Political Battlefield:
Aggressive Metaphors, Gender and Power in News Coverage of Conservative Party of Canada Leadership Contests

Bailey Gerrits
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Canada
gerrrits@ualberta.ca

Linda Trimble
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Canada
ltrimble@ualberta.ca

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Introduction

In characterizing the 2004 Conservative Party of Canada leadership campaign, *Globe and Mail* columnist John Ibbitson (2004a: A15) declared: "Mr. Clement is getting beaten up on the ground by Ms. Stronach". By describing Belinda Stronach as physically dominating her opponent, Ibbitson conveyed that her campaign was stronger in its ability to attract supporters. That his lexical choices evoke brutality and violence illustrates how metaphors, as vivid expressions of aggression, intensify meanings. By representing leadership campaigns and elections as battles and boxing matches, the news media discursively collapse political and aggressive language (Gidengil and Everitt 2003). Antagonistic depictions of politics send the message that politics is about power, but power is not mediated in a gender-neutral fashion. According to the gendered mediation thesis, the proliferation of aggressive language in media accounts of political competition constitutes politics as a masculine space, creating a hostile environment for women candidates (Ross and Sreberny 2000:93). Yet, when competitive women candidates for the leadership of national political parties exercise authority and command legitimacy, their media depictions have the potential to disrupt gendered understandings about political power.

Our paper investigates how power relationships were communicated by the aggressive metaphors used by the *Globe and Mail* to describe candidates for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative (now Conservative) Party of Canada in 1976, 1993 and 2004. Using content and discourse analysis, we examine *Globe and Mail* coverage of the 1976 campaign, which featured a sixth-place finish by Flora MacDonald, the 1993 contest when Kim Campbell became prime minister as a result of her victory, and the 2004 leadership campaign wherein Belinda Stronach placed second. By distinguishing between four different types of power that can be communicated through aggressive metaphors and by highlighting the specificity of gendered meanings within each of the three Conservative party leadership campaigns, our intention is to interrogate the nuanced and complex metaphoric representations of political power. We explore the possibility that combative discourses about political leadership interrupt the assumption that political power is the exclusive purview of men and masculinity. As the findings reveal, aggressive metaphors did not necessarily or automatically cast women candidates as powerless, or indeed as victims. On the other hand, in the 1993 and 2004 leadership contests journalists used the figurative language of combat to question the woman candidates' ability to independently exercise power in an authoritative and effective manner.

Metaphors, Gendered Mediation and Power

Analyzing metaphoric language is important for understanding how news media (re)produce power relations. Metaphors convey meaning succinctly by vividly describing something without literally intending what is said. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) contend, metaphors allow us to understand the world in which we live as these linguistic devices often reflect nascent views held by the dominant culture (ibid). When reporters use aggressive metaphors, likening political competitions to battlefields or boxing matches, they reflect and arguably reinforce gendered power relations. Many authors contend that aggressive and war-like metaphors valorize masculinity as dominance and, in turn, perpetuate the dominance of men (Siebers 2010:89).

Indeed, the gendered mediation literature argues that power is gendered masculine through media coverage of politics:

> [T]he way in which politics is reported is significantly determined by a male-oriented agenda that privileges the practices of politics as an essentially male pursuit. The image and language of mediated politics, therefore, supports the status quo (male as norm) and regards women politicians as novelties (Ross and Sreberny 2000:93).

Jansen and Sabo similarly maintain that conflating war and sports metaphors with politics is thought to discursively reassert the dominance of hegemonic "manly men" (1994:14). Furthering the assumption that politics is gendered masculine, several authors argue that the metaphoric language of aggression positions women outside the male political game (Gidengil and Everitt 1999; Sampert and Trimble 2003; Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2009; Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Halevi 2012). For example, studying the media coverage of Prime Minister Kim Campbell in the national debates, Gidengil and Everitt contend that the media overstate the aggressive rhetoric or behaviours of women leaders like Campbell because these actions run counter to gendered expectations (2003: 228). In contrast, Trimble and Treiberg illustrate how gladiatorial discourses constructed New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark as commanding and authoritative in her performance of leadership, while at the same time suggesting she was "strangely unfeminine"(2010: 130). Women politicians face a double-edged sword. When they are described as excessively aggressive, attentive voters view them more negatively (Gidengil and Everitt 2000:124). At the same time, if candidates—women included—are positioned as victims of an attack, they are seen as weak competitors. In other words, mediation that relies on aggressive or so-called 'masculinist' language may actually impede women's political success.

We agree with the central assertion of these studies: aggressive metaphors communicate something about power. But do they necessarily exclude women by always associating power with men and the performance of masculinity? We argue that understandings about gender and power are fluid, context-specific and open to contestation by political actors as well as by their media representations. As such, we seek to challenge the stability of gender position in aggressive metaphors. A nuanced conception of power is needed when investigating the discursive construction of relationships between aggressive metaphors, gender, and politics. According to sociologist Max Weber, power is "the capacity to exercise one's will, even in the face of opposition" (quoted in Fennell 1999:24). But this classic understanding of power overlooks important ways in which power can be enacted in political life. To be sure, power in politics includes the ability to win elections, defeat opponents, pass bills and maintain legitimacy, but it also includes the capacity to lead campaign teams and command public support. Power, therefore, implies relationships between political actors that are not fully captured by the "power as domination" perspective. Power can also be understood more abstractly. For example, Foucault argues that power is not something an individual either does or does not possess; rather, power both produces subjectivity and is enacted by subjects (1980:98). To investigate the gendered meanings of aggressive metaphors, we require conceptual distinctions that reflect the different ways in which power may be enacted in political spaces.

By distinguishing various forms of power, the literature on micro-power accounts for its relational nature and suggests how understandings about the performance of power can be gendered. Smeed et al. identify three different ways in which power is enacted: power over, power with, and power through (2009:26-29). *Power over* denotes dominance over another person. Actions associated with *power over* include "manipulation, exploitation and coercion" enacted by a singular actor (Fennell 1999:25). Conversely, *power with* and *power through* account for multiple actors. *Power with* is a relational form of power whereby individuals work together to achieve a common purpose (Smeed et al. 2009:30). Also relational, *power through* is a facilitative form of power that "entails enabling and empowering others through power sharing" to achieve a common end (ibid). Fennell adds two additional forms of power: *power to* and *power as* (1999:28). *Power to* specifically denotes "the capacity to bring about certain intended consequences" (Fennell 1999:24). *Power to* can be contrasted with *power over*, which implies a subject and an object and necessarily involves an aggressor or dominator. Finally, *power as* explicitly refers to "inner strength," but it also indicates embodied power (Fennell 1999:28).

These forms of power are not themselves gendered, but when applied to party leadership candidates, the news media could interpret them as such. It can be argued that *power over* represents a traditionally masculine form of dominating power which positions men as aggressors and women as victims (Smeed et al. 2009). Similarly, one could also expect that *power to* and *power as* would be more likely to be used by the news media to describe male candidates because this assumption fits with a stereotypical understanding of powerful masculinity. On the other hand, *power through/power with* can be conceptualized as more feminine because of their collaborative and non-combative nature (ibid). In the micro-power literature, *power over* is regarded as a negative approach to achieving goals, while *power with* and *power through* are viewed as positive manifestations of power. However, the gendered mediation thesis would suggest that within the context of political competitions, metaphors denoting *power over* (or dominating power) present a positive indication of success, while *power with* and *power through* metaphors represent the limited capacity of the leadership candidate to enact power individually. Our study investigates the ways in which these forms of power are represented through aggressive metaphors. By determining how battle metaphors position women and men candidates in relation to different forms of power, we are able to explore the nuanced assumptions about gender and power embedded in aggressive discourse.

Data and Methods

This data was drawn from a qualitative database of aggressive metaphors compiled for a larger project examining *Globe and Mail* coverage of 13 Canadian national political party leadership contests held between 1975 and 2012. All articles, columns, profiles and editorials about each leadership contest published from the day the previous party leader resigned until seven days after the election of the new leader were analyzed. When an article used aggressive language—defined as any form of speech (noun, verb, adjective) explicitly invoking a form of aggression—to describe leadership candidates, the phrase or sentence was recorded in a qualitative database. From this large inventory of aggressive phrases and sentences we examined those used to describe selected women and men candidates for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1976 and 1993 and for the Conservative Party in 2004.

The inventory was refined, and in some instances expanded, using the metaphor as the unit of analysis. Because several of the sentences communicating aggression enacted by (or on) the leadership candidates included more than one instance of aggressive actions or imagery, we established rigorous criteria for deciding what constituted a specific case for the purposes of our analysis. The metaphor had to be explicitly aggressive and it had to be directly linked to at least one of the studied candidates. If an aggressive descriptor was applied to more than one of the candidates, it was assigned as a separate case for each candidate. Sometimes sentences included a cluster of aggressive acts or referenced different imagery to connote aggression. In these cases, to be included as a distinct case, the metaphor had to denote a specific type of aggressive imagery. Disagreements about which phrases to include were resolved by discussion amongst the coders. Based on this process, we compiled a dataset of 518 aggressive metaphors.

For each metaphor, we identified the subject(s) of the metaphorical aggression and determined whether or not they were situated as the *perpetrator* or the *victim* of the aggression. As well, each case of aggressive metaphoric language was classified based on which of four types of power it communicated: *power to*, the ability to accomplish a goal; *power over*, the ability to dominate another person or persons; *power with*, the ability to work with another person or group of persons to accomplish a goal; *power as*, an adjective describing the person as embodying an aggressive form of power; or none of these forms of power. There was conceptual slippage between the *power with* category and the *power over* and *power to* categories, so we achieved consistency in coding by assigning all metaphors that grouped a candidate with other actors as *power with*. Assignment of metaphors to the groups was found to be reliable as an intercoder reliability test on 10% of cases in the dataset achieved an acceptable standard of agreement on all variables. The Cohen's kappa on the nominal variables ranged from 0.705 to 1.000.

We used critical discourse analysis to identify the specifically gendered relations of power reflected in news texts (Lazar, 2005:11). A three-stage process guided the qualitative analysis (Bryman et al. 2012:259). First, we carefully read through the aggressive metaphors and used the technique of open coding to identify themes and patterns. When the language of aggression was applied differently to women and men leadership candidates, we examined how the discourses gave legitimacy to, or disrupted, gendered social and political norms and practices. The third stage involved reading through the metaphors once again to ensure that the analysis was comprehensive and any discrepancies were noted and explained.

Findings

Analyzing the Conservative races which featured women candidates provides an opportunity to explore metaphoric representations of power within the different contexts of the power relationship: the contestant as an anomaly (the first Conservative woman leadership candidate), the contestant as the winner (the first woman Prime Minister), and the contestant as a contender (finishing a strong second). We determined that each race – 1976, 1993 and 2004 – had different renditions of the woman candidate's power dynamic in the race. Notably, each of the campaigns had a different number of aggressive metaphors. In the 1976 leadership race, reporters penned 64 aggressive metaphors in the 310 stories. We found a whopping 341 metaphors in the 344 articles printed about the 1993 contest. It is possible that the aggressive language was ramped up because

the winner of this contest would become the next prime minister. The *Globe and Mail* offered less coverage of the 2004 leadership race, with 138 stories, yet the use of aggressive descriptors remained high, appearing 113 times. Clearly, the *Globe's* depictions of various campaigns as rhetorical battles varied dramatically and, as we discuss next, so did its construction of power.

The Flora Syndrome and the 1976 PC Leadership Contest

Flora MacDonald joined a crowded race of 11 candidates for the PC party leadership in 1976 and was considered one of six contenders capable of winning the race to become leader of the official opposition. Joe Clark, the eventual winner on the fourth ballot, surprised pundits by his come-from-behind victory over front-runner Claude Wagner. Equally surprising was the sixth-place finish of MacDonald, whom the *Globe* assessed as a strong competitor. Analysts agreed she had fallen to the "phenomenon of declared but undelivered support" -- promptly labelled the "Flora Syndrome" (Trimble 2007:970). Our analysis included coverage of Clark, Wagner, MacDonald and MacDonald's closest male competitor, Paul Hellyer, who finished in fifth place on the first ballot.

As Table 1 illustrates, MacDonald was no more likely than her male competitors to be positioned as the victim within aggressive metaphors. In fact, Hellyer and Wagner were more frequently described as being on the receiving end of rhetorical violence. MacDonald, in contrast, was more likely to be located as the instigator of rhetorical combat than as its object. Regarded by the *Globe* as a worthy and assertive combatant, reporters pronounced MacDonald a "fighter" and judged her as having "fought a very good campaign" (Globe & Mail 1976:6). Indeed, MacDonald was depicted more often than both Wagner and Clark as displaying dominating power. *Power over* metaphors conveyed assessments of the candidates' prospects of leading the country, or in Clark's case, described his victory in the leadership contest. MacDonald and Hellyer were both judged as capable of beating Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau if they were to win. Alternatively, Clark "beat" Claude Wagner to win the leadership contest (Stevens 1976a:6). Wagner, on the other hand, was viewed as the bitter opponent of the other Quebec candidate in the race, Brian Mulroney, indicating how rivalries are highlighted by *power over* metaphors. Indeed, metaphors depicting *power with* were most frequently applied to Wagner because reporters grouped him with his chief rival, Mulroney, as one of the Quebec candidates competing for votes from that province.

Table 1: Positioning of Candidates within Aggressive Metaphors, 1976 Contest

	Flora MacDonald **N (%)**	**Paul Hellyer** **N (%)**	**Claude Wagner** **N (%)**	**Joe Clark** **N (%)**
Victim	2 (17%)	3 (23%)	8 (33%)	1 (8%)
Aggressor	10 (83%)	10 (77%)	16 (67%)	11 (92%)
Power over	4 (40%)	5 (50%)	5 (31%)	4 (36%)
Power to	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	1 (6%)	1 (9%)
Power with/through	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	10 (63%)	1 (9%)
Power as	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	5 (46%)

MacDonald and Hellyer were frequently described as using their authority to achieve a goal, but there was a subtle difference in the meanings conveyed by *power to* metaphors. Those applied to MacDonald suggested she had the ability to positively enact change, while Hellyer was posited as ruthlessly and selfishly seeking power. For instance, MacDonald was "fighting" for a purpose, including "women's advancement" (Winsor 1976:3). By attaching MacDonald's *power to* (fighting) with a cause (women's advancement), the reporter justified MacDonald's aggression. In contrast, reporters seemed comfortable describing Hellyer as assaulting without justification. While these characterizations arguably de-legitimized Hellyer by depicting him as unnecessarily belligerent, they also juxtaposed his performance of aggressive masculinity against the foil of MacDonald's less combative tactics. This was not a strong trend, however. Indeed, MacDonald declared herself willing to "go in there and fight" (Winsor 1976:3).

Even though the lone woman candidate was described as independently carrying out powerful acts, there were nuances that seemed to reify aggression as masculine. Of note, the party and the candidates were gendered male in an assessment of MacDonald as the "[b]est man for the job, as it were, but fighting the Tory right, which is the last stronghold of male chauvinism" (Beddoes 1976:8). The aggression seems to demand a masculine actor (best man for the job), yet the target is associated with masculinity (male chauvinism). As well, *power as* metaphors intimated that a combative performance is necessary for effective political leadership. During the race, Clark was positively evaluated as "aggressive enough to be a powerful contender" (Stevens 1976b:6), and after he won, reporters judged him suitably assertive: one reporter called him a "thinker with an instinct for the jugular" (Chevaldayoff 1976:10).

With MacDonald enacting *power to* more often than all three of her male competitors and *power over* more often than the front-runner and the eventual winner, it seems aggression was not portrayed as a quintessentially masculine act by the *Globe's* coverage of the 1976 campaign. Further, with Wagner implicated within most of the *power with* metaphors it appears that the 1976 campaign interrupts the location of dominating power as masculine. However, as the discourse analysis revealed, the metaphors did not fully disrupt the association of aggressive forms of power with masculinity. Aggression was gendered male when MacDonald was labeled the "best man for the job." And rather than minimizing Wagner's power, the application of *power with* metaphors foregrounded his rivalries rather than emphasizing his capacity for collaborative teamwork. As the earliest campaign in our sample, this 1976 contest stands out. Coverage of the following campaigns more overtly communicated gendered meanings.

Campbell Plus Power Equals Discomfort? The 1993 PC Leadership Contest

In 1993, the Conservatives had to elect a new leader to replace retiring Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who had been in power since 1984. Despite the Conservative party's dismal standings in the polls, five candidates stepped forward to challenge the leadership role. Campbell was in the lead off the start, but was prevented from winning handily on the first ballot by the strong showing of her closest competitor, Jean Charest. With her second-ballot victory, Campbell became the first woman to lead a competitive national party and the first to serve as prime minister. That Campbell's proximity to power throughout the leadership contest provoked what Bashevkin (1999:11) calls the "women plus power equals discomfort" equation was evident in the aggressive metaphors applied to her candidacy. Described throughout the contest with

battle language, the media viewed Campbell as a powerful antagonist. However, as our discourse analysis reveals, she was rarely described favourably as mobilizing her power to achieve a goal or to thwart her primary opponent, Charest.

When journalists represented Campbell as embodying assertive forms of power (*power as*), their metaphoric references cast her as a formidable adversary. Described as "combative" (Howard 1993a:A5), Campbell was "deemed the least desirable of the front-running candidates to battle in an election from the standpoint of the Reform Party" (Cernetig and Roberts 1993:A5). Mulroney spoke favourably about his successor's forcefulness: "She's tough, she's a winner and she's ours" (Winsor and Howard 1993a: A1). Such affirmative assessments mirror Clark's evaluations in 1976, which applauded his forceful leadership style. Similarly, Charest's *power as* metaphors emphasized his strength by commenting on his energetic "Rocky on steroids" campaign style (Couture 1993a:A27). However, that a combative stance is considered unusual and somewhat distasteful when deployed by a woman was embedded in some of Campbell's *power as* metaphors, which pronounced her aggressive persona problematic. Journalists pejoratively described her as "heavy-handed" (Barber 1993:A7). One columnist associated these evaluations with the double standards confronting women in public life: "But, when women become aggressive, they are often labeled hysterical" (Smith 1993:A4). The cognitive dissonance created by a woman "leading the troops" in a figurative political battlefield was evident in the metaphors applied to Campbell.

Table 2: Positioning of Candidates within Aggressive Metaphors, 1993 Contest

	Kim Campbell **N (%)**	**Jean Charest** **N (%)**
Victim	98 (44%)	18 (19%)
Aggressor	125 (56%)	79 (81%)
Power over	18 (13%)	20 (24%)
Power to	39 (29%)	11 (11%)
Power with/through	60 (45%)	48 (49%)
Power as	17 (13%)	3 (3%)

Even though her campaign persona and tactics were conveyed with aggressive language, and she was occasionally described as exemplifying warrior-style leadership, Campbell was frequently portrayed as relatively powerless within the leadership "battle." She was regularly cast as the object of opponents' aggressive acts, and her own combative attempts were judged ineffective. Table 2 shows that Campbell was more often situated as the victim of metaphorical aggression than Charest, and less often positioned as the belligerent. As the clear frontrunner, she was the target of attack by opposing candidates and parties, and stories about the campaign noted this fact. For instance, reporters describe how "the Liberals have targeted Ms. Campbell as their most likely opponent" (Winsor and York 1993:A4). But unlike any other candidate in our sample, Campbell was described as her own worst enemy. Reporters opined that "most of the damage [is] self-inflicted" (Winsor and Howard 1993b:A1). Stories about Campbell presented her as constantly "under attack" for not only her performance as cabinet minister, but for her personal life. One article said Campbell was "picking her way through the *minefield* of minute-

by-minute media scrutiny, [and] intense probing of her varied pasts, including unhappy family and failed marriages" (Winsor 1993a:A1, emphasis ours). Because the Charest campaign was responsible for much of the attention to Campbell's family life, the *Globe* portrayed Charest as sneaky, taking a few "veiled shots" at Campbell (Fraser 1993:A4). In this characterization, Charest was arguably derided as devious, but he was still exercising *power over* Campbell.

One would expect that with the commanding lead Campbell maintained during the campaign, reporters would have noticed her *power over* Charest more often. Instead she was observed "to box mostly with shadows" (Sheppard 1993a:A21). While *power over* metaphors typically positions the combatant as active and forceful, Campbell's attacks were portrayed as lackluster and unsuccessful. In fact, a columnist asserted that Campbell's lead in the race resulted from the fact that she was "bound to emerge from this non-contest only to face her most dangerous foe: a tide of probably unfulfilable expectations" (Sheppard 1993b:A19). Here, Campbell's power was muted; she had no serious challenger and her leadership was judged, in advance, a disappointment.

A comparison of *power to* metaphors reveals that Campbell's power was questioned within the metaphors, whereas Charest's control was affirmed. Despite her commanding lead in the race, reporters said Campbell faced "an uphill battle" (Wilson 1993:A4). In contrast, Charest, who arguably faced a much more daunting task, was impressive in his willingness to confront such a formidable foe: "Guts. It was something Mr. Charest has plenty of, as he showed when he started his spectacular battle against the odds" (Gagnon 1993:D3). Campbell was also subtly juxtaposed as both an aggressor and a woman, implying the two are inherently incompatible. She was "the unconventional modern woman who could shoot from the quip" (Winsor 1993b:A3). Campbell's aggression and femininity were thus placed in opposition, mirroring the gendering of aggression as male illustrated in the 1976 campaign, when MacDonald was called the "best man for the job." Campbell's assertiveness tended to be read against her status as woman.

Table 2 shows that the plurality of power metaphors applied to both Campbell and Charest communicated some form of jointly exercised power (*power with*). For Charest, these metaphors mapped his progression throughout the campaign. At the start of the race, Charest was spurned by "the big guns" in the party (Couture 1993b:A23), forced to campaign on his own. Near the middle of the campaign, Charest gained support: "the Charest organization is planning a major effort at recruitment and dominance of riding meetings, to wrestle control from MPs who already committed their ridings to Ms. Campbell" (Howard 1993b:A4). As the campaign came to a close, the Charest forces were successfully "beating the forces for Ms. Campbell" (Delacourt 1993:A6). Journalists portrayed Charest as a successful general, leading his campaign troops into battle: "Mr. Charest, to his credit and that of his Quebec organizers, stunned the Campbell forces in Quebec. Ms. Campbell had the big-name organizers and the well-known ministers, but they were out-manoeuvred by the Charest team" (Simpson 1993:A20).

On the other hand, various men were positioned as critical to Campbell's team at the very outset of the media coverage. We noted that Campbell was portrayed as a powerful actor who had the help of skilled advisors. For example, a columnist declared that "she's pushing her leadership ambitions by blitzing Quebec alongside Marcel Masse" (Whyte 1993:D2). However, there were more instances in which Masse and Gille Loiselle were described as the protagonists.

These two men were "aggressively recruiting MPs and arm-twisting their backers to get aboard Ms. Campbell's train" (Howard and Fraser 1993:A1). In sum, while Charest led his own troops, Campbell needed some hired guns to enact aggressive power for her.

The subtle gendering of aggressive metaphors applied to both Campbell and Charest support Bashevkin's "women plus power equals discomfort" equation. No doubt the fact that Campbell was poised to take Canada's top leadership position influenced the media's use of these powers to denote ideas about power. By being described as a fierce combatant, Campbell illustrated that women are not always regarded as outsiders on the political battlefield. However, she was mercilessly denigrated, even mocked, for her status as a frontrunner and as a woman. *Power to*, *power over* and *power with* metaphors alike cast Campbell as passive, inactive or ineffective. Such harsh evaluations were certainly not evident in evaluations of Clark in 1976, nor were they featured in assessments of another frontrunner: Stephen Harper.

Blonde Bombshell[1]: The 2004 Conservative Party Leadership Contest

After its 1993 huge electoral loss, the Progressive Conservative Party had to rebuild. The Conservative Party of Canada emerged when the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives united in 2003, and in 2004 the party held its inaugural leadership contest. Stephen Harper, the leader of the Canadian Alliance when the parties merged, was the undisputed frontrunner. However, while Harper won quite handily on the first ballot, Belinda Stronach garnered considerable support and finished a strong second. We focused our analysis on the two leaders, Harper and Stronach, as the third candidate, Tony Clement, trailed throughout the race.

Stronach had a high profile throughout the campaign but was rarely described as quintessentially powerful, as illustrated by Table 3. While she was more often situated as the aggressor than the victim, the discourse analysis revealed that opponents and pundits did not take her candidacy seriously. For instance, a reporter observed that neither Harper nor Clement "spent any time attacking Ms. Stronach, save for a veiled jab from Mr. Harper" (Laghi 2004a:A8), suggesting Stronach had no chance at winning, and therefore there was no need to wound her campaign. When applied to her candidacy, victim metaphors savaged Stronach. She was "ripped into" for her lack of facility with the French language (ibid) and endured "sexist attacks … from some lowbrow … calling her "Parliament Hill Barbie" (MacGregor 2004a: A2). While Stronach was metaphorically depicted as the classic hapless victim, Harper was frequently portrayed as a formidable foe.

[1] Belinda Stronach was literally labeled a blonde bombshell in a column by Margaret Wente (2004: A17).

Table 3: Positioning of Candidates within Aggressive Metaphors, 2004 Contest

	Belinda Stronach N (%)	Stephen Harper N (%)
Victim	20 (37%)	16 (28%)
Aggressor	34 (63%)	42 (72%)
Power over	5 (15%)	20 (47%)
Power to	9 (26%)	7 (16%)
Power with/through	20 (59%)	15 (35%)
Power as	0 (0%)	1 (2%)

Harper was mediated by several *power over* metaphors that mirrored his dominance in the 2004 race. As with evaluations of MacDonald and Hellyer's leadership potential, reporters suggested that Harper could "take on Martin" (Laghi 2004c:A9) and Stronach could "beat Mr. Martin" (Chase and Laghi 2004:A4). However, reporters mediated Harper and Stronach's reported capacity to defeat the incumbent prime minister in curiously different ways. Reporters took note of Harper's experience, including his "six years in the House of Commons" (Laghi 2004b:A1). The sources reporting Stronach's ability to prevail over Martin included a self-conducted "poll" and her own declaration: "Give me 40 days in the campaign trenches with Paul Martin ... and I will give you the keys to 24 Sussex Drive" (Chase and Laghi 2004:A4; Ibbitson 2004b:A13). In other words, Harper had the experience to beat Martin and move into the prime ministerial residence, whereas Stronach merely thought she could. In the end Harper did win by "out-muscling his rivals" and "vanquish[ing] political neophyte Belinda Stronach" (Chase 2004:A5; Moczulshi 2004:A6). Unlike Campbell, who was depicted as shooting herself in the foot, reporters highlighted Harper's successes throughout the campaign with *power over* metaphors, reinforcing his dominance in the leadership campaign.

While Stronach was rarely described as employing *power over* (see Table 3), one intriguing metaphor linked Stronach's performance of domination to her sexual allure:

> The blonde belting out Nancy Sinatra's *These Boots are Made for Walking* (as in: 'One of these days these boots are going to walk all over you') at Toronto's Fox and Fiddle pub Thursday night was Conservative leadership candidate Belinda Stronach ... Ms. Stronach's singing style is a little looser than her public speaking style, and she likes the microphone. (Taber 2004: A8).

Here columnist Jane Taber suggests that this performance was a metaphor for Stronach's leadership bid. The song itself has subtle sexual innuendos. Stronach's sexualization was punctuated by two photos accompanying the story, one of Stronach performing the karaoke version and one of Nancy Sinatra, who made the song a hit in 1966. In the image, Sinatra and her backup dancers are clad in fishnets, black underwear, high-heeled boots and sweaters, and the camera shot features the women's sexy legs. By noting Stronach's blonde hair and shapely physique, and by deeming her singing performance "looser than her public speaking style," Taber employed sexual metaphors to discuss her performance, both at the karaoke bar and in the

leadership campaign. This story illustrates Stronach's novelty value as a glamorous and attractive celebrity politician (Trimble and Everitt 2010).

Several of the aggressive metaphors applied to Stronach conveyed a strong ability to enact change through attacks on her opponents or assertive statements about her policy positions. However, there were also several instances in which Stronach, similar to Campbell, was trivialized with a rhetorical backhand. For example, columnist Roy MacGregor rather patronizingly observed that during a candidates' debate, "there wasn't the slightest connection, but let's give her a mark for getting a quick lick in when her opponent wasn't expecting it" (MacGregor 2004b:A2). In McGregor's view, Stronach not only failed to score the all-important knock-out blow, most of her punches missed their target. Not once did a reporter or columnist undercut Harper in a similar manner. While he was once scolded for being too aggressive, Harper was also commended for exercising restraint: "Harper refused to take the bait, but jabbed back when he needed to" (Laghi 2004d:A1). Overall, the application of aggressive language to these competitors suggested Stronach was too inept to play the game well, while Harper knew exactly how to pull his punches.

Power with metaphors emphasized Harper. For instance, Harper was quoted as explaining that "the team around me in Ottawa has been planning to fight that battle for over a year now" (Laghi 2004a:A8). He was the undisputed leader of the team. In contrast, Stronach was trivialized by this category of metaphor. One journalist emphasized the powerful men involved in her campaign: "Stronach pulled out the biggest political weapon in her arsenal yesterday by enlisting former Ontario premier Mike Harris" (Laghi 2004e:A5). Stronach's biggest weapon was, therefore, not her experience or her business knowledge, but a man. Indeed, as one reporter put it, "[a]mong the many knocks she has absorbed during her highly scripted campaign has been a criticism that she is little more than a cardboard cutout fronting the ambitions of her backroom campaigners" (Laghi 2004f:A1).

A clear picture emerges of an underrated and disparaged candidate whose sex appeal, looks and attractiveness to powerful men were considered her only notable assets. Harper, on the other hand, is the prime example of perfected aggressive power. Rarely derided for his combative performance on the campaign trail, Harper was positioned as capably managing his campaign team and effectively demobilizing opponents. In contrast to the coverage of Campbell, the other notable frontrunner, Harper was rarely ridiculed. In fact, a columnist described his "emphatic victory" as a "mandate to lead and a better shot a bringing down the Liberal hegemony than anyone would have thought possible six months ago" (Ibbitson 2004c:A1). Harper's dominance in the race was conveyed convincingly by aggressive allusions.

Discussion

Metaphors reflect socially constructed and culturally embedded understandings about power and power relations. When applied by the media to women and men candidates for the leadership of a major national political party, they reveal gendered assumptions about political leadership. Our study analyzed combative figures of speech used by the *Globe and Mail* to describe the personas and performances of leadership candidates for the (Progressive) Conservative Party of Canada in 1976, 1993 and 2004. We codified four distinct forms of power communicated by the aggressive

metaphors: *power over*, *power to*, *power with* and *power as*. As well, we determined whether the leadership candidates were positioned as the victim or aggressor within the metaphor. Discourse analysis of the phrases applied to each of the candidates allowed us to explain some of the nuanced forms of gendered mediation embedded in aggressive language.

This paper interrogated the assumption that aggressive language invariably places women as unwanted visitors in what is largely understood as a masculine political realm. We found that aggressive metaphors convey nuanced gendered meanings that situate candidates differently in their relations to power. In particular, MacDonald's performance was described as authoritative and commanding. She was included in the metaphorical battle in much the same way as her male competitors, as exercising both *power over* and *power to* and as initiating rather than receiving acts of rhetorical aggression. Not only was MacDonald depicted as mounting a "good fight," she was described as capable of "beating" the incumbent prime minister. The *Globe's* journalists seem to regard her candidacy as eminently credible, describing her performance with pugilistic game frame language. The women who followed MacDonald were also portrayed as capable of exercising power. In fact, Campbell was described with more aggressive metaphors than any of the men candidates in our sample, situating her as a strong contender in the "fight" to become the party leader and Canada's prime minister. Although many of the aggressive metaphors delegitimized Campbell and Stronach, the fact that they were discursively included in the competitive game illustrates that women are understood to embody and enact political power.

That said, our discourse analysis provided plenty of evidence to support the gendered mediation literature's assertion that aggressive metaphors display unease with women's performance of certain forms of power. MacDonald may have been seen as commanding, but political leadership was explicitly classified as masculine when she was called the "best man for the job." More explicitly, the aggressive metaphors used to describe Campbell and Stronach were more likely to undermine rather than underscore their power. For example, one would expect Campbell to have been consistently mediated by *power over* metaphors because she dominated the race and predictably won. However, we found relatively few. In contrast, reporters penned many *power over* metaphors to describe Harper's undisputed lead in 2004. Something about Campbell disquieted the media. She was critiqued for being too combative, her performance of warrior leadership juxtaposed against her feminine persona. The implication is that her aggression was unnatural and off-putting. The frequent target of attacks, Campbell was further derided as her own worst enemy. While Campbell was also described as a formidable foe, possessing sufficient qualities to become the prime minister, the juxtaposition of obvious disparagement and well-deserved acclaim suggest that the mediation of Campbell's leadership bid both interrupts and affirms the gendering of aggressive power as masculine.

The "women plus power equals discomfort" equation is illustrated by the fact that both Stronach and Campbell were belittled through the aggressive metaphors. They were described as the victims of attacks perpetrated by the men who competed against them. As well, *Globe* coverage situated them as indirect actors, while the men aiding their campaigns were presented as the primary actor(s). Further, many of the metaphors subtly reinforced the perception of aggression as a masculine tactic. Stronach was further marginalized by mentions of her looks and sexual allure. Many scholars have commented on the sexualization of the campaign, but we

found it surprising that the same tactics were employed through aggressive metaphors. As Campbell "boxed with shadows," Stronach sang an alluring tune.

Conclusion

By distinguishing between four types of power communicated by aggressive metaphors, this study showed that the metaphorical language of politics as a political battlefield often situates women and men candidates differently in relation to power, albeit in different ways than suggested by the gendered mediation literature. We did not find a strong tendency to represent the women candidates as victims of the power exercised by opponents rather than as the perpetuators of powerful acts. Although Campbell and Stronach were slightly more likely to be situated as victims of aggression than were their male counterparts, they were still more often positioned as "on the attack" than as the recipients of rhetorical blows. Nor was the *Globe* reluctant to describe women candidates as enacting forms of power traditionally associated with men and masculinity. MacDonald, Campbell and Stronach alike were shown to use their strength and influence to challenge opponents (*power over*) and achieve goals (*power to*). While *power as* metaphors were rarely deployed by the *Globe* to describe the various leadership candidates as embodying assertive leadership skills and attributes, they were applied to the winners of the three leadership races, including Campbell. However, aggressive metaphors were used in ways that questioned, and even de-legitimized, Campbell and Stronach's performances of power.

Although relational forms of power are thought to be typically associated with women and femininity, we found that *power with* metaphors were as often, and sometimes more often, applied to the men candidates in the three leadership races. Charest and Harper in particular were flatteringly described as exercising *power with* by successfully building and retaining full command of their campaign teams. In contrast, both Campbell and Stronach's capacity to control their advisors and supporters was questioned through the application of *power with* metaphors. Campbell needed the help of powerful men to mobilize her campaign team, while Stronach was a puppet of the backroom boys. These findings underscore the extent to which the power associated with the performance of political leadership is understood as relational. Upon reflection, collaborative power relationships are crucial to the success of political leaders, who must attract supporters, cultivate loyalty, inspire passion and commitment, and convince others that the endeavor is truly a team effort. Our discourse analysis shows that the news media reflect considerable skepticism about a woman's ability to perform powerful leadership in this manner. Thus even when women leadership aspirants are described with quintessential battle language, doubt is expressed about their capacity to effectively and authentically exercise power.

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