the group lobbied to get the governmental funding removed. The group pushed on this issue for years, giving presentations to city hall, and eventually convinced the municipal government to revoke funding for Planned Parenthood. This led to the closing of the Planned Parenthood in Bob's city. In Bob's words,

[...] three years later, to the day we started, they were gone. So we lobbied hard and Planned Parenthood was removed from [his city's] funding, and they shut their doors [...] They're out of the schools. They are on a no-go-to list in the [local] school board. They are not allowed to be in the schools.⁴³⁸

The group went on, according to Bob, to vet "two different editions of the sex education curriculum."⁴³⁹ He was clearly very proud of his involvement and the effectiveness of this group.

Bob's involvement with this group began well before he became an active member of the CHP. Although his sentiments about public education were usually shared by other CHPers, it was rare for others to take such a decisive and public position on education. It was very clear that Bob remains very concerned about public education and continues to remain active, and encourages others to become active, on the local level. As he stated, "When you fight federally, the kids are still entering into public schools. It's twisting their minds, so the closer you can stay to home the better."⁴⁴⁰ Becoming a CHP candidate has not hindered Bob's activism regarding public education. If anything, it has offered him a wider platform for disseminating his stance and rallying others to become involved. He has been very adept at merging his federal, provincial and municipal politics.

In a February 2012 *Communiqué* titled "Educational Excellence and 'Parental Choice,'" former party leader Hnatiuk discussed the dismissed appeal of a Quebec family seeking, "permission to exempt their child from that province's controversial ethics and religious culture

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

course.”⁴⁴¹ Hnatiuk goes on to write, “Education is constitutionally under provincial jurisdiction. This news makes it painfully clear just how important it is for the Christian Heritage Party and its members to be engaged in provincial politics as well as federal.”⁴⁴² He explains that this was part of the impetus for the CHP National Board to allow the development of provincial branches in BC and Manitoba. Bob is an excellent example of a CHPer being engaged in provincial and federal politics in the manner outlined by Hantiuk in a province that does not have, and is unlikely to develop, its own branch of the party.⁴⁴³

A second example of an individual CHPer who has been heavily involved in public education activism is G.J. Rancourt, although his involvement was notably different than Bob’s. Rancourt ran as a one-time CHP candidate (2011) in the London-Fanshawe riding, approximately 200kms southwest of Toronto—well outside the greater Toronto area. It is important to observe this fact because Rancourt publicly protested the Toronto District School Board in the summer of 2011 over the issue of Muslim students praying in Toronto’s Park Valley Middle School. Rancourt spoke at a minimum of two protests over the so-called “Mosqueteria,” always making sure to present himself as a candidate for the CHP.⁴⁴⁴ Muslim students at Park Valley were given time and space in the school’s cafeteria (hence the “Mosqueteria”) for noon prayers after it became apparent that students who were leaving the school for noon prayers were not always returning. This somewhat innocent attempt to encourage student attendance drew the

⁴⁴¹ Jim Hnatiuk, “Educational Excellence and ‘Parental Choice,’” *Communiqué* 19, No. 9 (February 28, 2012).

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ The reasons that this development is unlikely were described in the introductory chapter.

⁴⁴⁴ Emma Teitel, “Opposing Prayer in Toronto Public Schools, With Dignity: How Bad Bedfellows Have Clouded the Case Against the ‘Mosqueteria,’” *Maclean’s*, July 27, 2011, accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www2.macleans.ca/2011/07/27/opposing-prayer-in-toronto-public-schools-with-dignity/>. I never interviewed Rancourt, therefore he has not been made anonymous. All of the information given about him in this dissertation was collected via publicly accessible sources or based on field notes taken at public CHP events. Videos of Rancourt speaking at these events can be seen on the following YouTube videos: G. J. Rancourt, “Muslim Students Given Exemption To Pray In Public School,” YouTube video, 32:25, posted by forhisglory700, July 26, 2011, accessed September 4, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoLs6PPtHR4>; and G. J. Rancourt, “Canadian School Board Submits to Sharia Law 1/5 – Coalition Protest: G.J. Rancourt,” YouTube video, 13:29, posted by forhisglory700, August 8, 2011, accessed September 4, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ear87TE3dFI>.

ire of a motley crew of religious opponents: Rancourt, representing the Christian Heritage Party, and representatives from the Jewish Defence League, Canadian Hindu Advocacy, and Rev. Paul Costa.⁴⁴⁵ While this may be the most inter-religious event that I am aware of any CHPer being involved with, I question if Rancourt received permission by the CHP National Board to represent the party. My reasons for questioning this are twofold.

First, in November of 2011, the fall after the protests, Rancourt announced at the CHP's Beamsville Townhall meeting that his EDA was planning to sue the Toronto District School Board over the issue of Muslim students praying in the public schools. It did not appear that others at this meeting had prior knowledge of this plan. Indeed, some CHPers interviewed after the townhall meeting said that they were unimpressed with this plan, seeing it as a step backwards; they felt this attempt to remove Islam from the schools could also close the door on Christianity. Second, not only have I not seen any further references to this EDA following through with Rancourt's announcement, he no longer appears to be the candidate in that riding. The website for the EDA, which largely focused on Rancourt as the candidate, is last known to be active on February 5, 2012. The fact that the website is no longer active and that Rancourt was in the center of another very public conflict in August 2012, again promoting himself as a representative of the CHP, suggests that he has since stepped down from this position.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ "Video: Press Conference Announcing Mosqueteria Protest At TDSB HQ," BlazingCatFur (blog), July 2011, Accessed June 20, 2013, <http://blazingcatfur.blogspot.ca/2011/07/canadian-hindu-advocacy-with-jewish-and.html>. It is not clear which church or organization Rev. Paul Costa represented.

⁴⁴⁶ This second conflict centered on the decision of the city of London to not fly a "Christian" flag for Prayer Fest. See: Jonathan Sher and Gillian Wheatley, "Christian Flag Raises Ire," *London Free Press*, August 20, 2012, accessed September 4, 2014, <http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/2012/08/19/20118251.html>; Angela Mullins, "Request to Fly Christian Flag for Prayer Fest Denied by City of London," *Metro News* (London, ON), August 23, 2012, accessed September 4, 2014, <http://metronews.ca/news/london/346590/request-to-fly-christian-flag-for-prayerfest-denied-by-city-of-london/>; and Scott Taylor, "Prayer Fest Protesters Anger Organizer," *London Free Press*, August 26, 2012, accessed September 4, 2014, <http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/2012/08/25/20139981.html>.

Unlike Bob, who seamlessly merged his prior local politics with his later involvement with the CHP, Rancourt did not appear to get publicly involved with issues regarding education until he became a member of the CHP. Additionally, Bob remained focused on his local public schools, whereas Rancourt chose to protest a school board that was around two hours outside of his EDA. Whatever their differences, Bob remains actively involved with the CHP and continues to effect changes, albeit slowly, to his local schools, and Rancourt appears to no longer be involved with the CHP.

The third example and final example of an individual CHPer's activism in relation to public schools is Jeff, a middle-aged father of two young children. Jeff is a relatively new member of the CHP—not a candidate—and is at the center of a court case against his local public school board.⁴⁴⁷ The court case centers on Jeff and his wife's right to be notified when his children would be taught about topics that conflicted with their family's Christian worldview. His intention was to have his children removed from those particular classes—not the entire course, just the classes when those topics were being discussed—however, he was told that he would not be notified and that his children would be attending those classes. This case, which is still active at the time of writing, garnered negative attention from a *Maclean's* editorialist and support from conservative media, such as *The Catholic Register* and *LifeSite News*.⁴⁴⁸ In the more liberal, mainstream media Jeff was portrayed as ignorant and bigoted, whereas the conservative sources praised him for defending parental rights. The question of parental rights coalesces around the issue of who has the ultimate authority on how one's children are educated? If individual citizens pay into public education and choose to use that system, can they prevent their children from being exposed to curriculum mandated by the government, even if they are

⁴⁴⁷ Interview #26, November 14, 2011.

⁴⁴⁸ I have not included citations for these sources in order to maintain Jeff's anonymity.

personally opposed to that curriculum? Or do parents have to pay into the public system and the extra expense of a private education for their children?

In the case with Jeff it is especially important to note that Jeff was never publicly linked to the CHP, unlike Bob or Rancourt. He did not take this action because he is a member of the CHP or present himself as a representative of the party. Instead, he happens to be a member of the CHP who has sued his local public school board. I am drawing on him as an example because I feel his actions embody the sentiments about public education expressed by the party members that I interviewed. That is to say, Jeff is keenly aware that the public school system, while attempting to accommodate others, is not accommodating his religious position. In our interview he described this situation as “discrimination against [his] family because of [their] Christian faith.”⁴⁴⁹ This reflects Bob’s comment about inclusive schools excluding “everyone else,” but makes it much clearer that “everyone else” is Christians (and a particular type of Christian at that).

To summarize the significance of these three case studies, they highlight actions taken by individual CHPers—sometimes as individual citizens and sometimes as representatives of the party—in relation to public education. In the case of Bob, he has been particularly adept at bringing together his political activities and has been remarkably successful in enacting the changes that he sought. Rancourt offers a counter-example to Bob, reaching beyond his local school board and eventually—or so I infer—leaving the CHP. Jeff is something of an outlier among the three examples. He has taken his personal convictions to task, and while I have no doubts that the CHP supports him in his lawsuit, he has not made any public acknowledgements that he is a member of the party. Although he is active on his local EDA, he is not a candidate and therefore there is less imperative for him to be publicly connected to the CHP regarding the

⁴⁴⁹ Interview #26, November 14, 2011.

court case. That being said, Jeff's reasons for suing his local school board are very much in tune with the criticisms of public education that I heard from CHPers. While he may be a special case in that he is suing his school board, the sentiment underlying this action are shared by his fellow party members.

What can we infer about the CHP and Education?

Although as a primarily federal political party the CHP, even if elected, has no direct ability to alter public education, this does not mean that party members are not passionately concerned about education. If anything, concerns about parental rights, secularization, sexuality, and inclusiveness come together in the members' educational choices for their children and their opinions of public education. While the party does not have any official policies on education, it is not uncommon for issues relating to education to be discussed in the *Communiqué*, as seen in examples given above, and for party members to share a generally negative opinion of public education.⁴⁵⁰

The educational choices made by members of the CHP clearly illustrate how party members stand apart from the broader Canadian populace. Among the CHPers that I interviewed they are just as likely to have attended public school as they are to have attended Christian school, Catholic school, or have been homeschooled. However, those CHPers who attended public school most likely did so at a time when Christianity was still quite present in the public system. Keenly aware of the decreased presence of Christianity, party members displayed nostalgia for what public education used to be.

⁴⁵⁰ The party's policy booklet does include a general statement about education and resource management, but no official policy. This statement reads, "Educational media should be provided for use in schools so that Canada's youth can be challenged to participate in recycling, conservation, and protecting the environment." CHP Canada, *CHP Party Policy*, 33.

Although the decisions to privately educate or homeschool one's children are relatively rare in Canada, these are two popular choices among CHPers. In the cases of members with Dutch ancestry public schools are seen as not an option and publicly funded Catholic schools appear to go unconsidered. More children of CHPers were sent to Christian schools or homeschooled than attended public school, and public school was never described as a first choice. The children of CHPers with no Dutch ancestry were more likely to be sent to a public school than their Dutch-Canadian counterparts, and they were also more likely to be part of a smaller family.

Negative opinions of public schools expressed by members of the CHP frequently centered on the lack of Christianity and nationalism present and provincial governments pushing for greater acceptance of sexual and religious diversity. In this sense, public schools are symbolic of the overarching concerns that CHPers have about Canada moving away from its Christian heritage and declining morality. Considering how frequently these types of criticism were raised it is somewhat surprising that it took nearly twenty-five years for the party to begin to branch out into provincial politics. The primary reasons that I suspect it took this long is because of the Dutch-Canadian presence in the party. Considering the Dutch-Canadian CHPers are most likely to avoid the public system altogether and that this group appears to have the greatest control over the party, it seems unlikely that they would bother trying to change the system even if they are critical of it. This is probably part of the reason why none of the three examples given of CHPers actively attempting to alter public education were Dutch-Canadian.

The fact that much of the criticism of public education was focused on secularization, particularly secular humanism, and the prevalence of the "homosexual agenda" offers an ideal shift in this study from discussions of education to the perceived enemies of the CHP. In the

following chapter I will discuss in greater detail three amorphous groups—possibly better described as concepts—that the CHP understands as promoting the degradation of Canada’s Christian heritage: secular humanism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam. All three were discussed at some point in association with education, but, as will be seen, the concerns CHPers raised with these groups go beyond opposition to public education.

Chapter Six: Conceived Combatants: Christian Heritage Party Imaginings of Secular Humanism, the Homosexual Agenda, and Radical Islam

The CHP's March 2012 National Convention in Abbotsford, British Columbia was perhaps the most helpful of all my fieldwork experiences. The convention was attended by highly committed CHPers from across the country and afforded me the opportunity to make many useful contacts and conduct numerous interviews. In many ways going to the convention felt like a celebrity sighting for me, since it was my first opportunity to meet candidates that I had tracked during the 2011 election. One of the interviews I managed to snag while at the convention was with one of these "celebrity" families. Phyllis and Moe joined the CHP before the party's first election in 1988 and have always been very active members.⁴⁵¹ Both in their sixties and sharing a Dutch-Canadian identity, it was apparent by their interactions that they have developed a strong marital partnership. Phyllis holds a prominent position in the Alberta board; she is well-educated and has an aura of matronly comfort. She clearly takes pride in her role as a mother and homeschooled some of her children while Moe worked on the family farm. Moe has a friendly demeanour and the rugged, weather-worn appearance of someone who has farmed his entire life. He has run as a candidate for the CHP three times, including the most recent election. Although Phyllis has never run as a candidate, she is one of those people who are essential to the functioning of the CHP because of their dedication to making the party work.

I interviewed Moe and Phyllis during one of the convention's lunch breaks. We decided to walk a short distance from the convention hotel to a local coffee shop for a light lunch while I recorded. The coffee shop was full of other attendees seeking respite from the morning of deliberating resolutions and the bright halogen lights of the conference centre. Like so many of

⁴⁵¹ Interview #45, March 15, 2012.

the CHPers I talked with, Phyllis and Moe support a wide variety of social conservative organizations, like the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, Alberta Pro-life, the Canadian Family Action Council, and REAL [Realistic, Equal, Active for Life] Women of Canada. After mentioning many of the groups that they belong to Phyllis added,

I think we could learn something from our enemies because if you see how the—like, for example, the homosexual movement works. They don't care if they agree with every jot or tittle with the other person, but if it fits with their agenda they get behind that person for that issue. But the Christians, they seem to have to think that they have to agree with every jot and tittle of their theological position in order to work together and be co-belligerents in the fight for life or the fight for family or the fight for righteousness.⁴⁵²

Prior to this homosexuality had not been mentioned in the interview, so it was a bit surprising when “the homosexual movement” was suddenly invoked as an enemy. Equally unanticipated was implication that this movement is somehow unified. I am quite certain that those actively attempting to secure the rights of queer people (not just homosexuals) feel there is a lack of unity. Even if we limit “the homosexual movement” to gays and lesbians, there are a myriad of opinions and positions on the end goals of such a movement (if there is one movement). However, for our purposes what is important to note are Phyllis's perceptions of: 1) the homosexual movement as an enemy of Christians, and 2) this enemy is more unified than Christians. The feeling that Christians—that is, social conservative Christians—have challenges working together was most likely reaffirmed for Phyllis earlier that morning during the plenary sessions, where CHPers had difficulties coming to a consensus on many platforms and policies. If members of the party cannot agree on the approach they should take, then what hope do they have combatting against their supposedly unified enemies.

Later, when discussing debates within the CHP about the name of the party Phyllis brought up the homosexual movement again. She voiced her frustration with “Christian” being

⁴⁵² Ibid.

aligned with bigots and homophobes, speculating that those who want to change the name of the party are attempting to avoid these connotations. In her own words,

Unfortunately, in today's society, the connotation is anything Christian is bigoted, you know. 'They're hateful. They're homophobes. They're this. They're that.' We're all these ugly things, when in actuality it's a ploy used to shut-up the Christian voice. And if you are aware of that then you can deal, then you're not necessarily intimidated by it, but you can still go forward. That's a tactic effectively used by the homosexual movement [...] to label you as, you know, a homophobe.⁴⁵³

She went on to describe how words, like "Christian," "tolerance," "love," and "ultimate good," are manipulated by the world and the homosexual movement to mean something different than their Christian values. The implications here are: 1) Phyllis' Christian meanings given to these terms are the historically accurate and perpetually correct definitions, and 2) the homosexual movement is somehow more connected to these changes in definition than other groups. All of Phyllis's discussions of "the homosexual movement" started with as assumption that there is a single homosexual movement that exists. No attempts were made to define this movement, so it was not clear if she was subsuming all homosexual people under the banner of "the homosexual movement." Whether this movement is exemplified by Pride festivities or by petitions for the rights of same-sex couples to marry, divorce, adopt, or claim joint taxes remains unclear. What is clear is that in the mind of Phyllis and many other CHPers, the homosexual movement is a clear and formidable opponent for like-minded Christians.

Conceived Combatants

Although the opening vignette emphasizes the rhetoric framing the homosexual movement as an enemy of the CHP, the perceived homosexual movement is not the party's sole combatant. In this chapter I critically examine three groups discussed by CHPers as challenging

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

the party—not in a strict political sense, like competing political parties, but groups that present competing ideologies—namely, secularism/humanism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam. Defining one’s enemies helps create group cohesion. Whether or not those combatants are organized or understand themselves taking place in the battle is insignificant compared to how the imagining of the enemies helps to shape group identity. Therefore, I am not overly concerned with how those supposed secularists, homosexuals, and radical Muslims perceive themselves. Rather, my primary concern within this chapter is how the CHP conceives these perceived combatants and how this reflects the identity of the party. At times I may question the veracity of these perceptions, but it is not my role to uphold or dismantle the CHP’s conception of its enemies. It is my job to illustrate how the party shapes its understanding of these groups and how the shared perceptions of secularism, non-heteronormative groups, and radical Muslims shore up the CHP’s social conservative Christian identity.⁴⁵⁴

The fact that the CHP focuses so much on these three groups marks them as social conservatives. I argue that opposition to secularism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam is a trifecta of contemporary social conservative identity markers. They represent fears or at least intense wariness of non-heteronormative identities, irreligion, and competing religious conservatives (particularly in the form of Islam), and are presented by the party as reasons for its existence. Another perceived enemy, not emphasized in this chapter, is feminism, which is frequently linked with abortion and contraceptive rights. In the following section I explain in greater detail why feminism or “the feminist agenda” are not included in this particular chapter as perceived enemies of the CHP. These types of social conservative identity markers shift over time and the contemporary lack of emphasis on feminism is a reflection of how the perceived enemies of the CHP have changed since the party’s inception.

⁴⁵⁴ “Social conservatism” was defined in the introduction of this dissertation.

In any case, the party's open opposition to secularism, homosexuality, and radical Islam is an overt marker of the CHP's social conservative identity. I argue opposition to abortion—the party's pro-life stance—is its primary Christian social conservative identity marker, which is part of the reason why that aspect of the CHP garnered its own chapter. The CHP actively emphasizes its pro-life stance over its other social conservative positions; however, it would be an oversight to leave these other groups unexamined. Although they are not emphasized to the same degree as the pro-life position, maintaining these oppositions works to attract social conservatives who do not see abortion as their central concern. That is to say, the three groups emphasized in this chapter are significant to the CHP's social conservative identity, but are not as close to the epicenter of CHP identity as the party's pro-life stance.

During interviews I did not ask any questions specifically about defining an enemy or challenge facing the CHP. The recurring themes of secularism, the homosexual movement, and radical Islam either arose organically during interviews or were regularly mentioned in party publications (or publications endorsed by the CHP). I did regularly ask questions about the pro-life stance of the CHP, as discussed in Chapter Five, which would have contributed to more detailed discussions of that particular position. However, even if we just look at party publications, abortion is discussed more frequently than secularism, the homosexual movement, or radical Islam. When asked about the defining policy or platform of the CHP most interviewees mentioned the pro-life position, or indicated that was the answer they felt I expected, but then discussed the party's immigration policy or its position on same-sex marriage.

It is also important to note that while I discuss each group independently this does not mean that they were discussed by CHPers as wholly separate. The Canadian and provincial Human Rights Commissions (HRC) are understood as a bastion of secularism, but most of the

cases linking CHPers to the HRC have to do with alleged hate crimes against homosexuals.⁴⁵⁵ Furthermore, the opposition to one of these groups tends to be linked to the opposition of the others. It was not uncommon for the Christian worldview of CHPers to be described as being pro-life and for “traditional families,” which in less positive language can be understood as opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage. Although I discuss each group separately, when taken as a whole, perceiving challenges posed by the homosexual movement, secular humanism, and radical Islam, as well as feminists fighting for open access to abortion and contraceptives, become the modus operandi of Christian social conservatives.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections. First, I explain why feminism is not included as one of the core combatants in this chapter. This may seem odd to those familiar with the rhetoric employed by conservative American talking heads, such as Rush Limbaugh and those on Fox News. Indeed, I initially expected feminism to be more significant to this research project prior to interviewing CHPers, but, as will be seen, it was just not so. Second, I examine the CHP’s description of secularists or humanists. In many ways this group is presented by the CHP as an enemy within, in the sense that secular humanists have covertly infiltrated the Canadian political sphere. Discussions of secularism were more heavily emphasized in party publications than by individual interviewees, and seemed like a more dated or all-encompassing concern. Additionally, the language used to refer to this enemy varied greatly—there was no consistent use of atheist, secularist, or humanist by CHPers. Third, I shift to examining the perceptions of the homosexual agenda or homosexual movement. Although the brochures describing the CHP as “pro-family” are a nod to the party’s opposition to the

⁴⁵⁵ In particular the cases of Hugh Owens, who took out an ad in his local paper in Saskatchewan opposing homosexuality, Chris Kempling, a B.C. teacher who wrote letters to the editor opposing homosexuality, and a costly investigation of the CHP, one of the party’s Electoral District Associations (EDA), and former leader Ron Gray for propagating hatred based on sexual orientation.

homosexual agenda and support of “traditional families,” this stance was emphasized more often by individual interviewees, and publications by individual members, than in official party publications (such as the *Communiqué*). In this section I argue that early in the party’s history being “pro-family” primarily indicated concerns about feminism and shifting gender roles, but this have shifted to opposition to homosexual rights and same-sex marriage.

In the penultimate section I dissect the party’s presentation of “radical Islam.” The perceptions of this group are multifaceted and controversial. The party’s immigration policy, seeking a ban on immigration from countries with Sharia law, is contentious even among CHPers. The distinction between Muslims and “radical Muslims” is not always clear, and a shared definition of Sharia is barely present. “Sharia” is understood as little more than “Muslim law” and I have seen no attempts by the party to elaborate upon this definition. Some members voiced open opposition to Muslims in general, while others felt Muslims should be courted for their vote (even if they can never be members of the party). This particular combatant draws attention to the tensions between the CHP’s claims that it is “defending religious liberty – for everyone,” while attempting to curtail the religious freedom of Muslims.⁴⁵⁶ Radical Islam represents the threat of the religious other that, in a different light, could be understood as quite similar to the conservative Christianity of the CHP. Also, unlike secularism, concerns about radical Islam also illustrate a relatively new enemy of the CHP that most likely formed since the September 11th attacks and eventually cemented the party’s immigration policy regarding Muslim countries.

This chapter concludes with an analysis of the shared themes connecting these conceived combatants. Secularism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam are amorphous enough that they can reflect any number of shadowy fears or concerns held by CHPers. The fact that the CHP

⁴⁵⁶ “About CHP Canada,” *CHP Canada*, accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.chp.ca/party/about/>.

rarely attempts to clearly define these combatants allows them to be shaped and adjusted to fit the concerns of each member. How these groups are perceived can tell us how CHPers perceive the party, as the enemies are understood as holding characteristics that are the polar opposite of the CHP. Phyllis's description of the homosexual movement as cohesive is one example of this. Her perception of this movement as cohesive and organized serves to highlight that lack of cohesion among Christians, particularly those in the CHP. Finally, the fact that the CHP chooses to emphasize secularism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam as its core combatants marks the CHP as different from major, elected, political parties in Canada. The Conservatives, NDP, and Liberals go out of their way to avoid these types of moralistic debates, but the CHP positions these debates as an important aspect of party identity. The emphasis on these particular groups also aligns the CHP with the social conservative rhetoric expressed by American Tea Party Republicans. The fact that the party has this similarity with the vocal Americans only works to further disassociate the CHP from popular ideas of Canadian politics. In other words, the shared social conservative concerns with their American comrades only increase that unfortunate aura of American-ness, which hampers attempts to attract voters as discussed in Chapter One.

Why not the Feminist Agenda?

Given the prevalence of American social conservative rhetoric opposing feminism, such as Rush Limbaugh's infamous popularization of "feminazi," it may be surprising that the "feminist agenda" is not included as one of the three conceived combatants in this chapter. As Sally K. Gallagher notes, "a number of studies have made the case that anti-feminism is a salient, central, and persistent component of evangelical religious subculture," yet she finds compelling

evidence that evangelical Christians are not uniformly anti-feminism.⁴⁵⁷ Indeed, when I embarked on this research project I initially thought that opposition to feminism would be far more central to CHP identity. Before deciding to focus on the CHP, I considered studying the religiosity of REAL Women of Canada, an overtly anti-feminist Non-Governmental Organization. It quickly became apparent that REAL Women has been over-studied by antagonistic academics to the point that the group's leadership have developed nigh-impenetrable gate-keeping mechanisms.⁴⁵⁸ Yet in my preliminary explorations of REAL Women I found the group was linked on the CHP's website. This suggested that there may be some strong anti-feminist positions held by CHPers, so when I compiled potential interview questions in preparation for fieldwork I included questions about familiarity with and perceptions of feminism. However, these questions were rarely, if ever, asked—so much so that when I eventually altered my questions to more adequately reflect those I actually asked in interviews, the few questions about feminism were removed from the list.

In the rare instances that these questions came up in interviews it was because the interviewees had copies of the questions in front of them, not because I asked a question. One interview with a relatively young couple from Southern Ontario offers a clear example of this situation. During the interview, Betty, a wife and home-schooling mother of five, read aloud from the list of potential questions, "Do you personally know any feminists?"⁴⁵⁹ We both laughed at how poorly phrased the question was, but she followed our laughter by commenting that, "feminism has influenced a lot of our [CHP] policies." When I asked for clarification she

⁴⁵⁷ Sally K. Gallagher, "Where are the Antifeminist Evangelicals?: Evangelical Identity, Subcultural Location, and Attitudes toward Feminism," *Gender and Society* 18, no. 4 (August 2004): 452.

⁴⁵⁸ For discussion of Blakely's experiences with gatekeeping issues and how this affected her research see: Blakely, "Women of the New Right in Canada," 62-3 and 86.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview #22, November 2, 2011.

mentioned "the whole daycare thing."⁴⁶⁰ Her husband, Mark, was quick to add that that is a government policy and not a CHP policy.⁴⁶¹ Betty continued, explaining that the push for universal daycare is part of the feminist agenda. The CHP's childcare policy, the "Family Care Allowance," makes clear the desire to keep one parent at home to look after child or aged parents. The party's website introduces this policy by discussing how the \$1000 they would offer per month is more than "the average take-home pay of a woman who works at a second job."⁴⁶² This strongly suggests that the party envisions the mothers staying home to take care of the children, but in public presentations of this policy it is frequently noted that either parent could take advantage of this policy. Additionally, the description of this policy does not mention feminism.

When I circled back to the question Betty noted from the list, she added, "I think there's a lot of feminists even within the Christian community."⁴⁶³ This is a sentiment that I certainly agree with and have repeatedly argued at least since I was an undergraduate majoring in Religious Studies and minoring in Women's Studies. While there are some in the party who take issue with some feminist causes, there was very little pointedly anti-feminist rhetoric. If anything, criticism of feminism was subsumed by concerns about secularism and was primarily invoked in discussions of abortion.

As if to prove this point, two of the most notable overt criticisms of feminism that I witnessed arose in public presentations given by guests at CHP events, namely Michael Coren, at the March 2012 National Convention, and more recently Dr. Charles Lugosi, at a recorded talk

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ To be clear, the current Conservative government does not support universal childcare. There is the Universal Child Care Benefit, which allocates funds to help mitigate the cost of childcare, but this is not universal childcare in the sense that the federal government provides free or low-cost childcare to its citizens.

⁴⁶² "Family Care," *CHP Canada*, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.chp.ca/better-solutions/life-family/family-care/>. N.B. no sources are given by the party for this data.

⁴⁶³ Interview #22, November 3, 2011.

given with pro-life activist Linda Gibson in Cloverdale, B.C. in November 2013.⁴⁶⁴ Although I do not recall either using Limbaugh's term "feminazis," their discussion of feminists fit Limbaugh's definition as "a woman who gets mad when a woman decides to have a baby, is talked out of having an abortion."⁴⁶⁵ This definition of feminazi easily overlaps with both Coren and Lugosi's descriptions of feminists as women who argue in support of abortion and do not value motherhood. However, even in these public talks about abortion, feminists only make a passing show as supporters and perpetrators of abortion. Feminists may be those women who argue for the right to access abortion, but the central horror of this procedure is the holocaust-like numbers of prematurely terminated unborn babies. Comparisons between the holocaust, unjust capital punishment and abortion abound, whereas feminists play a second fiddle.

It is possible that individual CHPers are just as concerned with feminist enemies as they are with secularism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam, but the fact of the matter is without any prompting these three groups were discussed more often by individuals and more frequently in party publications. Although I originally included questions on feminism, I rarely found a need to ask those questions, and despite not having any questions about secularism, the homosexual agenda or radical Islam, those groups were mentioned regularly. Many CHPers noted that they support REAL Women of Canada, but affinity or affiliation with that group did not translate into overtly critical discussions of feminism. Rather, support of REAL Women was

⁴⁶⁴ A recording of the November 16, 2013 talk in Cloverdale, B.C. is publicly available here: Linda Gibbons and Charles Lugosi, "CHP Canada Hosts Linda Gibbons and Dr. Charles Lugosi," YouTube video, 1:16:00, posted by christianheritage, November 23, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1T9KDPyPXs&feature=c4-overview&list=UUuRr-Efu013z2XcA5eEw6vg>.

⁴⁶⁵ John K. Wilson, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Rush Limbaugh's Assault on Reason* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011), 55.

linked with a myriad of other pro-life, pro-family organizations that the party members support.⁴⁶⁶

There are two alternative ways to think about feminism as a potential combatant of the CHP: 1) that opposition to feminism is linked with the pro-life position of the party, and 2) that in the early history of the CHP the party's pro-family position was a response to the threat of feminism, but that this has largely given way to the threat of same-sex marriage. For now, let us focus on the first alternative. The second alternative is examined in greater detail in the section below on homosexuality.

Opposition to abortion, which is strongly tied to the perception of feminists as supporters of this procedure, is certainly a central feature of the CHP—so much so that the party's pro-life position garnered its own chapter. But even the rhetoric around abortion was not heavily focused on feminists as the singular proponent of this procedure. Abortionists, the Conservative leadership's unwillingness to challenge abortion legislation, and general Christian apathy were pointed to as holding back the pro-life cause as much as feminists. While the initial push to decriminalize abortion may be strongly associated with the feminist movement, the perpetuation of legal and accessible abortions in Canada does not lie solely on the shoulders of feminists, and the CHP appears to recognize this. Therefore, the fact that there are many groups that currently support legally accessible abortions made opposition to the feminist agenda less linked to the CHP's pro-life position than one might expect.

This is not to say that there were no comments made in interviews about the negative repercussions of feminism. After giving a basic description of my Master of Arts research—a Women's Studies project examining how religion was discussed in texts used in Introductory

⁴⁶⁶ Additionally, support of REAL Women is not limited to women – something that I had assumed based on perusing the group's website.

Women's Studies courses across Canada—Veronica commented in passing, “Well, feminism before 1963 was like suffrage; it was the ability to not be a piece of property. After that it's become sexual freedom, which I think has actually been very harmful and hurtful to women.”⁴⁶⁷ 1963 is a year pointed to by some as the beginning of the so-called second wave of feminism. It is the year that Betty Friedan published her classic text, *The Feminine Mystique*, and the American Equal Pay Act—an early attempt to reduce the gender wage gap—was signed.⁴⁶⁸ However, suggesting that prior to 1963 feminism was solely about women's right to be recognized as persons (including the right to vote) and since has been about sexual freedom is a sweeping simplification of the struggle for women's rights. This simplification of contemporary feminism as essentially a fight for sexual freedom places feminism in contrast to the CHP insomuch as sexual freedom presumably carries with it non-monogamous, non-heteronormative, pro-abortion/contraception connotations. That is to say, the idea of feminism as the push for sexual freedom defines it in opposition to the pro-life and pro-family identity of the CHP. The two CHPers, Betty and Veronica, discussed in this section were some of the few members that directly mentioned feminism. These examples illustrate that there continues to be some framing of the feminist agenda as an enemy within the CHP, but overall this is less significant than the combatants perceived in secular humanism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam.

The CHP and Secularism: The Enemy Within

Concern about the rise of secularism has been present in the CHP since the party first developed. The sense that a Christian worldview was being pushed aside for a secularist worldview in the 1980s, exemplified with the decriminalization of abortion and the repealing of the Lord's Day Act (banning Sunday shopping), helped motivate the development of the CHP. It

⁴⁶⁷ Interview #43, February 2, 2012.

⁴⁶⁸ Both of these examples are uniquely American. It is difficult to locate Canadian examples of second wave feminism that are equally iconic.

is important to note that while humanism, secular humanism, secularism, and atheism have arguably dissimilar meanings and origins, these concepts are generally understood as interchangeable within the CHP. The preference for one term over the others varied from CHPer to CHPer. Some interviewees would draw on a variety of these terms, while others would just discuss “atheistic worldviews,” “the religion of humanism,” or “the secular” school system, but avoid some of the other terms.⁴⁶⁹ I found little rhyme or reason for why some CHPers would gravitate more towards one of these terms over, and sometimes to the exclusion of, others. It was clear though that no matter which term the individual preferred or if they used a variety of terms, they all boiled down to the same core concerns. Humanism, secularism, and atheism all represent an irreligious worldview that is the diametric opposite of Christianity. By way of example, “secular” was frequently used to contrast Christian schools and public schools. In eleven interviews (or 17 % of the interviews) “secular” or “humanistic” was used to describe public schools and universities.

Another popular use for “secular” or “atheistic” was to describe non-Christian and/or non-religious society. This type of usage usually arose when the CHPer was discussing Canada’s Christian heritage or attempting to define separation of church and state. In contrast to understanding “secularism” as supporting separation of church and state, CHPers used this term to indicate individuals, groups, or institutions that are “opposed to religion.” Based on the former, the CHP could arguably be understood as secular through its support of the separation of church and state, but given the more common usage among its members, it seems highly unlikely

⁴⁶⁹ Interview #1, August 11, 2010, contains a reference to “atheistic worldviews.” Interviews #4, July 27, 2011; Interview #9, August 25, 2011; Interview #13, September 16, 2011; Interview #24, November 12, 2011; Interview #25, November 14, 2011; Interview #43, February 1, 2012; Interview #48, March 18, 2012; Interview #53, May 1, 2012; Interview #56, May 14, 2012; and Interview #60, May 22, 2012 contained references to “secular” schools or “secular” universities when discussing public schools/universities. Interview #61, May 24, 2012 includes a discussion of “the religion of humanism.”

that CHPers would embrace any claims that the party is secularist. Rather the CHP is Christian and upholds Canada's Christian heritage, while Canada is understood as increasingly secular and the major political parties are secular. This was especially the case when talking about the Conservative Party, where secular was used to indicate that that party is unprincipled and anti-Christian. This perspective shines through in my informant Joseph's explanation of what drew him to the CHP.⁴⁷⁰ Joseph, who is in his mid-fifties, has been a member of the CHP since around the time the party was founded and his children grew up with the party. In the 2011 election Gordon, Joseph's oldest child, ran as a candidate for the party. When Joseph described his reasons for becoming involved with the CHP he emphasized the problems with the Conservative Party:

Well, if you look around you [at] the choices you have then it becomes more and more clear that you have to make a difference in this life. And then you look at our closest ally—[that] would be the Conservative Party—yes, on the whole they make sense in how they run the country and a lot of our policies would agree with theirs, but they are becoming more and more secular and almost anti-Christian. And the obvious examples are the abortion, euthanasia, and gay rights movements, all of these things that they have slowly given away to out of the fear of losing votes. It's not a whole lot of principle left.⁴⁷¹

This sense that secular equals a lack of Christianity, declining morality, and questionable principles is one of the recurring criticisms launched by CHPers at the Conservative Party. It runs parallel to questioning the Christianity of Stephen Harper and his credentials as a true (read, social) conservative.

I do not want to downplay or over emphasize the significance of secularism as an enemy of the party, so it needs to be acknowledged that the words "secular," "atheist," and "humanist" (or variations of those words) were not used in over half of my interviews. Thirty-four of my

⁴⁷⁰ Interview #29, November 30, 2011.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid. I have slightly altered Joseph's spoken words so that their meaning in written form is accurately represented.

sixty-four interviews contained no direct mention of atheism, secularism, or humanism. Many of the remaining thirty interviews contain singular passing use of one of these terms, either to note that they had attended a “secular college” or discussing “secular culture.”⁴⁷² Despite this lack of use or detailed description of secularism in interviews I stand by my assertion that secularism is perceived as an enemy of the CHP because of the rhetorical uses of these concepts in CHP publications and public presentations. The CHP’s website, in particular, makes it pointedly clear that the CHP is combatting “secularists” when answering the question “Is the CHP trying to impose Christianity on those of other faiths?” The response, drawing heavily on data from the 1991 Canadian Census, includes the following:

“The Secularist minority in Canada dominates four powerful institutions that shape all our lives: governments, courts, the public education establishment, and the major news and entertainment media. The best defence of the religious freedom and intellectual liberty of the minority faiths (which at 4% all together total only about 1/3 of the 12% who are Secularists) is to make common cause with the 83% of Canadians who identify themselves as Christians.”⁴⁷³

Exactly who represents or personifies secularism is less clear than the actions the CHP attributes to this group; however this remains one of the clearest attempts I have seen to define secularists by the party elites or any individual CHPers. Unfortunately (depending on your perspective) this information is over twenty years out of date and, despite giving specific numbers, is quite vague. As discussed in Chapter Three, the claim that 12% of Canadians are secularists is questionable. This number is based on grouping together all of the people who claimed religious affiliations other than the traditional Eastern and Western religions listed on the 1991 census forms. Because this 12% draws on a very broad group, it is unlikely that all of the people the CHP have named

⁴⁷² Interviews #24, November 12, 2011 and Interview #16, October 13, 2011, respectively.

⁴⁷³ “About CHP Canada,” *CHP Canada*, accessed February 14, 2014, <http://www.chp.ca/party/about/>. Although these numbers were updated to the 2001 census data in a 2004 open letter on the “History of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada” written by former leader Ron Gray, the statistic on the party’s website remain out-dated. Gray, “History of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada.”

“secularist” would self-identify as such. What is made clear in the section from the website is that the CHP either believes or wants to give the impression that little more than 10% of the Canadian population are secularists, and they wield a disproportionate influence on politics, law, education and the media.

More so than individuals associated with the homosexual agenda or radical Islam, the secularist is nebulous and difficult to characterize as a person. Secularists could be anyone, including individuals who claim to be Christian. A prime example is Stephen Harper, who upholds many of the qualities that CHPers associate with secularism, even though Harper has been associated with the East Gate Alliance Church, part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance denomination.⁴⁷⁴ Because it is less common for Canadian politicians to publicly announce their religious affiliations than their American counterparts, Canadians, including members of the CHP, can easily project religiosity or lack thereof onto politicians.

Instead of being tied to a person (or more accurately, a stereotype), CHPers associate secularism with texts—most often a Humanist Manifesto, in its various incarnations, and, in one interview, A Secular Humanist Declaration.⁴⁷⁵ The significance of the Humanist Manifesto regarding how the party understands secularism as its enemy is even noted in Paul Freston’s short discussion of the CHP in *Protestant Political Parties*. Freston states,

They [the CHP] quote from an ‘official Humanist publication’ and from the Humanist Manifesto (which functions as a sort of ‘protocols of the elders of Zion’ of the North American Christian right), that is, they construct their opponents as a mirror-image of themselves, as an organized group (a serious lack of realism which goes a long way to explaining the inefficacy of such parties).⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ Colin Campbell, “The Church of Stephen Harper,” *MacLean’s*, February 20, 2006, accessed February 19, 2014, http://www.macleans.ca/article.jsp?content=20060220_121848_121848&source=srch.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview #25, November 14, 2011.

⁴⁷⁶ Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*, 57.

Unpacking Freston’s statement, I agree that the CHP draws heavily on the Humanist Manifestos—there is more than one—in order to give a sense that secularists are a highly organized group. The early significance of these Humanist Manifestos on CHP perceptions of secularism is shown in founding leader Ed Vanwoudenberg’s 1989 publication *A Matter of Choice*. The first of the eight addendums (all primary sources Vanwoudenberg felt necessary to include) is “Humanist Manifesto No.1 and No. 2.”⁴⁷⁷ These texts are presented as if they are authored by the same people and written during roughly the same period, which is not the case. The first version of the Humanist Manifesto was written and signed in 1933, whereas the second was written forty years later. Humanist Manifesto II, penned by Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson in 1973, pushes against the theism they saw present in the earlier Manifesto.⁴⁷⁸ Both Humanist Manifestos included a long list of signatories (mostly American individuals), but the second includes more from nations outside of the United States. The most notable Canadian signatory of both the Humanist Manifesto II and A Secular Humanist Declaration is Dr. Henry Morgentaler. Although Morgentaler’s connections to secularism were never mentioned in my encounters with the CHP—his name is very much tied to the decriminalization of abortion in Canada, as discussed in Chapter Four—he was also a former president of the Humanist Association of Canada. The first of the Manifestos was written with a strong religious humanist flavour, whereas subsequent versions have quashed all signs of theism. Presenting the two Humanist

⁴⁷⁷ “Humanist Manifesto No. 1 and No. 2” in Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice*, 235-246. The other addendums are, in order: “British North America Act 1867,” “The Canadian Bill of Rights,” “Charter of Rights,” “Meech Lake Accord,” “Media Release” (the CHP’s response to “Bill C-72: The Language Bill”), (CHP) “Reaction to Quebec’s Language Bill 178,” and “Charter of the Rights of the Family – Knights of Columbus, Ontario State Council.” Vanwoudenberg did not name the main authors of “Humanist Manifesto No. 1 and No. 2” or give any original sources, but he groups them together in a way that indicates he got them from the same source. The versions of “Humanist Manifesto I” used in *A Matter of Choice* concludes with a paragraph that was very clearly not included in the original document, outlining how Humanist Manifesto II, which is more secularist than the original Manifesto, supersedes the first.

⁴⁷⁸ Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson, “Humanist Manifesto II,” *American Humanist Association*, 1973, accessed February 14, 2014, http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_II.

Manifestos together as a single text gives a false impression that humanists are more unified and timeless than is the case.

Additionally, I can see the claim that Freston is making about the Humanist Manifesto functioning “as a sort of ‘protocols of the elders of Zion’ of the North American Christian right,” although it is an overstatement. These texts function similarly in that they are both pointed to as a blueprint for domination by those who oppose Jews (in the case of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion) and secular humanists (in the case of the Humanist Manifesto). However, it is well recognized outside of anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists that the Protocols of the Elders of Zion was not written or endorsed by Jews. In contrast, the various incarnations of the Humanist Manifesto were penned by and continue to be endorsed by various religious humanist, secular humanist, and free-thinker individuals and organizations, such as the American Humanist Association and the Centre for Free Inquiry, which has international affiliates. Drawing on the Humanist Manifesto is not an inherently unrealistic route for trying to make sense of a secular humanist worldview. However, it is questionable to assert that secularists, secular humanists, humanists, and atheists are somehow united and organized around these texts like a religious doctrine or religious text. Just as Phyllis described the homosexual movement as a highly organized and coherent group, secularists are presented by the CHP in a similar fashion, focusing on these texts as a sign of cohesiveness of the group. In this sense, imagining secularists as a cohesive group unified around a particular text illustrates, as Freston comments, the construction of “their opponents as mirror-images of themselves.” The Humanist Manifestos may present the ideals of some secular humanists, but they are not doctrines and they are not prescriptive; they do not tell all secular humanists how to act and behave, but outline how some imagine their ideal world.

Although the Humanist Manifesto was drawn on in Vanwoudenberg's text, it was only mentioned in a few interviews. Mark, a member more closely affiliated with the FCP than the CHP, mentioned both the Humanist Manifestos I and II, as well as "The Declaration of Secular Humanism," in relation to humanism.⁴⁷⁹ He was the only interviewee to mention the latter text, which he found when researching the definition of "secular," in order to argue that those running his local public school system did not have an accurate understanding of the term. Based on his account of the debate, they said that secular means "we can't have any religion involved," to which he argued, drawing on the Humanist Manifesto I and II and "The Declaration of Secular Humanism" (as he called it), they were operating from a humanist perspective.⁴⁸⁰ "The Declaration of Secular Humanism" was most likely referring to A Secular Humanist Declaration, which was primarily written by Paul Kurtz on behalf of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanists (now called the Council for Secular Humanism) in 1980.⁴⁸¹ Mark did not challenge the definition of secular as the exclusion of religion from the public sphere, but instead that the public school board was promoting the religion of secular humanism and not avoiding religion as they claimed.

In the group mind of the CHP secularism is the enemy within because it has been absorbed into the psyche of the Canadian public and eats away at the glorious Christian heritage of this nation. Christians who reject the CHP are thought to do so because they are unwilling to publicly stand up and be counted as Christians. The false belief that separation of church and state means that you cannot be religious and involved with politics becomes part of the secularist thinking that pushes Christians away from the CHP. In this sense secularism can be used by

⁴⁷⁹ Interview #25, November 14, 2011.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Paul Kurtz, "A Secular Humanist Declaration," *Council for Secular Humanism*, 1980, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/11>.

CHPers to partially explain why their fellow social conservative Christians do not support the party in droves. Worst of all, Canadian society is increasingly becoming, if it has not already become, a secular society, rejecting and forgetting its Christian origins. Whether there is a shadowy cabal of secular humanists controlling Canada or it is the internalization of secular culture by Christians, this enemy is mighty and difficult to extract from nominal Christians. Secularism has blended with some forms of Christianity, yet it is the polar opposite of the Christianity of the CHP and is halting some Christians from living their religion to the fullest.

The dated information used to understand secularists, namely the 1991 census and the Humanist Manifesto 1 and 2, as well as the infrequency with which this enemy was discussed by interviewees strongly suggest that secularists were an early enemy of the CHP. The lack of discussion of secularism (or atheism or humanism) in the interviews does not necessarily indicate that CHPers are no longer concerned about this group. It could also show that the ideas of secularism as a combatant have been so thoroughly absorbed by the party that it is deemed a given. Secularism is understood as constantly wearing down the religiosity of Canadian Christians, but many of the dramatic changes (such as legalizing Sunday shopping and decriminalizing abortion) took place around the time the CHP was developing. Now the battleground between Christianity and secularism largely takes place in the hearts of individual Christians and, as seen in Chapter Five, in educational institutions.

The CHP and the Homosexual Agenda

Unlike secularism, which was not overly emphasized in interviews, interviewees discussed the challenges posed by homosexuality and the homosexual agenda in much greater detail. Whereas secularism has been an enemy of the CHP since the party's inception that has faded as a central concern, homosexuality has developed as a more significant concern over the

last two decades. It is unlikely that the homosexual agenda was a core concern of the CHP when it was founded, but instead became significant when same-sex marriage became a viable option in Canada. Also, more than two-thirds of my interviews (forty-two out of the sixty-four) included some discussion of homosexuality or same-sex marriage suggesting that the homosexual agenda is a greater concern for individual CHPers than secularism.⁴⁸²

Given that the CHP frequently presents itself as Canada's only "pro-life, pro-family federal political party," I could (and possibly should) have asked questions about the "pro-family" position of the party. One of the struggles with conducting interviews is determining what questions you will include or exclude, and I chose to focus more on the pro-life aspects of the CHP over the pro-family identity. I strongly recommend this aspect of the party be examined in greater detail in any future research on the party.

In his monograph *Pro-Family Politics and Fringe Parties in Canada*, Chris MacKenzie points to American Christian Right strategists Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie as coining the term "pro-family" in the 1970s.⁴⁸³ More specifically Weyrich suggested "pro-family" as an alternative to "pro-life," because the former encapsulated a wider variety of the concerns of religious (and social) conservatives. MacKenzie describes "secular humanism" as "a clear enemy" of the early pro-family movement—an enemy that has been maintained by the CHP. Indeed we can see many of the concerns I have presented from within the CHP in MacKenzie's description of the early concerns of the pro-family movement; "The pro-family movement was now the New Christian Right with a sharpened focus: to beat back legalized abortion, gay rights,

⁴⁸² One of the forty-four included in this count talked about heterosexuality being taught in public schools. This would not be a direct use of homosexual or homosexuality, but an indirect reference to multiple sexualities being discussed in schools.

⁴⁸³ Chris MacKenzie, *Pro-Family Politics and Fringe Parties in Canada* (Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 102.

permissive and liberal public education politics, and feminism.”⁴⁸⁴ In this sense I have dealt with the pro-family issues of the CHP even if I did not receive verification through interviews that these are perceived as pro-family issues by the party members.

If we focus on the “family” and “relational” quality of this term, “pro-family” has been used to describe opposition to a variety of “non-traditional” families and non-heteronormative sexual identities. This includes, but is not limited to: single-parent households, women as primary wage earners, same-sex marriages/parenting, homosexuals and transpeople. In the first decade or so of the party the pro-family descriptor most likely indicated concerns about women-run single-parent households, second wave feminism, and calls for universal daycare. Although homosexuality and queer sexual identities may have been part of the spectrum of pro-family concerns, it did not become a significant concern for the CHP until legalized same-sex marriage became a viable possibility in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Vanwoudenberg’s book offers some evidence of the party’s early thoughts on pro-family concerns. The chapter on “The Family” contains six subsections: “Family, church and government relations;” “The role of women in: procreation, abortion, sanctity, and compassion;” “The family’s role in education;” “The role of women as homemakers: daycare – demand and need;” “The role of women in society: equity and diversity;” and “The role of women in the workplace: the comparable worth debate.”⁴⁸⁵ Four of these six subsections directly refer to the roles of women, but none mention homosexuality. Indeed, I only found two comments about homosexuality in this chapter; one, mentioning demands by “lesbian feminists” for artificial insemination, and the other, an unsourced reference to the 1988 case of Karen Andrews, a Toronto librarian who lost a court battle to have her lesbian lover and two children covered by

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁸⁵ Vanwoudenberg, *A Matter of Choice*, 7.

her company health insurance.⁴⁸⁶ As noted above, feminism was infrequently mentioned in interviews with CHPers, unlike homosexuality, which was discussed in a solid two-thirds of my interviews. All of this is to say, by the time I embarked on this research, “pro-family” became more closely connected to opposition to same-sex marriage and the “homosexual agenda” than feminism and women’s rights.

For the purposes of this chapter I use “homosexual agenda” to refer to a wide variety of issues that center on sexual orientation and sexual identity. These issues include, but are not limited to: the decriminalization of homosexuality in the late 1960s, the legalization of same-sex marriage in the mid-2000s, sexual education curriculum in public schools including any potentially positive discussions of homosexuality and non-heteronormative sexual identities, anti-bullying legislation, and recurring attempts to have the Canadian Blood Services accept donations from men who have sex with men (frequently abbreviated to MSM). The terms “gay agenda” or “homosexual agenda” were popularized among Christian social conservatives in the 1990s.⁴⁸⁷ This helps explain why this terminology was not used in Vanwoudenberg’s book.

Individual CHPers are very sensitive to the threat supposedly posed by the homosexual agenda, perceiving risks that approval (or tolerance) of homosexuality and same-sex marriage pose to “traditional marriage” and “traditional family.” As might be expected, much of the rhetoric around the homosexual agenda focused more specifically on men who have sex with

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 113. Mr. Vanwoudenberg gave very sparse details of Ms. Andrews’ case in the chapter. JoAnne Myers, “Canada” in *Historical Dictionary of Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movements* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 103 was consulted for additional details.

⁴⁸⁷ In her examination of anti-homosexual writings in the conservative Christian magazine *Christianity Today*, Didi Herman notes: “Aside from the significant increase in the ex-gay genre, there were few other differences between *CT*’s [*Christianity Today*] response to gay issues in the 1980s, as compared to the 1970s. In contrast to what I expected to find, the journal’s tone did not escalate, few references were made to the phrase now uttered routinely by the CR—“the homosexual agenda”—and fears about children were not only largely absent, but often expressly discounted.” Thus the term “homosexual agenda” existed prior to the 1990s, but was not popularly used until that decade. Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 53.

men. Lesbians were mentioned occasionally, but the terms “gay” and “homosexual” were used far more frequently. In a language choice that was particularly unusual, even among CHPers, Robert, a three-time candidate for the party, repeatedly used the terms sodomite or sodomy, but never used the terms homosexual or homosexuality.⁴⁸⁸

Concerns about homosexuality were expressed in some *Communiqués*, other emails from the CHP elites, and in books promoted by the party (such as Larry Spencer’s *Truth or Politics: Sacrificed?* and Gordon Truscott’s *Inside Homosexuality: Does My Pain Matter to You?*), but it most frequently arose in interviews with party members.⁴⁸⁹ The Human Rights Commission (HRC) was linked to the homosexual agenda by various CHPers. Nine interviews contained comments linking homosexuality with the HRC or the courts in general. More specifically I learned about Hugh Owens and Chris Kempling, whose encounters with the HRC were unequivocally linked to publicly stating their positions on homosexuality, through interviews. Owens and Kempling’s cases would have been publicized by the party elites, rallying CHPers to support these individuals.

From Saskatchewan, Owens, rumoured to be a former CHPer, responded to an advertisement in the Saskatoon newspaper *The StarPhoenix* for the June 1997 gay pride events by taking out his own ad presenting his biblically-based opposition to homosexuality. According to the appeals report, Owen’s advertisement,

[...] consisted of the citations of four Bible passages, “Romans 1:26; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10,” set out prominently in bold type. They were accompanied by a reference in smaller print to the New International Version of the Bible. The citations were followed by an equal sign and then by two stickmen holding hands. A circle with a line running diagonally from the two o’clock to the eight o’clock position (the “not permitted” symbol) was superimposed on the stickmen. The following words appeared in small print at the

⁴⁸⁸ Interview #32, December 11, 2011.

⁴⁸⁹ Larry D. Spencer, *Truth or Politics: Sacrificed?* (Regina, Sask.: Kayteebella Productions, 2006); and Gordon Truscott, *Inside Homosexuality: Does My Pain Matter to You?* (Singapore: Armour Publishing, 2011).

bottom of the advertisement: “This message can be purchased in bumper sticker form. Please call [telephone number withheld in original].⁴⁹⁰

Complaints were filed against Owens in August 1997, and in 2001 the Saskatchewan HRC found Owens guilty of spreading hatred against homosexuals. Owens attempted to appeal the Commission’s findings multiple times and was finally successful in 2006.⁴⁹¹

Unlike Owens, Kempling, of British Columbia, was not the target of a HRC complaint, but filed complaints of religious discrimination against the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT) after he was repeatedly reprimanded and suspended from work (as a teacher and counsellor) for publicly expressing his Christian-based opposition to homosexuality. Between 1997 and 2000, Kempling wrote an article and several letters to the editor of his local newspaper, the *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, expressing opposition to homosexuality and his belief in conversion therapy. In 2002 he was suspended from work for one month after the BCCT determined that his writings were discriminatory against homosexuals and showed conduct unbecoming of their employees.⁴⁹² Kempling’s initial case against his employer was first dismissed by the Supreme Court of British Columbia in 2004, and second by the Court of Appeal in British Columbia in 2005.⁴⁹³ Since his initial suspension he also ran as a candidate for the CHP in the riding of Cariboo – Prince George (2006) and, to my knowledge, is still an active member of the party.

⁴⁹⁰ Owens v. Saskatchewan (Human Rights Commission), 2006 SKCA 41 (CanLII), accessed February 21, 2014, <http://canlii.ca/t/1n62q>.

⁴⁹¹ For a detailed outline of Owens’ case see: Kevin Boonstra and Iain Benson, “LexView 61.0: Can Bible Verses be Hate Speech?” *Cardus*, April 4, 2007, accessed February 21, 2014, <http://www.cardus.ca/lexview/article/2127/>. The reader should keep in mind *Cardus* is a conservative Christian think-tank.

⁴⁹² For details of this case see: Kempling v. School District No. 28 (Quesnel) and Curr (No. 2), 2005 BCHRT 514, November 14, 2005, accessed February 21, 2014, [http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/decisions/2005/pdf/Kempling_v_School_District_No_28_\(Quesnel\)_and_Curr_\(No_2\)_2005_BCHRT_514.pdf](http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/decisions/2005/pdf/Kempling_v_School_District_No_28_(Quesnel)_and_Curr_(No_2)_2005_BCHRT_514.pdf).

⁴⁹³ Kempling v. The British Columbia College of Teachers, 2004 BCSC 133, February 3, 2004, accessed February 21, 2014, <http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/sc/04/01/2004bcsc0133.htm>; and Kempling v. British Columbia College of Teachers, 2005 BCCA 327, June 13, 2005, accessed February 21, 2013, <http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/jdb-txt/ca/05/03/2005bccca0327err1.htm>.

If these two cases were not enough to convince CHPers that the HRC is primarily used as a pawn by the homosexual agenda to attack their Christian worldview, in the mid-2000s an Edmonton man laid charges of “hatred or contempt based on sexual orientation” against the CHP, its former leader Ron Gray, and one of the party’s Electoral District Associations.⁴⁹⁴ The charges were eventually dismissed in 2009, but nonetheless cost the party an estimated \$50,000 and further convinced the party that the HRC would be used to silence their voice.⁴⁹⁵ These cases had the unfortunate result of solidifying the belief that gay rights and religious rights are a zero-sum game, especially where the HRC is involved. This perspective has been reaffirmed by recent anti-bullying legislation, which is framed as protecting homosexual students and, in the case of Ontario, mandates that schools (including those in the Catholic School Boards) permit Gay-Straight Alliances (a type of queer-positive student organization).

The homosexual agenda, in its various forms, was discussed in interviews in association with many topics beyond the HRC. Discussions of education, separation of church and state, defining policies, and reasons for joining the party, were all connected at some point to issues of homosexuality. Regarding the latter point, a couple of interviewees were explicit that they became involved with the CHP, or at least ended their support of the federal Conservatives, after the Conservatives allocated \$400,000 in funds (via a tourism program) for the Toronto Gay Pride Festival. Others discussed Prime Minister Harper’s 2006 campaign promise to re-examine the Civil Marriage Act of 2005, which marked the federal legalization of same-sex marriage. Harper won a minority government in the January 2006 election and, true to his promise, had an open

⁴⁹⁴ “Human Rights Commission ‘Dismisses’ Hate Charges Against CHP Canada,” *ARPA Canada*, January 27, 2009, accessed February 25, 2014, <http://arpacanada.ca/issuesresearch/religious-freedom/483-human-rights-commission-dismisses-hate-charges-against-chp-canada>.

⁴⁹⁵ The process of dealing with the HRC was outlined in this letter, Ron Gray, “The Process is the Punishment: The Victim’s of Canada’s Human Rights Commissions Deserve Mention in the Country’s Museum Devoted to Human Rights,” (letter) *Reformed Perspective*, March 2011, 7-10.

vote on a motion to effectively re-open the same-sex marriage debate in December that year. The motion was voted down and the Harper government has avoided this debate ever since.

Those actively opposed to same-sex marriage saw this move as a scam—Harper had made this campaign promise to appease social conservatives, but put no real effort into reversing the Civil Marriage Act. Veronica, a perennial CHP candidate, and her husband, Douglas, discussed in detail the “travesty” of Harper’s attempt to reopen this issue.⁴⁹⁶ Veronica had formally applied to speak at public hearings on same-sex marriage before the motion went to vote, but did not received notification of her acceptance and a date until “about two weeks after [she] was supposed to be there.”⁴⁹⁷ As far as Veronica could determine, Harper’s promise to reopen the debate on same-sex marriage was “designed to fail,” and although she was already a member of the CHP, this only worked to reaffirm her belief that Harper’s Conservatives are not social conservatives.

I found it especially peculiar when CHPers discussed abortion and homosexuality as the defining policies of the party. As stated repeatedly throughout this dissertation, the party defines itself as pro-life and pro-family, and this is most likely what CHPers meant when they said that abortion and homosexuality were the defining policies of the party. I argue this because unlike abortion, where the CHP has a policy titled, “Abortion,” as well as another on the sanctity of life, it is far more difficult to pinpoint policies specifically about homosexuality. There are seven CHP policies that either directly mentions homosexuality or “aberrant” sexualities that could be interpreted as policies “on homosexuality” but none use that particular word in their title.⁴⁹⁸ Of

⁴⁹⁶ Interview #43, February 1, 2012.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ These policies are 6.2 Legislative Responsibility and Limits in Law, subsection 9 “Moral Law”; 6.3 Individual Human Worth, subsection 6 “Reproductive Technology”; 6.4 Sanctity of Marriage and The Family, subsections 1 “Marriage,” 2 “The Family,” 3 “Sexual Aberrations,” and 10 “National Guidelines”; and 6.5 Honesty and Integrity, subsection 3 “Obscenity.” CHP Canada, *Party Policy*, 39-43.

these seven policies only two contain the word “homosexuality” and one use of “lesbians.” The party’s policies on marriage and the family affirm the nuclear family. Here is an excerpt from the policy on the family: “We affirm that heterosexual, monogamous marriage is God-ordained as the foundation of the family, and that any other form of union whatsoever is Biblically prohibited.”⁴⁹⁹ This policy uses positive, rather than negative, language rather skilfully and in such a way that it avoids any outright condemning of homosexuals. This affirmation of the nuclear family is upheld in the party’s policy on reproductive technology, which includes opposition to the “insemination of lesbians.”⁵⁰⁰

Many of these policies associated with homosexuality and “sexual aberrations” are similar to the current and highly controversial Russian laws against pro-gay propaganda, but use far softer language. By way of example, the party’s policy on “Moral Law” calls to “restore elements of Canada’s pre-1969 Criminal Code” including “outlawing of adultery and sexual aberrations, thereby preventing this behaviour from being openly flaunted in public, or being taught as ‘normal’ or an ‘alternative lifestyle’ in public schools.”⁵⁰¹ The policies on “Sexual Aberrations,” “National Guidelines” (to discourage “publicly-funded institutions from openly teaching neutral or positive attitudes towards” homosexuality among other things), and “Obscenity” seek to either criminalize homosexuality or actively discourage representations of homosexuality.

Some interviewees linked together the party’s position on abortion and homosexuality, but rarely attempted to explain this connection. Perhaps in a moment of awareness that I might be confused by this connection, Douglas and Veronica, mentioned above, discussed how their “life-respecting” position ties together being pro-life and being concerned about transpeople and

⁴⁹⁹ CHP Canada, *Party Policy*, 41.

⁵⁰⁰ CHP Canada, *Party Policy*, 40.

⁵⁰¹ CHP Canada, *Party Policy*, 39.

homosexuals.⁵⁰² Regarding transpeople (a term they did not use) Veronica said, “being life-respecting means to respect people for how God created them and God creates male and female.”⁵⁰³ Although she acknowledged that some people are born something other than strictly male or female (I offered the terms “transgender,” “intersex,” and “hermaphroditic,” but she did not feel any of these terms reflected what she was discussing), she described individuals who want to change the sex they were born into as “a victim of circumstances” and the act as “a rebellion against who God made that person to be.”⁵⁰⁴ She described herself as wanting “to be compassionate to the person,” and respectful and lovingly.

It is clear that while the party maintains these policies and individuals are concerned about the homosexual agenda, members ardently strive to not be classified as bigoted or homophobic. I did not meet anyone who identified as a homophobe or a bigot, and many expressed frustrations with being associated with these terms. During interviews they might say things that could be understood as horribly offensive to the homosexual and queer communities—for example when Veronica referred to the North American Man-Boy Love Association, a highly questionable pro-pedophilia organization, as a reputable source to explain how people become gay—while insisting that they hold a loving and compassionate view of homosexuals.⁵⁰⁵ Individual members complained about being classified as bigots for holding traditional family values, and argued how their position does not discriminate against homosexuals.

Luke, who has been a member of the CHP since around the time of the founding convention and who was previously mentioned in Chapter Three, offers us another example of

⁵⁰² Interview #43, February 1, 2012.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

these attempts to position oneself as not bigoted or homophobic.⁵⁰⁶ Luke was highly critical of another CHPer who he felt was too extreme because they wanted to reinstate the ability to incarcerate adulterers or homosexuals. Additionally, Luke was very critical that the party's leadership does not screen extremists like this other CHPer, who was embracing an interpretation of CHP's "Moral Law" policy.⁵⁰⁷ While this initially gave the impression that Luke was concerned about possible homophobic tendencies of some CHPers, it seemed more likely that he was concerned with how this type of extremism would make the party seem homophobic. However, immediately after criticizing people like this other CHPer for being extreme, he insisted that while his church excommunicates gays, it does not discriminate against them because, "we do leave the door open for them to kind of 'go thy way and sin no more.'⁵⁰⁸ Any self-awareness that excommunicating people for being gay or telling them that their sexual preferences are inherently sinful could be understood as discriminatory was completely missing.

I interpret this defensive positioning as reflecting a wilful ignorance among party members, in that they are unwilling or unable to acknowledge how these stances could be understood as discriminatory, and instead focus on how they are being unjustly persecuted for their beliefs. Rather than trying to empathise with individuals who embrace their non-heteronormative sexual orientation, CHPers narrowly focus on those who emphasize the sadness and possible abuse associated with homosexuality, such as Gordon Truscott. I purchased a copy of Truscott's book *Inside Homosexuality: Does My Pain Matter to You?* at the national convention.⁵⁰⁹ He founded Caring Friends, a counselling service/ministry that "investigates

⁵⁰⁶ Interview #64, July 19, 2012.

⁵⁰⁷ CHP Canada, *Party Policy*, 39.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview #64, July 19, 2012.

⁵⁰⁹ Truscott, *Inside Homosexuality*.

developmental homosexuality and its prevention.”⁵¹⁰ His book emphasizes male homosexuality as non-permanent—the idea that someone could be a “pre-homosexual” or “ex-gay” man—and argues “sexual abuse by an older male” is one of the paths to homosexuality.⁵¹¹ Truscott is fairly open about his own struggles with homosexuality. His book reflects a position that does not easily accept or empathise with homosexual men who are at peace with their sexual orientation.

Although one might expect CHPers to use the Bible to argue in opposition to homosexuality, reasons for their opposition were more varied. Yes, there were definitely some who talked about the sinful nature of homosexuality and this was the most popular reason given to oppose homosexuality, but this was not the sole argument. Bob, who has been discussed in Chapters Two and Five, was very open about how when he is publicly arguing against teaching about homosexuality in public school sex education curriculum and against allowing MSM to donate blood he avoids using religious arguments or drawing on evidence from religious organizations like Focus on the Family.⁵¹² Instead, he draws on the Ontario Ministry of Health and his local Public Health organization to argue the health risks associated with homosexual practices (generally focusing on MSM).

John Corvino, a philosophy professor who regularly participates in debates with Evangelical Christians on homosexuality and gay rights, describes five recurring arguments raised regarding homosexuality: 1) “God Said it, I Believe It, That Settles It;” 2) “A Risky Lifestyle;” 3) “It’s Not Natural;” 4) “Born This Way;” and 5) “Man on Man, Man on Dog, or Whatever the Case May Be.”⁵¹³ These arguments are not wholly discrete, but the Bible-based

⁵¹⁰ Caring Friends, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.caringfriends.hk/>.

⁵¹¹ Truscott, *Inside Homosexuality*, 17, 53-4, and 154. Chapter Three is called “Background of a Pre-homosexual Boy.” Like Veronica in Interview #43, February 1, 2012, Truscott linked NAMBLA with homosexuality (pages 208-9).

⁵¹² Interview #9, August 25, 2011.

⁵¹³ John Corvino, *What’s Wrong With Homosexuality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 47.

argument, “God said it,” gets associated more with conservative Protestants than others. Catholics may use the “God said it” argument as well as natural law, “It’s Not Natural,” to criticise homosexuality. Although Bob, a Protestant, confirmed that he personally believes the Bible-based perspective, he understands that this argument is not attractive to most people in the public positions of power. He therefore makes a conscious effort to present “the risky lifestyle,” a secular, argument when publicly debating issues around homosexuality.

Bob’s intentional decision to publicly present a secular argument is the embodiment of one of Jon Shields’ five deliberative norms necessary for democracy—“the rejection of appeals to theology.”⁵¹⁴ Shields’ argues in *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right* that, despite persistent arguments to the contrary, the American Christian Right elites promote a deliberative democracy. I was thoroughly surprised when talking with Bob how much he resembled the Christian Right elites described by Shields. Since that interview my opinion that Shields’ model fits this particular CHPer has only intensified, as he has since given instructional talks to other party members on how to present themselves in public debates. Bob is not unique among CHPers in his use of “the risky lifestyle” argument, but the level of self-awareness about how to present an effective argument in the public (non-conservative Christian) sphere was notable.

At the beginning of this chapter I showcased a vignette where Phyllis described the homosexual movement as unified, unlike the disorganized Christians. According to Phyllis, this combatant is somehow more united than the party and its “co-belligerents.”⁵¹⁵ Yet, this is not a quality that is unique to the homosexual movement, but one perceived in all of the CHP’s

⁵¹⁴ Shields, *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right*, 19. Haskell discusses a similar trend among Canadian evangelicals’ arguments against same-sex marriage in David Haskell, “‘What We Have Here is a Failure to Communicate’: Same-Sex Marriage, Evangelicals, and the Canadian News Media,” *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 311-29. The deliberative norm that Shields describes as “the rejection of appeals to theology” runs parallel to Haskell’s observation that Canadian evangelical leaders and organizations avoided the “argument from divine ordinance” in their public statements.

⁵¹⁵ Interview #45, March 15, 2012.

enemies. The perceived unity of the homosexual movement is not the central issue the party has with this enemy. What is at stake with the CHP's perceptions of the homosexual agenda is a sense of righteous persecution and the party's zero-sum approach to religious rights versus gay rights. The type of Christianity popular within the CHP—and indeed the Christian Right more broadly—frames a sense of persecution as a sign of righteousness.⁵¹⁶ The more they see their religious rights being challenged, the more justified they are to exist and persist.⁵¹⁷ This is part of the reason why the HRC was invoked so much in discussions of homosexuality. The CHP's encounters with the HRC emphasize that Christians get targeted by the homosexual movement because of their religious beliefs. Whether or not the party's rhetoric or actions are discriminatory to the queer community is not seriously considered—party members feel they are being loving and compassionate and they cannot understand why the queer community might not see that. However, this self-perceived loving and compassionate response plays second fiddle to the sense that conservative Christian beliefs about “traditional families” are under attack.

Besides the sense of religion under attack helping to motivate and reaffirm the party's existence, it also has the unfortunate consequence of presenting religious freedom and gay rights as a zero-sum game. Both cannot triumph. Redefining marriage for legal and political purposes means that religious definitions of marriage are nullified. Enacting legislation to protect primary and secondary students from bullying means that Christian children are being told they cannot publicly discuss their religious-based understanding of the family. And the government instituting the HRC to deal with alleged hate crimes means the government is removing

⁵¹⁶ For a discussion of this sense of persecution in the American Christian Right see: Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 48-9; and Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Persecution Complexes: Identity Politics and the “War on Christians,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 152-180.

⁵¹⁷ Matthew 5:10, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (NIV) – a part of the Beatitudes – helps foster this connection between persecution and righteousness.

Christians' freedom of speech. The black and white dichotomy means one has to have the upper hand and, from the perspective of the CHP, the homosexual movement is winning. Perhaps over time the view of the homosexual movement as a real and present enemy will decline, like we saw with feminism. For the time being, the only other enemy that is a comparable concern for the CHP to the homosexual agenda is radical Islam.

The CHP and Radical Islam: The Religious Other

Another reason that attending the CHP's convention was incredibly useful for my research was that it gave me the opportunity to observe convention delegates (that is, regular party members) debate resolutions. The resolutions presented at the convention ranged from editing the party's constitution to officially adopting platforms and policies to general statements about the actions of the national board. Sooner or later all CHP policies are vetted at triennial conventions by party members from across the country. As former leader Ron Gray aptly described in a public letter on the "History of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada:"

Between conventions, the National Leader formulates policy with the aid of the Party's Policy, Planning & Strategy Committee and in consultation with the National Board, which comprises the table officers (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer) plus all the provincial presidents. Those interim policy statements are subject to ratification by the members at the next convention.⁵¹⁸

This process of ratification is exactly what happened with the CHP's controversial new immigration policy initially showcased during the 2011 election.

In November 2010 at a national board meeting in Kamloops, B.C., the party's new immigration policy was adopted with ratification pending. By the following week—on November 23—the policy was first discussed in a *Communiqué* (written by Hantiuk) and picked

⁵¹⁸ Gray, "History of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada."

up by *The London Free Press*.⁵¹⁹ The *Communiqué* announcing the new policy, titled in non sequitur fashion “School Children Trained to Amputate,” amounted to less than two full pages. The newsletter begins by recounting a BBC report “that more than 40 schools in Britain have trained over 5,000 children aged 6-18 years on Sharia Law and its punishments.” It then mentions four so-called “honour killings” that took place in Canada since 2009 before discussing how Muslim immigrants have failed to integrate in various European countries. After stating a need to protect Canadian culture, the new immigration policy is outlined:

*CHP Canada calls on the federal government to institute a moratorium on all immigration from Muslim nations governed by Sharia Law until their refusal to align themselves with our culture is resolved; also, to deny immigration to anyone whose ideology threatens Canadian security. At the same time, we call on the federal government to accept as refugees individuals from these countries fleeing Sharia law or the decisions of Sharia courts, who have passed a criminal evaluation, because our culture protects victims of injustice.*⁵²⁰

News of this policy spread quickly and the same day the party released the above *Communiqué*, *The London Free Press* reacted by publishing an on-line article titled, “Muslim stance ignites critics.” The article describes G.J. Rancourt, their local CHP candidate at the time, presenting the new policy, and reactions from two academics: Cameron Anderson, a political science professor at the University of Western Ontario, and Jeffrey Reitz, a political science professor at the University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs. Although both Anderson and Reitz are quoted on the un-Canadian sentiment behind the policy, Rancourt is presented as adamant that it is necessary to protect Canada against terrorism. Rancourt, who was

⁵¹⁹ Jim Hnatiuk, “School Children Trained to Amputate,” *Communiqué* 17, no. 46 (Nov. 23, 2010); and Kate Dubinski, “Muslim Stance Ignites Critics,” *London Free Press*, November 23, 2010, accessed March 3, 2014, www.lfpress.com/news/london/2010/11/22/16269226.html.

⁵²⁰ Hnatiuk, “School Children Trained to Amputate” (original italics).

clearly unimpressed with how the article represented the CHP, wrote an opinion piece in response, published in the same paper on December 4, 2010, defending himself and the party.⁵²¹

The questionable attention associated with the party's new policy fuelled internal debates. When I asked interviewees if there were any party policies that they took issue with or thought perhaps should change, the majority of interviewees said they could not think of any; however, when they did point to a specific policy it was most frequently the moratorium on immigration from Muslim countries. Although CHPers embraced the sentiment behind the policy—protecting Canada against an Islamic threat—they were concerned about how the wording of the policy would be interpreted by outsiders. Negative media attention, such as the article in *The London Free Press*, reaffirmed that the wording of the policy was the central issue; however, because the policy was introduced between a convention and an election, CHPers were not able to openly debate it until the 2012 convention.

The national convention officially ran from March 14-17, 2012, but time was at a premium, with only the 15th and the 16th set aside as full days with four plenary sessions for deliberating resolutions, as well as the leader's address, four workshop sessions, and a gala dinner. Forty-five separate resolutions were included in the original convention package, and some minor last minute changes with resolutions being removed or added were announced at the welcoming event on the evening of the 14th. After the third plenary session it was clear to everyone that there simply was not enough time to deliberate all forty-five resolutions, and just before the end of the fourth session the chair announced that all resolutions, save one, following resolution #33 would be removed from the agenda due to time constraints.⁵²²

⁵²¹ G. J. Rancourt, "Christian Heritage Candidate Denies Party 'Blatantly Racist,'" *London Free Press*, December 4, 2010, accessed March 3, 2014, www.lfpress.com/comment/2010/12/03/16421186.html. I suspect that the title of Rancourt's response was not chosen by him.

⁵²² Field notes. Abbotsford, British Columbia. March 2012.

“#24: CHP Platform (*Better Solution*) for Immigration—Terrorism and Screening”—the last of the comprehensive five-part immigration platform—was formally presented for debate during the third plenary session, early in the morning on the 16th.⁵²³ The other parts of the immigration platform saw few questions and little debate, but this last part drew some heated discussion. Delegates lined up at the two microphones to voice their support or opposition to the resolution, and to seek points of clarification. One delegate, a lanky middle-aged man who waited patiently in line to approach the microphone, called on the chair to amend the wording from “CHP Canada would deny immigration from any Muslim country” to “countries practicing Sharia law.” This was called to a vote, but the amendment narrowly failed.

After a relatively short, but heated, period of debate, and while there were still people waiting to speak to the resolution, the chair determined the original language needed to be clarified so the resolution was postponed until later the same day. When policy was finally called to the floor again after a short mid-morning break the minor rewording, regarding militant individuals who hold ideologies that threaten Canada, was accepted by the delegates and the debate quickly returned in full force.

Those opposed to the policy expressed concern that it was too sweeping. They expressed concern about Christians in Muslim countries who might want to immigrate and Muslims who felt persecuted by their country’s Sharia-based legal system. They wanted reassurance that this immigration policy would still allow for refugees from those countries. Some critics astutely raised concerns about the CHP’s ability to claim they support freedom of religion when they want to ban immigration from Muslim countries. One middle-aged man spoke passionately about his experiences living in a so-called Muslim country and his apprehension that the policy lacked nuance.

⁵²³ CHP Canada, *Setting our Sails for Tomorrow*, “Resolutions,” 51-2.

National board members attempted to assure these concerned delegates that the policy did not include refugees and that anyone who was attempting to leave a Muslim country because they felt persecuted by Sharia law would be accepted pending screening. This, the board members felt, answered questions about refugees, Christians, and Muslims being persecuted. The other significant concerns about religious freedom and simplistic understanding of “Muslim countries” were left untouched by the board members.

Although the delegates were divided on this resolution, there were more who supported it than opposed it. Supporters felt the policy would help protect Canada from an onslaught of radical Muslims and internal terrorist attacks by Muslim groups. In the end, when the resolution was called to a vote the amended policy was adopted and applause rang out in the convention hall in support of the resolution. Those opposed to the policy stayed quiet and the serious question of religious freedom was left unanswered.

The perceived threat of radical Islam has developed among CHPers since the party was founded. Although the party had no formal policies regarding Islam until the immigration policy discussed above, it is more likely that concerns about radical Islam have been building up over the past decade or so rather than suddenly manifesting in 2010. Members of the CHP are not ignorant of the public discourse since the events of September 11, 2001, which has presented Muslims as a terrorist threat. Furthermore, CHPers are attracted to more conservative media sources, like the Sun News corporation, Tim Bloedow’s Christian Governance website, and various conservative blogs, that foster concerns about Muslims present in North America and Europe.

It is likely that September 11th marks the period that individual CHPers started associating Islam with terrorism; however, in public presentations and in *Communiqués* the party

leadership have largely linked this threat to Muslim immigrant issues in Europe. Party publications and policy do not totally ignore associations between Islam and terrorism, but this connection was stressed in the first-part of the comprehensive immigration platform—resolution “#20: CHP Platform (*Better Solutions*) for Immigration—Citizenship and Loyalty”—and not in the policy explicitly on terrorism.⁵²⁴ I will discuss this resolution in greater detail shortly, questioning why it did not receive the same calibre of debate as the resolution described above.

Rather than emphasizing terrorism to justify the proposed moratorium, as the name of the resolution suggests, the party has taken a different route focusing on Muslim immigration issues in Europe to justify the policy calling on a moratorium on immigration from Muslim countries. During the 2011 leader visit and in *Communiqués*, elected European officials, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Norwegian Progress Party Leader Siv Jensen, and Dutch Party for Freedom Leader Geertz Wilders, were regularly cited for their opinions about the failure of multiculturalism and problems attributed to Muslim immigration.⁵²⁵ The fact that the former leader drew on Geertz Wilders so frequently to argue against Muslim immigration bothered a few CHPers; not because of the negative associations with Wilders’ Party for Freedom, but because he is against religion in general.

Additionally, resolution #24 did not directly state that Islam is a cause of terrorism, but strongly implies this sentiment with the following statements:

In the list of justifications for the moratorium policy: “Canada is currently at war with an enemy that espouses a particularly dangerous and pernicious ideology, radical Islam, which seeks the subjugation of the entire world to its ideology.”⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ CHP Canada, *Setting our Sails for Tomorrow*, “Resolutions,” 43-4.

⁵²⁵ Hnatiuk, “School Children Trained to Amputate.”; Jim Hnatiuk, “Canada Must Act Against Sharia Law Now,” news release, February 8, 2011, accessed March 3, 2014, www.chp/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Canada-Must-Act-Against-Sharia-Law-Word97_3_-1-1.pdf; and Jim Hnatiuk, “Canadian Women Second-Class Citizens? NEVER!” *Communiqué* 18, no. 37 (September 13, 2011); Field notes taken at various leader visit events across Southern Ontario in April 2011.

⁵²⁶ CHP Canada, *Setting our Sails for Tomorrow*, “Resolutions,” 51.

Part of the adopted policy: “Recognize that immigration is being used as a subtle and hidden form of jihad designed to undermine Canada’s Judeo-Christian culture; CHP Canada would deny immigration from any Muslim nation.”⁵²⁷

The first statement clearly names radical Islam as an enemy of Canada and the CHP by association, although it does not name the enemy with which we are supposedly at war. This could be a reference to “the war on terror” or Al Qaida or the Taliban. Part of the reason why Canada needs to adopt the CHP’s immigration policy is to stop this ideology from spreading around the world. While I do not disagree with the reality behind this premise—Islam is a missionizing religion that seeks converts—there is little to no acknowledgement by party members that Christianity is also a missionizing religion that could be understood by some as posing a similar threat. Instead of recognizing the similarities between Islamic and Christian worldviews, the party focuses on the struggle for dominance and the unsavoury aspects of Islam.

Samuel Huntington’s thesis from *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* is a popular source for CHPers to draw on when arguing the reality of the threat posed by Islam.⁵²⁸ The idea that Islam may be attempting to infiltrate Canada via immigration, as noted in the second statement, is a variation of Huntington’s thesis. Although the first statement discusses the threat of radical Islam, the second statement, like the clash of civilizations thesis, collapses all Islam into radical Islam, disallowing any middle ground where Islam and Christianity can peacefully coexist. This inability or unwillingness to note the difference within Islam was apparent in interviews with CHPers at all levels, but there were also some who resisted these negative generalizations.

Although the terrorism and screening of the immigration policy present in resolution #24 drew the greatest amount of attention of all the five-part comprehensive immigration policy, it is

⁵²⁷ CHP Canada, *Setting our Sails for Tomorrow*, “Resolutions,” 52.

⁵²⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

surprising that the first part—resolution #20, regarding citizenship and loyalty—did not attract more debate. As noted above, this part of the immigration policy has more direct language on terrorism, but it also included controversial assertions about Sharia law. Resolution #20 calls for a new requirement where all immigrants must “sign a formally binding pledge” before gaining entrance into the country and applying for citizenship. Violation of the pledge would risk deportation. Besides agreeing “to abide by Canadian law,” the pledge also includes agreeing:

[T]o forgo or abandon practices and traditions that are contrary to Canadian law and tradition such as:

- a. Sharia Law—which includes but is not limited to ‘honour’ killings, polygamy, and the wearing of the burqa or niqab face covering in public.
- b. Gang Violence.
- c. Religious beliefs that run contrary to the Charter in that they demean individuals or jeopardize public safety.
- d. Terrorism—which includes promoting and supporting subversive terrorist groups (the most numerous are those involving Muslim extremists, but there are others such as Tamil and Sikh organizations) in their country of origin and worldwide.⁵²⁹

Although there is a clear link being made between Muslim extremism and terrorism, it is not the only religious—or ethnic—group associated with terrorism. Despite this policy containing potentially Islamophobic or narrow ideas of Sharia law, it did not attract the same negative attention as the resolution #24. Only one person voiced a concern that the language regarding Sharia law in resolution #20 was too extreme. No one pointed out or debated how point c from the list above could directly challenge the CHP’s claims that it upholds religious freedom for all. It is clear that the maintenance of Canada’s Judeo-Christian heritage and culture takes precedence over the freedom of religion for all. In the end, resolution #20 easily passed without additional comments.

⁵²⁹ CHP Canada, Convention Package, “Resolutions,” March 2012, 43-4.

Among CHPers resolution #20 was not nearly as controversial as resolution #24, despite containing similarly challenging language. I believe this lack of controversy has a lot to do with the fact that it was the wording from the terrorism and screening policy, not the language in resolution #20, used in 2011 election pamphlets, and the negative press that the wording used in resolution #24 attracted around the time of the election. This means CHPers could have encountered the negative reactions in the press prior to attending the convention. Additionally, party members who were actively involved in campaigning during the 2011 election could have had personal experiences of potential supporters finding the wording distasteful. At least one candidate from Ontario commented that he got permission from the National Board to alter the pamphlets specifically because of the wording of that policy. When explaining his concerns with the policy he said,

I was very uncomfortable with the way they [the National Board] presented their moratorium on Islamic immigration. I think they handled it poorly. I agree with what they want to do. I understand that. Why import the enemy? Makes no sense. But in the public eye you have to word things properly, and even on my own door hangers I got permission from them to change the wording. And even then Christians said, ‘you know, I was going to vote CHP, but I saw that and was scared. You’re hateful, so we won’t vote for you.’ I didn’t agree with ... I agree with their reasoning, but I didn’t agree with their approach. I was very uncomfortable with that flyer.⁵³⁰

He makes it very clear that he supports the idea behind the policy, but took issue specifically with the wording. Presumably, alternative, softer language for the public could make this policy more acceptable.

Although the new immigration policy was frequently pointed to as a policy or platform that individual CHPers see as problematic, one relatively new CHPer, Trisha, was very clear about how central the party’s stance on immigration was for her.⁵³¹ I met Trisha at the

⁵³⁰ Interview #9, August 25, 2011.

⁵³¹ Interview #55, May 10, 2012.

convention and then interviewed her by phone a few months later. 2012 marked the first convention that she has attended and she brought her preteen daughter—one of the youngest people in attendance—along with her. We had the opportunity to chat a couple times during the convention, where I found out that Trisha was originally from the East coast, but had moved to Northern Alberta when her husband, in the military, was stationed near Edmonton. When I asked her about the defining policy of the CHP she initially said, “I know you are looking for abortion.” After I assured her that I was “not looking for anything in particular,” and she sufficiently convinced me that “as a Christian” she is against abortion, she spoke freely about the significance of the party’s immigration policy.⁵³² Trisha talked about how scared she is of Islam; how she knows “they [the media] are creating this Islamophobic narrative, but as a woman and a Christian” she is scared, and “if that doesn’t give [her] a legitimate reason to fear Islam then [she] doesn’t know what does.”⁵³³ While Trisha was unique in how much emphasis she placed on her fear of Islam and the centrality of the party’s immigration policy, she was not alone in her fear of this religion.

A version of resolution #20 used in the November 30, 2010 *Communiqué*, “Citizenship and Loyalty vs. Sharia Law,” was altered by the time the resolution was presented at the convention.⁵³⁴ The words used to describe Muslim-specific traditions in this *Communiqué* were more extreme than those in the resolution #20. As seen above, the policy on citizenship and loyalty associates Sharia law with honour killings, polygamy, and certain women’s garb. The *Communiqué*, when touching on the same point, calls for immigrants to forgo or abandon “adherence to Sharia law *and/or the fatwas and edicts of imams and Islamic councils*—which are not limited to ‘honour’ killings, polygamy, *genital mutilation, pedophilia (child marriages)* and

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Jim Hnatiuk, “Citizenship and Loyalty vs. Sharia Law,” *Communiqué* 17, no. 47 (November 30, 2010).

the wearing of the burqa or niqab face covering in public.”⁵³⁵ Because the *Communiqué* is only sent to those who request it and not the general public, it is unlikely the wording in one of these newsletters could lead to a response similar to campaign pamphlets or news articles. Yet, the fact that the wording changed suggests there was some response among *Communiqué* subscribers that led to the altered wording. All of this is to say, resolution #20 does appear to contain softer language than originally intended, but it is still quite extreme and did not cause any significant reaction at the convention.

The CHPers’ perceptions of Muslims, radical or otherwise, are quite different than the other combatants examined in this chapter because they are so vastly inconsistent. Unlike secularism and homosexuality, which were universally understood as not right, CHPers were all over the board with their perceptions of and sentiments on Muslims. Some individuals made strong distinctions between Muslims and radical Muslims, while others made no distinction whatsoever. Although the majority of people I interviewed voice strong concerns about Muslims, others discussed the need to campaign to the Muslim community and one candidate even reported having a Muslim campaign manager during the 2011 election.⁵³⁶

At least a few people pointed to the FCP’s ability to have non-Christian members and candidates—including pro-family Muslims—as a notable difference between the FCP and the CHP. Those who pointed to this particular difference usually presented it as one of the better qualities of the FCP and one of the potential deficiencies of the CHP. These individuals who bemoaned the CHP’s restrictive membership were not in the majority, as seen in the debates about the name of the party discussed in Chapter Three. These rare individuals were more able than most to see that the potential overlap of social conservative concerns shared by the Christian

⁵³⁵ Hnatiuk, “Citizenship and Loyalty vs. Sharia Law,” (my italics indicate sections from the *Communiqué* not included in resolution #20).

⁵³⁶ Interview #17, October 14, 2011.

and Muslim community could attract more voters and members. Where campaigning to Muslims can be understood as middle ground, and desiring to allow Muslims members can be seen as one extreme, there were even CHPers in the other extreme, who spoke point-blank about not wanting Muslims to vote for the party. All of this is to say, while the majority of CHPers are certainly concerned about the “Muslim threat,” there is little consensus about the individuals who supposedly represent this threat.

In some cases the tensions between wanting Muslims to support the CHP and striving to protect Canada from radical Islam created tensions not just in the party, but in individual CHPers. One prime example is G.J. Rancourt, a candidate from Southern Ontario during the 2011 election discussed in Chapter Five. During the leader visit in his riding he proudly announced that Muslim families had his sign on their lawn, and yet, he is the same individual who was planning for his electoral district association (EDA) to sue the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) over the so-called “Mosqueteria.” Despite living well outside of the TDSB’s region, he helped organize and spoke at two protests after one school arranged for Muslim students to conduct noon prayers on school property. Rancourt’s mixed messages on Islam were presented in public forums, such as campaigning events, public CHP meetings, in the media, and in YouTube videos, which is how I learned of his stance. It is not clear if he stayed involved with the CHP after he announced the plan to have his local EDA sue the TDSB, but he certainly attracted some media attention between his public thoughts on Islam, promoting the party’s immigration policy, and his involvement with a local prayer festival.

Beyond the controversial and negative attention the CHP’s immigration policy drew, the policy shows: (1) a lack of understanding of Sharia beyond the simple designation of “Muslim law”; (2) an unexplained system for designating Muslim countries; and (3) an underlying

assumption that the majority of Muslim terrorists are imported, rather than homegrown.

Regarding the first point, the lack of complex understanding about Sharia became particularly clear to me when I was at a leader visit meeting in April 2011. One of the attendees of the event asked the candidate to explain Sharia law. The candidate admitted that he felt that Jim Hnatiuk, the leader at that time, was better equipped to answer the question. Hnatiuk pointed to the work of Samuel Solomon, co-author of *Modern Day Trojan Horse: The Islamic Doctrine of Immigration* and *The Mosque Exposed*, a well-known former Muslim Christian convert.⁵³⁷

Although Hnatiuk never gave a clear or concise answer, all in all he primarily aligned Sharia with honour killings and Muslim extremists. I have seen no recognition that there is no singular Sharia or that there are multiple legal schools holding vastly different positions within the scope of Sharia. By linking Sharia with honour killings, polygamy, and supposed restrictions on women's clothing the party is reducing a complex and multifaceted legal system to extremist stereotypes.

Second, despite the clear intent to ban "immigration from any Muslim nation," I have seen no explanation as to how the CHP will determine which nations are Muslim or not.

Presumably, given the emphasis on Sharia law, a Muslim nation is one that employs Sharia, but there are a variety of ways that this legal system is employed. There are demographically Muslim majority countries that uphold secular constitutions, such as Turkey. There are countries, like Indonesia, that have multiple courts, including a religious, Sharia-based, court. Even some non-Muslim majority countries, such as the United Kingdom, allow for Islamic-based legal

⁵³⁷ Sam Solomon and Elias Al- Maqdisi, *The Mosque Exposed* (Charlottesville, VA: Advancing Native Missions, 2007); and Sam Solomon and Elias Al- Maqdisi, *Modern Day Trojan Horse: The Islamic Doctrine of Immigration* (Charlottesville, VA: Advancing Native Missions, 2009). Field notes from April 13, 2011.

arbitration on family issues (i.e. divorce and inheritance).⁵³⁸ Finally, there are countries, like Iran, which since the revolution has had a Sharia-based legal system.⁵³⁹ Given the diversity of countries that employ some aspect of Sharia law, it seems unlikely that the presence of Sharia-based arbitration in a given country is a sufficient singular benchmark for determining whether a country is “Muslim” or not. Simply focusing on religious demographics does not appear to be the key factor either, as Indonesia, the most Muslim country by population, never gets associated with this immigration ban. The countries that have been mentioned in association with this policy include: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and Somalia.⁵⁴⁰

Third, the fact that the policy seeking a ban on immigration from Muslim countries is framed as an anti-terrorism endeavour suggests that the CHP associates terrorism more with non-Christian immigrant groups—particularly Muslims, but also Tamils and Sikhs—than citizens born in Canada. The *Communiqué* that initially introduced CHPers to the new immigration policy states, “Canada currently identifies over fifty (50) terrorist organizations active in Canada.”⁵⁴¹ It is implied based on the context of this unsourced information that these terrorist organizations are tied to Muslim immigration, although no evidence is given to support this claim. Indeed, the most notorious Muslim terrorist plot in Canada, the subverted plans of the “Toronto 18,” was organized by both immigrants and those born in Canada.⁵⁴²

These three points draw attention to the intentions behind the controversial immigration policy. The CHP’s hardline stance on Muslim immigration is not based on the viability of the

⁵³⁸ Elaine Sciolino, “Britain Grapples With Role for Islamic Justice,” *The New York Times*, November 18, 2008, March 19, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/world/europe/19Shariah.html?pagewanted=1&r=0>.

⁵³⁹ Toni Johnson and Lauren Vriens, “Islam: Governing Under Sharia,” *Council on Foreign Relations.org*, January 9, 2013, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/religion/islam-governing-under-Sharia/p8034>.

⁵⁴⁰ Hnatiuk, “Canada Must Act Against Sharia Law Now.”

⁵⁴¹ Hnatiuk, “School Children Trained to Amputate.”

⁵⁴² “Sketches of the Ontario-based Terror Suspects,” *CTV News*, June 11, 2006, accessed March 19, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/20060611190320/http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060605/terror_suspects_060605/20060605/.

policy, but the ability of the party to posture. Because there is currently little possibility that the policy will be enacted, the party can take this hardline position, asserting that they are protecting Canada, without serious consideration of how the policy could be legislated. Since the 1982 adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which includes the freedom of conscience and religion, the prospect of banning immigrants based on religion could be considered unconstitutional. Furthermore, the CHP's promotion of this immigration policy raises considerable questions about the party's claim that it upholds religious freedom for all. What is at stake for the CHP with this immigration policy and posturing regarding Muslims is the perceived threat that this growing religion poses to their ideal Christian way of life. Although some individual CHPers acknowledge concerns shared by both conservative Christians and conservative Muslims, for the majority of party members the ground won by Muslims is understood as territory lost by Christians.

What does this tell us about the CHP?

The majority of this chapter has examined the three major perceived combatants of the CHP: secularism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islam. There are different issues at stake with each combatant, but when examined as a whole we gain a greater understanding of how the CHP sees itself. For one, focusing on these particular enemies shores up the CHP's credentials as a social conservative Christian group. The perceived enemies of the Christian CR have shifted since the 1980s and the changes in CHP discourse since the party developed reflect this shift. While the enemies highlighted by the party may seem out of touch to those outside of the Christian Right, they are current with those who share that ideology.

Prior to the formation of the CHP and during the party's early years the threat of feminism—in the form of single-parent households and dual-income families—was very tangible

for the Christian right and like-minded social conservatives. Dan Quayle's now infamous scuffle with the fictional Murphy Brown over the portrayal of single-motherhood in popular culture is a thing of the past. More contemporary reality shows like *Sixteen and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* fail to garner comparable attention. In Canada, REAL Women developed in 1983 as a "pro-family conservative movement" in reaction to the changes associated with feminism.⁵⁴³ However, other threats posed by feminism, such as universal childcare and closing the gender wage gap, have seen little progress since the early 1990s, thereby allowing the perceived imminence of other enemies to take precedence. Also, where the "pro-family" designation of the CHP used to point almost exclusively to the party's struggle with feminism (and homosexuality to a much lesser extent), overtime this came to primarily signify the party's opposition to homosexuality and other queer lifestyles.

The threat of secularism and secular humanism has had highs and lows since well before the party was founded. For CHPers, the threat of secularism has multiple peaks, with the advent of legalized Sunday shopping, the removal of explicitly Christian content in public school curricula, and the perceived silencing of Christian voices by the media. Although they generally acknowledge that Canada has become quite secular, it does not mean that this enemy has disappeared. Instead, it is a cyclical combatant, ready to reappear any time a public display of religion or religious belief is challenged.

The CHP presents secularists as a highly organized minority—a militant juggernaut, to paraphrase the party's website—forcing their will onto the religious majority. This rhetoric presents the party as a minority among the religious, who are able to see the threat posed by secularists and who strive to defend Canada against this attacker from within. It also places the CHP as defenders of religious freedom, even though their immigration policy can be understood

⁵⁴³ "About Us," *REAL Women of Canada*, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.realwomenofcanada.ca/issues/>.

as challenging this position. From the perspective of the CHP, those outsiders who might think the party is attempting to promote Christianity above other religions are wrong. Secularism stifles religious freedom, whereas the CHP sees itself as embracing this right for all. The party is not attempting to bring about a theocracy, but instead are trying to protect everyone's right to openly practice their religion.

The CHP projects its use of the Bible onto secularists when they assert that the Humanist Manifestos can be used to understand secular humanist thinking. Because the CHP presents an idealized biblically-literalist way of life, they assume that the Humanist Manifestos function similarly for secular humanists. Atheism and secular humanism are understood as a type of religious worldview and the Humanist Manifestos function as their scripture or doctrine. In this sense secular humanism is very much a competing religious worldview, even if those under the secularist umbrella would balk at this religious designation.

Although secularists are presented as a type of religious other, they are also understood as an organically developing enemy within Canadian culture, and are therefore quite different than the "radical Muslim" religious other. The former are a misguided result of enlightenment rationalism and humanism developing out of Western thought, whereas the latter are seen as wholly different. Radical Muslims come from foreign lands. Their way of thinking is understood as a non-Western religious ideology that seeks to forcefully convert or eliminate Westerners. And, although some CHPers promote a kinship with Muslims, more are willing to collapse all Muslims into the "radical" category.

I found it surprising how many people at the national convention informed me that Muslims are allowed to outright lie to non-Muslims. This questionable fact was drawn on to show why Muslims in general cannot be trusted and how they are different than Christians; a

Christian must be true to their word, but a Muslim is permitted by their religion to lie to others.⁵⁴⁴ Another striking contrast made between Christians and Muslims were claims that Islam forces conversion while Christianity does not. Although both religions have histories that include forced conversion, these assertions foster a sense that Muslims are the religious opposite to Christians. Rather than emphasize the similarities between these two religions, the differences are emphasized, thereby highlighting Islam as wholly the religious other to Christianity.

Similar to secularists, the CHP perceives the homosexual movement as a highly organized and powerful minority. The homosexual movement is perceived as possessing qualities that social conservative Christians should adopt, such as their purported willingness to work together to achieve shared goals. Although the CHP presents its social conservative beliefs as aligned with a Christian majority, it sees these minority enemies as objects of envy in their ability to work together to attain their respective goals. The party's opposition to the homosexual movement is a more contemporary interpretation of its "pro-family" identity. As noted above, where pro-family originally primarily indicated opposition to the feminist agenda, today it is a way to express support for "traditional families" without making direct negative statements about same-sex marriages or homosexuals.

As much as those promoting the homosexual agenda feel attacked and maligned, the CHP sees Christians—that is conservative Christians—and social conservatives as the real victims. The CHP is not unique in perceiving Christians as under attack. This theme is common among

⁵⁴⁴ I describe this as a "questionable fact" because in general Muslims, like Christians, are taught that lying is a sin. The CHPers were most likely referring to "taqiyya," a predominately Shia jurisprudence that allows for "precautionary lying" (such as concealing one's religion) only when one is being persecuted (i.e. when living in Sunni majority regions) or when one's life is at stake. Sunni jurisprudence also contains permissible lying (telling "untruths"), but only in the cases of war, settling disagreements, or smoothing over differences. This is to say, while there technically exists exemptions within Islamic law that allow for lying in some very specific instances, these are not laws that are universally embraced or necessarily well-known within the Muslim community.

social conservative Christians.⁵⁴⁵ Every gain by the homosexual movement for queer rights is interpreted as another attack on conservative religious values. This zero-sum game perspective on the gains of the homosexual movement carries over to the party's other conceived combatants. The presence of a humanist position in public education means the loss of Christianity. Allowing Muslim students to pray in school or Islamic religious arbitration signals an attack on Christian religious expressions and law. Emphasis on the zero-sum quality of rights is not unique to the CHP. The issue of one type of rights trumping another, say freedom of speech trumping human rights, is a very serious concern in any society that promotes universal rights. But the CHP gives an added positive value to the sense that their rights and freedoms are being compromised. Evidence that a biblical Christian worldview is being attacked is used to justify the existence of the party. If there were no sense that their Christian worldview was under threat then there would no longer be a need for the party to defend Canada's Christian heritage. Furthermore, a certain perception of persecution is interpreted as a sign of the correct path being followed by the CHP. As the beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew states, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."⁵⁴⁶

Finally, the conceived combatants of the CHP illustrate the intensely contradictory and human quality of the party. Part of the party's criticisms of secular humanism, the homosexual agenda, and radical Islamists are that they are minorities attempting to control the Christian majority; yet there is a keen awareness that party members are in the minority within the Christian majority through their chosen political vehicle. The party's enemies are a concern because they are attacking the Christian worldview held by CHPers, yet this sense of persecution

⁵⁴⁵ For an insider's perspective on Christians being persecuted in the United States see: David Limbaugh, *Persecution: How Liberals are Waging War Against Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2003). For an outsider's analysis of this theme see: Castelli, "Persecution Complexes."

⁵⁴⁶ Matthew 5:10 (KJV).

helps to perpetuate the party. The encounters with the enemies highlight the struggle to maintain freedom of speech and freedom of religion and the blurred lines therein. Living with cognitive dissonance, such as this, is a feature of humanity and the party needs these perceived combatants—and the real threat associated with them—if it is going to continue to exist.

Conclusion: Making Sense of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada

From an outsider's perspective the CHP may seem like a strange, scary, or unknown thing, but for party members—especially long-term, highly committed members—the CHP is just common sense. My intention with this research has been to illustrate how the positions held by the party make sense to party members. Certain perspectives make the CHP easy to dismiss, such as insisting that it is more American than Canadian, or emphasizing the improbability that the party will get elected. But these perspectives do not take the positions of individual CHPers seriously or attempt to understand the significance they place on the party. In Canada, choosing to be a member of any political party already shows a level of political commitment beyond that of the general populace. So why join a party that has such a poor electoral record? Any claims that CHPers, or members of any other fringe parties, join for fun suggests a serious lack of consideration for the time, financial, and emotional commitment given by these people. Instead, the lens of lived religion and identity politics offers us a better means for making sense of the CHP.

The theory of lived religion, as outlined by David Hall, Robert Orsi, and Meredith Maguire, emphasizes the everyday religious practices and faith of individuals outside of religious institutions.⁵⁴⁷ It embraces the complexity, fluidity, and tensions of the religious lives of individuals that can be missed when examining institutional forms of religion or relying on a quantitative approach to religion. As stated by Maguire,

Rather than deduce an image of individuals' beliefs and practices from abstractions about religion in general or even about particular religions, I have grappled with how to comprehend individuals' religions-as-practiced, in all their complexity and dynamism. Too often, our concepts for describing and analyzing individuals' religions simply fail to

⁵⁴⁷ See Hall, *Lived Religion in America*; Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*; Orsi, *The Madonna*; and Maguire, *Lived Religion*.

capture how multifaceted, diverse, and malleable are the beliefs, values, and practices that make up many (perhaps most) persons' own religions.⁵⁴⁸

Furthermore religion in this sense is not simply about practice, although it does strive to take individual and group religious practices more seriously. Lived religion frames religion as broader engagement in the world; that is to say, social interactions, political activities, educational decisions, and boundary-making are all part of doing religion in everyday life. This approach acknowledges, in Orsi's words,

Religion-in-action cannot be separated from other practices of everyday life, from the ways that humans do other necessary and important things or from other cultural structures and discourses (legal, *political*, medical and so on). Nor can sacred spaces be understood in isolation from the places where these things are done [...], from the media used to do them, or from the relationship constructed around them.⁵⁴⁹

In this sense, while the CHP is literally a registered federal political party, for its members it is a site where they are doing religion in their everyday lives and in politics more particularly. The act of running as a candidate becomes a form of witnessing, the party policy and the five unalterable principles become sacred texts, and maintaining loyalty to the party becomes a way of devoting one's life to God. Through describing these practices and the central issues at stake for the party, the crux of my research has been determining the lived religion of the CHP and thereby highlighting the humanity of the individuals in this political/religious group.

Overarching Themes: Identity Politics and the Principled vs. the Pragmatic

Throughout this dissertation there are two significant overarching and related themes: identity politics (particularly regarding identity production and maintenance of "social conservative Christianity") and tensions between what I call the principled versus the pragmatic. Regarding the first of these themes, the party attracts a particular type of Christian—social

⁵⁴⁸ Maguire, *Lived Religion*, 5.

⁵⁴⁹ Orsi, *The Madonna*, xxxix. Emphasis added.

conservative, fundamentalist Protestant (especially Dutch Reformed), holding pro-life *and* pro-capital punishment positions, supporters of private Christian schools and homeschooling, and Christian Reconstructionists—and reifies that particular Christian identity so that it is naturalized among the membership. Members who do not necessarily embrace these identity markers either learn to adapt their position against the standards unofficially set by the party or eventually disassociate from the group, as seen in the case of Richard and Susan. We can speak in broad terms of the identity of the CHP and its members, but we can also see the tensions of maintaining this identity. Debates around the name of the party, the prevalence of Dutch Reformed members, the significance of being pro-life and supporting capital punishment, as well as determining the enemies of the party, illustrate these tensions.

A recurring theme present throughout these debates is the desire of the party to uphold Biblical Christian principles—those associated with the CHP’s particular Christian identity—while striving to be a viable political party. I repeatedly describe this as a tension between being principled versus pragmatic. Whether or not the proposed pragmatic measures could actually grow the party membership or attract more votes is untestable and not wholly significant. What is important about this recurring struggle is that it highlights the functional difficulties for the party to maintain their Christian identity in the sphere of electoral politics, and that despite these difficulties the party persists.

Areas of Contribution

My research on the CHP contributes to studies on religion and politics—particularly conservative Christian political engagement and the CR more generally—as well as the literature on the conservative Dutch Reformed community in Canada. Much of the scholarship on conservative Christian political engagement originates in the United States, or positions the

American CR as the standard. While I have included a section comparing the CHP to the American CR—primarily for the benefit of readers who will assume that the CHP is an American import—I found the Dutch Reformed factor to be just as significant as any American influences.

In considering the significance of the Dutch Reformed community on the CHP, I am adding to the literature on this ethno-religious group. Much of the current literature on the North American Dutch Reformed community is written by insiders, such as Herman Ganzevoort, Corwin E. Smidt, and James D. Bratt.⁵⁵⁰ Even Michael Fallon, who wrote his Ph. D dissertation on Dutch Reformed immigration into Canada post-World War II, was not born into the community, but attended Redeemer University College—a Christian Reformed institution—for his bachelors and is currently the Christian Reformed Campus Minister at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.⁵⁵¹ He presents himself as an outsider in his dissertation, but he is very inside the community for an outsider.⁵⁵²

Scott Grills—who is an outsider to the CHP and the Dutch Reformed community—notes in his dissertation the overwhelming presence of Dutch Reformed individuals in the party, but he does not examine the role of this ethno-religious group in the formation and worldview of the CHP. Like Grills, I am an outsider to the Dutch Reformed community, but I have given the significance of this community greater consideration than Grills. Framing the CHP as a part of the orthodox Dutch Reformed pillar in Canada helps make sense of the party's origins and its ability to persist despite the inhospitable political environment. It makes perfect sense to join a

⁵⁵⁰ Ganzevoort, *A Bittersweet Land*; Luidens, Smidt, and Stoffels, *Reformed Vitality*; and Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*.

⁵⁵¹ Fallon, "People of the Covenant"; also, "Dr. Michael D. Fallon Curriculum Vitae," McMaster Christian Reformed Campus Ministry, accessed September, 29, 2014, <http://re-creation.ca/dr-michael-d-fallon-curriculum-vitae>.

⁵⁵² Fallon, "People of the Covenant," 2.

conservative Christian political party when your family and others in your social circles are already members, and the party already reflects your religious convictions. The CHP contributes to the institutional completeness of the more conservative faction of the Canadian Dutch Reformed community, and the strong social cohesion of this group helps reinforce the party.

My thick description approach to the CHP also adds to the literature on the moods and motivations of the CR. Popular texts on the CR, such as Michelle Goldberg's *Kingdom Coming* and Marci McDonald's *The Armageddon Factor*, tend to emphasize the eschatological beliefs of CR supporters as a primarily political motivation.⁵⁵³ This emphasis on end-time beliefs does little to humanize CR supporters, and instead presents them as other and strange—more concerned about life to come than anything in this life. It does little more than foster fear and conspiratorial thinking about the CR. In my encounters with the CHP I saw little to suggest that eschatological beliefs were a significant motivating factor driving party members' political engagement. Instead, they were more concerned with the erosion of Canada's Christian heritage and contemporary society than a perceived immanent second coming. Indeed, discussions of the end of days did not naturally arise in my encounters with CHPers, and the party regularly draws on concerns about the welfare of future generations to argue parts of their platform. A prime example is the common argument that failing to reduce the federal debt is equivalent to "stealing money from our children and grandchildren."⁵⁵⁴ This line of argument emphasizes a concern for future generations, rather than desire to bring on the Armageddon. Moreover my thick description approach to the CHP fosters a sense of the human-ness of party members. They are not some strange, scary other. They are real people who have chosen to join the party for a variety of reasons that make sense in their context.

⁵⁵³ Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming*; and McDonald, *The Armageddon Factor*.

⁵⁵⁴ "Economy," *CHP Canada*, accessed December 1, 2014, <https://www.chp.ca/platform/category/economy>.

What Would I Have Done Differently?

As is the case with all research projects, there are things that, given the opportunity, time, and money, I would have done differently. This project was my first foray into interviewing and ethnographic data collection. Relating to my lack of prior experience, I wish I had been more thorough when compiling field notes and more assertive about accessing certain key CHPers to interview. There are two CHPers in particular that I did not interview whose perspectives could have added to, or potentially changed, some discussion presented here. Because they were not interviewed, I have made some assumptions about their perspectives or situations that were not fully verified. That being said, the fact that they are public figures and I did not interview them removed the complicated process of ensuring their anonymity—something that was promised in the interview consent forms. In general, I am pleased with the number of interviews I collected for this project. If I had collected more interviews from outside Ontario then I could have included greater discussion on regionalized differences within the party. As it stands, I was able to obtain interviews across Canada, from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, but not enough to make any strong assertions about regional differences beyond the overlap with Dutch settlement patterns.

A survey of CHPers could have added support to my assertions about the central concerns and positions of the party members. If I had included a survey, I would have conducted the survey around halfway through the period I was conducting interviews, then the survey could have helped verify trends I had noticed. The questions would have been based on the most common interview questions, such as basic demographics (i.e. age, location, ethnicity, church-affiliation) and positions on the party (i.e. central policy, the meaning of “prolife,” debates about the party’s name). Possible answers for each question would have been based on recurring interview responses, with the option to write other answers or add details. I do not feel that I had

the time or funds to create and conduct a survey or properly analyze survey data, but I can see how it could have augmented my findings.

I originally intended to include a chapter focused on international comparisons with other Christian political parties beyond the American CR. In that chapter I would have also included comparisons and contrasts between the CHP and the solely provincial FCP Ontario.

Unfortunately, in part due to my emphasis on the positions of CHPers and their general lack of discussion of other Christian political parties—outside of those described in Chapter Two—this chapter did not make the final cut. As for discussion of the relationship between the CHP and the FCP, this appears throughout the dissertation rather than relegated to one particular chapter. This scattershot approach made sense given the various topics associated with the FCP and the significant overlap of membership in Ontario.

Regarding my theoretical framework, this dissertation would look different if I had drawn more heavily on Berger and Luckmann's theories on the social construction of reality or if I had included any social movement theory. Grills' research on the CHP drew on some of these theories, so I suspect I subconsciously avoided these theories in part so as to not repeat Grills' approach. His dissertation emphasized sociological theory, particularly phenomenological interactionism and the sociology of deviance, using the CHP as a case study, whereas my dissertation emphasizes the ethnographic details of this group.⁵⁵⁵ That being said, in retrospect I can see how drawing on these theories could have added to my research in a positive manner.

Areas for Further Research

As is the case with all research, there are multiple possibilities for future research building off of my research on the CHP. In the previous section I mentioned that I did not have

⁵⁵⁵ Grills, "Designating Deviance," iv.

an appropriate place in this dissertation to adequately present a comparison of the CHP with similar conservative Christian political parties on the international scale. My comparisons are largely limited to a triangulation of the CHP with the American CR and Christian parties in the Netherlands. Further comparing and contrasting of the CHP with ideologically similar parties in the United Kingdom and British Commonwealth countries could add a depth of understanding of Christian political trends beyond American CR and continental European Christian Democratic tendencies.

Similarly, this current project, while mentioning assorted CR organizations in Canada, does not attempt to map the social interconnections between these organizations. A research project that examines shared membership of predominant CR organizations in Canada (such as REAL Women of Canada, Focus on the Family Canada, the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, and the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition) and political affiliations could further our knowledge of the various flavours of the Canadian CR. Rather than presume that all of these organizations are interconnected, we could then see which ones are more closely aligned with each other, and how connections relate to political practices (i.e. joining or supporting a particular party, or choosing not to vote). This research could further our understanding of who joins these organizations and their political activities, and shed light on the diversity within the CR.

Brian Carwana, a doctoral candidate at University of Toronto, is doing some of this work. His research examines “how key evangelical political lobbies in Canada [including some mentioned in the previous paragraph] engage in tense social issues concerning sex, the family, and religion while confronting a culture whose dominant values often conflict with their own.”⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁶ Brian Carwana, *Academia.edu*, December 15, 2014, <https://utoronto.academia.edu/BrianCarwana>.

While Carwana is still in the thick of his research, it will be valuable to compare his findings on these groups to my findings on the CHP.

In my current research I placed a lot of emphasis on the CHP's pro-life identity. Although the CHP proclaims itself to be "Canada's only pro-life, pro-family federal political party," I have largely avoided attempting to define the pro-family facet of the party. It is not clear if being pro-life and pro-family are interchangeable positions or if these terms indicate difference social conservative qualities. The CHP receives some passing attention in Chris MacKenzie's *Pro-Family Politics and Fringe Parties in Canada*, however MacKenzie's focus is primarily on the now defunct Family Coalition Party of British Columbia.⁵⁵⁷ Building on my and MacKenzie's work, future research could expand on the pro-family identity of the party and elucidate the differences between being pro-life and pro-family.

Another area for further research is to examine the gendered perspectives espoused by the party and enacted by its members. In Scott Grills' dissertation, which uses the CHP as the case study for his sociological theory on "championing," he indicates regret over not having more female interviewees.⁵⁵⁸ Grills chalks this up to his position as a young male outsider, but also suggests that there is a place for further consideration of the gendered perspectives among CHP members stating,

[...] some participants in the CHP deny the appropriateness of the involvement of women in the political process (beyond simple enfranchisement). They do not accept the ordination of women, reject being "led" by women, and do not believe that women ought to have an "active" or "high profile" political role. Yet these women are involved in a federal political party. They are members, vote in internal party matters, and assist in staging meetings, even if at times they are restricted to traditional custodial and secretarial duties.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ MacKenzie, *Pro-Family Politics and Fringe Parties in Canada*.

⁵⁵⁸ Grills, "Designating Deviance," 136-8.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

Although I did not face the same issues accessing female CHPers, female members only made up 32.5% (or 26) of the 80 individuals I interviewed. Admittedly, this is a higher percentage than the number of female MPs in the House of Commons, which hit an all-time high of 25% as of the 2011 election, but it could still be better.⁵⁶⁰ One particularly striking gendered difference is that I interviewed more women as part of a married couple, two-person interview (14) than I did as single interviewees (10), whereas more than twice the number of men (38) were interviewed by themselves, whether they were married or not. Part of these differences could be attributed to phone interviews—which, due to technological limitations, were usually conducted with individuals rather than couples—but it does not fully explain this particular gender difference.

I agree with Grills that roles of women and the gendered perspectives within the CHP should be examined more closely, and I did not fill that particular gap in my own research. When I embarked on this project I thought I would be dealing with the gender issues in the party in greater detail than I have in the end. While I can see that the gendered dynamics of the CHP have shifted since Grills conducted his doctoral research—the party had a female interim leader in the mid-1990s and numerous female candidates—they have also stayed the same. CHPers by and large do not belong to churches that ordain women and many members expressed opposition to women being deacons or elders in their church. Overall, this is an issue that deserves more attention than I have given it here. It would be an ideal focal point for future research on the CHP.

Concluding Thoughts about the CHP

When I would tell people about my experiences doing fieldwork with the CHP I repeatedly encountered concern about the disjuncture between my worldview and that of the

⁵⁶⁰ Meagan Fitzpatrick, “Record Number of Women Elected,” *CBC.ca*, May 3, 2011, accessed November 9, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/record-number-of-women-elected-1.1106627>.

party members. Within religious studies and ethnographic methodological approaches there is an open anxiety about being positioned as an insider, but there is also a less publicly acknowledged anxiety about those that we assume are other to the liberal academy—that is, those groups that do not share the supposed western liberal academy’s ideals of separation of church and state, multiculturalism, or universal human rights. People and groups that identify as religiously conservative fit squarely into this assumed other category. While there was little risk that I was going to become an insider through my encounters with the CHP, I was more surprised by how much my fellow academics perceived CHPers as hostile outsiders to the academy. It was regularly assumed that CHPers would not want to talk to me or that they would be overwhelmingly critical about my studying the group as an outsider, yet my experiences with the party members did not reflect these assumptions.

To be certain, there are many areas where I did not agree with the positions of CHPers. When interviewing on these areas I let the members talk and did my best to avoid disclosing my opinions, especially when I did not share the position of the interviewees. Early on in my fieldwork I had a distinctly visceral reaction when James, who I had been chatting and joking with during a supper as part of an April 2011 leader’s visit/annual general meeting, mentioned the size of his long gun collection.⁵⁶¹ At some point James owned more than 200 long guns, as well as some assorted handguns, and I could not stop myself from being taken aback that anyone would own that many guns. Rather than be offended by my obvious opposition, James laughed at my reaction and pulled over Jim Hnatiuk, the leader at the time who also happens to own a hunting, fishing, and taxidermy shop, to help explain why someone might want a gun collection. Out of all the things said to me in my encounters with CHPers, this was the most outward opposition that I expressed and it was dealt with in a positive manner.

⁵⁶¹ Field notes, Southern Ontario. April 7, 2011.

There are plenty of other positions held by CHPers that I do not wholly agree with, and I hope these points are not necessarily obvious to the reader as I tried to treat the positions held by the party equitably. However, it is the areas where I could agree with CHPers that I found the most thought provoking. Many of the CHPers I talked with have a very nuanced understanding of Canada's religious heritage and the relationship between politics and religion. They spend a lot of their time doing charity work and looking after other people in their community. Their actions reflect an intense concern about the world and other people, even if their reasoning for it is different than my own.

A prime example can be seen with Douglas and Veronica, who discussed their recycling practices and how they regularly collect cans and bottles off the side of the road. They also do some scrap metal collection and own a small water-generated hydroelectric plant. If I just discussed their recycling practices you might think that Veronica and Douglas were avid environmentalists. They acknowledge that they are "pro-green" and their actions are environmentally responsible, but if you called them environmentalists they would see that as akin to calling them "Gaia worshippers."⁵⁶² Instead, they frame their actions as good Christian stewardship and as economically sound practices. Their reasons are different than outsiders may expect, but their actions are no less commendable.

Similar observations can be made about CHPers' political engagement. Overall, CHPers are very politically engaged—not just in the fact that they are members of a political party, but in the fact that they vote, participate in candidate debates, put up political signs, write letters to the editor, and petition for the causes that they care about. They promote individuals voting for a party that aligns with their religious convictions and broader worldview, rather than strategic voting or being politically apathetic. I cannot begrudge them this position, even if I do not

⁵⁶² Interview #43, February 1, 2012.

necessarily agree with their political choices. Negative assumptions about my interactions with CHPers and the fear-mongering journalism of McDonald and Goldberg foster the othering of conservative Christians like CHPers. It is easy to vilify other people who hold a position that you do not agree with or find troubling from the outset, but doing so removes the humanity of those people. Putting in the effort to find the areas where you agree with people that you otherwise disagree with highlights our shared humanity and makes it more difficult to discard their opinions as irrational or scary.

The intention of this dissertation has not been to attract support for the CHP or to disparage the group, but to explain how the positions of the party make sense to its members. In doing this, I have strived to illustrate the humanity of CHPers and the complexity of their religious worldview.

List of Abbreviations

ARP	Anti-Revolutionary Party
ARPA	Association for Reformed Political Action
BQ	Bloc Québécois
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Church
CA	Canadian Alliance
CCS	Calvin Christian Schools in Winnipeg, MB
CDA	<i>Christen Democratische Appèl</i>
CDP	Christian Democratic Party
CHP	Christian Heritage Party of Canada
CHP NZ	Christian Heritage Party of New Zealand
CHU	<i>Christelijk-Historische Unie</i>
CLP	Christian Liberty Party
CP	Constitution Party
CPC	Conservative Party of Canada
CU	<i>ChristenUnie</i>
CR	Christian Right
CRC	Christian Reformed Church
EDA	Electoral District Association
FCP	Family Coalition Party of Ontario
GDBCHS	Guido De Brès Christian High School
GPV	<i>Gereformeerde Politiek Verbond</i>
HRC	Human Rights Commission
HSLDA	Home School Legal Defense Association
KVP	<i>Katholieke Volkspartij</i>
NDP	New Democratic Party of Canada
OCHEC	Ontario Christian Home Educators' Connection
OCRC	Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (also ORC or Orthodox Reformed Church)
PC	Progressive Conservative Party

URC	United Reformed Church
RPF	<i>Reformatische Politieke Federatie</i>
SGP	<i>Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij</i>

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- Christian Liberty Party: <https://sites.google.com/site/christianlibertyparty/>
- Christian Schools International: <http://www.csionline.org/>
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Newsroom: The Official Resource for News Media, Opinion Leaders and the Public: <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/>
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