Conceiving a “Natural Family” Order:
The World Congress of Families and Transnational Conservative Christian Politics

DISSERTATION

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Rita J. Trimble

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Dissertation Committee:
Professor Debra Moddemog, Advisor
Professor Tanya Erzen, Co-Advisor
Professor Mytheli Sreenivas
Professor Hugh Urban
Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the World Congress of Families (WCF), a transnational network of “pro-family” organizations striving to influence global sexual and gender norms. Previous scholarship characterizes WCF as a particular subset of the US Christian Right that has the makings of a global social movement. By contrast, I argue that WCF provides the intellectual core of a still-emerging transnational pro-family movement—albeit primarily a Euro-American one—comprised of organizations associated with intertwined networks of Catholic, Mormon, and Protestant Evangelical organizations. The alliance consolidates around the “natural family,” a heteronormative, marital, procreative, conservative Christian model. This dissertation investigates the affective and intellectual resonance of natural family discourse across various constituencies. It traces WCF materials, activities, interactions, and strategies around human rights issues related to population, sexuality, reproductive rights, marriage, women’s rights, LGBT equality, and religious freedom. These issues are hotly contested in international debates and interact with complex questions related to immigration, economic disparities, national sovereignty, and Western economic and cultural imperialism. I examine how these contestations overlap and combine in natural family discourse.

My project builds on and extends earlier scholarship in at least two important ways. First, it provides more extensive contextualization for the rise of a transnational pro-family movement. I ground the WCF worldview and activism in a longer history of US Christian beliefs and organizing centered on “the family.” My analysis engages affect theory, conceiving emotions not as psychological states, but as social and cultural practices, highlighting emotions
that matter in WCF’s global sexual politics. As such, my work illuminates the importance of emotions for transnational pro-family activism.

A second contribution of this project is to provide a crucial update on recent pro-family activities, strategies, and inroads in the global civic sphere. US-based pro-family organizations like the Family Research Council, Alliance Defending Freedom, Concerned Women of America, Focus on the Family, Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (CFAM), and United Families International are key players, but support increasingly comes from outside the US, especially from Europe. WCF has successfully knit together new alliances and increased the frequency of WCF gatherings. These accomplishments warrant understanding WCF as central in a pro-family transnational movement, rather than a mere subset of the US Christian Right. WCF activities have become more coordinated, organized, and institutionalized in the past decade. Framing messages that resonate across various boundaries to build a broad coalition is a hallmark of Christian Right organizing, and WCF brings that skill to global politics. WCF gatherings and partnerships have helped shape a pro-family discourse that operates beyond US Christian Right arenas—especially among conservative Christians—in countries like Spain, Poland, and Russia which are experiencing declining fertility rates. I expect this research to contribute to debates on global biopolitics and the role of international civic engagement, as well as deliberations on balancing the protection of religious, sexual, and other competing human rights.
Dedication

For my family…in the broadest sense of the word…
Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my dissertation committee, especially co-advisors, Debra Moddelmog and Tanya Erzen, for their guidance and intellectual support throughout the dissertation process. Professor Erzen’s classes and scholarship have inspired my thinking and helped launch my academic journey. Her direction has been fundamental in my progress throughout. Professor Moddelmog’s queer theory course intensified my interest in sexuality studies, which became central to my work. Her wise advice and meticulous feedback have been vital in my success. I am thankful to Mytheli Sreenivas for teaching the course that helped me connect the dots between gender, family, and nationalism. I have also benefited from her expertise and valuable conversations about population politics. Similarly, Hugh Urban’s instruction in theorizing religion, as well as follow-up discussion, has been indispensable to my understanding of this project. I could not ask for better mentors than my committee members.

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Vita

1980 ............................................................... B.S. English Education, The Ohio State University

2008 ............................................................... M.A. Comparative Studies, The Ohio State University

2006 to present .................................................. Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Comparative Studies, The Ohio State University

Publications


Fields of Study

Major Field: Comparative Studies
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Chapter 1: Introduction

We are inspired by a convergence of religious truth with the evidence of science around the vital role of the natural family. We see the prospect of a great civil alliance of religious orthodoxies, within nations and around the globe; not to compromise on doctrines held dear, but to defend our family systems from the common foe. With wonder, we find a shared happiness with people once distrusted or feared. We enjoy new friendships rooted in family ideas that cross ancient divides. We see the opportunity for an abundant world order built on the natural family.

—The Natural Family: A Manifesto

The authors of The Natural Family: A Manifesto have proclaimed an ambitious goal. As the epigraph above indicates, they call for “a great civil alliance of religious orthodoxies, within nations and around the globe” to create “an abundant world order built on the natural family.” Allan Carlson and Paul Mero are both presidents of conservative pro-family organizations and, in co-authoring this book, they have formed a religious alliance of sorts as a Lutheran and a Mormon respectively. After initially publicizing the manifesto as a booklet in 2005, they developed it into a book-length manuscript that was published in 2007. In an interview with the North Carolina Family Policy Council in 2008, Carlson was asked why the book does not mention amending the state and US Constitutions to define marriage as only the union of one man and one woman—a key policy goal for the pro-family movement. His response reveals the manifesto’s boldly grand-scale vision as well as the careful calculation that went into crafting its message:

2 Carlson is president of the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society. Mero is president of the Sutherland Institute.
Well, to some degree it was a strategic reason. I mean both Paul Mero and I would favor such an amendment to the US Constitution at this point. It’s not the ideal solution to the problem or the challenge of same-sex marriage, but I’m afraid at this point it’s the only practical one. We also left that out because we didn’t want to tie this book to the immediate issue of the time. The Natural Family: A Manifesto is meant to speak not just to our generation but to generations across many decades, into the future, and also to speak to the situation in other nations. So, while we would certainly favor that amendment, we didn’t want to just focus on the immediate public policy issue of 2007. We wanted to have a much broader statement that would, again, transcend time to some degree.¹

The “natural family” is a central concept for a transnational “pro-family” network of organizations called the World Congress of Families (WCF), including heavy-hitters like Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, and American Family Association.² WCF seeks to rally an effective global voice to promote a natural family worldview in what it sees as a “post family” culture.³ According to its website, WCF means for the term to signify “a natural order to family structures that is common across cultures, historical, and overwhelmingly self-evident,” and that it casts other family formations as “unnatural.” Natural family discourse argues explicitly and implicitly that this particular family formation causes health, wealth, and happiness for the individuals who practice it and for their societies overall. Natural family discourse operates in religious, intellectual, and affective registers. The

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¹ Interview, Family North Carolina Magazine, January/February 2008.
² See Appendix A for a complete list of current WCF partner organizations.
³ Certain words used by WCF will strike some readers as offensive or problematic, like “natural family,” “pro-family,” “traditional values,” and “non-intact family.” However those words faithfully reflect the terms WCF and “pro-family” organizations use—so much so that using “scare quotes” in every instance would become distracting. If this dissertation is properly understood as a critique of WCF’s “natural family” discourse, the scare quotes should be assumed.
term natural family provides a flexible core with religious connotations around which Christians with various denominational perspectives can work in common cause. Many people in Western societies respond on a visceral level to familiar elements of the idea of “family” (like motherhood, vulnerable childhood) which, for WCF alliances, helps paper over differences and contradictions. It also facilitates activists’ use of social scientific arguments in non-religious contexts. As discussed more thoroughly below, growing numbers of activists in countries that have hosted WCF gatherings are embracing the natural family rhetoric and tailoring it to local contexts. Natural family discourse circulates especially well through various religio-political networks, including Mormon, Evangelical, and Catholic organizations. A WCF narrative about global population decline has shown up in pro-family materials aimed not just for domestic audiences in countries with low fertility rates, but also in the United States where the fertility rate remains at status quo.

WCF’s natural family approach is potentially attractive to a variety of constituencies, not only because it makes sense to them, but also because it is a convenient vehicle for furthering their own stratagems. Its emphasis on marriage and normative gender roles appeals to social and religious conservatives who are eager to see a resurgence in certain types of “tradition” and orthodoxy. Natural family rhetoric also appeals to those who favor conservative sexual morality. WCF materials label non-procreative, non-marital, and non-heteronormative sexual behaviors as threats to the natural family, including same-sex marriage, divorce, contraception, abortion, cohabitation, and the birth of children outside of heterosexual marriage. Its procreative mandate attracts those in countries with declining fertility rates who are fretful about an aging population and economic fallout—in Spain, Italy, and Russia, for instance. Nativists worried about immigration also are drawn to natural family ideology in that it relies on mothers to reproduce their group’s population (i.e., race) not just biologically but also culturally. These various
anxieties and agendas bring together a coalition of people and organizations with an interest in managing gender norms, sexuality, and reproduction. This is a politics that aims to produce and protect power and privilege—of whiteness, of middle-class respectability, of heterosexual men, of the global north and western cultural norms.

This dissertation investigates the affective and intellectual resonance of natural family discourse across various constituencies and publics by tracing WCF materials, activities, interactions and strategies around human rights issues related to population control, sexuality, reproductive rights, contraception, abortion, marriage, women’s rights, LGBT equality, sexual education, and religious freedom, among others. WCF concerns coalesce around these issues because gender and reproductive roles are central to WCF’s definition of the natural family. These issues are hotly contested in international human rights debates, although international actors—UN bureaucrats and representatives, non-governmental organizations, governments—differ on how to define the terms, identify the problems, craft solutions, or evaluate progress. These issues also interact with complex questions related to immigration, economic disparities within and among countries, national sovereignty, and Western economic and cultural imperialism. Throughout the dissertation, I examine how these contestations overlap and combine in natural family discourse, investigating the affective responses it stirs and to whom the discourse appeals. What power structures does it create or amplify? What accounts for its potency? This dissertation illuminates ways in which the WCF-led transnational pro-family movement has grown and is likely to have an increasing influence on international human rights debates. The outcomes of such deliberations have a potentially profound impact on the lives of vulnerable people around the world. The constituencies WCF attracts and the passions it stirs have global significance.
The excerpt from the manifesto quoted in the epigraph provides a succinct introduction to WCF and its goal of forming an “alliance of religious orthodoxies” around a natural family world order. WCF consists of dozens of organizations; most of them are based in the United States, but as the network has grown globally, so has the geographic range of its affiliations. US-based pro-family organizations like the Family Research Council, Alliance Defending Freedom, Concerned Women of America, Focus on the Family, Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (CFAM), and United Families International are key players, but support increasingly comes from outside the US, especially from Europe. Almost eighty percent of long-time partners (six or more years) are US-based organizations, but only seventy percent of those of three years or more and barely over half of current partners are from the US. Similarly, Americans accounted for up to eighty-four percent of WCF speakers in its early years, but more recently, only twenty to thirty percent. Conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons, most of whom are also active in pro-family politics in the United States, lead the network. WCF positions itself as open to all religions that are proponents of its family ideal, but in reality, the guiding principles and almost everyone involved are Christian. In its explanations of the term natural family, WCF cites the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “[t]he family is the natural and fundamental

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6 Appendix A gives a complete list of current partner organizations. Appendix B, Table 1 lists organizations that WCF credits as providing substantial support even before its partner program began in 2007.
7 See Appendix B, Table 2.
8 See Appendix C, Table 2.
9 Allan Carlson, a Lutheran (ECLA), is the primary founder of WCF, but momentum for a global pro-family movement emerged equally from Catholic, Mormon, and Protestant Evangelical networks working simultaneously in the mid-1990s and eventually coming together through WCF in 1997. Most of the primary actors are US-based, but the Vatican’s ideas and actions have had enormous influence as well. For a detailed account of the early history of these groups’ UN activism, see Jennifer Butler, Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 88-114.
10 Although the scriptures and beliefs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church) overlap with that of Christianity, LDS is distinct enough that many Christians, Mormons, and scholars consider it a new religious movement in its own right. For my purposes, the term Christianity is meant to include Mormons while acknowledging significant distinctions.
group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”11 WCF proponents define the natural family as the union of a man and a woman in lifelong marriage for the purpose of rearing children and to “pass on a way of life that has transcendent meaning.”12 WCF messaging emphasizes religious and family orthodoxy, framed as the keys to bringing order to a chaotic world.

Heteronormative sexuality and gender roles are central in WCF’s idea of a natural family order. Issues related to marriage, reproductive rights, gender norms, sexuality, population control, and human rights hold great significance for WCF activism. They are prominent in WCF materials, which relate these issues back to the natural family. For those involved in the network, the heterosexual procreative marriage-based family is a crucial part of how they conceive of a universal moral order—their cosmology or worldview.13 The natural family is used as a flexible term that can be easily translatable. It allows participants to gloss over some cultural and religious differences, a move which facilitates the formation of alliances across denominational and geographic boundaries. Natural family discourse also provides a nominally secular vocabulary and the basis for social scientific or other non-religious arguments for use in the global civic sphere.

WCF is influential in a still-emerging transnational pro-family movement comprised of non-government organizations (NGOs) associated with the intertwined networks of Catholic, Mormon, and Protestant Evangelical organizations. Global pro-family activism arose through these networks and, while WCF has facilitated interaction among them, they continue to operate

11 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16 (3).
13 By cosmology I mean a metaphysical (rather than a physics-based approach) to understanding the universe, the nature of humans, and their relationship to a supernatural creator.
independently, each speaking to a different religious constituency. At the same time, they also collaborate through WCF, which enables coordination of the international activism of these various conservative pro-family organizations. WCF draws from and builds on the US pro-family movement, but its actors, audience, and discourse are also somewhat distinct from the US-focused movement. A significant component of WCF’s work is to arrange large-scale gatherings for pro-family activists to share ideas and collaborate. Since its inception in 1997, WCF has convened seven “World Congresses” and twenty-four regional events. WCF I was held in 1997 in Prague; WCF II, in 1999 in Geneva; WCF III, in 2004 in Mexico City; WCF IV, in 2007 in Warsaw; WCF V, in 2009 in Amsterdam; WCF VI, in 2011 in Madrid; WCF VII, in 2013 in Sydney. Regional events have been held in the United States, Latvia, Nigeria, Turkey, Australia, Russia, Canada, Bolivia, and England. Having attended WCF V and WCF VI as a participant observer, I would describe their format as roughly parallel with academic conferences. The two I attended each lasted three days and offered concurrent sessions featuring panel discussions of various topics. Plenary sessions similarly included panel discussions, but also speeches by local organizers and dignitaries. At moments these larger sessions fell into the mood of a pep rally. Holding these gatherings facilitates alliances and sharing resources and strategies among pro-family organizations. WCF also aids in the articulation and maintenance of a global pro-family worldview in that it produces, encourages, and gathers social scientific research that is favorable to that perspective. In addition, it develops and circulates messaging that lends itself to

14 Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM), Population Research Institute, and Human Life International are Catholic NGOs, for example. United Families International (UFI) and the World Family Policy Center (WFPC) are Mormon NGOs. American Family Association, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, and Focus on the Family are NGOs that have long been associated with the US “Christian Right,” which has involved primarily but not exclusively Evangelical Protestants. Austin Ruse, of C-FAM, was instrumental in convincing some of the Christian Right NGOs to apply for consultative status with the UN. See Jennifer Butler, 88-114.
promotion and defense of the natural family worldview in the global public square.\textsuperscript{15} These efforts help produce and shape a global pro-family discourse.

I situate the WCF transnational pro-family movement solidly within a long history of US conservative Christian organizing around conceptualizations of the family in response to perceived gender and sexuality crises. Gender issues in particular affect people in intense and personal ways, and religious language has often been used to express people’s concerns and to reinforce sexual and social conventions. Because these ideas are central for conservative Christians, shifting gender roles and sexual mores have, at various times in history, felt especially chaotic for them.\textsuperscript{16} We might think of these as crises in common sense, in Gramscian terms, when that which everybody knows is no longer stable. US conservative Christians have mounted a series of moral regulation movements.\textsuperscript{17} One example near the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is the response of conservative evangelicals to wage-earning capitalism’s effect on gender roles; this solidified into a movement in the 1920s to preserve Christian orthodoxy—known as the fundamentalists.\textsuperscript{18} A second example is the new conservative Christian alliances and strategies that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the 1960s “sexual

\textsuperscript{15} I use the term \textit{worldview} to refer to the way natural family ideology organizes the WCF approach to moral questions. Following Peter Berger, Michael Lienesch characterizes the idea of worldview as assuming religion and politics are aspects of a continuous process of world construction and maintenance. Lienesch defines Christian Right worldview in terms of concentric circles with self and family at the center. See his discussion in \textit{Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 20-1.


\textsuperscript{18} See Betty DeBerg, \textit{Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). Also, see Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, \textit{Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 4-5, for a succinct discussion of the terms \textit{fundamentalism} and \textit{evangelicalism}. I will discuss the fundamentalists at length in the next chapter.
revolution.” More recently, conservative Christians have felt the need to respond to the challenges made by global feminist and gay rights social movements to restrictive notions of “the family” and definitions of normalcy (the introduction of the idea of homophobia, for example). The second chapter of this dissertation traces continuities between these previous movements and recent WCF pro-family activities in UN gatherings and other global venues.

At the same time, I also situate this pro-family movement within a history of global population and sexual politics activism. One cannot understand the current contestations around population without some sense of the history of population control. Ideas about which countries’ “populations” were causing “overpopulation” of the world evolved into a global movement in the 1960s and 70s.\footnote{Two books that help make sense of this are Matthew Connelly’s \textit{Fatal Misconception} (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) and Betsy Hartmann’s \textit{Reproductive Rights and Wrongs} (Boston: South End Press, 1995). Both Hartmann and Connelly tell comprehensive versions of the global population control movement, especially as manifested in the 1960s and 70s. Connelly takes care to distinguish this phenomenon from nations’ routine regulation of their own populations.} This crusade was the result of neo-Malthusians, eugenicists, pronatalists, and nativists around the world all organizing at the same time, trying to “remake humanity to fit global norms.”\footnote{Connelly, 379-80.} These efforts fit solidly within Foucault’s definitions of biopolitics—the power to regulate both individual and social bodies. The movement arose at the juncture of decolonization, falling European birth rates, and accelerating population growth in North Africa, Korea, India, Indochina, and the West and East Indies.\footnote{In this period, Europeans and Americans began to organize against migration from the Global South (Connelly, 260). The trend began with regulating movement in decomposing empires like the United Kingdom. In the United States, the Immigration Act of 1965 resulted in more non-European immigrants than expected, especially from Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Connelly, 260-1). Population control appealed to the rich and powerful whether it targeted migrants or the “unfit.” As Connelly puts it, “with the spread of emancipatory movements and the integration of markets, it began to appear easier and more profitable to control populations than to control territory” (378).} Even while the global “overpopulation”
problem continues to be raised as a topic of concern, quite a few countries are worried about “underpopulation.” Current European population panics about low fertility rates echo population control movement discourse. Discourses about demographic crises reflect views of who should bear children in light of who is actually bearing them, on otherness related to class, ethnicity, race (“others within”) or immigrants (“others without”). They “are frequently perceived to be one and the same (e.g. poor immigrants).”

Activists in the WCF network are attuned to these recent Western population panics related to immigration and low fertility rates. Current conservative responses to these worries converge in a desire that (some) women have more babies, an idea often known as pronatalism. Pronatalism can be defined as a political, ideological, or religious project to encourage childbearing by some or all members of a particular civil, ethnic, or national group. It typically springs from any or all of several common anxieties. A group may fear being too few in number, being outnumbered by another group (from within or from outside the group’s “territory”), or losing traditional culture, knowledge, heritage, or morality. Most often, pronatalism is associated with a combination of all these worries. WCF organizations and speakers fret about the end of western, EuroAmerican civilization. At times WCF’s demographic rhetoric implies that Europe is in immediate danger of being overtaken by immigrants—especially Muslims—and that the US will be next. Regardless of whether the primary aim is to reproduce the group’s population biologically or culturally, pronatalist agendas rely on women wanting and choosing to be mothers. And in the case of the WCF pro-family coalition, these various anxieties bring together people and organizations with an interest in managing sexuality, reproduction, and morality.

22 For example, see Mother Jones, May/June, 2010. The cover asks the question, “Who’s to Blame for the Population Crisis?” Several articles approach questions concerning global population from various angles, listed in the table of contents under the title “The Last Taboo.”

The Globalization of Sexual Politics

Issues of sexuality that matter to WCF are frequent topics of international conversations. Frameworks for international deliberations about sexual issues were established by UN activities, especially around population control and reproductive health. The globalization of sexual politics has materialized for a variety of reasons. The global economy has increased the necessity and intensity of cultural exchange as capital and labor move across borders. Similarly, the international flow of products like films, clothing, television shows, and music stimulates increased interchange of ideas about sexuality. New technologies extend and speed up the transmission of knowledge about “others” and “elsewhere.” In addition, the globalization of NGO activism provides a powerful motivation for and conduit of exchange. Significant networks of transnational social movements have developed, many of them focused on gender, reproductive rights, and sexual rights as human rights. Activists concerned about issues related to sexuality express them in terms of rights in part because human rights are one of the most viable, legible, and morally powerful avenues for political enfranchisement.

Claims for sexual rights, then, evolved through the work of transnational networks in a global political and economic landscape. International activism in general increased significantly during the 1990s. NGOs proliferated throughout the twentieth century, especially after Amnesty International’s receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977. However, the participation and visibility

of NGOs shifted dramatically starting with the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. More than 1500 NGOs took part—including those with interests in reproductive and adolescent health, family planning, women's rights, violence against women, female genital mutilation, and development—creating a new form of transnational politics. Transnational feminist alliances fought for recognition of women’s health and reproductive rights as human rights, which provoked a strong conservative response from an alliance of Muslim nations and the Vatican. The pattern continued at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and after. Issues surrounding gender equality, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, transgender identities have continued to be at the forefront of agendas in United Nations gatherings. However, little progress has been made since the 1990s toward an international consensus on what constitutes reproductive and sexual rights. This is surely in part because those resistant to any kind of sexual rights have successfully produced a political impasse in UN gatherings. It may also reflect the reluctance of sexual rights activists to rush toward an official definition.25

International deliberations over defining sexual norms matter because sexuality is a powerful site of social and political control. Michel Foucault calls sexuality “an especially dense transfer point for relations of power” that is “capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.”26 In every society, sexual norms are policed by legal, religious, medical, governmental, and social institutions. Each society maintains its own version of a sexual hierarchy that privileges some practices and stigmatizes or forbids others. Gayle Rubin refers to the privileged acts as being inside a “charmed circle” of good, normal, natural,

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25 See Wilson, 254-5.
blessed sexuality. Sexual hierarchies, like racist and sexist ideologies, typically grant virtue to the dominant group and are used to justify subordination of everyone else. Race, gender, class, citizenship status, and other categories of identity all intertwine in sexual hierarchies. For the most vulnerable people—whether due to race, class, citizenship status, etc.—sexual difference can be very dangerous. Nevertheless, these power dynamics are not always obvious. Sexuality is imagined as “private” even though it is a constant target of surveillance and regulation. It is imagined as “natural” even though what counts as natural is defined variously in different times and places. These perceptions can enhance the power of sexual norms. Heteropatriarchal family structures help naturalize sexual (and other) hierarchies as well as a gender binary on which patriarchy rests. Abortion, contraception, same-sex sexual relationships are marginalized and restricted when procreative sex is inside the “charmed circle.”

As one among many competing discourses seeking to define the saliency of sexual and reproductive rights in a transnational civic sphere that is weighing “human rights,” the natural family discourse calls on familiar, emotional, and hegemonic ideas about family. WCF crusades for protection of the natural family, which is posited as a universal family form in part through associating it with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In WCF’s natural family discourse, population control and universal human rights provide the milieu for transnational natural family advocacy. WCF alleges a global depopulation crisis, which it uses as justification for promoting early marriage and childbearing, large families, and other “pro-life” causes. WCF combines its depopulation claim with references to coercive sterilization and contraceptive programs like China’s one-child policy in an attempt to characterize abortion and other

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28 Rubin, 283.
reproductive rights as human rights abuses. This depopulation narrative and the strategic use of a human rights framework are key to WCF’s effort to take conservative American Christian activism to an international stage. WCF characterizes policymakers’ and activists’ support for sexual and reproductive rights as “the West” forcing its ways on countries with “traditional values.”

The population framework turns out to be flexible for incorporating sexual issues. LGBT rights provide a useful example. Recent developments around issues related to lesbian and gay relationships and same-sex marriage give the impression that sexual norms are on an inevitable trajectory of accommodating sexual variation. The UN Human Rights Office, in an unprecedented effort, launched its first global outreach campaign to promote tolerance and equality for LGBT people in the summer of 2013. Some attitudes about same-sex marriage and relationships have shifted dramatically in the United States and many other countries. Lesbian and gay couples can marry in fifteen countries, eight of which have legalized it since 2010. Many other countries seem poised to follow in the near future, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) rights in general are improving in many places. However, the story is far from tidy as homosexuality is still illegal in at least 76 countries. In some countries, attention to LGBT rights has created new categories and identities, and has stirred persecution of sexual

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30 It is true that the construction of the modern nation state implies certain stances on sexuality, including equating “sexual liberation” with freedom and democracy. States in the Global South often resent being characterized as “backward” for having non-Western attitudes about sex. WCF has tuned into and encouraged these resentments.

31 It should be noted that same-sex marriage reinforces a variety of norms even as it challenges others.

32 The Free and Equal campaign is named for Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights.” The campaign includes videos and public-service announcements, a website (www.unfe.org), and the participation of celebrities from around the world.

practices that have long been unnamed and accepted or ignored.\textsuperscript{34} In fact, the plight of LGBT persons has actually worsened in some countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{35} Moreover, legality does not guarantee protection. Homosexuality is legal in South Africa, yet lesbians are frequently victims of “corrective rape,” which is intended to enforce conformity with gender and sexual norms. Homosexuality is legal in Russia, but Vladimir Putin signed a law in 2013 that outlaws “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations” anywhere children could hear it. It stands to make gay pride parades illegal as well as any mention of homosexuality online or in news reports and possibly same-sex couples’ public displays of affection. Violence against LGBT people in Russia has increased since the implementation of this law and publicity surrounding it.

Russia has provided fertile ground for WCF’s natural family discourse. In fact, Russia serves as a useful example of how WCF rhetoric translates into on-the-ground presence. In 2011, WCF held a regional meeting in Russia called the Moscow Demographic Summit: Family and the Future of Humankind. The depopulation theme has been effective among pro-family activists in Russia and other countries with low birthrates. Natural family discourse lends itself to wrapping religious and moral arguments into social scientific ones and attaching them to issues that fit with a range of conservative agendas. Speakers at the Russian demographic summit related the natural

\textsuperscript{34} Egypt is a good example. Although same-sex sex is not new, the identity of the homosexual is fairly recent—the “speciation” of sexuality in Foucauldian terms. Also recent is a crackdown on homosexual behavior, especially on gay bottoms. However, it is not simply same-sex practices that are being repressed by Egyptian police, but “the sociopolitical identification of these practices with the western identity of gayness and the publicness that these gay-identified men seek.” See Amr Shalakany’s “On a Certain Queer Discomfort with \textit{Orientalism}” and Aeyal Gross’ “Queer Theory and International Human Rights Law: Does Each Person Have a Sexual Orientation?” both part of a panel discussion detailed in Buss et al., “Queering International Law,” in \textit{The American Society of International Law Proceedings} 101 (2007), 119-132. See also Joseph Massad, “Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World,” \textit{Public Culture} 14(2) (2002), 361-385.

family to religion and family fertility, marriage, the importance of mothers, the influence of radical feminism, abortion, and family-centered economic policy. The idea of the natural family has a powerful ability to help inspire, organize, and mobilize conservative Christian activists, who see it as benevolent and threatened. WCF organizers can draw on broad support from religious institutions and long-standing pro-family organizations that have built-in constituencies and a wealth of resources.

WCF’s pronatalist ideas hold much appeal in Russia due in part to panic about its low birth rate. Then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s quote in promotional materials for the WCF summit gives a glimpse into the significance of birth and population issues in Russia: “Without exaggeration, the central problem of contemporary Russia is demography, strengthening the family, increasing the birth rate.” Dmitry Medvedev, the president of Russia at the time, asserted that Russia’s population decline “would result in weakening of political, economic and military influence of Russia in the world.” The Russian Orthodox Church played a significant role in the summit. About a third of the local speakers at the summit were affiliated with the church. The gathering bore fruit for WCF. Four Russian organizations became WCF partners during the two years following the summit. Several local organizers and speakers from the Russian summit spoke at WCF VI in Madrid (2012) and WCF VII in Sydney (2013). WCF VIII will take place in 2014 at the Kremlin in Moscow.

WCF organizing and rhetorical strategies may also prove helpful for Putin. He has embraced “family values” talk in part to gain conservative support and to win favor with the

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36 In addition, the local organizing committee included two men described as originators of the Russian pro-life and pro-family movement in 1993. Three others had demographic backgrounds—one a professor at Moscow State Lomonosov University. The sixth was a sociologist at the Russian State Social University.
Orthodox Church. In the midst of a religious revival, the church has taken on a more public role as a moral authority. In speaking about the new propaganda law, Putin declared that it would not threaten the LGBT community, but it might help reverse the country’s population decline. Clearly, such thinking assumes that same-sex couples cannot have and rear children; in fact, Putin has explicitly said as much. His logic also appears to rely on the old scare tactic that professes that gays recruit children into a homosexual lifestyle. Putin claims he does not discriminate against gays, and yet LGBT activists feel his public remarks help keep them second-class citizens. Sexual politics can serve politicians’ priorities. In fact, some have argued Putin is using this as a strategy to solidify his base and distract from more difficult problems like poverty. In Russia’s case, in addition to poverty, other intractable issues include worries about high rates of alcoholism, high mortality rates especially among men, and a shortage of urban housing, all of which are arguably strong factors in Russia’s low birth rate.

Since the 1990s, sexual questions are increasingly topics of international deliberation, creating a worldwide debate in which WCF organizations are central. In many ways, WCF


Philip Jenkins links anti-gay rhetoric and crackdowns in the global south to the influence of a version of Christianity that favors economic and social justice, but is conservative on gender and sexual issues. Homosexuality has come to be portrayed as a Western phenomenon. Politically, anti-gay rhetoric combines with anti-Western and anti-imperialist activism. Jenkins’ examples include politicians in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Uganda. See Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 231-5.

Based on ethnographic data, Cynthia Gabriel posits four interrelated cultural and political reasons for Russia’s low birthrate: the cultural desirability of early childbearing, resulting in older mothers electing to have abortions; grandmother-provided care as a common childcare solution for cultural and economic reasons; an adult mortality crisis, related in part to high rates of male mortality linked to binge drinking and alcohol-related incidents; and a shortage of urban housing that accommodates the cultural norm of providing space to one’s adult children. See Gabriel, “‘Our Nation is Dying’: Interpreting Patterns of Childbearing in Post-Soviet Russia,” in Barren States: The Population “Implosion” in Europe, ed. Carrie B. Douglass (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 73-92.
represents the globalization of US family values politics. Gender and sexuality are central components of a conflict in the United States often referred to as “the culture wars,” waged between what James Davison Hunter refers to as Progressivism and Orthodoxy. This dichotomy oversimplifies the situation, but activists across the spectrum have taken up “culture wars” framing as short hand for a set of complex issues, like abortion, homosexuality, and contraception, which are prominent points of contention in “culture wars” debates.

Globalization of US Conservative Christian Activism

Although the phrase natural family is in many ways a WCF innovation, scholars have noted a history of conservative Christians organizing and expressing their worldview based on gendered familial roles. It is through these conceptions of the world that inequality seems natural. Their family ideals represent the common sense order of things for them—including hierarchies of gender, race, class, sexuality. God is central for them, but the marital family is key to organizing earthly matters. As the alliances have broadened, their shared theologies have become more diluted and general in order to accommodate the coalition. For example, early twentieth-century Fundamentalists would have had a fairly specific, homogenous set of Protestant beliefs, while the 1980s Christian Right worked to maintain its alliances with Catholics and economic conservatives through a looser “family values” Christianity. WCF leaders represent the network as open to all the “Abrahamic faiths,” and it does already include a wider range of Christianities (Protestant Evangelicals, Catholics, LDS, Russian Orthodox Church). Therefore, they often emphasize “orthodoxy” in general over Christian particularities (although some individual organizations tout specific Catholic or Baptist or general “Christian” ideals).

41 For example, see DeBerg, Bendroth, and Balmer.
These theologies shape and are informed by conservative Christians’ political organizing. Victorian-era “separate spheres” ideology appealed to nineteenth-century evangelicals as a way to deal with changes resulting from industrialization. In such thinking, men were meant to engage in “public” activities in politics and the economy, while women’s proper realm was the “private” space in the “divinized home.” Early twentieth-century Christian fundamentalists incorporated this gendered philosophy into their theology and activism.\(^42\) During the Cold War, conservatives’ common enemy shifted gradually from anticommunism to secular humanism and a “family values” rhetoric, especially in the 1960s to the 1980s.\(^43\) The change in focus allowed for appeal to a broader constituency. Conservative Christians themselves used the term “cobelligerencies” to explain their coalition-building strategy in the 1970s and 80s. It is based on the idea of fighting for a common cause along with people who might differ with them theologically or on certain key issues.\(^44\) The term “Christian Right” is often used to refer to US right-wing political organizations and activism that arose mid- to late-twentieth-century which advocate for socially conservative policies that they relate to their Christian tenets. The Christian Right label is most strongly associated with evangelical Protestants, but conservative Catholics, Mormons, Jews, and secularists have provided support and helped form this informal coalition. Family values discourse expressed pro-family and pro-life issues in the “language of the people” in order to form a “discursive bond” between conservative religious and political groups during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.\(^45\) To be effective, such organizing often frames messaging in ways that appeal to those for whom religious language is not the most persuasive.\(^46\) WCF’s messaging combines

\(^{42}\) See DeBerg.
\(^{43}\) McGirr, 168-86.
\(^{45}\) See McGirr.
\(^{46}\) Martin, 192-7.
these various approaches in a sophisticated way that demonstrates a keen awareness of previous pro-family activists’ techniques. WCF’s activism, in fact, arises directly from the Christian Right. Those familiar with the Christian Right would recognize among WCF’s partners such heavy hitters as Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, the Family Research Council, and the American Family Association, all formed in the United States in the 1970s.

Two excellent monographs covering the early years of WCF conclude that the network is simply the US Christian Right acting in international politics. In their 2003 book, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*, Doris Buss and Didi Herman, legal scholars, trace the 1994 to 2001 global activities of organizations and individuals who still provide WCF leadership a decade later. They focus their analysis on the eschatology, ideology, and political activism of these organizations. Buss and Herman detail what they call a “new family theology” associated with the CR UN. They define theology as “the religious form of ideology or worldview, containing a set of both ontological and epistemological foundational ‘truths’ premised on a notion of the divine.” Their work in turn synthesizes and builds on other excellent treatments of Christian Right ideology. Based on their examination of the materials of these organizations and on Herman’s attendance at WCF II at Geneva in 1999, they credit Christian Right activism with having an impact on international policy making in a variety of ways:

48 Buss and Herman, 1. The entire chapter is devoted to a thorough explanation of this theology, as the title indicates: “Divinity, Data, Destruction: Theological Foundations to Christian Right International Activism,” 1-18.
[Examples include] providing significant leadership to the anti-U.N movement in the United States; injecting an antiabortion ethos into international population policy and aid; maintaining pressure on the US government to remain a nonsignatory to international human rights conventions; influencing the content of final drafts of documents, such as the 1995 Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing; monitoring the activities of UN-sponsored bodies such as UNESCO and the World Health Organization; and providing an extensive critique of the perceived “global liberal agenda.” (xv)

Jennifer Butler’s observations concur with Buss and Herman’s. Butler’s work is based on her years of experience serving as a representative of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in the UN. Her 2006 book, Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized, which she designed to complement Buss and Herman’s, characterizes Christian Right activities she witnessed at that time as “building a global, interfaith coalition, advocating policies at the United Nations through government allies, establishing offices around the world, catalyzing regional networks and holding international conferences…. [with] the support of powerful religious and political leaders [including Pope John Paul II and President George W. Bush].”

Based on observations at the time, the authors of both books characterize the activism they study as a US Christian Right phenomenon. In fact, Buss and Herman refer to the actors collectively as CR UN (the Christian Right at the United Nations). They see the organizations as a particular subset of the US Christian Right that “has the makings of a global social movement.”

By contrast, I argue that WCF is the intellectual core of a transnational pro-family movement—albeit primarily a Euro-American one. I started following WCF in 2006 when its

49 Butler, 4-5.
50 Buss and Herman, xx-xxi. See also their discussion of their use of the term Christian Right, xviii-xx.
website hyped a countdown of days, minutes, and seconds until the 2007 WCF gathering (WCF IV in Warsaw, Poland). In retrospect, I see it was a transitional time for WCF, which helps explain why my understanding of it is somewhat different from that of Buss and Herman as well as Butler. In 2007 WCF founder Allan Carlson published the “natural family” manifesto as a book—which lays out a detailed set of premises, objectives, and policies. WCF initiated a new program in which partner organizations gain public recognition and access to WCF events for a $2500 donation. Early partners included US-based Concerned Women for America, but also REAL Women of Canada and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development of Qatar.

My project builds on and extends the work of Buss and Herman and Butler in at least two important ways. First, it provides more extensive contextualization for the rise of a transnational pro-family movement. Buss and Herman synthesize previous treatments of Christian Right ideology, detailing WCF’s “new family theology.” My contribution is to ground this worldview in a longer history of US Christian beliefs centered on “the family.” I trace the salience of gender-, sexuality-, and family-based rhetoric and ideologies in the history of US conservative Christian religiopolitical activism, as well as its effective incitement of passion. Linda Kintz’ book *Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions That Matter in Right-Wing America* calls attention to conservative Christians’ effective use of affective elements, as the title of her book suggests. She describes “a revisionary reconstruction of the role of the emotions in political life, possibly the most important achievement of the Right’s culture wars, which have been waged to disengage passion from the popular culture of the sixties and associate it with the popular culture of traditional morality.”

My analysis engages affect theory, conceiving emotions not as

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psychological states, but as social and cultural practices.\textsuperscript{52} I highlight “emotions that matter” in WCF’s global sexual politics. As such, my work illuminates the importance of emotions for transnational family politics.

A second contribution of this project is to provide a crucial update on recent pro-family activities, strategies, and inroads in the global civic sphere. In a post-George W. Bush era, pro-family activists are better able to represent themselves as “outsiders,” bolstering their rhetoric of crisis and the endangered natural family. US-based pro-family organizations like the Family Research Council, Alliance Defending Freedom, Concerned Women of America, Focus on the Family, Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (CFAM), and United Families International are key players, but support increasingly comes from outside the US, especially from Europe. WCF has successfully knit together new alliances and increased the frequency of WCF gatherings. These accomplishments warrant understanding WCF as central in a pro-family transnational movement, rather than a mere subset of the US Christian Right. WCF activities have become more coordinated, organized, and institutionalized in the past decade. Framing messages that resonate across coalitional boundaries is a hallmark of Christian Right organizing, and WCF brings that skill to global politics. WCF gatherings and partnerships have helped shape a pro-family discourse that operates beyond US Christian Right arenas—especially among conservative Christians—in countries like Spain, Poland, and Russia. I expect this research to contribute to debates on global biopolitics and the role of international civic engagement, as well as to deliberations on balancing the protection of religious, sexual, and other competing human rights.

\textsuperscript{52} Ahmed (2004), 9.
Overview of Methods and Remaining Chapters

In researching this dissertation, I have examined natural family discourse across a wide range of sources, including participant observation at two of WCF’s eponymous world congresses, as well as the websites, books, and other materials produced by WCF and its partner organizations. The discourse focuses on a variety of long-standing pro-life/pro-family issues, including marriage, abortion, and religious rights, all of which are interlaced throughout WCF’s population narrative. Specifically, my research strategy is one described by Sarah Maddison as triangulation or multiple-methods research, including participant observation, interviewing, and textual analysis.53 Quoting Shulamit Reinharz, Maddison argues that “Multimethod research creates the opportunity to put texts or people in contexts, thus providing a richer and far more accurate interpretation.” I have adopted this method in an effort to explain the assumptions and strategies employed in the natural family discourse, as well as its continuity and discontinuities with other family rhetorics. I have therefore engaged a careful reading of a variety of texts that go into the production of global pro-family discourse. By global pro-family discourse I mean the language, rules, conventions, and the institutions within which the natural family ideal is produced. Michel Foucault says that “Whenever one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation.”54 By texts I mean the written publications, websites, and audiovisual productions produced by participating organizations and institutions, as well as speeches at events and gatherings. In other words, I am interested in meanings produced by the interrelationship of these texts. My aim is to locate natural family

54 See Michel Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1982), 38.
discourse within a particular historical, political, and social context. Doing so helps make sense of the strategic reasons behind and the impact of WCF’s natural family discourse among particular audiences and within the contemporary international civic sphere in which NGO activism is prominent.

**Textual Analysis**

Besides *The Natural Family: A Manifesto*, and several recent books by Allan Carlson,

other significant vehicles for production and circulation of the natural family discourse are World Congress of Families newsletters, press releases, and website, the latter of which includes declarations, a list of speakers and their papers, and other detailed records from each of the seven major World Congress of Families gatherings. Three DVDs on the topic of “demographic winter” are or have been featured prominently on the WCF and many of its partners’ websites and shown in pro-family gatherings. The website of the Howard Center, a think-tank which publicizes original pro-family literature for WCF, is another important production and distribution site of natural family discourse. Finally, the discourse circulates through the websites and materials of WCF partner organizations and affiliates.

**Participant Observation and Interviews**

A crucial conduit of engagement and energy for the global pro-family movement comes from assemblies of supporters and activists. As of 2013, there have been seven primary international World Congress of Families gatherings, the first in 1997. My participant/observation at WCF V in 2009 in Amsterdam and at WCF VI in 2012 in Madrid gave me insight into the current membership, activities, and logistics of the movement. My own

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55 Other books Carlson has authored include *Third Ways: How Bulgarian Greens, Swedish Housewives, and Beer-Swilling Englishmen Created Family-Centered Economies—And Why They Disappeared; The New Agrarian Mind: The Movement Toward Decentralist Thought in Twentieth-Century America; Conjugal America: On the Public Purposes of Marriage; and Godly Seed: American Evangelicals Confront Birth Control, 1873-1973.*
interactions and interviews with participants have provided a fuller sense of the self-understanding of the global pro-family movement and the shared, contested, and changing ideas of those engaged in the movement.

This dissertation is organized around identifying and exploring what makes natural family discourse effective. After locating the transnational pro-family movement within a history of US conservative Christian activism, it focuses on three broad themes: marriage, population, and human rights. Marriage is a crucial defining feature of the natural family and family ideology has long been central for the American Christian Right. WCF’s global depopulation narrative, however, is a novel approach attuned to shaping a pro-family discourse for an international audience. Similarly, using a human rights framework is key to “internationalizing” the US “culture wars.” The chapters align with these themes.

In Chapter 2, “A Familiar Worldview: Natural Family Discourse in Theoretical and Historical Perspective,” I provide a genealogy of American conservative Christian organizing centered on family ideology on which WCF now draws. Natural family discourse builds on a history of US fundamentalist and evangelical Christians’ use of a familial framework to construct an ordered ideal and remedy in times of perceived gender or sexual crisis. As in the past, WCF response is based on the logic that women can restore order in times of cultural dislocation by returning to traditional roles. My argument is that the concept of the natural family is strategically key to the WCF alliance because it provides a link to past organizing around the family and the organizations and institutions currently invested in pro-family politics. It is also a supple term, a discursive bond, capable of stretching to accommodate a variety of issues and conceptualizations including pro-life issues or questions of sexual morality or conservative economic views. Most importantly, the idea of the natural family resonates with many people on

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56 See Balmer, 98.
an affective level; especially for conservative Christians, familism is a powerful scaffold from which to stir a sense of “wholesomeness” and “rightness” which needs to be defended when it is imagined as under threat. The natural family strategy illustrates WCF’s shrewd awareness of how to marshal emotions in politics.

Chapter 3, “Marriage Makes a Family ‘Natural,’” explicates how marriage works to organize WCF’s natural family worldview and also as a regulatory and disciplinary mechanism that can help instantiate a natural family order. Nowhere is natural family moral order more apparent than in WCF’s treatment of marriage. For WCF, the natural family is the basis for a universal moral order, a worldview. The idea of the natural family does not materialize naturally, however; for it to remain viable requires effort. WCF leads a moral regulation movement intent on solidifying the natural family worldview. Encoded in the natural family framework is not only familial, gender, sexual, reproductive, and economic order, but an exclusion of the “unnatural” alternatives—namely same-sex relationships, single-parent-headed families, co-habiting couples, or any other non-marital household arrangement.

The purposes of a natural family are to regulate sexuality, childbearing and rearing, and economics. Not surprisingly, then, for WCF activists, marriage is essential to moral order, the organizing feature of the natural family ideal vision. It provides the context within which sex is sanctioned, as long as it is procreative and heterosexual. It therefore organizes and sanctions gender roles and sexual orientation. WCF messaging resonates with those social scientists who argue that a married couple provides a more stable and healthier environment for children than other households. It also appeals to economic conservatives and others who extrapolate from the correlation between single mothers and financial hardship that marriage is an effective anti-

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57 WCF explanations of the natural family routinely include three key material purposes: regulating sexuality, bearing and rearing children, and managing economic concerns. Within the framework of “a lifelong covenant of marriage,” together these pursuits produce a gendered moral order.
poverty measure. More recently, the procreative marriage ideal is also used to marginalize same-sex unions. Ironically, the success of the movement for marriage equality for same-sex couples tends to reinforce the idea of marriage as “normal” and desireable. For conservative Christians, as well as many others, marriage is understood as both a sacred institution and state-regulated relationship, which means it lends itself to messaging on both registers. As a result, marriage not only carries great significance among conservative Christians and others, but it also works well as a fulcrum for reinforcing a disciplinary regime for those who take up WCF themes, such as social and economic conservatives.

Chapter 4, “The Endangered Natural Family and the Threat of Demographic Winter,” argues that population issues are important to WCF for several reasons, especially in providing a context for social scientific arguments and vocabulary for global attention to the natural family. In WCF materials, global depopulation is prominently featured as a crisis for which the natural family is a solution. Framing the crisis in global population terms provides a context for global engagement, opens possible avenues for new alliances, and allows for use of social scientific language. Much of the WCF focus on population is couched in economic terms. For instance, in many countries, aging populations due to low fertility rates prompts fears there will be too few young workers to sustain social security for the elderly in their retirement.

The chapter examines a set of documentaries that serve to promulgate WCF’s depopulation crisis narrative and heteronormative natural family solutions. These videos provide a portable delivery system of rationales for preserving sexual norms aimed at countering claims for the sexual and reproductive rights of women and sexual minorities. The films, revolving around a theme of “demographic winter,” warn of the collapse of social-security systems and ultimately the end of so-called Western civilization. The documentaries locate the problem principally in women’s individual marriage and childbearing decisions and blame
environmentalist, feminist, and LGBT-rights movements for spreading misinformation that fuels what the films declare to be problematic choices. The chapter argues that these documentaries employ a politics of fear in an attempt to secure social norms based on a set of gender, sexual, and racial hierarchies. They mobilize fear of economic, moral, racial, and sexual chaos positioned against a familiar model of home, motherhood, and safety. The analysis highlights how emotional and demographic elements combine to shape an argument for patriarchy that resonates with a variety of global anxieties and political goals.

In Chapter 5, “The Persecution of Natural Family Believers: The World Congress of Families and Human Rights Discourse,” I argue that WCF uses a natural family human rights discourse to build alliances and stir righteous anger and pride among conservative Christians worldwide—what WCF sometimes refers to as Christendom. Probably few people would disagree with pro-family activists’ embrace of the principles of freedoms of religion, conscience, and speech, at least in the West where such ideas resonate with Enlightenment-inspired individual rights. However, in some cases it is tricky to reconcile these rights with other ideals in pluralistic societies—especially in regard to religious, moral, and cultural traditions concerning gender and sexuality. Sexual politics provide a prominent example of the difficulty of finding international consensus around such issues. The contemporary idea of a universalized human rights project has been manipulated by various groups, including conservative Christians, to advance political causes without naming them as such. Central to WCF’s campaign is its attempt to universalize the natural family in part through linking it to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Contradictions in WCF’s application of the UDHR reveal WCF’s ambivalent relationship with the document.

This chapter explicates WCF’s use of the UDHR through an examination of several key WCF texts. First, I argue that WCF activists Allan Carlson and Paul Mero’s The Natural Family:
A Manifesto adopts specific UDHR passages to normalize an ideal straight Western white male Christian subject of universal rights. Second, I analyze a WCF protest statement that characterizes US support for LGBT rights as an assault on the religious freedom of countries with “traditional values.” WCF couches its argument in “religion in general” language that advances the idea that natural family values—specifically concerning sex and gender—are common to all or most religions. Reading the protest letter alongside the remarks of various speakers at WCF VI in Madrid reveals a conservative Christian-centric perspective. The speakers share a view of sexual and reproductive rights as illegitimate. They cast those who speak out against such rights as heroic and critics as persecutors. The pro-family movement is depicted as a beleaguered minority, a victim of intolerance, even as it posits its ideals as universal. WCF’s human rights discourse is less a call for religious freedom than for the elevation of a particular worldview—that of the global pro-family Christian Right—to international dominance.

An overarching goal of the dissertation is to call attention to the affective and ideological potency of the natural family construction. WCF is a shrewd purveyor of a complex family-based discourse. It effectively privileges a white, middle-class, heteropatriarchal, marital, procreative, Western family form to the detriment of others. The explicit and implicit favor historically bestowed on this “natural family” in the United States and western Europe has contributed to statistics that correlate it with positive “results.” Those correlations are then used to justify incentivizing people to replicate it. Meanwhile the sexual and economic moralism buried in such social science arguments often stymies attempts to provide aid to nonconforming households that struggle to get by. Scholars and activists interested in pursuing social justice worldwide would do well to pay attention to the globalization of WCF’s sophisticated natural family discourse that has its roots in a series of influential movements.
Chapter 2: A Familiar Worldview: Natural Family Discourse in Theoretical and Historical Perspective

[T]he natural family—part of the created order, imprinted on our natures, the source of bountiful joy, the fountain of new life, the bulwark of ordered liberty—stands reviled and threatened in the early twenty-first century. Foes have mounted attacks on all aspects of the natural family, from the bond of marriage to the birth of children to the true democracy of free homes. Ever more families show weaknesses and disorders. We see growing numbers of young adults rejecting the fullness and joy of marriage, choosing instead cheap substitutes or perhaps standing alone, where they are easy prey for the total state. Too many children are born outside of wedlock, ending as wards of that same state. Too few children are born inside married-couple homes, portending depopulation.

The Natural Family: A Manifesto

The above quote serves as an example of how natural family discourse appeals to the emotions of its readers, how it circulates particular “affectional” alliances through reference to comforting, religious, and/or patriotic qualities or concepts that are under attack by unnamed foes. It associates the natural family not only with the security and vitality of order, nature, liberty, and life, but it also depicts it as “the source of bountiful joy.” It goes on to characterize the natural family as reviled and endangered—actually under attack by unnamed foes. Moreover, the perils are not only external, but internal as well; families exhibit “weaknesses and disorders” that cause seemingly self-destructive tendencies. Young adults neglect to marry, have children, and (re)produce the “married-couple home,” which is linked to freedom and democracy. For the authors, the stakes are high: this failure to replicate the natural family form is leading to our victimization by “the total state” and “portending depopulation.” A pervading sense of threat

58 Carlson and Mero, 6-7(emphasis in original).
underlies every sentence; the natural family is presented as vulnerable, in need of defense. The natural family is idealizable through this narrative of insecurity.\textsuperscript{59}

US conservative Christians have a long history of envisioning an ideal family form as key to meeting the challenge of sweeping social changes. Gender and sexual norms inherent in this family ideal help structure a conservative Christian worldview. Therefore, many conservative Christians have felt especially threatened by shifts and disruptions in supposed societal consensus around gender roles and sexual practices. Their powerful affective responses around gender and sexuality have an impact on their ordinary daily experiences and routines and on group identity. These feelings also influence the political organizing and strategies of conservative Christian activism. In fact, activist leaders are particularly adept at marshaling affective currents strategically. This chapter explores the affective intertwinement of politics and belief—two terms that will be further interrogated below—especially in regard to how that intertwinement operates in natural family discourse circulated by conservative Christian groups, including WCF. The intimacies of family life, gender roles, and sexuality are central in both. A familiarity with the weaving of these threads throughout the twentieth-century history of US conservative Christian organizing helps make sense of current WCF-led transnational pro-family politics.

Affect plays a powerful role in natural family discourse and WCF’s successful alliance building. In this chapter, I aim to tease out how it operates in this discourse and why it is so potent. I argue that the history of family-based discourse among American conservative Christian organizers helps account for its affective force. Therefore, this chapter provides a genealogy of family-themed conservative Christian activism, focusing on three emergences: the early 1900s fundamentalist movement, the Christian Right movement that arose in the 1970s, and the current transnational pro-family movement. The chapter is organized around four main sections. The

\textsuperscript{59}Ahmed (2004), 144.
first section provides a theoretical framework for considering these three interrelated movements, and the remaining sections focus on each of the three emergences. I trace how American conservative Christians use family discourse to shore up norms and create meaningful responses to social change, especially as they cohere around gender roles and sexuality.

The first section explains a key strand of commonality among the three movements, which is a gendered family worldview. I explicate the idea of “worldview” and the role of affect in shaping and maintaining its inherent sense of order. I use the term “worldview” because conservative Christians frequently use it. In fact, a primary WCF goal is to “articulate and promote a morally sound natural family worldview that can serve as a reliable guide to culture, law, and public policy.”60 Briefly, we might think of worldview as a systematic approach to looking at the world that helps organize and interpret the meaning of everyday life. More than simply a lens, a worldview actually molds a person’s world in that one’s reality materializes through repetition of language and practices to the extent one adheres to its norms.61 In this section, I spell out how belief, politics, and the circulation of affect shape and are shaped by conservative Christians’ creation and preservation of a worldview ordered by traditional gender roles.

The remainder of the chapter looks at three “waves” of US conservative Christian family-themed activism. I construct a genealogy of conservative Christian family discourse using secondary source analyses of the three movements to pull out significant commonalities in the use of family framing. Broadly, I argue that each of these three movements reacted to a different set of challenges to taken-for-granted assumptions, but threads of family discourse knit the movements together. Recurring themes include crises in gender norms—especially

61 Sara Ahmed (2004), 12; Judith Butler (1993), 9; Peter Berger, 4.
masculinity—as well as loss of consensus regarding white middle-class Protestant norms of respectability and sexual morality. In each case, activists have expressed ideas about restoring order—often in gendered-family terms—that speak specifically to conservative Christian views. However, other segments of society have shared many of the anxieties that provoke their activism and the messages have often resonated more widely. The language that movement leaders use each time is distinctive. For instance, the movements emphasize theological language less as they work to build broader coalitions. In each section, I open with a significant event and a brief overview of a few key players from the movement by way of orienting the discussion of its particular family discourse.

The second and third sections focus respectively on the emergence of family discourse among the early 1900s Christian fundamentalist movement and the mid-1900s Christian Right movement, through a review of scholarly literature that has paid attention to the significance of family- and gender-based themes in these movements. Bringing these histories together illuminates continuities in family ideologies as well as important shifts. These separate but related family discourses provide an opportunity to explore how the language of family forms a basis for conservative religio-political activism. This analysis emphasizes that artful mobilization of familiar sentiments about family, paired with fear and anger, have been strategic for coalition building. These two sections lay the groundwork for my examination of the discourse in the current WCF-led transnational pro-family movement in the fourth section. In this final section, I trace how the influence of the US Christian Right is apparent in the particular pro-family organizations and activists involved in launching the movement, as well as the strategies they have inherited and adapted for transnational activism. This examination notes these links with the two previous emergences and highlights innovations aimed to incorporate a global perspective into a worldview that has generally been suspicious of international organizations and regulation.
Affective Power in a Conservative Christian Family Worldview

For those involved in the WCF network, the heterosexual procreative marriage-based family is a crucial part of how they conceive of a universal moral order—what many of them refer to as their worldview. The natural family worldview, then, organizes the WCF approach to moral questions. It is also central to natural family discourse and politics. I use the word “politics” broadly to refer to the ways people negotiate and/or reproduce relations of power and privilege. This definition is more useful for understanding the broad range of WCF activism intended to influence definitions, policies, and attitudes related to family, sexuality, and gender in a variety of institutional, civic, and cultural spaces. For example, the activities of WCF organizations include lobbying UN delegates as NGOs, lending free legal expertise in relevant court cases worldwide, and advising various policy-making entities at national and international levels. At the same time, these cultural politics can be advanced through “nonpolitical” media. WCF participates in the production and dissemination of knowledge about the natural family for the purpose of arming pro-family activists with persuasive rhetorical and other tools. Films shown at WCF gatherings have included a Christian drama about marriage, an historical drama

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62 The complexity and changing alliances of the “Christian Right” in all its various incarnations make the idea of a homogenous “worldview” problematic. Nevertheless, respected scholars do, with cautions, discuss such a view and I believe it is useful enough a notion to justify its use here—with the understanding that the views of conservative Christians are as varied and contested as those within any other “worldview.” For an especially nuanced discussion of this, see Christian Smith’s description of “four fallacies” in his introduction. Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6-15.

63 See Dawne Moon’s discussion of politics in *God, Sex, and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 124-5. Generally, I use Moon’s definition of politics to distinguish my use of the word from one associated mainly with activities aimed at directly influencing the outcome of elections, legislation, or policies. In addition, in some instances the idea of politics is imagined as involving inappropriate self-interest of some kind. See Dawne Moon’s discussion of politics in *God, Sex, and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 124-5.

64 Bivins, 8.
about early-1900s persecution of Catholics in Mexico, and several documentaries based on a narrative of global depopulation. In all cases, the natural family worldview anchors the discourse and activism.

Religion and politics are both aspects of a continuous social process of world-construction and world-maintenance. In fact, it is useful to see religion and politics more as modifying each other than necessarily as separate.\(^6^5\) Religion and culture are means by which people order their world. Beliefs and values are key for legitimating and giving meaning to a particular social construction of reality, especially in unsettled times.\(^6^6\) Social power works through beliefs—through our understanding of the world. Therefore the ordering of meaning, the production of truth, is not an apolitical process. It is based in and creates or reproduces hierarchies; it is political, even if not explicitly so.\(^6^7\) This ordering—the social construction of reality—is the stuff of worldview.

Peter Berger describes world construction in terms of three processes—externalization, objectivation, and internalization—which work together this way:

Externalization is the ongoing outpouring of human being into the world…in the physical and mental activity of [humans]. Objectivation is the attainment by the products of this activity…of a reality that confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other than themselves. Internalization is the reappropriation by [humans] of this same reality, transforming it once again from structures of the objective world into structures of the subjective consciousness.\(^6^8\)

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\(^6^5\) Bivins, 7.
\(^6^6\) Lienesch, 20.
\(^6^7\) Moon, 13-15.
Berger sees this “world construction” in terms of an ordering experience, society’s creation of meaningful order that he calls *nomos*. Once produced, this *nomos* generates an impetus for society to shift from seeing it as simply useful, desirable, or right to seeing it, as far as possible, as taken for granted, as inevitable, as just the universal nature of things. Societies accomplish this “taken for grantedness” through explanations that ground the order in something larger than themselves—in the *cosmos* or the fundamental meanings of the universe. Berger calls this process cosmization, positing that contemporary cosmization is more likely to be a “scientific” proposition about the “nature” of humans rather than about the nature of the universe. Religion, on the other hand, establishes cosmization in a “sacred mode,” positing objectivated ideas as part of a divine order. In any event, the socially constructed world is always fragile, requiring an ongoing repetition of the transmission and internalization of its “truths” for it to continue. This “world maintenance” is necessary in “the never completed enterprise of building a humanly meaningful world.” Sara Ahmed, quoting Judith Butler, puts it in these terms:

>Social forms (such as the family, heterosexuality, the nation, even civilization itself) are effects of repetition. As Judith Butler suggests, it is through the repetition of norms that worlds materialize, and that “boundary, fixity and surface” are produced (Butler 1993:9). Such norms appear as forms of life only through the concealment of the work of this repetition.

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69 Berger, 3-27. Berger defines sacred as “a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience” (25).
70 Berger, 27. Berger explains that, for their lives to have meaning, people feel a need to create explanations of the world in which humans occupy a place of unique significance, as opposed to imagining humans as just another animal.
71 Ahmed 2004, 12.
Ahmed compares regulative norms to repetitive strain injuries that contort bodies. The cumulative repetition of narratives shapes what it is possible for a body to do. The reiteration of certain scripts from a number of sources helps concretize them. Through daily interactions with people, power circulates in the capillaries of the social body; power works through hierarchies (like racism and sexism) and also through socialization.

Religion is a powerful source of socialization in which particular social realities are reinforced and maintained. Gender is a central organizing principle and core symbolic system in conservative Protestantism and evangelicalism. Historically, religious language and theological frameworks have helped adherents make sense of how to be a man or woman, especially as gender roles have become more ambiguous. That is not to say that conservative Christian ideas about gender roles have remained static or even that they have ever fit into tidy or unanimously agreed-upon definitions. The interpretation and control of gendered meaning are the result of an ongoing process of construction entailing much negotiation. Nevertheless, for conservative Christians the gendered human body, as “a location for formalized, repeatable symbolic performances,” is ritualized as a sacred space in which they ground sacred symbols. The body “enacts myths of masculinity and femininity and marks boundaries between the saved and the lost

73 Foucault (1978), 92-95; Moon, 9.
75 Julie Ingersoll’s work highlights the internal contestations among evangelical women regarding gender-related issues. Many women within conservative Protestantism—women she calls biblical or evangelical feminists—hold counterhegemonic views about gender roles. She specifically advocates moving away from a feminist critique of traditional religion to make sense of women and conflicts within. She also points out that even Marie Griffith and Brenda Brasher—whose careful work undermines the idea that conservative evangelical women are simply agency-less victims of conservative men’s gender ideology—even they fail to give voice to dissenters among those women.
with idealized gendered behavior.”76 For conservative Christians, family ideology provides a gendered framework for a cosmic order. The roles of wife, mother, husband, and father are tied to a sense of universal harmony. In Berger’s terms, for families aligned with this order their socialized identities have become an important subjective “locale” of the sacred, grounded in the “nature of things” as created or willed by God.

A discourse that incorporates a gendered family ideology is therefore especially salient in conservative Christian politics. These activists have been effective because they understand better than their critics that “politics are not only about abstract reasoning or economic interests but also about belief, which combines the rational and the irrational, the conscious and the unconscious, thought and feelings, the abstract and the physical.”77 Feminist and queer scholars have shown us that “emotions ‘matter’ for politics; emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds.”78 The places where politics come to matter most are “at the deepest levels of the unconscious, in our bodies, through faith, and in relation to the emotions. Belief and politics are rational, and they are not.”79

Emotions should not be regarded simply as psychological states, but rather as social and cultural practices. Ahmed offers a model of sociality of emotion that sees emotion as a social form, rather than individual self-expression. Referencing Durkheim, she explains emotions as coming from “without”—as with the rise of emotion in a crowd, “‘great movements’ of feeling, ‘do not originate in any one of the particular individual consciousnesses.’”80 However, such

76 Ingersoll, 124. Based on her ethnographic study of evangelical Christian women, Julie Ingersoll has emphasized gender as theologically significant for conservative Protestants. Ingersoll’s ideas support and extend those of Lienesch, DeBerg, and Bendroth.
77 Kintz, 4-5.
78 Ahmed 2004, 12.
79 Kintz, 5.
feelings do not remain “without.” “This force must also penetrate us and organize itself within us; it thus becomes an integral part of our being and by that very fact this is elevated and magnified.” The ability to activate an affective response is therefore a valuable political tactic and especially key in social movements. Emotions are as important as cognitive understandings and moral visions in analyzing social movements. Activists deploy language to arouse various emotions. A movement’s success depends in part on developing a common frame for defining a social problem and its solution that resonates with participants’ beliefs and experiences and motivates them to act. If a person has love for her family and associates the idea of “family” symbolically with positive connotations like security and comfort, for instance, family framing is more likely to engage her as an activist. Emotional attachments help account for the “glue” of solidarity that holds a movement together. The presence of a gendered-family discourse is a sustaining feature that connects the three emergences of conservative Christian organizing discussed below.

Conservative Christian organizing has always been part of the political landscape in the United States. Its visibility within US politics increases at times, but its involvement in politics is a permanent part of US history, if only episodically or cyclically. As Michael Lienesch puts it: Rooted in the past, connected to the political context of its times, the Christian right has demonstrated a distinctive approach to politics characterized by alternating strains of accommodation, activism, and alienation, continuing tensions between movement

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82 Social movements can be defined as “sustained, intentional efforts to foster or retard social changes primarily outside the normal institutional channels encouraged by authorities.” James Jasper, “Social Movements,” George Ritzer, ed., The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 4443.
84 Conservative Christian movements have been known variously as fundamentalism and conservative evangelicalism, also known as the Christian Right or the New Right in the 1980s. See Wilcox, McGirr, Martin, and Balmer.
members, and a paradoxical synthesis of piety and protest. Far from short-lived, its redemptive approach to politics is cyclical and recurrent. While not totally predictable, it is predictably periodic. It is also a permanent part of American politics (19).

As mentioned above, I locate WCF activism within this history of US conservative Christian politics. It is a politics that has often used family frames to shore up gender and sexual norms in response to social change. A review of this history helps make sense of the potency of WCF natural family discourse. Family rhetoric in conservative Christian organizing in the United States is often associated with what is today often called the Christian Right, but some scholars link it to earlier attempts to mobilize language about the family to restore a gendered sense of order.

One cannot fully understand conservative Christian activism without discussing sex and gender issues. Anxieties about masculinity as defined against femininity have informed various conservative Christian movements. Attention to gender and sexuality in analyzing these movements sheds light on continuities over time and across changing alliances within the Christian Right. It also helps clarify connections between the fears of “mainstream” conservative white middle- and working-class Americans and those that inspire conservative Christian movements, as well as how emotion has functioned in those movements. Finally, it also helps elucidate the centrality of gender in meaning-making for conservative Christians. The remainder of this chapter focuses on these continuities and connections—as well as discontinuities and disruptions—regarding proper forms of gender and sexuality as they relate to American conservative Christian sensibilities.
Explanations of the rise of the Christian Right in the 1970s and 1980s attend to the centrality of gender and sexual norms. Michael Lienesch explains 1980s Christian Right thinking using a heuristic of concentric circles, with “self” in the smallest circle, followed by “family,” “the economy,” “the polity,” and “the world.” Like many other scholars, as well as members of the Christian Right themselves, he characterizes the family and traditional gender roles as central for Christian Right thinking, describing the family as the most important social institution, the fundamental building block of society, in which men rule, women submit, and children obey. In addition, Lienesch highlights the Christian Right understanding that marriage and the family serve as boundaries for controlling male sexual aggression. In his schema, the gendered family arrangement is most central to ordering the Christian Right world, right after ideas about one’s “self.” Women play an important role in conservative Christian movements in their embodiment of Christian womanly ideals. In right-wing Christianity, gender differences

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86 Lienesch, 52-3. Linda Kintz

87 Lienesch points out that this gendered logic does contain inconsistencies and contradictions. For instance, in Lienesch’s explanation of a Christian Right worldview, men are to rule, and yet women are the ones with the power—through their willing submission—to create men’s “headship” (61-3).

88 See Julie Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battle* (New York: New York University Press, 2003). For outsiders, women’s participation in movements that seem to reinforce their subordination is rather incomprehensible. According to Linda Kintz, the appeal for conservative women is the promise of community, female agency (if limited), and the security of responsible male behavior (3). She also highlights the revalorization of women’s work—especially motherhood—as important in garnering women’s support (11).
and heterosexuality are absolute, a crucial part of conservative Christians’ understanding of a universal moral order, their cosmology. Linda Kintz portrays these ideas as being built on an already existing American mythology which she, similar to Lienesch, envisions as “a set of concentric circles stacked one on top of the other and ascending heavenward: God, property, womb, family, church, free market, nation, global mission, God…glued together by the symbolic figuration of the proper woman and by her activism.”

The significance of women’s role in conservative Christian families and activism is a recurring theme of conservative Christian discourse across time, as I highlight below.

Defending the Family in the Divinized Home: The Emergence of Christian Fundamentalists in the Early 1900s

Christian fundamentalism is strongly associated with a famous episode in US history, the so-called Scopes Monkey Trial, The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes. Often imagined as a battle over fundamentalist versus modernist ideologies, the case revolved around whether public schools could teach about evolution. Fundamentalists won the court case, but ultimately lost the larger argument as public opinion shifted in the opposite direction. This was in many ways the apex of fundamentalist activism visibility. In the aftermath, a division occurred that resulted in the coalition sorting into fundamentalists and evangelicals. Margaret Lamberts Bendroth defines fundamentalism as “a coalition of conservative, predominantly Calvinist, Protestants that emerged from within a broader, more ecumenical evangelical culture in the late nineteenth century. Known largely for their unrelenting attacks against evolution, they were committed to a militant defense of orthodoxy against what they saw as liberalizing influences in

89 Kintz, 6.
Protestant institutions.”90 “The term *evangelical* refers to the historic tradition in American Protestantism that was broadly orthodox and active in social and missionary outreach. After the 1920s, this coalition fragmented and the label took on a confusing array of interpretations. *Neo-evangelical* is a term describing a group within post-World War II fundamentalism which tried to bring the movement out of its intellectual isolation and to broaden its evangelistic appeal.”91

A glance at a couple of exemplary fundamentalist leaders and institutions helps situate the movement. They were prominent and persuasive, like any movement leaders tend to be, far from the impression of backwardness cast by press coverage of the Scopes trial. Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899) was an evangelist known for establishing the Moody Church, the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers, all of which are located in Chicago and remain influential today among conservative Christians. His preaching drew crowds throughout the United States and Great Britain. His conferences and sermons influenced prominent preachers and evangelists from around the world. R. A. Torrey, a graduate of Yale Divinity School, joined Moody in 1889 and continued his work after he died. He preached all over the world and went on to be the first dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola University). Lyman Stewart, president of Union Oil, and T.C. Horton, a Presbyterian minister and author, founded the school. Torrey was one of three editors of *The Fundamentals*, as well as *The King’s Business*, which was a popular Christian monthly publication.92 Biola published both and is still a thriving school for conservative Christians today.93

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90 Bendroth, 4.
91 Bendroth, 5. The Christian Right emerged from these movements in the 1970s and will be discussed more at length below.
92 *The Fundamentals: A Testimony* to the Truth is a twelve-volume series of essays published in 1910-15 stating basic Christian doctrine according to the Christian theologians and scholars who wrote it. The fundamentalist movement was named for this. Bendroth, 48.
93 Other key leaders include Billy Sunday, Carl McIntire and other popular preachers. See Bendroth, DeBerg, Lienesch, and Martin. Also see the websites of Moody Bible Institute at
US Christian fundamentalism has been characterized as an intellectual movement of well educated men, which is clearly the case, as the above examples demonstrate. It has also been described as a broadly-based social and religious protest against threats to traditional Christianity, which the Scopes trial exemplifies. However, a more complete picture materializes from scholarship that locates the origin of gender as an organizing principle of fundamentalism before it became more visible in the 1920s. Betty DeBerg’s examination of conservative Christianity, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism*, posits 1920s fundamentalism as arising from a crisis in masculinity. She persuasively connects it to a disruption in gender ideologies that accompanied the shift to wage-earning capitalism. Strictly theological interpretations for the movement rely too heavily on scholarly debates at the expense of understanding popular perceptions. Histories that do focus on social explanations seldom properly take into account changing gender roles and ideology, which affected people personally and intimately at the dawn of the twentieth century. DeBerg uses several otherwise strong social/cultural histories as a starting place for constructing her argument. These books argue that industrialization, urbanization, and immigration provoked anxieties to which fundamentalists responded. Her innovation is to apply a gendered framework, toggling back and forth between these histories and her own primary sources throughout the book.

DeBerg argues that gender and family issues are not new in fundamentalism of the early 1900s but a continuation of the movement’s turn-of-the-twentieth-century concerns about male identity. With the rise of industrial capitalism in the 1800s, changes in men’s roles provoked a

http://www.moodyministries.net/crp_mainpage.aspx?id=64 and Biola University at http://www.biola.edu/about/history/


need to find new ways to define manliness. Nineteenth-century evangelicals embraced the Victorian “separate spheres” ideology, which helped for a time. Men were “economic warriors” in the public masculine sphere, and women were “queens” of the “divinized” home, the private feminine sphere. Popular fundamentalist press justified a patriarchal family and gender-based division of labor through religious appeal. In fact, fundamentalist discourse continued to associate home and family life with the sacred long after the Victorian era, as this 1920 example illustrates:

The family founded on the ordinance of marriage between one man and one woman, is designed not only for the perpetuation of the race, but for its social and religious welfare…There is no satisfaction or purity where the family does not exist. All other relationships of men and women and children, except as God directs, fail to secure the proper welfare of the race.  

96 Men also “imprisoned” the church within the domestic sphere “in order to free the political and economic realm from Christianity’s moral code,” and women became its primary congregants and volunteers.  

97 This feminization and privatization of church was key in producing women’s moral superiority. As women gained independence—both in the home and through church activities—subordinate wives became harder to find. Eventually, these changes provoked conservative evangelical men’s need to reclaim the church.

Gender issues in particular affected people in intense and personal ways, and religious language, as has often been the case, was used to express people’s concerns and to reinforce sexual and social conventions. As part of the remasculinization of the church, conservative evangelical leaders promoted manly Christianity and reimagined the home as the “bastion of true

96 DeBerg, 61. As its title suggests, the entire chapter, “The Divinized Home,” focuses on fundamentalist discourse on the family and the home (59-74).

97 DeBerg, 29.
The “divinized home” was established as the appropriate place for women’s religious activities and influence. The rise in the power and popularity of fundamentalism coincided with the emergence of the flapper. Seen in the context of nineteenth-century gender-role disruptions, fundamentalist theology circulating in popular sources makes sense. The subordination of women was integral in early twentieth-century fundamentalist discourse on evolution, biblical inerrancy, premillennial concerns, and critiques of modernist theology. For example, women’s decreasing conformity with conventional feminine comportment was seen as a sign of impending “end times.” Similarly, early twentieth-century fundamentalist publications posited loss of faith in the Bible’s truthfulness as causing a decrease in birthrates and a “revolt against motherhood.” Masculinity was a frequent theme. Editors of King’s Business, which would have included R. A. Torrey at the time, called modern theology “emasculated Christianity.” As part of the effort to “remasculinize” the church, a Boston publication, Watchman, declared the “new evangelism” “will appeal to all that is manliest in men. A masculine vigor will throb through its presentation of truth which will lay hold on manhood and greatly increase the proportion of men in our churches and congregations.” These examples show how fundamentalists conceived of explanations for their resistance to changes in sources that spell out divine order. DeBerg points out that fundamentalist theology was a reflection of real concern and alienation caused by rapid changes in nineteenth-century American society.

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98 DeBerg, 97-8.
99 Briefly, “flapper” was a term associated with women who flouted gender conventions in various ways, such as wearing shorter skirts and hair, drinking, smoking, and/or adopting a more casual attitude toward sexuality.
100 DeBerg, 123.
101 DeBerg, 133.
102 DeBerg, 91.
103 DeBerg, 92.
We can think of these attempts to regain equilibrium as fundamentalist world maintenance. In other words, the impulse to bring more men into church and to proscribe women’s roles was tied to reasserting a gendered order. Like Ungodly Women, Margaret Lamberts Bendroth’s history, *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present*, starts from a premise that gender is a powerful means of orienting world and self. Bendroth foregrounds the idea of fundamentalists’ search for “order” as defining fundamentalists’ theology and actions. She describes gender issues as significant for modern conservative evangelicals, not only against secular culture, but among themselves. Although Bendroth characterizes evangelicalism as “not inherently antifeminist,” the debate over gender roles is “central to questions about the survival of conservative religious values within modern secular culture, of maintaining a visibly distinctive tradition that is still socially relevant.” The success of women’s causes, like temperance and suffrage, was alarming for middle-class men by the end of the 1800s. The theological rationale for subordinating women and elevating men was firmly in place by the early twentieth century. Inherent in fundamentalists’ push for biblical inerrancy was an interpretation that emphasized Eve’s “moral disability.” The Scofield Reference Bible included in its list of edicts of the new “Adamic dispensation” a “changed state of woman” that included “motherhood linked with sorrow” and male headship “made necessary by the entrance of sin, ‘which is disorder.’” The entry of antifeminism into fundamentalism is rooted in this time and has been sharpest in times of social upheaval, in the 1920s and 1940s for instance. Beginning in the 1920s,

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104 Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender: 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.)
105 In fact, she says “order of creation” terminology entered and dominated within the movement, especially after 1960 (112).
106 Bendroth, 2-6.
107 Bendroth, 3.
108 Bendroth, 45.
109 Bendroth 44-5.
conservative Presbyterians resisted women’s ordination in the name of “masculine Calvinistic doctrines.” One Calvinist, defended the prohibition against “ecclesiastical feminarchy” as “an integral part of Princeton Calvinism.” The 1920s was a pivotal decade in which fundamentalists emphasized men’s role as defenders of orthodoxy. Women, on the other hand, were seen as theologically shallow.

After the Scopes trial, fundamentalists took on a “fortress mentality” in the 1930s and 40s. During this time, fundamentalists were less visible as they quietly invested in building mass media connections, missionary work, and youth organizations, as well as the strengthening, expansion, and establishment of Bible colleges. Women’s roles were limited, but many became Bible teachers, a position imagined as “nonauthoritative,” and therefore appropriate for women. Nevertheless, their participation in large numbers threatened to refeminize evangelicalism, creating a new demand for female submission, which inspired the refiguring of marriage as a career and the home as an alternative to active service, a woman’s ministry.

Some imagine the 1970s and 80s as a time when conservative Christians became politicized, in part because many accounts of conservative Christian activities in the early twentieth century do not revolve around a political framework. However, that view rests on a narrow understanding of politics. Fundamentalists based most of their attacks on gender-related social change on the premise of a religiously sanctioned defense of a particular set of social hierarchies, norms, and values. Fundamentalism’s “staunchly conservative defense of the ideology of female subordination and the separate spheres of activity” aligns with particular political stands. Religious language has often been used to reinforce social structures, hierarchies, and conventions. This is a crucial point in considering the political work of the

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110 Bendroth, 40-41.
111 See Carpenter and Martin.
112 DeBerg, 149-50.
Christian Right and recognizing that it has certain continuities with the past. The Christian Right flowed in part from the fundamentalist and evangelical institution building during the 1930s and 1940s. Conservative Christian involvement in activities geared to shape cultural norms and morality never stopped. Nevertheless, the emergence of the Christian Right stands out as a moment of changes in strategies and new conservative Christian alliances.

Defending Family Values: The Emergence of the Christian Right in the 1970s

The Supreme Court’s landmark 1973 ruling in Roe v. Wade is as symbolically central to the formation of the Christian Right as Scopes is to the history of fundamentalism. Just as the court’s ruling in the Scopes trial does not tell the whole story, Roe was in some senses a pyrrhic victory for supporters of legal access to abortion. The case ultimately contributed to coalition building for conservatives. At the time, the strongest opposition to abortion came from Catholics; liberal Protestants were mostly pro-choice and conservative evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants initially had little to say.113 Eventually, fundamentalists joined with socially conservative evangelicals, as well as economic and social conservatives more broadly, to form a coalition that included some conservative Catholics, Pentecostals, Mormons, and Orthodox Jews, among others. Organizers successfully fused anti-statist libertarianism and normative conservatism into a loosely cohesive but effective alliance.114 The Christian Right is a difficult movement to define; it has been accurately called a social, political, moral, and intellectual

113 Martin notes that Jerry Falwell did not preach a sermon on abortion until 1978. He quotes a conservative evangelical theologian who hypothesizes the delay may have been in part due to anti-Catholic bias among Protestants: “At that point...a lot of Protestants reacted almost automatically—‘If the Catholics are for it, we should be against it.’” (193).
114 See McGirr, 147-163. Also see Lienessch
movement. It is even difficult to name; I usually refer to it as the Christian Right, but it has been called variously the New Christian Right, the Religious Right, or simply the New Right. From the outset, it was deeply divided religiously and politically. It was, therefore, incumbent on movement leaders to identify strategies to keep the diverse sets of “cobelligerents” working together. Early evangelical organizers identified abortion as a key issue for bringing Catholics into their camp. At the same time, in the late 1970s, some prominent evangelicals were making a case for an anti-abortion stance, and by the early 1980s it was one of the movement’s central issues, along with others like sex education in public schools and homosexuality.

The story of how abortion came to play such a predominant role illustrates the kinds of leaders and vehicles for coalescing that fueled the rise of the Christian Right. Harvard-trained evangelical theologian Harold O. J. Brown (1933-2007) was among the first prominent evangelicals to address the topic of abortion. Immediately after the Roe decision, he wrote an editorial on the subject for Christianity Today, a magazine for which he was an associate editor. Along with eminent pediatric surgeon C. Everett Koop (1916-2013), he formed the Christian Action Council which published a newsletter and lobbied Congress to illegalize abortion. Evangelical theologian and philosopher Francis Schaeffer (1912-84) played a key role in providing Protestants with a biblical framework for opposing abortion. He teamed up with his son, Franky, and C. Everett Koop to produce an influential film and companion book—both

115 See Lienesch, 20; McGirr, 163. Any of the terms is defensible, although the movement’s religious roots are undeniable by any name. As I argue above, religion, politics, and culture are inseparably intertwined. 116 As Martin notes, various names have taken on a negative connotation so that even terms initially embraced by some participants, like the New Right, no longer are used by insiders (viii). 117 For example, the movement tended to divide along evangelical, fundamentalist, and charismatic lines. Beyond basic theological tenets like the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection, and the second coming, there was little common ground. See Lienesch, 15. 118 Lienesch calls it a “politics of moralism,” arguing that the movement concentrated on moralistic messages more than economic ones (11). Also see Martin’s chapter 8 on the Moral Majority, especially 192-4; 197-202. It should be noted that left-leaning movements also saw abortion as an opportunity for political exploitation, as Martin notes (192).
entitled *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*—which elaborated a Christian response to abortion. They visited churches throughout the country, showing the film and convincing people to fight for the prohibition of abortion.\(^{119}\) Like the earlier fundamentalist movement, the Christian Right also relied on popular preachers. Jerry Falwell (1933-2007) played a significant role. He was the pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church, which became one of the largest Protestant congregations in America, and founded Liberty University, both located in Lynchburg, Virginia.\(^ {120}\) He also preached on both a radio and television program. Teaming up with several other key conservatives, he helped establish the Moral Majority in 1979; by 1980 it had chapters in eighteen states. The political action organization explicitly welcomed Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, and non-religious people who shared its views on the family and abortion. From the outset, abortion was at the top of the group’s list of issues. Falwell’s 1980 book, *Listen, America!* articulated the rationale and purpose of the Moral Majority, which he described as “pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral, and pro-American.”\(^ {121}\) The Moral Majority was influential, though not the most significant or lasting group of the Christian Right. It was one among many conservative Christian-based organizations that formed in the late 1970s and early 1980s; together they had a major impact on American politics and culture in the 1980s and beyond. Quite a few, like the American Family Association, Focus on the Family, Family Research Council, and Concerned Women for America, are still thriving and play a significant role not only in the United States, but also in WCF’s global activism.

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\(^ {120}\) These institutions are still thriving. Falwell’s sons, Jerry Jr. and Jonathan, are the chancellor of Liberty University and the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church respectively.

\(^ {121}\) Martin, 201. Martin’s chapter titled “Moral Majority” details the origins and early activities of the organization (191-220). Lienesch focuses on Falwell and his ideas as well. See especially chapters 1 and 2 (23-93).
Increased conservative activism in the 1970s was both reactive and proactive. The Christian Right materialized in part because of the social, economic, and cultural changes of the 1960s, although roots of the movement can be also traced to conservatives’ mobilization in response to the 1950s Cold War. Expanded personal freedoms and identity-based activism in the 1960s disrupted gender relations and racial hierarchies and affected sexual behaviors and attitudes. Changes in the religious climate were also unsettling for conservative Christians. Many young people were embracing “alternative” religions, the number of non-European, ethnic-religious communities grew, and conservative Christians viewed rulings like the one prohibiting officially led public school prayer as a marginalization of religion. José Casanova characterizes this as a “disestablishment of the Protestant ethic” in the 1960s that accompanied the emergence of a legally protected pluralistic system of norms in American civil society. According to Casanova, for evangelical Protestantism these changes threatened to turn them into “just another quaint subculture” like the Amish. Conservative evangelicals’ single out the 1960s as “the moment when a previously safe and stable ‘Christian America’ came under siege from the forces of secularism and moral permissiveness.” As evangelicals reentered the political arena they discovered the rules of public discourse had changed with increased pluralism, and that evangelical Protestants could no longer set the terms of the debate. The Christian Right gained traction because social and religious conservatives felt a need to assert the dominance of their beliefs and values in politics. The movement emphasized order over personal freedom. Like that of the earlier fundamentalists, the Christian Right worldview was intensely normative. It was “fundamentally shaped by a faith in an objective moral order ordained by a transcendent moral

122 See Lienesch, Martin, Wilcox, and McGirr.
123 José Casanova, 155.
124 Bivins, 10.
125 Balmer, 103.
The movement drew support because it addressed conservatives’ concerns in a way that “seemed to safeguard a way of life and set of power relations its adherents wanted to preserve.”

In this environment, defining what counts as a legitimate family took on symbolic importance. In 1980, the White House sponsored three regional conferences on the state of “the American family” with delegates from every state. Conference organizers purposefully set out to include delegates with a diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints with a goal of listening as much as possible in order to get an accurate feel of what ordinary families saw as their greatest needs.

A conservative pro-family coalition worked to win a majority of seats in each state in order to influence what its organizers perceived as a national debate over how to define the family and the federal government’s role in family life. The pro-family ranks included Beverly LaHaye, founder of the Concerned Women for America. She and other conservatives supported a definition of family limited to a mother, father, and children within the bonds of marriage. She and her organization were determined “to hold onto the real true meaning of the genuine family, as God intended it to be.” LaHaye summarized conservatives’ concerns this way:

We came to realize that this White House Conference was really geared up toward changing the definition of the family. It wanted to include any two people who chose to live together, regardless of their sexual orientation. Early in 1980, we saw that

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126 McGirr, 156. See her chapter 4, “The Conservative Worldview at the Grass Roots,” 147-186.
127 McGirr, 19.
128 Martin, 176. For a detailed account of the conference preparations and issues, see Martin’s chapter 7, “We—Some of Us—Are Family” (169-190).
homosexuals were driving in, because they wanted to part of the whole definition of the
family. And we objected to that.  
Conservatives argued for limiting the definition to people related by blood, adoption, or marriage
to prevent the legitimation of not just homosexual relationships but also unmarried partners and
“unwed mothers” and their offspring. Conference participants whose own families did not fit that
narrow framework or who worked to help families in a range of circumstances fought for
recognition of a broader characterization. The conference eventually settled on a non-
definition.

Distinctiveness in strategies and alliances that are associated with conservative
Protestantism beginning in the mid-twentieth century are important to note. Gender-related
concerns shaped the conservative evangelical political agenda, which is evident in such 1970s and
80s issues as the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, and private sexual morality. Although
gender roles figured prominently as an organizing ideal for conservative Christians throughout
the years, new discursive strategies of the 1970s and 80s required new idioms for communicating
their ideas. With 1970s disruptions associated with feminism, the Pill, and the resulting
separation of sex from procreation, masculinity was felt to be under threat and evangelicals
believed women’s unwillingness to accept God’s plan was at the root of the disorder. As
fundamentalist Christians had in the past, their response was based on the logic that women can
restore order in times of cultural dislocation by returning to traditional roles.

Gender was a key component of family discourse in the Christian Right and masculinity
was again (still) felt as threatened. In her examination of, Tender Warrior: God’s Intention for a

130 Martin, 178.
131 Martin, 179.
132 See Linda Kintz, Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions That Matter in Right-Wing America (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 45-6, 17-9; and Balmer, 94-8
133 Balmer, 98.
Man (1993), by evangelical pastor Stu Weber, who was active in the Christian men’s movement, Linda Kintz argues that both the book and movement countered feminist messages “by reconstructing manhood as tender but virile and in the process remasculinizing Christ to reclaim religion from its association with women.” She also quotes George Gilder, conservative author and founder of the Discovery Institute, on questions of masculinity at stake in issues of abortion and contraception. His 1973 book, Sexual Suicide (republished in 1993 as Men and Marriage) explains that “the usual assumption is that opposition to abortion on demand stems from a puritanical aversion to premarital sex, combined with religious superstition that feticide is murder.” But in fact, the real opposition concerns something else:

The erosion of male sexuality…Few males have come to psychological terms with the existing birth-control technology; few recognize the extent to which it shifts the balance of sexual power further in favor of women. A man quite simply cannot now father a baby unless his wife is fully and deliberately agreeable…Male procreativity is now dependent, to a degree unprecedented in history, on the active pleasure of women.

In Kintz’ reading of Gilder’s book, anxiety about masculinity is not the only worry. Economic and racial uneasiness are also apparent. Gilder argues that poverty is related to too much childbearing among African American women, then turns around and argues that the welfare state will self-destruct “as fewer workers are made to pay more and more taxes to support ‘the child-free aged.’”

He frets that younger workers will tend to be less productive because taxes consume much of their income even as their wives bear fewer and fewer children. Kintz notes that this echoes similar racialized concerns of the early twentieth century when immigrants were arriving in record numbers. Theodore Roosevelt warned of “race suicide”; he blamed white women who

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134 Kintz, 3.
135 Kintz, 263.
136 Kintz, 174.
were seeking reproductive rights instead of having babies needed to maintain the purity of the race.\textsuperscript{137} For Gilder, too, “sexual suicide” means “racial suicide.”\textsuperscript{138}

The shift from expressing Christian Right ideas about gender issues in theological or religious frameworks to how these ideas were mobilized in political arguments after the 1970s for a broader audience is important. To appeal to “cobelligerents” for whom religious language was not the most persuasive, required changes in vocabulary. The idea of “family values” helped frame a discourse that could bridge the gaps. McGirr uses the term “discursive bond” to refer to how a family values framework allowed religious and secular economic conservatives to come together around a common idea. “Moral” issues gained new prominence in this discourse. Pro-life and pro-family issues expressed in the “language of the people” became the “glue uniting economic and religious conservatives.”\textsuperscript{139} “Family values” ideas about personal responsibility and less government held broad appeal for “ordinary” people because liberal attempts to redistribute power more equitably stirred anti-egalitarian sentiment.\textsuperscript{140} Gender ideology also played a prominent role in forging bonds between ideas and between groups of people. For example, the issue of abortion caused anxiety about “natural” gender roles, such as motherhood, for many and worked to draw a wide spectrum of people together. Conservative grassroots antiabortion organizations helped forge an alliance between Catholic and Protestant evangelicals, and even brought together Republicans and some Democrats.\textsuperscript{141}

Family values rhetoric turned out to be vital, and, as in the past, women’s role was a key component—symbolically and otherwise. Kintz argues that

\textsuperscript{137} For example, see Roosevelt’s March 13, 1905, speech, “On American Motherhood,” addressed to the National Congress of Mothers.
\textsuperscript{138} Kintz, 174.
\textsuperscript{139} McGirr, 260-1.
\textsuperscript{140} McGirr, 12, 241, 272-3
\textsuperscript{141} McGirr, 232-3.
[I]t is only with women’s help that the public-policy concerns of conservative economic theory and its attacks on government have been so powerfully collapsed into people’s feelings about the family, or at least their own families. That collapse has also paradoxically helped establish a symbolic framework that returns manliness to the center of culture and brings the traditional morality of fundamentalist religion together with the fundamentalism of the market.¹⁴²

Her mention of the market is worth noting here in that it highlights the way “family values” discourse is useful in attracting economic conservatives.

Similar to McGirr’s idea of the “discursive bond,” Kintz sees secular and religious conservatives as linked by “passionate symbolic cohesion,” the complexity of which is the focus of her analysis. A major achievement of the US Christian Right is its successful use of emotions in politics.¹⁴³ The ability to arouse emotional responses is very useful in politics, and it has been key in Christian Right strategy, as noted earlier in the chapter.¹⁴⁴ Kintz uses the term resonance to denote “the intensification of political passion in which people with very different interests are linked together by feelings aroused and organized to saturate the most public, even global, issues.”¹⁴⁵ Family ideology is tactically useful in its power to signal a shared worldview and evoke sentiment. As Kintz puts it, in the Christian Right’s “conservative cosmology, resonance is created by familiarization, which the culture wars are all about, really.”¹⁴⁶ The term familiarization indexes taken-for-granted ideas about traditional family arrangements. At the same time, it conjures the notion of something or someone already known. Mothers’ subtle

¹⁴² Kintz, 2.
¹⁴³ Kintz, 4.
¹⁴⁴ See for example Bivins, Kintz, Stacey.
¹⁴⁵ Kintz, 6.
¹⁴⁶ Kintz, 6.
training of children in “familiarism,” grounds a political system in what is already familiar.\textsuperscript{147}

Resonance and familiarity are sealed by linking passions for what matters to things like national identity.\textsuperscript{148}

Family values rhetoric has traction because it relies on a normative construction of the family that is already familiar and that calls up notions of returning to a nostalgic past. For the Christian Right, these resonances are crucial not only for binding religious and social conservatives together, but also as the “glue” holding together various religious factions that have little common ground beyond some basic beliefs like virgin birth, atonement, resurrection, second coming, and biblical inerrancy. These divisions are not surprising in what has always tended to be a decentralized movement structure built of “umbrella” organizations that bring together grassroots groups at state and local levels.\textsuperscript{149}

In its thinness of meaning “family values” rhetoric provides great flexibility for being mobilized in a variety of ways. Janet Jakobsen explains the connection with the economy especially well. Specifically, she argues that “family values” reasserts what Max Weber called the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Economic conservatives may use secular frames, but Jakobsen sees American secularism as a specific form of reformed Protestantism that is intertwined with the market and is part of the network that sustains the Right. She argues that “family values” mediate between the economy and the American nation under contemporary market conditions by offering a discourse that places “family” (rather than the state) between the economy and the nation.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{147} Kintz, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{148} Kintz, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{149} Lienesch, 13-4.
\textsuperscript{150} Jakobsen, 50.
The concept of family values can be effective in creating not only alliances, but also vague common enemies. For instance, its combination with market ideologies makes it especially flexible for economic and religious conservatives. Jakobsen argues that talk of “family values” signals a reconstruction of American citizenship that regulates and distinguishes those Americans who deserve the rights and benefits of citizenship from those who do not, like illegal aliens and queers (61). Specifically, if moral values rather than economic value now locate that which is peculiarly “American,” then the supposed loss of values indicated by an increasingly visible “homosexual minority” is indicative of a loss of Americanness itself. Similarly, the regulation of family through “welfare reform” is dedicated to managing the “threat” to the nation posed by “uncontrolled” family form, even as it contributes to smaller government. Threats to the livelihood of “middle America” can be transposed from corporate America to those “others” who are understood to be “outside” the middle and thus part of an external threat. It is no longer “corporate special interests” but those who challenge corporate policy who represent “special interests,” those who want “special rights.” Jakobsen argues that middle America needs values because without them all that is left is the market. This construction of citizenship also distinguishes the American nation as the land of values, distinct from those countries that are simply marked by, and thus sources of, economic value. America thus becomes the appropriate site from which to run both transnational capitalism and the new world order.

The transnational pro-family movement has much in common with the US Christian Right. For one, it has brought the rhetorical and organizational tactics of the Christian Right to its mission. As international NGO activity has gained influence, especially in UN conferences, the Christian Right has become increasingly involved. In fact, some of the very characteristics which

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151 Jakobsen 61.
152 Jakobsen, 56.
scholars and mainline denominational church advocates have attributed to conservative evangelical organization strategies throughout the twentieth century are also strengths of the global movement. Such qualities include openness to strategic alliances, new organizing techniques and technology, openness to young people, strategic funding, and rhetoric that speaks to people’s passions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Doris Buss and Didi Herman see this activism as a particular subset of the US Christian Right. They use the term “Christian Right” specifically to refer to “a broad range of American organizations that have tended to form coalitions, both domestic and international, around an orthodox Christian vision and a defense of the traditional nuclear family formation, referred to by the CR as the ‘natural family.’” In this category, Buss and Herman include neoconservative Catholics and conservative Mormon organizations that have taken a leading role in constructing a global, conservative religious network. I see this network as a nascent movement shaped by a new “wave” in US conservative Christian organizing.

Defending the Natural Family: The Emergence of WCF’s Global Pro-Family Movement in the Mid-1990s

Organized involvement in questions concerning global population stands as a turning point in US Christian Right activism and a defining moment for a new global pro-family movement. In fact, the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 is seen as the site of the “birth of the UN pro-family movement.” As described above, the conference in Cairo stands out for other reasons as well. It marked a dramatic rise in NGO

153 Donald Miller (1997) for example.
154 Buss and Herman, xviii.
155 Buss and Herman, xviii-xxi.
participation in UN conferences, especially by feminist organizations. Women’s rights-based NGOs’ activism associated with the conference is credited with shifting the population conversation from a demographic to a more “woman-centered” framework. Feminist influence on drafting the program of action worried the Vatican and right-to-life groups. As a result, the Vatican formed alliances with conservative Muslim countries (like Libya and Iran) to force compromise on the language. Publicity generated by the Vatican also contributed to what has become an ongoing routine of PR activity surrounding UN conferences.\textsuperscript{157} To the extent Cairo was a women’s rights victory, then, its success was tempered by the formation of a strong opposition to much of the feminist agenda. The publicity and subject matter attracted the attention of Christian Right organizations in the United States, several of which issued statements in support of the Vatican’s views. By the following year they were even more engaged, when groups like Focus on the Family and Concerned Women for America attended the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing to buttress Vatican positions.\textsuperscript{158}

Many influential people and organizations have played important roles in launching the global pro-family movement. In many ways, Catholic and Mormon activism has been ahead of evangelical Protestant efforts. Nevertheless, I consider Allan Carlson (b. 1949) a primary if not the key figure of the movement. He is more of an academic than a global organizer, but he has been instrumental in articulating the natural family worldview and rhetoric that underpins the success of the movement. The entry of WCF into global politics also marks the beginning of large-scale coordination of efforts by pro-family organizations. Carlson became interested in family policy questions during his doctoral dissertation research on Sweden’s response to its

\textsuperscript{157} See Buss and Herman, 61-2; Jennifer Butler, 15, 92-4.
\textsuperscript{158} Buss and Herman, 62.
1930s plunging fertility rate."159 Shortly after graduating in 1978, in his words, “[g]rowing ever more conservative, I became aware of America’s own mounting family crisis and turned my attentions there, as well. This background in international and American family questions is what led me to Rockford [Illinois] in 1981.”160 The Rockford Institute, a conservative think tank, was formed by Rockford College president John Howard in 1976 because he was “alarmed by the preceding decade’s social revolution.”161 While working there, Carlson wrote prolifically on family-related topics.162 Carlson served as the Rockford Institute president until 1997, when he and Howard founded the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society and WCF. Just before that, in August, 1994, Carlson was one of eight pro-family speakers who staged a press conference in opposition to the agenda of the impending UN Cairo population conference.163 He spoke as “an advocate for the family unit” and his brief comments were precursors to WCF’s main talking points. In January 1995, while a guest of the Sociology Department of Moscow Lomonosov State University, he had a conversation with lay Christian leader and artist Ivan

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159 Carlson has a Ph.D. in Modern European History from Ohio University (1978). His dissertation is titled *The roles of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal in the development of a social democratic response to Europe’s “Population Crisis,” 1929-1938.*
161 See the Rockford Institute website, [http://www.rockfordinstitute.org/?page_id=176](http://www.rockfordinstitute.org/?page_id=176). The Rockford Institute (RI) has a controversial past. In 1989, the RI had a public falling out with Richard John Neuhaus, a Lutheran minister who headed the RI’s Center for Religion and Society in New York. The RI closed down his offices when Neuhaus complained about an RI publication’s racist and anti-Semitic bias. According to Jennifer Butler, in the late 1990s, the Rockford Institute (RI) began to support a neoconfederate organization called League of the South, which created some public controversy. Around that time, Carlson and John Howard left to form the Howard Center. The two organizations are still located side by side in Rockford, Illinois. See Butler, 103-6; Buss and Herman, xxix; Goldberg, 156. See also David Frum, “Unpatriotic Conservatives: A war against America,” *National Review,* April 7, 2003, online at [http://old.nationalreview.com/frum/frum031903.asp](http://old.nationalreview.com/frum/frum031903.asp).
163 The August 23, 1994, event aired on C-Span and is available online at [www.c-spanvideo.org/program/59781-1#](http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/59781-1#).
Schevchenko, which inspired him to form “a global pro-family conference.” The World Congress of Families quickly became a reality with WCF I, held in Prague in 1997.

Two other men who, independently from Carlson and each other, took early leadership roles in international pro-family activism are Austin Ruse (b. 1956) and Richard Wilkins (1952-2012). They founded Catholic- and Mormon-based organizations respectively. Ruse recalls the Cairo Conference as a time when “Pope John Paul II called forth people of all faiths to go to Cairo and to fight the Culture of Death.” He left a career in magazine publishing in 1997 to help found the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM). C-FAM claims as a core value fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church. C-FAM monitors and lobbies the UN, “discrediting [its] socially radical policies” in order to “defend life and family…and to publicize the debate.” C-FAM has encouraged and helped many Christian Right NGOs apply for UN consultative status. Richard Wilkins was a law professor at Brigham Young University and recounts that he became interested in international family politics in 1996 when he attended the Second UN Conference on Habitats in Istanbul, Turkey. The speakers preceding him there advocated for gay rights, reproductive rights, and gender equality. He, in turn, followed up by urging the delegates to do all they could to strengthen the family, at times quoting from an LDS

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164 According to Carlson, Schevchenko, “[s]omething of a religious mystic, Ivan laid out a vision of a World Congress of Families, where family leaders from around the globe could come together to celebrate the natural family, and to find common strategies to protect and promote family life.” Carlson, “On the World Congress of Families,” 2005.

165 Ruse, 1999. Pope John Paul II broadcast brief weekly messages throughout the summer leading up to the September conference inviting Catholic and evangelical leaders to attend the conference and advocate for conservative stances on birth control, abortion, and family (Jennifer Butler 92-3).

166 C-FAM website at http://c-fam.org/en/aboutus/missionstatement. For more background on C-FAM’s start, see Buss and Herman, xxviii; Jennifer Butler, 94-5; Goldberg, 155-6. C-FAM is a spin-off of Human Life International, a Catholic organization launched in 1981 by Father Paul Marx, known for his anti-Semitic rhetoric (Goldberg, 152-5).

167 Ruse was instrumental in getting Focus on the Family engaged as an NGO, for example. Focus has ministries in twenty countries around the world, which translates into on-the-ground influence and infrastructure. See Jennifer Butler, 94-5, 110-1.

168 Founder of the LDS pro-family organization, United Families International, Susan Roylance, convinced Wilkins to attend (Butler, 100-103).
statement, “The Family:  Proclamation to the World.” Wilkins and Carlson met at WCF I in Prague in 1997. Together they laid out the plan for WCF II in Geneva. When they met, Wilkins already engaged in founding the World Family Policy Center (WFPC) at Brigham Young University, which was established in 1997 through the School of Family Life, the J. Reuben Clark Law School and the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies. Its goal was to influence international legal norms through “consistent attendance and participation in major UN Conferences, cooperation with like-minded organizations, and sponsorship of significant world-wide conferences on family policy.” Wilkins not only worked closely with Carlson on planning WCF II, but WFPC was the largest single donor for that event, covering about half the expenses. Both WFPC and C-FAM have played significant roles in launching WCF and in the global pro-family movement in general. In fact, Catholic and Mormon support initially outpaced evangelical Protestant support, which may be in part due to evangelical Protestant mistrust of the UN.

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170 Carlson and Wilkins’ collaboration was no doubt eased by the fact that elite Mormons had already been serving on the Howard Center board. See Butler, 104.

171 See the WFPC website at http://www.law2.byu.edu/wfpc/about.htm. Also see Jennifer Butler, 99-103; Buss and Herman, xxx-xxxi. The WFPC closed at the end of 2008. Its website refers people interested in issues affecting the family to the Howard Center website and that of the Doha Institute for Family Studies and Development. Wilkins retired from the university in 2009, devoting his full attention to The Doha (Qatar) International Institute for Family Studies and Development, where he was the managing director until he died in 2012.


173 Speaking to the Charismatic Leaders Fellowship Jacksonville, Florida January 12, 2005, Carlson noted that WCF I (1997) was mainly the result of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox organizational support; WCF II (1999) received substantial financial support from the LDS Church; and WCF III (2004) had primary financial backing from Roman Catholic groups and individuals. “My dream [for WCF IV] is to hold a Congress resting a greater diversity of resources, especially this time from Protestant sources.” See Carlson, “On the World Congress of Families,” 2005. Global pro-family activism has required not only engagement with the UN, but also revalorization of the nation state, both unpopular with the Christian
The formation and coordinated efforts of these three organizations along with other new and existing pro-family groups have created a transnational movement with growing influence. WCF has played a central role. WCF helps coordinate communication and activities among a wide range of organizations and individuals that share common concerns. WCF is a key project of the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society, in Rockford, Illinois, in that the Howard Center coordinates WCF activities. The Howard Center website describes it as “a non-profit research center…[based on the belief] that the natural family is the fundamental unit of society.” It claims to have no affiliation with any particular religion or political group. The center is run by Allan Carlson, the president, along with a fourteen-person board of directors and a forty-person board of advisors. The staff includes five full-time and two part-time employees. As “an unconventional leader in pro-family public policy,” the Howard Center is “a ‘primary source’ organization [from which] frontline pro-family organizations and people seek useful and relevant information....” The Howard Center publishes the periodicals *The Family in America* and *The Religion and Society Report*. It also operates the John L. Swan Library on Family and Culture, provides speakers, and hosts smaller meetings and conferences. The production of a natural family discourse for the World Congress of Families is by far the Center’s largest project.

WCF’s website describes it as “an international network of pro-family organizations, scholars, leaders and people of goodwill from more than 60 countries that seek to restore the natural family as the fundamental social unit and the ‘seedbed’ of civil society (as found in the

Right. US evangelical leaders have adopted these ideas at least to some extent, partly because the Bush administration’s approach to UN politics in 2000 to 2008 made it more palatable. See Butler, 106.

174 Besides serving as president of the Howard Center, he is currently a visiting professor of history and politics at Hillsdale College in Michigan, “a citadel of conservativism” according to the *National Review*. The Howard Center board of directors includes conservatives from a variety of backgrounds: a pro-life OB/GYN, prominent businessmen, a former University of Chicago social psychology professor, a former Olympic figure skater/Christian motivational speaker, a former US congressman, and an honorary member who also a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Overall, the group can be characterized as older, white, Christian, and male, with few exceptions. For a list of board members, see the Howard Center website at [http://www.profam.org/THC/xthc_faq.htm](http://www.profam.org/THC/xthc_faq.htm).
UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).” It was founded in 1997 by Carlson, who has served as its international secretary ever since. WCF also has two other permanent positions. Larry Jacobs, formerly a manager at Procter and Gamble for eight years, is the managing director of WCF and the Howard Center, and is responsible for operations, development, and public relations. Don Feder, a free-lance media consultant and former conservative columnist for the Boston Herald until 2002, is the communications director of WCF and the Howard Center. A managing committee of five people (the international secretary and four others chosen by him) functions on an ongoing basis. It is responsible for providing a strategic vision and for the overall management and coordination of WCF. The managing committee chooses about fifteen individuals after each world congress to serve on the selection committee and designates a chairperson. The selection committee, along with the managing committee, considers proposals for the site, theme, and dates of the next congress, eventually expanding to include three to five members to represent the next local organizing committee. At that point, the group becomes the international planning committee for the next world congress.

The natural family forms the core of the worldview WCF seeks to defend. Allan Carlson and Paul Mero, both WCF managing committee members, co-wrote “The Natural Family: A Manifesto,” as “a cohesive statement of that worldview.” As in the two previous emergences of conservative Christian family-based movements, it asserts a gendered moral order. WCF

175 As of 2012, besides Allan Carlson, that committee included Janice Crouse, Concerned Women for America; Paul Mero, Sutherland Institute; William Saunders, Americans United for Life; and Christine Vollmer, Latin American Alliance for the Family, Pontifical Council on the Family. The first three represent long-standing conservative Christian organizations in the United States. Christine Vollmer founded Latin American Alliance for the Family (ALIFA), which originated in Venezuela. She developed a “universal values” curriculum that ALIFA markets in many countries in Latin America and beyond.

defines the natural family as “the fundamental social unit,” “a fixed aspect of the created order, one ingrained in human nature,” and centered around “the union of a man and a woman through marriage.” The natural family is to serve as the center for social, educational, economic, and spiritual life. Other purposes include giving and receiving love; rearing children; passing on “a way of life that has transcendent meaning;” and being charitable to those “whose circumstances fall short of these ideals.” WCF claims the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (section 16(3)) and “the findings of social science” inform its definition. While not overtly religious, this family definition resonates with previous conservative Christian ideas about family. However, as for the Christian Right, religious language does not always best serve the needs of coalition building.

WCF situates itself as both related to earlier Christian Right organizing and in a position to learn from its mistakes. In fact, the manifesto provides a brief but substantial analysis of how pro-life and pro-family movements have operated in the past and direction for future alliances:

We…claim an alliance with the “pro-family” and “pro-life” movements of recent decades. Indeed, we might be called part of them (in modest ways). But we also see (and so confess to) weaknesses that have marred their effectiveness. Too often, individual ambitions and squabbles have prevented movement success. A narrowness of vision has led, at times, to a focus on petty questions while the truly important battles have been ignored, and so lost by default. Strategic thinking and bold moves that could transform key debates have been undone by timidity on the part of leaders and funders. Sustaining large institutions, rather than encouraging swift and effective agents, has been too common. Money, particularly “direct mail” money, has become the measure of too
many things. Doctrinal and sectarian differences on important, but tangential, questions have been allowed to obscure unity on the central issues of family and life. Our foes have celebrated as old fears and suspicions between religious groups have trumped potentially powerful new alliances.\textsuperscript{178}

Clearly, WCF imagines itself as building on a history of conservative Christian activism, of which it is a part “in modest ways,” as Carlson and Mero state in the above passage. At the same time, WCF sets itself apart as being in a position to detect and overcome past shortcomings. A strong theme of its critique homes in on sites of dissension, which include “squabbles,” “focus on petty questions,” “doctrinal and sectarian differences,” “fears and suspicions between religious groups” all of which “obscure unity on the central issues of family and life.”

WCF offers up the natural family brand as partial solution to the disunity it diagnoses. Once again, then, family framing is crucial. It is a new spin on the family values themes of previous campaigns that similarly attempts to provide a “lowest common denominator” rationale around which somewhat diverse actors can coalesce. Repeatedly, WCF represents the natural family approach as logical, reasonable, shrewd even. The WCF website explains that organizers rejected “nuclear” and “traditional,” and chose the term \textit{natural family} as more “defensible,” and having greater “utility in public discourse.” As mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of a natural family framework is self-consciously strategic in attempting to shape a set of unassailable arguments. WCF’s deliberate approach to choosing the natural family schema defines what amounts to a branding strategy. The rationale for selecting a natural family framing are worth quoting at length. The reasons are enumerated on the Howard Center’s website:

\begin{itemize}
  \item First, the term signifies a natural order to family structures that is common across cultures, historical, and overwhelmingly self-evident.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{178} Carlson and Mero, 25.
• Second, the term signifies a wholly defensible expression. "Natural" is not "nuclear," which would limit its scope, nor is it "traditional," which would burden its utility in public discourse. It is what it is, a totally self-evident expression.
• Third, the term "natural" precludes incompatible constructs of the family as well as incompatible behaviors among its members.
• Fourth, the "natural family" is a positive expression. It does not require a discussion of negative incompatibilities to define itself.179

In WCF’s explanation of the decision to frame itself in terms of the natural family WCF is performing a kind of rationality—an attempt to show that WCF’s leaders have considered alternatives and have carefully chosen this approach. WCF is making a case to potential “cobeligerents” for this particular framework. WCF argues that the natural family brand will resonate “across cultures.” It eschews the perceived pitfalls of “nuclear” and “traditional”—brands that pro-family campaigns have used in the past—and presents the natural family brand as “totally self-evident.” WCF also emphasizes the tidy dichotomy the term “natural family” sets up, by which all other constructs and behaviors are automatically branded as “unnatural.” And finally, WCF argues it is a “positive expression” that avoids accentuating what WCF is “against.” It does “not require a discussion of negative incompatibilities to define itself.”180

The manifesto illuminates the reasoning behind this move as it argues that “both pro-life and pro-family movements [have been] hampered by their reactive or defensive posture and by a reliance on political action.”181

WCF’s natural family ideal also continues the long history of evangelical Christian involvement in conservative movements that center around “the family” and clearly defined gender roles. Besides its centrality for making sense of the world and for moralizing others, the concept of natural family is strategically useful for WCF’s goals. The notion of family is

180 Presumably this refers to a reluctance to defining itself as anti-same-sex marriage, anti-cohabitation, anti-childlessness, etc.—positions most WCF organizations do actually espouse.
181 Carlson and Mero, 12.
powerful and supple, understood variously as a site of belonging, meaning-making, power relations, and biological and cultural reproduction, as well as a mechanism for exclusion and state implementation of social policy. Like family values rhetoric in the 1970s and 80s, natural family rhetoric today has traction with some people because it relies on a normative construction of the family that is already familiar and that connotes notions of returning to a nostalgic past. Such resonance is especially important in WCF’s transnational campaign that aims to appeal not just to a diverse array of Christian organizations, but—at least in theory—to Jewish and Muslim organizations as well.\textsuperscript{182}

The shift to a global arena has required Christian activists to adapt once again in order to have influence. As a result, the globally-engaged Christian Right has attempted to build new alliances and has adjusted its discourse so that it can resonate in the global context. WCF’s use of natural family as its core ideal is self-consciously strategic for building alliances in the transnational realm. WCF’s campaign is adept at combining diverse approaches that hold appeal for various constituencies. James Jasper suggests that successful social movement activists must “weave together a moral, cognitive, and emotional package of attitudes.”\textsuperscript{183} To gain momentum, various constituencies must align their frames to achieve a common definition of a social problem and a common prescription for solving it.\textsuperscript{184} The natural family emphasis demonstrates an awareness of the need for both emotional language and strategic framing. The natural family framework lends itself to both emotional and intellectual rhetorical strategies. Jasper argues that emotions are the glue that creates solidarity within a social movement and that they work to

\textsuperscript{182} These divisions are not surprising in what has always tended to be a decentralized movement structure built of “umbrella” organizations that bring together grass-roots groups at state and local levels. Lienesch 13-4.
\textsuperscript{184} Jasper, 412-3.
mobilize conflict. The natural family framework is useful in that regard. As the chapter epigraph demonstrates, WCF positions the natural family as an ideal source of moral order as well as familial safety and bliss; it also argues the natural family is in grave danger. WCF bolsters these appeals with social scientific “facts,” which intends to infuse the emotions the discourse stirs with an air of “truth.” Two key elements on which the natural family is based are marriage and heterosexuality. The Christian Right felt a need to respond to feminist and gay rights challenges to restrictive notions of “the family” and definitions of “normalcy” (the introduction of the idea of homophobia, for example). WCF supplies a social scientific counter rhetoric. Buss and Herman describe this as involving the “intellectualization” of the Christian Right, accomplished through organizations like the Howard Center. Buss and Herman see these conservative Christian professionals, including academics, as taking the religious foundation as given and laying upon it “a dome of scientific expertise.”\(^{185}\) It reinforces theological positions through “a proliferation of studies offering scientific and academic authority for the CR’s ‘natural family’ politics.”\(^{186}\) All this makes for a powerful and persuasive natural family discourse, or as Buss and Herman sum up, “divinity, data, destruction.”\(^{187}\)

The natural family discourse indexes a familiar gender order based on a conservative Christian worldview as in the two previous emergences, but most often avoids religious or moral language. Buss and Herman characterize this powerful counter discourse as knitting together religious doctrine and social science, a “family theology.”\(^{188}\) Inherent in this theology is a commitment to a divinely ordered set of relations within the family, the nation, and the church. WCF often conveys natural family gender order through the idea of *complementarity of the sexes*:

\(^{185}\) Buss and Herman, xxxiii.
\(^{186}\) Buss and Herman, xxxiii. Butler makes similar observations (71).
\(^{187}\) Buss and Herman, 1.
\(^{188}\) (4-5)
“Men and women exhibit profound biological and psychical differences. When united in marriage, though, the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.”189 Although the movement still embraces the idea of relatively distinct gender roles, especially for proper Christian families, WCF argues not that women must stay home and rear children, but that society must not discriminate against those who do, and that children thrive best in the care of their own mothers—as long as a father is also present.190 Anxiety about masculinity is evident in recurring references to the absence of fathers in natural family discourse. Echoing the gendered and racialized logic of Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s “tangle of pathology,” fatherlessness is associated with poverty and crime.191 It accounts for the “breakdown in familial mechanisms for controlling young men,” for the violent crime of “inner city black males,” and for the premature sexuality of sons and daughters. And “[f]atherlessness spreads like a plague.”192

Globalization of the movement has required some ideological shifts. An innovation from the past is that it integrates changing perceptions of gender, including a reconception of women’s rights and even rehabilitation of the word “feminist.” This assimilation is consistent with the fact that gender has always been a site of contestation and reconstruction within conservative Christian communities. As Buss and Herman put it, for its international activism to have any impact “requires that the CR UN embrace a few ‘bottom-line’ premises, particularly in relation to

190 Buss and Herman, 5-6.
191 Known informally as “The Moynihan Report,” Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then assistant secretary of labor, wrote The Negro Family: The Case for National Action to explain the roots of black poverty. Essentially, he argues that their hardship was the result of their refusal to adhere to middle-class, white, heterosexual, patriarchal norms.
192 See Manifesto (2007), 166-8. Even though fatherlessness is emphasized, actual fathers are not the usual target of WCF attention. In the Manifesto index, the column listing references to “Mother(s)” is an inch and a half long; for “Children,” it is six inches long. The topic of “Fathers” is not listed, unless one counts “Founding Fathers,” which points out two tiny references to their presumptive blessing on WCF’s natural family order.
women’s rights.” WCF rhetoric distinguishes “radical” or “extreme equity” feminists as a way to designate its “antifamily” enemies. This distinction is important not only because it allows WCF to answer the criticism that it is anti-woman, but also because “some conservative women consider themselves to be feminist.” Protection of motherhood has turned out to be a powerful rallying cry. The idea of reproductive rights, for example, was (and is) seen as an attack on motherhood. Conservatives argue that radical feminists are attempting to free women from the biological constraints of their bodies; to position women as autonomous, outside the home, and thereby marginalizing motherhood and family. They also argue that a reproductive rights frame is inextricably tied to sexual rights, which will lead to acceptance of homosexuality and a variety of “families,” as opposed to “the family.”

In addition to adjustments to ideological content to facilitate success in a global arena, WCF has also attempted to form new alliances. The Christian Right definition of “friends” and “enemies” in the global arena has therefore changed over time. WCF considers conservative Islam, Judaism, and developing countries as friends, for example, and courts partnerships with them. In fact, Buss and Herman see Christian Right global politics as based on a culture of a

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193 Buss and Herman, 5. Note that because Buss and Herman see this pro-family activism as a subset of the Christian Right, they refer to it as “CR UN,” an abbreviation for “Christian Right at the United Nations (xi).
194 Buss and Herman, 5-6, 40-1. They make reference to the participation of “ex-feminists” in the movement (xxxi, 6). It is not explored in the book, but a possibility for future research is to examine how women who define themselves or are defined as former feminists talk about feminism. For instance, do they present their stories as a form of conversion testimony, similarly to “ex-gays” as described by Tanya Erzen in Straight to Jesus?
195 Butler, 116. Butler describes an illustrative episode during the 2000 UN Beijing+5 conference in which a crowd of men from Mormon and Catholic groups streamed in together. Mostly male, white, young, conservative, religious, they infiltrated a gathering that was mostly female, middle-aged, racially diverse, liberal, and secular or more private about their religious identities. The young conservatives wore business suits and all of them wore bright campaign buttons emblazoned with the word “motherhood” (Butler, 1-2).
196 Buss and Herman, 64.
197 This and other CR UN moves are sometimes problematic for its relationship with the domestic CR. For instance, the very fact that CR UN sees the UN as redeemable rather than an evil whose alarming acts need
“friend-foe way of thinking” and identify three distinct enemies: feminists, socialists/globalists, and secularists/humanists. Each enemy represents a different type of danger facing the “natural family” but no one enemy has emerged as the force of evil at the international realm. The Christian Right’s portrayal of multiple and shadowy enemies and lack of a clear certainty about “the enemy” suggest several possibilities. The vagueness could indicate the movement is uncertain about its direction. It could signal potential divisions within the movement along ideological and theological lines in its worldview. It could also be a sign of a movement whose politics pay attention to a number of different concerns and different agendas and for whom the lack of specificity about “the enemy” has certain strategic benefits. All three explanations are probably at least partially true.  

Conclusion

The previous section has provided a very brief and very condensed introduction to the early years of global pro-family mobilization and WCF’s central role in it. It places the movement in a history of conservative Christian organizing around a family-based worldview, which helps explain part of the power of the natural family discourse. Powerful and enduring passions and loyalties associated with a familiar worldview circulate among US conservative Christians. Buss and Herman together with Butler provide a well-researched and much more complete account of those early years, complementing each other well. Published in 2003 and 2006 respectively, these authors’ books both hesitate to represent this as a transnational social movement unto itself. Buss and Herman’s research concludes that it is still largely a coalition of US Christian organizations, a subset of the Christian Right. However, Butler, whose work is to be illuminated as such for the world does not sit well with some members of the domestic CR (Buss and Herman 49-54).

198 Buss and Herman, 35-43.
more recent, seems convinced that new alliances between conservatives across religious and other boundaries may become increasingly influential in international politics. She points to the accessible language of family as effective in creating coalitions. Butler calls it a powerful social movement with potential global ramifications, characterizing the progress of the Christian Right at international gatherings as moving from one of symbolic protest to beginning to shape a proactive agenda. A convincing thread within Buss and Herman’s argument is that as Christian Right activism is globalizing and having an effect on global politics, it is also being globalized, which has an impact on its identity and values. In seeking a more “mainstream” political profile through the use of more sophisticated expert discourse, it has effectively de-theologized its discourse. This may be a “stealth” tactic, but it may also reflect assimilation to changing norms, or may be a little of both. Similarly, its alliances in the international realm have caused it to change its rhetorical emphasis from “abortion as the tool of an emerging Marxist world government to a ‘softer’ focus on poverty, third-world development, and the ‘rights of poor women.’”

In the intervening years since the publication of the books by Butler and Buss and Herman, I argue this has become a full-fledged nascent transnational movement—albeit comprised of coalitions that are often fragile, just as in earlier emergences of conservative Christian movements. Although the transnational pro-family activism is still strongly tied to and overlaps with the US Christian Right, it nevertheless can be seen as a separate movement. The number of organizations partnering with WCF has grown since its inception in 1997. Sixty organizations, representing every continent (except Antarctica), have held official “partner” status.

199 Butler, 77.
200 Butler, 156.
201 Buss and Herman, 58.
during the several years since WCF began the partnership program in 2007.\footnote{202} Most are from the United States, but participation has increasingly come from elsewhere. In addition, dozens more organizations have helped sponsor various WCF events, and many others are engaged in exhibiting and providing speakers at WCF gatherings. At the beginning of 2013, 37 organizations were official partners, but quite a few others remain supportive and involved even during years when they do not have official partner status. Organizations that identify themselves with “pro-family” or “pro-life” causes predominate. Besides the heavy hitters like American Family Association, Focus on the Family, and Concerned Women for America, are some less well known but nonetheless well-funded and influential US organizations including United Families International, Family First, C-FAM, Priests for Life, and Human Life International. WCF partners increasingly include pro-family organizations in other countries. Similarly, more speakers have come from the United States than any other country overall, but at WCF VI and VII more speakers came from the country hosting the event than from the United States.\footnote{203}

The next three chapters help account for the appeal of natural family discourse outside the United States. Activists have in many ways adapted the emotional and intellectual logics of US conservative Christian familial discourse to the international civic sphere. The movement is more institutionalized, organized, and internationalized in the decade since Buss and Herman’s book was published. Many US activists may be interested primarily in American supremacy. Alliances across religious and geographic boundaries may be partnerships of convenience.

\footnote{202} Partners pay an annual fee of $2500. Over half are from the United States, about one fourth from Europe, a few from Australia, a couple each from Mexico and Canada, and one each from South America, Asia, and Africa. 
\footnote{203} In 2013, of over three hundred people who have spoken at any of the seven World Congresses, about one third are from the United States, 28% are from Australia, 26% are from European countries, and about 12% are from other areas, including a few each from Africa, Asia, Central America, South America, the Middle East, and other countries in North America.
However, the history of conservative Christians’ ability to make traction with fragile alliances speaks for itself.
Chapter 3: Marriage Makes a Family “Natural”

People of biblical faith—Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike—find the origins of the family chronicled in Genesis 1 and 2. In these chapters of scripture, God establishes marriage as an unchanging aspect of His creation, essential to the very foundation of the divine order…These passages affirm marriage as both sexual (“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”) and economic (“fill the earth and subdue it” and “have dominion over [its creatures]”). They also emphasize marriage as monogamous.

_The Natural Family: A Manifesto_ 204

Marriage is a key organizing feature of natural family order. The above excerpt from _The Natural Family, A Manifesto_ suggests that, for “people of biblical faith,” marriage has a sense of timeless truth. It also suggests that marriage is about sex and money. It provides the only sanctioned context for sex, which is to be monogamous, heterosexual, and procreative. The passage above also references economic responsibilities. “Filling the earth,” presumably with children, appears to be part of that mandate. Elsewhere in the _Manifesto_ the authors explain that “[h]ealthy families produce good citizens and workers, competent consumers and innovative entrepreneurs.” 205 Moreover, a “family economy” centers on the pursuit of meaningful employment to fulfill one’s personal vocation and to provide for the present and future needs, obligations, and desires of the family—such as food, shelter, education, health care, charity, recreation, retirement income, taxes and the intergenerational family estate. 206

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204 Carlson and Mero, 51-2.
205 Carlson and Mero, 214.
206 Carlson and Mero, 214.
Clearly, in this model healthy families take financial responsibility for themselves. Along with all these obligations and strictures, however, the Manifesto also envisions “true happiness as the product of persons enmeshed in vital bonds with spouses, children, parents, and kin.” In fact, in this view marriage is “the best path to health, security, and fulfillment.” These intertwined ideas about marriage as a site of religious, economic and sexual regulation and also a site of joy are at the heart of this chapter’s exploration of the significance of marriage in transnational pro-family politics.

Marriage is essential in natural family proponents’ project to create a moral order. It organizes gender roles and redeems sex, as long as it is procreative and heterosexual. The wife’s performance of her appointed role helps define the masculinity of the husband. Marriage is understood as both a sacred institution and state-regulated relationship, which means it lends itself to messaging on both registers. Therefore, it can work well for projects of regulation of others or managing one’s own behavior. In its indexing of the complementarity of the sexes, the marital relationship has been central to American conservative Christian movements since the late 1800s and thereby has a built-in constituency, as discussed in earlier chapters. WCF also uses its procreative marriage ideal to marginalize same-sex unions, which WCF tries to code as incapable of producing children biologically. Thus, the significance of marriage in defining the natural family is equaled by its strategic importance.

WCF’s pro-family discourse promises health, economic, and emotional benefits to those who form natural families, but my examination highlights ways the project contributes to a disciplinary regime. Pro-family activists argue that marriage produces societal prosperity. They hope to reinstall marriage as an aspirational norm by bolstering its privileges and burnishing its

207 Carlson and Mero, 13.
208 Carlson and Mero, 12.
image. In doing so, they also profess to help (some) families withstand forces inherent in capitalism that tend to weaken families. To the extent that they succeed, though, they also reinforce societal inequalities that have long favored white, middle-class, heterosexual, married couples with children. At the same, the set of policies meant to support the natural family nevertheless is compatible with and lends support to neoliberal logics, which puts pressure on families to provide their own safety net. Neoliberalism is a rationality that infuses economic logic into every aspect of society, not just the economy. Neoliberal governmentality interpellates citizens as entrepreneurial individuals whose moral autonomy is measured in terms of their capacity for self-care, to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions.\footnote{Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” in Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 37-59.} By governmentality I mean to include moral regulation that can be generated from “above,” as by the state, but also from “the middle,” or even from “below.”\footnote{Hunt, 5. As an example of a “from the top” project, Hunt mentions the state-sponsored war on drugs. A “from the middle” project is the fundamentalist Protestant and Catholic church-sponsored anti-abortion campaign. Posting addresses of presumed “child molesters” is a project he deems as emanating “from below.”} WCF-led pro-family activism fits with what Alan Hunt calls a moral regulation project.\footnote{Hunt, 1-27, especially 11-18.} In fact, the manifesto calls on people to be “moral soldiers.”\footnote{Carlson and Mero, 28.} Such non-state movements may try to influence legislation or make use of legal resources. Moral regulation should be understood as “ongoing contestations that involve a continuous, and more or less coercive, suppression of some identities and forms of life and the encouragement and enhancement of preferred forms.”\footnote{Hunt, 15.} Such regulation is directed at governing others, but results in self-governing effects.\footnote{Hunt, 16.}

In this chapter, I want to explicate the significance of marriage in defining the natural family especially in the US context. I argue the “autonomous” natural family, which by WCF
definition takes personal responsibility for its own health, wealth, and happiness, albeit from a privileged status, is exactly the sort of self-regulating entity twenty-first-century capitalism prefers. In the next chapter, I will focus on how WCF’s coalition adapts its moral discourse to an international context, especially through its depopulation narrative.

Marriage is a central issue for natural family proponents as they assert their worldview in part because for them it provides a sense of order, tradition, and meaning, but also because it has historically privileged their way of life. This chapter focuses on ways in which natural family discourse sets out to give a rationale for seeing the natural family as best. The Natural Family: A Manifesto (hereinafter Manifesto) characterizes it as timeless, as having always and everywhere having been the framework for family formation—God ordained, biblical, just part of the natural order. The authors of the Manifesto also select scholarship that argues that the natural family is scientifically, economically, psychologically, and socially superior for creating a strong society and healthy, happy individuals. Much of the pro-family activism of WCF and its partner organizations aims to do the same. If the natural family can be made to seem superior, the logic goes, then it just makes sense for people to choose this way of life and all societal institutions should invest in its formation and success.

The first section examines how the natural family is explained and described in the Manifesto. Marriage is central in producing the roles of husband/wife, father/mother, and homebuilder/homemaker. In so doing, the natural family form also renders the categories of motherhood and childhood as dependent and in need of protection. I argue these roles and categories work to establish the “independence” of an otherwise unmarked white, middle-class, heterosexual breadwinner masculinity. The natural family form itself thereby also works to sustain hierarchies of whiteness, heterosexuality, and middle class morality.
The second section focuses on the way the natural family ideal taps into broader familiar currents of desire sustained not just by conservative Christians, but also by a variety of other interests. The ideal is built on assumptions that marriage automatically bestows health, wealth, and happiness. Happiness becomes a disciplinary mechanism for moral regulation. The circulation of familial longing and the logic that informs it often work to obscure the actual labor and resources necessary to instantiate natural family formation. Using recent examples from popular media, I analyze the rhetoric in calls for marriage as a cure for societal ills. I also look at three narratives about familial happiness from WCF V in Amsterdam meant to maintain the natural family ideal. These narratives acknowledge work (though not necessarily material resources) required to make marriage work, but consider it a moral obligation to do so. In either case, the familial ideal regulates not just the men, women, and children within the natural family, but others who are drawn by their aspirations to try to replicate it.

The third section examines policies set forth in the Manifesto. The logic is that, if the natural family is the foundation for a strong society, as the Manifesto argues, all societal institutions have an investment in incentivizing and supporting its formation and success. The natural family rhetoric of personal responsibility serves neoliberal economic logic that privatizes the social safety net. Hierarchies encoded in the natural family form help justify lower wages for women, children, minorities, immigrants, etc., and shape a flexible labor pool. I argue the reality of societal benefits and regulation challenges the myth of the autonomous, self-supporting natural family. The natural family vision actually relies on societal aid to subsidize one lifestyle at the expense of others.
The natural family provides structure to the World Congress of Families (WCF) worldview, and marriage is a key feature of how WCF defines the natural family. At the first major World Congress of Families gathering in 1997 (WCF I), a speaker put it in these terms: “The human species might be called not *Homo sapiens*...but *Homo familiaris*. Every enduring society that has been studied...has a recognizable marriage structure based on the natural differences between men and women and a family structure whose object is the care of children.”

This concept of a particular family form as an ahistorical fact of human existence is fundamental to WCF’s religious and political orientation. The reference to “natural differences” between men and women highlights the biological essentialism that permeates WCF’s natural family discourse. It is an inherent component of WCF gender ideology and the patriarchal family structure WCF promotes.


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216 In this dissertation, the title of the book is abbreviated as Manifesto—capitalized and italicized. The first twenty-eight pages constitute the actual manifesto, which is referenced without capitalization or italicization.


218 Carlson and Mero, 27.
Carlson, it is a “treatise that seeks to alter the very language of debate while remaining true to biblical principles.”

The manifesto’s natural family framing seems geared to resonate on affective levels as transcendent and religiously significant. The manifesto’s first section, “The Story of the Family,” provides an excellent example. It casts the natural family in transcendent terms. “What is the natural family?” it opens. “The answer comes to the woman and the man who take the risk of turning their love into promises of lifelong devotion.” From the outset, the world “lifelong” makes a reference to time, which plays such an important role in this section. “The Story of the Family” is complete with a beginning, middle, and end, and it reads like a myth. “A young man and a young woman draw toward each other. They yearn to be as one. When they see the other, broad smiles appear. They sense the possibility of joy.” The protagonist couple, never named and therefore all the easier to imagine as universal, go on to build a home that “rests on reverence, worship, and prayer,” have children, and open their home to extended family. Almost scriptural-sounding, it calls forth images of a Garden-of-Eden-like innocence through the verbal equivalent of a soft-focus lens. Certain words and phrases call to mind biblical passages, as in “the two become one flesh.” Similarly, that the couple “craft a home which becomes a special place on earth” subtly makes reference to Heaven—a special place beyond earth. For those who hold the Bible as sacred, this language may index the deepest kind of truth. For those less

219 Carlson is WCF’s founder and international General Secretary, and the president of the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society, a conservative think tank in Rockford, Illinois. He has a Ph.D. in Modern European History from Ohio University (1978). Sutherland is president of the Sutherland Institute, a conservative think tank based in Salt Lake City. He is a former vice-president of the Howard Center and coordinated the 1999 WCF gathering in Geneva, Switzerland. He has a degree in public policy from Brigham Young University (1984).
220 The Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society fundraising letter, December 30, 2010
221 Carlson and Mero, 3.
222 Carlson and Mero, 3-4.
223 Carlson and Mero, 4.
224 Carlson and Mero, 4. This is a reference to Genesis 2:24.
familiar with the Bible, the myth-like quality may still subconsciously stir associations with other scriptures, stories, fables, or myths that are thought to convey timeless truths.\footnote{Anna Solin, “Intertextuality as mediation: On the analysis of intertextual relations in public discourse,” \textit{Text}, 24(2) (2004): 267-296.}

Another significant element of this story is its manipulation of temporality. It manages to inscribe time on multiple levels at once, creating a sense of timelessness. As the couple marries, the narrative uses present tense to call to mind tradition and scripture as mentioned above: “The people among whom they live bless this bond in the celebration of marriage. The man and the woman exchange public vows with each other, and also with their kindred and neighbors, and the two become one flesh.”\footnote{Carlson and Mero, 4.} The story goes on to imagine the trials the couple will face, told in future tense:

> They will cry together, sometimes in happiness, sometimes in sorrow. They will face sickness; they may know poverty; they could face dislocation or natural disaster; they might be torn apart by war. In times of despair or loss, they will find strength in each other. Facing death, they will feel the warm spiritual balm that heals the pain of physical separation.\footnote{Carlson and Mero, 4.}

This passage suggests the familiar language of promises made in many Christian wedding vows with versions dating to the Book of Common Prayer in the 1500s: “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish, ‘til death do us part.” Like nursery rhyme words, they feel ageless. These words are still used today in Christian churches, in Las Vegas wedding chapels, and on popular television programs. For many, these words evoke the timelessness of marriage and the family. The future tense of the passage contributes to this sense of timelessness—it has always been this way, and it will always be this way. At the same
time, the fact that much of the story is written in the present creates a sense of immediacy, which helps communicate the urgency of the matter, adding momentum to the campaign’s purpose. It also gives a sense of the present, of current-ness.\textsuperscript{228} Finally, timelessness is expressed more overtly: “This family cares for its own. Each generation sees itself as a link in an unbroken chain, through which the family extends from and into the centuries.”\textsuperscript{229} The use of time in “The Story of the Family” is effective on several levels then. While maintaining an urgency in the present, the sense of timelessness supports the theme of the section and the whole document that a certain way of organizing family life is the way it has always been done. This style and scriptural language also seems apt for a document attempting to pull together people who agree on “religious orthodoxy as the source of the humane values and cultural progress,”\textsuperscript{230} but who may be from a variety of religious and scriptural traditions.

The \textit{Manifesto} quite explicitly refers to biblical support for the natural family, as the excerpt in this chapter’s epigraph indicates. However, while the \textit{Manifesto} explicitly espouses Christian views, it also argues that pretty much all religious traditions see the family in similar ways:

We believe that the natural family is universal, an attribute of all humankind. We confess to holding Christian values regarding the family: the sanctity of marriage; the desire by the Creator that we be fruitful and multiply; Jesus’ miracle at the wedding feast; His admonitions against adultery and divorce. And yet, we find similar views in the other

\textsuperscript{229} Carlson and Mero, 5.
\textsuperscript{230} From a summary of a 2006 WCF regional gathering in Los Angeles around the theme of “Why People of Faith Need to Speak Up for the Natural Family.” See \url{http://www.worldcongress.org/WCFreg/wcf.reg.ca.060425.htm}.
great world faiths. Moreover, we even find recognition of the natural family in the marriage rituals of animists.231

In fact, for WCF “family and faith are...two sides of the same coin.”232 The conceptualization of family and religion as two sides of a coin makes perfect sense in that religions and families often help constitute each other. Parents usually transmit religious beliefs and values to their children. The older generation hopes the children will maintain the religion, which would not continue to exist without new generations of adherents. The biblical commands to “honor your mother and father” and to “be fruitful and multiply” help perpetuate the kind of family that will perpetuate the religion.

At the same time, the Manifesto emphasizes that scientific and religious justifications for the natural family are in agreement. The second chapter of the book takes up this argument unambiguously under the subheading “A Part of the Created Order”: “Modern debates about marriage and family frequently pit the partisans of biblical revelation against the partisans of science and evolution. We hold that the story of scripture and the evolutionary narrative actually wind up in surprising concurrence over the origin and nature of the human creature.”233 The fourth chapter, “Eternal Truths and the Sciences,” posits explicit scientific support for a number of the manifesto’s main points, arguing that WCF’s natural family vision is grounded “in the natural world, where [its] truths are open to study and confirmation by the physical and social sciences...It is open to honest investigation, to fair scrutiny. The natural family welcomes scientific inquiry, with the confidence of welcoming a friend.”234

231 Carlson and Mero, 21.
232 Carlson and Mero, 102.
233 Carlson and Mero, 51-2.
234 Carlson and Mero, 99-100. Note that in spite of the above-mentioned “confidence,” the Manifesto qualifies its embrace of science. It is “open to honest investigation” and “fair scrutiny.” Similarly, the Manifesto states that “social science done well and true” sees the natural family as holding a “necessary,
WCF explanations of the natural family routinely include three key material purposes: regulating sexuality, bearing and rearing children, and managing economic concerns. For WCF, marriage plays prominently in all three. Within the framework of “a lifelong covenant of marriage,” together these pursuits are envisioned as producing a gendered order. WCF describes the purpose of each in terms of gender roles. The natural family vision sees boys growing into “husbands, homebuilders, and fathers,” and girls growing into “wives, homemakers, and mothers.”

Below, I explore how this “social unit” is encoded with unmarked traits signifying whiteness, middle-class respectability, and American evangelical Christianity—categories that are intertwined and co-constitutive. Making WCF’s rhetorical moves more visible helps reveal how much effort it takes to “naturalize” the supposedly already natural family.

Sexual Order: Husbands and Wives

For WCF, the natural family serves to regulate sexuality in that marriage forms a moral context for sexual union: “Life and sexuality are gifts from the creator to be enjoyed respectfully and wholesomely.” In fact, for WCF sexuality exists solely for the expression of love between husband and wife and procreation of children. The importance of marriage in constructing sexual respectability in the natural family is especially clear in this passage from a speech William R. Mattox, Jr. gave at the first WCF gathering in Prague in 1997:

[T]he ultimate expression of love, affection, and intimacy between a man and a woman is found in the marriage bed. It is there, within the protection of a lifelong marital

irreplaceable position” and science, “honestly done and honestly reported, is the friend of the natural family” (22).

235 Carlson and Mero, 13.
236 World Congress of Families Mexico City Declaration, 2004.
237 William R. Mattox, Jr., is on the USA Today board of contributors and is a former vice-president of the Family Research Council.
commitment, that a man and a woman can experience not just the joining of their two bodies, but the union of their two souls. It is there—and only there—that their hearts can fully experience the Edenesque thrill of being “naked and not ashamed”—of being “known” completely and of “knowing” another fully, without fear of rejection.238

This description demonstrates the WCF view that only within marriage does sex lose its shamefulness.239 Mattox also seems to suggest that within marriage one cannot be refused sex—there is no “fear of rejection.” The phrase implies that within marriage spouses have no justification for refusing to have sex. We may surmise that he is thinking specifically about men’s fear in that he goes on to say that for most men, “unprotected sex isn’t the problem—it’s the goal…And, personally, I think we ought to be making it easier for them to reach their goal, provided they do so within the context of a marital relationship.”240 The idea of “containing men’s sexual aggression” within marriage is a frequent theme in WCF materials. However, to be precise, the goal seems to be to legitimate men’s perceived sexual aggressiveness more than to “contain” or change it.

The regulation of women’s sexuality is also a key theme, if less explicitly. In the natural family, sex is to take place within the context of marriage but must also be aimed for pregnancy.

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239 Gayle Rubin describes five “unradical” ideological formations about sexuality, one of which make sense of the shamefulness WCF associates with sex. The ideology, which she labels “sex negativity,” sees sex as a dangerous, destructive, negative force. Rubin traces this idea in Western cultures to the tendency in Christian tradition, following the apostle Paul, to hold that sex is essentially sinful, to be redeemed only if performed within marriage for procreative purposes and only if the pleasurable aspects are not enjoyed too much. Rubin adds that such notions have acquired a life of their own and no longer depend solely on religion for their perseverance. See Rubin’s seminal piece, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, Carole S. Vance, editor (Boston: Routledge, 1984), 267-319.
240 Mattox speech at WCF I in 1997. Note that in 1984 New York was the first state to change its laws to recognize the possibility of rape within marriage. It was not until 1993 that North Carolina became the last state to allow prosecution of spousal rape. See Cott, 211.
The natural family does not use contraception, but instead remains “open to a full quiver of children.” 241 Neither does the natural family couple use fertility treatments (like in vitro fertilization), because in “quiverfull” terms, God opens the womb and God closes the womb. God is supposed to be in charge of women’s reproductive life, not women themselves. In other words, the natural family model of sexuality is heterosexual, monogamous, marital, and procreative. “Deviations” from this model are understood to be “unnatural.”

Reproductive Order: Fathers and Mothers

In the natural family, “children are the first end, or purpose, of marriage.” 242 Children are important for several reasons. First, they officially fulfill the procreative mandate that rescues sexuality from being merely the pursuit of pleasure. Secondly, it is the presence of children that produces mothers and fathers. Parental identities are paramount in natural family ideology. They are closely tied to the WCF idea that men and women have complementary natures, both physically and psychologically. These naturalized roles also underpin the heteronormative WCF position that children require the “complementary parental love” of a mother and a father. 243 Mothers and fathers inculcate children with proper gender roles and values. Therefore, children represent the biological and cultural perpetuation of the natural family.

Children also figure heavily in WCF rhetoric about the autonomy of the natural family. For WCF, parents have the responsibility and authority for the academic, moral, and religious

241 This is a reference to Psalms 127:3-5: “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.” There is a US grassroots “quiverfull” movement of families who subscribe to this ideal. See Kathryn Joyce, “Arrows for the War,” The Nation, Nov. 27, 2006; also, Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009).
242 Carlson and Mero, 4.
243 Carlson and Mero, 114-7.
education of their children. This authority demands that governments grant certain rights to parents, for example, the rights of parents to spend their resources (including tax dollars) on the schooling of their choice. Parental authority also encompasses corporal punishment, and the natural family *Manifesto* pledges to “end abuse of the ‘child-abuse’ laws.”

The natural family requires autonomy from the state and freedom for its parents to instill in their offspring their preferred religious and moral precepts—including valuing the natural family form.

Children also provide justification for the importance of marriage for WCF’s natural family order. The *Manifesto* puts it this way, citing the medical authority of the American Academy of Pediatrics:

> The record is clear from decades of work in sociology, psychology, anthropology, sociobiology, medicine, and social history: children do best when they are born into and raised by their two natural parents. This truth is unassailable. “Marriage,” an American Academy of Pediatrics task force explains, “is beneficial in many ways,” in large part because “people behave differently when they are married. They have healthier lifestyles, eat better, and mother each other’s health.”

Citing social scientists who support marriage, the *Manifesto* argues that children do best when raised in “intact families,” and that in any other situation children “do worse,” including “one-parent, step-parent, homosexual, cohabiting, or communal” households, deemed “broken.”

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244 Carlson and Mero, 18.
245 Carlson and Mero, 137. Interestingly, it appears this passage as quoted in the *Manifesto* contains a Freudian slip. The phrase “mother each other” is quoted elsewhere in the book as “monitor each other” (149). This “mother” version resonates with the narrative that it is women’s job to domesticate men in marriage. It also highlights the gendered notions of the (typically unpaid) labor of nurture and care-giving.
246 Carlson and Mero, 141, and more broadly 137-148.
Single mothers receive by far the lengthiest criticism, associating them with children’s psychological, social, economic, and medical harm.\textsuperscript{247}

\textit{Economic Order: Homebuilders and Homemakers}

The father has a natural right to work for a living wage that can “sustain a mother and children at home in decency.”\textsuperscript{248} Ideally, then, the father can “build” the house, but the mother “makes” it a home by staying in it with the children rather than working for pay. The \textit{Manifesto} candidly associates the mother-as-home-maker with the rise of the middle class: “The new, growing middle class [in post-Revolutionary Europe and America] soon crafted a moral order centered around the hearth and the mother in the home.”\textsuperscript{249} The mother’s economic dependence on the father is a natural family ideal. Of course financial dependence encourages women—especially mothers—to stay in a marriage even if they are unhappy, thereby keeping the family “intact.” Carlson and Mero explicitly argue that government support for single mothers makes children “an artificial economic asset in the ‘mother-state-child’ family.”\textsuperscript{250} A “provider” masculinity is at the heart of this model.\textsuperscript{251} Essentially, it sees “‘provider’ as the most important role a father can play,” and an inability to provide leads men to “withdraw from family life.”\textsuperscript{252}

The natural family is also intended to create “an altruistic domestic economy.”\textsuperscript{253} Most importantly, “[t]his family cares for its own.” In fact, “kindred share all that they have.”\textsuperscript{254} For the most part, this altruism is described in terms of generational responsibilities—the “sandwich”

\textsuperscript{247} This points to the centrality of a certain motherhood ideology in constructing the natural family, an idea that will be explored further in the next chapter.
\textsuperscript{248} Carlson and Mero, 9.
\textsuperscript{249} Carlson and Mero, 8.
\textsuperscript{250} Carlson and Mero, 109.
\textsuperscript{251} Robert O. Self’s \textit{All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s} (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012) is recent history of the rise of the conservative right in late-twentieth-century US. Self refers to “breadwinner conservatism” as short hand for the collective efforts of conservatives to protect the nuclear family (4-5).
\textsuperscript{252} Carlson and Mero, 113.
\textsuperscript{253} World Congress of Families Mexico City Declaration, 2004.
\textsuperscript{254} Carlson and Mero, 5-6.
generation couple caring for their own children and elderly parents. Beyond that vertical “altruism,” there is charity. A certain vision of middle-class economic respectability emerges in this model. Taking care of one’s own family calls up male breadwinner ideology in which men are good “providers” and their wives “stay home” and care for their children and the house. References to families holding “real property,” a “landscape of family homes, lawns, and gardens busy with useful tasks…” all call up visions of middle-class suburbia. Lawns and gardens are not typically associated with urban settings or apartments. Similarly, though a rural residential yard may be mowed regularly, the word “lawn” connotes a more carefully tended and manicured yard than is not routine for a large rural property.

White middle-class respectability is also invoked in the Manifesto’s mention of the 1950s family model to which WCF attributes the “social achievements of ‘the greatest generation,’” noting it was “largely confined to the white majority. Black families actually showed mounting stress in these years: a retreat from marriage; more out-of-wedlock births.” This interpretation seems to rely on ideas that date to Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s 1965 description of the structure of black families as a “tangle of pathology” that was responsible for their poverty. WCF’s understanding of history not only ignores structural inequalities that account for poverty but blames the victims themselves for their economic “failure” due to their refusal to form the “right” kind of family. This narrative overlooks governmental and societal investment in white heterosexual men through the GI bill and other post-World War II programs which discriminated

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255 Carlson and Mero, 6.
256 Carlson and Mero, 13.
257 Carlson and Mero, 20.
258 Carlson and Mero actually quote Moynihan’s “tangle of pathology” phrase (134). They also explicitly discuss that the “wealth-creating benefits of marriage mark the best way out of poverty” (153).
against GIs who were African American, women, or suspected of homosexuality.\textsuperscript{259} The “pathological” family stereotype against which the “healthy” natural family is made to appear respectable is unmistakable. The \textit{Manifesto} argues that marriage essentially causes health, wealth, and happiness.\textsuperscript{260} In fact, “the natural family opens the portals to the good life, to true happiness, even to bliss.”\textsuperscript{261}

\textbf{The Gravity of Wedded Bliss}

Marriage is not the taken-for-granted option it once was, but it nevertheless still has a powerful place in the social imaginary. According to the manifesto, the pursuit of happiness is an imperative and getting married is the only logical path. In fact, the authors emphasize that the phrase, “pursuit of happiness,” as found in the American Declaration of Independence, means just that. Many associate the words with the pursuit of “property.” Carlson and Mero cite historian Jan Lewis in arguing that it actually refers to domestic happiness—to their ideal of the perfect family as part of “creating and reinforcing an article of faith for their society, a belief perhaps more central to their lives than any other….”\textsuperscript{262} Carlson and Mero therefore read the original intent of the authors of the Declaration to mean that “this pursuit of \textit{family} happiness was at the core of American identity and purpose” (emphasis in original).\textsuperscript{263}

A WCF goal is to define and explain the natural family worldview, but also to attempt to bring it into being—to construct the natural family world, so to speak. That world can be manifested only through the existence of people who believe in and follow its precepts. The natural family worldview, anchored by marriage, informs the thinking and behavior of those who

\textsuperscript{260} Carlson and Mero, 152-7.
\textsuperscript{261} Carlson and Mero, 5.
\textsuperscript{262} Carlson and Mero, 38.
\textsuperscript{263} Carlson and Mero, 39.
subscribe to it. Marriage and family ideology also can and does play a role in governing the behavior of a broader number of people through various government policies, incentives, and regulations as well as people’s aspirations for respectability and fulfillment associated with idealizations of “the family.” Tellingly, the Manifesto refers to the natural family as an “ideal vision and universal reality,” a phrase that seems to contradict itself. An “ideal vision” implies something that exists only in the imagination, a standard of perfection for which to aim, an archetype that can be copied but never actually instantiated. A “universal reality” on the other hand implies something that actually exists, that has always and everywhere been in place, the natural state of affairs—just the way things are. We can better understand this paradox by recognizing that, while WCF perceives the dominance of natural family households as having declined from a former ubiquity, it nevertheless believes the natural family provides the ultimate model for how people should organize their intimate lives. In fact, WCF’s natural family concept is a significant component of its paradigm for moral order. Yet, in spite of its use of the word “natural,” clearly this order does not materialize “naturally.” The pairing of “ideal vision” and “universal reality” demonstrates that the Manifesto’s authors have at least an unconscious sense that the natural family moral order can be realized only to the extent that an “ideal vision” is shared. The very fact of WCF’s global campaign “to defend the family and to guide public policy and cultural norms,” reveals WCF’s recognition of the effort required to produce an approximation of the “universal reality” of the “natural” family. Generally, though, the resources and labor required for natural families to be successful are not typically foregrounded.

The promotion of marriage as beneficial for individuals endeavors to appeal to people’s aspirations. Stimulating such desire is necessary because, in spite of potential benefits, fewer

264 Carlson and Mero, 3.
people seem to feel willing and/or able to set up natural family households. The pro-family movement’s production of knowledge on family, sexual, and reproductive norms aims for an impact on policies and on people’s decisions about their intimate life. WCF also positions it as a rational choice by creating, gathering, and disseminating statistics and research that support the idea that the natural family is healthier for individuals and society. WCF materials consistently posit the family as a counterbalance to the power of the state, but modern states’ governmentality functions through rational actions, what Foucault labels biopower.266

Governmentality constructs prudent subjects who are controlled through their freedom to choose what is best for them. Marriage is imagined as a voluntary choice, therefore casting the natural family as a path to health, wealth, and happiness means an individual’s failure to organize his or her life that way is irrational. In this schema, happiness becomes a disciplinary technique—more of a responsibility than a right.267 WCF’s emphasis on creating change through cultural channels demonstrates a self-conscious strategy that reinforces such rationality even if not intended to support state power. John A. Howard, co-founder with Allan Carlson of the Howard Center, describes the center’s work as operating in the “cultural arena” rather than with “government.”268 In remarks at WCF III,269 Howard said this:

The Howard Center and a relatively small group of other think tanks are working, not with government, but in the cultural arena. Our work focuses on human behavior and the attitudes, traditions, ideals, and values which cause people to behave as they do. These cultural think tanks are also concerned with the schools, the laws, the family, the

268 From “Thoughts about a Pro-Family Think Tank,” WCF III, 2004.
269 WCF III was held in Mexico City in 2004.
churches, the news media and all the other social institutions through which people conduct the common activities of their lives.\textsuperscript{270}

Howard’s remarks highlight that the center’s work is concerned primarily with people’s “behavior, attitudes, traditions, and values” more than with legislation. It recognizes the importance of norms in shaping people’s willingness to incorporate ideals into their own self-governance. The Howard Center contributes to the “norming” of the natural family through the production and collection of social scientific knowledge that positions the natural family as healthy and productive—good for family members as well as society. In its emphasis on the family, WCF strategy seems to at least intuitively understand the utility of the family for effecting change and the power of “from the middle” movements in cultural transformation.

The current appeal of marriage for those outside pro-family circles may be less obvious. Some people are drawn to the idea of marriage as an anti-poverty measure.\textsuperscript{271} In fact, Judith Stacey attributes the success of backlash “neo-family-values” campaigns, in part, to the rise of neoliberalism, which injects an economic rationality into everything.\textsuperscript{272} For example, this logic was applied to 1990s welfare reforms that diverted resources from aid to needy households and instead directed them toward marriage incentives and classes, among other things. The mandate, especially for female-headed households with children, was to get married and get a job.\textsuperscript{273} One explanation is that it provides some degree of structure as past guidelines become less salient.

\textsuperscript{270} From “Thoughts about a Pro-Family Think Tank,” WCF III, 2004.

\textsuperscript{271} The idea of marriage as an anti-poverty measure is quite popular. As an example, a recent \textit{New York Times} article compares two families and attributes their economic disparities to the fact that one woman is married and the other is not. See Jason DeParle, “Two Classes, Divided by ‘I Do,’” \textit{New York Times Magazine} (July 14, 2012).


\textsuperscript{273} The underlying logic of this portion of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 seems to be that marriage magically solves poverty. For a useful discussion of this reform and ideas about marriage, see Cott, 222-3.
Stacy comments that it is “unsurprising…that many today indulge in fantasies of ‘escaping’ from freedom and succumb to the alluring certainties of family-values pieties.” The “allure of family values pieties” and taken-for-granted wisdom that marriage supplants the need for welfare hint at another important reason for WCF’s emphasis on marriage: it resonates beyond the pro-family movement.

In fact, US popular media frequently feature articles about marriage as a solution to personal and societal problems. Aside from the debate over legalizing marriage for same-sex couples (and perhaps because of it), cries for the reinvigoration of the heterosexual marital family are ubiquitous. A recent piece in The Atlantic advocates for early marriage, stating that “unmarried twenty-somethings are more likely to be depressed, drink excessively, and report lower levels of satisfaction than their married counterparts.” Charles Murray’s recent book, Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010, centers on the heteronormative marital family as an integral part of the “widely shared values” that make up “the American way of life.” He argues that its decline among America’s whites in lower economic classes accounts for rising inequality and suffering. A New York Times article that also attributes a growing underclass to the group’s widespread failure to marry echoes Murray’s argument.

Two themes that coalesce in these calls for marriage that speak to taken-for-granted assumptions about marriage are worth examining in that they resonate with natural family discourse. One relates to causality. For instance, structural factors do not seem to receive serious consideration in these accounts. A frequent lament, as revealed in Murray’s title, is anxiety that

this family “pathology” is spreading to the poor white population (which highlights the whiteness of marital norms). Just as in the controversial Moynihan Report of 1965, improper family formation is consistently seen as the cause of misery and financial struggles. The \textit{New York Times} article does mention briefly such realities as the growing cost of a college education, the loss of manufacturing jobs to automation and foreign competitors, and the decline of labor unions, but then immediately relates the resulting difficulties to marriage. The lack of well-educated and employed men means women cannot find “marriageable” men. Therefore they become single mothers, and “marital decline leaves the needy to struggle alone.” A researcher is quoted as suggesting that marriage to “troubled men” might do more harm than good, but the columnist returns to other scholars’ insistence on the healing properties of marriage. It seems marriage has a motivating effect that makes men earn more, therefore, “marriage can help make men marriageable.” Murray states that “Married men become more productive after they are married \textit{because} they are married” (emphasis in original).

One might wonder whether such arguments recognize that couples struggling financially or otherwise tend to delay marriage or get divorced, leaving those who are married to look happier and better off by comparison. Sociologist Andrew Cherlin put it this way: “It is the privileged Americans who are marrying, and marrying helps them stay privileged.” In \textit{The Promise of Happiness}, Sara Ahmed quotes a psychology professor who describes the kind of person who is most likely to be happy. Among other traits, s/he would tend to live in a democratic, prosperous

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{278} As mentioned earlier, this was a 1965 report by Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan, \textit{The Negro Family: The Case for National Action}, blamed the “deterioration of the Negro family” for the prevalence of poverty among African Americans. \textsuperscript{279} Similarly, Carlson and Mero associate “fatherlessness” with poverty (167) and argue that marriage makes men productive (117-8). \textsuperscript{280} Murray, 185. Murray references economist Gary Becker’s \textit{A Treatise on the Family} (to which I will return in the next chapter) and George Gilder’s \textit{Sexual Suicide} (mentioned in the previous chapter). \textsuperscript{281} DeParle.}
country, be a member of a majority not a minority group, be married, healthy, and get along with family and friends. As Ahmed argues, “The face of happiness...looks rather like the face of privilege.”

The other theme in popular sources has to do with how one defines happiness. Ahmed calls happiness “a form of world making” in that it “makes the world cohere around...the right people.” Moral hierarchies of happiness, she argues, may correspond to social hierarchies that are already given. Higher forms of happiness are associated with the mind, lower ones with the body—“mere enjoyment of pleasure.” This view of happiness can be linked to a bourgeois sensibility that is appalled at happiness that is “too easy, too accessible, and too fast.” Such a definition coincides perfectly with Murray’s, which emphasizes three things: effort, responsibility, and importance (pleasure can come from trivial things, but “pleasure is different from deep satisfaction”). According to Murray, only five activities can satisfy these requirements: having been a good parent, being part of a good marriage, having done your job well (including avocations or causes), having been “a faithful adherent of one of the great religions,” and having been a good neighbor and good friend. Murray emphasizes marriage: “The relationship of marriage to happiness is simple as can be. There’s hardly anything better than a good marriage for promoting happiness.” Murray’s discussion of happiness frames his chapter titled “The Founding Virtues and the Stuff of Life.” Clearly, happiness is a virtue.

Similarly, in natural family discourse, categories of virtue, responsibility, happiness, health, faith, effort, prosperity, and naturalness are intertwined.
WCF’s international gatherings illuminate how the movement works to stir desires and disseminate the Manifesto’s ideas. I attended WCF V and VI as a participant observer. Events at WCF V help illustrate the affective politics of pro-family work. The theme of the conference was “Family: More Than the Sum of Its Parts.” It was held at the RAI, a large convention center, in Amsterdam, August 10-12, 2009. Over fifty speakers from eighteen countries presented their papers, eight of them from The Netherlands. About half of the speakers were from the United States, so US perspectives tended to dominate.

For many speakers, the natural family is a basis for structuring their ethical and religious commitments. Two US speakers in particular help illustrate the power of a pro-family worldview to shape activists’ lives and their passion to promote it. Dorothy Patterson’s speech at WCF V, entitled “A Modern Paradigm for Motherhood,” argued that “[m]aternity should be viewed by all as intellectually respectable and emotionally rewarding as a worthy profession in the marketplace of life.” It was also an ardent personal testimonial to her experience of the rewards of motherhood, as this excerpt shows:

> I am equipped to carry and nurture in my body the most precious beginning life—life in the image of God. I am related to my body because of the intricacy of design and function necessary for me to fulfill my maternity, which is an awesome responsibility! In the doing of my God-assigned responsibilities, I find contentment with myself, joy in my task, and ultimately peace with my Creator… When I stand before God to give an account of my life and work, my most valuable contribution [will be] my children and grandchildren. They have been the reservoir into which I have poured my primary energies and creativity—my life. They are my life’s work.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁹ Her speech was entitled “A Modern Paradigm for Motherhood.” Patterson also spoke at WCF VI. I attended both congresses as a participant observer.
Patterson eyes welled up and her voice cracked with emotion as she made this declaration. Adhering to her ideas of how to be a proper mother has provided a strong sense of identity and a moral compass for how to live a meaningful life.\textsuperscript{290} Her speech illustrates how powerfully the natural family worldview shapes her self-governance. Motherhood is her God-assigned responsibility—her life’s work in which she finds contentment with herself.

For Patterson, in her sixties, her role as a wife is also central to her identity. She is the wife of Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), in Fort Worth, who is also a frequent WCF speaker. They were childhood sweethearts and married in 1963. She describes herself as a homemaker first and foremost, although she has two advanced degrees in theology, is listed as a professor of theology in women’s studies at the seminary, and is the author of several books and numerous chapters and articles. She routinely teaches a class at SBTS for wives of the seminarians, in which she advises them on the benefits of stay-at-home motherhood. However, she accepts no payment, explaining it is important to live within the means provided by her husband, and that refusing payment helps assure that she can be available to assist her husband as needed.\textsuperscript{291} Two of her recent books focused on the roles of wife and mother were released in 2013.\textsuperscript{292} Patterson takes seriously her mission to influence cultural valuing of these familial duties.

Another speaker, Susan Dutton Freund, was one of two who discussed their involvement in grassroots movements to reinvigorate (heterosexual) marriage in their states. Freund, director

\textsuperscript{290} The revalorization of women’s work—especially motherhood—is important in garnering women’s support for the pro-family movement. Movement ideals and activities offer conservative women the promise of community, female agency (if somewhat limited), and the security of responsible male behavior. See Linda Kintz, \textit{Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions That Matter in Right-Wing America} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 3, 11.

\textsuperscript{291} Dorothy Patterson, interview by author, Fort Worth, Texas, February 17, 2012.

of the non-profit organization ThinkMarriage.org, explained her goal as implementing change, “not just in behavior or choices, but a change in public sentiment—a culture shift.”²⁹³ To have an impact on family norms in Wisconsin, Freund developed a model she called “the four degrees of normalization.” The logic is that “it takes no more than four people to confirm an opinion before you believe you’ve encountered a social norm.” She explained that she and her team actively networked with community partners such as churches, media, therapists, businesses, educators, and government agencies in order to disseminate research that supported the organization’s mission. Her organizations website explains that “positive, connected relationships don’t just happen automatically,” meaning that they require skill and work. Unlike most WCF speakers, Freund, who was in her forties at the time of the speech, has been divorced. Departing from her prepared remarks, she revealed that she had been married, part of a nuclear family, divorced, a single mother, remarried, and part of a step-family. In a 2013 essay, she elaborates on the story, focusing on the difficulties of trying to balance work and childrearing as a single parent whose first husband was not involved financially or otherwise.²⁹⁴ Remarrying after a few years, she encountered another set of challenges including her husband’s careless “bull-in-the-china-shop approach to step parenting” her two sons and his “serious financial misdealing” which took them to the brink of bankruptcy. They had a daughter together and she eventually divorced him after “nineteen painful years.” Nevertheless, she still believes in marriage, and she is passionate about “helping others avoid the rocks [she’s] stumbled over.” She hopes to convince her daughter, who is “against marriage…that it’s still the best choice.” Her loyalty to the marriage ideal is a


testimony to its power to inspire people’s decisions and behavior, even when it goes against their own personal experiences and its promised benefits have eluded them. Her work demonstrates the various ways WCF-affiliated activists work to enact the natural family ideal.

The first evening of the conference, a screening of a faith-based drama provided another tool for carrying forward the WCF mission to stimulate passion for marriage. The movie, *Fireproof*, stars Kirk Cameron, an evangelical Christian. One of the film’s overriding themes is that men need to be more attentive to what matters to their wives, a message which seems geared to appeal to women. It seemingly strives to make it more palatable for men by tucking it in between action-packed scenes and featuring conventionally masculine characters. It tells the story of Catherine and Caleb, a couple in their late twenties whose marriage is foundering. Caleb is a fire captain and a fireman’s code provides the tag line for the film: “Never leave your partner behind.” Catherine is frustrated with Caleb’s preoccupation with buying an expensive boat and viewing Internet porn; she wants a divorce. Caleb is angry because he feels Catherine does not respect him as a hero like others do. A fellow firefighter, a Christian, accuses Caleb of letting his marriage burn to the ground. He advises Caleb, “Don't follow your heart—you gotta’ lead your heart.” Caleb’s dad offers a forty-day, Bible-based “Love Dare” that challenges him to gradually incorporate more solicitous actions into his daily treatment of Catherine. Grudgingly at first, then increasingly more sincerely, Caleb recommits as a Christian, changes his ways, and eventually wins over Catherine. His conversion becomes the basis for his spiritual leadership in their relationship when Catherine says, “I want what happened to you to happen to me.” In the happily-ever-after ending, they renew their wedding vows and a final scene shows them carrying Bibles and heading into a church.

This film resonates with the natural family ideal that couples should work through their problems rather than divorce. The *Manifesto* favors revising or eliminating no-fault divorce laws: “Given research that indicates that, over time, even couples in unhappy marriages will eventually begin to appreciate their partner again and experience a happy marriage, a change in the divorce culture might enhance the individual happiness of adults.”

The film also reinforces the idea that this kind of happiness takes work and the acquisition of important skills. The movie also models mentorship of young married couples by more experienced ones. WCF partner Focus on the Family has recently launched an online resource to foster and facilitate similar mentoring relationships. *Fireproof* also gave rise to a convenient set of resources to inspire marital aspirations. Fireproofthemovie.com offers to make the film available for churches so their congregants can “Say ‘I do’ all over again.” Couples can order a “Fireproof Your Marriage” DVD and study guide and a “My Marriage Is Fireproof” bumper sticker. At thelovedarebook.com, people can buy *The Love Dare* book like the one that Caleb’s dad gave him, which combines marital advice and Bible scriptures. Other products include a 365-day version, a “love dare” Bible study guide, and a “love dare” for parents.

Each major WCF gathering produces a declaration of principles; Allan Carlson read the WCF V Declaration during closing activities in Amsterdam. Marriage is central in the WCF V Declaration, as in the previous four. It defines the natural family as “rest[ing] on the lifelong marriage of a man to a woman, for the purposes of welcoming and nurturing new human life, providing love, companionship, and mutual support, building a home rich in functions, and strengthening the bonds of the generations.” It reiterates the WCF understanding that “the biological and social sciences…teach that children predictably do best when raised by their natural parents in a married-couple home.” It also calls for laws and policies that “support the

296 Carlson and Mero, 202.
natural institution of marriage…[and] discourage divorce, especially when children would be involved.” This declaration, as others before it, is briefer and more focused than the manifesto, so it is not surprising that it does not specifically mention happiness as a goal or effect of marriage and family formation (although “providing love and companionship” may imply as much). Given the high expectations of marriage listed in the Amsterdam Declaration, one might imagine that it relies on a definition of happiness that valorizes sacrifice. A recent posting on the Focus on the Family website of puts it this way: “…in the end, happiness isn’t measured by the many things most parents give up in order to raise a family…they can only give us temporary happiness. There’s deeper satisfaction that comes from living your life to the benefit of others, and of serving your children well… Moments [of parental pride in children’s success] make the sacrifices of parenting worth it.”

*Faith in a “Natural Family” Economy*

Marriage is important to the transnational pro-family movement for its religious, moral, and regulatory utility. As a state-sanctioned relationship, marriage is tied to direct and indirect regulation of intimate life. Marriage laws have allowed middle-class Protestants to “symbolize their values in the law and extend power and authority over others.”

The current US national debate over marriage for same-sex partners has made state regulation of sexuality through marriage laws more visible. Marriage has long provided material and symbolic rewards to heterosexual partners. States’ legalization of marriage for same-sex couples highlights the legal benefits as well as the fact that the state “blessing” confers an aura of respectability. The fact that

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marriage has been a central issue for gay rights activism is emblematic of the power of marital norms. The Manifesto opposes not only same-sex marriage, but also arrangements involving cohabitation, divorce, the birth of children to unmarried parents, or single parenting.

This section looks at the natural family policies and the economic vision that flows from them. In many ways, faith is the foundation of natural family ideals, including its economic vision. The manifesto affirms that “economic determinism is false. Ideas and religious faith can prevail over material forces. Even one as powerful as industrialization can be tamed by the exercise of human will.” The policies, centered around marriage, demonstrate how it can work as a mechanism for exclusion and privilege, as it has done for years in the United States as well as many other countries. A brief review of marriage in US history reveals that, far from a timeless institution, marriage has always a vehicle for political projects—often relating to economic policy.

Marriage in the United States has long worked to privilege middle-class heterosexual families like those engaged in pro-family activism. Symbolically the state’s blessing of marriage affirms the rightness of the natural family worldview. State-sanctioned marriage also bestows a legal partnership status that confers a host of rights and benefits on certain families. The resulting privilege bolsters the impression that marriage causes health, wealth, and happiness. State regulation of marriage has a history of opening up the possibility for intervention in families’

299 Carlson and Mero, 15.
300 I argue that, to the extent that marriage is associated with favorable outcomes, it is due to material advantages bestowed on married couples—over 1100 federal benefits, for example, and many more from individual states, not to mention symbolic benefits that accompany state recognition of a relationship. See Cott, 217. Also, for a useful discussion of questions of causality versus correlation between marriage and various benefits, see Steven L. Nock, “Marriage as a Public Issue,” in Future of Children 15(2) (2005). Nock was a professor of sociology and director of the Marriage Matters project at the University of Virginia until his death in 2008. Nock’s interest in making a case for causality seems clear, but he acknowledges that selectivity and reverse causality are equally plausible and that it is impossible to conduct research that definitively settles the issue. Tellingly, he does not entertain the idea that privileges society affords to legally sanctioned marriage causes the benefits associated with it. Nock’s work is especially relevant here because it is cited in WCF materials.
economic and sexual practices while preserving protection from state interference for “respectable” marriages.

Marriage has a history of serving as a vehicle for regulatory and disciplinary political projects that challenge taken-for-granted notions of it as a timeless, natural arrangement. Historically, marriage in the US took care of many economic, political, and social functions that are no longer required of it because the government performs these tasks today. For instance, it organized the production and distribution of goods and people; set up political economic, and military alliances; coordinated division of labor by gender and age; and orchestrated people’s personal rights and obligations.  

Although arranged marriages were once quite common for our European ancestors, modern American marriage is conceived as a matter of individual choice. In fact, it was and still is compared to a private contract relationship. Changes in mores associated with marriage over the past century are unsurprising in light of American ideals of personal autonomy and the idea of marriage as a personal choice and a place for personal fulfillment. For example, twentieth-century developments include no-fault divorce and increasing numbers of people choosing to remain single, cohabitate, or rear children outside marriage. A growing support for marriage for same-sex couples is consistent with these American ideals as well. Stephanie Coontz argues that, once people began to see marriage as a personal and private relationship that should fulfill their emotional and sexual desires…free choice became the societal norm for mate selection, love became the main reason for marriage, and a successful marriage came to be defined as one that met the needs of the members…[reinforcing the notion that] people could construct meaningful

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lives outside marriage and that not everything in society had to be organized through and around married couples.\textsuperscript{302}

Yet even though we think of marriage as a private choice, in the US it has always been regulated. While imagined as private, to the extent that marriage has been a status and an institution, it has also been considered public. Nancy Cott argues that monogamous marriage in the United States is a public/private hybrid based on the ideas of unity and consent, that it has been inextricably intertwined with the nation and citizenship, and that it has always been political rather than natural.\textsuperscript{303} Shane Phelan also frames marriage as a contract, as well as a status as part of the “founding unit of society.” She specifically points to the role of marriage in creating citizenship in that it renders some children as citizens and can mark certain adults as full citizens, too.\textsuperscript{304}

Individuals enter into the marriage “contract” by consent, then, but state legislation, judicial opinions, state and federal policies, and community standards define marriage. Government changes to the definition of marriage over the years have made it impossible to ignore the fact that it is a purely political designation. For example, states began to formalize divorce laws in the early 1800s with the aim of eliminating self-divorce. A primary concern was to ensure men’s obligations of financial support for their dependents. At the same time, states enacted “married women’s property” laws to protect property women brought with them into marriage. Legislators were less worried about women’s rights, however, than with keeping the property safe from husbands’ creditors, thereby enabling debt-ridden families to retain some assets in wives’ names.\textsuperscript{305} Beginning in the 1970s, states increasingly treated “marriage-like”

\textsuperscript{302} Coontz, 306-7.
\textsuperscript{305} Cott, 50-55.
relationships the same as marriage.\textsuperscript{306} As in the past, liberalization was motivated by states’ desire to hold wage-earners financially accountable for dependents. With every change, it has become more obvious that the state’s interest is primarily financial, and that there is no inherently natural way to constitute marriage.

Marriage in the US has been constantly adapting to the changing ways people have chosen to organize their families from necessity or preference, which highlights the constructedness of marriage. Cott likens it to a return to the time before marriage became formally regulated, when community validation of standards was the rule, and argues that legal and other societal changes in the US understanding of marriage effectively amount to a “disestablishment” of traditional marriage at the end of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{307} Cott compares the “disestablishment” of traditional marriage to the US disestablishment of religion in that in both cases the resulting freedom allowed diversity to flourish.\textsuperscript{308} Judith Stacey describes changes in family practices in terms of the “postmodern” family, which she sees as “diverse, fluid, and unresolved.”\textsuperscript{309} It is in this “postmodern family” context that WCF emerged in 1997.

It is not surprising, then, that marriage is so central in natural family discourse and activism. In a recent fundraising letter, Brian Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), praised WCF for its efforts in support of marriage:

> The World Congress of Families is THE group standing up for the family around the world. They have done amazing work in uniting all of those who stand for the truth about marriage and family. It has been an honor to partner with WCF and to be a part of

\textsuperscript{306} Cott, 207. As an example, Cott cites the 1976 “palimony” case involving the break-up of actor Lee Marvin and the woman with whom he had lived for seven years.\textsuperscript{307} Cott, 212-13.\textsuperscript{308} Cott, 212.\textsuperscript{309} Judith Stacey, “The Making and Unmaking of Modern Families,” in \textit{Brave New Families: Stories of Domestic Upheaval in the Late Twentieth Century} (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 7. Ironically, the push for same-sex marriage has given marriage a renewed aura of honor (Cott, 225).
their most recent Congress in Australia and regional conference in Trinidad and Tobago. I wholeheartedly endorse their work and urge you to financially support their efforts.  

Such acclaim speaks to the degree to which WCF has emphasized marriage. All the manifesto policies by definition aim to benefit heterosexual couples who conform to natural family standards. Three parts of the manifesto articulate most of these ideas: “A Vision,” “Our Principles,” and “Our Platform.” The manifesto envisions a culture for the twenty-first century that upholds heterosexual procreative marriage as the central aspiration for young people because marriage is “the best path to health, security, and fulfillment.” The decision to exclude same-sex-couple families is explicit: “[W]e are in a desperate fight simply to keep the vital institution of marriage from being fitted to homosexuals.” The manifesto vision describes the marital family household as “the primal economic unit…marked by…material abundance…broad self-reliance…private property…[and] open to a full quiver of children, the source of family continuity and social growth.” As mentioned above, “this family cares for its own.” The authors see the natural family as an altruistic system in which “[k]indred share all that they have, without expecting any return, only to receive more than they could ever have imagined.” For

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310 The National Organization for Marriage (NOM) is a political organization established in 2007 to work against legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States. It initially formed to rally support for the California Proposition 8 effort to eliminate the rights of same-sex couples to marry. NOM is a new WCF partner organization. The quote appears in an August 20, 2013, fundraising letter for the Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society.

311 Carlson and Mero, 12-18.

312 Carlson and Mero, 12.

313 Carlson and Mero, 12-3. Openness to a “full quiver” references Psalm 127: 4-5: “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.”

314 Carlson and Mero, 6.
everyone else, there is charity. The “economy of love” created by the family “fosters charity, good works, and true community.”

The manifesto’s proposals mostly rely on the state to orchestrate privileges for the natural family; that is, in fact, the purpose of the state. The manifesto suggests “the natural family is prior to the state and...legitimate governments exist to shelter and encourage the natural family.” An emphasis on the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the natural family elsewhere belies the central fact that the manifesto program counts on the government to subsidize its lifestyle. The manifesto platform specifically intends to “encourage self-sufficiency through broad property ownership, home enterprise, home gardens, and home workshops. We will end the culture of dependency found in the welfare state.” Apparently the aim is to divert state funds from needy people to “self-sufficient” natural families. Owning private property is a defining principle of the plan: “We affirm the necessary role of private property in land, dwelling, and productive capital as the foundation of familial independence and the guarantor of democracy. In a just and good society, all families will hold real property.” The authors do not suggest a plan for transfer of real estate or other property to those who do not already own it, so it is not clear how “welfare dependent” households might become “self-sufficient.” Perhaps the needy will receive real property through the charitable generosity of natural families in “a just and good society.” Presumably, governmental policy is not part of the plan: “We affirm that lasting solutions to human problems rise out of families and small communities. They cannot be imposed by bureaucratic and judicial fiat. Nor can they be coerced.”

315 Carlson and Mero, 6.
316 Carlson and Mero, 14.
317 Carlson and Mero, 18.
318 Carlson and Mero, 15.
319 Carlson and Mero, 15.
Many policies the manifesto advocates amount to direct financial benefits for natural families and most would work through the tax code. Some reward marriage, like ending “marriage penalties” in taxation. Others reward the birth of children, including credits against payroll taxes for each child and tax benefits to businesses that provide “natal gifts” and “child allowances” to their employees. Another targets both: “We will craft generous tax deductions, exemptions, and credits that are tied to marriage and the number of children. We will end the oppressive taxation of family income, labor, property, and wealth.”

The platform also plans to “end all discriminations against stay-at-home parents,” specifically it guarantees that “stay-at-home parents enjoy at least the same state benefits offered to day care users.” A childcare tax credit could theoretically allow some parents to take care of their own children instead of working for pay outside the home. However, transferring public funds to those who can already afford to have a parent at home will surely come at the expense of other kinds of aid for needier households. Undoubtedly it leaves out the category of mothers who might most need such help. The authors do not likely view a single mother as a potential stay-at-home parent given the manifesto’s ideas about gender complementarity and its desire to end “welfare dependency.” In fact, the plan is certainly to marry those women off. The manifesto aims to “transform social insurance, welfare, and housing programs to reinforce marriage, especially marriage for young adults.” This resonates with others who call for marriage as an anti-poverty measure. One other proposed benefit for marital families is to allow private insurers “to recognize the health

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320 Carlson and Mero, 15-18.
321 Carlson and Mero, 17.
322 Carlson and Mero, 17.
323 Carlson and Mero, 16.
324 Similar thinking has diverted welfare funds from direct aid for recipients to marriage instruction and incentives in President Clinton’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.
advantages of marriage and family living.”

In addition to its monetary advantage, the idea that married-couple families are healthier symbolically privileges such households and subjects others to stigmatization. Most of the other financial rewards would do so as well.

Evoking society’s symbolic blessing of the natural family plays a part in the manifesto in other ways. For instance, it calls for “special protections for families, motherhood, and childhood.”

Similarly, the platform means to “empower the legal and cultural guardians of marriage and public morality…[to] end the coarsening of our culture.”

Regardless of the specific applications of these broad ideas, they clearly intend to seduce societal institutions into buttressing the privileged position of marital families and maintaining their moral standards.

Likewise, the manifesto also touches on abortion and restoring “respect for life” through “democratic controls over abortion.” One other platform item promises to “hold up the primacy of parental rights and hold public officials accountable for abuses of their power. We will end abuse of the ‘child-abuse’ laws.”

No one associated with the manifesto advocates child abuse, of course, but many favor corporal punishment as part of childrearing.

Shifting societal attitudes on this issue call into question the legitimacy of such parental policies. At stake for the pro-family movement is not simply parental authority but also the idea of families as sites of

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325 Carlson and Mero, 16.
326 Carlson and Mero, 17.
327 Carlson and Mero, 16.
328 Nikolas Rose uses the term “moral entrepreneurs” to describe such efforts to “symbolize their values in the law and extend power and authority over others” (123).
329 Carlson and Mero, 18.
330 James Dobson, the psychologist who founded Focus on the Family, suggests using a “neutral object,” like a switch or a paddle, to avoid associations between the parent’s hand and punishment; he argues a child might begin to flinch when a parent reaches out to touch the child at other times. He recommends spanking should not begin before the child is fifteen to eighteen months old. See “Dr. Dobson’s Family Talk,” online at http://drjamesdobson.org/Solid-Answers/Search?s=spanking.
331 Corporal punishment has been banned in thirty-four countries but is legal in all fifty states in the US. Thirty-one states have outlawed corporal punishment in schools and some states have entertained laws prohibiting it in homes. See the report of the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, a UNICEF-backed effort, at http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/progress/reports/usa.html
domestic violence. The manifesto associates abuse with “unnatural” family forms: “Women are safest physically when married and living with their husbands. Children are best sheltered from sexual, physical and emotional abuse when they live with their married natural parents. In short the natural family is the answer to abuse.”\textsuperscript{332} Clearly social recognition of the prestige of the natural family is a primary component of the manifesto plan.

Some platform items could potentially help a broader range of families depending on definitions, like the one that references a “family wage.” Specifically, it pledges to “encourage employers to pay a ‘family wage’ to heads-of-households [and to end] laws that prohibit employers from recognizing and rewarding family responsibility.”\textsuperscript{333} The family wage concept has been widely critiqued as problematic from angles of class, race, and gender.\textsuperscript{334} In addition to standard objections, defining who counts as a head-of-household is another consideration. Most likely, for the authors a “family wage” requires a household with children and almost certainly a marriage license. In any event, the proposal is to “encourage” employers; it is not apparent how. If businesses decide whose level of “family responsibility” is deserving enough to qualify for a “family wage,” nothing guarantees assistance will flow to those most in need of it. The manifesto also favors “private and public campaigns to reduce maternal and infant mortality and improve family health.”\textsuperscript{335} Supporting improved health for mothers and children is important given how the United States compares globally. On the other hand, universal health care that sees all people

\textsuperscript{332} Carlson and Mero, 23. For similar reasons, WCF opposes the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.
\textsuperscript{333} Carlson and Mero, 18.

\textsuperscript{334} For a succinct discussion of objections to the family wage arguments, see Frank Ridzi, “Family Wage,” in Encyclopedia of Gender and Society, Volume 1, ed. Jodi O'Brien (Thousand Oaks, Calif. : Sage Publications, 2009), 281-3. Alternatively, proposals for a “living wage” for all full-time workers might hold more promise for reaching those who are struggling to get by. However, recent trends to reduce employees’ hours to keep from defining them as fulltime for health care coverage purposes demonstrate how such policies can actually play out.

\textsuperscript{335} Carlson and Mero, 17. Note that focusing on mothers and children in this way reinforces a sense of them as especially dependent.
as worthy could “improve family health” as well as that of women who do not choose to have children and men in general.

The manifesto has a conservative economic perspective, but it is not as straight-forward as one might expect. The manifesto obviously leans toward private solutions to many problems even while it solicits government help with problems perceived to plague marital heterosexual families. As discussed in the previous chapter, the American Christian Right brought together a coalition of conservative Christians, social conservatives, and economic conservatives around the idea of family values in the 1980s. The manifesto acknowledges that history, but suggests the current movement may have reservations about fully embracing this tactic, as follows:

At times, this fusionist approach has worked well politically. And it has shown real economic results…Nevertheless, we also see that interests of “big business” and families are not always compatible. Unless guided by other ideals, for example, the great corporations seek cheap labor wherever it can be found and end to all home production, from clothing to meal preparation to child care. The whetting of appetites commonly takes precedence over family integrity in corporate advertising. As “globalization” now shows, families are not immune to capitalism’s “creative destruction.”

The authors support “truly free markets and equitable trade,” but favor businesses that depict positive family images in their advertising and “grasp their long-term interest in strong homes.”

The manifesto points to “an inherent dilemma in capitalist economics.” The explanation is worth quoting at length:

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336 Carlson and Mero, 24.
337 Carlson and Mero, 24.
The short-term interests of individual corporations in weak homes (places focused on consumption rather than productive tasks) and universal adult employment (mothers and father alike) versus the long-term interest of national economies in improved human capital. This latter term means happy, healthy, intelligent, and productive young adults, “products” that cannot be shaped by day care centers, let along by childless homes.

“Fusionist conservatism” tends to paper over such inherent tensions. We put families first. We see any economy and all of its components…as servants of the natural family, not the other way around.\(^{338}\)

Economic conservatives might agree with parts of this assessment, but the authors are drawing an important distinction between their own position and a particular version of free market economics. In recognizing this “dilemma,” they imply the need for some regulation of the market in order to protect vulnerable families. However, as I have argued above, many would say these ideas would tend to benefit people who are already somewhat privileged by current economic policies and societal norms.

The proposed policies would also actually reinforce neoliberal rationalities that already disadvantage many of the most vulnerable households. Lisa Duggan uses two key terms to explain neoliberal logic: privatization and personal responsibility, which define the intersection between neoliberalism’s culture and its economic vision.\(^{339}\) Privatization refers to the neoliberal strategy to transfer wealth and decision-making from public, somewhat accountable decision-making entities to individual or corporate, less accountable ones. Personal responsibility is the rationale through which social services are privatized. The burdens of this redistribution of costs and benefits affect people disproportionately according to hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality

\(^{338}\) Carlson and Mero, 25.
and class. Work requirements of the welfare reform of the 1990s, for instance, shifted the social safety net from public agencies to individual households through low-wage employment. Women and children of color took the brunt of this change.

The manifesto’s emphasis on private property and family-based solutions indexes privatization. Similarly, various tax advantages for married heterosexual couples while “ending the culture of dependency of the welfare state” points toward shifting a portion of public funds into middle-class families’ hands and decision-making. Moreover, the home-schooling community is an important US pro-family constituency. Its interests are reflected in a manifesto platform item that sheds light on questions of a natural family position on privatization:

We will craft laws that protect home schools and other family-centered schools from state interference. We will give real control of state schools to small communities so that their focus might turn toward home and family. And we will create measures (such as educational tax credits) that recognize the exercise of parental responsibility. We will end discriminatory taxes and policies that favor mass state education of the young.

A range of people across the political spectrum might echo the emphasis on community control, but to an extent, local school boards already offer that. The authors elaborate on the issue, explaining they do not favor vouchers because they “tend to make private and religious schools dependent on state funds [and regulation].” Instead, they advocate a per-capita child tax deductions with no link to schooling, tax credits for all forms of educational expenses (an Illinois law granting up to $500 per year of expenses is offered as a model), and full deductability of all educational expenses (including preschool, homeschool, university). Tax credits could be useful to everyone, but $500 per year would not go far for families in lower socioeconomic strata. Tax

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340 Duggan, 12-9.
341 Carlson and Mero, 198.
deductions are not particularly useful for families with low incomes. Moreover, increasing the tax breaks for those who prefer and can afford private types of schooling for their children is unlikely to invigorate their passion for public education. Pairing these details with the manifesto support for “ending discriminatory taxes” that favor public education seems likely to fuel an already widespread disinvestment in public education.

Questions of educational choice are at least partly about the manifesto’s mandate for family autonomy, which resonates with the other neoliberal mainstay, personal responsibility. The manifesto calls the natural family the “source of true sovereignty” and posits that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “proclaims fundamental rights to family autonomy.”342 Within neoliberal governmentality, however, gaining family autonomy will not necessarily produce the desired result. Lois McNay, following Foucault, suggests that autonomy “is not the opposite of or limit to neoliberal governance, but rather lies at the heart of disciplinary control through responsible self-management.”343 The modern private family is intensely governed.344 Viewed as a voluntary, natural arrangement, a family does seem to have a range of choices; however, as Nikolas Rose observes, the “responsible, autonomous family” is expected to manage itself according to prevailing norms.345 A breadwinner must bring home sufficient income to be legible as a responsible head of a household. Parents (especially mothers) must produce “normal” children who do not have runny noses or sticky fingers to gain a sense of respectability

342 Carlson and Mero, 6, 12, 21. See also the discussion of tax reform as a “significant step toward protecting family income and autonomy” (171).
344 Rose, 213.
345 Rose, 126, 176-201.
and avoid intervention. Marriage promotes an emotional and economic investment and the resulting desire for normalcy is the currency of governmentality.\textsuperscript{346}

Ideas in the manifesto reinforce rather than challenge twenty-first-century capitalism in another way. The natural family form itself is a normalizing machine. It encodes hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, citizenship status, etc. In its privileging of white, middle-class, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied, men who are American citizens, WCFs pro-family campaign helps legitimate justifications for paying some people less for their labor. If employers presume that female, teen-aged, or elderly employees are not “breadwinners” but “dependents,” it is easier to pay less for positions in which they predominate. If immigrants are imagined as “illegal” and lucky to have a job at all, they become more vulnerable to exploitative labor practices. Such rationales have helped maintain a flexible labor force that maintains a neoliberal economy.

The next two chapters examine WCF’s foray into transnational population and human rights politics. It will be useful to keep in mind that the natural family discourse encodes multiple hierarchies and that it resonates with aspects of neoliberalism. This chapter has focused on the many ways the \textit{Manifesto} reflects its authors’ US perspective, but they do envision an international audience. Two platform items specifically aim to adapt natural family rhetoric to global population concerns, the subject of the next chapter. One affirms that “the world is abundant in resources…[and the] breakdown of the natural family and moral and political failure…account for poverty, starvation and environmental decay.”\textsuperscript{347} The other affirms that “human depopulation is the true demographic danger facing the earth in this new century. Our

\textsuperscript{346} Rose, 129.

\textsuperscript{347} Carlson and Mero, 14.
societies need more people, not fewer.” This pronatalist discourse relies on the suppleness of the idea of family. WCF’s campaign attempts to capitalize on that flexibility, maintaining a sense of family universality that often works. The natural family provides a flexible and savvy brand.

This chapter has shown how the natural family provides a framework for a worldview with vision for moral order, as well as a plan for biological and cultural reproduction of itself. It is rooted in a long history of conservative Christian activism and deep-seated belief around family and gender roles. The natural family ideal resonates with people for whom such an order feels familiar and safe.

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348 Carlson and Mero, 14.
Chapter 4: The Endangered Natural Family and the Threat of Demographic Winter

*We do seek a sustainable human future.* With sadness, we acknowledge that the neo-Malthusian impulse has succeeded in its war against children all too well. Fertility is tumbling around the globe. A majority of nations have already fallen into “the aging trap” of depopulation. As matters now stand, the predictable future is one of catastrophic population decline, economic contraction, and human tragedy. Our agenda actually represents the earth’s best hope for a sustainable future.

*The Natural Family: A Manifesto*³⁴⁹

By United Nations calculations, on October 31, 2011 the world’s population surpassed seven billion. This milestone was framed in contradictory ways. At a press conference, the UN secretary-general called for world leaders to “Think about our children. Think about the future.”³⁵⁰ The press release touched on issues commonly associated with overpopulation, including environmental challenges, poverty, inequity, and wars. The same day, people representing pro-family organizations placed a full-page ad in the *Washington Post* celebrating “baby seven billion’s birthday.”³⁵¹ A smiling white baby dominated the Baby Seven Billion ad, which seemed directed to the UN announcement in its timing and its accusation that “the population controllers and the planned parenthood types believe we would be better off if she [baby seven billion] had never been born.”³⁵² The ad warned that global population is actually declining, and suggested that a number of miserable circumstances have resulted from a growing proportion of elderly people, such as “closing schools, falling real estate and stock prices, and moribund economies.” According to the ad-signers, “the real threat is not ‘overpopulation,’ but

³⁴⁹ Carlson and Mero, 23-4.
³⁵² Ibid.
underpopulation.” Both the UN press release and the pro-family ad aimed to stir fears about population changes. That such different perspectives stem from the same set of numbers highlights the complexity and politicization of population issues.

This chapter explores the techniques and ideologies proffered by WCF around the subject of population management. WCF partner organizations co-sponsored the ad and represent over half of its signers. Their efforts are directed at influencing international norms dealing with issues like contraception, abortion, and homosexuality. As Michel Foucault points out, demographic statistics and efforts to shape sexual norms are inseparable.353 This chapter interrogates WCF’s production of a population-decline crisis and the positioning of population statistics as “objective” and “factual” to bolster support for pro-family political goals. Specifically, I examine three documentaries produced by pro-family activists that argue that depopulation is a global crisis. My analysis is organized around three crisis themes: depopulation, family decline, and cultural extinction, elaborated below. These documentaries are especially useful for analyzing WCF’s discourse and transnational activism for three reasons. First, targeting global population issues is crucial in WCF’s move to take conservative US Christian activism to an international stage. Second, more than most materials, these films demonstrate a collaborative endeavor of WCF actors and, therefore, better represent the ideas and strategies of this transnational effort. Finally, these films are evidentially significant for WCF: they have been advertised on WCF partner organizations’ websites and shown and sold in pro-family gatherings, and the films are a primary vehicle for promulgating WCF ideas about population crisis and natural family solutions.354

353 Foucault 1978.
354 Throughout the chapter, I use WCF terms like natural family, traditional values, and nonintact family without scare quotes for ease of reading. This is not meant to indicate that I find them unproblematic.
The films’ assessment of declining fertility rates is not a fabrication; major demographic change is taking place. Even while the world’s population is growing, many Western countries are experiencing fertility-rate decline. In fact, quite a few countries are below replacement level, and their populations are predicted to decrease in coming years. For example, the fertility rates in Spain, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Japan are all around 1.4, and Latvia’s and Poland’s are near 1.3—well below the 2.1 replacement rate. The popular press reports regularly on the phenomenon. For instance, the *Economist* calls the shift “one of the most dramatic social changes in history.” Interpretations of the costs and benefits of this change vary widely, however. The *Economist* article sees the trend as moving toward a stable world population, proclaiming: “Lower fertility is changing the world for the better.” By contrast, the WCF documentaries argue that lower fertility rates have disastrous economic implications.

The three documentaries examined in this chapter offer a thorough, yet fairly compact representation of the WCF population narrative. I provide a close reading of the films, their techniques, their “facts,” and their conclusions. These WCF-popularized documentaries revolve around the theme of demographic winter. The producers—Barry McLerran, Rick Stout, and Steven Smoot—are Mormon activists involved in Family First Foundation, a WCF partner organization that strives to “enable pro-family nonprofit organizations to provide programs and

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Similarly, I use WCF references to the *West* and *developing countries*, categories that are arguably Eurocentric and chauvinistic.

355 A nation’s total fertility rate represents the number of children that an average woman is likely to have during her lifetime. To gauge population growth, the total fertility rate is compared to its replacement fertility level, which is the number of children that each woman must have to maintain the population at a constant level. The replacement fertility level is about 2.1 in most wealthy countries; in economically marginal countries with higher mortality rates, the replacement rate is higher. It is true that the world’s population grew exponentially more rapidly during the past century than ever before and will continue to grow for decades to come, but the rate of growth is slowing, particularly in Europe. Population predictions beyond the next generation are imprecise, but UN projections range from a slight decrease by 2100 to more than doubling, depending on future birth- and mortality-rate trends.

357 “Go Forth” 2009.
services that promote, defend and support the natural family.”  

The DVD set includes three documentaries, titled *Demographic Winter: The Decline of the Human Family* (2008), *Demographic Bomb: Demography Is Destiny* (2009), and *The New Economic Reality: Demographic Winter* (2010). Each disk is around an hour long, but the last title includes two discs, for a total of four hours. The repetition of certain charts, graphs, interviews, and other images indicates that they are intended to work together to build a cohesive set of arguments for activists. The first film was screened at WCF V and the second one at WCF VI. In addition to viewings at those and other pro-family gatherings, the films have aired on BYUtv, a Brigham Young University–operated television channel. BYU Broadcasting programming is available on its website and to over fifty million cable and satellite subscribers in the United States and millions more internationally. Similarly, the films have aired on the Eternal Word Television Network, which provides Catholic programming and news coverage to more than 148 million homes around the world through its radio, television, and online media. According to Stout, the films have also been screened at the UN, US Senate, European Union, and Toronto Film Festival.

Together, the films reveal a fear-based politics that marshals the energy of already-circulating anxieties about population and economic decline. They aim to secure social norms based on a set of gender and racial hierarchies. Their population-panic approach sheds light on WCF’s tactics of assembling demographic statistics to rationalize the need for heteronormative natural family reproduction. Furthermore, the films illustrate how population-size-based arguments easily become intertwined with an economic perspective on human worth. And

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358 See the Family First Foundation website at http://www.familyfirstfoundation.org/about_us.html.
359 See the BYU Broadcasting website at http://www.byub.org/about/.
whether the concern is too many or too few people, defining population size as a problem immediately draws women’s reproductive habits into question. Alarm about global depopulation is a key theme of this network of organizations engaged in transnational family-values politics based on the natural family.

This chapter is comprised of four sections. The first contextualizes the depopulation narrative as an extension of WCF arguments discussed in the previous chapter for understanding the natural family as having healing properties. The demographic winter discourse similarly presupposes and reinforces a familial disciplinary regime. WCF engages a politics of fear to build an international coalition. I have organized the remaining three sections to correspond to three crisis themes: population decline, family decline, and cultural extinction. The section on the population crisis introduces the *demographic winter* documentaries and shows how the films attempt to establish a tale of global depopulation leading to inevitable economic disaster. They present the argument that healthy economies require growing populations and that, conversely, declining populations produce economic depression. The films use a *numbers don’t lie* logic to establish the need for more babies. Ultimately, such reasoning commits women to a reproductive obligation. The third section concentrates on how the films delineate a family crisis as the cause of population decline; in fact, one of the films pointedly depicts this in a chart in which the term *fertility decline* shifts to *family decline* and back again. Women’s decision-making plays prominently in the documentaries’ explanation of family decline. I argue that the films depict women’s disordered gender behavior as the root of population decline by casting women as responsible for proper family formation. Combining expert testimony, statistics, and short vignettes, the films paint heteronormative families as “healthy,” “natural,” and therefore “happier,” and also as capable of (re)producing a society—and ultimately a world—that thrives economically, socially, and morally. The final section centers on how the films associate
population decline with a crisis of cultural extinction. Re-purposing feminist and postcolonial critiques of 1970s population-control activity, the films depict worries about overpopulation and proponents of reproductive rights as endangering vulnerable cultures and traditions by trying to foist contraception, abortion, and sterilization on economically peripheral countries. They portray developing countries as staving off new hegemonic Western sexual and family mores that would overrun their traditional practices. The films position the global pro-family movement as aligned with these “endangered cultures.” As I argue in this section, in dividing the world into the threatened and those who are threats, the films also divide the West: they cast the “good” part of the West as endangered, and Western feminist ideas as the most dangerous threat.

Endangered Family

The WCF focus on global population aims to lend a sense of urgency and universal investment in WCF’s profamily proposals. Knitting together family values and global population has been part of WCF’s agenda from its inception. As mentioned in previous chapters, WCF formed, in part, as a response to feminists’ successful push for a more woman-centered approach to global population issues at the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.

The last chapter explored the natural family common sense that marriage is the best path to individual well-being. I argued that social order centered on marriage is secured by disciplinary and regulatory regimes. Forming a marital family is part of the logic of neoliberal governmentality, which presumes that responsible citizens make choices that minimize their need for assistance. This chapter examines how WCF adapts the natural family discourse for a global audience through its narrative of depopulation. A population frame is astute. Demography is a sexual discourse—a mode of sexual ordering that presupposes the superiority of heterosexual
procreative sex. The idea of global depopulation helps re-open questions around sex-related issues like abortion, contraception, homosexuality. WCF argues that family breakdown has caused population decline and thereby economic problems; therefore, stimulating procreative marital family formation can produce healthy, wealthy, and happy populations. It is a persuasive discourse in that it makes individual decision-making the scapegoat for economic problems and offers easy answers and a sense of agency. WCF’s transnational activism aims to affect global norms and bolster pro-family efforts in countries around the world engaged in similar debates about sexuality. It also resonates with the logics of neoliberal governmentality.

The family is instrumental in regulatory and disciplinary regimes. Bourgeois family and modern states having developed together, so it is unsurprising that the family functions as a metaphor for imagining the state, as a model for building the state, and as a vehicle for state goals, what some have called familialism. Understanding this helps make sense of WCF attempts to incorporate natural family ideology into international norms. Michel Foucault’s work highlights the interaction of internal power dynamics within the family and that of society as a whole. Jacques Donzelot elaborates on Foucault’s ideas. His work shows how the family came to be an important instrument of government in “developing the quality of the population and the strength of the nation” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He characterizes this period as a time of “transition from a government of families to a government through the family.”

Mitchell Dean explicates and frames Foucault’s ideas in terms of governance of self and

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363 Lynne Haney and Lisa Pollard, ed., “In a Family Way: Theorizing State and Familial Relations,” in *Families of a New World: Gender, Politics, and State Development in a Global Context* (New York: Routledge, 2003, 1-16). Note also that “nation” is often described in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, patria) or home, and is similarly seen as something to which one is naturally tied, unchosen, like parentage. See Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, 143.
governance of others, what Foucault named governmentality.\textsuperscript{365} Dean describes governmentality as the way governments go about producing the kind of citizens they deem most conducive to accomplishing government’s goals. Wendy Brown describes governmentality as “techniques of governing that exceed express state action and orchestrate the subject’s conduct toward himself or herself.”\textsuperscript{366} A governmentality framework takes note of public policy that describes and incentivizes a set of norms and relies on citizens to weigh costs and benefits and choose to comply.

Sexuality is quite significant in understanding Foucault’s idea of governmentality. In fact, Foucault names the family as a site of deployment of sexuality, locating sex “at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population.”\textsuperscript{367} As Foucault puts it, in a society “‘with a sexuality’…the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used.” Foucault envisions sex as the pivot of two axes, one tied to the discipline of the body, the other to the regulation of populations. This combination of regulatory actions imposed on populations and individuals’ self-disciplining is what Foucault has named biopower. Sexuality, then, is where the individual body and the social body intersect.\textsuperscript{368}

modern family can be seen as a mechanism for executing public policy aimed at “developing the quality of the population and the strength of the nation.”

The existence of international governmentality helps make sense of WCF’s depopulation framing. Through liberal international government of the global population, various actors and authorities (like the World Health Organization and the UN Population Fund) focus on such concerns as global patterns of health, population growth and the control of its reproduction, the relationship between population and the environment, and movement and flows of populations and their management. Population problems interact with global governance of economy and security. Solutions can be developed and considered in the space of transnational civil society populated by NGOs, individuals, grass-roots groups, loose coalitions, and networks, like WCF. An idea can gain influence if it is adopted by a broad enough range of actors.

WCF’s emergence from the US Christian Right means it can draw on a wealth of experience in coalition building which it brings to its work in the transnational civic sphere. Like other organizations aiming for ideological persuasion, WCF employs emotional messaging. Fear is an inherent component of the WCF depopulation narrative: it warns that future disasters will come to pass unless people change their behavior. Political fear attempts to restore order, establish allegiance and identity, and clarify boundaries.

Corey Robin suggests that political fear is “a tool . . . created and sustained by political leaders or activists . . . because fear helps them pursue a specific political goal or because it reflects or lends support to their moral and

370 See Dean’s discussion in his chapter, “International Governmentality” (228-49). He draws on Foucault’s ideas as applied to the international domain, especially his lectures in Security, Territory, Population (London: Palgrave, 2007).
371 Dean, 244-5.
372 Dean, 242-3.
373 Bivins, 27.
political beliefs—or both.” Frank Furedi argues that a primary objective of today’s politics of fear is to build moral consensus and solidarity. As mentioned in earlier chapters, WCF is explicitly engaged in an effort to pull together “a great civil alliance of religious orthodoxies.” Political fear promises safety and certainty and confirms that the moral order is being violated. Jason Bivins describes a particular instantiation of US conservative evangelical politics that he calls the religion of fear. He characterizes it as “a mode of social criticism and a political sensibility . . . a discourse [with] pedagogic and representational aims.” It draws on emotional discourses “in order to commend specific cultural, behavioral, and affective responses to the sociopolitical issues it criticizes.” The religion of fear that Bivins describes posits demonological causes for political decline and engages political matters through fear by using conventions of popular culture’s horror genre. Although WCF’s depopulation narrative does not refer to evil or demons, it does create an Us versus Them dichotomy. WCF’s list of misguided actors and ideas parallels the list of sources of evil Bivins associates with the religion of fear. The danger from these “enemies” contrasts with the virtue of the natural family.

WCF’s promotion of the natural family as a solution to the crises it names is key to its strategy. This intertwining of threat and security corresponds to what Sara Ahmed describes as “the affective politics of fear.” In natural family discourse, the prospect of a bleak future rationalizes a need to secure social norms in the present in order to preserve “a way of life” or “life as we know it.” WCF’s production of crisis seeks to justify a return to pro-family values. The language of fear signals urgency, provides a rationale for global pro-family activism, and

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378 Bivins, 9.
379 Bivins, 9, 11.
380 Ahmed, 2004, 64.
facilitates alliances. Ahmed describes “the intensification of ‘threats’ which works to create a distinction between those who are ‘under threat’ and those who threaten.”  

In WCF’s pro-family discourse, the threat comes from those who advocate for sexual and reproductive rights.

A Population Crisis: Demographic Winter

WCF’s focus on global depopulation strategically facilitates US pro-family transnational activism—in terms of forming new alliances and framing its issues. It expands the thematic range for arguments WCF can make in favor of procreative, heterosexual, natural family morality. The films help WCF construct a narrative of crisis by stirring existing anxieties about changing gender and sexuality norms, economic instabilities, and immigration issues affecting many countries.

Documentaries set out to persuade us to adopt a particular perspective about the world.  

The WCF films are advocacy documentaries promoting a pro-family agenda and were produced for political reasons, as “weapons in a war of ideas.” They serve a pedagogical function for members of the transnational pro-family movement, providing activists with a portable delivery system of global rationales for conservative sexual norms related to population decline, including economic disaster and loss of cultural traditions, for example. The films revolve around a demographic winter theme and use foreboding music and data; they warn of sweeping social harms, including the collapse of social-security systems and other economic crises, the eventual loss of cultural tradition in countries with low fertility rates, and ultimately, the end of Western civilization. The documentaries locate the problem primarily in women’s marriage and childbearing decisions, especially divorce, cohabitation, delaying marriage, and

382 Bill Nichols, Introduction to Documentary 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), xv.
383 Nichols, 150.
preference for smaller families; they blame environmentalist, feminist, and LGBTQ rights movements for spreading “misinformation” that fuels these choices. Most importantly, the films highlight an impending depopulation calamity to solidify arguments for natural family values.

My analysis pays careful attention to strategies that the films use to establish their credibility and sense of urgency. The documentary form itself signals credibility, with its implicit pledge of truthfully telling an important story about real life. Documentary conventions, such as authoritative narrators, expert interviews, and statistics, bolster the sense that this is objective, dispassionate, factual evidence. At the same time, my analysis takes note of how these films, like all documentaries, use filmmaker tools like sound, images, special effects, and pacing to structure the story and strengthen their desired impact. Together, these elements play a strong role in generating the sense of crisis these films want to create.

To further their arguments, the films use several documentary conventions to construct a “voice of authority.” They represent themselves as objective by introducing copious statistics to establish population decline and the superiority of WCF’s familial ideal as scientifically proven matters of fact. They interlace expert testimony with images of charts and graphs to reinforce the message of authenticity. The “experts” are legible through formulaic practices: they are presented facing the camera, seated in offices full of book-lined shelves, with their names and credentials featured prominently onscreen.

Some analysis of the films’ experts is in order. Of the twenty-one featured in the first film, *Demographic Winter*, sixteen have doctorates and nine are affiliated with well-respected universities, mostly in the United States; six work for think tanks. Their areas of expertise include

385 Aufderheide 2, 90–91.
386 Aufderheide, 10–11, 90–91.
387 Nichols 2010, 74.
sociology, economics, demography, public policy, ecology, psychology, and philosophy. Sixteen of the experts are from the United States, four are European, and one is Australian. All appear to be white except one, who appears to be Asian American. Sixteen are men, five women. Several are affiliated with WCF organizations, such as Patrick Fagan, who is with the Family Research Council. Others have discernible political, religious, or professional commitments that are compatible with pro-family advocacy, such as sociologists Bradford Wilcox and Steven Nock’s association with the University of Virginia’s Marriage Matters project. The films hype the participation of 1992 Nobel Prize–winner Gary Becker, a politically conservative economist mentored by Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago. His work on human capital applies rational-choice theory to nonmarket behavior, including marriage, divorce, and childbearing. Although his ideas are highly regarded and influential, they are also controversial, and some people have even claimed, patriarchal. However, the participation of some well-known liberal-oriented experts is harder to understand. For example, historian Matthew Connelly of Columbia University is also featured in the films’ packaging and promotion. His portrayal in the films conveys key points of his important critique of population control that, to an extent, aligns with the films’ critique. At the same time, remarks in Connelly’s book about abortion, the Catholic Church, the UN, and conspiracy theories stand in contrast to the films’ and WCF’s assumptions. A review of Connelly’s book by Steven Mosher, president of WCF-partner organization Population Research Institute, criticizes the author for imposing a “complex narrative [of the past], feminist in conception, that leads him to a fundamentally wrong-headed

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390 Connelly appears prominently in Demographic Bomb, but had not seen it when I contacted him about it (personal communication, January 7, 2013).
conclusion.”\textsuperscript{392} It is worth noting that experts who appeared in a documentary by the same filmmakers have publicly denounced how their views were represented in that film.\textsuperscript{393} Therefore, experts’ appearance in these films should not be construed as wholehearted endorsement.

The films pair their authoritative tone with strategies to provoke and access fears about economic, racial, and sexual uncertainties likely to resonate with middle-class, married, conservative, white, heterosexual Mormons, Catholics, and Protestants. According to Bill Nichols, “[f]ilms speak through the images they select and arrange and the music that accompanies them.”\textsuperscript{394} In these documentaries, for instance, graphs represent falling stock prices and rising costs of social security, Medicaid, and Medicare as reminders of current financial worries. Charts that show falling Western birth rates and rising immigration rates trigger xenophobic anxieties. Mood-setting devices seem designed to produce affective responses to enhance the films’ arguments, employing music and narrators’ voices to set variously ominous, comforting, or mocking tones. Images of children trudging through snow, children disappearing from playgrounds, and empty playground equipment contribute to the menacing feel. Similarly, brief, nonverbal vignettes of families interspersed throughout the films access familiar narratives to explain current crises, such as the “logic” that divorced mothers’ single-ness is the cause of their poverty. Likewise, the sense of contentedness depicted in a traditional family scene provides sharp contrast with various representations of nonintact families. These techniques, examples of which are further detailed below, combine themes of depopulation, economic disaster, and family crisis, emphasizing the natural family as a place of security and as a solution to societal problems.

\textsuperscript{394} Nichols, 2010, 75.
Depopulation is central to the demographic winter documentaries’ arguments. The global population-decline framework provides an international scale for WCF’s discussion of procreative habits and proffers economic justifications for worldwide investment in encouraging natural family formation. The demographic winter theme sets a tone of decline and forms a frame for positing decreasing population as a global crisis. Yet, in spite of the large-scale nature of this dangerous transformation, it is presented as undetected by most people—and all the scarier for it. The first disk cover explains: “One of the most ominous events of modern history is quietly unfolding. Social scientists and economists agree—we are headed toward a demographic winter, which threatens to have catastrophic social and economic consequences. The effects will be severe and long lasting and are already becoming manifest in much of Europe.” Charts and graphs show falling fertility rates by country to buttress the projection and render population decline as fact. New America Foundation demographer Philip Longman attests to the long-term expectation that population decline in many countries is inevitable, given current patterns.

The films argue that fertility and population decline inevitably lead to economic decline. To support this thesis, they marshal the authority of economists—notably Gary Becker. One of his contentions is that women increasingly entered into wage labor and had fewer children because, as the market attached a higher value to women’s time, the opportunity cost of staying home became too high. The documentaries combine excerpts from his interview with those of other economists to connect declining population and economic catastrophe. They argue that there will not be enough young people to pay for social programs for growing elderly populations or to “keep the trains running” or buy baby-boomers’ houses when they are ready to retire and downsize.

The documentaries emphasize low fertility rates, scrolling the list of low-rate nations repeatedly throughout each film. Graphics depict an inverted pyramid, with many retirees on the
top supported by only a few workers at the bottom. One chart shows plummeting birth rates correlating with higher tax rates. Harry Dent, a Harvard MBA and president of the HS Dent Foundation, argues that as people age, they tend to spend less money; therefore, the economies of aging societies face long-term contraction.\textsuperscript{395} As he speaks, two graphs are slowly brought into alignment and superimposed on each other to show how their peaks and valleys coincide. One is of US births and the other is a Standard & Poor’s stock market index. Dent argues that decreasing birth rates mean that baby boomers will not be able to sell their homes as they retire; his warning is accompanied by scenes of real estate signs blowing forlornly in cold, snow-covered neighborhoods. Graphics of snow-covered maps of Europe show snow spreading around the globe to signify a growing demographic winter catastrophe.

Depopulation is further visually represented in the films through images of disappearing children—disappearing from school classrooms, family rooms, and playgrounds. Children sledding down wintry hills vanish; images of empty swings and teeter-totters call attention to the absence of children. Without making an explicit anti-abortion argument, these images nevertheless call to mind pro-life lamentations for the loss of over fifty million US children since \textit{Roe v. Wade} legalized abortion.\textsuperscript{396} In addition, the “figure of the Child” is an emblem of reproductive futurity.\textsuperscript{397} Calling attention to children routinely serves to regulate political discourse. The Child embodies the ideal citizen in whose name adult behavior is justifiably

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{395} According to its website (http://www.hsdent.com), HS Dent Foundation is a private “economic research and forecasting company” that provides economic predictions and advice based on demographic information. It argues that baby-boomers’ spending peaked during their child-rearing years, fell off just before retirement (ages 48–63), and, somewhat controversially, that stock market trends followed suit.
\item\textsuperscript{396} As an example, Concerned Women for America launched the “Red Envelope Project” in protest when President Obama revoked the “gag rule” in 2007. It called on grassroots efforts aimed at sending fifty million red envelopes to the White House conveying notes that explained it represented one child who died in abortion.
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Depictions of disappearing kids are interspersed with charts and graphs featuring downward birth- and fertility-rate trends to reinforce the message. The images are no doubt geared to resonate with worries already circulating in many countries. Latvian MP Inese Slesere brings these worries into the films, fretting that low birth rates threaten “the very survival of the Latvian nation.”

WCF, then, is far from alone in its call for more babies in response to falling birthrates. The congress’s pronatalist discourse finds resonance with others who view the family as a cure for various social ills. Like other pronatalist movements, WCF’s is inherently interlocked with childbearing, motherhood, and women’s sexuality. When it comes to shaping the population, women’s bodies are often ideologically linked to the larger social body, sometimes overtly through direct regulations that limit access to contraceptives or abortion, but also through less obvious laws, policies, and discourses. Pronatalism reasserts patriarchal controls on women’s sexuality; in fact, a pronatalist rhetoric inevitably interpellates women as mothers in the social body. As illustrated in the following section, the demographic winter documentaries frequently depict women as mothers; moreover, they insinuate that procreation is women’s duty to society, and that failure to have children is unhealthy for women.

398 Edelman, 10.
400 Pronatalism can be defined as a “political, ideological, or religious project to encourage childbearing by some or all members of a civil, ethnic, or national group” (Brown and Ferree 2005, 8).
401 Douglass 2005, 8–9.
Women’s imprudent choices figure prominently in the Family First Foundation films’ explanation of the demographic emergency. Women’s dangerously nonprocreative trends are relayed through “factual” reports and charts that associate their lack of fertility with economic disaster. For example, a several-minute segment in The New Economic Reality (Part 1) presents these portentous statistics. First, a graph shows that in the United States, white women dropped below replacement-level fertility in 1971. Meanwhile the narrator reports that only Mexican American immigrants have saved the United States from the fate of European fertility decline, as Hispanic women tend to marry earlier and have more children. White women, in other words, have not done their part. Next, charts depicting falling fertility rates in Italy, Spain, and Europe in general flash onscreen while demographer Nicholas Eberstadt—of the conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute—discusses the “march toward sub-replacement fertility.” Later, an animated graphic shows a factory on the left, with four male stick figures and six female ones inside. On the right is a house with three females and four males; between them is a circle made of two rounded arrows labeled economy steadily spinning clockwise. The word widget spins around the circle toward the house, while dollar signs spin from the house toward the factory. Longman states: “Never in history have we had economic prosperity accompanied by depopulation.” The economy circle turns ever more slowly and stick people vanish one by one until two women remain in the factory and one woman in the house, as the circle grinds to a halt. One interpretation suggests that when women are alone both in the factory and the home, this leads to economic collapse. The graphic clearly indicates that smaller populations lead to financial disaster. Within the context of the films’ other messages, the implication is that women’s failure to have enough babies is to blame.
The documentaries’ explanation of catastrophic fertility decline centers on changes in women’s role in society. The first film, *Demographic Winter: The Decline of the Human Family*, explains that modern economies need growing populations, and that many developed countries are experiencing below-replacement fertility levels. It posits five causes of fertility decline through testimony from social scientists. Such expert testimony is interspersed with brief vignettes that link individual decision-making to falling fertility rates. Short family scenes feature women looking dismayed as children vanish. For instance, in one vignette, a little girl is on a teeter-totter, a halo of sunlight behind her; on the other end is a woman with long dark hair—presumably the girl’s mother. Up and down they go, smiling, until unexpectedly the child disappears. Mom’s brow furrows and she stands alone, looking perplexed and dismayed. Meanwhile, a narrator’s voice intones: “We have entered into a new phase of modern history . . . one that we desperately need to understand.” The entire episode amounts to twenty seconds near the beginning of *Demographic Winter*. The image of disappearing children brings an implicit air of menace. As Ahmed explains, discourses of fear are concerned with “the preservation not simply of ‘me,’ but also ‘us,’ or ‘life as we know it,’ or even ‘life itself.’”\(^{403}\) The intertwining of individual women and depopulation sets up women’s career, marital, and sexual decisions as responsible for threatening not just a way of life, but life itself—the survival of the human species.

The documentaries build up this sense of peril step by step, beginning in *Demographic Winter*. A web-shaped graphic with Fertility Decline at its center lists these five causes for such a decline: women working, prosperity, the sexual revolution, the divorce revolution, and inaccurate assumptions. The first cause, *women working*, focuses on Becker’s theory of the growing value of

\(^{403}\) Ahmed, 2004, 64.
women’s paid labor, resulting in higher opportunity costs for having children. He also associates the growing number of working mothers with women’s increasing participation in higher education, remarking that there are currently more women enrolled in college than men, which, in the context of the film, seems to connote deviance.

The second cause, prosperity, also links fertility to the growth of women’s education and wage labor. In the film, Becker explains that higher aspirations cause couples to want to spend more on themselves and their children—hence choosing to have fewer children, and investing more in each child. In the context of a “fertility crisis,” the insinuation is that this is rather selfish; further, the narrator remarks: “There seems to be one predictor that explains fertility levels better than any other. And that is desired family size as expressed by women.” In other words, when women are more educated and prosperous, they desire and have fewer children. The narrator’s tone is matter of fact and many demographers would agree with these claims. Tellingly, however, in the final disk of the series, women working becomes women’s revolution in the Fertility Decline graphic. The films clearly insinuate that women’s economic and educational choices are not only misguided, but also rebellious.

The third cause of fertility decline, the sexual revolution, also concentrates on women. An array of sociologists casts women’s sexual behavior, especially extramarital sex, as suspect. Their testimony has an implied sense of longing for a moral standard that has passed. For instance, sociologist Steven Nock declares that “once we began to travel down the road toward gender equality and all the other changes that are associated with it—including birth control—everything changed.” University of Chicago sociology professor Linda Waite remarks that, among women who came of age in the 1960s or later, a much higher percent were sexually active

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405 Ibid.
before marriage and have had more partners. She observes that a result of the sexual revolution is that “it is not as socially stigmatized for women to have children while unmarried. It used to signal that they were having sex while unmarried, well—duh!” Given the broader context of the films, the inclusion of this statement seems to imply a certain moral repugnance, suggesting that society was better off when extramarital sex and out-of-wedlock child-rearing were properly ostracized. Interestingly, since even out-of-wedlock babies increase the population, disapproval of extramarital sex and single parenting seem inconsistent with the depopulation narrative.

*Demographic Winter* implies that women are responsible for steering men’s sexual and marital habits to ensure society’s cultural and biological reproduction. Norval Glenn, a sociologist at the University of Texas at Austin, explains that men no longer need to marry and assume responsibility for the sake of sexual gratification, implying that this is because women are sexually available. In cohabitation, he continues, “the male has no plans for marriage . . . it’s simply an arrangement of convenience.” Kay Hymowitz, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank, calls them “child men [or] gamers, spending two plus hours a day playing video games.” In her opinion, men “have a harder time growing up without women than women do without men.” Clearly, men are to “man up”; the implication is that women are responsible for making them into grown-ups by saving sex for marriage and making them fathers.

Taken as a whole, this presentation of changes in women’s education, work, marital, and sexual habits points to a presumed societal cost of women’s failure to be good mothers and wives; it argues that these changes have led to demographic anomalies portending economic disaster. Furthermore, sociologists in the film argue that the increasing number of cohabitating couples has had an impact on fertility because they tend to have fewer children than married couples and frequently delay childbearing until it’s too late. This framing indexes another kind of panic—that
surrounding women’s age-related infertility—implying that defying the natural order of things may no longer bring immediate shame, but women will live to regret it anyway.\(^{406}\)

In fact, *Demographic Winter* suggests that life without children is purposeless. For instance, a twelve-second vignette depicts a young couple sitting on the floor as a toddler starts to walk from one toward the other. The little boy vanishes midway in his journey, leaving both would-be parents looking pained and confused. In the next scene, the couple is sitting on a sofa with a bowl of popcorn between them, staring at a television and appearing apathetic. In this alternative scenario, they do not seem to have a child—or much enthusiasm. The film hints that, in the childless version of their lives, this couple has failed to achieve adulthood. Elsewhere in the film, the husband is depicted as one of Hymowitz’s “child men/gamers,” clapping a video-game controller in each hand while his wife looks on, seemingly resentful and lonely.

The “purposeless” life of this couple is presented in sharp contrast to that of a happy and fulfilled family. In the next vignette—a forty-second sketch, the longest of the film—we catch a glimpse of a natural family. Expert observations connect it with the immediately preceding story of the childless couple. First, a demographer notes that people need a reason to have children—if not economic ones, then something else. Glenn comments that “economic changes would [not] have had much impact in the absence of value changes. . . . It’s basically a matter of change in attitudes, values, beliefs . . . characteristics of the individual.” The focus moves without further explanation to a spacious, yet cozy family room. Dad is sitting on a sofa reading to a little girl; mom enters the room and sits beside dad, sipping contentedly from a coffee cup. The camera pulls back and shows three older children, ranging from about ages 5 to 12. Dad begins reading to

\(^{406}\) Robin Truth Goodman observes that female fertility ultimately is the unquestioned basis for considering sexual difference and defining genders, therefore, “…infertility upsets the stability of categories based on the phallus” (xiv). *Infertilities: Exploring Fictions of Barren Bodies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
the two younger children, while the camera angle shifts to mom’s perspective as she smiles and lifts her cup for another sip. She, and we as viewers, survey the scene, which expands to include the older boy and girl doing their homework. All is well, the scene seems to say. This depiction attests to the health, security, and happiness of the natural family home, which appears to be white, middle class, heterosexual, and procreative. This sense of security is in sharp contrast to the scene that follows, set outdoors during the autumn. Significantly, dad is not in this segment. The younger boy rides into view, then the older one. Mom and the girls appear next, walking side by side. Gradually, however, the children vanish one by one and mom is left standing with only the youngest child. She looks bewildered and forlorn, very much like the newly childless mother on the teeter-totter. This story, as framed by the experts, posits individual responsibility for the population problem; it conveys that certain attitudes, values, and beliefs—presumably those that inspire one to form a heteronormative family—lead to contentment and a well-ordered life. Delaying or foregoing childbearing, on the other hand, results in regret and disorientation, especially for women. Women must be sutured to husband and children to be happy, a theme that is reinforced throughout the films.

The insufficiency of mothers to parent children without fathers is driven home in several ways. For instance, the fourth cause, the divorce revolution, does not directly reference women as instigators, although women’s increasing financial independence is often cited as a factor in higher divorce rates, along with women’s rising expectations of finding fulfillment in marriage.407 Perhaps the filmmakers count on viewers to fill in that narrative. The video shows divorced women as regretful and suffering. A good example is the twenty-second vignette depicting a young mother and father arguing at a dinner table with their two daughters. The father gesticulates heatedly as the mother sits silently across from him, eyes downcast, and the girls

watch, looking miserable. Suddenly, the father stands up, pushes himself away from the table and vanishes. Meanwhile, the voice-over intones that “the divorce revolution has meant that neither men nor women can count on their spouse being there next year.” In the final scene, the dad’s chair is empty and the backdrop shifts from an expansive, well-lit upper-middle-class dining room to a smaller, darker room, with what appears to be a plywood-covered window. Divorce, the scene suggests, means misery and poverty for women and children. In other portions of Demographic Winter, charts and graphs represent single-mother-headed and other nonintact family households as consistently linked to negative outcomes, such as child delinquency and incarceration, poverty, children’s poor performance in school, and so on. The specters of the bad mother and the pathological family loom large in these examples. As with out-of-wedlock birth, divorce seems irrelevant to Demographic Winter’s population argument. Fixating on these issues highlights the fact that the depopulation crisis narrative is interconnected with pro-family politics.

The final documentary, The New Economic Reality, revisits the problem of divorce, couching it in economic terms. One expert who advances this line of reasoning is Patrick Fagan, a psychologist with the Family Research Council’s Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI), which focuses on family, marriage, religion, and America’s social problems. Fagan describes the various forms of “broken families” as having less human capital than “intact families,” thereby leaving their children… “significantly disadvantaged” from a young age.

Meanwhile, an intact family of five strolls arm in arm on a sunny beach. Next, Becker argues that neglect at an early age is compounded at later ages, leaving kids “unprepared to engage in modern economies.” “An increasing number of children are being born into such households,” the narrator’s voice adds over the image of a pie chart showing 40 percent unwed women and 60 percent married women. Such households contribute to growing social and economic inequality,
concludes Robert Michael, professor of public-policy studies at the University of Chicago.  

Becker adds that this loss of human capital results in the loss of innovation, which will be increasingly important for depopulating countries grappling with the problems of productivity that come with fewer skilled workers.

The depiction of men in *Demographic Winter* reinforces the breadwinner male ideal. Men are featured prominently as experts, but in the family vignettes, men are mostly an endangered species. They are featured obliquely or partly hidden, as exiting or disappearing, or completely absent. Men disappear as part of the affective strategies of the film’s effort to nudge anxieties about changing gender norms. The implication is that women are doomed to life without men as a result of their push for independence and their attempts to emulate “masculine” behavior (like working for pay, pursuing demanding careers, and having sex for pleasure). The film’s “child men” reference a societal failure to help boys become grown, economically responsible men. “Autonomous” families need a male breadwinner. Together, the films depict a West that is suffering from a masculinity deficit. Failed family formation, as well as the “nanny” state, have squelched masculinity and we are suffering the economic consequences.

*Demographic Winter’s* fifth and final cause of fertility decline, inaccurate assumptions, focuses on debunking the notion of overpopulation with charts and graphs showing declining fertility rates. Economic experts reiterate the connections between declining fertility and serious economic outcomes, such as dwindling contributions to social security and declining consumer spending. Having raised women’s reproductive decisions as the cause of population decline, the film, by linking fertility and financial decline, implies that women’s failure to procreate leads to

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408 Robert Michael is one of three principal investigators whose research resulted in the popular press publication *Sex in America*, critiqued for its normative assumptions about sexuality, among other things (see Poovey 2000, 86–112).
catastrophic economic results. These inaccurate assumptions are prominent in the second film, *Demographic Bomb*, in which they are used to identify “endangered” populations and to help distinguish the “good guys” from the “bad guys” in global “culture wars” over defining the family.

*A Looming Crisis of Cultural Extinction: The End of “Life as We Know It”*

The idea of cultural extinction, the third crisis theme woven throughout the documentaries—especially the last two—is instrumental in defining potential alliances. The films frame global depopulation as threatening humanity and cultural practices that are identified as fragile. In Ahmed’s terms, the films distinguish between those who are under threat and those who threaten.\(^4^0^9\) But it is Western civilization—specifically, the often unmarked categories of the white, patriarchal, heteronormative, and Christian parts of Western civilization—that seem most threatened in the documentaries’ account of the coming demographic winter. This is apparent, in part, from the fact that all the families in the vignettes described above appear to be heterosexual, white, and middle class; almost every expert appears to be white as well. More specifically, what is endangered is “life as we know it,” as Ahmed puts it\(^4^1^0\)—a worldview, the “way of life with transcendent meaning” mentioned on WCF’s website. In the films’ terms, this way of life is in danger because of declining numbers; white Western women are not having enough babies. And it is endangered because of the loss of hegemonic legitimacy: people are not “naturally” forming the kinds of families it takes to reproduce natural family values. Ironically, the villain, as it turns out, is the West and its “sex without babies” mentality. The documentaries accomplish this demonization by positioning the pro-family movement alongside developing countries being

\(^{4^0^9}\) Ahmed, 2004, 72.

\(^{4^1^0}\) Ahmed 2004, 64.
pressed into accepting Western sexual and reproductive practices, such as contraception, abortion, and homosexuality. According to WCF, the West that is applying the pressure is the UN and transnational advocates for sexual and reproductive rights—namely, environmentalists, feminists, and queer activists. Further, the ideas of these “post-family” activists have caused a shortage of laborers in Western countries; therefore, they are drawing from the men in developing countries to make up the difference, consequently leaving the sending countries “fatherless.” The presumption that migrating laborers are men is telling, because in reality, women make up about half of international migrants. These films solicit so-called developing countries as allies in critiquing Western neo-imperialism in order to lambaste transnational efforts to define sexual and reproductive rights for women and sexual minorities as universal human rights. Moreover, the documentaries conspicuously display people from economically marginal countries—especially from countries in Africa—to fend off charges of Euro-centrism and racism, even while the perspective of the films seems to be a desire for people to stay in their places within their own national borders. The films, then, label three key threats: feminists, characterized as being too independent; queers, characterized as nonprocreative; and immigrants, or at least immigration, characterized as “out of place.”

The documentaries’ narrative about heteronormative family formation—as the solution to worries about immigration and the flow of people and ideas that accompanies global capitalism—is not surprising. Robin Truth Goodman has proposed that “the coming apart of the family enters culture as a moral problem, usually about women,” even though it is more closely related to capital shifts and mobility. WCF’s natural family narrative is exemplary of Ahmed’s argument

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412 Robin Truth Goodman, viii.
that “the moral defense of the family as a way of life becomes a matter of ‘global politics.’”\(^{413}\) It is worth quoting Ahmed at length:

> [T]he reproduction of life itself, where life is conflated with a social ideal ("life as we know it") is often represented as threatened by the existence of others: immigrants, queers, other others . . . [allowing the family to be] idealisable through the narrative of threat and insecurity; the family is presented as vulnerable, and as needing to be defended against others who violate the conditions of its reproduction . . . heterosexuality becomes a script that binds the familial with the global: the coupling of man and woman becomes a kind of . . . giving birth not only to new life, but to ways of living that are already recognisable as forms of civilization.\(^{414}\)

The demographic winter politics of fear, then, produces the natural family as both threatened and as the ideal solution. At the same time, it defines which people are threats and helps bind together an alliance of the threatened—it constructs, in other words, a We and a They.

This We/They construction resonates with *The Natural Family Manifesto*. The They side of the equation in the Manifesto is imprecise. This can be advantageous; as Ahmed points out, the more we do not know about what or who it is we fear, the more the world becomes fearsome.\(^{415}\) At its vaguest, They are described as “a terrible cloud of ideologies,” which includes socialism, feminism, communism, sexual hedonism, racial nationalism, and secular liberalism.\(^{416}\) They are “partisans of a post-family world [who] have taught that liberty means freedom from tradition, from religious faith, from family, from community.”\(^{417}\) They are also “forces [of a] global

\(^{413}\) Ahmed, 2004, 144.
\(^{414}\) Ahmed, ibid.
\(^{415}\) Ahmed 2004, 69.
\(^{416}\) Carlson and Mero 2007, 8.
\(^{417}\) Carlson and Mero, 18.
campaign [at UN conferences] designed to tear down the natural family in developing nations.”

They are “modern social engineers, who would create their own artificial orders based on social class, or racism, or the violence of androgyny (the negation of woman and man).” And certainly They understand the population crisis in terms of too many people rather than too few.

In the Family First Foundation documentaries, They are branded with espousing coercive population-control policies. The films draw a dotted line between sexual and reproductive rights advocates and the global population-control movement of the 1960s and ’70s. In fact, in the second film, Demographic Bomb, current reproductive rights activism is depicted as a continuation of the population-control movement. The film’s title is a reference to Paul Ehrlich’s influential book The Population Bomb, which warned of overpopulation and famine. In Demographic Bomb, Ehrlich stands in as a symbol of the population-control movement which the films blame for wide-spread inaccurate assumptions that led to fertility decline.

To drive home the argument that Ehrlich’s predictions were flawed, clips from an interview with him and references to his book are frequently accompanied by humorous-sounding music that seems geared to mock his overpopulation ideas. Demographic Bomb discredits him through experts’ testimony that the population-control movement has come to be understood as coercive, especially in its application in economically peripheral countries. Using snippets from filmmakers’ interviews with prominent scholars on the subject like Connelly, the film traces postcolonial arguments against population control; it points out that the movement’s ideas were rooted in eighteenth-century warnings by Thomas Malthus on overpopulation that proved to be

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418 Carlson and Mero, 11.
419 Carlson and Mero, 19.
The film also traces the population-control movement’s association with social Darwinism and eugenic suppositions, arguing that overpopulation issues are more productively viewed in terms of the distribution of resources than of too many people. Connelly notes that the eugenics movement was associated with progressives and their goals of “making people better.” The film intends for this remark to help link eugenics and the population-control movement to current progressives who advocate for sexual and reproductive rights.

Those who worry about overpopulation or promote reproductive rights are treated as similarly misguided or threatening. For example, Hania Zlotnik, the director of the UN population division until 2012, is featured discussing the need for education and access to family planning and contraceptive materials in countries with high fertility rates. As with Ehrlich, each time she is shown, mocking music plays in the background. A previous population division director, Joseph Chamie, is shown saying that “countries have rules about lots of things—marriage, driving, burial.” The original context of the remarks is unclear, but the narrator comments that “what he means is that population control should be involuntary.” Pro-family activist Fagan calls this “contraceptive mentality.” Longman comments that women’s rights, gay rights, and environmentalism have all been informed by 1970s thinking and have a common cause in population control. He looks sadly into the camera and, shaking his head, intones that if the population is seen as too big, there is no need to commit one’s life to motherhood, there is no public goal in suppressing homosexuality. In a somber tone of voice, he adds that the environmental movement takes its strength from fear of population growth, and “if they’re wrong, these organizations will have to find a new way of arguing.” In other words, he says that these movements have a big investment in maintaining the overpopulation claim.

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Demographic Bomb links 1970s global population-control ideas to feminism. It points out that these ideas got traction because people were personally motivated to control their own fertility. The reference is apparently to feminists’ activism for birth control. The narrator adds that this “rationalization for having sex without babies” caused motherhood and family life to become less valued. This observation is accompanied by a graph showing the average age of marriage in the United States climbing steadily upward from the 1960s to 2000. Then the graph is replaced by a black-and-white photo of individuals reminiscent of Woodstock-era hippies: most individuals have their eyes shut, and some faces are turned upward, with euphoric expressions. In such a context, the placement of this photo indexes the 1960s and ’70s drug culture and sexual permissiveness. Another graph follows showing the percent of US women who are childless climbing from the 1980s to 2000. Next is the image of a poster from a 1975 UN International Women’s Year (IWY) regional conference; it includes the heading Tumbling Traditions and lists the conference talks. The then newly adopted IWY symbol stands out: a dove intersected by a female symbol and an equal sign. Beside the poster is a chart of falling US birth rates between the years 1960 to 2000. The narrator mentions that this decline in birth rates has been a worldwide phenomenon. Clearly, these images and comments invite viewers to associate feminism with birth control, sexual licentiousness, the UN, the global population-control movement, and a depopulation crisis. In fact, WCF’s campaign turns feminist critiques of population control to its own ends—namely, to critique feminists and promote alliances for conserving heterosexual, procreative marital family norms. Meanwhile, the demographic winter documentaries situate pro-family activists as champions of poor countries.

Demographic Bomb casts African countries as “ideal” victims of the West. It reinforces its conceptualization of the West as a conflation of the coercive population-control movement and the current reproductive rights movement, both construed as fostering sexual permissiveness. The
film uses a variety of illustrations to shape this narrative; for example, images said to be “inspired by actual population control posters” feature black silhouette cutouts that appear to represent Africans. The narrator introduces the first poster image this way: “Apparently some people believe African countries should not be allowed to follow their own path.” The poster depicts black silhouettes of a man and woman with a baby, talking to a black silhouette of a nurse behind a counter; cutouts above this appear to represent an IUD, a pill bottle, and a large syringe. The poster’s caption reads: “Fewer people. Happy Life.” After a few seconds the people fade away. Experts characterize the introduction of contraception as intruding upon local values.

    Jennifer Morse, who is credited in the film as having taught economics at both Yale and George Mason universities for fifteen years, comments that modern Western sexual mores and contraception—the whole contraceptive mentality of sex without babies—have been pernicious in Africa, contributing to the instability of the family, “and in a place like Africa, the family means so much to people. . . . It’s their security.” The film intersperses comments from Africans to create an impression of homogenous African endorsement of pro-family causes. Mary Amadu, the director of the Department of Social Welfare in Ghana, says that “[o]ur total survival as a nation depends on strong families. And that is what we’re working towards.” Bertin Babadoudou, from Benin, who is the vice chair of the UN Commission for Social Development, explains that in his country, as in much of Africa, the “exportation of values from somewhere else” has contributed to a crisis in the family there. This narrative unambiguously places the pro-family movement on the side of African countries against the erosion of local family values.

422 Tellingly, according to its website (http://www.ruthinstitute.org/pages/DrJBio.html), Morse is the founder and president of the Ruth Institute, which aims to “make marriage cool.” It is a project of the National Organization for Marriage, which is a political organization working against the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States.
In this regard, all three films echo ideas from the natural family manifesto, which aligns WCF with non-Western countries, as the following demonstrates:

[I]n the early twenty-first century, there is little that is “Western” about our views. The voices of the “post-family” idea are actually today’s would-be “Westernizers.” They are the ones who largely rule in the child-poor, aging, dying lands of “the European West.” It is they who seek to poison the rest of the world with a grim, wizened culture of death. Our best friends are actually to be found in the developing world, in the Third World, in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, South America. Our staunchest allies tend not to be white, but rather people of color. Others seek a sterile, universal darkness. We seek to liberate the whole world—including dying Europa—for light and life, for children (emphasis in original).

This quote helps clarify how WCF means to sort the We and They of the world. The pro-family movement stands with its best friends—the marginalized developing world and people of color—against the post-family voices “who seek to poison the rest of the world.” This is where a separation of the West into two parts becomes apparent. One is the European West, “dying Europa,” whose “child-poor, aging, dying lands” seem to place it with the other marginalized, all co-victims of the post-family voices “who largely rule.” The second West, comprised of “today’s would-be ‘Westernizers,’” promotes the “culture of death.” The label associated with this West, “the voices of the ‘post-family’ idea,” is unquestionably intended to be attached to feminist, LGBTQ, and environmental activists. Those who advocate for the possibility of sex without babies are branded as seeking a “sterile . . . darkness.” In this context, sterile appears to be gendered, referencing those selfish women who fail to reproduce the “light and life, for children” who would be the antidote to the apparent family and fertility declines that threaten to end life as

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we know it. Note also the use of the pronoun we in this quote; it is obviously set apart from They, those who are part of the threat. But We also seems to be located outside of the developing world. Similarly, dying Europa seems to be there rather than here where We are. We may be located hovering above “the whole world,” which We seek to liberate. But the We perspective is more logically positioned in North America, the only inhabited continent not expressly named. This reading of the manifesto can work as a lens for further interpretation of how the documentaries classify various people(s).

The documentaries construct Europe’s population woes and developing countries’ westernization as cautionary tales. Anxiety about the flow of people lies at the heart of the films, and WCF’s commitment to people of color and non-Western Others seems flimsy. Take the comment about “values from somewhere else” made by Babadoudou. Although the films have this line coming from a man from Benin, the imported values he mentions are apparently the same ones that WCF hopes to stave off in the United States. The films also fret about the fatherless families resulting when men migrate from economically poor though child-rich countries to the economically wealthy though child-poor ones. Clearly, this worry is about not only immigration, but also unassimilable immigrants. This anxiety is unsurprising, since the social body implied by WCF’s natural family discourse, as with most pronatalist programs, includes a sense of social order: the biology-based social hierarchies of gender and race. Note that concern about fatherless families in developing countries mirrors the nervousness about such families formed by women who divorce or have out-of-wedlock children in the West. Just as WCF’s natural family ideology is based on an essentialist understanding of gender roles and the division of labor that is centered around the notion of a married mother in the home, the films seem to hold an essentialized notion of racial and national identities. These ideas are apparent, for instance, in remarks like this one by Larry Jacobs, who handles global media for WCF: “It could
be that the French will disappear—that there will be no more native-born French people.” The comment implies that only “native-born French people” can truly constitute the French. Later, the narrator remarks almost matter-of-factly that “the most common boy’s name in Amsterdam is Muhammad.” In the Western imagination, Muhammad is a recognizable index of racial, national, and religious Otherness. The implications seem to be that Others are overcoming native European populations, and that the United States is next. The suggestion is that authentically Western women in each country with population decline must have more babies as a safeguard for securing culture and values within borders.

Conclusion

WCF hopes to form alliances for institutionalizing natural family values as the global norm. Its fabrication of a population crisis, intertwined with themes of economic, gender, sexual, and racial chaos and cultural extinction, stimulates and intensifies already circulating anxieties. Solutions centered on familiar ideas about the married, procreative mother in the home resonate with many around the world, especially religious conservatives. Several WCF organizations have NGO status, whose presences at UN conferences have been effective. One such organization, United Families International (UFI), claims that “[w]e have been successful in affecting the outcome of numerous UN conference documents and in promoting respect for the family, marriage, life, religion, parents and national sovereignty.” After the 2012 Commission on the Status of Women, UFI claimed to have been instrumental in providing “negotiating language and encouragement and support to . . . pro-family country delegations.” Women’s rights activists similarly reported that not since the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing had there been

“such a stalemate between women’s rights advocates and ultra-conservative forces. Once more, culture and tradition were invoked to stall progress on critical women’s rights issues and provoke a political deadlock. Fundamentalist forces see this impasse as a great ‘pro-family’ victory.”

Activists considering an alliance with the global pro-family movement might note the contradiction in WCF’s neo-imperialism construct: while claiming to represent the third world as endangered by Western ideas of gender and sex, it simultaneously fuels anxieties about the decline of the West. Proponents of sexual and reproductive rights should also take note: population decline panic may lead to coercive policies not unlike those employed in the population-control movement. Promoting women’s education, employment, and reproductive health care as strategic for driving down population makes reversing any such gains attractive for staving off a demographic winter. In fact, making such an association reinforces a focus on population reduction that feminists supposedly redirected toward women’s human rights at the 1994 UN conference in Cairo.

This chapter’s examination of the demographic winter discourse highlights how population-reduction-based arguments are readily associated with the eugenic history of the population-control movement, which inevitably codes certain populations as too many. It also illuminates how WCF’s pronatalist arguments similarly assume that certain groups need to increase their numbers. To the extent that any organization hopes to advocate for the marginalized, perhaps its cause would be well-served by making its case based on recognizing broad economic, racial, gender, and other structural inequalities, as well as the importance of political freedoms rather than stimulating fears of populations being too few or too many.

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426 Asian Pacific Forum 2012
427 Connelly 2008, 382
Chapter 5: The Persecution of Natural Family Believers: The World Congress of Families and Human Rights Discourse

As the Year of Our Lord 2009 draws to a close, there are new signs of turmoil in the family system of Western Christian Civilization. Marriage rates are in full-scale retreat; at the same time, the proportion of children born out of wedlock soars, climbing this year over 40 percent in the United States. The protagonists of the Sexual Revolution keep the Christian Home in their gun sights; the court-driven push for “Same Sex Marriage”—a direct repudiation of the Judeo-Christian sexual ethic—claims ever more states and nations. Plummeting birthrates portend the disappearance of a once vital Christendom. Recent, conventional pro-family strategies to encourage marriage and marital childbearing have faltered.

Email to “Pro-Family Friends of The Howard Center and World Congress of Families”

The overt rhetoric of Christian persecution in the end-of-year email message quoted in the epigraph is not prominent in most WCF materials, although more subtle versions are not without precedent. The idea that “the protagonists of the Sexual Revolution keep the Christian Home in their gun sights” strikes a particularly menacing note. Conveying a sense of urgency about an issue is routine, but couching it in terms of malevolence is less frequent and typically references the natural family rather than Christian or even “Judeo-Christian” existence. Given the WCF goal to form “a great alliance of orthodoxies” that purports to welcome Jews and Muslims, the explicit focus on Christianity is odd. In end-of-year fundraising letters like the one excerpted, however, it is more frequently the case. The email sent at the end of 2010 includes a paragraph that is almost identical. Such letters are sent near Christmas and typically include Christmas greetings as well, but no acknowledgement of other religious holidays. Undoubtedly, WCF

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428 Email update to “Pro-Family Friends of The Howard Center and World Congress of Families,” December 18, 2009, on behalf of the WCF Secretariat, in reference to: “A Special Christmas Letter from Allan Carlson, President of the Howard Center.”
targets subscribers and members to receive fundraising letters, people expected to be friendly to pro-family movement causes. Nevertheless, as I argue below, a sensibility of Christian persecution and righteous anger provides a key component of the affective force to WCF’s transnational pro-family movement. Activists use human rights discourse in an attempt to legitimize a sense of injury and justify their outrage.

This chapter argues that WCF uses human rights discourse to frame a sense of lost prestige. WCF must use a discourse of human rights in part because it is the language of the realm in international deliberations today, but it does serve WCF purposes. The specific appeal of universal human rights for WCF is as much or more the “universal human” part as the “rights” part of the equation. WCF’s use of UDHR 16(3) conjures a universal unmarked family that is “the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” However, as this dissertation points out repeatedly, the natural family form is marked by its key characteristics: it is heterosexual, marital, procreative, middle class, white, and orthodox, or at least “religious.” As an “alliance of orthodoxies,” WCF usually makes claims in the name of the natural family, not Christianity. That is because the injury articulated by transnational pro-family activists is not most accurately understood as religious persecution so much as the loss of a privileged unmarked status. In the persecution narrative, activists in effect “mark” themselves as part of “traditional” or “natural” or Christian families in order to “unmark” themselves. They claim the mantle of universal “natural family” humans, which the UDHR putatively favors as part of “fundamental” group units. WCF activists claim to speak for the generic natural family and religious people in general, even though it is as conservative Christians that they feel affronted.

Conservative Christians are supposedly “persecuted” by the demand to obey new laws and social

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429 I have subscribed to the quarterly publication, *The Family in America*, throughout my research years.
430 I am grateful to Sande Garner and RaShelle Peck for their insight during multiple conversations about this subject.

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conventions that do not privilege their religious and moral sensibilities, such as equal and respectful treatment of LGBT people and relationships. Their resistance to do so has marked them as “intolerant.” Religious and ideological pluralism has forced them to make explicit that which in the past could usually “go without saying.” For example, the push to expand reproductive and sexual rights has required conservative Christians (and others) to articulate objections to women’s freedom to follow their own conscience regarding such intimate issues. The ideas that women are to remain virgins until married or that women’s ability to give birth and breastfeed define them are no longer (as widely) taken for granted. A clearer recognition of what is at stake for conservative Christians in these debates could help provide a starting place for more useful conversations about balancing rights claims based on freedom of conscience, religion, gender, and sexuality.

The last chapter argued that WCF rhetoric tends to formulate a We versus They dichotomy. This chapter continues to explore who constitutes the We and who constitutes the They by examining WCF’s use of human rights discourse. WCF foregrounds a universal right of a (presumably straight) person to marry and found a family. WCF emphasizes the call of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to protect motherhood and childhood, roles which symbolically define the heterosexual, procreative, and autonomous husband/father as the ideal universal subject. These conservative Christian father-mother-children families and their supporters are the “We.” “They” are those who call for rights for same-sex couples to marry and found a family, for women’s rights to independent sexual and reproductive decision-making and resources, and/or for children’s right to access religious and sexual information outside the family. This chapter also focuses on the passions called upon, stimulated, and circulated through the production of these categories and the rhetoric that constructs them. Pro-family activists feel provoked by proponents of sexual and reproductive rights—rights they see as illegitimate. WCF
supporters defend the freedom of speech and conscience of religious people (almost always Christians) to speak up ardently against sexual rights and to take stands like refusing to serve gay and lesbian customers. Cases in which such actions have prompted accusations of discrimination or hate speech appear in WCF accounts as religious persecution, as this chapter describes below. This narrative of persecution fuels righteous anger that unites a conservative Christian movement against a foe that threatens to marginalize the natural family worldview. However, this narrative also generates a clear picture of WCF’s particular worldview. Far from speaking for religion in general, or religions everywhere, or even Christianity, promoters of the natural family represent a particular Western conservative Christian perspective.

WCF indicates that the UDHR is the principal source for its conceptualization of the “natural family.” Calling on the UDHR is part of WCF’s attempt to validate its assertion that “the natural family is universal, an attribute of all humankind.” For WCF, human rights discourse provides not only a basis for making common cause with other global actors, it also provides a putatively neutral and secular, yet transcendent sounding, vocabulary and ideal for making the WCF case for protecting the natural family. Far from universal, however, the family WCF locates in the UDHR is a distinctive heteronormative marital family form that situates gender complementarity as one of its key defining features. Moreover, the version of family WCF envisions in the UDHR is so integrally enmeshed in the natural family religo-political worldview as to be inseparable from it. In fact, free speech entails public proclamation of this worldview and verbal attacks on others for WCF proponents. Similarly, WCF indirectly invokes the UDHR guarantee of people’s right to their own particular religious beliefs and practices. WCF claims it strives to protect religion and “traditional values” from a perceived worldwide

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encroachment of militant secularism. However, the idea of “religion in general” sometimes slips into a particular conservative Christianity in WCF discourse. For instance, at the WCF VI gathering in Madrid, on panels entitled “Can You Have Democracy and Human Rights without God?” and “Hate Speech Laws and Anti-Discrimination to Marginalize Believers,” no speakers represented religious perspective outside of Christianity. Moreover, WCF understands the UDHR as informed by, or even inhabited by, specifically Christian ideals and assumptions. Furthermore, WCF’s positing of a universal family ideal and protection for “religion in general” revolves around an axis of racial, gender, and sexual norms. Human rights claims based on this family model protect heterosexual white male privilege.

WCF’s use of human rights discourse is an example of crafting its message in presumably secular terms, but the idea of universality also allows the movement to make” truth” claims on behalf of generic families and religious people in general. I argue it is an aura of transcendent, universal truth surrounding human rights that most appeals to WCF. As this chapter will show, human rights discourse fits with their presumption of a universal truth about human nature and what is right. WCF uses human rights discourse, intertwined with natural family language, to further its goals of moral regulation around sexuality. As in the case of WCF’s approach to questions of global population, a thorough examination of how WCF marshals the UDHR reveals ambiguities and contradictions that help to explicate natural family logic and its appeal within and beyond the US Christian Right. As such, this chapter provides a case study in how conservative ideological and political projects marshal human rights discourse.

This chapter argues that WCF human rights-based discourse is at least partly a reflection of conservative Christian’s sense of threat to their dominance in terms of a constellation of issues surrounding gender, sexuality, marriage and family formation. The discourse focuses on the universal status of the natural family even though the movement is comprised almost entirely of
Christians. The concerns are not questions unique to Christian tenets per se, but WCF has stimulated and capitalized on a righteous anger on which conservative Christians can draw in order to claim religious persecution. The chapter includes three main sections. The first section attempts to historicize the concept and discourse of human rights discourse to capture its changing meaning and mythopoetical significance as well as its mobilization for political uses. Doing so highlights how the contemporary idea of a universalized human rights project has been manipulated by various groups, including conservative Christians, to advance political causes without naming them as such.

The second section of this chapter explicates WCF’s use of the UDHR through an examination of how a key WCF text, *The Natural Family: A Manifesto*, borrows from specific UDHR passages. The analysis points to an ideal straight western white male Christian subject of universal rights. This section investigates WCF’s use of the words “family” and “religion” as unmarked categories. I emphasize the particular family form and set of religious traditions which WCF invokes even as it couches its argument in the language of universality. Central to WCF’s campaign for the natural family is WCF’s claim that such a family is “is the basis of all healthy and progressive civilizations”[^432] and that its definition derives from the UDHR. Nevertheless, my analysis of contradictions in WCF’s application of the UDHR as well as its omission of various passages from the document reveals WCF’s ambivalent relationship with the UDHR and some of its themes. In fact, WCF uses certain UDHR articles to attack other human rights treaties and other UDHR provisions. Specifically, WCF and its partner organizations condemn the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), all the while exalting the UDHR’s call for special care for motherhood and childhood.

The third section of this chapter examines WCF’s framing of human rights claims to moral and religious freedom. The analysis highlights the slippage between WCF worries about religious freedom and loss of conservative Christian prestige. To do so, I consider a WCF protest statement that characterizes US support for LGBT rights as an assault on religious freedom. The accusation is framed as cultural imperialism—as the US forcing its ways on countries with “traditional values.” WCF couches its argument in “religion in general” language that advances the idea that these values—specifically concerning sex and gender—are common to all or most religions. However, reading the WCF protest alongside the remarks of various speakers at WCF VI in Madrid reveals a conservative Christian-centric perspective. The speakers share a view of sexual and reproductive rights as illegitimate. They cast those who speak out against such rights as heroic and critics as persecutors. The pro-family movement is at times depicted as the majority view being pushed around by vocal minorities with influence that exceeds their numbers. At other times, it is a beleaguered minority among others, a victim of intolerance.

Advocacy for religious and moral freedom would seem to value and protect difference. WCF’s human rights discourse is less a call for religious freedom than for the elevation of a particular worldview—that of the global pro-family Christian Right—to international dominance.

433 It is important to interrogate the source of “traditional values,” especially in formerly colonized countries where colonial presumptions often resulted in disruptions of usual kinship practices. As one example, British colonial intervention in Nyasaland in the 1930s elevated the nuclear family over the existing extended family and also expected families to adjust to a patrilineal model. These changes privileged men and denigrated women, and also elevated the role of husband-father to the detriment of brother, elder, chief, and son. See Cynthia Brantley, “Colonial Africa: Transforming Families for Their Own Benefit (and Ours),” in Families of a New World: Gender, Politics, and State Development in a Global Context, ed. Lynne Haney and Lisa Pollard (New York: Routledge, 2003), 139-155.
Recent scholarship historicizes the UDHR and the ideas that inform it, illuminating its particular underpinnings and its rise to ubiquitous use. Many scholars and activists trace the concept of human rights to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century, or even earlier, thought. In fact, human rights are often imagined as timeless, universal, self-evident, and neutral. At the same time, others point to Western influence in drafting the UDHR as well as in its implementation, interpretation, and enforcement. Similarly, feminists have argued that, although women are formally included in the UDHR, in practice, men are treated as the ideal subject of human rights and women’s equality and freedom from discrimination are not prioritized in the international arena. This section does not aim to resolve such questions, but to situate WCF’s understanding of human rights within the context of these contestations. Therefore, the focus here is on explicating WCF’s particular understanding of the origins of human rights and how it fits within the politics of rights discourse. Doing so helps make sense

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438 Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to resolve such debates, I am most persuaded by accounts that take such asymmetries into consideration and focus on the distinct uses of rights discourse that emerged in the late twentieth century. Like Joanna Bourke, I believe that [r]ights do not arise out of universal, timeless moral truths but are won in social struggles in the real world.” See Joanna Bourke’s review of Lynn Hunt’s *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, entitled “Sentimental Education: The Invention of Human Rights,” *Harper’s Magazine* (May, 2007), 89-93.
of the affective power of WCF’s appeal to the UDHR as a tool of persuasion, including through its imagined timelessness and universality.

Histories of human rights often identify a “deep roots” origin. Two well-regarded examples are Micheline Ishay’s *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* and Lynn Hunt’s *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. Ishay sees human rights as an integral part of human history, pointing to various religious and secular traditions as their initial source, including Hinduism, Buddhism, the Stoic ethics of the Greeks and Romans, Confucian values, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. She argues that these traditions informed Enlightenment thinkers, to whom she gives credit for our modern understanding of secular human rights. Similarly, Lynn Hunt roots universal human rights in the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. She argues that new social practices helped create a psychological change that made these revolutionary ideals possible. She specifically suggests that the rising popularity of novels—especially epistolary novels—increased people’s awareness of the inner lives of others, thereby producing an “empathy effect.” The fashionability of individual portraiture provoked a shift toward seeing people as individuals. At the same time, according to Hunt, these changes made way for eighteenth-century revolutionaries to declare rights that were imagined as universal.439 In his *Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen*, Paul Gordon Lauren focuses more broadly on a long-standing global struggle for human rights. He seeks to include contributions of non-Western sources, including an Islamic visionary, Burundi proverbs, Chinese sages, in addition to Roman stoics and thinkers like Thomas Paine.

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439 Of course, at the time, only white male property holders could exercise these rights and, for many, meaningful access to rights remains elusive even today.
Other scholars focus more specifically on the post-World War II moment as the origin of human rights as we recognize them today. An excellent example is Mary Ann Glendon’s history of the collaboration to fashion the UDHR, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Glendon provides a detailed picture of the creation of the document, viewing the UDHR idealistically, as materializing when “the mightiest nations on earth bowed to the demands of smaller countries for recognition of a common standard by which the rights and wrongs of every nation’s behavior could be measured.”

She argues that a core of fundamental principles is widely shared, if not literally universal, and that the UDHR articulates these basic values.

By contrast, Samuel Moyn’s *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* suggests that today’s understanding of human rights, is different enough from the understandings of the past as to be practically unrelated to previous instantiations, including the 1948 UDHR. He critiques what he calls myths of deep roots. Even in 1948, he argues, the idea of human rights initially occupied a peripheral space in the international imagination. The UDHR initially reinforced national sovereignty; no one imagined human rights as providing an avenue of redress for individuals from state misdeeds, and certainly not as justification for intervention from other states. Even during decolonization, the impulse was toward collective self-determination, it was about national liberation from empire not about state-sponsored relief for individuals within a nation. Moyn argues that it was not until the 1970s, with the collapse of universalistic schemes (socialism, for instance), that such uses became thinkable and the novelty of the new meaning.

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440 Glendon, xv.
441 Glendon, 222-3.
442 See Matt Moore, “The Lives of Others,” *Dissent* (Winter 2011), 106-110, for a constructive review of *The Last Utopia* that takes issue with the pointedness of Moyn’s separation of today’s human rights from previous ideas.
443 Moyn, 12.
444 Moyn, 45-7.
became recognizable.\footnote{Moyn, 118, 122. Moyn credits Jimmy Carter with elevating human rights to a policy of the state in 1977. Later, Reagan used human rights and democracy promotion as justification for neoconservative geopolitics (151-60; 217).} Human rights were taken up by various social movements beginning in the 1970s and 1980s and became the creed of a transnational social movement, a morality of the globe—an ideology.\footnote{Moyn, 171-5.} Human rights-based nongovernmental organizations rose dramatically in the 1980s—especially after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.\footnote{Moyn, 218-20. See also Ara Wilson, “The Transnational Geography of Sexual Rights,” in \textit{Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights} (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 252-3.}

It is during this time of NGO proliferation and participation in United Nations conferences that WCF was conceived. Feminist NGO efforts at the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development resulted in a paradigm shift from a focus on demography to a women-centered focus on rights, including people’s decision-making about reproductive health and fertility. The Vatican, opposed to Program of Action provisions concerning contraception and abortion, formed alliances with fundamentalist Islamic countries to effect compromises in the language. The Beijing Conference on Women the following year attracted US conservative Christian organizations such as Focus on the Family and Concerned Women for America (both of which eventually became WCF members) and WCF held its first congress in 1997.\footnote{Doris Buss and Didi Herman, \textit{Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 44-46; Jennifer S. Butler, \textit{Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized} (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 103-6; Michelle Goldberg, \textit{The Means of Reproduction: Sex, Power, and the Future of the World} (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 151-7.}

The idea of “sexual rights” has taken shape in recent decades, representing an extension of rights discourse into a seemingly new direction. The mobilization for sexual rights spans a wide array of aspects of sexuality. It can include variously “sexual orientation, gender identity, intimate relations, erotic practices, health, reproduction, bodily integrity, autonomy, and the...
potential for pleasure.” The framing of sexual rights evolved through many of the same international conferences and conversations that led to shifts in thinking about population at the 1994 conference in Cairo. This is far from a unified or concerted set of activists or ideas. Yet the danger of growing acceptance of sexual rights looms large on the agendas of NGOs in the WCF network.

As NGOs expanded and were institutionalized, the nature of human rights discourse shifted as well. Eventually, Moyn argues, activists were forced to offer programmatic vision. In spite of their perceived moral transcendence of politics, human rights became a political agenda. The thrust has shifted from primarily being about morality to providing the core language of international politics, a move that has not been fully acknowledged. Therefore, it is a politics that often does not see itself as political. In fact, human rights discourse is used to justify “schemes of transformation, regulation, and governance,” often in the service of the powerful over the powerless. Glendon also acknowledges that governments and interest groups “increasingly deploy the language of human rights in the service of their own political, economic, or military ends.”

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450 Ara Wilson dates the origins to as early as the 1970s, including the 1975, 1980, and 1980 UN conferences on women; the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights; the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo; the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen; and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing (Wilson 253). Examples of relevant international organizations include the International Lesbian and Gay Association, which formed in 1978; the Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights, which formed in 1984; and Amnesty International, whose advocacy included sexuality-related rights since at least 1982.

451 Moyn, 221-227; Glendon, 219; Buss and Herman, 44.


In spite of this politicization, WCF invokes a UDHR aura of transcendence, timelessness, and universality. In doing so, WCF is not necessarily unusual; however, as I argue below, for WCF this universalizing move is connected to WCF’s tendency to collapse Christianity with “religion in general” and an understanding of the UDHR as having particular Christian roots. A sense of timelessness is apparent in the many allusions to it in WCF materials. For instance, UDHR references are conspicuous in multiple places on the WCF website, as highlighted in this discussion of the natural family: “The definition of natural family comes from a working group of the World Congress of Families, crafted in May, 1998, in a Second Century B.C. room in the ancient city of Rome. It is informed both by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and by the findings of social science.”

The emphasis on dates implies that these are very old ideas, even while mentioning social science affirms their currency—hence timelessness—for today. Human rights and/or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are also mentioned in all but one of the formal declarations that conclude each of WCF’s congresses. The most recent declaration, from the 2013 WCF VII, raises the UDHR in the second sentence: “The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed by every nation on earth, states that ‘men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to

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455 The tone, language, and allusions of declaration of WCF IV (Warsaw, Poland, 2007) differ noticeably from the others. For example, it references the Holy See’s 1983 Charter of the Rights of the Family and other documents authored by Pope John Paul II instead of mentioning the UDHR. Each major WCF gathering is hosted by a local organizing committee; and it is not particularly surprising that the declarations vary in their emphases and “flavor.” I see the distinctiveness of the Catholic references in the WCF IV declaration as an anomaly. Note that the prelude to the most recent declaration (WCF VII, held in Sydney, Australia in 2013) describes the declarations’ purpose this way: “At every World Congress of Families, a declaration is read to complete the proceedings. This is a summary of findings—put together with all the presentations and discussions in mind—which reaches a formal conclusion and gives participants a mind-frame with which they can move forward.” The declaration turns almost immediately to quoting Article 16.1 and 16.3 from the UDHR, adding that this declaration is in “agreement with earlier World Congresses and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”
marry and to found a family…The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.’ (Article 16.1, 16.3).” Universality is invoked in mentioning that “every nation on earth” has signed the document and in the phrase “without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion.”

At the same time, WCF materials acknowledge and rely on the specificity of the post-World War II creation of the UDHR and posit an explicit Christian influence. The UDHR is absolutely central in the natural family manifesto and the book-length expansion on its ideas, *The Natural Family: A Manifesto*. In the first paragraph of the introduction, the authors explain the relationship: “We cast the document [the natural family manifesto] as a cohesive statement of a pro-family worldview, with the concept of the natural family at its core. Put another way, we sought to put flesh on the skeletal concept of ‘the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society,’ a phrase found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” The entire book, then, is purportedly built around this UDHR clause. The book locates the origin of the Article 16 family reference in “the 1948 debates of the United National Commission on Human Rights.” More specifically, the Manifesto authors, Allan Carlson and Paul Mero, attribute the Article 16 ideas largely to Charles Malik and Rene Cassin. Carlson associates both men with Christian Democracy in another book he authored, which was published the same year as Manifesto, referencing Malik as “an Arab Christian Democrat,” and Cassin as a Jew who “was

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458 Carlson and Mero, ix.
459 Carlson and Mero, 76.
460 Carlson and Mero, 76. Glendon would agree, to an extent (64-9; 92-3).
highly sympathetic toward postwar Christian Democracy.”  

He characterizes the post-war Christian Democratic movement as inspired by an “animating spirit [based on] a dream to revive Christendom; indeed, to build a democratic version of the old Holy Roman Empire on the ruins of a continent recently ravaged by war.”

Carlson works to give Christian Democracy a moral presence and weight in the UDHR that makes it more acceptable to draw parallels between the two, and even to view the Christian framework as built in to the UDHR. Carlson’s book Third Ways examines several episodes in history in which different thinkers have developed economic systems he characterizes as “third ways,” as neither capitalist nor communist. One chapter is devoted to Christian Democracy, which Carlson describes as a “distinctly Christian response to modernity.” He calls the UDHR “an enduring legacy of postwar Christian Democracy, naming Malik and Cassin “the key architects.” Carlson sees Christian Democratic influence in the UDHR conceptualizations of “natural,” “the notion of a “family wage,”” and “personalist” ideas about “the right to life” and “the dignity and worth of the human person.” For Carlson, personalism is the origin of the idea of “human dignity” in the UDHR. Carlson and Mero explain that Manifesto draws inspiration from Christian Democracy’s concept of personalism, focusing on its idea that “the whole person only emerges through relationships with others, in social structures such as the family.” The strand of personalism embraced by Manifesto might be thought of in terms of theological

463 Carlson 2007, 153.
464 Carlson 2007, 167. Carlson also credits Post-World War II ideals of the movement with fueling Europe’s economic renewal and preliminary visions of a European Union in that the “animating spirit [of 1950s European treaties] came from [Christian Democrats’] dream to revive Christendom.”
465 Carlson 2007, 168. See also Moyn 74-80, 191.
466 Personalism encompasses a broad array of ideas and thinkers. Carlson and Mero cite these particular men’s ideas on personalism: Abraham Kuyper, Emmanuel Mournier, Etienne Gilson, and Etienne Borne (74-5).
humanism.\textsuperscript{467} In fact, Carlson describes personalism as a “‘Christianized’ version of individualism.”\textsuperscript{468} So even in this historically specific approach to the UDHR, WCF’s ideas tend toward a universalizing Christian framework.

\textit{Natural Familism and Human Rights}

The idea of family is an integral component of WCF’s interpretation of the UDHR. \textit{Manifesto} draws parallels of universality among the UDHR, the natural family, Nature, Christianity, and religions in general. The natural family manifesto brings them together this way:

[W]e object to current attacks on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document which proclaims fundamental rights to family autonomy, to a family wage for fathers, and to the special protection of mothers.

We do believe that the natural family is universal, an attribute of all human kind.

We confess to holding Christian values regarding the family: the sanctity of marriage; the desire by the Creator that we be fruitful and multiply; Jesus’ miracle at the wedding feast; His admonitions against adultery and divorce. And yet, we find similar views in the other great world faiths. We even find recognition of the natural family in the marriage rituals of animists.

Because it is imprinted on our natures as human beings, we know that the natural family can be grasped by all persons who open their minds to the evidence of their senses and their hearts to the promptings of their best instincts.\textsuperscript{469}

\textsuperscript{467} More specifically, the \textit{Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy} distinguishes between strict personalism which they associate with Emmanuel Mounier and Thomistic personalism which they associate with Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain (who played a role in drafting the UDHR).

\textsuperscript{468} Carlson 2007, 162-4.

\textsuperscript{469} Carlson and Mero, 21.
This excerpt implies that there is a consensus on what “Christian values” about “the family” are and that this manifesto speaks for Christians. Moreover, it states that “other great world faiths” have reached the same consensus and “even” animists apparently share these ideas about “the natural family.” But one does not have to be religious to share these views because the natural family is part of “our nature as human beings.” Those who fail to “grasp” the concept have ignored the empirical evidence of their minds and senses and have denied their “best instincts.”

The idea of instincts in this case seems to float between two possible meanings: first, a biologically-based, unconscious behavior (a la “nature”); and second, something more akin to “gut” response—or perhaps more accurately, a response that comes from the heart, where presumably one’s “best instincts” originate. This second meaning is closer to the idea of morality. This view sees morality as universal, as existing “in the world,” to be discovered by any person who recognizes the truth of it, rather than as contingent ideas to be agreed upon by people trying to get along with their differences. The manifesto aims to use the UDHR to connect the natural family to previous timeless documents and ideals—to God and Nature.

Yet even at WCF gatherings, diverse ideas about families have emerged. As just one example, in 2009 in Amsterdam, at WCF V, His Royal Majesty Drolor Bosso kafor Adamtey I spoke on “The Effects of the Absence of Fathers: Labor Migration, Urbanization and Family Breakdown.” He contextualized his comments this way: “I speak from an African perspective. More specifically, I speak as a man, a father and a leader of the SE (Shai) People of the nation of Ghana. My understanding of the meaning of family and the roles and responsibilities of a father are grounded in the culture and traditions of my people.” He prefaced his main remarks by specifically discussing “the meaning of family in the African context,” providing this explanation:
A family consists not only of the nuclear family of husband, wife and children, but also of the extended relations such as cousins, uncles, nephews, clan heads, grandparents, and so on. Relationship ties are very strong and extended family members play a role equivalent to that of the nuclear family. All are treated with equal amounts of love and care. The notion of family also extends further into the larger community. In Africa, children do not belong simply to their parents and siblings; they belong to their parents, the extended family and the entire community. Each child is seen as a precious member of society; they are cared for and watched over by everyone.

Adamtey paints a vision of what constitutes “family” and who owes care to whom that vastly differs from the one proffered by most WCF texts. “Traditional African perception of the family tends to be large,” was the way another speaker at WCF V put it. He further observed that “when we compare the western nuclear family to the African traditional family we do observe that both have weaknesses.” Nevertheless, most WCF advocates consistently hold up the father-mother-children ideal as universal and fundamentally flawless. The manifesto attempts to make these points through associating the UDHR and the natural family.

In a Manifesto chapter that deals with the UDHR directly, “The Bulwark of Liberty,” the authors go on to delineate the specific clauses of the UDHR on which the natural family manifesto draws in developing its principles. Manifesto refers to them as the “family clauses,” which address such issues as marriage, motherhood, and children’s education. The way

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Manifesto frames the passages, as well as its omission of other passagess, is telling. The following examination of these frames and contradictions highlights the Manifesto’s predisposition toward a heteronormative patriarchal family ideal. Further, the rights the Manifesto envisions for this family include privacy and autonomy from government regulation on the one hand, and government-sponsored economic privileges on the other.

The Manifesto calls first on the UDHR Article 16(3): “Most importantly, our key term ‘natural family,’ derives from Article 16, paragraph 3, of the UDHR: ‘The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.’” It goes on to introduce each of several other UDHR passages this way:

Alongside article 16, paragraph 3, other clauses of the UDHR merit our support:

Regarding family autonomy, Article 12: “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence.”

Regarding the right to marry, Article 16(1): “Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.” and (2): “Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.”

Regarding a father’s right to a family wage, Article 23: “Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection (emphasis in Manifesto).”

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Regarding the protection of motherhood and childhood, Article 25(2):

“Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.”

And regarding parental rights, Article 26(3): “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”

Assembling these passages in this manner conjures a particular family form: heterosexual, marital, procreative, and hierarchical. Fathers work for pay while mothers and children are dependent. In fact, it sounds exactly like “the breadwinner/homemaker/child-rich family sustained by a ‘family wage’” of the 1950s. And UDHR drafters may have had just such a family ideal in mind in 1948. Nevertheless, a review of sections left behind in the plucking of these particular passages is useful. For instance, the remainder of Article 23 declares that “everyone”—presumably including mothers—has the right to work, to equal pay for equal work, and to trade union membership. Similarly, Manifesto omits the remaining sentence in Article 25(2), which goes on to specify protection for children of unmarried parents. In failing to address these articles, the authors seem unwilling to acknowledge UDHR gestures toward protection of non-marital households. At the same time, Manifesto drops the end of Article 12

472 Carlson and Mero, 76-7.
474 Glendon credits Hansa Mehta with raising concerns about women’s rights repeatedly during the drafting of the UDHR (38, 90, 111-2). Article 16 clauses do naturalize the heterosexual, two-parent family, but it is important to note that they also articulate a more egalitarian relationship between the sexes than what was practiced in virtually all countries at the time. For further discussion, see Susan Moller Okin, “Feminism, Women’s Human Rights, and Cultural Differences,” Hypatia 13(2) (1998), 39-40.
475 Article 23(1): Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Article 23(2): Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Article 23(4): Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
476 Article 25(2) continues: All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.
477 Although Carlson does not argue overtly for reinstituting the idea of “illegitimate birth,” he does refer to it as part of “our civilization’s unwritten sexual constitution” that was meant to instill shame and fear to help confine sexual relations and childbearing to marriage. He goes on to entertain a couple of strategies.
mid-sentence. It reads in full: “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks” (Italicized portion omitted from Manifesto). Perhaps including a reference to “his honor and reputation” risks being too readily associated with honor killings that pepper global news headlines, perpetrated on women in retribution for proscribed sexual behavior.  

Interestingly, the Manifesto leaves out one entire article that specifically references family. Article 25(1) states that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (emphasis mine). It is possible that the idea of state-provided guarantees of social rights interferes with some WCF coalition members’ notion of an autonomous family. Earlier in the chapter, state intervention in family life is critiqued: “Even in its most benign forms, the modern welfare state requires the full surrender of household liberty to the state.” In fact, the Manifesto positions the state in opposition to the family; “the only check on the state that is bound to renew itself as eternally as the state.”

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478 For example, see Dennis Altman, Global Sex (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 47. Also, see Okin 1998, 40; and Jewel Danev, “Family Banishments: Understanding Honor Crimes in the United States, in Femininities, Masculinities, and the Politics of Sexual Difference(s), ed. Dorothy Sue Cobble, et al. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Institute for Research on Women, 2004), 37-41.
479 Carlson does include this UDHR passage in Third Ways (168), so presumably he does not personally see a conflict between autonomy from the state and state guarantees of a social safety net—at least for “natural” families.
480 Carlson and Mero, 71.
It is male autonomy that is foremost at stake in this suspicion of the state. Quoting at length from G. K. Chesterton’s *What’s Wrong with the World* (1910), *Manifesto* characterizes the relationship between the state and the family in this way:

> It may be said that this institution of the home is the one anarchist institution. That is to say, it is older than law, and stands outside the State…The State has no tool delicate enough to deracinate the rooted habits and tangled affections of the family; the two sexes, whether happy or unhappy, are glued together too tightly for us to get the blade of a legal penknife in between them. The man and the woman are one flesh—yes, even when they are not one spirit. Man is a quadruped.\(^482\)

Carlson and Mero do not seem to share Chesterton’s opinion that the marital couple are glued too tightly together for the state to get a blade between them. They decry the rise in “the ‘mother-state-child’ family” in which government policy has made children an artificial economic asset.\(^483\)

This general instability of marital relationships is the result of the rise of the welfare state, which “ended women’s dependence upon men in traditional family circumstances.”\(^484\) Carlson characterizes the family wage policies of the late 1800s and early 1900s as keeping the “dependency problem” within the family wherein women’s unpaid labor of caring for children, as well as sick, handicapped, or elderly family members, was rewarded with “a fair portion of the remuneration for workers.”\(^485\)

For WCF, the dependence of wives and children on men helps define a wage-earner masculinity. Not surprisingly, then, Carlson and Mero highlight the UDHR idea of “special care

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\(^{482}\) Carlson and Mero, 71, emphasis in *Manifesto*.

\(^{483}\) Carlson and Mero, 109.

\(^{484}\) Carlson and Mero, 109.

and assistance” for motherhood and childhood. Both the UDHR and WCF *Manifesto* frequently fall back on sentimentalized abstractions like “motherhood” and “childhood” and “the human family.” For WCF, this “special assistance” seems more likely a function of WCF understandings of women and children’s “natural dependency” and place in the family hierarchy than to a concern with addressing the needs of actual mothers or children. WCF resistance to women’s and children’s rights is obvious in its stand on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Carlson contends that CEDAW “strips the family of all autonomy and authority” and pressures signatory nations to promote androgyny. Carlson quotes CEDAW Article 5(a), which requires that states “take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.” He interprets the passage to grant “sweeping power to the state to regulate, restructure, and even abolish the natural family.” Similarly, he maintains that the CRC “subverts the authority of parents over their children.” He highlights Article 13(1), which he construes to mean the state will impose itself between parent and child to protect the child’s right: “The child shall have the right to freedom of

487 Allan Carlson, “Globalizing Family Values,” a talk for the Charismatic Leaders’ Fellowship, January 12, 2004, Jacksonville, Florida. [http://www.profam.org/docs/acc/thc.acc.globalizing.040112.htm](http://www.profam.org/docs/acc/thc.acc.globalizing.040112.htm). Accessed 7/9/2013. Most WCF references to CEDAW are disparaging. However, it is worth noting that some portions are referenced selectively. For instance, in her speech at WCF VI, Babette Francis invoked Article 6, which calls on states to “suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.”
488 Ibid. Note that Carlson does not quote Article 5(b), which seems to align with many of WCF’s ideas about the role of the family: “To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.”
489 Ibid.
expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.”

Carlson sees these documents as dramatic departures from the UDHR, which he characterizes as pro-family. Both are part of what he calls a change in human rights policy from a “‘Christian’ focus on the innate dignity of each human person and the necessary place of humans in natural communities to a radical feminist individualism.” He also calls the UDHR “a product of Christian and Jewish witness”; much of his sense of threat revolves around a perception that a “militant secular alliance” has targeted religious freedom: “Only a very private and inward faith would be allowed; no public expression of one’s faith should occur…no actual attempt actually to apply moral principles derived from faith would be permitted. Vital, active faith and the natural family must die together.” Carlson’s reading of these international documents reveals his sense that the international community has abandoned the original Christian intent of the UDHR. He articulates a perception that international “officialdom” is hostile toward religious believers in general. However, in many situations pro-family activists express a similar frustration in terms of Christian persecution specifically.

490 Ibid. For a different perspective, see Barbara Bennett Woodhouse and Kathryn A. Johnson, “The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Empowering Parents to Protect Their Children’s Rights, in What is Right for Children? The Competing Paradigms of Religion and Human Rights, ed. Martha Albertson Fineman, et al. (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 7-18. In contrast to Carlson, the authors understand Article 13(1) to mean that states signing the CRC agree not to infringe upon the child’s rights to free expression, which might reinforce parental control rather than erode it (11-2).


492 Ibid.

493 Ibid.
Religion in General and the Production of Religious Persecution

Carlson’s warning that “faith” and family together are under threat fits with WCF’s stated goal of creating an alliance of orthodoxies based on a notion of natural family commonality across religions. WCF’s rhetoric of religious persecution is key in this regard. Using “religion in general” within a human rights framework facilitates the construction of pro-family activists as victims of persecution by a secular “foe.” Proponents claim persecution as justification for anger, which works to build alliance cohesion.\(^494\) WCF’s generic use of the word religion is worth examining.

The organization often discusses religious freedom in terms of religion in general. Feminist theologian Kathleen Sands describes the “official” US approach to religion as the concept of religion as exceptional in which religions are thought to deserve special accommodation or conversely to require limits in the public sphere (i.e., separation of church and state). She contrasts the exceptionalist tradition with the idea of “generic religion,” a point of view in the US that sees religion as “a singular essence that is at the heart of all (‘true’) religions.”\(^495\) From this perspective, generic religion is the foundation of public life and “rather than being walled off from religion, the secular is felt to rest on religion like an edifice on its foundation.”\(^496\) Public life is thought to include rituals and practices that are coded as “secular,” like faith in God, the entrepreneurial spirit, and supposedly traditional sex and gender relations. They may be “orthodoxies,” but because they are “secular,” they do not deserve scrutiny.\(^497\) More recently, the particular Protestant identity of generic religion has been unmasked. As a

\(^{494}\) Jasper 1998, 413-4.


\(^{496}\) Per Sands, “generic religion has a place in the Declaration of Independence, in the beliefs of the founders, and in…‘civil religion.’ The founders and their intellectual forebears called it, variously, ‘Deism,’ ‘Natural religion’ or ‘Enlightened religion’: lately…it is simply called ‘faith’” (312).

\(^{497}\) Sands, 312-3.
result, proponents began to openly claim Protestant Christianity as the cornerstone of American polity. In Sands’ estimation, conservative US evangelicals in recent years are involved with a discourse of generic religion that departs from older notions: “ideally, no independent secular realm even would exist; all aspects of public life would be thick with religion…the religion that founds their ideal social order no longer is seen as an essence available in all true religions.” In Sands’ observation, for US evangelicals, evangelical Protestantism is thought to be the true and only religious foundation of the American polity, stripping generic religion of its feigned universality and morphing it into “an unabashedly ethnocentric nationalism.”

For WCF’s transnational alliance, a more general version of Christianity is needed—one that more closely resembles the older version of generic religion described by Sands. As Sands explains, the justification for generic religion as the “foundation for public life” has been that “the polity, in order to cohere and flourish, must be symbolically full rather than symbolically empty.” Generic religion was legitimized based on its claim to be “natural,” or “as Old as the Creation.” The natural family functions in this same way in WCF human rights discourse. Above I showed that in WCF framing, the universal natural family embodies a universal religious ideal on which the UDHR is founded. WCF’s sense of a religious aura that surrounds the UDHR (or at least its origins) most often goes unmarked, but its Christian underpinning is inherent and at times even explicit. WCF’s understanding of religious freedom is necessarily flavored by its Christian perspective.

WCF claims to be open to all pro-natural family religions, though in practice, it is a conservative Christian familial orthodoxy that holds its alliance together. The alliance includes

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498 Sands, 324.
499 Ibid.
500 Sands, 313.
501 Sands, 313.
conservative Catholic, Protestant, and Mormon organizations and attracts a handful of conservative Jewish individuals and even fewer Muslim individuals. They may share some “traditional values” and a desire to collaborate in global politics but it is a somewhat tenuous connection. Intersecting commonalities exist among the three main groups amid rather interesting yet surprising and intractable differences. In fact, many Catholics and Protestants do not regard Mormons as Christians at all. To maintain a broad alliance, WCF activists must bracket these differences. For instance, I talked with one Protestant who is a long-time WCF activist and seemed familiar with Mormon theological concepts. For my interviewee, these “very clear distinctives…do not support the biblical creation order.” The person told me that Mormons “do not fit into the Christian umbrella”; nevertheless, partnering with Mormons in WCF efforts to bolster the natural family is beneficial.

The idea of “the natural family” is usefully neutral, but contending that faith and family are under attack inspires ardent defense. Generating a sense of shared threat helps unite WCF’s disparate actors. WCF partner C-FAM proclaimed as much in a recent fundraising letter: “Our enemies are gathering and they intend to strike with everything they’ve got. They are frustrated. They are angry and bitter….But it is because they are angry that they are the most dangerous. They are holding meetings all over the world, plotting how they are going to take us down and impose a right to abortion and a redefinition of the family.” Projecting the menace onto an enemy—Them—can bring together a more coherent and ardent Us. Sara Ahmed discusses this dynamic in terms of the passion of negative attachment to others. They hate Us and therefore We

502 One example given was the Mormon belief in the individual personhood of each entity of the trinity, which differs from the views of most other Christians. In the words of my interviewee, conversely Christians see “Jesus as the only son of God and as God himself.”
503 Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) email appeal for donations to “Help C-FAM make payroll…and Make UN pro-aborts mad!” from Austin Ruse, “Sitting in the Moscow Airport, July 25, 8:00 a.m.”
are under threat. “Such narratives work by generating a subject that is endangered by imagined others whose proximity threatens not only to take something away from the subject…but to take the place of the subject.”

WCF narrativizes that They want to take away Our freedom of religion, speech, and conscience. This notion implies the worry that others will replace natural families as the majority, the ordinary, the good. As Ahmed notes, “the circulation of hate between figures…works to materialize the very ‘surface’ of collective bodies.”

Pro-family organizers do not experience themselves as hateful but as enforcing moral values, “positive values that maintain tradition and culture.” A shared orientation away from those who threaten “tradition and culture” helps create the We.

This section examines WCF’s approach to religious freedom through analysis of a WCF letter of protest against US support for LGBT rights internationally. The letter characterizes US recognition of gay rights as “cultural imperialism”—as the United States forcing its ways on countries with “traditional values.” The letter further equates gay rights with impinging on the rights of religious people. Reading the letter alongside WCF VI speeches on human rights and international law clarifies the set of anxieties that motivate WCF’s human rights rhetoric. WCF associates US and other countries’ endorsement of sexual and reproductive rights with religious persecution. It is often “religion in general” that WCF defends—presumably over “secular” irreligion. However, pro-family activists frequently disparage religious perspectives that differ from their own—even those of other Christians. More specifically, it is “orthodoxy”—religious, sexual, and familial—that WCF defends. However, distinctions between “religion” and

504 Ahmed 2004, 43.
505 Ahmed 2004, 46.
“Christianity” often blur in WCF speeches. This section unpacks these contradictions and taken-for-granted, unmarked categories that are inherent in WCF’s use of human rights discourse.

WCF’s Letter of Protest: “Washington is aggressively promoting the ‘gay’ agenda internationally”


According to the press release, “more than 120 pro-family and pro-life leaders from 11 countries signed a letter initiated by the World Congress of Families.” Nearly half of the list of 121 names is affiliated with WCF or its partner organizations. Almost all of the remaining names are affiliated with obviously religious or politically conservative organizations. As the title implies, the letter was meant to protest the upcoming attendance of a US ambassador at a gay pride parade in Prague. It opens this way: “We the undersigned pro-family and pro-life leaders vigorously protest the participation of the United States embassy in the Czech Republic in a so-called gay-pride parade which will take place on August 18.” The protest seems to respond directly to the ambassador’s signature on an August 2012 “Joint Statement Expressing Support for the 2012 Prague Pride Festival.”

Besides US Ambassador Norman Eisen, ambassadors of eight countries and chargé d’affaires from two other countries signed the statement, in which they expressed their “solidarity with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities of the Czech Republic…[to] celebrate diversity peacefully, share opinions publicly, and share awareness of important issues.”

509 Ibid.
participation as part of US “cultural imperialism,” as “Washington trying to force approval of the ‘gay’ agenda on societies with traditional values.” It also reasserts the WCF claim that its “natural family” ideal emanates from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 16(3), in which “the family” is described as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society…entitled to protection by society and the state.” The letter associates state support for LGBT rights with undermining the family and therefore “a breach of the State’s responsibility to protect this indispensable institution which precedes government and makes a stable and free society possible.”

One theme that permeates the document is that gay rights are being forced on societies, endangering the rights of those who disapprove. At the heart of the letter is a sense that those who disagree with gay rights are under threat. The letter accuses the US of “aggressively promoting the ‘gay’ agenda internationally.” Washington is “trying to force approval of the ‘gay’ agenda on societies with traditional values.” The letter similarly asserts that ‘regarding ‘gay rights,’ those caught up in this lifestyle have the same rights as other citizens. This does not include the ‘right’ to force others to validate a lifestyle they find objectionable, for religious or other reasons.” WCF’s letter equates US advocacy for LGBT rights with “stigmatization and marginalization of any who object to…homosexual ‘marriage’ or rights.” The reference to objections being about “religious or other reasons” links the threat to religious freedom. The

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510 WCF’s association of the Ambassador’s actions with Washington is not misplaced. President Obama had publicly announced his support for same-sex marriage a few months earlier on May 9, 2012 (see the White House blog at http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/05/10/obama-supports-same-sex-marriage). Obama had also recently prioritized combating human rights abuses against LGBT persons abroad. In December 2011, he issued a presidential memorandum, “International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons” (http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/06/presidential-memorandum-international-initiatives-advance-human-rights-1). That same month, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave a speech on the subject to a UN gathering in Geneva, Switzerland on December 6—International Human Rights Day (http://www.humanrights.gov/2011/12/06/remarks-in-recognition-of-international-human-rights-day/). The main theme of Clinton’s speech is best summed up in her declaration that “gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights.”
effect is to imply that US support for gay rights amounts to religious persecution of such objectors.

A second theme, the illegitimacy of sexual rights, appeals to several sources of authority to throw doubt on the validity of gay rights. The letter writers argue that “the United Nations has never affirmed homosexual ‘marriage’ or rights.” In fact, the letter refers to “gay rights”—always in scare quotes—as “pseudo-rights” that “debase [rather than advance]…human freedom and dignity.” Similarly, the letter references the UDHR right to marry and found a family, specifying that it “does not include the right of men to marry men and women to marry women.” Allusion to the Czech pro-life and pro-family leaders implies that WCF’s protest speaks for or with them. The signers also invoke the authority of their own status as “representatives of the international pro-family movement.” In fact, the letter quotes the affirmation of the natural family in the Madrid Declaration of WCF VI and asserts that it “was unanimously adopted by more than 3,200 delegates from 72 countries.”

Although the tone of the letter is measured, it clearly delineates a Them and an Us. It generates an image of Them attacking Us. The use of words connoting force and aggression conjures an aggressor. Who is doing the attacking? Washington and the US embassy. The attackers are determined to “undermine the family” and its supporters. They want to stigmatize and marginalize those who object to same-sex marriage and gay rights. The letter does not explicitly make LGBT people the ones perpetrating the attack, but they are surely also implicated. If not for people sponsoring a gay-pride parade, there would be no worrisome participation by the ambassador. The single reference to actual gay people is to “those caught up in this [gay]

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511 As a participant-observer at WCF V and WCF VI, I noticed that there was no mechanism provided for general attendees to dissent or to contribute to the language of the declaration or to formally register a vote. I assume the above-mentioned unanimous endorsement was inferred from the audience’s widespread participation in applause after the declaration was read aloud as part of the closing ceremonies.
lifestyle.” The phrase “caught up in this lifestyle” indexes deviance. People can be “caught up in” a life of crime or drug abuse. People are not “caught up in” the natural family lifestyle—it stands as the default. This wording reminds us that They are the ones who are supposed to be stigmatized and marginalized. The pride parade indicates that now They are refusing to be marginal. They want to push Us from the center to the periphery. They want to take Our place as people “entitled to protection by society and the State.”

These indirect messages are also discernible elsewhere in WCF’s discourse on human rights. Speeches at WCF VI frequently addressed issues of religious persecution and UDHR guarantees of freedom of speech, conscience, and religion. Therefore the speeches provide additional context for understanding the type and role of religion(s) in WCF ideas about religious persecution. Delineations of Us and Them are also spelled out. The themes of authority and force occur throughout the speeches. Authority is alternately based on the UDHR, the UN, biology and nature, or God, and the categories often blur. The theme of force most often is expressed in terms of the imposition of an “anything goes” sexual standard on religious believers. The examples feature religious people accused of hate speech and discrimination—all Christians. Freedom to evangelize and quote scripture publicly is described as under threat, but almost all the cases seem to be about Christians’ right to denigrate LGBT people and any sexual behavior outside of conservative Christian moral norms. The following review of the speeches clarifies the production of Us/Them and the circulation of affect in this complex discourse.

*World Congress of Families VI: Marriage and Family: The Future of Society*

WCF VI was held in Madrid at the Palacio de Congresos in May 2012. The theme was Marriage and Family: The Future of Society. The local organizing committee was led by HazteOir (“Make Yourself Heard”), a pro-life/pro-family organization that formed in Spain in
2001. Other co-conveners were the Alliance Defense Fund, C-FAM (Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute), and Focus on the Family. The topics of plenary and panel sessions included common pro-family themes: marriage, abortion, depopulation, homosexuality. In addition, speakers frequently focused on issues related to religious freedom. In fact, several plenary sessions and panels at WCF VI specifically addressed freedom of religion in human rights and international law.\textsuperscript{512} The speakers’ remarks strongly resonate with themes in WCF’s protest letter.

Transcendent Authority: Numerous speakers challenged the validity of sexual and reproductive rights. Similar to Allan Carlson’s use of the UDHR to impugn CEDAW and CRC, several speakers referred to the UDHR or the UN to prove that sexual rights are illegitimate. Sharon Slater, president of WCF partner Family Watch International, spoke specifically on the clash between sexual rights and religious liberty. Her speech contended that sexual rights activists misinterpret UN agreements that were signed years ago and get their “friends in high places” to issue reports that redefine words and alter the intended meaning of those documents. Francisco Tatad, a journalist, former politician of the Philippines, and current member of the International Board of the International Right to Life Federation, focused mostly on abortion and accused UN agencies of failing to conform to the purposes stated in the Preamble of the Charter of the UN, such as saving the world from the scourge of war and reaffirming fundamental human rights. Another speaker, Piero Tozzi, senior counsel for the WCF partner Alliance Defending Freedom,\textsuperscript{513} warned that “the stage is set for a clash of competing rights.” He contrasted “fundamental human rights, such as freedom of religion, conscience and expression” with

\textsuperscript{512} The biographies of most WCF speakers and links to many of their speeches are available on WCF’s website at \url{http://worldcongress.org/WCF/wcf_spkrs_bio.htm}.

\textsuperscript{513} At WCF VI, Alliance Defending Freedom was in the midst of starting to rebrand itself. Previously it had been known as Alliance Defense Fund.
“newly-fabricated rights” that insinuate themselves into human rights discourse, namely, reproductive rights and rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity.514

WCF VI speakers also refuted the legitimacy of sexual rights by invoking the “higher” authority of God or nature. Tozzi spoke about how to fight back against international law, claiming that countries should defend their sovereignty. He laid out a “tripartite scheme” that included “the juridical personality of the nation state in international law”; popular sovereignty, “with whom the authority to govern resides through their legislative representatives”; and “that ultimate sovereignty, the sovereignty of God and His laws…Ideally, all three are in accord.” Tatad maintained that some human rights “repudiate the very truth of our being as creatures of God.” He asserted that such illegitimate rights are used “to justify acts and omissions that offend and deny our intrinsic human dignity, which the spirit of God has breathed into each one of us.” He alluded to an Alexis de Tocqueville quote about the US having been built “under a sacred canopy with religion as its first political institution,” implying that this is the basis of US democracy. He insisted that a democratic state’s mandate to govern originates in “the authority of a Transcendent Power from whom the truth about man, about freedom, about justice, about peace comes. There is only one name for that Power, and that is God.” For him, “civil government is nothing but a human participation in the divine governance of the universe.” Tatad’s examples revolved chiefly around abortion and other “right to life” issues, unsurprisingly given his involvement with the International Right to Life Federation. He argued that no human

514 Similar to other WCF activists, Tozzi seems ambivalent about the UDHR even though he holds it up as authoritative. In a second speech, relating to sexual orientation and international law, he distinguishes between “negative rights,” described as inalienable rights one holds against the state, versus “positive rights,” the ones that the state grants. He associates the negative rights with the American Declaration of Independence. He describes the UDHR, however, as “a somewhat schizophrenic document,” because it includes both negative and positive rights. As an example of a UDHR negative right, Tozzi points to Article 26(3), “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given their children.” He contrasts that with the positive rights in other provisions of Article 26, including the right to free and compulsory elementary education.
rights can exist without God, therefore, “there is no human right, and there can be no human right to suicide, murder, or abortion….” He averred that there is “no international human right to abortion…not because there is no international document creating such a right, but rather because there can never be any valid international document creating such a right.” Tatad allowed for the possibility of a “God of conscience” for non-believing individuals, while quoting Pope Benedict at length. Other speakers echoed Allan Carlson’s belief that human rights emerged from Christianity. Juanjo Romero, a journalist/analyst who specializes in “culture war issues,” discussed the “sanctity of human rights” as having “deep Christian roots.” Mats Tunehag, a freelance consultant, speaker, and writer from Sweden associated with the World Evangelical Alliance, mentioned Judeo-Christian ethics as the basis for the UDHR. I will return to the question of Christian versus generic religious allusions below, but here my point is that WCF speakers use the higher authority of God to refute attempts to introduce or reaffirm sexual rights of any kind as legitimate human rights.

Other speakers grounded their stand against sexual rights in nature or science. Family Watch International president Sharon Slater posited a battle with two main sides at war over the context in which sexual relations should occur:

First, there’s religious or the pro-family side. And this side holds that sexual relations should only occur in marriage. And that any sexual relations outside the marital bond of a married mother-father family—and it doesn’t matter whether it’s homosexual, heterosexual, extra-marital, or pre-marital—any sexual relations outside of marriage will bring negative outcomes for men, women, children, and society. And all the social science data will back this up. This side also holds that gender is a biological reality that you are born with. It is fixed—not changeable. You are either male or female.
Tozzi’s tripartite scheme of sovereignty referenced God’s laws and included the appositive phrase, “the laws of nature and Nature’s God.” He expanded on this idea in another speech he made at WCF VI on sexual orientation and international law. Quoting Charles Malik, whom he described as the person perhaps most responsible for the UDHR, Tozzi touched on “higher law, the law of nature” which Malik argued the UN and states must not only recognize and respect, but to which they ought to conform. For Malik, any law that “contradicts the transcendent norm is by nature null and void.” Tozzi went on to discuss the Yogyakarta Principles, “a set of international principles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity.”

He specifically contrasted the concept of gender therein—“an ideological term”—with “the biological complementariness of the two sexes.” Clearly WCF speakers hypothesize biology qua “Nature” and God as not just in harmony but as synonymous.

Slippage between the categories of nature/science/biology and religion/morality is common. Tozzi’s analysis of the Yogyakarta Principles focused on its call for public education to “counter discriminatory attitudes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.” He dismissed such educational commitments with “biological reasoning” straight out of Anita Bryant’s Save Our Children campaign. He accused the “homosexual agenda” of requiring public education to further its goals because by nature, “homosexual acts are incapable of bearing fruit—indeed, strictly speaking, they are not sexual, as they are incapable of being generative or procreative. Thus there is the need to desensitize and corrupt young minds, both to undermine

515 See [www.yogakargaprinciples.org](http://www.yogakargaprinciples.org).


517 The Save Our Children campaign successfully orchestrated the recall of a 1977 Dade County ordinance that banned discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation based on sexual orientation. “Homosexual recruitment” was a central part of the campaign’s scare tactics.
resistance to the agenda and for recruitment among those that are at an emotionally vulnerable stage of development.” Tozzi finished with a call to “reclaim a notion of rights as grounded in nature.” Similarly, Sharon Slater vowed from the outset of her speech that she intended to make her case based on social science alone and still nevertheless fell back on religious language near the end of the speech. She solemnly testified, “We live in a world turned upside down. In today’s world of political correctness and tolerance, to sin is not a sin but to call a sin a sin is a sin. I’ll say that one more time. To sin is not a sin but to call a sin a sin is a sin.”

Believers under Attack. The idea that religious folks are not allowed to “call a sin a sin” publicly was a subject of quite a few WCF VI speeches. As in the protest letter, the perception of religious people being marginalized or threatened was a central theme. These speakers pronounced the pursuit of sexual rights as having eroded their UDHR rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 18) and freedom of opinion and expression (Article 19). Tozzi explained it this way:

“Sexual orientation” is a nebulous term not defined in international law in any binding sense. On its face, it implies an inward disposition, or orientation…Yet it is deemed by some to extend beyond an inward disposition that must necessarily manifest itself in forms of behavior that have traditionally been considered deviant, harmful, immoral and in many cases criminal. Those of us who continue to believe that this is the case and state this publicly out of a sense of obligation to Truth and to the common good…then become attacked as human rights offenders.

The subject of religious persecution came up in a variety of contexts, but, in fact, one panel discussion was entirely devoted to this topic. Entitled “Hate Speech Laws and Anti-Discrimination to Marginalize Believers,” the discussion featured four panelists, including Juanjo Romero and Mats Tunehag (both mentioned above) and two Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF)
attorneys: Benjamin Bull, who is an executive vice-president of ADF, and Paul Coleman, a UK-based ADF lawyer who also serves as counsel for WCF partner Christian Concern. Both Bull and Romero alluded to George Orwell’s 1984. Romero used it to frame his discussion of After the Ball, a 1989 book that proposed a broad-based public relations strategy for furthering gay rights. Like many pro-family activists, Romero referred to After the Ball as an influential piece of propaganda emblematic of a cultural war against Christians. Bull’s speech similarly took 1984 as its starting point. He highlighted the limiting and shifting vocabulary of the novel’s Big Brother-created language, “Newspeak,” which the party uses to criminalize ideas—“crimethink”—that pose a threat to the regime. Bull suggested that hate speech laws create a slippery slope that leads to legitimized banning of any speech that is objectionable according to the whim of the state. “It starts so disarmingly with baby-steps, then gradually gains speed, and in time, gives birth to a society where free speech is no longer free and people whisper words they believe are true for fear of punishment or retaliation” (emphasis Bull’s). He quoted from Orwell’s original preface to Animal Farm: “If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.” In Bull’s estimation, this sentence sums up the essence of free speech, in that “without the freedom to offend, free speech and free thoughts cannot exist.” He ceded that “the freedom to offend can propagate stupid and irrational ideas,” and he also argued that “freedom to speak freely is the only means available to fight against tyranny, or fascism, or communism, or to overturn foolish but widely accepted dogma” (emphasis is Bull’s). In describing freedom that “protects only the expression of popular or politically correct views” (emphasis Bull’s), he called up the specters of Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union and

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Kim Jong-II’s North Korea, as well as “fundamentalist Muslim nations,” all of which he cited as places “where the expression of certain politically incorrect ideas can get you killed.”

Yet fear of persecution and life-and-death stakes were not prominent in the examples Bull used to make his point. Furthermore, his examples did not seem to illustrate “speaking truth to power” so much as attempts to reassert a narrative of deviance about gays and lesbians. He told the story of Pastor Åke Green, in Sweden, who was prosecuted in 2003 under Sweden’s hate crimes law for preaching what Bull characterized as a typical Christian sermon on “the biblical position on immoral sexual behavior.” Green was sentenced to thirty days in jail and ADF joined in his defense. Through appeals, he was eventually acquitted in 2005, which ADF considers a great victory. It remains a touchstone case for ADF and other WCF activists.\(^519\)

Pro-family activists use the case of Pastor Green to illustrate the persecution of Christians’ UDHR guarantee of freedom of “thought, conscience and religion.” While Green’s sermon is liberally sprinkled with passages from the Bible, it is not necessarily biblical quotes that make this text incendiary. A few lines from a translation of Green’s sermon are instructive.\(^520\) It opens with the question, “Is Homosexuality Genetic or an Evil Force that Plays Mind Games with People?” Green adds, “I am well aware that this subject is charged and controversial—and it has become so even in Christian circles.”\(^521\) Green decries that the porn industry, TV, movies, and gay demonstrations “have awakened these powerful desires by openly promoting [this homosexual lifestyle] to all Swedish people. It is done unabashedly, without

\(^{519}\) On ADF’s website, the case was still featured prominently in July, 2013, listed first among examples on the page labeled, “Protecting Religious Liberty Around the Globe.” A three-paragraph description of the case and ADF’s involvement appears under the headline, “Victory in Sweden Sets Worldwide Precedent.” See \texttt{http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/issues/global}.

\(^{520}\) The European-American Evangelistic Crusade is “a Bible centered group of believers who desire to grow in the full knowledge of Jesus Christ without compromise to His Word.” The website provides a translation of Green’s sermon from its original Swedish. See \texttt{http://www.eaec.org/bibleanswers/ake_green_sermon.htm}.

\(^{521}\) Frustration with Christians whose views differ from WCF’s is a frequent WCF complaint.
consideration for people who cannot bear to see such things. As a result, people may commit acts of violence. It is known that this is dangerous.”

While Green does not speak for WCF, his concerns do resonate with WCF’s. He is dismayed that homosexuality is openly and unabashedly promoted. And he presupposes there should be “consideration for people who cannot bear to see such things.” Neither he nor WCF activists necessarily advocate violence toward LGBT people, but he warns it may be inevitable—“as a result” of their open and unabashed visibility. “It is known that this is dangerous,” so They ought to know better. He is further irritated that his attempt to promote his views were initially disregarded. During the sermon he told his congregation that he invited TV and newspaper reporters to hear the sermon, but none showed up. Frustrated at being ignored, he sent the text to a local paper, which is how it came to be a controversy.522 Rather than fearing persecution, it would seem that Pastor Green sought it out. On examination, then, there are two sources of Green’s sense of injury. First, he mourns the loss of a shared societal morality that kept LGBT people properly ashamed and invisible. Second, he is annoyed at the initial dismissal of his perspective. That WCF proponents hold him up as a victim of human rights violations helps illustrate the nature of religious persecution under debate.

WCF’s, like Green’s, worries about religious and free speech persecution revolve around Christians—the “marginalization of believers,” as the panel title puts it. Bull specified two types of speech as problematic for Christians. The first is criticism of homosexual behavior, and the second is criticizing aspects of another religious belief system. Bull complained that hate speech restrictions criminalize Christians’ evangelizing to gays and Muslims, yet none of his examples

involved such evangelizing; they all involved public criticism of homosexuality and Islam. Tunehag named Muslims, secularists, and homosexuals as targeting Christians. Romero named feminists, secularists, and homosexuals as using anti-discrimination laws to persecute Christians. Interestingly, Romero’s speech depicted Christians as in the majority, branding anti-discrimination laws as the minority imposing itself on the majority. Conversely, Coleman called Europe’s Equal Treatment Directive “a new political orthodoxy and a new ‘tyranny of the majority’” that marginalizes Christians. He lamented that Christians are not tolerated in Europe because their views on homosexuality are considered intolerant, but “Christians are just seeking to be tolerated, along with everyone else.” In each of his examples, all from the UK, Christians in various lines of work refused to serve same-sex couples as clients or customers.523

In WCF’s discourse of persecution, “intolerance” that conservative Christians face for their refusal to recognize human rights with which they disagree is sometimes rhetorically equated with serious violations of human rights suffered by religious minorities—especially Christians. Perhaps the most passionate charge of Christian persecution came near the end of the conference during a panel on religious freedom in Paul Herzog von Oldenburg’s speech, entitled “Worldwide Religious Persecution.” Oldenburg, from Belgium, is a member of the German Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property, and serves as director of Pro Europa Christiana Federation, which defends the Christian roots of Europe. Two references to the film

523 Andrew McClintock, a magistrate, stood down from dealing with family cases after he was refused permission to opt-out of cases which could result in a same-sex adoption (2007). A Christian doctor, Sheila Matthews, was removed from an adoption panel because she refused to endorse applications by gay couples (2009). Lillian Ladele, a marriage registrar for Islington Borough Council in London, refused to carry out civil partnership registrations when they became legal (2006). Peter and Hazelmary Bull, Christian owners of a bed and breakfast, had a policy of restricting double rooms to married couples, which was ruled as discriminating against a gay couple (2011). One other case does not involve refusal to serve LGBT people, but the couple involved refused to follow governmental requirements for foster parenting. Eunice and Owen Johns, a Pentecostal Christian couple, lost their approval to be foster parents because they insisted on their right to tell young foster children that homosexuality is morally wrong (2011).
Cristiada (or For Greater Glory)\textsuperscript{524} were bookends for the speech. He opened with praise for the film, which is based on the true story of the 1926-29 Cristero War in Mexico provoked by governmental violence against Catholics. It had been shown at the conference the night before his speech, and the audience responded to his remarks about it with warm applause. This opening is significant as it sets the stage for the initial theme of his speech in which he equated violent and totalitarian persecution of Christians with human rights-based tolerance in democratic countries. His speech launched into far-flung examples of religious persecution beginning with “the open killings of Christians in the hands of Islamists in Africa, Asia, the Middle East or in Turkey.” He then mentioned Hindu persecution of Christians in India. He attributed a “more subtle” and “far more insidious” form of religious persecution to China and Cuba. There, he argued, Communism “turns religion into an instrument of its totalitarian policies” through control of churches. However, “the first prize in this championship of deceit does not go to the Communists [sic] regimes, but to our own Secular, pseudo-democratic States in the West.” These “pseudo-secular” states “impose State policy as a doctrine, in the name of today’s ‘Higher Law.’ And by this I mean so-called human rights.”

Here Oldenburg introduced a second theme—the question of authority. For him, the proper authority is likely God as evidenced by his emphasis on Christianity throughout the speech, but he also touched on nature and science. He contrasted the “real, unchangeable, fundamental rights of the human person” with these “so-called human rights.” This “subjective, relativistic and evolving version” of human rights is very different:

\textsuperscript{524} Cristiada/For Greater Glory, directed by Dean Wright, Mexico, ARC Entertainment, US, 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Fox, 2012.
A version that allows unthinkable aberrations like killing a baby in the name of a supposed right of the mother to do what she pleases with her own body—even going so far as to kill him after birth in the name of the right to health or happiness.

Or the supposed right to follow one’s unnatural sexual orientation and to have all the privileges of a married couple, including the adoption of children for unnatural unions.

Or even the supposed right to define oneself as male or female at one’s own discretion regardless of one’s physiological sex and without “sex-reassignment” surgery or hormonal treatment. All of this is done in the name of “the gender experience as each person feels it,” as stated in the Gender Identity Law recently approved 55-0 by the Argentinean Senate.

Here, Oldenburg reiterated the list of “new, unauthorized rights” that WCF consistently finds problematic.

A third theme of the speech was that Christians are forced to acknowledge other moral standards. Religious persecution in this “human rights dogma,” he argued, takes the form of pressuring Christians to act in public life against their own convictions. Like Romero, Oldenburg seemed convinced that societies single out Christians for ill treatment, instead of tolerating Christians as they do other groups. The irony, he exclaimed, is that “we are supposed to live in an era of human history considered to be the most ‘tolerant’ ever! What we have instead is the ‘dictatorship of relativism’ many times denounced by the Pope.” Oldenburg equated this relativism with religious persecution in that “it forces us Christians to cultivate an ‘attitude of openness,’ a positive interest for ‘alternative lifestyles’ to accept someone else’s ‘diversity,’ to ‘enrich’ our personality with his opposing point of view.” In other words, the Christian grievance is that in “the democratic states of the west,” Christians suffer because it pains them to publically
recognize their fellow citizens’ human right to be different. As examples above demonstrate, it is not just disapproving speech pro-family activists demand, but the right to refuse services to those whose legally protected differences offend them.

A fourth theme Oldenburg raised—an exhortation to Christians to stand up to this persecution—exemplifies how human rights discourse gives way to strains of defiant pride in order to stir righteous passion. In this case, Christianity becomes explicit, although the more “universal” identity of the natural family is more often mobilized. Instead of being part of “the ‘festival of diversities’” that modern democracies pretend to be, instead of “succumbing to this languorous, deceptive and Siren-like melody of ‘tolerance,’” Oldenburg insisted that Christians must “fight back with the unmitigated truth against an enemy [anti-Christian persecution] that is gradually showing its true face.” For him this is a battle about rebuilding Christendom:

It is a fight for the common good. It is a fight for the one and only true civilization, that is, Christian Civilisation whose remnants we admire around us today. These remnants should spur us to action because our great aim, our great ideal is to build a Christian civilization from the ruins of the modern world just as the medieval world arose from the ruins of the Roman world….Let us walk, nay run onto the battlefield! This is a battle between Heaven and Hell. If we want to prevent Hell on Earth for our families, then let us raise our eyes to Heaven with confidence and fight!

He closed with this final exhortation: “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” (“Long live Christ the King!”), which drew very enthusiastic applause.525 It echoes the battle cry of the Catholic rebels or Cristeros (soldiers for Christ) in For Greater Glory. This cry was raised more than once at the conference, with similar response. Oldenburg’s address unmistakably resonates with WCF themes of

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525 This may have been a last-minute impulse as the line does not appear in the prepared version of his speech, which is available on the WCF website.
Christian persecution. That his speech was so well received among WCF activists attests to the fact. The popularity of his oration confirms WCF’s overwhelmingly Christian participation.

In summary, I want to review the kinds of rhetoric and passions circulating in the name of human rights at WCF VI. International norms and national laws guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights amount to Christian persecution. “Real” human rights, like freedoms of religion and speech, are being infringed on in democratic states because of illegitimate “subjective, relativistic and evolving” ones, like those related to sexuality and gender equality. Limitations on public expressions of disgust and discrimination “feel” threatening, like persecution similar to that suffered by Christian minorities in oppressive regimes. The proper response is righteous anger and action. In the name of “real, unchangeable, fundamental” rights, the source of which was Christian ideals, if not solely Christians themselves, “people of good will” need to rebuild western civilization—synonymous with Christendom. The collective call to action produces something like nationalistic pride in a sort of diaspora that might be called conservative Christendom.

Taken together, the letter of protest and the WCF VI speeches constitute a discourse that attempts to organize and unite WCF as a cohesive group, to enflame passion. This is accomplished in part through what Ahmed describes as the passion of negative attachment to others. The speakers’ language and tone seems geared to rouse indignation and anger toward the vague entity of They—alternatively secularists, “the gay agenda,” feminists, Washington, and Muslim fundamentalists. However, some caution about the kind of fervor incited is in order. In many countries, even in “the democratic states of the west,” many people come to harm because of their gender and sexual identities rather than their religious identities. Some WCF rhetoric could be misconstrued (or perhaps accurately so) as justification for mistreatment. As Pastor

526 Ahmed 2004, 43.
Green remarked, the mere public visibility of gays offends “people who cannot bear to see such things.” Gays should know that this is “dangerous,” and that “[a]s a result, people may commit acts of violence.”
Conclusion

WCF’s involvement with the burgeoning Russian pro-family movement has matured over time.

WCF Managing Director Larry Jacobs, reflecting on the upcoming WCF VIII, scheduled to be held in Moscow in 2014. 527

In considering WCF’s impact on global politics, Russia comes to mind once more. In the press release quoted above, Larry Jacobs recounts WCF’s history with Russia, some of which has been related earlier in the dissertation. Jacobs begins with the fact that the World Congress of Families was first envisioned in Moscow as a result of Allan Carlson’s meeting with a group of Russian sociologists in 1995. WCF held “the world’s first Demographic Summit” at the Russian State Social University in Moscow in 2011, followed by a second demographic summit in Ulyanovsk in 2012. He goes on to assert that “many new pro-life projects were launched after the first WCF Summit and Russia passed laws restricting abortion to 12 weeks, adopting a waiting period for women wanting abortions, and requiring abortion clinics to warn women about the significant health risks from abortion, including (death, cancer, infertility, miscarriages, and preterm births).” 528

According to the press release, the theme of WCF VIII is “Every Child A

528 See also Sophia Kishkovsky’s article written the same year as WCF’s demographic summit there, “Russians Adopt US Tactics in Opposing Abortion,” in The New York Times, June 10, 2011. She refers to efforts by a WCF partner organization, Sanctity of Motherhood, which is associated with the Russian Orthodox Church. She also devotes a paragraph to discussing the relationship between the Russian pro-life movement and WCF, explaining an anti-abortion stance has been a uniting factor between Russian Orthodoxy and Protestant evangelicals. Several Russian activists mentioned in the article have been speakers at WCF’s major gatherings.

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Gift: Large Families—The Future of Humanity.” The WCF VIII planning committee has scheduled a special WCF Parliamentary Forum to be held at the Russian Duma. To support the parliamentary forum, organizations have committed to sponsor and help “bring pro-family MPs from Europe and around the world.” Other WCF VIII venues include the Kremlin for the first day and Christ the Savior Cathedral for the other two days. The press release remarks on the historical significance of the church, the cornerstone of which was laid in 1839. “The original Cathedral was dynamited and destroyed by the communists in 1931 to promote state-sponsored atheism and to build the world’s largest monument, ‘Palace of the Soviets,’ with a statue of Lenin as a tribute to socialism.” The fact that the church was rebuilt on that site clearly has symbolic import for not only the Russian Orthodox Church, but also for conservative US Christians for whom communism and socialism are anathema. Alliances between WCF and Russian pro-life activists appear to have been effective at gaining traction in Russian politics. WCF VIII seems aimed to influence politics in other countries with conservative political representatives.

James Jasper suggests another way of measuring the success of a social movement besides things like its impact on public policy or extent of recognition; an additional important effect to consider is its ability to sensitize other actors in the political arena.\(^529\) As this dissertation has noted, WCF has shown great skill in accessing and stirring emotions, which are crucial in building and sustaining a social movement.\(^530\) Passions at WCF VI in Madrid were palpable; follow-up emails from the local organizing committee leadership in Madrid continued to reflect an energized local presence. WCF events have been increasingly effective at attracting and invigorating local pro-family and pro-life activists. Many of these relationships bring


\(^{530}\) Jasper 1998.
expanded access to resources and institutional networks, as is the case with the Russian Orthodox Church.

It remains to be seen whether WCF will make inroads with non-Christian religions. I have not seen evidence of any ongoing commitment by any Muslim or Jewish organizations, although some individuals have been supportive. I have not seen evidence of any ongoing commitment by any Muslim or Jewish organizations, although some individuals have been supportive. Farooq Hassan, a Pakistani legal scholar who was a speaker at WCF III, IV, V, and VI.\textsuperscript{531} He has remained involved in the movement but has consistently criticized it for its preoccupation with issues that matter much more to US conservative Christians than anyone else.\textsuperscript{532} In his WCF VI speech he opines that “the psychological perceptions amongst some of us that these pernicious trends [of wider acceptance of homosexuality] are ‘accomplishing’ the demise of the traditional family values is perhaps hyperbolic in character.” He continues that “reference to such imaginary conceptions as there being a ‘conspiracy’ is not helpful.” He points out that Islamic countries nevertheless have been instrumental in stymieing or delaying key votes relating to pro-family issues in UN venues, including some on gay rights. Hassan wants to see more emphasis on a “much needed rapport between the principal religions and ethnic diversities that clearly exist in contemporary civilizations.”\textsuperscript{533}

In any event, the primary impetus seems to be among Christian organizations and is likely to remain so for some time if the mood at WCF VI is any indication. To date, the overwhelming majority of speakers and organizations are from the US, Europe, and more recently Australia. However, WCF has some strong and consistent ties to a few individuals and organizations in Latin America and Africa—two areas where Christianity has been expanding

\textsuperscript{531} Hassan did not actually speak at the WCF VI panel on “Achievements of the Pro-Life and Pro-Family Movement Worldwide” as scheduled. No explanation was given at the time, but his prepared speech is available on the WCF website.

\textsuperscript{532} Jennifer Butler, 132-4.

\textsuperscript{533} Hassan, WCF VI speech on “Achievements of the Pro-Life and Pro-Family Movement Worldwide.”
rapidly and is likely to continue, based on demographic predictions. The shift in the predominance of Christian population from the global north to the global south may bode well for WCF. Christianity in the global south tends to be very conservative on issues of gender and sexuality. On the other hand, there is also more emphasis on poverty and social justice. As my analysis has pointed out, WCF rhetoric on marriage and family seems to resonate more with neoliberalism than with social justice sensibilities. Farooq Hassan’s comments are explicit in their criticism of WCF’s failure to address questions of poverty, unequal distribution of resources, and global injustices. But speakers from places like Ghana, Malawi, and India also have spoken eloquently at WCF gatherings about a lack of infrastructure, economic devastation, the AIDS crisis, gender oppression, and definitions of family that are significantly different from the natural family ideal circulating among most WCF partner organizations. WCF’s cultural blind spots have implications not only for attracting and maintaining coalition partners, but also for the influence of its politics. To the extent WCF has an impact in geopolitical matters, how will it avoid the “bull in a china shop” effects of evangelicals in Uganda whose political influence fueled efforts on legislation for the death penalty as punishment for homosexuality? I am among those who are hard pressed to see such situations as “innocent” regardless of lack of foresight about “unintentional consequences.”

Sexual rights advocates are also sometimes seemingly unaware of the impact of their activism. Globalization means that the dynamics of sexual politics is such that change can have an impact quickly. The results can be liberatory, as new social norms spread and encourage societies to be more open and tolerant; although, certainly new upper-middle-class sexual identities can stimulate neoliberal individual entrepreneurial desires in ways that are not so different from those provoked by natural family discourse. At the same time, in some places, sexual rights discourse can reinforce the need to “clamp down” on “traditional” gender and sexual norms—especially when liberated sexuality is associated with “the west.” In some places, universalizing concepts like gay, lesbian, homosexuality versus heterosexuality, etc., sometimes makes things worse for those whose previously unlabeled practices appear to fall into those categories.537

Sexual rights advocates might purposefully consider what frames and emotions they mobilize. As my analysis of WCF’s natural family campaign demonstrates, framing and affective strategies can be powerful. Founding sexual rights politics on LGBT sexual minority rights, for instance, may be problematic. For one thing, it can invite “tolerance” rather than “liberty.”538 My research could inform an intentional approach to marshaling human rights discourse on sexual rights. WCF relies on a universal morality. Religious, philosophical, and legal approaches can all lead to universal moral norms. The US gay rights movement for marriage equality makes sense in many ways, but it also reinforces many of the norms WCF strives to uphold. However, for the international sexual rights movement, Sonia Corrêa and Richard Parker suggest taking a practical political approach, which sees human rights are relevant and universal to the extent they

537 See Buss et al. 2007.
are accepted and agreed upon, combined with a procedural approach, which emphasizes coalitions and consensus building.\textsuperscript{539} They posit that relying on a minority identity is limited and risky, but perhaps politically pragmatic, especially to the extent that such a position focuses on the intersections of sexuality with categories like race, class, and gender.\textsuperscript{540} A procedural approach may be most conducive to progress; such an approach

…questions what makes a discourse universal. It emphasizes a Habermasian perspective based on the use of coalitions and consensus building. For these theorists the problem does not lie in the content of human rights agreements, but in the process through which the agreements are reached. They believe that to the extent that human rights are constructed or derived from an open, reciprocal, and communicative discourse, they may be considered universal.\textsuperscript{541}

Procedural approach proponents are most likely to of sexual rights as “a discursive strategy to enhance the potential of individuals in relation to the state (and the market), concurrently creating multiple ‘spaces’ in which the very meanings of sexual rights can be constantly refined and re-defined.”\textsuperscript{542} It also fits with an emphasis on plural public spheres and the situatedness of moral debates; it allows the capturing and valuing of local (contextual) meanings of sexuality.\textsuperscript{543}

A procedural approach must acknowledge the importance of including a multiplicity of perspectives—including religious voices. The supposedly secular international civic sphere can marginalize religious views. The secular bias tends to favor Christianity to the extent that

\textsuperscript{540} Prioritizing a minority sexual identity necessarily submerges the fluidity and volatility of the domain of sexuality, according to Corrêa and Parker, 24.
\textsuperscript{541} Corrêa and Parker, 23.
\textsuperscript{542} Corrêa and Parker, 24.
\textsuperscript{543} Corrêa and Parker, 24.
Christian perspectives inform the particular secularism of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\footnote{See Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008, especially the introduction, 1-38.} In fact, the marginalization of religion contributes to the elevation of conservative religious spokespeople as the “voice of religion.”\footnote{See Sands.} Many LGBT people and feminists see religion as an adversary, perhaps understandably, but religions are internally diverse.\footnote{See Sands; also Michael Bronski, Ann Pellegrini, and Michael Amico, “You Can Tell Just By Looking”: And 20 Other Myths about LGBT Life and People (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013).} Queer and feminist religious scholars and activists may be in the best position to expand conversations about sex and religion beyond the dominance of conservative religious activists’ positions on sexual issues as “the” religious perspective.\footnote{For example, see W. Anne Joh, “Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality: Integrating the Diverse Politics of Identity into Our Theology,” in New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views, Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, ed. (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2010), 52-63.}
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Appendix A: 2013 World Congress of Families Partner Organizations
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<td>1 Alliance Defending Freedom</td>
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<td>2 Alianza Latinoamericana para la Familia (ALAFA) (Latin American Alliance for the Family)</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
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<td>3 Americans United for Life</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>4 Associazione per la Difesa Dei Valori Cristiani – Luci sull’Est (In Defense of Christian Values or Association for Family Values)</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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<td>5 Australian Family Association</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>6 The Blue Flag</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>7 Bruderhof Communities</td>
<td>Australia, USA, UK, Germany</td>
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<td>8 Christian Concern</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>9 Christian Film and Television Commission</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>10 Concerned Women for America</td>
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<td>11 Dads4Kids</td>
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<td>12 Endeavor Forum</td>
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<td>13 Ethics and Public Policy Center</td>
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<td>14 The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission</td>
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<td>15 Euthanasia Prevention Coalition</td>
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<td>16 Family &amp; Society</td>
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<td>17 Family First Foundation</td>
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<td>18 Family Policy Institute</td>
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<td>19 Family Watch International</td>
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<td>20 Family, Unity, Motherhood Program</td>
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<td>21 Father Peter Skarga Institute</td>
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<td>22 Federation Pro-Europa Christianian</td>
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<td>23 Fellowship of St. James</td>
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<td>27 HazteOir.org (Speak Up)</td>
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Source: *World Congress of Families News*, Volume 7, Number 3 (April/May) 2013, 12.
Appendix B: Organizations That Have Affiliated with World Congress of Families
### Appendix B: Table 1

Organizations That Have Affiliated with World Congress of Families
Listed by Country and Years

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Notes:
Highlighted organizations are ones I consider long-time supporters, which I define as their participation as WCF partners for six or more years.


1997-2004 * = “convening organizations.”

Sources: World Congress of Families News, Volume 1, Number 1 (August) 2007, through Volume 7, Number 3 (April/May) 2013; World Congress of Families website information about sponsors of WCF I, WCF II, and WCF III, all of which preceded WCF’s partner program, begun in 2007.
## Appendix B: Table 2

Summary of WCF Partner Organizations by Country and Years of Participation

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**Religious Affiliation:**
Of 30 partners of 3+ years:
- 12 “Christian” or Protestant affiliations
- 8 Catholic affiliations
- 2 LDS affiliations
- 22

**Country of Origin:**
Of 18 long-time partners of 6+ years:
- 14 US
  1 Canada (REAL Women)
  1 Mexico (Red Familia – “Family Network”)
  1 Venezuela (Alliance for Family)
  1 Italy (Defense of Christian Values)
- Of 30 partners of 3+ years:
  21 US plus above 4 organizations from elsewhere and...
  1 Canada (Euthanasia Prevention)
  1 Spain (HazteOir – “Speak Up”)
  1 Switzerland (Parents Forum)
  1 Australia (Australia Family Association)
  1 UK (Christian Concern)
Appendix C: Summary of World Congress of Families Speakers
## Appendix C: Table 1
Summary of World Congress of Families Speakers at WCF I - VII by Country

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WCF I 1997 Prague
WCF II 1999 Geneva
WCF III 2004 Mexico
WCF IV 2007 Warsaw
WCF V 2009 Amsterdam
WCF VI 2011 Madrid
WCF VII 2013 Sydney
WCF VIII 2014 Moscow

### Appendix C: Table 2
Summary of US Speakers as Percentage of Total

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