LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR WHOM? :
EXCLUSIONARY NATIONALISM IN THE RHETORIC
OF CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA
AND THE FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL

A Thesis

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By

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ABSTRACT

As a growing political force, conservative Christian policy organizations like Concerned Women for America (CWA) and the Family Research Council (FRC) pose a threat to those suffering the effects of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia, and to the work of political progressives who strive to secure rights for the marginalized. This thesis elucidates the ways that these organizations use nationalism as a strategy to promote their exclusionary political agenda.

Nationalism facilitates the attempts of these organizations to imagine solidarity among a community of “ordinary” American citizens, and so to shift the political center to the right so that they themselves appear mainstream and representative of “the people.” Despite their attempts to appear politically centrist, this study reveals two main ways that their agendas and policy proposals actually function to exclude and condemn many Americans. First, CWA and the FRC distort the terms of the liberal democratic tradition and the motives of political progressives (especially gays, lesbians, and feminists) in order to demonize progressives as contrary to the interests of the Good American Citizen. Second, CWA and the FRC build their policy proposals upon narrow and punitive views of what is moral and correct. Developed with the perspective of the white, heterosexual, traditional, middle class Christian in mind, such proposals do not and cannot represent the interests of all American people. The policy proposals of these organizations, rather,
uphold social inequality by seeking to enforce the traditional family structure,
discrediting the work of progressives who challenge hierarchical sex/gender roles,
dismissing structural inequalities that play a role in the construction of social problems,
and maintaining biased perceptions of those who supposedly perpetuate social problems.

With designs to institute an exclusionary – rather than emancipatory – political agenda, CWA and the FRC thus present a very real threat to anyone who will not or cannot fit their narrow conceptualization of what is an appropriate family, belief system, or lifestyle. Most gravely, with a new presidential administration that is sensitive to such conservative Christian perspectives, CWA and the FRC are in an ideal position to impact the political climate in ways that edge out progressive influence.
For my mother, Rita,  
for being the first to believe in me,  
and for my boys, Regis, James, and Joey,  
whose love, support, companionship, and devotion  
have aided and abetted this and other endeavors.

"Never to want to see  
the other side of the hill ...  
would kill us all."

-Alastair Reid
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"We should – we will – welcome people of faith into the political process ... It is essential that believers enter the arena.
Your involvement in politics helps determine how well our democracy works.
We have finally learned that government programs cannot solve our problems.
Government can hand out money, but government cannot put hope in our hearts
or a sense of purpose in our lives."
- George W. Bush¹

The recent presidential election of George W. Bush – a man “who has unabashedly embraced his faith” (Esposito 1) – attests to the shift of the political center further to the right, and of the increasingly mainstream acceptance of religion in American politics. Conservative Christians can take at least partial credit for this shift to the right, and they can certainly take credit for the role of Christian moral values in the construction of legitimate political concerns. Although Christian fundamentalism has been on the political scene since just after World War II (Bendroth 2), the power and presence of conservative Christians in politics has reached its height most recently.² The growing influence of politically active conservative Christians is changing the American

¹Qtd. in Latham, 102.

²Throughout this thesis, I use the term “conservative Christians” in a way similar to Nikkie R. Keddie’s description of those who espouse “new religious politics.” According to Keddie, new religious politics accounts for the efforts of religious groups to gain political power “in order to implement a social order supposedly based on eternal, timeless principles prescribed by their religion” (Riesebrodt and Chong 1).
political climate, imperiling the potential for progressive change (Smith "Why Did Armey Apologize?" 169), and threatening to turn back the clock on progressive policies already incurred.

As a growing political force, conservative Christian policy organizations like Concerned Women for America (CWA) and the Family Research Council (FRC) pose a threat to the work of political progressives who strive to secure the rights of those still suffering the effects of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia, and who work towards a more equitable nation. It is through the power of their rhetoric – and especially their use of nationalism in this rhetoric – that CWA and the FRC are able to facilitate their exclusionary politics and establish a following. Nationalism enables these organizations to appeal to people’s emotions while simultaneously veiling their reactionary political agenda. Drawing upon the cloak of patriotism, these organizations seek to mainstream their position as that which is reflective of the interests of the Good American Citizen. What makes these organizations so dangerous is that they have been successful in both developing a following and in impacting policy and legislation in ever more right-wing ways. Moreover, with a new administration in Washington – especially one that is highly sensitive to conservative Christian concerns – their presence represents a very real threat to progressive politics.

**Background on the organizations**

CWA was founded in 1979 by Beverly LaHaye, who “was stirred to action” after watching a television interview with Betty Friedan, the founder of the National
Organization for Women (NOW). LaHaye "[realized] that Friedan claimed to speak for the women of America ... She knew the feminists' anti-God, anti-family rhetoric did not represent her beliefs, nor those of the vast majority of women" [emphasis mine, "About CWA," par. 1, (6 Dec. 2000)]. Today, CWA uses a variety of means to fulfill their mission "to protect and promote biblical values among all citizens ... thereby reversing the decline in moral values in our nation"³ (par. 1). These means include: meetings and conventions with legislative officials and the public; "research on issues important to women and families" at the Beverly LaHaye Institute, a conservative think tank; political organizing and lobbying; prayer/action chapters, which "meet on a regular basis to pray for leaders and issues, and then take action"; fax, e-mail, and media alerts; publications, including Family Voice, a bi-monthly magazine; and the radio program, Beverly LaHaye Today. Recently, CWA added to its efforts the Culture and Family Institute, a CWA affiliate that "will focus on cutting-edge social issues" (Wright "CWA Launches Culture and Family Institute," par. 1). Robert H. Knight, former Director of Cultural Studies for the FRC, heads the Institute. In April, Peter LaBarbera joined him as Senior Policy Analyst. LaBarbera is a former reporter for The Washington Times and former editor for Family Voice. He also was Senior Analyst in the FRC's Cultural Studies Department, and currently serves as Director of the Americans for Truth Project of Kerusso Ministries ("The Culture and Family Institute Announces New Senior Policy Analyst," par. 3-4).⁴

³ CWA revised their mission statement late in 2000. Before this, their mission was "to come together and restore the family to its traditional purpose and thereby allow each member of the family to realize their God-given potential and be more responsible citizens" [About CWA, par. 2 (17 April 2000)].

⁴ Although CWA and the FRC have collaborated in the past, this Institute seems to represent an increasing move to combine forces. Latching on to a phrase used by George W. Bush during his presidential campaign, the FRC has focused much of its efforts in 2001 on developing policy proposals centered around "building a culture of life." They have produced the policy document, Towards a Culture of Life, outlining
Using language to emphasize “diversity,” the CWA web site attempts to construct the appearance of an inclusive membership body to show that it speaks for all American people, especially women. The web site tells us that CWA’s “membership includes women and men of all ages, various church affiliations and multiple political parties” (par. 3). By taking a dual-sex, multi-denominational, non-partisan stance, CWA seeks to set itself up as a universal and non-discriminatory voice for the people.\(^5\)

Like CWA, the FRC is a “non-partisan” organization that shares the goals of “restoring” the family to the intact, two-parent, heterosexual structure. Originally formed in 1983, the FRC “merged with Focus on the Family from 1988-1992, then reorganized ... and incorporated ... in October 1992” (“The Vision and the Work”\(^6\)). Despite these changes, one pamphlet assures us, “Through each transition, [FRC’s] purpose has

\(^5\) In practice, CWA is less successful than the FRC in promoting the idea that they are a non-partisan organization. During his presidency, they openly lambasted Clinton for his “radical” policies and immorality, and currently applaud the conservative agenda of President Bush. Their inability to construct a non-partisan appearance was most clear to me, however, at CWA’s Convention 2000, a gathering of Concerned Women for America with the purpose of “provid[ing] the latest information on trends within public policy ... encouraging ... with testimonies of the transforming power of Christ, as well as increas[ing] ... knowledge of the issues challenging us.” On September 15, 2000, the Friday evening of the convention, which was held at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., a Democratic convention promoting the presidential campaign of then-Vice-President Al Gore was held in adjoining ballroom. CWA convention officials as well as CWA convention attendees made several snide remarks about Gore and about the general presence of the Democrats.

\(^6\) This information appeared on the FRC web site under the heading “The Vision and the Work” up through the summer of 2000. In fall 2000, the FRC revamped their web site, and this information can no longer be found online.
remained the same: to defend the societal bedrocks of family, faith, and freedom” (Who We Are and What We Do 1). The FRC uses a variety of means to meet their mission of “reaffirm[ing] and promo[ting] nationally, and particularly in Washington, DC, the traditional family unit and the Judeo-Christian value system upon which it is built.” To realize this mission, the FRC:

- Promote[s] and defend[s] traditional family values in print, broadcast, and other media outlets;
- Develop[s] and advocate[s] legislative and public policy initiatives which strengthen and fortify the family and promote traditional values;
- Establish[es] and maintain[es] an accurate source of statistical and research information which reaffirms the importance of the family in our civilization;
- Inform[s] and educate[s] citizens on how they can promote Biblical principles in our culture” (3).

There are two major reasons for my selection of these particular organizations as subjects of study. First, both are national policy organizations with a Christian focus, and both are based in Washington, D.C. Because their strategies center on political organizing and lobbying, they are in a position to exert influence over legislators and policy. With a narrow and punitive moral focus, however, CWA and the FRC are hardly representative of the diverse interests of people across the nation. Furthermore, their potential to have a broad-reaching effect on governmental issues presents a grave challenge to those who do not share their views.

The second reason I have selected these organizations for study is because of their mutual focus on the traditional family and their positions within the broader context of conservative Christian political activism. CWA is the largest and most influential women's organization of its kind, boasting more than 500,000 members nationwide7

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7As Linda Kintz points out, however, exact numbers are hard to come by (18).
(CWA Profile par. 6). Sharing the goal of restoring the traditional family through policy, the FRC matches CWA’s objectives perhaps more closely than any other conservative Christian organization does. The work that they do has become an important and representative part of conservative Christian political activism. The centrality of the family in their moral and political agenda and the move towards institutionalizing a social gospel designed to “redeem” American culture characterizes the aims and objectives of this historical moment in Christian fundamentalism (Bendoroth 9). As policy organizations, CWA and the FRC are powerfully positioned to accomplish their political goals through lobbying and political organizing.

The Problem of Exclusionary Politics

I call the politics of CWA and the FRC “exclusionary” because these organizations seek to impose hierarchical conservative Christian morality upon mainstream politics in a way that pits “goodness” against “deviance.” Both CWA and the FRC believe that American society is suffering from a pervasive moral decline evident in a range of “social problems” from teen pregnancy to drug abuse to welfare dependency. They attribute the cause of this moral decline to the breakdown of the

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8 Focus on the Family, the organization with whom the FRC once merged, is more focused on strengthening the traditional family by “offering practical help for your marriage and child rearing” (Yahoo Search engine), especially through publications and media broadcasts. Overall, they are much less concerned with lobbying and other forms of political activism than is the FRC. The Christian Coalition, a “big brother” organization to the FRC, is primarily concerned with impacting electoral politics, and has somewhat less of a focus on restoring the traditional family.
traditional heterosexual intact two-parent family. CWA and the FRC share the mission of “getting the nation back on track” by valorizing a fundamentalist Christian value system and promoting the traditional family unit. Non-traditional lifestyles, family structures, and values represent a threat to the stability of this “ideal” family form, and so the policy proposals of these organizations center around “encouraging” the traditional family, in part, by discouraging alternative family structures. Ultimately, this position places them in role of the moral police, and “ignores the needs and interests of those individuals who don’t fit into conventional families ... [telling] them that their ends and purposes are of less value than those of citizens who embrace the conventional family model” (Struening 149).

There are two major problems with their “return to morality” approach. First, this conceptualization of causality ignores structural inequalities that can play an important role in the development — and indeed, construction — of social problems.10 Since the primary goal of these organizations is to restore moral values through the traditional family structure, their policy proposals foreclose the exploration of policies that could address the structural aspect of social problems. Indeed, those like CWA and the FRC who operate within what George Lakoff calls “Strict Father” morality11 openly reject

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9 Burack and Josephson explain that the “neo-traditional family” is characterized by traditional sex-based gender roles and an avoidance of associating these roles with the need for masculine authority and control (214). Because these organizations — CWA, especially — make little effort to mask the “necessity” of masculine authority and control, I refer to their prescriptions for family life as simply “traditional.”

10 Iris Marion Young makes a very similar argument in “Mothers, Citizenship, and Independence: The Citizen Virtue of Motherhood” (545), as does Burke in The Philosophy of Literary Form (204-5).

11 In Moral Politics, Lakoff clearly outlines the qualities of “Strict Father” and “Nurturant Parent” moralities, which help to explain the differences between politically conservative and politically liberal worldviews. Strict Father morality emphasizes Moral Strength, Moral Authority, and Moral Order, as well
structural explanations for social problems, viewing such explanations as an excuse for lack of talent or character (205). Second, this particular brand of morality insists that it is the only “correct” form of morality. In this view, other forms of so-called morality are not moral at all, but rather are excuses designed to justify immoral behavior and lack of self-discipline or self-reliance.\textsuperscript{12} Since such an approach to morality ignores or marginalizes those values and perspectives that differ from its own, clearly it cannot account for the wide and diverse interests of all American people.

As feminists, we are all too familiar with the effects of such approaches to social issues. First, the traditional family of which these organizations speak is the nuclear unit, comprised of two married heterosexual parents and their offspring. In this family unit, one’s role and contributions are determined by traditionally hierarchical understandings of gender (Collins “It’s All in the Family” 63-4). Furthermore, conservative Christian approaches to this family unit are strict and exclusionary; that is, they are not open to structural variations. Both CWA and the FRC denounce single parenthood (especially motherhood), divorce, sex outside of marriage, same-sex marriage (and gay and lesbian relationships in general), and other alternative situations that re-define our cultural notion of the family. In their rhetoric, alternative families and lifestyles are constructed as deviant and immoral. Unable to account for beliefs and values that differ from their own, these organizations produce policy proposals that are nothing short of discriminatory.

\textsuperscript{12} See Lakoff, especially chapter 22.
Nonetheless, both organizations profess to speak for and represent the interests of “the people.” This positioning, however, often opposes them to the “liberal” federal government, and always opposes them to “radical” organizations concerned with leftist issues like women’s rights and gay rights. In assuming this position, they seek to accomplish four major objectives: 1) To universalize their position as representative of “the people”; 2) To imagine solidarity among a community of “ordinary” American citizens, whilst 3) “Othering” gays, lesbians, leftists, and other such “social deviants” as extremists; and 4) To appease anxieties in regards to social change. These four objectives produce exclusion while simultaneously positioning CWA and the FRC as mainstream. Nationalism becomes a primary conduit through which these organizations are able to assert and facilitate their exclusionary politics.

Although CWA and the FRC propose to be representative of the American people, in this thesis I show how their proposed policy solutions do not and cannot represent the interests of all American people. Rather, their conceptualizations of public policies that will produce a strong nation require thinking from the standpoint of a conservative white, heterosexual, Christian, middle class subject position.

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13 I am using “liberal” here to denote “political liberalism.” Throughout this thesis, my usage of “liberal” shifts in meaning between “political liberalism” and “theoretical liberalism,” which, as a field in political philosophy, is distinct from political liberalism (Lakoff 19-21). For CWA and the FRC, “liberal” is a word with negative connotations. And although, in the rhetoric that I examine, these organizations don’t discuss theoretical liberalism per se, they seek to appropriate the terms of the (theoretical) liberal democratic tradition in their conceptualizations of nationalism.

14 I give credit to the work of Anna Marie Smith for helping me to formulate this analysis. In her article, “Why Did Armey Apologize?: Hegemony, Homophobia, and the Religious Right,” Smith outlines six strategies used by the Religious Right that benefit the wealthy, but construct the appearance of a “populist liberal democratic ‘defender of the people’” (157-9). Because my focus here is to delineate what CWA and
Defining Nationalism

My definition of nationalism grows out of the cumulative efforts of several theorists of nationalism. In his seminal work, Benedict Anderson defines nationalism in terms of the “imagined community,” a concept which emphasizes the constructed and mythic nature of the nation. As C.F. Seton-Watson wrote: “A nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one” (Anderson 6, qtd. in footnote #9). National identification comes when one imagines that “one [is] among many of the same kind as himself” (85). Anderson points out that such an understanding of the nation builds “particular solidarities” that includes some and excludes others (133-4). Tamar Mayer asserts that nationalism is inherently exclusive, built upon an “internal hegemony” that empowers only those who share a sense of belonging in the same community. By distinguishing those who belong and do not belong to the nation, nationalism demands exclusion (1). Furthermore, embedded within nationalist projects are hierarchical understandings of gender (Yuval-Davis), sexuality (Peterson), and race and class (Collins). As these theorists make clear, nationalism is exclusionary for “those whose identity is at odds with homogenous national identity” (Peterson 35). Conceptualizing nationalism without accounting for intersecting social hierarchies masks its critical exclusions. Therefore, studies of nationalism must be contextualized in light of these hierarchies (Yuval-Davis 4). With this in mind, I pay particular attention to the construction and intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality within rhetoric on nationalism.

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the FRC are trying to accomplish in their rhetoric, I deviate a bit from Smith’s discussion of the six
This study is intended to reveal the exclusions that appear in CWA’s and the FRC’s patriotic and jingoistic constructions of nation. Particularly useful to this project is Wendy Brown’s critical conceptualization of “liberalism” and Anna Marie Smith’s descriptions of “the liberal democratic tradition.” It is important to note here that liberalism is not without virtues; indeed, with its emphasis on individual rights, it has provides the foundation for worthy and humanitarian political endeavors, including such progressive concerns as women’s rights, human rights, and separation of church and state. It has helped to procure rights and to provide protections against abuse of power and despotism. Moreover, morality is not absent from liberal democracy. Built into American democratic institutions are such moral principles as Moral Fairness, Moral Empathy, and Moral Self-Interest, which manifest in the liberal principles of liberty, equality, impartial rule-based distribution, rights-based fairness, and contractual distribution (Lakoff 323).

But liberalism also has been used in troubling ways; the ways in which CWA and the FRC use liberalism, for instance, give cause for concern. By de-historicizing and de-contextualizing the liberal democratic tradition, these organizations distort its terms in a way that does not uphold actual freedom, but exclusive privilege. In this sense, these organizations are stellar examples of Brown’s and Smith’s criticisms. Smith argues that values such as “‘freedom,’ ‘equality,’ ‘democracy,’ and ‘tolerance of difference’” which arise out of the liberal democratic tradition have been distorted and appropriated by many on the political Right for their rhetorical worth and the legitimacy they lend (“Why Did Arney Apologize?” 150). In the rhetoric of these organizations, liberalism appears as an strategies.
“ahistorical and mythological” conglomerate, produced by generalizing various epochs, geographic milieus, and thinkers (such as Locke, Tocqueville, Bentham, Constant, and Rawls). In this sense, liberalism is “both a set of stories and a set of practices,” appearing “as ideology and as discourse, as an obfuscating narrative about a particular social order as well as a narrative constitutive of this social order and its subjects.” Through its mythological construction, its terms “are ‘ordinary’ to a very contemporary us” (Brown 141-2).

CWA’s and the FRC’s alleged embodiment of these terms enables them to wield tremendous ideological, and by extension, rhetorical, power. For this reason, liberalism is central to their conception of nationalism. Importantly, CWA and the FRC did not invent liberal notions of “America” themselves; rather, they apply a distorted, jingoistic view of the American liberal democratic tradition, drawing upon cultural rhetorical memory that conceives of the United States as the land of the free and the home of the brave. In “Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?”, Ernest Renan writes: “Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup des choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié beaucoup des choses”\(^{15}\) (qtd. in Anderson 6). It does not matter, then, whether or not what is believed about the nation is actually “real”; what matters is that the nation has a common existence in the minds and hearts of its people. The use of a proud and patriotic nationalism enables the appearance of political centrism through the invocation of those principles upon which the nation was founded. Moreover, that such principles are laid out in the Declaration of Independence as “self-evident” supports the kind of

\(^{15}\) Translation: “The essence of a nation is that all individuals have a lot of things in common, and also that they have forgotten a lot of things.”
absolutism that these organizations insist upon (Hartz 58). Equally important, using nationalism enables these organizations to conceal their exclusions while simultaneously diverting progressives’ accusations of narrow-mindedness with counter-accusations of anti-nation-ness.

In addition to appropriating the terms of a mythologized brand of liberalism, these organizations capitalize upon liberalism’s hierarchical aspects for not-so-democratic ends. CWA and the FRC insist upon hierarchy, defending themselves with the argument that it is natural, God-ordained, and sanctioned by the liberal democratic tradition and the Moral Order (Lakoff 81). They portray their lack of criticism as patriotism; those who do criticize the liberal democratic tradition as they have conceived of it, they imply, clearly are opposed to the best interests of the nation and can’t be trusted. As Wendy Brown argues in “Liberalism’s Family Values,” however, the liberal democratic tradition must be interrogated because it assumes a masculinist subject, necessarily subordinating the feminine subject. V. Spike Peterson argues further that the gendered nature of the liberal subject is closely tied to heterosexism because “state-centric nationalisms … engage not only in sexist practices … but also take for granted heterosexist sex/gender identities and forms of group reproduction that underpin sexism” (39). The state’s interest in regulating heterosexual desire grows out of notions of the traditional family as normative, “‘pre-political’ and ‘non-contractual’” (40). Patricia Hill Collins theorizes that nationalist rhetoric around the venerated traditional family does not include race and class variation (“Producing the Mothers of the Nation”). The work of these theorists illustrates the ways in which nationalism produces exclusions while veiling its own constructed assumptions. In this thesis, I synthesize the arguments of Brown, Peterson, Collins and others for an
integrated theory that challenges liberalism’s assumption of a white, heterosexual, and middle class – as well as masculinist – subject.

Brown also criticizes liberalism for predicking its terms upon binary oppositions. Brown points out that these oppositions, or “dualisms,” as she calls them, are “achieved through [their] constitution by, dependence upon, and disavowal of … subordinate term[s].” The “constitutive dualisms of liberalism” that Brown considers are: equality vs. difference; liberty vs. necessity/encumbrance; autonomy vs. dependence/dependents; rights vs. needs/relations/duties; individual vs. family; self-interest vs. selflessness; public vs. private; and contract vs. consent. She carefully articulates the ways in which the “desirable” primary terms become attached to the liberal subject, gendered masculine, while the subordinate terms are marked feminine (152). I would like to expand upon this analysis, however, and argue that the subordinate terms are not simply feminine, but Other. Liberal political discourse not only allies the feminine with the oppositional subordinate of the autonomous liberal subject; it also associates other categories of difference – the non-white, non-heterosexual, and non-middle-class, for instance – with the same oppositional subordinates. Normative identity categories of whiteness, heterosexuality, and middle class status join with masculinity in constituting the liberal subject.

Rhetorically conceived in terms of natural order, the tenets of liberalism are founded upon assumptions about “the individual” and his place both within and independent of the family and the state. Even though the boundaries of the tripartite social order (divided between the state, civil society, and the family) – and, I would argue, the “constitutive dualisms of liberalism” (Brown 152) – are “obviously
interconstitutive… they are analytically separated in ordinary discourse” (144).
Insistence upon the separation of the autonomous individual subject denies the interdependency of the liberal subject to the society around him. Thus, conservative organizations like CWA and the FRC are able to use such “natural” separations to their advantage, and to argue that the liberal tradition anticipates the righteous (and hierarchical) social order that they promote. Using nationalism and invoking the liberal democratic tradition, therefore, offer an excellent vehicle through which CWA and the FRC can assert their exclusionary politics.

Methodology and the Use of the Term “Rhetoric”

In its popular usage, the term “rhetoric” has a negative connotation. It is often used to signify “empty speech” that belies the rhetor’s intentions for the purposes of duping an audience into “signing on” to his or her platform. In this sense, it can be condescending or insulting to accuse a person or group of using rhetoric. Despite my viscerally opposed response to organizations like CWA and the FRC, I do not use the term in this way. Rather, I use the term “rhetoric” more broadly and non-judgmentally, as that which seeks to “[construct] … a shared understanding of the world.” This definition implicitly raises questions about whose “reality” gets privileged in this shared understanding (Foss et al. Feminist Rhetorical Theories 6), an issue of key concern to feminists.

This conceptualization of the term is particularly appropriate to helping us understand the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus
primarily on the textual rhetoric of these organizations, much of which has been taken from their web sites. Most of the textual rhetoric I examine is in the form of articles, although I also consider policy proposals, public relations documents, position statements, and the use of visuals. As my rhetorical analysis shows, these organizations indeed attempt to construct and maintain “a shared understanding of the world” with their audience. A classical usage of rhetorical analysis would focus on examining the act of persuasion in their rhetoric. I consider this usage as well, since, as lobbyists, these organizations indeed do seek to persuade policymakers and legislators into their understanding of particular issues. The articles these organizations produce, however, seem most focused on “preaching to the choir” — of constructing and maintaining a particular conceptualization of the world for an audience of those already persuaded. Persuasion in their rhetoric, therefore, is not primarily intended to convert an audience of skeptics into accepting their argument, but rather to maintain a conservative worldview as the correct worldview, and sometimes, to induce action.

The method of rhetorical analysis allows me to meet the goals of this project because this strategy is aimed at exposing the underlying assumptions of arguments. In an effort to understand why an argument is persuasive, the rhetorician must examine how a rhetor (in this case, CWA and the FRC) attempts to construct a convincing argument. The rhetorician asks the following questions: For whom would this argument be persuasive? What counts as evidence here? How does the rhetor make his/her authority

16 The form of rhetorical analysis I describe here is Aristotelian, which primarily focuses on rhetoric for the purpose of persuasion. Some feminist rhetorical theorists have challenged this rhetorical intention as masculinist and even violent [see, for instance, Foss, Foss, and Griffin (Feminist Rhetorical Theories), and Foss and Griffin (“Beyond Persuasion”)]. I find these Aristotelian premises useful for this project,
claims? Does s/he appeal to logos (factual knowledge claims)? Does s/he rely on ethos appeal (the character of the speaker)? Or does s/he appeal to pathos (the emotions of the audience)? What is the intended effect of the argument? (Covino 5-6). Rhetorical analysis allows us to unmask the unstated assumptions and examine the implications of an argument (10).

The two rhetorical methods I use in this study are ideological and cluster criticisms. Cluster criticism allows the rhetorician to discover the worldview of the rhetor through a close textual examination of key words and phrases in the rhetoric. The rhetorician selects the terms based on the frequency and intensity with which they appear in the text and examines the tone and surrounding phrases to establish a context for the terms. Through this examination, “God” and “devil” terms begin to emerge. “God” terms are words or phrases that are associated with that which is unmistakably and unquestionably positive. Some God terms appearing in the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC include family, faith, freedom, values, tradition, America, and Founding Fathers. Devil terms are words or phrases associated with “Otherness,” deviance, and negativity (Foss Rhetorical Criticism 63-5). Devil terms appearing in CWA’s and FRC’s rhetoric include: radical, activist, liberal, feminist, homosexual, and agenda.

Ideological criticism focuses on examining the unspoken assumptions, structures, and normative beliefs promoted in a text (293). The rhetorician’s primary goal in ideological criticism “is the emancipation of human potential that is being thwarted by an existing ideology or ideologies.” She accomplishes this by exposing the ideologies that are implicitly present in the text, as well as those that are absent (295-6). Ideological however, because my primary purpose is to explicate the ways in which CWA and the FRC construct a
criticism involves a semiotic approach, in which the rhetorician examines both the meaning in terms and the meaning in visual signs and structures (292). For the purposes of this study, cluster criticism functions usefully in conjunction with ideological criticism because it exposes the ideological meaning of God and devil terms. Ideological criticism is useful in this study because my central argument pivots on showing how the rhetoric of these organizations is a conduit of exclusionary – rather than emancipatory – politics.

Organization of the Thesis

I have organized this thesis in a way that focuses categories of identity around two thematic arguments. Chapter Two, “Shifting the Center: Constructing the Good Citizen vs. the Menace to Society,” exposes the ways in which CWA and the FRC “Other” gays, lesbians, and feminists in an attempt to shift the political center to the right and to construct themselves as mainstream. Nationalism is integral to their efforts because it allows them to employ a framework that already is built upon the importance of distinguishing between Self and Other. Moreover, this framework empowers them to embody the terms of the liberal democratic tradition.

In chapter three, “Excluding ‘Others’: The Race and Class Fall-Out,” I argue that although CWA and the FRC attempt to portray themselves as inclusive of people of different classes, and especially, races, their conceptualizations of the origins of the nation, the qualities of the citizen, the benefits of the traditional family, and the causes of social problems stand in the way of developing non-discriminatory policies. By

“convincing” argument.
considering what policies would best benefit the conservative, white, middle class, heterosexual Christian citizen, these organizations fail to see the ways in which their perspectives and policy proposals exclude, if not punish, those who fall outside the confines of this subject position.

For the sake of clarity, I separate my analyses of the identity categories, dealing primarily with gender and sexuality in chapter two, and race and class in chapter three. I do not intend to suggest that any of these categories are wholly independent from one another. Rather, as becomes clear in my analyses, these categories intersect with one another. Therefore, there is some overlap in my discussions of these facets of identity.

I conclude by considering the broader implications of this study. Through this project, I seek to contribute to the growing mass of research on conservative Christians. This endeavor is important to feminists and to other progressive intellectual communities because organizations like CWA and the FRC are positioned to impact policy and legislation in ways that are destructive for those will not or cannot fit their narrow conceptualization of what is an appropriate family, belief system, or lifestyle. Moreover, their castigation of certain groups – most notably, gays and lesbians – perpetuates bias and maintains the continued denial of rights for such groups. Furthermore, with a new conservative presidential administration headed by a man who shares their Christian sensibilities, CWA and the FRC are in an ideal position to impact the political climate in ways that edge out progressive influence. As participants in an emancipatory movement, feminists are invested both personally and politically in the influence such organizations are able to garner.

\[17\] For an influential discussion on intersectionality, see Collins (1990).
CHAPTER 2

SHIFTING THE CENTER:
CONSTRUCTING THE GOOD CITIZEN VS. THE MENACE TO SOCIETY

"In politics men who make speeches do not go out of their way to explain how differently
they would speak if the enemies they had were larger in size or different in character.
On the contrary whatever enemies they fight they paint in satanic terms,
so that a problem sufficiently difficult to begin with in a liberal society
becomes complicated further by the inevitable perspectives of political battle."
- Louis Hartz

If a political movement is to achieve hegemony, it must appear to be legitimate,
normal, and reflective of the values and interests of the culture in which it is situated. As
Gramsci asserted, it must "organize [the] consent" of the populace (Smith "The Good
Homosexual and the Dangerous Queer" 225). CWA and the FRC seek to construct their
own position as mainstream and normal by making progressives appear to be fringe. But
more complex than merely positioning their own good intentions as dichotomous with the
intentions of radical progressive movements, these organizations – along with other
conservative Christian organizations – also project themselves as tolerant while they seek
to exclude and marginalize those who do not fall within the parameters of their vision for
the Nation (Smith "The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism" 113).

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1 The Liberal Tradition in America, 6.
In “The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism,” Anna Marie Smith explains that organizing consent does not require “actual approval for actual policies”; rather, it depends upon the construction of a political “imaginary.” Similar to the concept of the imagined community, a political movement achieves imaginary status when its worldview and conceptualizations of what is “real” about society are accepted as normal and true (114). The goal is to become seamless – to create the illusion that the perspective offered is natural. In order to do this, political movements must conceal their own mythic status. Roland Barthes defines myth as normalized ideology; the values promoted in that ideology are perceived as inherent and unquestionably true. “The very principle of myth … [is that] it transforms history into nature” (129). When a political movement achieves mythic status, the values and standards it puts forth presume to become everyone’s values and standards. In this way, myth denies that it is a constructed concept, while marginalizing those who do not adhere to its values. An examination of an organization’s rhetoric elucidates the process by which it constructs a mythic political imaginary by revealing the assumptions of an ideological position and the effects that ideology can have upon a society.

It follows, then, that political movements seeking imaginary status have a stake in the appearance of political centrism. In other words, if organizations like CWA and the FRC cannot achieve a mainstream appearance, they will appear to be reactionary extremists on the political fringe, which, as Smith points out, would spell their failure to achieve hegemony (“The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 114). The political power and influence of these organizations thus depends upon the ability to appear mainstream. Organizations like CWA and the FRC do not handle this pressure by
adapting their positions to match centrist views; quite the contrary, they attempt to shift the political center further to the right so that their position becomes the new political center. Smith explains that this strategy works by increasing the prominence of conservative positions within centrist and center-left parties, so that these parties, in turn, shift their positions further to the right. They also radicalize left-leaning positions and attempt to alienate supporters of more progressive political positions. Like most conservative Christian organizations, CWA and the FRC attempt to accomplish this by redefining the terms of liberal democracy in an effort to ensure that their vision “becomes increasingly accepted as the only possible social order” (emphasis mine, 114-15).

Appropriating the terms of the liberal democratic tradition enables these organizations to lodge themselves squarely in the political center (Smith “Why Did Armey Apologize?” 150-1). Nationalism, in particular, aids in this process because it offers the ideal space to draw upon the rhetorical power of patriotism. Unquestionable itself because of its jingoistic “God term” status, nationalism affords the ideal terrain to mask the nature of its own exclusions. Indeed, nationalism, as these organizations use it, requires “Othering”; it requires distinguishing “us” from “them” (Mayer 1). In application, then, nationalism offers CWA and the FRC a framework in which to reconcile the discontinuity between their own exclusionary politics and the banner of freedom and equality upheld by the liberal democratic tradition (Smith “Why Did Armey Apologize” 162-3). It is beside the point that, if instituted, the kinds of policy proposals these organizations promote would exclude massive portions of the population; the point is not to include, but to redefine and perform tolerance (Smith “The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 133-4). Pretending to defend the liberal democratic tradition becomes
a way for conservative Christians to justify racist, classist, sexist, and heterosexist exclusions in the interests of creating cross-class solidarity and a unified political imaginary (Smith “Why Did Armey Apologize” 156).

Creating a unified identification, then, is integral to the agenda of these organizations. Rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke explains that consubstantial identification ensures the group solidarity of an “us” which defines itself against the Other (A Rhetoric of Motives 22-3). The creation of the Other – or the “scapegoat” – enables group solidarity of “us” through the transference of one’s burden (The Philosophy of Literary Form 45), and “combines in one figure contrary principles of identification and alienation” (A Rhetoric of Motives 140). Burke explains that the scapegoat thus performs a “medicinal effect,” wherein the projector can retain self-respect and dignity by projecting “bad” features onto “the devil” (The Philosophy of Literary Form 195-6). As Burke points out, it does not really matter whether or not the scapegoat actually possesses the qualities it is purported to embody. What matters is that the scapegoat is believed to embody certain characteristics of “Otherness” (45-6).

Furthermore, once the scapegoat is essentialized, all proof of deviance is automatic (194). With the figure of the scapegoat in place, it is not necessary to build all rhetoric on logos claims in order to “organize consent”; rather, consent is obtained once a group accepts that the scapegoat actually represents a threat.

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2 The “burden” for CWA and the FRC refers to those social problems that cause them so much anxiety and motivate their efforts to enact social change. As discussed in the introduction, these organizations believe the burden is primarily caused by the breakdown of the traditional family structure, a phenomenon they link to immorality and godlessness.
As I demonstrate in this chapter, CWA and the FRC validate their members by constructing them as Good American Citizens, and opposing them to the scapegoat, the “menace to society.” Progressive politics represent this menace, embodied in political liberals (especially gays, lesbians, and feminists), socialists and communists, and “know-it-all” leftist intellectuals. To some extent, CWA and the FRC also scapegoat people of color, immigrants, and the poor; because they want to appear tolerant, however, they adopt what Smith calls “the new racism,” a less overt form of racism that allows its practitioners to refuse to acknowledge the complementary structures of privilege and discrimination (“The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 117-18). For this reason, their racism, classism, and xenophobia can be more difficult to recognize; as Jean Hardisty points out, it becomes visible when one considers the effects that their ideological agenda would have upon these groups if instituted through policy (122). In Chapter 3, I explicitly discuss the ways in which the racism and classism of these organizations become visible.

CWA and the FRC reassure their members that they are Good American Citizens for performing the work they believe will return the United States to its righteous station. Through these means, they uphold Anna Marie Smith’s claim that

Religious Right discourse wants to construct a subject that is … moved by bigoted passions but always recognizes the necessity of self-discipline and the primacy of the law … The ideal Religious Right subject is simultaneously mobilized and neutralized; fired up and pacified; impatient for radical change and content to leave the real action to the leaders, content to seek social reform exclusively through legislative means (“Why Did Armey Apologize?” 164).
Both organizations channel the zeal of their membership through "action alerts"\(^3\) that urge members to contact their legislators in regards to issues of key concern, and to contribute financially so that the central organizations will be able to maintain their lobbying efforts. The result is a smoothly functioning system directing efforts on both grassroots and larger institutional levels.\(^4\) CWA and the FRC reflect back as good citizenship their members' bigoted activism with praise that they are helping to ensure the continuity of the liberal democratic tradition ("Why Did Armey Apologize" 164). Through their legislative activism, members of these organizations are assured that they are "doing the right thing" as American citizens.

This assurance, of course, depends upon the redefinition of the liberal democratic tradition. If their work were recognized for its exclusions, it would become clear that the worldviews of such organizations are not democratic at all, but rather, that they contribute to the maintenance of a social hierarchy that benefits a conservative Christian elite at the expense of others. But their status as Good American Citizens is ensured by the conservative Christian conceptualization of what causes social problems. If one believes that the breakdown of the family has led to society's moral decline, which, in turn, manifests in a variety of social problems, then one is likely to accept that the correct way to turn back the growing tide of social deterioration is to encourage the formation and retention of traditional families. In the analysis of organizations like CWA and the

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\(^3\) These action alerts take the form of print and online alert. The media-savvy CWA is also particularly adept at urging action through radio broadcast. For a discussion of conservative Christian mobilization through media outlets, see Diamond (1998).

\(^4\) Sara Diamond attributes much of the Religious Right's success to their efforts in electoral politics as well as in their cultural projects, which include informal, day-to-day practices (such as church-going, listening to the radio, watching TV) that influence followers' worldviews (42, 44).
FRC, upholding Biblical principles encourages morality and devotion to family; therefore, (Judeo-)Christian values should be codified in law and policy to better the nation ("Why Did Armey Apologize" 164-7). I agree with scholars such as Kintz and Lakoff who assert that conservative Christians' concern for the nation is genuinely sincere. Like them, though, I am also critical of organizations like CWA and the FRC for the ways in which they conceive of social problems and the solutions to those social problems. Arising out of strict, authoritarian, Bible-based morality, the perspectives of CWA and the FRC ultimately advocate hierarchy, exclusion, and punishment.

Of course, this is not overtly stated in the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC. Rather, it becomes clear, in part, through the construction of the Good American Citizen. The ethos of the Good American Citizen is constructed through what Burke calls "associative mergers." In his chapter, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," Burke explains that Hitler was able to secure a Nazi following by "using ideas as imagery." By associating Vienna with prostitution, poverty, immorality, incest, death, and democracy, for instance, Hitler successfully inspired the conceptualization of these ideas as devil terms (The Philosophy of Literary Form 200-1). He also was successful in associating his own regime with truth, enlightenment, progress, and purity. Similarly, CWA and the FRC create an associative merger in which they themselves represent patriotism, which, in turn, represents the true premises of the liberal democratic tradition. This rhetorical strategy is particularly effective because it sets up their own interpretations of democracy, tolerance, diversity, and equality as the only acceptable definitions, while simultaneously constructing leftist and centrist interpretations of the same as "unpatriotic, Stalinist,
communist, fascist, or totalitarian” (Smith “The Good Homosexual and the Dangerous Queer” 229). In this way, they construct themselves as democracy incarnate.5

Smith points out that this kind of redefinition contributes to the mainstreaming of conservative Christianity. Redefining the terms of what counts as democratic enables conservative Christians, for instance, to pursue anti-gay measures as a legitimate political interest. Such redefinition also contributes to the attraction of these groups. By reflecting their followers as “Good American Citizens,” these organizations enable their members to obtain “imaginary identification” and to think well of themselves – that they are actually defending the interests of the country through their exclusionary politics. These organizations also reflect this image outward, so that members may be attracted to the notion that acting in these interests will bring them legitimacy to others (symbolic identification). Essentially, these forms of identification enable followers to justify their actions within the framework of the supposed liberal democratic tradition (“Why Did Arneym Apologize?” 167-8). The coming together of imaginary and symbolic identification culminates in the mythic figure of the Good American Citizen.

**Constructing the Radical Homosexual**

Some of CWA’s and the FRC’s most blatantly malicious and rights-denying efforts are poured into anti-gay campaigns. Because of the ways that they challenge

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5 These organizations also draw upon the cultural association of America with rugged individualism in an attempt to justify conservative, free-market, limited government politics. Moreover, they are able to appropriate America’s historical bias against communism and socialism to support this position. For a more detailed discussion, see Kintz, especially chapters 6 and 7.
traditional ideas about gender roles, sexuality, and the family, gays and lesbians, along with feminists, are considered the archenemies of conservative Christians. Thus, CWA and the FRC attempt to redefine gay rights as “special rights” and seek to marginalize gays and lesbians as radical deviants who represent a threat to “normal” Americans.

Through the use of nationalism, CWA and the FRC are able to garner support for their exclusionary politics against those of alternative sexualities (most particularly, gay men). As V. Spike Peterson points out, nationalism is an essentially heterosexist “homogenizing project” (35) because of the ways in which it depends upon the sexist practices of the state and the forms of group reproduction that underpin them (39-40). Indeed, in its current formation, the state does have an interest in “manufacturing naturalized hierarchy.” In “It’s All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation,” Patricia Hill Collins explains that the nationalist perspective connects the building of a strong family with the building of a strong nation. This connection justifies the state’s interest in the family: if the nation is to be strong, so the argument goes, then the family must instill the “proper” values that will lead to good citizenship. The state’s sole recognition of heterosexual marriage legitimates the heterosexual unit as a family, as well as the children born of the union. Moreover, the traditional family model necessitates hierarchy since one of its primary functions is to teach one about his or her place within the structure of the family and the broader society (63-4). Peterson argues that heterosexism is inextricable from the centralization of political authority and the state’s interest in regulating reproduction and in establishing the heterosexist, patriarchal family as the “basic socio-economic unit” that maintains the smoothly functioning capitalist state (39-40). The fact that the state continues to recognize only heterosexual
unions clearly highlights a political tradition actively upholding the normalization of heterosexual desire. Thus, CWA and the FRC are able to invoke the “national tradition” of denying gays and lesbians rights, and to assert that non-heterosexual relationships and activities are contrary to “Our American Heritage.”

It is important to note that, despite the frequent use of the generic “homosexual,” which referentially encompasses both lesbians and gay men, gay men most often are the focal point of CWA and FRC anti-gay rhetoric. Sometimes they use the word “gay”—often flanked by suspicious scare quotes—and sometimes they use “gay and lesbian.” The term “lesbian” rarely appears on its own; when it does, it is usually in direct reference to specific individuals. When discussing the threat posed by “homosexuals” having contact with children and the “risky sexual practices” that can lead to HIV/AIDS, CWA and the FRC do not specify that these issues are connected primarily to gay men. The general use of “homosexual” in their rhetoric, rather, conveniently subsumes lesbians into the realm of dangerous and objectionable behavior, alongside their queer male peers. And why not? Although lesbian sex poses less medical risk than gay male sex, lesbianism—in the view of these organizations—remains dangerous and objectionable for the way that it threatens the traditional family. As Drucilla Cornell writes: “The lesbian is not only a woman who enjoys sexual relations with other women; she represents all the horrible modern women who have extramarital sex, abortions, or have children as if men were unnecessary in their lives” (133). Almost never uniquely discussed, lesbians get lumped with gay men (for being gay) and sometimes get lumped with feminists (for threatening patriarchy). In my discussion of CWA’s and FRC’s anti-gay rhetoric, I use the phrase “gay and lesbian” to refer to those areas where a “lesbian
menace” is implied, if not explicitly articulated. I use the term “gay men” in my own discussion of those areas where CWA and the FRC are clearly referring to gay men, even if they use the generic term “homosexual” or “gay and lesbian.”

In a September 2000 letter sent to their mailing list of members and prospective members, the FRC sought to construct the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) as Good Citizens under the rabid attacks of various gay and lesbian organizations. The situation the FRC describes in this letter refers to the recent conflict between gay and lesbian organizations, who advocate the acceptance of gay men as Scout leaders, and the BSA and their supporters, who argue that accepting gay Scout leaders would violate their commitment to their “beliefs, values, and rights” (FRC letter to the author, 9/15/00).

In this letter, the FRC uses war metaphors to represent the organizations’ polarized intentions. A number of “attack and protect/defend” phrases appear throughout the four-page letter: “under attack,” “vicious attacks,” “relentless attacks,” “slippery tactics,” “protect this … organization,” “major victory,” “nationwide protests,” “battle,” and “combat.” In a war, the conservative audience will easily recognize, there are the “good guys” and the “bad guys,” and these two groups are on opposite sides. Therefore, someone must be right and someone must be wrong. What is critical here is how each side is constructed in terms of “rightness” and “wrongness.”

In this letter, the FRC secures their righteousness by constructing their own position (and the positions of those who share their traditional values) as the good, decent, hardworking, and reverent; a position built on “solid American values.” Nationalism facilitates this construction both through its supportive association with America, and through its requirement to distinguish who and what comprise this
imagined community of “us.” The solidarity of this imagined community is achieved at the expense of the “Other,” who is framed as the “radical,” the “deviant,” and s/he who poses a threat to attack.

In order to impress the righteousness and legitimacy of the BSA’s position, the FRC calls them a “charity,” “one of America’s most treasured organizations,” an “apple pie organization.” The FRC here uses nationalism to create an association between the BSA and the God term “America.” The use of nationalism enables the BSA to become attached to indisputable greatness. This “cherished American treasure” is also associated with activities that testify to its members’ reverence and patriotic respect. The BSA is credited with having “taught and nurtured millions,” and with “strengthen[ing] … families” with “solid values” and “solid American principles.” “All these kids [want] to do [is to] serve their country.” Who, the recipient of this letter is left to wonder, can argue with that?

The FRC further underscores the BSA’s pristine qualities by portraying them in opposition to the other side. Referring to gay and lesbian advocacy organizations as “the radical homosexual lobby” and “homosexual activists,” the FRC seeks to construct these organizations as deviants ready to bulldoze others with their “intolerance” for conservative values. The FRC constructs the threat that these organizations pose by stating that they are trying to “force their radical lifestyle on hardworking Americans who commit themselves to upholding the timeless values of organizations like the BSA.” Each careful word in this assertion is packed with intent. The words associated with gays in this sentence – “force,” “radical,” and “lifestyle” – suggest that they are intolerant and irreverent rebels who make the deviant choice to live as they do, and that they actively
attempt to inflict this "choice" on others. The words associated with the "Americans," by contrast, suggest steadiness, reverence, something that stands true for all time:

"hardworking," "commit," "upholding," "timeless values." Importantly, the inclusion of the "hardworking Americans" here is general rather than specific; thus, it is intended to create the notion of a common-sense majority of "us" against a radical minority of "them." The gays, in this scenario, are not presented as Americans at all. Rather, they represent the radical fringe element, "pounding away" at the values of the Good American Citizen, and "refusing to respect … [the] views" of those who disagree with them.

But the FRC goes further than this. They also attempt to outrage their audience by invoking the association of gay men with child molestation. Importantly, the FRC did not invent the stereotype of gay men as promiscuous pedophiles. Perhaps more dangerously, they are able to draw upon this stereotype from outside of their organizational culture. That they are able to appropriate it makes it appear all the more true. The example that they use as supportive evidence is that John Hemstreet, a "convicted child molester" and president of the Toledo chapter of Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), participated in protests apparently led by gay and lesbian advocacy organizations against the Boy Scouts. Hemstreet "was also a Scout leader for 20 years … he's now a 'gay' activist who wants the Scouts to open its doors to homosexuals." Immediately following this assertion, the FRC explains: "(The homosexual movement has a long history of harboring a group dedicated to a 'man-boy love' campaign to lower the age of sexual consent)."
First, being involved with PFLAG does not necessarily mean that Hemstreet is gay; as their name indicates, PFLAG is devoted to supporting those who are the parents, friends, and family members of gays and lesbians. The FRC, however, is able to use this association to its advantage, suggesting that Hemstreet is "one of them." Second, the FRC links the fact that Hemstreet has been convicted of child molestation to his involvement with a "pro-gay" organization. Third, the FRC reinforces the notion that all gay men advocate lowering the age of sexual consent by associating them with the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), a small "pro-gay" faction. These three strands come together to suggest that not only are gay men deviant among their peers, but that they may have an ulterior motive in their advocacy of gay Scout leaders: they want to molest boys!

But the FRC qualifies:

While many homosexuals are not pedophiles, the Boy Scouts have had real problems with boys being sexually molested by their adult leaders. They can't afford to allow homosexual men to take boys on overnight campouts. And, they cannot sacrifice their standard of role models for boys.

By conceding that not all gay men are pedophiles, the FRC attempts to undercut any opposition that might suggest that they are stereotyping gay men. And yet they

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6 In their own words, the purpose of NAMBLA is as follows: "NAMBLA supports the rights of all people to engage in consensual relations, and we oppose laws which destroy loving relationships merely on the basis of the age of the participants. NAMBLA does not say that ALL children should engage in such relationships. However, we believe that when this does occur, society should be able to distinguish between those relationships that are loving, supportive, and mutually desired, and those which are harmful and involve force or coercion." It is beyond the scope of this project to debate the validity of this organization. I would like to point out, though, that what the FRC has to say about organizations like NAMBLA is an example of pathological stereotyping. "A pathological stereotype is the use of a pathological variant of a central model to serve as a stereotype for the whole category, and hence to suggest that the pathological variant is typical" (Iakoff 311). In other words, the FRC presents the elimination of age of consent laws as typical to the gay agenda. Despite its inaccuracy, this serves the important rhetorical function of radicalizing gays.
maintain the suggestion of danger – the Boy Scouts, the FRC believes, simply “can’t afford to allow homosexual men to take boys on overnight campouts.” There are several assumptions at work here. First, this assumes that only gay men molest boys. Second, it assumes that Boy Scouts who were molested were molested only by gay men. Third, it assumes that an “overnight campout” would pose a particular risk both because of the isolation it would incur and because it would take place at night, when sexual activity or assault could occur. Despite their careful admission that “many homosexuals are not pedophiles,” the FRC effectively reinforces the notion that gay men indeed pose a very particular threat by building their argument upon stereotypical assumptions of gay male deviance.

The FRC, however, predicted an accusation of intolerance. The outside of the envelope containing this letter proclaims: “The Latest ‘Hate Crimes’ against the Boy Scouts.” In a savvy rhetorical move, the FRC invokes the controversy over hate crimes legislation and re-frames it so that the victim is not the gay or lesbian (who the hate crimes legislation would protect), but rather, the one who upholds “traditional values.” Importantly, the primary reason that organizations like CWA and the FRC do not support hate crimes legislation is because they fear that “it would have a chilling effect on free speech by making unpopular [read: conservative] ideas a basis for harsher treatment in criminal proceedings” (Knight par. 7). In short, these organizations fear hate crimes legislation because it frames views like theirs as bigoted and intolerant. Therefore, where issues concerning gays and lesbians arise, these organizations do their utmost to redefine tolerance and show that “[i]n the worldview of a liberal, ‘tolerance’ is a one-way street” (FRC letter to the author, 9/15/00).
The attempt to redefine the meaning of the phrase “hate crimes” is a common rhetorical move for these organizations. As Smith points out, organizations like these are able to work around the very real threat of anti-gay sentiment by naturalizing and downplaying violent homophobia (“The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 124). For instance, in a Washington Watch radio commentary, Janet Parshall, an FRC spokesperson, suggested that hate crimes legislation gives unfair preference to gay victims of violence, and shadows other victims of violence who are equally, or more, deserving of justice and sympathy. Parshall began her brief commentary by acknowledging the well-known case of Matthew Shepherd, “the openly homosexual student from the University of Wyoming who was tragically killed in 1998 by two brutal attackers” (Parshall par. 1). Attempting to center herself as a sympathetic and rational authority, Parshall sought to circumvent accusations of insensitivity or blatant avoidance of the issue of homophobic violence with a concession of the tragedy of Shepherd’s death. Immediately after this concession, however, she proceeded to imply that nothing sets Shepherd’s case apart from other violent crimes by pointing out that gays can be violent, too. She then cited the little-known case of Jesse Dirkhising, a “13-year-old seventh-grader who … was allegedly tortured [and murdered] by a 22-year-old homosexual with the cooperation of the man’s 38-year-old lover” in Prairie Grove, Arkansas (par. 1). Her purpose in citing this case was to downplay the attention paid to homophobic crimes, and to suggest that gay victims actually may receive more attention than other crime victims, and that they are, therefore, disproportionately privileged. She quoted an analyst from the Media Research Center, a conservative media watchdog organization, to support her theory that “political correctness [is] at work in the scant
media attention given to the murder of this child ... [The MRC analyst says,] 'Nobody wants to say anything negative about homosexuals.'” She then insinuated the hypocrisy and insensitivity of gay rights proponents by quoting an unnamed spokesman for “the nation’s largest homosexual lobbying group” as saying “that the murder of Jesse ‘has nothing to do with gay people’” (par. 2). Having implied that gay rights proponents are concerned only about their own agenda, Parshall concluded with the assertion that “the ‘hate crimes’ label is a distraction and a political nightmare. The standard must remain equal justice under law” (par. 2). Parshall’s choice of words here – “label,” “distraction,” and “political nightmare” – discredits the proposed hate crimes legislation as something which would benefit very few people, would divert sympathy and attention away from victims whose experiences did not fall under the hate crimes label, and would contribute to a slowly moving bureaucratic system. Finally, by framing the issue in terms of “equal justice,” Parshall invoked the rhetorical myth of “equality,” ignoring structural discrimination against various minority groups, and framing initiatives that attempt to account for discrimination and privilege as “special rights.” Thus, as the beneficiaries of hate crimes legislation7, gays and lesbians are seen as a threat to the equality of “normal” Americans. By portraying gay rights proponents as compassionless people who care only about their own agenda, Parshall suggested that gays and lesbians are not only

7 Obviously, gay and lesbian victims would not be the only ones who would benefit from such legislation, which also seeks to protect those who are victims of crimes that are motivated by race- and gender-based prejudice. In the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC, however, gays and lesbians are the only victims ever discussed as beneficiaries of hate crimes legislation. Importantly, this rhetorical move adds credence to the contention that hate crimes legislation is unnecessary because the beneficiaries are “undeserving.” If such legislation were successfully blocked, it would not be “just” gays and lesbians that would be affected, but victims of racial and gender-motivated violence as well. However, CWA and the FRC do not consider this openly in their rhetoric.
differentially privileged, but greedy for *more* "special rights." The effect of such rhetoric, as Smith points out, is that the focus shifts from liberals and minorities who are victims to liberals and minorities who are perpetrators. Thus, liberals and minorities get blamed for violence while reactionary violence – and the radical conservative movements that directly or indirectly support such violence – remain shielded from questioning (Smith “The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 135).

Similarly, CWA’s “Referenda on Homosexuality” asserts that state measures on issues concerning gays and lesbians amount to a decision either to grant "*privileges* for homosexuals" or to protect "the *rights* of citizens with conservative values" (emphasis mine, Riggs par. 3). By framing the issue as an "either/or" situation in which votes in favor of gays and lesbians spell the usurpation of rights for "citizens," CWA clearly implies that it is an all or nothing battle, and that ordinary Americans stand to become the victims of gay rights activists. Throughout the article, the author, Rebecca L. Riggs, tracks what was at stake in recent state initiatives concerning gay and lesbian rights in Oregon, Maine, and Nebraska.

Oregon’s Measure 9 addressed the issue of "balanced" sex education for public school students. Some sex education teachers “[wanted] to introduce students to the *health risks* of homosexuality and to the *lack of scientific evidence* that homosexuality is genetically caused” (par. 4). Some school administrators in Oregon, however, would not allow this. One Portland superintendent “instructed teachers not to tell students about the *dangers* of homosexual behavior” (par. 5). Supporters of measure 9 “want[ed] to protect their children from a *radical bias*” (par. 8). They wanted to be sure that students would “be taught the *grave consequences* of homosexual behavior” so that they would be able to
resist being “indoctrinated into accepting risky sexual practices” (emphasis mine, par. 8). In directly referring to quotes from this article, I have italicized key words to show how same-sex sexual activity is constructed in this rhetoric. I summarize their position and expose their assumptions by using their own terms: “Homosexual behavior” is a “risky sexual practice” that poses a “health risk.” Students must be “protected” from the “dangers” of “radically biased” sex education programs that seek to “indoctrinate” them into the “behavior” by ignoring the “grave consequences” of introducing them to this “risky sexual” activity. Ideological criticism reveals two assumptions at work in the terms used here: first, that being gay is dangerous; and second, that being gay is a choice.

Riggs continues by criticizing the wording of Maine’s question 6. She implies that the “stealth wording” of the proposed initiative confuses what is at stake in (to use the words of Question 6) “‘extending to all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation the same basic rights to protection against discrimination now guaranteed to citizens on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin’” (par. 9). She asks, “How can this legislation guarantee special protection and still deny special rights?” (emphasis mine, par. 9). Framing the issue in terms of “special” status, Riggs argues that, if passed, this initiative could violate the “religious freedom” of those who “[disapprove] of these individuals’ behaviors” (par. 10). More specifically, she worries that the act “could require Christians to employ or rent their property to homosexuals” (par. 10). By ignoring the question of protection from discrimination, Riggs attempts to reframe it not as a question of civil rights for gays and lesbians, but as one of protecting the “freedoms” of those who are morally offended by them.
Riggs concludes the article with a discussion of Nebraska’s Initiative 416, a proposal that would create an “amendment to the state constitution that [would define] marriage only between a man and a woman,” thereby prohibiting the recognition of civil unions or domestic partnerships (par. 13). Riggs frames the importance of this issue with a preceding discussion of the “Take Back Vermont” campaign, a movement to overturn the legislation recognizing same-sex civil unions in that state. By introducing the Nebraska initiative in this way, she sets up the issue as a “warning”; it becomes a way to say, “Nebraska, don’t let this happen to you.” Her paragraph begins with the statement: “The institution of marriage is under attack” (par. 12). Using the phrase “under attack” carries associations of invasion, battle, and war. Gays and lesbians thus become the alien element threatening to besiege the institution of marriage – and implicitly, the nation – with their foreign values.

Furthermore, by framing the argument in terms of rights versus privileges, Riggs constructs the grave importance of these initiatives by appealing to fear. Her intended audience must share her worries about protecting “ordinary citizens” from the “radical bias” of initiatives that would not defend the notion of the family as exclusively restricted to the two-parent intact heterosexual structure. Underlying her argument is a pathos appeal to what is good, moral, and appropriate, as well as the notion that the rights (or privileges, as she would argue) of gays and lesbians are incompatible with a democracy that “[upholds] the equality of all people” (par. 1). Through pathos appeal and the construction of “us versus them,” nationalism becomes the primary conduit through which CWA and the FRC facilitate their exclusionary politics.
The efforts that these organizations make to redefine tolerance reveals their deep anxiety over the prospect of being labeled as reactionary extremists. They fear that if gays, lesbians, and their progressive allies are successful in exposing the bigotry of organizations like CWA and the FRC, they will lose their credibility and the potential to have their views accepted into the mainstream. In essence, that they do not embody the liberal democratic tradition will be made visible. Despite the fact that these organizations find same-sex relationships and activities so morally repugnant, they do not shun all thoughts of it; rather, Smith suggests that conservative Christians are actually obsessed with their own distorted views of it. Smith reasons that this obsession is necessary to hold together the contradictory nature of their discourse. It also reveals conservatives’ anxiety over the possibility of their own declining hegemony, and so they project the blame onto gay “Others” (Smith “The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 133).

In some places in their rhetoric, though, these organizations attempt to moderate their obsession with gays by situating themselves as tolerant and compassionate people, concerned with the physical, emotional, and moral health of this Other. One place that this becomes clear is in their discussion of policies concerning HIV/AIDS. In their rhetoric, the FRC creates an association between male homosexual activity and HIV/AIDS. Contraction of the virus through heterosexual activity and contact with contaminated blood remains an absence.\(^8\) Consider, for instance, the FRC’s “Sound AIDS Policy.” In this policy proposal, the FRC questions the trustworthiness of federal AIDS spending by suggesting that funds are not only needlessly abundant, but

\(^8\) Although not mentioned in this policy, the FRC does address contraction of the virus through drug use. That discussion falls under a separate policy on banning needle exchange funding.
misdirected. Drawing on the cloak of sympathy, they explain that, despite the prevalence of funds, still many AIDS sufferers do not receive sufficient assistance. While this is a reasonable complaint, and one that is consistent with information provided by the National Institute of Health Office of AIDS Research under the Clinton Administration available at the time that this policy proposal was authored, the FRC goes on to suggest that funds would be better directed towards organizations that focus their efforts on curbing[ing] the voluntary, high-risk behaviors that spread the disease. Instead AIDS funding has been directed to organizations that promote the very behaviors that enhance the infection . . . On the basis of a careful audit, federal dollars would . . . be directed away from organizations that celebrate and encourage addictive behaviors that facilitate HIV transmission and toward counseling centers and psychological efforts that seek to help individuals change their sexual behavior (emphasis mine, par. 4-5).

In this policy proposal, the FRC clearly assumes that AIDS is caused by the immoral behavior of gay men. Focusing on the notion that a changeable behavior causes AIDS, the FRC limits their AIDS programs to support for those organizations that accept behavioral modification as a reasonable way to reduce the spread of the disease. They do not problematize the fact that AIDS clinics would service people who have already contracted the virus, and whose behavioral change, therefore, would not offer them any redemption. They also assume that sex between men (and women, for that matter) is inherently immoral, and therefore, should be changed. Thus it becomes clear that this AIDS policy is not about bettering the medical circumstances of the afflicted at all, but rather serves as an opportunity to enforce compulsory heterosexuality. However, by promoting the need for services to help those pursuing the “unhealthy homosexual lifestyle,” the FRC attempts to construct itself as tolerant, concerned, and proactive.
Smith argues that the Religious Right cannot practice “pseudoinclusions” of gays and lesbians as it does of women, people of color, and Jews; she claims that “it is engaged in nothing less than a total war against the entire lesbian and gay community” (“The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 128). I do not challenge this statement; however, I would like to complicate it by pointing out that the FRC, in particular, attempts to impress that it is concerned with the welfare of gay and lesbian individuals. This concern, however, comes in promotion of “ex-gay” ministries (through web links and articles), and other efforts that offer acceptance at the cost of assimilation. Smith likely would be quick to point out that this is not true acceptance at all, and she would be right. Smith theorizes that many right-wing discourses use the myth of the “good homosexual” to construct their own tolerance. The “good homosexual” is s/he who represses her/his gay sensibilities, and remains celibate, asexual, isolated, and silent. The “good homosexual” does not “flaunt” his or her “homosexual behavior.” By claiming to accept gays and lesbians who assimilate in this way, conservatives can perform tolerance (“Why Did Arney Apologize” 161). But, as Smith points out, “the ‘good homosexual’ would be the last homosexual” because s/he would have been stripped of all political solidarity and “abnormal” sexual desire, and alienated from the gay and lesbian community – essentially neutralized into nonexistence (“The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 122). Conservative Christians like those who belong to CWA and the FRC do not even go so far as to pretend acceptance of the good homosexual. Rather, they take an even more conservative position with the claim that gays and lesbians can overcome their homosexual feelings and live an “upright” and Christian life. Smith argues that this position is strategic: “A total exclusion of a demonized figure may weaken the
authoritarian project’s claim to universality”; thus, CWA and the FRC reconcile this by extending to gays and lesbians a welcome into the Christian family in exchange for heterosexual conversion (115).

The FRC’s Yvette Schneider serves as a case in point. Schneider is an FRC policy analyst in Cultural Studies, who allegedly “spent six years as a practicing lesbian and homosexual rights advocate before becoming a Christian and exiting the homosexual lifestyle” (FRC Policy Experts, par. 3). The FRC claims that Schneider even worked with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), but then she became a Christian, and “read in Romans 1 that homosexual behavior was sinful. [She] knew then and there that [she] needed to stop having lesbian relationships, and [she] did” (Schneider par. 5). Since 1998, Schneider has researched and written for the FRC. She also speaks and debates “homosexual issues” through television, radio, and other public appearances (FRC Policy Experts, par. 2). The FRC values Schneider for the special insight she can provide on gays and lesbians; she has the ethos and authority of one who has “been there.” Now married to a man who “has helped [her] to be the woman that God created [her] to be,” Schneider claims that she no longer desires same-sex relationships (Schneider par. 6-7). Completely and successfully assimilated in her conversion to heterosexuality (and no longer endangered by the sin of homosexual desire), Schneider serves as a representative example of the “healing and saving power of Christ.” As such, Schneider is not important for who she is, but for what she represents.

The inclusion of Schneider on the FRC’s staff enables the organization to position itself as tolerant and accepting. The fact that the FRC hired this ex-lesbian shows their forgiveness of her and other potentially-ex-gays. Rather than casting her out to eternal
damnation for her sins, the FRC demonstrates that they truly can “hate the sin, and love the sinner” – at least when the sinner gives up her sinful ways. Such pseudo-inclusions of “assimilated Otherness” are performed so that organizations like the FRC can “construct their imaginary national spaces as diverse and tolerant spaces” (Smith “Why Did Armey Apologize?” 161). The concept of assimilation here enables the FRC to appear centrist, without sacrificing their exclusionary stance (“The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 124).

CWA and the FRC use a variety of means to impress the wrongness of gay and lesbian identity. By attacking gays and lesbians as radicals, they construct them as a threat to the values and rights of “normal” Americans. Gay rights thus can be framed as “special rights” for the greedy and deviant, and can be contrasted with the mythic equality that all other Americans presumably share. The only way that gays and lesbians can redeem themselves from total Otherness is by rejecting their perverse desires and lifestyles and “taking up the Cross.” This promise of pseudo-acceptance enables these organizations to pursue their homophobic agenda while denying their exclusions and to position themselves as mainstream and respectably committed to their values. Such efforts to redefine tolerance, however, are contradictory because, as Smith puts it, “Their worldview is utterly antithetical to liberal democratic dialogue” (“Why Did Armey Apologize?” 153).
Defining the Feminist Menace

Similar to their disdain for gays and lesbians is their contempt for feminists. CWA and the FRC perceive that feminists, like gays and lesbians, transgress and challenge traditional gender roles, and therefore, threaten the traditional family. Because of the ways that traditional gender roles encourage the heterosexual marriage and family structure – an important foundation for a strong, well-functioning nation, in this ideology – feminism represents a threat to the nation.

The threat that feminists represent is especially prominent in the rhetoric of CWA, even moreso than in that of the FRC. After all, Beverly LaHaye founded this organization in response to the menace of second wave feminism. While they sometimes do incorporate some biological and psychological research findings to prove the naturalness of sex-determined gender roles, CWA primarily focuses upon the biblical mandate for traditional gender roles. Because they believe the Bible is infallible, “to follow it is to follow the correct path” (Hardisty 119). Therefore, feminists, who by definition disregard traditional gender roles, are not simply acting in biologically or socially unnatural ways, they are defying the law of God! Thus, the rhetoric of CWA frames opposition to feminism as a holy war (120).

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9 Although both organizations are Christian and uphold the ideal of biblical law as a model for government, the FRC’s rhetoric is somewhat less overt in its religiosity than is that of CWA. In policies and articles, the FRC is more likely to take an “objective” or academic approach, and less likely to say, “Because God says so.” In this way, the FRC’s rhetoric walks the line between secular social conservatism and religious conservatism (without ever sacrificing its religious values). CWA, on the other hand, makes no secret of its fundamentalism.
In *Desires of a Woman’s Heart*, Beverly LaHaye sets up feminism as a radical agenda that denies women their true womanhood, and frames the movement as not reflective of the real needs and desires of women.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, LaHaye’s argument requires that she essentialize what it means to be a woman (and a man, for that matter) and that she ignores differences among women. Right from the beginning, LaHaye asserts: “... If we examine the answers [to what are the desires of a woman’s heart] ... we will discover common threads woven throughout the fabric of womanhood. There are some things we all desire” (3). Throughout the rest of the book, LaHaye identifies these universally feminine desires by examining categories: “Desires in Our Personal Life” (We Want: Happiness and Significance; Meaningful Friendships with Women; Respect and Honor from Men; and Purpose and Examples); “Desires in Our Family Life” (We Want: To Be Fulfilled Single Women; To Love and Respect Our Husbands; and To Experience the Beauty of Motherhood); and “Desires in Our World” (We Want: Joy and Satisfaction in Our Work; Truth from the ‘Women’s Movement’; To Find Our Rightful Place in the Church; and Our Desires Respected by Government).¹¹ The greatest of our desires, however, follows in its own section with the final chapter (and declaration): “We Want to Be Women of God.” Even the wording of LaHaye’s section titles reflect her claim to the universalism of these desires. These, she declares, are the desires of “our personal life” (not lives), of “our family life” (not lives), of “our world” (not worlds). She avoids plurality in her nouns just as she avoids plurality in women’s potential selves.

¹⁰ Kintz, too, points this out in *Between Jesus and the Market* (19).

¹¹ LaHaye breaks down her discussion in these three primary sections. I provide the names of each chapter in parentheses following the section in which it appears in the book.
experiences, and subsequent desires. Nowhere in the text does LaHaye consider important differences that can shape women’s experiences – differences based on religion, class, race, sexuality, or ability. She does not even consider idiosyncratic individual difference. Differences among women are simply an absence. Rather, she implicitly assumes that all women share these desires across the boundaries of difference. One gathers from a reading that the only important differences are those between men and women. Importantly, LaHaye’s unproblematized assertion of women’s desires enables her to dismiss feminism as secular, selfish, hurtful, and unfulfilling, rather than as a potentially meaningful and liberating worldview. By positioning her own perspective as universal, she is able to frame feminists as radicals who are out of touch with their own femininity.

LaHaye stereotypes feminism, claiming that the goal of the movement(s) is to turn women into “imitation men” (51, 65). She reduces feminist struggles to carefree thoughtlessness, invoking the stereotype of the feminist as the “castrating bitch” who denies men the very essence of their masculine nature. She argues: “To insist that women be treated ‘equally’ with men – that is, if by equally with we mean identically to – not only injures women, but it deprives men of a natural need to protect and support” (73). Building her argument around the “natural” difference between the sexes/genders, LaHaye establishes the problematic character of equality, while simultaneously constructing feminist challenges to sex/gender roles as impertinent.
But many feminists agree that the meaning and goals of "equality" are indeed problematic. For instance, Wendy Brown, similar to LaHaye, argues that the treatment of all people as if they were equal is damaging and erroneous. Brown, however, does not base her argument upon the assumption of natural sex/gender differences. Rather, she argues that constructs of gender difference within liberalism problematically define equality as sameness. She asserts that the opposite of equality is not inequality, but difference, and therefore, "female sexual difference ... is the conceptual opposite of the liberal human being," gendered male. Such a vision of equality establishes men as the normal and "neutral standard," securing male gender privilege and maintaining what appears to be women's "natural" difference. Equality thus remains exclusionary because sameness and difference define it (153-4).

LaHaye's conceptualization of women as "subordinate, but not inferior" to men (to use the title of one of her own essays) stands in the way of her acknowledgment that many sex-based inequalities still exist. Unequivocally stating that "men and women are different" (62), LaHaye's repetition of key phrases builds upon the notion that such differences are natural, an argument which depends upon the assumption of heterosexuality. Emphasizing the "importance of these dissimilarities" and "significant differences" between men and women (62), she provides supportive evidence for her claims from a "secular science" study on the differences between men's and women's brain structures. Additional support comes from Deborah Tannen's observations on differences in the communication styles between men and women; Kintz points out,

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however, that LaHaye distorts Tannen’s work to reinforce her argument about sex/gender differences (36). LaHaye asserts that “[u]nderstanding and honoring the differences plays a pivotal role in forming and maintaining healthy relationships between the sexes” (64). If the goal of feminism is to “erase” differences between men and women, as LaHaye claims, then feminism is unhealthy and unnatural. In this argument, feminism ignores the “fundamental differences” between the sexes (65), the “uniqueness of men and women” (65), the very essence of what makes men and women different, and yet “intricately complementary” (63).

By extension, same-sex relationships defy the notion of dual sex complementariness. As Linda Gordon points out, the assumption of natural sex and gender differences presupposes a “dichotomous and universal human system” that ignores cultural and historical specificity and assumes immutability. Furthermore, such notions of “positional dualism” imply that only the two sexes/genders together can create a whole – without one, the other is incomplete. Privileging heterosexuality in this way creates heterosexism by “suppress[ing] homosexuality and mak[ing]… it a deviant and/or defective practice” (Gordon 94-5). This heterosexism, however, is not a problem for LaHaye; it is simply natural, good, and divinely intended. Sex and gender differences, LaHaye argues, should be a source for “completion, not [the] competition” that feminism unnaturally creates (62). Insisting that the natural differences between men and women demand separate gender roles, LaHaye argues that feminists have “[distorted] … the noble pursuit of equality … into a quest for role interchangeability” (60). Homosexuality, moreover, confuses the pursuit altogether.
Drucilla Cornell points out that conservative arguments for strict sex/gender divisions justify the advocacy of male responsibility and authority. So the logic goes, the role of the father must appear desirable to men – that is, it must offer dominance, headship, and manliness – in order for men to want to play it (134). As LaHaye explains,

A man’s role as leader is threatened when the woman refuses to give him the support he needs in the challenging task of undertaking godly leadership. We continue to see women usurp men’s roles in the home and in the church, which squelches men’s ability to lead, protect, care for, and provide for their families, churches, and communities (emphasis mine, 116).

Women, thus, are ultimately responsible for ensuring that men will be the leaders that they were meant to be. It is women’s failure to submit and to support appropriately that leads to men’s failure to assume proper headship within the traditional family. This belief helps to explain why conservative women’s organizations like CWA support chauvinist movements like the Promise Keepers and father’s rights, and welfare reform that encourages men to “take responsibility” by marrying the state-dependent mothers of their children. Rather than seeking to increase women’s autonomy, they believe that the appropriate solution to social problems is a return to male responsibility and authority. Moreover, because feminists understand the injustice of such hierarchical gender roles, they represent a threat to the traditional family (Cornell 135-6).

“Women’s intuition” (LaHaye 63) and men’s “protective instinct” (66) are part of the “God-given ... nature” (65) and “identity” (68) instilled in all people, not only through biological but divine intent. Furthermore, because God has bestowed these sex/gender differences upon us, we must recognize and value them as good. Biological determinism supports biblical determinism in LaHaye’s argument: God created the world, and, as part of that world, the biological systems that order it. Here, biology and
the Bible walk hand in hand.¹³ “Cultural, time-sensitive biases” corrupt the “timeless biblical model of masculinity and femininity” and lead to “sinful distortions and limitations” of our “true nature[s]” (66). LaHaye reframes women’s sex/gender difference and biblically mandated subordination as a source for power and liberation:

We want the power to be meek, not weak. This power will free us to live according to our feminine nature as nurturers, supporters, and bearers of culture and civility (65) ... Women would feel secure and fulfilled living according to the Creator’s design. “At the heart of mature femininity,” write Piper and Grudem, “is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman’s differing relationships.” Women have an inborn desire to affirm and nurture others (emphasis mine, 67).

In this passage, power, nature, and freedom come together to create something that is essential and good. Contrary to feminist assertions, there is no oppression in this vision of biologically determined sex/gender roles. Rather, this is a view of gender-appropriate power. Biblical determinism rescues biological determinism from feminist critique: “…God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (NKJV, Genesis 1:31). Furthermore, because humans were put on earth to do God’s will, no attention need be paid to the part humans have played in ordering existence. According to conservative Christians, those who stray from God’s intent are radical deviants who must be stopped from destroying society by His disciples.

LaHaye argues that feminists want to erase difference because sex/gender “distinctions don’t do much to support [feminist] ideology” (64). She does not consider here how important maintaining these distinctions is to conservative Christian ideology. Towards the end of the book, however, she half-reveals the importance of sex/gender

¹³ LaHaye does not feel this way about all biological theory, however. She calls the theory of evolution “one of Satan’s biggest lies” (194).
differences, without realizing the implications of her argument. She writes: “If there were no differences between men and women, it would make no difference whether a woman married a man or a woman; but God makes it clear over and over in his Word that homosexuality is an abomination to him” (211). Here it becomes absolutely clear how deeply necessary sex/gender distinctions are to justifying homosexual exclusions. If these distinctions are not preserved, then the conservative Christian ideological house of cards falls, giving way to the evils of homosexuality, feminism, and leftist politics, which, by association, lead to teen pregnancy, welfare dependency, drug use, and the breakdown of the family. Linda Kintz argues that conservative Christians cope with the “chaos and fluidity” of these social ills by blaming progressive movements for the role they play in challenging absolutism (37). Organizations like CWA and the FRC believe that only God can order existence and create meaning, and therefore, he also is the only one who can save us from social anarchy. The answer to social ills, then, is a conservative reading of God’s Word, which tells us that sex/gender distinctions are necessary and that “homosexuality is an abomination.” In this way, it becomes clear that sex/gender distinctions serve as a linchpin of conservative Christian ideology. As Peterson argues, “personal gender identities constitute a ‘core’ of the self … condition[ing] our self-esteem and psycho-sociological security”; therefore, challenges to gender identities represent a challenge to the core of the self. In this way, the notion of unfixed gender identities can generate fear and further resistance to efforts that challenge a stable identity (37-8). Hardisty, too, argues that because conservative Christian organizations conceptualize feminist challenges to traditional gender roles as encouraging chaos, feminist policies are viewed as irresponsible rather than liberating. If a woman
steps out of her "proper" role, her husband may step out of his (or simply may not know how to react). Therefore, she is responsible for the chaos that follows in the wake of her "unnatural" and "irresponsible" behavior (120). In this argument, maintaining clearly defined gender roles protects individual women and the larger society from the social problems that result when women challenge gender hierarchy.

On the other side of the argument, LaHaye explains feminist aversion to sex/gender differences with the argument that feminists are angry, selfish, and godless women. She claims that the feminist challenge to the traditional gender roles that lead to heterosexual marriage and family life has led to "emptiness, anger, and loneliness" for many women (75). Deprived of the fulfilling love of a good man and the joy of motherhood, feminists become "miserable, angry people" obsessed with "my rights, my goals, my body, and my self-fulfillment" (76-7). They are "enslaved to the notion ... [of] independence, indulgence, a self-centered orientation to life, and the fleeting pleasure of recognition," and so they "nurse a bitterness toward anyone who encroaches on their 'rights' of equality and self-rule" (14). This explanation presents a clear contrast with LaHaye's earlier passage that emphasized the liberation that comes with accepting one's feminine role. Furthermore, LaHaye calls into question here the validity of the feminist pursuit for women's rights by placing "rights" in scare quotes. Just as both CWA and the FRC frame gay rights as a "special interest" that would hurt the true rights of ordinary Americans, LaHaye derides feminism for its godless approach to attaining what she sees as super-equality. LaHaye explains feminism's over-ambition this way: "Rebellion is the core of feminism. Feminism is rebellion against man, against woman, and most tragically, against the God who created us female" (185). Framing feminist ideology and
activism in terms of anger, rebellion, and discontent, (which, interestingly, are also the hallmarks of Lucifer, the rebellious angel-turned-demon), LaHaye disregards the limitations created by traditional gender roles and ignores the ways that one might conceptualize feminism as a positive move towards possibility and change. Instead, she argues that feminists have not been able to see that “power and equality have never brought anyone happiness” because they have been “blinded … by their own ambition” (178). Conceptualizing feminism as little more than a “secular challenge” (26), LaHaye succinctly declares: “Women cannot serve God and feminism” (192). Indeed, if we accept her conceptualization, LaHaye appears to be right.

Interestingly, though, LaHaye does not deride all feminists; she simply does not recognize as feminist those feminists or aspects of feminism with which she agrees. Certainly, LaHaye does not define herself as a feminist, nor does she seem to fit most contemporary definitions of what a feminist is. However, her beliefs and her project closely match those of turn-of-the-century feminists. At that time, feminists maintained that women were different from men; women were nurturing, moral, and virtuous, and men were aggressive. While they did not always point to biology to explain these differences, “the process of differentiation was less interesting to them than the result: a world divided between a male principle of aggression and a female one of nurturance” (Gordon 97). Motherhood was of profound importance, both as a woman-defining experience and for the purpose of creating good citizens, and by extension, building a strong nation (Mink The Wages of Motherhood 4-5). This worldview explains much feminist activism at the time, which centered around woman- and child-centered social programs such as mother’s pensions, which focused on building domestic skills and
reinforced the importance of assimilation among immigrants and developing “American” qualities like celibacy and temperance (38). Growing out of the notion of gendered citizenships and the Victorian principle of “separate spheres,” mother’s politics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was based on the idea that “moral uplift” would bring about cultural and national uplift (5).

It is easy to see the connection between the ideology of these turn-of-the-century feminists and that of LaHaye. In Desires of a Woman’s Heart, LaHaye commends two such early feminists (although she does not call them that), Frances Willard and Catherine Beecher. Willard devoted herself to the causes of temperance, and of preserving the family, for the end of “uplifting the lot of mankind, not only in the United States, but around the world” (83). Beecher was instrumental in the area of character development, emphasizing the importance of child rearing, homemaking, and “mother’s character in modeling the future leaders of the nation” (84-5). Within their own context, these women were deemed progressive. But LaHaye does not recognize their progressiveness, just as she does not recognize the importance of context. Because she does not, she is able to draw a clear comparison between the work of these women and the work of CWA and similar organizations. Such motivated Christian women had “a tremendously civilizing effect on their society,” LaHaye argues, and they did much to bring about moral and cultural uplift, an endeavor to which she sees CWA subscribing. For LaHaye, the work of women like Beecher and Willard, as well as that of the women of CWA, offers an alternative to the image of the angry feminist. Such

Heroic women know their purpose in life is not to satisfy their own desires, but to minister healing, love, and hope to the less fortunate. They are selflessly devoted to their particular cause, whether it is pulling young women out of prostitution, saving the lives of unborn children, or crusading against alcohol and drug abuse.
They are not devoting their lives to the elusive goal of ‘self-fulfillment,’ because they are fulfilled and happy as a result of their willingness to give of themselves (86).

Unlike angry and godless feminists, the “heroic women” that LaHaye describes are not acrimonious rebels; rather, they are described as positive and satisfied in their acceptance of God’s plan for them. LaHaye thus invites “concerned women” to assume the image of this contented and “heroic” woman by elevating her to a position of honor and juxtaposing her with the alternative of the angry feminist.

LaHaye argues that feminism can fulfill no true woman. She firmly tells her readers: “Neither I nor the majority of American women share the passion to overpower men that consumes the hard-line feminists. To me, such a cause is a senseless evasion of the real issues of life” (emphasis mine, 178). Feminists are positioned on the radical fringe, believing that they “must picket, protest, scream, and destroy so [they] can have [their] own way” (79). In LaHaye’s rhetoric, feminists are constructed as destructive, misguided, and most assuredly not at peace.

LaHaye uses this juxtaposition between feminists and Christian women to develop her nationalist call to action. Because feminists represent a threat through their aggressive promotion of “amorality and humanism,” LaHaye urges Christian women to “work to restore moral standards and an acknowledgment of God’s Word as truth in America” (235). She tells her readers: “Our nation needs women of God with the courage to stand up for what is right” (249). Such women are “heroes” because “they see the decline in American society, and they are actively trying to stop it … They are concerned about protecting the rights of families rather than their own personal rights … They are seeking to fulfill a concrete need: preserving the nuclear family and society
from destruction" (86-7). Within the context of the family values view espoused by organizations like CWA and the FRC, the heroic woman’s most important roles are that of wife, mother, and disciple of Christ (Hardisty 119). Honored for her presumed selflessness and adherence to traditional gender roles, the heroic Christian woman is called to do God’s work for the good of the nation. In this way, she exhibits what Iris Marion Young calls “the citizen virtue of motherhood”: Women’s value within the family – and also within the “national family” of the larger society – is based not on her independence and self-sufficiency, as for men, but on her roles as caretaker, nurturer and sacrificer (Young 545).

LaHaye argues that just as feminists rebel against God, so too do they rebel against the nation. She sets up this argument in a rhetorically savvy move that creates an explicit connection between Christianity and the good of the nation. As Christianity’s antithesis, then, feminism becomes anti-nation. LaHaye quotes Frank Norris, author of The Responsibilities of the Novelist, in a passage that illustrates the correlation between God’s Truth and the nation:

“The people have a right to the Truth as they have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is not right that they be exploited and deceived with false views of life, false characters, false sentiments, false morality, false history, false philosophy, false emotions, false heroism, false notions of self-sacrifice, false views of religion, of duty, of conduct and manners” (emphasis mine, 194).

In this passage, Norris invokes the most basic of American rights as laid out in the Declaration of Independence: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights, along with the equally esteemed right to “Truth,” are threatened, “exploited and deceived” by the forces of “falseness.” LaHaye follows this passage with an analysis that names some of the forms of falseness that threaten “the people[’s]” fundamental rights:
same-sex relationships and sexual activity, abortion, euthanasia, evolution, feminism, promiscuity, and "sexual perversions"\(^\text{14}\) (194-5). Conceptualized as falseness, these things violate the rights of the people and set the nation into decline. Truth, whose source lies in the Christian faith, can save the nation from its decline (201). LaHaye declares: "We want society to make truth a foundational part of public policy. We do not want America to fall under God’s judgments because we have chosen lies instead of truth" (196). Thus, the cost of not working to save the nation from its decline has worldly as well as spiritual effects – not only will the nation experience a host of social problems in life, but the negative consequences will continue into the afterlife in the form of God’s judgments. This argument thus acts as a call to action for the Christian reader, motivating her by making her responsible for the state of the nation; it is up to her to choose Truth instead of lies.

A nationalism arising out of the liberal democratic tradition assists LaHaye in developing her argument against feminism because its "time-honored Truths" encourage her to conceptualize what is best for the nation in terms of tradition. In this brand of nationalism, challenges to traditional gender roles are constructed in a way that makes them contrary to nation. Feminism and nationalism thus are framed in LaHaye’s rhetoric as thoroughly incompatible. Kintz points out that the equation between a firm body and a Christian heart with the best interests of the nation results in exclusions that "Other"

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\(^{14}\) Elsewhere in the book, LaHaye clarifies what she means by "sexual perversions": "Sex is only perverse when it is immoral, and it is immoral when it is outside the bond of marriage." Because she, like other conservative Christians, believes that the traditional family is the bedrock of the nation, she argues that sexual perversions "devastat[e] men, women, the family unit, and ultimately, our nation" (125). Therefore, because sexual purity is fundamentally important to the family, it also is fundamentally important to the strong nation.
feminists as well as non-Christians. The notion that "ethical behavior is only possible for those who know God" (Kintz 37-8) restricts the voices and interests of those who do not share fundamentalist Christian beliefs, and essentially seeks to enforce compulsory Christianity.

This is not to say that all feminists necessarily would disagree with LaHaye’s assertion that feminism and nationalism are incompatible. Indeed, the particular brand of nationalism used by CWA and the FRC does seem to oppose many feminist principles. However, as Peterson points out, the potential compatibility of feminist and nationalist movements or projects "depends on contextual specifics" (emphasis mine, 53). In the case of these organizations, it seems that such nationalism cannot be used in a way that accurately supports progressive interests because the nationalism that they use is grounded in inaccurate and decontextualized patriotic myths about the liberal democratic tradition, and depends on exclusionary constructions of Self and Other. These organizations strategically invoke nationalist myths to justify exclusions – which feminists seek to circumvent – in the supposed interests of the nation.

The research of some scholars of nationalism supports the contention that feminism and nationalism are not compatible. Val Moghadam, who studies contemporary nationalist movements, states: “‘Feminists and nationalists view each other with suspicion, if not hostility, and nationalism is no longer assumed to be a progressive force for change’” (qtd. in Peterson 53). Moghadam’s work, as well as the work of Barbara Einhorn, and Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, all of whom have studied nationalisms in eastern Europe, have found that women’s lives and interests tend to get subordinated to the larger interests of nationalist movements. Because of the ways in
which structures of heterosexism marginalize feminist, gay, lesbian, and queer agendas, Peterson firmly concludes: "In all nationalist contexts, women – as symbols and childbearers – face a variety of pressures to support nationalist objectives even, or especially, when these conflict with feminist objectives" (53). Peterson’s contention would not threaten a conservative women’s organization like CWA. Rather, they use nationalism as a tool to prove that feminism is anti-nation, not that nationalism itself is problematic. Moreover, their celebration of women’s traditional roles indicates that they likely would relish nationalism for endorsing them.

But some feminists and progressive academics argue that nationalism is neither anti-progressive nor anti-feminist. For instance, Kumara Jayawardena, who has studied turn of the century anti-imperialist movements in Asia and other colonized countries has found feminism to be compatible with nationalism (Peterson 53). Philippa Strum’s work with Palestinian women and the Intifada reveals that nationalist movements can result in new opportunities for women and progressive change for gender roles (1992). In *Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women*, Alison Baker states that faith, feminism, and nationalism have blended together naturally for many Moroccan women. Although Baker acknowledges that nationalist movements tend to hold mixed messages on the status of women (275), she points out that the context of both nationalism and feminism in Morocco has been different than that in the United States and other Western countries (10-13). The work of Baker and these other scholars seems to suggest that, in the context of independence struggles against an imperial power, nationalism coalesces more naturally with feminism than it does in places like the United States, where there is no hegemonic colonial power to overcome. Since U.S. feminism tends to be subversive,
with designs to transform the forces of a hierarchical dominant culture, the appropriation of the terms of U.S. national identity may be considered as the appropriation of the terms of a hierarchical dominant culture. This is not to say that American feminists have completely rejected the notion of appropriating the terms of American nationalism. For instance, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL), a feminist reproductive rights lobbying organization, has invoked liberal principles in their own rhetoric.\textsuperscript{15} Ultimately, it seems, the context out of which both nationalism and feminism arise is quite variable, and therefore, their compatibility or lack thereof cannot be predetermined.

Like CWA, the FRC constructs feminism as contrary to the best interests of the people, the nation, and even the world. In the article, “Human Rights and the Gender Perspective,” Dale O’Leary\textsuperscript{16} attempts to invert the equation of feminism with human rights by arguing that feminists pervert the meaning of human rights, and that “family values” conservatives are its true defenders. But more than this, O’Leary argues that feminists cannot even be trusted to defend women’s rights, let alone rights for all humans; O’Leary accuses feminists of “exploit[ing] … the cause of women’s rights” in a

\textsuperscript{15} The success with which they do this has been debated. For a discussion of NARAL’s Choice for America Campaign for Reproductive Choice see Dingo (2000).

\textsuperscript{16} It is unclear whether Dale O’Leary actually works for the FRC. He does not appear among those on FRC’s “Policy Experts” page (http://www.frc.org/exp/index.cfm). The end of this article states that O’Leary is the author of The Gender Agenda: Redefining Equality. It also is unclear whether this article is an excerpt from O’Leary’s book or whether it was written especially for the FRC. In any case, it is not unreasonable to assume that the FRC endorses the opinions presented in the article, as it is accessible directly on their web site, and there is no indication that the FRC is critical of the article, or that they are attempting irony by including it. In general, the FRC is not known for making a habit of carrying articles that conflict with their views.
way that violates the "good will" associated with it and hurts the "true well-being of women" (par. 2).

Like LaHaye, O’Leary frames feminists as "power-hungry" radicals (par. 6) whose "gender agenda is primarily about pretending there are no differences between men and women, and destroying the family as we know it" (par. 3). He attempts to illustrate the falsehood and even violence of the feminist movement by suggesting that "radical feminists want to re-interpret the [United Nations'] Universal Declaration of Human Rights to include this agenda and thereby force it upon people around the world" (emphasis mine, par. 3). He accuses feminists of "hijack[ing]" the term "human rights" as a "political tool" and a "political weapon" (pars. 3 and 6). Invoking language connotative of terroristic violence and coupling it with language about politics squarely positions feminists as imposing outsiders (not "one of us") and suggests that they who claim to defend the interests of the oppressed are themselves oppressive and dictatorial.

He sets up his argument regarding radicals' power to distort this way:

Mary Robinson, the new High Commissioner for Human Rights and the former President of Ireland, has suggested that certain "values," including the "complexities of 'gender' and 'sexual orientation,' are implied in the Universal Declaration [of Human Rights]. There is no need, therefore, to make a new declaration to recognize these values: Reinterpretation of the original will suffice. Thus it is that the Declaration has become a political tool for those in power at the UN, rather than a statement of ideals to be shared by all the world (emphasis his, par. 3).

O’Leary criticizes the UN’s readings of governing documents as "reinterpretations," clearly suggesting that the contemporary UN distorts the "real" meaning intended in the original UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ignoring the fact that a conservative interpretation is still an interpretation, this is a common move in the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC. Throughout their rhetoric, these organizations
frame non-conservative readings of important documents as ungodly, and therefore, untrue in an attempt to discredit progressive interpretations of governing documents. For instance, O’Leary implies that the contemporary UN defies God’s law with such reinterpretations, arguing that “…Human rights are not a human creation. They are ‘inherent to the dignity of the human person’” (par. 5). Interestingly, O’Leary’s conceptualization of human rights as inherent is quite similar to some feminist and liberal conceptualizations of the same.\(^{17}\) The difference appears in the framing of human rights as “not a human creation.” Although it is possible to maintain concurrently that human rights are socially constructed and that humans have inherent worth, O’Leary’s argument suggests that human rights are designated by a higher power. Considered in context with his comments regarding radical “reinterpretation[s],” three assumptions emerge: first, that (conservative traditionalist) humans have perceived correctly God’s intentions in regards to human rights; second, that the Universal Declaration accurately reflects these intentions; and third, that there exists a correct interpretation of the Declaration, and that the current UN has drifted from this.

Also in this passage, O’Leary seeks to mainstream the views of conservatives by positioning feminists as powerful dictators unconcerned with the interests of real people. He does this by suggesting that radical feminists are among “those in power at the UN,” and that they see the Universal Declaration not as “a statement of ideals to be shared by all in the world,” but as a mere “political tool” to meet their own agenda (par. 3). Far from being benevolent leaders, he frames them as greedy, self-centered, and out of touch.

\(^{17}\) See, for instance, Foss and Griffin’s explanation of Starhawk’s rhetoric of inherent value (1992: 333-5).
with the “ordinary” people they are supposed to serve. He continues with the assertion: “Countless documents and resolutions … are being reinterpreted to become products of unbending radical ideologies that are increasingly divorced from reality and divorced from the beliefs of ordinary people” (par. 7). As is done in the FRC letter on the BSA, O’Leary attempts to reframe tolerance so that feminists and political progressives working for the UN appear to hold extremist views in the form of unrealistic and “unbending radical ideologies.” Furthermore, his choice of the term “divorced” resonates on two levels: first, it polarizes the views of feminists with that of “ordinary people”; and second, it evokes the term’s more popular usage as “break in marriage.” Both overtly and implicitly, O’Leary suggests that feminists lack commitment, that they are wedded to nothing but their own “unbending radical ideologies,” and, of course, that feminists are anti-marriage and anti-family.

Similar to conservative attempts to erase heterosexism and portray gays and lesbians as the oppressors of what Smith calls “the imaginary class–transcendent heterosexual family,” O’Leary conceptualizes feminists as oppressors, rather than as defenders of the oppressed. This representation requires the reversal of power dynamics so that the subject(s) appear “fundamentally disempowered,” overwhelmed and oppressed by “the actual oppressed peoples, gays and lesbians” (“Why Did Arney Apologize” 157). O’Leary’s article does not actually address oppression inflicted by gays and lesbians. However, he conceptualizes feminists as oppressors in precisely the same way as conservatives frame gays and lesbians as oppressors elsewhere. As Smith points out, this enables the “ordinary people” to assume the position of the underdog
threatened by “an authoritarian imposition of alien values” (“Why Did Armey Apologize” 157).

If conservatives are successful at mainstreaming their own perspectives, they become able to make the left appear “unpatriotic, extremist, and out of control” (“Why Did Armey Apologize” 159). O’Leary accomplishes this by portraying a thoroughly reductionist view of feminism. He explains that, in order to understand what is meant by the UN term, the “gender perspective,” and to determine whether “it [will] secure women’s equal human rights, or … undermine women’s freedom … one needs to understand some history” to contextualize how the term has been conceived (par. 8-9). The “history” he provides, however, is distorted by his selective and decontextualized representation. O’Leary explains feminism’s retrogression from the legitimate social cause it once was to the radical and unrealistic agenda it supposedly has become. In a rhetorical move ironic for conservatives, he argues that “[I]n the 1960s, a rejuvenated women’s movement fought for equal rights, equal opportunity, equal pay for equal work, and equal protection under the law” (par. 10). This kind of assertion is contradictory for the likes of CWA and the FRC, as they hold 1960s activism responsible for much of the current social decline we now supposedly face. Such retrospective validation, however, allows them to appear mainstream and to glorify the past as better than our current state of affairs. In O’Leary’s case, moreover, the vagueness of his assertion enables him to appropriate what is now considered to be positive change brought about by the civil rights movements, without actually explicating what he finds legitimate and inoffensive. The 1970s, O’Leary argues, was when the positive efforts of the women’s movement “[were] taken over by radicals who believe that class differences are the cause of all evil”
(par. 10). In discussing "class differences," O'Leary is not referring to "class" in terms of economic status, but rather as differentiation determined by one's group membership. He may have picked up the term from his review of Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, which he footnotes. In this text, Firestone draws a comparison of oppression accorded by sex class with oppression accorded by economic class. O'Leary explains, "According to this radical feminist perspective, if a group is divided into different classes, one of these classes will feel inferior. Feeling inferior is oppressive and should be eliminated" (par. 10). He insinuates that feminism is grounded in wishy-washy *feelings*, rather than in actual discrimination. Simplistic, reductionist, and condescending in tone, O'Leary's explanation intends to cast aspersions on "the radical feminist perspective," both for its "radicalism" and its inanity. He continues:

If women and men are different, for example, because women bear children and take care of them, then women are oppressed. The only way to eliminate women's oppression, then, is to eliminate motherhood as women's work. According to this theory, two things are necessary: 1) all women must work at paid labor, and 2) men must assume 50 percent of the direct childcare tasks within the home (par. 11).

In this paragraph, O'Leary suggests several misleading things about feminism in the interests of representing feminists as out of touch with reality. First, he implies that feminists refuse to recognize biological sex differences. He fails to explain exactly what feminists object to when they argue against sex/gender differences. He implies that feminists contest *biology*, rather than the way that power gets attached to socially constructed categories of sex/gender. Shulamith Firestone, whom O'Leary cites, makes it clear that eliminating biological distinctions would not guarantee liberation; rather, *Firestone* contends that elimination of male privilege and sex distinction is necessary (1 i-
12). Second, he attempts to impress the notion that feminism is all about eliminating motherhood. Moreover, the “two things [that] are necessary” to do this require changing the way we conceive of “women’s work” and “men’s work.” Here it becomes clear that at the heart of conservative anxieties is that to overhaul the sex/gender system would result in the annihilation of the traditional family structure. Feminists thus become the enemy.

To further support his points about how radical feminists are, O’Leary completely de-contextualizes statements made by a few feminists. For instance, he explains that

When asked whether feminism should support the choice of women to stay at home as full-time mothers, Simone de Beauvoir replied: “[W]e don’t believe that any woman should have this choice. No woman should be authorized to stay at home to raise her children. Society should be totally different. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one” (par. 12).

O’Leary does not provide any context for these statements; he simply lifts them out of the texts. And although O’Leary quotes de Beauvoir correctly, he quotes her only partially and out of context.18 If one goes to the primary source, one realizes that de Beauvoir and Friedan disagreed on many topics in their conversation, and that many of their disagreements seem to stem from differences between the women’s movement in France and the women’s movement in the United States. When de Beauvoir uttered “we,” she was not referring to all feminists everywhere; she was referring to the opinions of many of the feminists in France. Furthermore, when read in context of the conversation, de Beauvoir’s statement does not seem quite so outlandish. Friedan and de

18 De Beauvoir concluded her thoughts by saying, “It is a way of forcing women in a certain direction” (qtd. in Friedan 18).
Beauvoir were discussing whether women’s work as mothers and domestic caretakers should be supported with pensions. Friedan said yes, arguing that such economic supports would promote women’s financial freedom as well as assign value to traditional women’s work, which has been undervalued. De Beauvoir argued no, stating that she is against inducing women to stay home (Friedan 18). Such a move would maintain separate spheres, and reduce women’s abilities to make truly free decisions on their own, “not as a result of conditioning.” De Beauvoir further stated that there is a need to “[n]ot keep the same system of crèches, but change the system so that the choices that are available are different” (19).

None of this information is provided by O’Leary, however; more likely than not, he was not even aware of the full context himself, for he did not go directly to the primary source for this statement. Rather, he gathered his information from Christina Hoff Sommers’s notorious backlash text, Who Stole Feminism?. But even Sommers provides more context than O’Leary does, explaining that the statement was uttered in the context of a disagreement between de Beauvoir and Friedan (Sommers 256). This minute example, even as explained by Sommers, provides some indication of how incredibly variant are beliefs and opinions among feminists themselves. Having used Sommers as his source, O’Leary had to have realized this. Yet, he chose to present de Beauvoir’s statement as the truth of what all feminists believe. His omission of these details, thus, seems not simply deceptive, but strategic.

Another place that O’Leary engages in sloppy scholarship comes in the paragraph that follows his citation of de Beauvoir. O’Leary writes:

Radical feminists explain away the resistance of ordinary women by insisting that women who want to be full-time mothers are brainwashed by a social system
created by men. Alison Jagger, author of a textbook on feminism, believe that women’s “desires and interests are socially constituted” and most women are “systematically self-deceived” about “truth, morality, or even their own interests.” According to Jagger, only the radical feminists are not deceived since they have transcended the “theoretical constructs of male dominance” (par. 13).

This reference, as with that of De Beauvoir, enables O’Leary to firmly situate feminists as out of touch, and perhaps, as oppressors themselves. That he does not illuminate feminist arguments by providing context, however, becomes less important to his audience than the radical things the feminists are saying. If one cross-examines O’Leary’s references, however, one finds major inaccuracies. For instance, O’Leary cites page fourteen of Jagger’s article, “Political Philosophies of Women’s Liberation,” which appears in Feminism and Philosophy, edited by Mary Vetterling-Braggin, Frederick A. Elliston, and Jane English, and published in 1977. Nowhere in this particular article, however, does Jagger make such an assertion. In fact, in this article Jagger takes no explicit stance on either women’s supposed false consciousness or even how best to achieve women’s liberation. Rather, “Political Philosophies of Women’s Liberation” outlines the perspectives of several major strands of feminist theoretical thought contemporary to the 1970s. If we assume that, although incorrectly cited, O’Leary – or a research assistant – actually read this article, we also might assume that he is aware that feminism cannot be reduced to a singular, unified (radical) perspective. He also might guess that feminist theoretical thought has expanded in ways that had not yet been imagined in the 1970s. But nowhere in his article does O’Leary situate feminist thought within a historical context, or even imply that anything other than radical feminists, who want to eliminate motherhood, even exist.
Interestingly, however, a return to Sommers’s text is very revealing when trying to discover the reason for O’Leary’s gross reference flaws. It seems that O’Leary actually encountered Jagger’s statements not in a primary source, but again, through Sommers, who cites Jagger in Feminist Politics and Human Nature, published in 1988. The result of de-contextualizing feminist perspectives in this way is that the audience reads such statements through the distorted and non-situated lens through which O’Leary intends them to be read.19 Crucially, however, O’Leary does nothing to elucidate feminist arguments – he simply extracts a statement for its potential to appear radical, especially to a conservative audience, and ignores the importance of context and construction of argument in the arguments of his adversaries.

While academically, this may be poor scholarship, rhetorically, this move is powerful and purposeful for an audience of conservatives like himself. O’Leary’s goal here is to de-legitimate the arguments of his adversaries, and he seeks to do that by “Othering” them. If he can make feminists appear radical, he meets his goals. To accomplish this, he must ignore context, must reduce feminism from the broad and internally conflicting ideology that it is, squeezing it to fit the one-dimensionality of a scapegoat. If he can do this successfully, he can undermine “the feminist agenda” as too radical to be considered.

19 O’Leary is certainly not the only one guilty of distorting the context and sources of feminist arguments. Beverly LaHaye herself, for instance, also does this in Desires of a Woman’s Heart. In a discussion of feminist perspectives on abortion, LaHaye states: “As one feminist put it, ‘In a subliminal way, it’s revenge against men’” (187). LaHaye’s endnote for this citation attributes credit to Susan Faludi in Backlash. A cross-reference on this citation, however, reveals that the statement was uttered by Don Grundemann, a chiropractor whose “girlfriend had an abortion without even asking him,” and who believed abortion to be women’s requital against men’s “shabb[y] treat[ment]” of them (Faludi 401).
O’Leary goes on to affirm that such feminists’ rejection of motherhood and the sexual division of labor signals a “disregard for human rights ... [that] is typical of the far left” (par. 15). Here he reduces not just all feminisms into one radical-looking perspective, but agglomerates all left-leaning politics into the same radical lump. The sensible alternative, then, is conservatism. He continues:

Radicals concern themselves with perceived oppressed classes, not the rights and dignities of individuals. They do not care about or respect individual liberty, human dignity, or even the inalienable right to life. All these rights belong to each human person, not an abstract class ... [R]adical feminists are ready to sacrifice human rights in the name of rescuing the group. In this way, they pose a real threat to authentic human rights (par. 15).

O’Leary sets up an opposition between the “radical” perspective and the perspective of “everyone else.” Words associated with this radical perspective include “perceived oppressed classes,” “abstract class,” “sacrifice,” “rescuing the group,” and “pose a real threat.” Everything about the radicals suggests a lack of insight and a lack of practicality. They have no regard for the real perspectives and real lives of real people, and for this reason, they are dangerous. On the other hand, his conservative – supposedly mainstream – perspective is concerned with “the rights and dignities of individuals,” “individual liberty, human dignity ... the inalienable right to life,” “each human person,” and “authentic human rights.” Appealing to the individual, O’Leary creates an association between this “non-radical” perspective and the most fundamental of liberal rights as outlined in the Declaration of Independence. Additionally, his accusation that feminists “do not care about or respect ... even the inalienable right to life” resonates on two levels: first, on the historical level, as a partial quotation of the Declaration of Independence, an important part of American rhetorical memory; and second, on the contemporary level, as a rebuke against common feminist support for abortion rights.
Thus, in their support for abortion rights, O’Leary’s argument implies, feminists violate the family and the intentions of the nation’s founders, and disrespect the most precious gift of life. The two-pronged approach of distorting and misrepresenting feminist perspectives and using rights discourse to mainstream the conservative perspective enables him to impress the notion that feminist perspectives are contrary to “all that this country stands for.”

Embedded within O’Leary’s argument is a simplistic and decontextualized conception of the meaning of women’s rights. He does not exactly deny the existence of gender inequality; however, he seems to imply that it is no longer relevant in the United States. At the beginning of his article, he states: “Today, only a very few countries deny women the right to vote, the right to pursue education, or the right to work outside the home in a profession of choice” \(^{20}\) (par. 2). O’Leary here presents a simplistic vision of what counts as women’s rights. He suggests that as long as one technically has the right to vote, pursue education, or work, then one is equal. He does not consider the ways that race, gender, and class inequalities complicate access to and experiences of such rights. He also does not consider that discrimination and/or oppression can take place outside of poll booths, educational settings, and the workplace. Framing rights in these terms and asserting that “only a very few countries” still deny such rights enables him to throw feminist activism into question, making it appear unnecessary. But it is precisely the

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\(^{20}\) O’Leary’s comment here is rather unusual because of the way it seems to create parity between women’s right to work outside the home and women’s right to vote. In general, CWA and the FRC criticize the former and esteem the latter. Furthermore, this is the only positive mention that O’Leary makes of women working outside the home. Later in the article, he seems to contradict this point by venerating the sexual division of labor (par. 24).
absence of an analysis of hierarchy, privilege, and oppression that disables a full understanding of inequality.

Instead, O’Leary shifts the blame onto radical feminists for denying women their due rights. In his argument, radical feminists refuse women the “free choice” to be mothers and wives. It is revealing to consider that O’Leary’s focuses on women’s roles as mothers. He does not discuss at all that women might want to make any number of reproductive, sexual, and relationship choices that may or may not include motherhood. Indeed, O’Leary may not even be able to imagine such a possibility. His primary concern is to ensure women’s rights by protecting the traditional family. He succinctly declares: “Defenders of the family must make it clear that we are the defenders of real human rights … [W]e need to make it clear that, when we fight for motherhood, for marriage, and for the family, we are fighting for women” (par. 33-4).

Embedded within the argument that traditionalists are “the defenders of real human rights” is the unproblematized assumption that “women” is a static category, and that all women desire motherhood and heterosexual marriage as conceptualized by family values conservatives like himself. But can the traditional family defend and fulfill women’s rights and interests better than any other institution? A critical look at this family structure indicates that it can’t. I am not suggesting that the traditional family structure cannot ever meet its members’ needs, desires, and interests, or that it cannot be a happy and fulfilling place for some people. I am saying that it is not – nor should it be – the only family structure that is good and beneficial for the individual and for society. For people who do not want to engage in traditional heterosexual relationships, for people who – no matter the reason – remain unmarried, for people who – married or not – do not
want or do not have children, the traditional family structure may seem confining and unfulfilling, or at least unrepresentative of their interests. Moreover, as Collins suggests, it is important to critically examine the meanings of home and family, for, all too often, such concepts are represented as "idealized, privatized spaces where members can feel at ease." In reality, the traditional family often reifies distinctive gender roles and teaches one about his or her "place" within the family and society ("It's All in the Family" 67). As a venue where one may learn hierarchy, privilege, and discrimination, the traditional family sometimes serves as a site of oppression. Such ideas are not contemplated within the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC; as I discuss further in chapter three, these organizations remain unable to consider the role of power, control, and in/equality within the traditional family.

Furthermore, the patriotic nationalism that these organizations use in their rhetoric discourages a critical assessment of gender roles and the family. Tamar Mayer argues that the nation, conceived as a "heterosexual male construct," enables men to retain power over women. Intersections of nation with gender and sexuality, then, result in a "moral code" that determines men as "sole protectors" and women as "biological and symbolic reproducers" (6). Reproduction, then, enables women "to fulfill their duty to the state/nation" by having and raising children.21 Non-reproductive sex, therefore, represents a threat to such nationalist policies (Peterson 44-5). This may help to explain why women's roles and choices beyond marriage and motherhood do not even make an

21 Collins (1999) emphasizes, though, that women experience natalist policies differently depending on their race and class.
appearance in O’Leary’s article. The absence, however, may not be immediately recognizable, especially to a conservative audience, since O’Leary’s argument focuses upon the urgency of ensuring women’s right to motherhood and of preserving the traditional family.

With feminists positioned as powerful oppressors, O’Leary can position conservative traditionalists like himself on the side of ordinary people. He addresses his audience as “we” and “us,” assuming the audience’s unquestioned agreement with his arguments. This “inclusive” stance validates his perspective, authenticates the views of “those of us who care about motherhood and the family” (par. 4), and “Others” feminists in the process. O’Leary seeks further credibility for his position by arguing that “we” care about “women’s practical needs … [which] include housing, food for families, and access to clean water” (par. 24). He implies that the writers of Gender Concepts (a UN booklet allegedly drafted by “radical feminists”) ignore such practical needs, and that they are concerned only with “women’s strategic gender interests [which] include such things as abolition of the ‘sexual division of labor’ and ‘freedom of reproductive choice’” (par. 24). Thoroughly misrepresenting feminist concerns, O’Leary suggests that feminists care nothing about the material conditions of women’s lives, but only about the abstract concepts that they have selected as oppressive. Furthermore, by relegating the “sexual division of labor” and “freedom of reproductive choice” to scare quotes, O’Leary insinuates their invalidity, and ignores the material effects that the presence or absence of both have on women’s lives. He uses a discussion of “women’s practical needs” to construct his perspective as humane and democratic, but dismisses women’s rights.
In actuality, O‘Leary is intent upon upholding traditional and hierarchical gender roles. He explains: “The sexual division of labor refers to the family where the father and mother divide the work of the family and the mother accepts primary responsibility for the care of the children. The abolition of this sexual division of labor amounts to the abolition of motherhood” (emphasis mine, par. 24). For O‘Leary, one apparently is not a mother by virtue of childbearing alone.\footnote{22} In his analysis, the sexual division of labor is \textit{integral} to the meaning of motherhood. Evidently, one cannot truly be a mother without it. O‘Leary’s suggestion that “[t]he abolition of this sexual division of labor amounts to the abolition of motherhood” attempts to radicalize feminists and to scare his conservative audience into believing that feminists think that motherhood should not exist. By tying the abolition of one to the abolition of the other, he reinforces the necessity and naturalness of the sexual division of labor, and promotes an essentialized view of gender roles, where the mother must nurture while the father provides economically. With a focus upon “women’s practical needs” and their role within the family, he not only essentializes women’s roles, but also implies that as long as women’s basic human needs are met, they have human rights.

In the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC, feminists appear again and again as radicals unconcerned with – or hostile to – the interests of normal, ordinary American citizens. They represent a danger to these citizens, particularly because of their efforts to inflict a political agenda that challenges traditional gender roles and the traditional family structure.

\footnote{22 I do not intend to suggest here that there are not other ways – adoption, for instance – to “become” a mother. It is beyond the scope of this study to debate fully the various and complex meanings and
In order to paint such a stereotypical picture of feminists, CWA and the FRC have needed to ignore context and all evidence of variability among feminists to reduce them to a singular, uniform, radical perspective. Variability among feminists cannot be allowed in their rhetoric because of the way that it complicates the totality of their arguments.

But it also has been important to essentialize all women, their roles, and their desires. Nationalism provides an excellent vehicle to accomplish this both because of the way it venerates women’s traditional roles, and because the principles of liberalism can be portrayed as oppositional to left-leaning politics. However, such a strategy does not allow for women’s (or even men’s) complex interests, desires, and choices, which may not involve traditionally gendered heterosexual relationships and family life. But then, the liberation of women has never been the intention of these organizations.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, the efforts of CWA and the FRC to construct feminists, gays and lesbians as radicals unrepresentative of normal American citizens signify an attempt to undermine progressive political efforts. To some extent, obstructing the work of feminists, gays, and lesbians is their reason for being; this is what initiated CWA in the mind of Beverly LaHaye, and it is the central focus of many of the efforts of both organizations. CWA’s and the FRC’s campaigns against feminists, gays, and lesbians are not as simple as mere ideological differences; rather, they are waged to portray feminists, constructions of motherhood.
gays and lesbians as the ultimate enemies of ordinary citizens. Because of the threat these groups pose to traditional, hierarchical, biologically and biblically determined sex/gender roles, these organizations argue that feminists, gays and lesbians defy nature, God, and nation. These organizations present themselves, on the other hand, in accordance with the Natural and Moral Order, and as thoroughly representative of the interests of the Good American Citizen. In order to attain this ethos, they construct themselves as tolerant and mainstream, even in the face of incredibly reductionist, vicious portrayals of gays, lesbians and feminists. Appearing mainstream is important to their effectiveness as policy organizations; if they do not appear so, they will fail to gain the ears and the sympathies of a broad-reaching populace. Nationalism, moreover, facilitates in this process because it enables them to appropriate the terms of the liberal democratic tradition and to construct themselves as the embodiment of liberal democratic interests. Donning these terms promotes the appearance of mainstream-ness, suggests that these organizations truly advocate for the best interests of the Nation and the Good American Citizen, and “Others” those who challenge traditional gender roles and morality. The citizen these organizations really represent, however, is not representative of all.
CHAPTER 3

EXCLUDING "OTHERS":
THE RACE AND CLASS FALL-OUT

"Freedom (to move, to earn, to learn, to be allied with a powerful center, to narrate the world) can be relished more deeply in a cheek-by-jowl existence with the bound and unfree, the economically oppressed, the marginalized, the silenced."
- Toni Morrison

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which CWA and the FRC’s conceptions of the Nation and the Citizen function to exclude people of color as well as people outside the middle or upper classes. Both organizations draw upon the ideals of liberalism in developing their conception of the nation, but they do so in a way that supports exclusions. The vision of Nation and Citizen conceived by these organizations is based upon a patriotic myth that supposedly corresponds with the founders’ “true” intentions for the nation.

Philosophically, there is much within the liberal democratic tradition that is attractive. First, it assumes that all are “born equal” (Hartz 66). Second, it contends that “it is a prima facie good for individuals to have and be in a position to act upon and satisfy their interests and desires, objectives and purposes” (Flathman qtd. in Damico 170). As such, liberalism presumes two things: first, that “freedom from interference” is

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1 Morrison, Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination, 64.
a good; and second, that it is good for individuals to “have, develop, and pursue” their own interests (170). Liberalism’s emphasis upon individualism intends to guard against misrule, and represents an attempt to “tame power” so that the state does not become totalitarian (171). While liberalism intends to limit the powers of the state in the interests of the individual, it also defends the state’s power to govern for the common good. Where, in other political philosophies, religion or economic class may play a role in governance, liberalism “automatically [gives] to the state a much higher rank in relation to [citizens] than ever before. The state becomes the only association that might legitimately coerce them at all” (Hartz 59-60). This coercion is not to come from a monolithic regime, but to arise out of a government “of, by, and for the people.” As Elaine Spitz notes, one of the great strengths of modern liberalism is that it seeks to build institutions fairly and by agreement (196).

Liberalism’s embrace of individualism is attractive because, ideally, it protects the individual’s interests and secures against autocratic impositions. But it also is important to consider how effective and efficient liberalism is at guaranteeing the rights and interests of all people, especially when distorted and then applied in ways that are less than democratic. A jingoistic and de-historicized interpretation of liberal principles, such as that used by CWA and the FRC, ignores some of the problems of liberalism and upholds the hierarchy which materializes from presupposing a white masculinist subject.

What these organizations don’t examine are the ways in which liberalism and their vision of the nation’s founding are conceived from the perspective of those who have benefited most from the American project. They do not use liberalism for the purpose of supporting equal rights, but rather to suggest that, because America was
founded, in part, on the principle of equality, people in the United States are naturally equal. Since they are so, everyone must have an equal opportunity to succeed in the United States. Any failure to succeed, then, indicates lack of talent or lack of character (Lakoff 205). In addition to this unabashed embracing of "bootstrap theory"\(^2\), these organizations ignore the ways in which the nation's founding actually was built upon the binary opposition of the free and the unfree. The great irony, of course, is that while the nation supposedly was founded upon the notion of liberty and justice for all, there existed "the presence of the unfree within the heart of the democratic experiment – the critical absence of democracy, its echo, shadow, and silent force in the political and intellectual activity of some not-Americans" (Morrison 48). In Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination, Toni Morrison compellingly explores the ways in which American writers have constructed whiteness against a real or implied Africanist presence, arguing that the fear of the racial Other enables the white Self to feel secure in its own freedom. Ominously underscoring the consciousness of racial discrimination, Morrison's argument suggests that social hierarchy is cruel because of the way it deliberately produces and maintains inequality and oppression. In a similar argument, Andrew Light and William Chaloupka contend that early American nationalism was partly dependent upon the ability to define Blacks and Native peoples as culturally, mentally, and morally inferior. This enabled early nationalists to distinguish the Self from the Other. The liberty, virtue, and cohesion of the new republic thus were solidified by the presence of this dark Other (333). In other words, one knew that one was free

\(^2\) I am indebted to my colleague, Melissa Poole, for coining the term "bootstrap theory" to refer to the notion that all one needs to do to succeed is to "lift oneself up by the bootstraps."
because one could see that others were not. This is a concept that also can be read in light of class. Moreover, if we consider this matter via the constructed vision of the Nation that CWA and the FRC uphold, we must interrogate their conceptions of who makes a good citizen, and what kinds of policies benefit this citizen.

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the policies of CWA and the FRC are designed with the white, middle class subject in mind. In “Kitchen-Table Backlash: The Anti-Feminist Women’s Movement,” Jean Hardisty explains the transitional focus upon maintaining white supremacy by the “Old Right” to the driving underground of overt racism and the primary concentration upon the traditional family by the “New Right.” As Hardisty points out, the racism of organizations like CWA and the FRC is “encoded” rather than explicit. That is, it becomes visible when one examines the consequences of their ideology and agenda, and acknowledges the negative effects of their policies upon people of color. Indeed, people of color are welcomed into these organizations, provided that they share their values, which include opposing multiculturalism, welfare, secular humanism, sex education and affirmative action, and valorizing individualism, limited government, and personal responsibility (121-2). Similar to the “good homosexual” mentioned in the previous chapter, the “good person of color” is not politicized, is isolated (in the sense of lacking solidarity with other people of color), and is assimilated into a “civilized” white norm. Such assimilation enables CWA and the FRC to look upon themselves as tolerant (“The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism” 121-2).

Embodying what Smith calls “new racism,” CWA and the FRC avoid the explicit argument that whites are superior and people of color are inferior. Their contention that people of all races are structurally equal, however, perpetuates race-based privilege and
discrimination, and effectively blames people of color for failing to achieve respectable middle class status (118). After all, they reason, if “all men are created equal,” all people have equal opportunity not only to survive, but to succeed in the United States. This is an attractive assertion on a couple of levels. First, it denies that race is a relevant factor in one’s social positioning. Rather, it seems to suggest that, as human beings, each with inherent worth, we are all born equal, but it does not account for the ways in which those outside the dominant culture experience inequality. Second, it seems to place the power to succeed solely within the hands of the individual; if we just work hard enough, we can “make it” in America, so bootstrap theory goes. Third, it suggests a timeless truth. That this truth is “self-evident” and so recorded by the nation’s founders makes it all the more culturally resonant. That Thomas Jefferson, the author of this phrase, was himself a slave owner, a participant in the “democratic” project, remains unspoken, unaccounted for.

Yet this avoidance of context is one of the allowances – necessities, even – of presuming all people already equal. Consistent avoidance of context enables CWA and the FRC to ensure a stable, coherent, and patriotic ideology within a system of binary oppositions. Ominously, however, avoidance of context also enables CWA and the FRC to reduce social analysis to the individual level, and to insist that each of us is solely responsible for what we make of our lives. Thus, we alone are to blame for “bad choices” or failure to succeed. Avoidance of context also constructs and sustains the notion of a neutral citizen, which is actually theorized from the perspective of a white, middle class, heterosexual, conservative Christian subject position, and disregards the very relevant differences, needs, and experiences of others. This position explains
inequality on an individual basis, and avoids accounting for structures that uphold and perpetuate inequality.³

Rhetorically, liberalism serves CWA and the FRC well in this capacity. Built upon what Brown calls “constitutive dualisms,” liberalism is raced and classed, just as it is gendered and heterocentric. For instance, Brown explains that “equality as sameness [as it is conceptualized under liberalism] is a gendered formulation of equality, because it secures gender privilege through naming women as different and men as the neutral standard of the same” (153). We could change some of the words here and this statement would ring true for race: “Equality as sameness is a raced formulation of equality, because it secures white privilege through naming people of color as different and whites as the neutral standard of the same.” This statement also can be applied to class: “Equality as sameness is a classed formulation of equality, because it secures middle class privilege through naming working class/poor people as different and middle class people as the neutral standard of the same.” Built upon mutually constitutive binary oppositions, liberal notions of categories of difference continually “Other” those who do not fit the normative category.

The stigmatization of class-based or race-based difference becomes clear in the oppositional association of the working class/poor and people of color with terms like liberty, equality, and independence. Because the liberal subject is positioned as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual, working class/poor people and people of color wind

³ In the final chapter of Killing the Black Body, Dorothy Roberts reaches similar conclusions in regards to the liberal definition of liberty.
up stigmatized and not benefited by policies that fail to account for them or that reify stereotypes about them.

**Imagining the Classless (Middle Class) Subject**

The classism of CWA and the FRC becomes clear in their rhetoric on tax and economic policies, and on social welfare programs. The "liberal" federal government consistently appears as the enemy to the economic, and by extension, personal well-being of American citizens and families. The resonant rhetorical images of citizens and families provide an emotional anchor that sets up their arguments for what is wrong with the way the government conducts policies on economic issues. The measure of a policy’s goodness is determined in accordance with how much it helps "The Citizen" who it is supposed to represent and serve, and with whether or not it hurts "The American Family."

I have established that what is intended by "The American Family" is the traditional, intact, two-parent, married heterosexual unit, and the children born of it. I have established, too, that disdain for structural variation in the family amounts to intolerance and social injustice. It is essential to account for these factors when considering the economic and social welfare policies of CWA and the FRC. Clearly, when these organizations talk about what will benefit "the family," they are referring to one very narrow, specific model. As their tax, economic, and social welfare policy

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4 For an interesting discussion of the ways in which conservative ideology reconciles loving one’s country, but hating one’s government, see Lakoff, chapter 16.

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proposals make clear, this family supposedly enjoys a fair amount of affluence, and could enjoy even more with the right kind of policies in place.

For instance, in “Where’s Mom,” an article appearing in the July/August 2000 edition of CWA’s Family Voice, Charmaine Yoest describes an idyllic “reality” supposedly shared by those whom the organization represents:

On a recent morning, my three children ate their Cheerios around our kitchen table, while their father and I chatted about the morning headlines and the coming day. My daughter spilled the milk, and my son wanted to know why pineapple has spiky green leaves sticking out at the top. Hmm. Good question. After breakfast, we waved goodbye to my husband, and the children and I walked the few blocks to school. My three-year-old fell and skinned her knee, but we still arrived a little early. As we descended the stairs, we discovered a crowd of children lined up at the kitchen. Puzzled, I turned to my daughter. “What are they doing?”

“They’re getting breakfast,” Hannah replied. (Yoest 26).

Yoest’s narrative begins with a quotidian scene of father, mother, and children beginning their morning together around the breakfast table. The problems they encounter within these private, familial moments are no more serious than spilled milk and scraped knees. Once they venture into the realm of the public, however, the “crowd” of children served by the school breakfast program disrupts these pleasant images, jarring the author and her audience into the cold anonymity of a public bureaucracy. What follows is an alarmed report of the future of education: “motherhood ‘run’ by government bureaucrats” (26). For Yoest, the culprit is not complex economic processes that, for a variety of reasons, make such programs necessary, but rather “big government programs” bent on wresting control out of the hands of parents. Yoest goes on to insinuate conspiracy as she describes “a Clinton legacy” of increased spending on government subsidized childcare and government designs to replace motherhood in the form of early childhood education and programs for disadvantaged children (26).
Yoest’s attitude towards programs to assist the disadvantaged is suspect. In an explanation of a briefing on early childhood development that took place on Capitol Hill in May 2000, Yoest writes, “The briefing, outlining the latest research on early childhood development programs, focused narrowly on disadvantaged children” (emphasis mine, 27). The thrust of Yoest’s criticism here tells us much about her perspective. If the research is “focus[ing] narrowly on disadvantaged children,” who is left out of the analysis? Clearly, comparatively privileged children whose families have more money, and likely, better access to resources. But if the research had focused on these comparatively privileged children, how could such research consider the needs of the most needy of children? Policies and research that focus on the privileged alone fail to take heed of the needs and experiences of those outside the dominant culture, thus re-inscribing a middle class norm.

But Yoest needs to make this argument in order to protect her family values perspective. Yoest worries that structural analyses place too much “emphasis on economic status [and increase] the pressure mothers feel to work outside the home,” thereby destabilizing the traditional family ideal of a stay-at-home mom and a father who works. This is why she criticizes analyses that point to “poverty and “low socio-economic status”” as primary factors contributing to the likelihood that a child will begin school without the necessary skills (27). Here, the core of Yoest’s anxiety becomes visible: politically liberal structural analyses threaten the stability of the traditional family by drawing attention away from the essential benefits that such a family supposedly provides.
For family values advocates like Yoest, support for the traditional family structure is the solution to the problem of school readiness. After all, “only one generation ago, families struggled through the Depression to raise healthy, high-achieving children … And yet,” Yoest points out,

‘school readiness’ is defined primarily by character, not resources. When kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the most important characteristics of school-ready children, they listed physical health, communication skills, enthusiasm, willingness to take turns, and the ability to sit and pay attention (27).

Failing to acknowledge the ways in which adequate income and access to resources impact these factors, Yoest suggests that school readiness is as personal and as basic as the family. Embedded within this argument is an assumption of the superiority of the traditional family and the values – like personal responsibility – that this family allegedly inculcates. The focus on character ensures that accountability remains personal and specific. In this analysis, a logical chain of cause and effect emerges: failure to produce adequate school readiness (and teen abstinence and independence of public assistance, for instance) become the fault of the individual, and/or the liberal government that institutes laws and policies which fail to satisfactorily support the traditional family.

Yoest remains unable to consider the ways in which the functions of this “ideal” family form as she has conceptualized it is a class-based phenomenon, unattainable to the lower classes without structural overhaul. Instead, she suggests that “tax breaks” designed “to empower the parents” would better serve the needs of low-income families (29). Since tax breaks are typically income-based, it is unlikely that any return low-income families would receive would be very substantive. This, however, seems outside the realm of Yoest’s comprehension; clearly, she is operating out of a privileged, middle
class mindset. The result is shortsighted and exclusive policy recommendations that can only imagine a middle class citizen.

In the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC, successful middle class status is taken to be the result of a strong family. In “Does the Family Have a Place in Habitat,” Wendy Wright accords the family praise for the strong individuals and the strong nation it produces. The family is important as a site of socialization: “It is within the family that individuals learn how to be responsible members of society, by learning the behavior and attitudes that are beneficial for society.” It is also the place where one forms his/her “most enduring identity” in relationship with others, as son or daughter, mother or father, aunt or uncle (Wright par. 14). The family also is an important site of support (par. 15), and a critical site of belonging. One gains a sense of responsibility in caring for others, while one’s own rights and well-being are duly “safeguarded”: “By banding together, [family members] can more effectively challenge hostile outside forces” (par. 16).

In “It’s All in the Family, Patricia Hill Collins points out that just as policies regarding national territory and immigration are intent on distinguishing between insiders and outsiders, so too is rhetoric on the family intent on drawing lines between who belongs in the family, and who does not, and in determining what is a “family matter,” and therefore private. She points out, too, that establishing boundaries in this way is grounded in a long history of defense and conquest, intentions to acquire and/or maintain “sovereignty,” and to ward off corrupting alien forces (68-9). Indeed, Wright’s article seems to construct family members as fellow soldiers, who assist one another in “safeguard[ing]… rights” and “effectively challeng[ing] hostile outside forces” (Wright.
par. 16). Ferociously protective of those who belong against those who do not, the traditional family has a fierce interest in distinguishing between Self and Other.

Additionally, within the family, “the advantages of personal growth and advancement are multiplied because they are shared with other family members” (par. 16). Because members are so closely “involved in each other’s lives,” they are in a better position than “an impersonal agency” to help “loved ones.” Wright notes, “This is especially true for disadvantaged groups including women, the elderly, the handicapped, and children”5 (par. 17). It is also “[w]ithin the family [that] we learn to sacrifice for the good of another.” Through sacrifice, the family teaches that “self-denial in the short-term will result in long-term benefits.” The family also teaches respect and care for oneself and for others (par. 18). Wright concludes that “[t]hese characteristics are essential for a healthy, productive society,” and that the negative consequences of family breakdown can be witnessed in its effects on the individual and on society (par. 19).

Patricia Hill Collins argues that although rhetoric on the traditional family contrives an image of collective fulfillment within a smoothly functioning and balanced unit, “actual families remain organized around varying patterns of hierarchy” (“It’s All in the Family” 64). This family’s purpose is to teach one his or her place, both within the family and within the larger society. In this way, social hierarchies based on age, race, gender, sexuality, and class get reproduced (64-5). Furthermore, Collins argues, “[f]amily rhetoric that naturalizes hierarchy inside and outside the home obscures the

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1 It is extremely unusual for a staff member of CWA or the FRC to speak of women as part of a “disadvantaged group.” It is important to note here that, despite what appears to be her concession, Wright does not seek equal rights or progressive systemic change to better the lot of the disadvantaged. Rather, she praises the virtues of the traditional family for the role it plays in the lives of the disadvantaged, without considering the family’s participation in the disadvantaging.
force needed to maintain these relations” (67). Nowhere in Wright’s article — nor in others written by the staff of these organizations — is there a critical assessment of power and in/equality within the traditional family.⁶

In the chapter “Subordinate, but not Inferior” in I Am a Woman by God’s Design, Beverly LaHaye resolves this absence most clearly. Although LaHaye argues that “a woman [can] submit to her husband without fear of losing her identity, individuality, or equality in the marriage bonds” (46), she acknowledges that “some of you are objecting because you know of marriages where the women have been slaves to their husbands or were treated as second-class citizens” (47). She continues. “That is sadly true, in some cases. Nevertheless, such a wrong does not alter the biblical teaching on submission to the Lord or a woman’s submission to her husband” (47). Later, LaHaye explicates that although the Christian husband is the “head” of his wife, “when a husband uses his headship to justify authoritarian actions and attitudes, he is not acting in obedience to God” (51). Although LaHaye cautiously admits that women may become victims of the aggressive authoritarianism of “ungodly” husbands, this does not sway her determination that submission is a virtue weightier than such risks. In the last paragraph of this chapter, LaHaye concludes, “in the final analysis, this life is just a passing moment, in light of eternity, and female equality and personal rights seem trivial and insignificant” (55). Thus, women’s safety and right to live a life of self-determination, free from violence, coercion, and emotional battery, needs no further attention, because, for her, it is not as

⁶ In June 2001, when I used CWA’s and FRC’s search engines to find articles on domestic violence and incest, the results that returned established connections between these forms of family-related violence and sexuality education, abortion, same-sex unions, cohabitation, pornography and the decline of the traditional family in general. I did not find any articles that dealt with issues of violence, power and control within the traditional family itself.
compelling as her central message: as “an act of obedience to our heavenly Father,” submission “enriches an individual’s life and promotes him to a more mature level, resulting in good self-esteem, loving concern for others, and a general attitude of well-being” (48). The gross lack of attention paid by these organizations to the issue of power and in/equality within the hierarchy of the traditional family, and LaHaye’s dismissive discussion point to a general unwillingness to acknowledge the potentially unsavory and rights-denying aspects of this family.

Instead, the focus is solely on the negative effects of the breakdown of the traditional family. Wright contends that a “broken family” is a “prime cause” of poverty (“Does the Family Have a Place in Habitat?” par. 23-5), crime and violence (par. 27). Divorce (par. 29), cohabitation, out-of-wedlock births, and single parenthood (par. 32-4) all destabilize the family. Furthermore, the effects of the broken family are not just individual, but impact the community and the nation. “When marriages decline, public order and the common good decreases, and public costs increase” (par. 28); therefore, “reducing the cause of these behavioral, emotional, and psychological problems will benefit societies, nations, and the global community as well as individuals” (emphasis mine, par. 38). For Wright, the problem is not structural issues like unequal pay, racism, and sexism that contribute to poverty and other social problems, but the absence of a strong family and the psychological problems of individuals. Consequently, her proposed solution addresses the problem on an individual level.

She follows up this analysis with a section that appears under the subtitle: “Wanted: A Work Ethic.” Wright explains:

An indispensable condition for rising above poverty is a healthy work ethic. A positive work ethic comes from an attitude that invests in effort, believing that
effort can change and improve circumstances, as opposed to an attitude of helplessness. The damaging effects of a broken family — a sense of rejection, self-destructive behaviors, inability to work through conflicts, among many others — impinge on this ability (par. 35).

Heedless of the role of structural forces, Wright’s analysis blames the individual for his or her class status by suggesting that the poor remain in the position they are in because of a bad attitude. She bases her argument upon assumptions about “the damaging effects of a broken family,” evoking stereotypes of the members of a divorced family who run away from their problems rather than confronting them head-on, and turning to “self-destructive behaviors” such as drugs, alcohol, crime, violence, and sex outside of marriage. In this view, there is no joy for the “broken family.” By assuming that such family structures result from poor character, Wright’s article re-inscribes stereotypical and classist perspectives of the poor as lazy and degenerate.

Iris Marion Young tackles the question of whether divorce and single parenthood really are causes of poverty in “Mothers, Citizenship, and Independence: A Critique of Pure Family Values.” Young’s analyses suggest that the circumstances of poverty and of non-traditional families are far more complex than CWA and FRC rhetoric suggests. She points out that studies that examine the effects of divorce on family members return ambiguous and conflicting results (537). She also calls attention to the role of family conflict as a contributor to emotional damage in children, and suggests that allowing parents who do not want to be together to divorce peacefully may be less emotionally damaging to children (538). In regards to poverty, Young considers the advantages and disadvantages of both single-parent and two-parent families. For instance, while she acknowledges that growing up in a single-parent family “may be a handicap” because of multiple pressures on single parents, so is growing up in a two-parent family with several
siblings. Furthermore, although the presence of a second adult who willingly shares the weight of helping a woman raise [a] child[ren] can be beneficial, “it does not follow that the second adult must be a live-in husband” (540). Finally, Young points out that the presence of a male helps to keep women and children out of poverty because men typically are better enabled to earn more. This is because of both gender-based wage leverage and the fact that women are more likely to work part-time because childcare and domestic chores are accorded disproportionately to them (541-2). Young does not suggest, however, that a woman must enter a relationship with a man in order to avoid poverty, especially when doing so entails “unjust subordination” (545). Rather, she proposes that pay equity (541), “home help, child care, transportation, workplace accommodation, and flexible work hours” (552) would help “to enable all families to be as excellent as possible” (emphasis mine, 553). Young’s complex analyses show that it is possible to defend the virtues of family while accounting for the role of structural forces, equality, choice, and the best interests of all involved. They also indicate that poverty and alternative family structures are much more complicated and less condemnable than CWA and the FRC imply.

Like CWA, much of what the FRC suggests about class has to do with the association of “deficient” family structures with poverty. Even moreso than CWA, however, the FRC attributes responsibility to the government7 for its role in encouraging “dependency.” For instance, in their policy statement on welfare, the FRC affirms that

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7 This may be due, in part, to the fact that most of the texts I am examining were written during the Clinton years, when conservatives railed against the policies of a “liberal” Democratic administration. It will be interesting to see if and in what way(s) the rhetoric of these organizations changes throughout the conservative Bush Administration. So far, most of what these organizations have to say about the new administration has been positive.
“Today, government usurps the natural role of the family ... This can be seen most clearly when it comes to the subsidization of single parenthood through welfare programs.” To support this assertion, they compare statistical figures on the out-of-wedlock birthrate in 1960 with the figures for “today” (“Introduction to Welfare Services” par. 1). Using a logos claim, the FRC attempts to create a cause-and-effect relationship between welfare and out-of-wedlock births. However, the FRC does not provide either a date to explain what is meant by “today,” nor do they provide a source for their statistics. This absence of context seems intended to bolster the notion that welfare encourages non-traditional family structures, without accounting for other significant social and structural forces that have contributed to the rise in out-of-wedlock births. This also enables the FRC to invoke the stereotype of female welfare recipients as lazy and promiscuous, and creates a correlation between single-parent families and poverty.

In regards to the latter, the FRC is not entirely wrong. Gwendolyn Mink, who has researched and written extensively on welfare, states that “families in which women are the sole providers are disproportionately poor: 60 percent of all poor families with children are single-mother families; and among solo mothers who support their children mainly through their earnings, 60 percent earn a poverty level income ... or below” (Welfare’s End 106). Mink does not suggest, however, that these figures demonstrate the inherent deficiency of single-mother households. Rather, similar to Young, she criticizes

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8 See Chapter 8 of Coontz (1992) for more contextual information on society and sex outside of marriage.

9 Stephanie Coontz presents the same statistics, but via another perspective. She points out that although sixty percent of what she calls “hyperpoor” families are headed by women, “forty percent are not, and they
welfare policies that have constrained the choices and opportunities of welfare recipients (who are, disproportionately, women), coercing them into “marital apartheid, to punish poor mothers for the economic effects of their marital and reproductive choices” (37). She affirms that the trend in welfare policy over the past thirty years has been to encourage marriage rather than to facilitate economic independence (40). Like Young, Mink argues that the solution should not be coercive policies that restrict women’s choices and compel them into marriage in order to survive, but rather should be the facilitation of their equality.

The FRC’s analysis lies at the other end of the spectrum. They provide no critical analysis of labor inequalities or other structural forces that restrict the poor to a “caste” of poverty. Rather, they criticize the Democratic Johnson Administration for its War on Poverty: “Intended to lift the poorest of the poor out of poverty, these programs often had the opposite effect, creating instead a culture of dependency and poverty.” While welfare has been partially reformed, it has not improved the state of marriage among those who would benefit most” (“Introduction to ‘Welfare Services’” par. 2). There are two things going on here: First, their contention that the War on Poverty “created … a culture of dependency and poverty”; and second, their avowal that marriage will lift poor (women) out of poverty. In a position statement on welfare, the FRC considers the War

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10 This argument about welfare creating a “culture of dependency” is also seen in the conservative Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980 by Charles Murray. Coontz points out that Murray’s analysis, while rhetorically resonant in the way that it spoke to American cultural ideas about self-reliance, did not provide sound empirical evidence to uphold the notion that the welfare subsidies of the 1960s and 1970s induced “a tangled skein of dependence, demoralization, immorality, and self-destruction” (80-1). Coontz, moreover, reveals that notions of independence and self-reliance are misleading, pointing out the ways in which all classes of families have relied upon and benefited from government assistance (see especially Chapter 4).
on Poverty “well-intended,” but believes that it “has actually worsened the plight of the poor in America” because of the prominent role of the government in resolving poverty. The FRC continues:

Reflective of our commitment to a lesser role of the federal government in American life, we support efforts that look less to Washington and more to the job market, family members, and locally-funded social services, including churches and faith-based organizations, to help the poor (FRC Position Statement par. 1).

Indeed, it seems that if the Bush Administration is successful at decreasing the role of the government in social welfare capacities and in implementing programs through the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, the FRC’s wish may come true.

The FRC’s assertion that marriage would lift the poor out of poverty assumes that marriage would provide stability by shifting the dependency of female welfare recipients from the government to a male breadwinner. As Mink points out, women’s dependency in general is not so much a concern as is women’s dependency on the government (35). The economic equality of the poor is not the central concern for the FRC; rather, discouraging non-traditional family forms are. They conclude their “Introduction to ‘Welfare Services’” with their statement of intention: “[T]o educate the public about how to restore the family to its natural health at the same time that we work to lift people out of poverty” (emphasis mine, par. 3). In another FRC policy document, Building the Family, Building the Republic: Policy Proposals for the 107th Congress, Michael D. Bowman and Jennifer J. Wotochek provide a suggestion as to how to do this. They assert, “Marriage is a significant factor in families’ leaving welfare; to that extent it should be encouraged with welfare funds.” Their suggestion entails distributing “leftover” TANF/AFDC funds to the states “for developing programs to strengthen marriage and reduce divorce rates” (5). Unconcerned with the rights and desires of actual
welfare recipients, the FRC determines marriage an essential good in and of itself that must be encouraged at any (personal) cost.

But enforcing and preserving the traditional family is not their only concern; they also want to avoid “big government,” which is marked not just by social welfare programs, but taxes as well. Their aversion to taxes can be seen in an article entitled “Taxation’s Moral Price,” by FRC policy analyst Leslie Carbone. Carbone explains that “the growing cost of taxation” is forcing families to make all sorts of sacrifices:

For some families ... [it] means that both parents have to work for pay and leave their children in the care of others. For others, it means doing without education at preferred schools or living in homes that are too small. For many, it means foregoing necessities or near-necessities, like a second car or a family vacation and the precious time together it would allow (par. 1).

Let me be clear that I do not intend to disparage such sacrifices. However, the sacrifices she describes mostly represent the interests of the middle class – those who have the luxury of sacrificing a family vacation or a private school education. Where “need” for the poor can be defined in terms of paying the rent, buying groceries, and keeping the family in clothes, “need” as Carbone considers it here is rather insular. Her middle-upper class perspective becomes even more clear later, when she notes that “Funding these outrages [the National Endowment for the Arts, international family planning programs, and needle exchange programs] costs us the freedom to fulfill our moral responsibility to provide the things our families need, like home security systems, computers, or wholesome family fun” (emphasis mine, par. 6). The kind of lifestyle that Carbone envisions here is one that is growing steadily more exclusive. As the middle class itself splits into two groups – those who “hold relatively unskilled jobs whose wages have stagnated, if the job has not disappeared entirely,” and those whose
professional skills and increasing wages have fared them well in an information age – many of those for whom the "American Dream" of owning a single family home in the suburbs was once a real possibility are no longer able to attain this dream. Paralleling this widening gap between the classes is a "retreat from public responsibility" by those better off manifest in the growing consumption within and privatization of American suburbs (Kintz 106-8). And so as American suburbanites for whom Carbone writes turn inward, concerning themselves with their home security systems, personal computers, and private school educations, they begin to draw lines around what they think they should "pay for." Taxes, Carbone reasons, are the problem because she and others like her are less likely to notice the benefits rendered by taxation. If it weren't for taxes, "American families" would be able to keep more of their own money for the things their families really want and "need." Patricia Hill Collins explains that because middle class and affluent citizens don't depend on government programs, and because their experiences tend to be more directly influenced by private sector initiatives, they are less likely to take note of the ways in which they benefit from public expenditures ("Producing the Mothers of the Nation" 119). Carbone assumes that it is because of too-high taxation that families are denied such amenities. She does not consider the role of a capitalist, business-oriented economy in creating and upholding such conditions. 11 Moreover, Carbone clearly implies that lower taxes would help families universally without considering who would benefit most from lowered taxes. Since the less well-off tend to receive less in tax breaks and rely more on social services and public assistance

11 See Amott and Matthaei (1991), Fohr (1994), and McCall (2001) for discussions on the role of capitalism in contributing to class inequalities.
programs, which often experience funding cuts when taxes are lowered, it is clear that the poor would benefit the least.

But it is important, too, to examine Carbone’s strategy of blaming taxation for what middle class families don’t have. If taxation is to blame, the focus shifts away from a critical analysis of the roles of capitalism, business, and industry. This reflects a general trend in social and fiscal conservatism to protect private industry and to criticize public programs.\(^{12}\) But it also reflects the moral worldview of conservatives. As George Lakoff explains in *Moral Politics*, taxation is conceptualized as “taking money away” from those who have earned it and, therefore, deserve to keep it. For this reason, it is seen as doing a harm — as *punishment* — to those who are doing what, “according to the American Dream, they are supposed to do.” Taxation violates a very important principle of conservative (“Strict Father”) morality: the Morality of Reward and Punishment. Since taxpayers are “doing the right thing,” they should not be punished by having their earnings “taken” from them. Thus, taxation is viewed as an unfair and inmoral process (189).

Carbone invokes nationalism to prove that taxation is bad because of its moral cost, because it reduces “our” freedoms, and because it is a “big government” strategy.

\(^{12}\) In “Fulfilling Fears and Fantasies,” Ann Withorn outlines five major factors which lead to the Right’s “unified objections to welfare”: 1) “Hegemonic anti-communism,” visible in reductions in welfare provisions and a move towards privatization, which indicates a general fear of leftist/socialist/communist politics; 2) Revived nativism, which shows up in fears that alien Others are going to come to “our country” to take over jobs that otherwise would go to “real” Citizens; 3) The Gulf War, which marked the end of “The Vietnam Syndrome,” and inspired a newfound militaristic patriotism and belief in tough discipline as the way to solve problems; 4) Changes in women’s status, which have inspired fears that welfare — “no matter how compromised” — offers women an alternative to the “stabilizing” presence of a husband and an employer; and 5) The “limited, but real” success of black social activism, which has led to racist fears, manifesting in public discourse and representations constructing African Americans as pushy and demanding, making “excessive and divisive claims,” that the government responds to, as a “provider and protector of economic or social rights” (134-7).
that disenfranchises families. Towards the beginning of the article, she reasons: “To provide the best for our families is our moral responsibility. As taxation reduces our economic freedom to meet this responsibility, so it reduces our moral freedom, the freedom to do what we ought” (emphasis mine, par. 2). She continues to build her case with a discussion of a parent’s responsibility to provide a good education for his/her child/ren. She establishes the terms of a good education by arguing that a student should be: intellectually challenged, encouraged to develop “his” talents, appropriately disciplined, physically safe, and not exposed to “messages that conflict with his family’s religious or moral beliefs” (par. 2). Encoded within Carbone’s argument is the current Christian conservative stance on education: that parents should not have to “pay for” an education where their children might be exposed to sinful “lifestyles” and ideas, such as homosexuality and sex education.13 Furthermore, Carbone argues, “By taxing us at three different levels to pay for public education for the nation’s children, government limits many middle- and low-income parents’ economic freedom to select the schools that will best guide their children to become mature, healthy, productive citizens” (par. 4).

Approaching the issue with what looks like concern for middle- and low-income families, Carbone overlooks several factors here. First, she assumes that lowered taxes for education would promote the economic freedom of even low-income people. This stems from her belief that government limits families’ economic freedom; she does not examine the role of the capitalist economy. Second, she does not consider the impact that defunding public schools would have, especially in low-income areas. Third, she assumes

13 This view is reflected in the homeschooling movement, which seems to be gaining momentum. Both CWA and the FRC advocate homeschooling, as well as taking other steps to decrease the impact of “liberal” influences in education.
that these families would not choose public education for their children. She also seems to be suggesting that a child can only become a “mature, healthy, productive citizen” if s/he obtains education from a private or religious school. Interestingly, Carbone seems to be suggesting that government is anti-nation in the sense that its “big tax programs” disable the nation’s people from being the citizens they were meant to be.

Carbone acknowledges that “education is universally valued,” and therefore, may be somewhat tax-worthy, “but there are other things that our tax dollars finance that most of us don’t want at all.” Among these things are “obscene ‘art’ … population control activities in other countries … [and] free needles [for] drug addicts” (par. 5). From Carbone’s perspective, these things are no more than “pornography, abortion, and illicit drug use,” and furthermore, she asserts, “Being forced to pay for them is a form of moral slavery” (emphasis mine, par. 5). Carbone powerfully invokes the association of the American Citizen as the slave, bound by the unconcerned and out-of-touch government, which denies the Citizen’s freedom – economically and morally – through taxation. Through Carbone’s rather libertarian exaggerations, the American Citizen thus appears as the underdog, slated to combat the forces of a totalitarian government. Her use of metaphor here is ironic as well as offensive, but tells us much about whom her perspective considers. As she praises the liberal virtues of equality and independence in this article, she draws upon a white patriotic vision of the nation’s history. Like the colonial revolutionaries at the time of the nation’s founding, Carbone objects to taxation that does not represent “the people.” For the European colonists, who comprised the dominant culture even of the early United States, Mother England was inhibiting the freedom of the “American” people. But independence for the United States would not
mean freedom for the indigenous people who already inhabited the American continent, nor for the African slaves of the colonists. If we consider this analogy against the modern conditions described by Carbone, we can recognize that to decrease taxation would benefit those who have something to gain from lowered taxes, not those who rely on government services and who are "bound" by poverty and racism. Thus, framing the state of affairs of the comparatively privileged middle class to slavery is nothing short of impertinent reductionism.

But to support her assertion that tax relief is what "the people" want, she quotes Susie Dutcher, "a full-time mom and former school teacher," who spoke before the Senate Finance Committee in 2000. Dutcher's ethos as a full-time mom lends credence to her ability to speak to what is best for the average American family, whose interests CWA and the FRC purport to reflect. Claiming that "[t]axes are far and away the biggest portion of our family budget," Dutcher ridiculed the U.S. government for taxes benefiting inefficient bureaucracy and the morally unworthy, citing "closed captioning for the 'Jerry Springer' show... food stamps for the deceased... and Social Security disability payments for escaped convicts" (par. 7). Compared to the things that were nearest and dearest to Dutcher and her family, such as "dollars [for] our retirement account... books for Lincoln, Elizabeth, and Mary Margaret... ballet lessons for Elizabeth... and money to support our church's missionary in Albania," Dutcher's testimony strongly supports Carbone's constructions of government taxation as petty, unproductive, and contrary to the best interests of the family. Carbone thus concludes with suggestions as to what could provide "family tax relief" for "American families" like Dutcher's: "reduction of the Social Security tax, expansion of the 15 percent bracket, abolition of the marriage
penalty, expansion and indexing of the child tax credit, and implementation of education savings accounts” (par. 8). Such “family tax relief will restore to Americans the economic and moral freedom needed to care for our own families” (par. 9). Having established the pathos appeal of the family, Carbone’s article intends to gain support for those policies she believes will ensure the family’s freedom. Since families are hardly all the same, however, it is important to interrogate which families benefit most from certain policies.

By developing policy proposals that benefit one particular kind of family, CWA and the FRC attempt to normalize that which is good for the white, heterosexual, married middle-class family is good for all. Both organizations operate within an ideology wherein the answer to society’s problems lies in a return to the traditional, intact, two-parent, heterosexual family structure. Because organizations like CWA and the FRC attribute the cause of social ills to the decline of this family structure, their policy solutions are limited to encouraging both the structure and supposedly inherent morality of this “ideal family.” Moreover, their analyses and policy proposals take only middle-upper class experience into account, while simultaneously projecting a kind of classlessness that is supposedly inherent to the traditional family. The normalizing tendency of the traditional family creates a myth that benefits those middle-upper class persons who are able to fit the ideal model, and discriminates against those who cannot or will not. As Stephanie Coontz argues in The Way We Never Were, “these myths distort the diverse experiences of other groups [who don’t fit the ideal] … and don’t even describe most white, middle-class families accurately” (6). The overall effect is that any “failure” to succeed by the designs of these organizations must be corrected with
attention to the character of the individual, and/or via laws and policies that get the “liberal” government on the path of supporting the traditional family.

Reproducing -- and Denying -- Racism

In dealing with racial issues, CWA and the FRC put forth a “color blind” image that suggests that race is not a problem in the United States anymore. Indeed, they welcome into their organizations those people of color who share their values. Hardisty points out that such organizations claim not to judge on the basis of color, but on the basis of worthiness, which is determined by the morality (read: conservatism) of one’s values. Those who are unworthy fall prey to the sins that perpetuate social problems: moral weakness, corruption, violence, laziness, greed, lust, and dependency (122). These organizations represent racial issues in three major ways: first, in an “unconscious” way, heedless of their reification of racist stereotypes; second, in a “color blind” way, to perform interracial solidarity; and third, in a strategic way, to accuse political progressives of using race exploitatively for an immoral agenda.

As with their class analyses, these organizations conceptualize race in purely individual terms, arguing that “racial discrimination is no longer a factor in American society and that personal failures are simply personal failures” (Hardisty 123). This view thus does not challenge racist views, but rather, maintains them. Moreover, representations of racist stereotypes are not acknowledged as racist, but rather as “accurate and honest depictions of unworthiness” (123). An example of this can be seen in the March/April 2000 issue of Family Voice. The cover of this issue bears the
headline: “A Former ‘Welfare Queen’ Speaks Out” emblazoned across the middle of a photo of Star Parker, an African-American woman, wearing a neat and stylish dress of bright orange, with a pink and yellow jacket (figure 1). Her straightened hair is cut short in a fashionable style, and she wears gold earrings and understated make-up. She stands contraposto, with her hands on her hips, smiling widely up at the camera, which is positioned above her. She exudes confidence; her bright cheeks and radiant smile indicate her self-assurance and self-control. Both textually and visually, we are to understand that her shameful days as a “welfare queen” are over.

The silent subtext of this representation is loaded with racist stereotypes. The use of the words “welfare queen” with the African-American face of Parker draw upon cultural rhetoric and serve to reinforce stereotypical assumptions about the race of welfare recipients. With its long history of racist representations and popular perceptions of welfare recipients as African-American women, it seems particularly inappropriate to reify such stereotypes. But this is just what CWA does in their failure to challenge such perceptions. The race of welfare recipients is not discussed at all; it simply goes unspoken. The very fact that it does go unspoken and that their “poster child” is African-American leaves safely intact the myth of the welfare queen. This decision was perhaps unconscious or simply unthinking; nevertheless, the message remains the same: welfare queens are depraved black women who exploit the system and drain the taxes of hard-working (white) Americans.

\footnote{See Mink (1998) for a discussion of the ways in which racist ideas have been applied to welfare (especially p. 46-8).}
This message is reinforced by the feature article “Breaking the Bonds,” written by Parker herself and CWA staff member Pamela Pearson Wong. With the ethos and authority of a person who “know[s] because [she] lived it,” readers are to trust Parker when she asserts:

No reason exists to maintain the current government-controlled welfare state. Instead of improving people’s lives, it has eroded them. Instead of providing a safety net in times of crisis, it has provided a hammock where people relax and depend upon Uncle Sam (par. 3).

The figure of an African-American self-described welfare queen narrating her own story of the ways in which welfare enables the “rest and relaxation” of the poor serves the function of “deracializing” an essentially racist representation through the “construction of a racially inclusive image”. Indeed, Parker’s self-representation is in keeping with Charles Murray’s insistence in Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980 that black welfare mothers are not so much lazy and thoughtless “breeders,” but rather “calculating” in their designs to exploit the system (Roberts 18).

Cluster analysis reveals the association of welfare with laziness, flippancy, and lack of moral fiber. Parker describes her time on welfare as a “lifestyle” (par. 7, 14) that allowed her to “defraud” (par. 1) and “take advantage of the system” (par. 2). She explains that it was a time in her life when she was “dependent” (par. 1), “rebellious” (par. 2) and “reprobate” (par. 16). She explains that while she was on welfare she partied

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15 Indeed, this is a message Parker has carried further; at the end of this article, CWA advises, “Look for Star Parker’s book, How the Poor Get Rich (Tyndale House), next fall.”

16 In “The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism,” Anna Marie Smith makes a very similar argument – from which I have borrowed language – in a discussion of a speech given by Enoch Powell in regards to his racist immigration campaign for Great Britain (126).
all the time, used drugs, and had several abortions. She says that when she realized she was pregnant, she decided that she “wasn’t going to let a child interfere with [her] nightlife” (par. 4). She moved in and out of jobs, leaving when working became too difficult. Welfare, she claims, “enabled” (par. 9) this corrupt “lifestyle.”

Moreover, Parker positions her own story as a representative example of what life on welfare is like. Indeed, the very first paragraph sets this tone: “They called me a ‘welfare queen.’ I lived dependent upon the government for nearly seven years. I thrived on the welfare system. I defrauded it. I laughed at it. And I wasn’t alone” (emphasis mine, par. 1). Parker does not intend for her story to be read as the story of one individual; there were others (many others, the middle-upper class audience fears) who did the same.

At the beginning of the article, Parker does concede that “not everyone assisted by welfare abuses it. But the system needs changing” (par. 3). This concession serves the important function of implying that Parker, despite what looks like stereotypical representation, is not generalizing. It also suggests that “radical overhaul” (par. 3) is needed so that others like her do not abuse it. Embedded within this is the notion of welfare as addictive, which is substantiated by Parker’s narrative. This notion, moreover, is resonant of historically racist contentions that welfare “rewards the very laziness and propensity towards dependence … inherent in people of color” (Withorn 129). That Parker’s story seems to validate these beliefs lends credence to such racist stereotypes. Parker explains that she was “seduced by [the] easy living” that welfare allowed, a cycle from which “it … [took her] years to break free” (par. 9). She “promised [her]self she would stop,” but found the draw to be incredibly strong (par. 20).
Besides its addictive capacities, welfare and the effects it allegedly produces are associated here with metaphors of "leeching, contamination, and subversion." Parker explains that Medi-Cal stickers, issued by "California’s government-run medical assistance program" (par. 5), enabled her not only to obtain multiple abortions, but to earn money from selling them on the black market. When in a financial pinch, she "could always fall back on the black market for Medi-Cal stickers" (par. 14). Moreover, "that biweekly check enabled [her] to continue as a prodigal. Without it, [she] wonder[s] if [she] would have gotten pregnant four times and had four abortions" (par. 9). Clearly, Parker contends, welfare encourages a cycle of depravity that snowballs from government dependence to exploitation of the system to promiscuity to a selfish disregard for "life." Ultimately, her audience is to conclude, welfare encourages immoral behavior.

Indeed, Parker makes clear, the system itself did not impress any moral values upon her, a point of which she is critical. Parker explains: "I had never heard that abortion actually stopped a beating heart, or that it could harm me or my future fertility. It never occurred to me that abortion was wrong. No one in the welfare system tried to tell me" (emphasis hers, par. 10). Later, she describes how she "began telling people of the many problems of welfare, and they listened. They heard how living on the county had come at the expense of my autonomy and self-esteem. They heard how my caseworker discouraged marriage, education, and the reporting of other income" (par. 24). Parker’s portrayal of the lack of moral guidance she received from the welfare system as an absence reveals her belief that moral influence should come from a welfare

\[17\] Smith explains that these metaphors also were used in new racist immigration discourse ("The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism" 126).
system. This perspective is consistent with current popular beliefs about welfare’s social role: “it is no longer seen as a charity but as a means of modifying poor people’s behavior” (Roberts 202).

Parker supports this point, moreover, by indicating that the problem is with a government system upon which people can “thrive” (par. 1), and not necessarily with an uncaring employer or a valueless family environment. She describes the support and nurture she received while she was employed with the Los Angeles Times. Parker explains that could not blame her employer for her difficulty leaving welfare. Rather, her fair and just “boss even talked about promoting [her].” Even when she became pregnant and “was exhausted and sick all the time, and getting to work at 6:00 a.m. became impossible,” her “boss gave [her] lots of chances … [B]efore they could fire [her], [she] quit and went back to ‘living on the county’” (par. 13). Parker suggests that she lived on welfare because it was easier than living as an “upright” citizen, and because she wanted “to continue [her] hip lifestyle” (par. 7). Her discussion here of her employer responds indirectly to liberal arguments about the difficulty of obtaining good job opportunities and leaving welfare. Clearly, she suggests, that was not the issue for her.

Nor can Parker blame her family for her time on welfare or her irresponsible attitude. She describes her family as “solid – [her] father was a noncommissioned military officer, [her] mother a beautician.” Parker takes sole responsibility for her years of dependency and depravity, explaining her stint on welfare in terms of individual failure. She defends her family: “[My parents] worked hard to support their five children, and my choices can’t be blamed on a lack of role models” (par. 7). Furthermore, her mother was especially instrumental in offering help, although Parker admits “dismissing
[her family] as out of step” (par. 9). Ultimately, when Parker “made the decision” to leave welfare, her mother offered her a loan to help her get on her feet (par. 22). At first glance, Parker’s discussion here of her respectable, supportive, and caring family seems at odds with what CWA usually says about the importance of the traditional family in instilling “good” values and keeping future generations out of the cycle of poverty. However, Parker’s emphasis on personal failure and what she says later about the importance of family keeps the conservative Christian ideology safely intact:

By readily supporting single mothers and reducing benefits when a couple married, the system weakened the family. Under the safety net of welfare – as my past sadly illustrates – illegitimacy and abortion rates skyrocketed (par. 25).

By “allow[ing her] to do as [she] pleased” (par. 9), the government bears the weight of responsibility here. “The system didn’t change me – or even attempt to.” Parker criticizes the government welfare system for not giving her “a reason to leave” (par. 16). Rather, “finding” God and becoming a mother did.

“Introduced” to the Lord by “three young, black, Christian men” (par. 15) who believed in her, Parker explains how her journey to faith slowly turned her life around. Although she continued “living off welfare and partying occasionally” for a while after she began attending church, “God was working in [her] life.” She explains: “When the pastor spoke about the importance of setting a good example for our children, I vowed to get all those nasty men out of my life and to abstain from sex until I got married” (par. 18). Parker was, by this time, the mother of an eighteen-month-old daughter. Although organizations like CWA certainly discourage out-of-wedlock motherhood, Parker’s narrative substantiates their beliefs about the “civilizing” effect that motherhood
supposedly can have. Concern for her child helped motivate Parker to “do the right thing” as a mother and as a woman.

Just as important, if not more so, however, was the role that God and the church played in Parker’s life. Parker recalls the sermon that influenced her to go off welfare:

“The government is not your source. God is your source,” [Parker’s pastor] said. “He’s the one who takes care of you. You do not depend on the government!”

The next day I called my social worker and told her I no longer wanted to receive welfare checks … Trust in God replaced my trust in the government (par. 21-2).

Entirely absent of structural analysis, Parker’s narrative confirms all that the conservative Christian CWA believes to be true about welfare, moral fiber, and the importance of God in one’s life. Once she became Christian and left welfare, her life turned around entirely. She describes how she found a job and launched a newsletter that became a successful magazine. “I had the satisfaction of seeing my business grow. When I married a dedicated Christian man, he joined me in the business, and we became parents to another daughter, Rachel” (par. 23). Parker’s ability to move out of welfare and to “lift herself up by the bootstraps” and become a successful entrepreneur and, later, conservative social activist, sends the message that other welfare recipients, too, can overcome with a commitment to God.

Parker compares her journey out of “dependency” to a slave’s journey into freedom:

Leaving welfare is the first step in breaking the bonds of dependency. The second step, I believe, is entrepreneurship. Starting my own business was my way out of poverty (emphasis mine, par. 30) … If the current welfare state is to change, people at the grassroots must demand it. We will look to charities, churches, the free market, and American goodwill to care for people in need. Or
we will continue to give license to immoral behavior, a cycle of government dependency and virtual slavery (emphasis mine, par. 32).

Parker’s analogy of welfare to slavery is especially meaningful given her identity as an African-American woman. Within the context of a story with a moral, the comparison is meant as a message of motivation and inspiration. In the spirit of rugged individualism, it suggests that the American people must begin at “the grassroots,” taking power into their own hands to create a government of, by, and for the people. They must look to God, and to what Linda Kintz calls “the entrepreneurial frontier” (Between Jesus and the Market). “American frontier patriotism” (Kintz 199), rhetorically conceived via popular discourse of the American West (188), is portrayed as the key to freedom.

A photograph of Parker and her two daughters, Angel and Rachel, epitomizes both Parker’s welfare-free success and a nationalist spirit (figure 2). Parker and her daughters, dressed casually but respectfully, stand close together, their arms affectionately draped around one another, while the Statue of Liberty looms in the background. While it is certainly not unusual to have a family portrait of a trip to a culturally famous site, the inclusion of the photograph with this welfare article gives it a complex new dimension. As the cultural symbol of American freedom, the Statue of Liberty, juxtaposed against Parker’s narration, starkly contrasts with descriptions of dependency and metaphors of addiction. Now free from her days as a “slave” to welfare dependency, Parker is visually “born again” – perhaps as a Christian, but also as a Good American Citizen and a fulfilled woman.
This article re-articulates racist stereotypes and fulfills racist and classist fears and fantasies about welfare.\textsuperscript{18} Parker’s personal narration of her story as an African-American woman who has “been there” seems to prove the conservative contention that welfare enables a “free-loading” attitude and discourages one’s spirit of individualism. Parker’s journey “up from welfare” and into Christianity and capitalism, moreover, positions her as a worthy and believable narrator. Furthermore, it clouds the racism of the representation, framing it, instead, in terms of simple truth.

A second way that these organizations deal with racial issues is by “performing” inclusion with what looks like interracial solidarity. This strategy is most prevalent in the rhetoric of the FRC, in their visual images, as well as in their outreach efforts, especially to Hispanic (sic) communities.

Since the FRC redesigned their web site in the fall of 2000, several images have appeared that suggest the organization’s racial inclusion and “color blindness.” For instance, on their homepage, next to the FRC logo and organization motto, “Defending Family, Faith, and Freedom,” appears an image of two smiling young girls, one black, one white (figure 3). The girls appear to be about the same age – about five or six years old – and are dressed similarly in casual tops and jeans with belts, their bodies visible only from about mid-thigh upward. The white girl is positioned in front of the African-American girl, her partial profile half-obscuring the African-American girl’s face. They clearly appear to be friends, as the African-American girl has thrown her arms around the neck of her white companion, and seems to be leaning her cheek against that of her white

\textsuperscript{18} I paraphrase the title of Ann Wither's article, “Fulfilling Fears and Fantasies: The Role of Welfare in Right-Wing Social Thought and Strategy.”
friend. The white girl’s arms are not around the African-American girl, but positioned loosely in front of her own belly. Nonetheless, her toothy smile shows her pleasure in her friend’s gesture. Her non-reciprocating stance and slight backward lean might be read as surprise for her African-American friend’s unexpected but warm and welcome affection. The sepia tones and hazy glow surrounding the image reflect the tender sentiments it evokes – there are no harsh lines here. Brimming with pathos appeal, this image is one of the first seen by visitors to the web site, and serves an important function as such. The apparent equality between the girls, both in terms of their presumed middle class status and their relationship with one another, mirrors the FRC’s perspective on race: that race doesn’t matter because all people are equal. Nowhere in the articles or policy proposals of the FRC are there attempts to address real racial inequalities.

Another image on the FRC web site that suggests racial inclusion is one that appears on the right-hand side of the screen when one reads a featured article. The image shows what appears to be a casual portrait of a family – father, mother, and two young sons (figure 4). Their race/s is/are somewhat ambiguous. The dark-haired mother appears to be Latina; the darker complected, mustachioed father may be African-American or Latino, or possibly bi-racial. The children are lighter-skinned than their father, but share some of his features. All four family members gaze outward at the camera, but only the parents are smiling. The elder son, who appears to be about ten or eleven years old, is not smiling, but his slight slouch and steady gaze seem to suggest conciliatory, if indifferent, cooperation. His younger brother, who bears a resemblance to Élian Gonzalez, looks slightly more distressed. Despite the boys’ lack of smiles, neither appears to be restrained in any way. In any case, the looks on the children’s faces clearly
are not supposed to carry any central significance. Like the image of the two young girls on the homepage, this familial image is depicted in sepia tones and surrounded by a hazy luminescence. A partial image of a gently waving American flag with muted tones of red, white, and blue – the only real colors in the overall image – appears just under the faces of the boys, blending into the portrait. This, we are to understand, is an American family. We also might suppose that the FRC defends the interests of such families; indeed, they might, if this family shares the FRC’s conservative values. It is important to note, for instance, that this family appears to fit the traditional ideal of the intact, two-parent, heterosexual variety. They are “worthy” because they appear to embody the “hardworking, churchgoing, responsible, [and] upright” criteria, qualities indicating their eligibility to be welcomed into the conservative Christian fold. What goes unspoken, however, is that the FRC would not act politically on behalf of such families’ specifically race- or ethnicity-based experiences of discrimination or desires for ethnic or cultural preservation. Various policies and articles by the FRC have negative things to say about, for instance, multiculturalism and affirmative action. Indeed, any design to defend or even celebrate the family’s race or culture is not even visually implied. This family claims no clear ethnic heritage. Moreover, the American flag that appears below them intimates that they are American, first and foremost. It may seem inclusive to deem people other than whites as American. However, the FRC conceptualizes their Americanness by melting down other aspects of their identity that may be significant either positively and negatively\textsuperscript{19}, which serves to erase racial/ethnic inequalities.

\textsuperscript{19} By this I mean that other aspects of their identity may be significant to them in terms of cultural pride and preservation (positively), or in terms of the discrimination they suffer (negatively).
Furthermore, that images such as these are not paralleled by articles and policy proposals that clearly address racial inequality indicates that they are not substantive, but tokenistic. They serve a rhetorical rather than authentic, practical function.

Interestingly, late in 2000, the FRC formally launched an internal program to reach out to “the Hispanic community.” They hired Yuri Mantilla, a native of Bolivia, as an adviser for their projects concerning “Hispanic and Latin American Affairs” (Dalfonso par. 1). Mantilla serves as a centerpiece for the FRC’s Hispanic Project efforts. Both a lawyer and a media commentator, Mantilla is particularly concerned with pro-life issues. In addition to media appearances and outreach to Hispanic communities, Mantilla “also has translated into Spanish several of FRC’s policy papers, on subjects including abortion, homosexuality, and drugs” (par. 2-5). More recently, the FRC also has launched a radio program, Familia Hispánia, “to communicate with these Americans who share our belief in Christ and in the family” (FRC letter 6/4/01).

The FRC’s makes no secret of their “Hispanic Project” agenda. In a short article appearing in the September 2000 edition of Washington Watch, they explain that since the Hispanic population is growing in the United States, they soon “will represent a major force in the United States with influence in the media, the arts, and the political life of this country” (“Reinforcing the Christian Heritage” 7). Because Hispanic populations in the United States are growing in numbers, they offer a strategic opportunity for the FRC. Rather than turn away this minority community as the “Old Right” would have done, the FRC, as part of the new Christian Right, sees political potential to be harnessed. Moreover, they point out,

Predominantly, Hispanics believe in the family as the foundation of society and resist the efforts of liberal politicians and scholars who want to deconstruct and
destroy the meaning of the family. This was evident last March when nearly 65 percent of Hispanics in California voted to keep the traditional heterosexual definition of marriage.

The FRC cautions their readers, though, that “Hollywood and anti-Christian organizations are deceiving Hispanics into believing that ‘only liberals ... embrace people of all races’” (“Reinforcing the Christian Heritage” 7). Outreach to the Hispanic community thus provides an opportunity to prove that conservatives, too, will embrace people of minority races — that is, as long as they share their conservative Christian agenda. The FRC is not interested in the diverse perspectives and issues of Hispanics; they are simply interested in gaining more support for their agenda. As the title of this article clearly proclaims, they are interested in “reinforcing the Christian heritage of [their] Hispanic allies.” Why? Because “many Hispanics are beginning to believe that the only way to defend their civil rights is to side with liberals politically” (“Reinforcing the Christian Heritage” 7). But the FRC does not fight for the civil rights of Hispanics. They do not mention any racist or xenophobic discrimination faced by this community, and none of their Hispanic and Latin American Affairs projects thus far have addressed any such concerns of these communities. It is clear that the FRC is interested in winning the loyalties of Hispanic populations to keep them away from siding with political progressives. Thus, “reinforcing the Christian heritage of [their] Hispanic allies” is a strategy to circumvent the appeal of political liberals who claim to defend their civil rights. For the FRC, it is a win-win situation; with a substantial backing by Hispanic populations, the organization gets to appear racially inclusive while simultaneously strengthening their numbers.
Like the FRC, CWA also attempts to associate their own agenda with that of minority communities. This tactic is closely allied with the third and final strategy I examine here: accusing political progressives of using “the race card” for an immoral and exploitative agenda. This becomes exceptionally clear in an article entitled “The Negro Project: Margaret Sanger’s Eugenic Plan for Black Americans,” by Tanya L. Green. Green argues that Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), had designs to “restrict – many believe exterminate – the black population” (par. 1), and moreover, that her racist motives persist in the work of PPFA today. Green opens and concludes the article by discussing the perspective of black Christian leaders who oppose abortion and/or birth control. Similar to the FRC’s Hispanic and Latin American Affairs project, sharing the perspectives of these black Christian leaders enables CWA to appear compatible with and representative of a minority. Equally, if not more, significantly, CWA capitalizes upon this opportunity to demonize political progressives as exploitative and villainous.

Under the guise of concern for racial Others, Green’s rhetoric demonizes not only Margaret Sanger, but by extension, PPFA, feminists, and the reproductive rights movement. Green constructs Sanger as devious, evil, and conniving. Clearly suggesting that Sanger had no sincere concerns to help black communities, Green explains that Sanger “cleverly implemented her plan” to curtail the growth of the black population by marketing her Negro Project “under the pretense of ‘better health’ and ‘family planning’” (par. 3). Sanger “shrewdly used the influence of prominent blacks” (par. 25), “charm[ing] the black community” (par. 39) by “peddl[ing] her wares wrapped in pretty packages” (par. 39). Through her “successful duplicity” (par. 60), Sanger “even managed
to lure … prominent [black leaders and intellectuals] into her deceptive web” (par. 57). Using language that implies trickery, Green paints Sanger as a heartless and deceptive individual.

Extremely important in Green’s construction of both Sanger and the relationship of reproductive rights to the black community is the profound lack of context in the article. Despite its lengthy historical account, the article does not illuminate the social context of the time, but rather frames it in light of contemporary attitudes towards race, eugenics, and reproductive rights. I examine here three functions of avoiding context and the effects it has on Green’s rhetoric.

First, Green establishes Sanger as a die-hard eugenicist. Although there are clear connections between Sanger and the eugenics movement, scholars such as Dorothy Roberts point out that her relationship to the movement was complex. Initially, Sanger’s work was founded upon a strong belief in promoting the sexual autonomy of women as an important factor in women’s liberation and equality (Roberts 57). Later, Sanger did become associated with the eugenics movement, and seemed to adopt some eugenic ideology. Historians like Carole McCann and Eileen Chesler have argued that Sanger’s alliance with eugenicists was politically strategic, offering “a sexually neutral language with which to speak publicly about reproduction” (McCann qtd. in Roberts 79). It also may have been “an attempt to counter religious opposition to birth control” (79). This is not to say that Sanger’s relationship to eugenics was not troubling or problematic. Indeed, she upheld eugenic perspectives that claimed that social problems were caused by the reproduction of the socially disadvantaged, and therefore, that reproduction in such populations should be discouraged (81). However, some scholarly research suggests that
she did not share the racial supremacy views of other eugenicists, but rather believed that racial degeneracy was caused by social factors rather than by biology (80).

Second, Green’s article fails to contextualize adequately the role of eugenic ideology among even respected and prominent white Americans at the turn of the century. Instead, Green explains:

Margaret Sanger aligned herself with the eugenicists whose ideology prevailed in the early 20th century. Eugenicists strongly espouse racial supremacy and ‘purity,’ particularly of the ‘Aryan’ race. Eugenicists hoped to purify the bloodlines and improve the race by encouraging the ‘fit’ to reproduce and the ‘unfit’ to restrict their reproduction. They sought to contain the ‘inferior’ races through segregation, sterilization, birth control, and abortion (par. 5).

Although Green mentions that eugenics was a “prevail[ing] … ideology,” and accurately indicates its racist focus on preserving “pure” bloodlines and decreasing “unfit” populations, this descriptive paragraph, with its references to “racial supremacy,” “purity,” and “the Aryan race,” reeks of association with Nazi extremism. Indeed, the Nazis operated out of eugenic principles; however, eugenics was a popular and pervasive ideology at the turn of the century, long before the Nazis came to power. Although eugenics is recognized as extremist today, it was not considered so by turn of the century standards. Green’s failure to situate eugenics within its own social and historical context thus can be read as not only irresponsible, but strategic, with specific designs to associate Sanger (and by extension PPFA and feminists in general) with racist, hateful extremism.26

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26 Green is certainly not the only one to associate political progressives with clearly anti-progressive extremism. The Reverend Dr. Laurence White, the keynote speaker at CWA’s Convention 2000, argued that abortion is akin to the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis.
Furthermore, Green seems not to catch the irony within her own argument. Although conservative Christian organizations like CWA and the FRC are not explicitly concerned with encouraging or discouraging specific races or classes to reproduce\(^{21}\), they nonetheless are very concerned with the "fitness" of the environment into which a child is born and raised. Numerous articles by these organizations contend that teenage girls, single women, unmarried couples, divorced parents (especially women), and gays and lesbians are unfit as parents. They argue that parenting by these populations leads to "inbred dependence on big government" (Bush par. 28), criminal behavior, pre-marital sex, a negative attitude towards (traditional) marriage (par. 31), poverty, early sexual experiences (par. 32), gang activity (par. 53), lowered levels of educational achievement (Wright "Does the Family Have a Place" par. 23), drug use, mental health problems, hyperactivity, depression, suicidal thoughts, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, higher than average mortality rates, inability to resolve conflict (par. 30), and child sexual abuse (par. 33), to name just a few consequences. Unlike eugenicists, however, conservative Christian organizations like CWA and the FRC do not seek to segregate or sterilize these populations, or to encourage their birth control or abortion usage. Their sexual/reproductive prescription for all of these populations is abstinence until they are of

\(^{21}\) Indeed, Green’s own article cites, with horror, the organization Children Requiring a Caring Kommunity (CRACK), which “offer[s] to pay drug-addicted women ... cash if they undergo sterilization or [have] long-term chemical birth control ... inserted into their bodies” (footnote 13). There is no mention, however, of the U.S. government’s role in perpetrating compulsory sterilization and birth control upon drug-addicted women, women of color, poor women, and women on welfare. Not surprisingly, there also is no mention of extensive feminist research on this issue [see, for instance, Roberts (1997), Mink (1998), Campbell (2000), Daniels (1993), and Gomez (1997)]. Moreover, Green’s footnote mentioning CRACK cites an article by Trudy Hutchens (now Chan), appearing in the January/February 2000 edition of Family Voice. Entitled “Roe’s Legacy of Death,” Hutchens implicates a feminist, reproductive rights agenda with eugenic and otherwise rights-violating agendas (like that of CRACK).
the age and position to participate safely in appropriate heterosexual activity within the context of traditional marriage.

Probably, CWA and the FRC would argue that there is no comparison between eugenic arguments regarding the fitness/unfitness of reproduction by certain populations and their own. To some extent, they would be right. Unlike eugenicists, these organizations have negative things to say about sex education, birth control, and abortion, and although they discourage sex outside of marriage, if a pregnancy results from such circumstances, they encourage "the adoption alternative." They also encourage the formation of traditional marriage and parenthood so feverishly that these life choices practically become compulsory in their ideology, unlike in eugenic ideology, which intends to engineer the population in race-specific ways. CWA and the FRC also probably would argue that eugenics was based upon "immutable" factors such as race, whereas their encouragement of certain populations to postpone parenthood is based upon factors such as age, marital status, and sexual orientation that can (and in the case of age, surely will) change. What is similar ideologically between these organizations and eugenic thought, however, is that both believe that only certain people should reproduce and/or engage in sexual activity. Thus, CWA and the FRC are not much more progressive than eugenicists in terms of reproductive and sexual autonomy. Betsy Hartmann clearly articulated a similar point in regards to population control and Third World women:

The population control [read: eugenic] and antiabortion philosophies, although diametrically opposed, share one thing in common: They are both anti-choice. Population control advocates impose contraception and sterilization on women; the so-called Right-to-Life movement denies women the basic right of access to abortion and birth control. Neither takes the interests and rights of the individual
woman as their starting point. Both approaches attempt to control women, instead of letting women control their bodies themselves (qtd. in Roberts 361).

A third aspect of Green’s avoidance of context is the very narrow picture she presents of the complex historical relationship of African-Americans and reproductive rights. Green presents only small tidbits of information about this relationship, declining to shed light on the broader context. The result is that Green’s argument can be read by the predominantly white organization to whom her article is addressed through the lens of white struggles for (and against) reproductive rights. Moreover, presenting select aspects of this relationship without further context monolithically suggests that this is the one true “black perspective” on reproductive rights.

For instance, at the beginning of the article, Green quotes Reverend Johnny M. Hunter, who is “the national director of Life, Education, and Resource Network (LEARN), the largest black pro-life organization” (par. 1): “‘Civil rights’ doesn’t mean anything without a right to life!” (par. 2). To the mostly white readership of CWA, an organization with strong pro-life convictions, this statement is powerfully validating. The catchphrase “right to life” invites the audience to identify with Hunter’s anti-abortion perspective. Moreover, his ethos as a leader in a black Christian community and the connection he makes between civil rights and an anti-abortion agenda implicitly authenticates conservative contentions that so-called progressive politics is antithetical to the “real” needs and concerns of communities of color, and that their own is compatible with it. Read in light of the historical relationship of African-Americans to reproductive rights, however, Hunter’s statement takes on deeper dimensions.

The United States has a long history of denying African-Americans reproductive control. This began, of course, during slavery, when black women were “bred” to
increase slave populations (Roberts 27-8), and black men were castrated as punishment for crime (66). Slave narratives, such as Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and scholarly research indicate that familial connections within slavery were important, enabling slaves to resist the dehumanization of slavery. However, slavemasters exploited slaves’ desire to maintain such connections in order to ensure their submission (Roberts 43-5).

Green, quoting Hunter, distorts the complexity of this history. Hunter said, “The majority of [blacks] are more pro-life than anything else ... Blacks were never taught to destroy their children; even in slavery they tried to hold onto their children” (par. 83). In an attempt to justify the pure logic of African-American alliance with a pro-life agenda, neither Hunter nor Green provides any information in regards to abortion and infanticide as forms of resistance to slavery and compulsory pregnancy. Roberts points out that such practices were used by slaves “to keep [their children] from living as chattel” (48). Although it is impossible to know exactly to what extent abortion and infanticide were practiced among slave women, historical information documents their incidence. To some, abortion and infanticide may seem brutal; however, within the context of slavery, “death may have appeared a more humane fate for [a slave child] than the living hell of slavery” (47-9). For Green and Hunter to imply that African-Americans, by virtue of their history, should or do have an unequivocal alliance with a pro-life agenda is nothing short of distorted and inaccurate. As a rhetorical strategy, this avoidance of broader context shields them from complicating their agenda.

In the twentieth century, other coercive and rights-denying efforts to control black reproductive autonomy were orchestrated on the public and private level in the form of
family planning programs that encouraged birth control usage and coerced sterilization\(^\text{22}\), especially when it involved drug use or receiving public assistance.\(^\text{23}\) Where, for middle-upper class white women, "reproductive rights" has meant access to birth control, abortion, and voluntary sterilization, it has had a very different meaning for women (and men) of color, whose reproductivity has been denied (Roberts 300).

A surface read of this history, coupled with the popular equation of "reproductive rights" with the right to have an abortion, serves Green's purposes well. It both facilitates the construction of Sanger as duplicitous and evil, and appears to strengthen the association of conservatism with the perspectives of African-Americans. For instance, Green seems to suggest that "the disproportionately high number of abortions in the black community" is the sole result of Sanger's Negro Project (Green par. 2). Using terms such as "bewitched," "hoodwinked" (par. 59), and "lured" (par. 57), Green implies that blacks became victims at Sanger's hands. Despite her great care to avoid sounding patronizing in regards to the prominent black leaders and intellectuals such as Mary McLeod Bethune, W.E.B. DuBois, and Dr. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., who signed on to Sanger's platform, Green nonetheless argues that the sly Sanger was so successfully deceptive that they became her prey. Dorothy Roberts points out, however, that "the birth control movement was not simply 'thrust' upon an unwilling black population" (82). Indeed, many black women practiced birth control well before Sanger's work and the birth control movement began. Moreover, black activists worked to establish clinics and family planning services because they well understood the importance of such

\(^{22}\) See Roberts, especially chapter 2, for a comprehensive discussion.

\(^{23}\) See Roberts, especially chapters 4 and 5, for discussion of these issues.
services – which had been denied them so long – for the health and autonomy of their communities (82). In the time between the two world wars, a debate over the role of the birth control movement within the black community arose in the black press, public lectures, and black women’s literature. On one side of the issue were those like DuBois, Mary Burrill, Professor Charles S. Johnson, Dr. W.G. Alexander, and Elmer A. Carter, who affirmed that birth control would help black communities to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates, “‘preserve their new economic independence,’ and improve their standard of living.” On the other side of the issue were black radical intellectuals like Marcus Garvey, who held that birth control “‘attempt[ed] to interfere with the course of nature and with the purpose of the God in whom we believe.’” Viewing the use of birth control by blacks as “race suicide,” such leaders condemned its usage, contending that it would further disempower blacks under a strong and racist white majority (83-4). Although intellectuals like DuBois and Carter “were not immune from the elitist thinking of their time,” blacks who advocated birth control for their communities did so for different reasons than most whites. They saw birth control as “a tool for racial betterment,” rejecting eugenic principles that claimed that some races were inferior to others. Rather they “understood that racial progress was ultimately a question of racial justice … requir[ing] a transformation of the unequal economic and political relations between blacks and whites” (85-6). Complex and divergent views on the meaning of reproductive rights in black communities persist today.24 Thus, for Green to present Hunter’s perspective outside of this context, as if it is representative of the entire black community, is deeply flawed.

24 See Roberts’s discussion on p. 98-103.
To further support her suggestion that conservative ideology is compatible with the interests of the black community, Green makes a few statements that sound remarkably progressive. For instance, a description of conditions for blacks in 1929 explains: “It was the dawn of the Great Depression, and for blacks that meant double the misery. Blacks faced harsher conditions of desperation and privation because of widespread racial prejudice and discrimination” (par. 22). Green’s acknowledgment here of “widespread racial prejudice and discrimination” seems assenting, but 1929 was over seventy years ago, and organizations like CWA hardly like to discuss racism today. Moreover, the use of the phrase “racial prejudice and discrimination” instead of just plain “racism” suggests that, although it may have been “widespread,” racism was visible in individual experiences. Indeed, as Diamond points out, conservative Christians typically view racism “as a sin of prejudice among individuals” (51). Although this perspective usually is most pervasive in conservative Christian rhetoric, Green, interestingly, does seem to avoid it in other parts of her article.

In a criticism of sociologist Walter A. Terpenning, who advocated birth control for African-Americans, Green comes across as even more progressive. She admonishes Terpenning for his view that birth control would be “more humane” than allowing a black child to be born into a world where “the unchristian and undemocratic treatment likely to be accorded it ... is nothing less than barbarous” (qtd. in Green par. 36-7). Green writes: “He failed to look at the problematic attitudes and behavior of society and how they suppressed blacks. He offered no solutions to the injustice and vile racism that blacks endured” (par. 37). Green’s observations concerning the relevance of racism manifest in society’s “problematic attitudes and behavior” are quite astute. Her suggestions to look
for solutions to “injustice and vile racism,” too, are just the kinds of structural arguments that progressives make. However, Terpenning, articulating a view not unlike that of slave women who decided their children would be better off unborn than born under slavery, was speaking to the relevance of racism in the black community’s decisions regarding birth control. Moreover, because Green’s criticism of the lack of structural analysis appears here, in regards to controversy over birth control (to which CWA is mostly opposed), and does not appear in other places in CWA analysis, it seems that she and her colleagues are only interested in those critical strategies that support their agenda.

In another place, Green again makes a seemingly progressive argument in regards to the way the problems of the disadvantaged get handled. She criticizes the Birth Control Federation of America (BCFA) for its 1940 act of opening a second clinic in a South Carolina county. She quotes Charles S. Johnson:

“South Carolina had been the second state to make child spacing a part of its state public health program after a survey of the state’s maternal deaths showed that 25 percent occurred among mothers known to be physically unfit for pregnancy” (qtd. in Green par. 52).

Green follows up, arguing, “Again, the message went out: Birth control – not better prenatal care – reduced maternal and infant mortality” (par. 52). Green makes an important point here about the importance of access to quality health care. Feminists agree that such access is essential to women’s reproductive rights. Green downplays the importance of access to birth control, however, and ignores the fact that blacks had long been excluded from clinics, and that those that were available to them were

\[25\] In fact, Planned Parenthood itself emphasizes “the importance of the relationship of early prenatal care to improved maternal and neonatal outcomes for women who elect to carry their pregnancies to term” (PPFA Mission and Policy Statements, par. 26). To this end, one of PPFA’s three-pronged goals concerning
“enthusiastically used” (Roberts 82). Rather, she assumes that every pregnancy was wanted. All in all, Green does not consider that, while it is important that women have the freedom to choose to become mothers, it is just as important to their health and autonomy that they have the freedom to choose when and whether to become mothers, and when to stop having children. Perhaps because, in the rhetoric of conservative Christians, “choice” is a devil term because of its associations with abortion rights, Green is unable to consider its import. Its absence clearly indicates that it is motherhood, not women’s autonomy, that conservative Christians like CWA and the FRC are interested in facilitating.

Overall, Green’s progressive-sounding statements lend a comprehensive, well-considered appearance to the article, shadowing the gross lack of context into practical irrelevance. They also validate the conservative Christian perspective as wholly reflective of the interests of “The Black Community.” Her conclusion, moreover, substantiates this view. Green writes:

Black pro-lifers are also linking arms with their white pro-life brethren ... The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) ... encourages networking between black and white pro-lifers. “Our goal is to bring people together – from all races, colors, and religions – to work on pro-life issues,” said NRLC Director of Outreach Ernest Ohlhoff (par. 86).

In language especially resonant among conservatives26, Green attests to the potential for unity and fellowship across color lines. Where those on the left tend to emphasize respect for difference and value for diversity, conservative Christians

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universal access to reproductive health services states that PPFA “should enable individuals to have children when and if they are ready—physically, emotionally, and financially” (par. 13).

26 During his presidential campaign, George W. Bush, too, repeatedly affirmed that he is “about bringing people together.”
highlight a "family of man" wherein all who share in the love of the Lord are viewed as children of God. Green suggests, too, that such alliances can be politically advantageous. She quotes Ohlhoff again: "Black Americans for Life is not a parallel group; we want to help African-Americans integrate communicational [sic] and functionally into the pro-life movement" (par. 86). Beverly LaHaye agrees: "Our mission is to protect the right to life of all members of the human race. CWA welcomes like-minded women and men, from all walks of life, to join us in this fight" (par. 87). Although inclusive of those who share views like their own, organizations like CWA and the FRC, are not only exclusive of those who don't agree, but demonizing. Green concludes:

Concerned Women for America has a long history of fighting Planned Parenthood's evil agenda. The Negro Project is an obscure angle, but one that must come to light. Margaret Sanger sold black Americans an illusion. Now with the veil of deception removed, they can "choose life ... that [their] descendants may live" [Deuteronomy 30:19 (NKJV)] (par. 88).

Although the Negro Project has not been in effect for many years, Green maintains that PPFA's racist "evil agenda" persists. Green's avoidance of the broader context of African-Americans historical relationship to reproductive rights allows her to hold Margaret Sanger, "who has been dead for over thirty years" (PPFA Margaret Sanger information page) primarily responsible for blacks' history of reproductive discrimination. Using contrasting and religiously resonant words such as "evil," "obscure," "light," "illusion." and "veil of deception," Green triumphantly closes the

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27 Diamond points out that "racial reconciliation" is a strategy especially prevalent among the Promise Keepers, and, to a lesser degree, the Traditional Values Coalition and the Christian Coalition (50-1).
article by linking conservative Christian perspective with light and truth (and God), and linking the associative merger of Sanger, PPFA, feminists, and other birth control advocates with darkness, trickery, and depravity. Overall, the strategies she uses enable her to conjoin the perspectives of CWA with those of African-Americans while portraying progressives as callous and wicked.

These three major strategies used by CWA and the FRC — reifying racist stereotypes and presenting them as non-racist truth, performing racial inclusion and “color blindness,” and accusing political progressives of exploiting “the race card” — reflect their perspectives on race as impertinent to current conservative discourse. Unlike members of the “Old Right,” who held onto notions of white supremacy, CWA and the FRC, like other conservative Christians and members of the “New Right,” claim that race is no longer an issue, and that interracial unity is possible—a notion that holds tremendous pathos appeal. No doubt, these organizations believe that their own rhetoric and policy proposals are not racist at all, rather, that racism is an absence in their rhetoric. As Toni Morrison argues, however, race is always a presence, even in its apparent absence (65).

Conclusion

Examining race and class in the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC reveals that, despite their declarations of inclusiveness, these organizations theorize from the perspective of a white, middle class, traditionally gendered, heterosexual, Christian subject position. Presenting this standpoint as neutral, they refuse to acknowledge the
ways in which this perspective limits and excludes those outside this norm. Instead, they claim that their purpose is to defend the interests of the Citizen and the Family, the two most basic units of society. Holding onto the patriotic myth of the founders’ intentions for the Nation and the Citizen, these organizations ignore that all people are *not* structurally equal in America. Rather, they assume that because the liberal tradition declares “all men are created equal,” all people are the same. This interpretation, however, ignores context and blames the individual for his/her personal failure. It also chastises “big government” programs for discouraging traditional family structures assumed to facilitate worthy virtues such as responsibility, sacrifice, a strong work ethic, and loyalty, believed to be essential to a healthy society and strong nation. Ignoring context and structural analyses enables these organizations to safeguard their ideology against the “dangers” of self-reflexivity. In other words, if they can assume that the problem is with the individual or with a “liberal” government, they can shift social problems onto Others and avoid examining their own privilege and participation in structures of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia that uphold hierarchy. Others’ assimilation into the ideals of these organizations enables them to appear tolerant and inclusive. Moreover, the rhetorical use of nationalism allows these organizations to deny that they are re-inscribing an oppressive hierarchy, and to argue that they *are* defending the interests of the nation’s people.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

"Like salt sprinkled throughout meat that would otherwise decay and be lost, Christians are preserving our country. Yes, our nation is suffering from sin ... But let’s not forget that though we are in a battle, we are destined to win. We have built on the moral foundation of our forefathers, and we are a mighty army of women armed with the power of prayer.”
- Beverly LaHaye

"...[L]eftist anti-racist and anti-homophobic resistance discourses must wage an all-out war to seize the liberal democratic tradition back from the right. It would, of course, be highly insufficient to stop there... [I]t would be naïve in the extreme to ignore the fact that in order to win the radical democratic war, we must first win the liberal democratic battle.”
- Anna Marie Smith

Not only are CWA and the FRC effective in their efforts to mobilize around important political issues, they also are very active in cultural projects designed to bring politics “down” to the level of everyday life. The combination of “God, Family, and Country” in their rhetoric appeals to the personal and the patriotic, rendering both political. As self-appointed defenders of “family, faith, and freedom,” CWA and the FRC imagine themselves — and present themselves — as representative of a community of

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1 LaHaye, Desires of a Woman’s Heart, 81.


3 See Diamond for a discussion of the Christian Right’s efforts in “cultural politics” and conventional political mobilizing strategies.
ordinary American citizens. An examination of nationalism in their rhetoric reveals not just the exclusions embedded within their ideology, but that their tremendous pathos—and, to a somewhat lesser degree, ethos—appeal enables these organizations to amass a dedicated following.

These organizations are just two components—albeit, important ones—of the expansion of Christian conservatism across the American political terrain. The rising influence of conservative Christians can be witnessed in a variety of political offices, not the least of which is the Oval Office. The strategies used by President George W. Bush during his presidential campaign were similar in many ways to those used by conservative Christian organizations like CWA and the FRC. By presenting himself as a "Washington outsider," Bush constructed an ethos for himself as a leader rising from the ranks of the populace. Successfully appealing to the emotions of citizens who wanted a president whom they felt shared their values, someone they could "kick back and have a beer with," Bush positioned himself as an ordinary American citizen—as "one of us." In this way, he effectively downplayed his background of tremendous privilege (wealth, Ivy League education, ex-President father, family summer home in Maine, etc.). In order for this "ordinary people" strategy to work for wealthy conservatives, they must deny the exclusivity of their own perspectives. If revealed for their exclusions (or exclusiveness), conservative constructions of mainstream-ness would appear contradictory. The appearance of centrism is critical so that a person, party, or organization may promote and institute their agenda. Smith points out that once conservatives are positioned as the true representatives of the people, they are able to position their own policy proposals as the best "solution[s]" to "popular anxieties" ("Why Did Armey Apologize?" 157-8).
Since his inauguration, President Bush continually has received much praise from both CWA and the FRC for articulating positions, appointing officials, and supporting policies that uphold conservative Christian perspectives. Indeed, some of Bush’s suggested policies directly reflect those proposed by these organizations. They share policy perspectives on education, abortion, taxes, faith-based social services, the missile defense system, and other issues. An explicit example of their mutual perspectives is especially visible in the FRC’s policy document, Towards a Culture of Life. In this document, the FRC draws directly from the language of President Bush’s presidential campaign pledge to "build a culture of life," presenting pro-life perspectives not just on abortion, but euthanasia, embryonic research, and international family planning organizations. In regards to the latter, the FRC recommends

[r]einstating a policy of withholding international population assistance funds from foreign, non-governmental organizations that perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning. This step is necessary to restore the role of the United States internationally as a guardian of innocent human life (12).

Indeed, on the twenty-eighth anniversary of Roe v. Wade and the first day of his presidency, President Bush enacted this very policy, as he had promised during his campaign.

I am not suggesting that either President Bush or these organizations necessarily consulted one another or conspired to formulate their political positions. But it would be naïve and unobservant to ignore the dialogical nature of politics. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that analyses of the causes, effects, and proposed solutions around social issues are situated within a larger framework of contemporary political discourse. Certainly, it is not a surprise that the President and these organizations share
similar perspectives since they are operating within a very similar – if not the same – worldview. Certainly, the President’s sensitivity to conservative Christian perspectives is clear. And certainly, the political influence of conservative Christians impedes the efforts of political progressives to secure the rights and to represent the interests of the many Americans who are critical of the absolutism and emphasis on tradition upheld by conservative Christians, or whose circumstances and experiences are just a little more complicated than conservative analyses tend to consider.

Having experienced firsthand the growing power and presence of Christian conservatism in politics, political progressives seem to feel an increasing sense of urgency to defend their causes. The logical question that follows an awareness of such urgency, then, is: What can political progressives do? In this thesis, I have intended to expose the particular ways in which the conservative policy organizations Concerned Women for America and the Family Research Council seek to mainstream their perspectives in order to discredit progressives and to shift the political center to the right. Understanding this is important because it can help progressives to orchestrate our own strategies in defense of progressive change.

This is about more than “mere” conservative efforts to shift the political center. As Anna Marie Smith states, “[T]he very meaning of democracy itself is at stake in [this] ideological struggle.” Conservatives’ appropriation of this tradition threatens to transform the meaning of democracy, alter the political landscape, and eliminate

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4 For instance, a cursory look at the “action alerts” sent to members of progressive organizations to mobilize around key issues of concern seems to indicate an increase in activity from the time leading up to the 2000 election to today. Moreover, a number of feminist organizations have expanded their efforts to fight conservative rollbacks of progressive legislation and policies, particularly those concerning abortion.
progressiveness ("Why Did Armey Apologize?" 168-9). For these reasons, it is essential that political progressives remain ever vigilant in our efforts to defend non-traditional and marginalized interests.

It also is important to keep in mind that political projects can become hegemonic without majority consent (Smith "The Centering of Right-Wing Extremism" 114). As pre-election polls indicate, voters are not simply rational actors, who make political decisions in the distinctly logical terms of "the best person for the job." As Linda Kintz so efficiently demonstrates, political passions dwell not just in the realm of reason, but in the realm of belief, "which combines the rational and the irrational, the conscious and the unconscious, thought and feelings, the abstract and the physical." If we ignore this, we also ignore "the very places where politics come to matter most: at the deepest levels of the unconscious, in our bodies, through faith, and in relation to the emotions" (5). This is why images and identifications play such an important role in individuals' political decision-making. Indeed, the influence of CWA and the FRC reflects their understanding of this. Moreover, their grassroots efforts and focus on "family, faith, and freedom" have enabled them to impact people's personal beliefs in a way that also advances their conservative agenda. Their particular success with the use of pathos appeal illustrates the importance of producing rhetoric that is down-to-earth and accessible to a wide audience. CWA and the FRC have been successful in their two-pronged campaigns to position themselves as defenders of ordinary people and to construct those on the political left as radical Others, and their influence seems to be growing. It is critical that progressives turn these misrepresentations around. Understanding rhetorical analysis and rhetorical

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Planned Parenthood, for instance, has developed Roe v. Bush, Naral has instituted Fight4Choice, and the
strategy are valuable tools to combat conservative campaigns to portray political progressives in a negative light. As Smith suggests, it also is important for progressives to continue to expose the ways that conservative rhetoric is inconsistent with the liberal democratic tradition ("The Centering of Right-wing Extremism" 134). Finally, it would be fruitful to examine closely the successful and unsuccessful uses of progressive rhetoric, in the interests of advancing our agendas.

Certainly, political progressives have an agenda to advance; so do conservatives. Political progressives are and must be strategic about the ways that we promote our agendas, just as conservatives are strategic about the ways that they promote their own. These admissions do not necessarily mean that all rhetoric and all agendas are negative or deceptive. As I indicated in the introduction, rhetoric need not refer to "empty" or deceptive speech. All argument is rhetoric, and may intend to persuade, to "construct a shared view of the world," or to perform some other function. This does not mean we need judge a group *because* they use rhetoric; what is more important are the ways in which they use it and for what purposes.

Political progressives alone do not control political discourse or the ways that others represent us, but we do control how we represent ourselves. It is crucial for political progressives to use rhetoric responsibly in building our campaigns to defend progressive interests and take back the terms of the liberal democratic tradition. An examination of the rhetoric of conservative organizations like CWA and the FRC provides useful insights for progressives. Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted the irresponsible and deceptive uses of rhetoric employed by these organizations. If we are

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Feminist Majority Foundation has established Million4Roe.
to develop "better" rhetoric, we should strive to develop a rational ethos and to do well what organizations like CWA and the FRC do poorly. The major recurrent flaws in their rhetoric include: 1) a lack of self-reflexivity; 2) a failure to account for multiple standpoints; 3) distortions, exaggerations, and lack of context; 4) failure to account for structural inequalities; and 5) irresponsible (because inaccurate) scholarship. If we can agree that these flaws render the rhetoric of CWA and FRC suspect, we must turn the critical spotlight on ourselves. It would be incomplete to scrutinize the rhetoric of our adversaries, exposing them for their flaws, and remain unwilling to learn from them. In our own rhetoric, therefore, we must aim to be self-reflexive, to avoid erasure, to provide context and not to distort the arguments of our adversaries (or even our allies), to account for structural inequalities, and to conduct our scholarship carefully. I am not suggesting that we do not do this already; I am simply suggesting that we must avoid carelessness. We want our rhetorical strategies to be effective, but it is hypocritical to criticize others for using the same flawed strategies that we ourselves might employ. Commendable for the effort to present well-supported, undistorted arguments, to strive for responsible rhetorical strategies is a worthy, moral, and progressive endeavor.

I am aware that one logical argument against my appeal for responsible progressive rhetoric is that, if conservatives use irresponsible rhetorical strategies that are effective at persuading people to agree with their perspectives, then why should progressives not do the same? In other words, why should progressives care about the "morality" of our own rhetoric? This argument is a challenging one, and one that is very

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5 These suggestions overlap with Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenburg's suggestions for inclusive feminist theory: including complex analyses, avoiding erasure, and specifying location (cited in Zina and Dill 328).
important to consider. George Lakoff’s arguments in *Moral Politics* can help us to see why progressives *should* care about responsible rhetorical practice. “Contemporary American politics is about worldview” (3); political worldview, moreover, is grounded in *morality*—particular notions of what is good, just, fair, and *right* (31). Conservatives, however, understand how their politics is connected to morality better than liberals do, and for this reason, they have been better able “to gain political victories … [and] to use politics in the service of a much larger moral and cultural agenda for America” (18). I suspect that progressives are much more wary than conservatives about using moral arguments in their rhetoric because progressives tend not to believe in “imposing” one’s values upon others, and perhaps because they consider morality to be essentially autocratic. It is important for liberals to understand that conservatives alone do not *own* morality; progressive politics, too, arises out of morality, albeit a very different kind of morality, with different moral priorities. Moreover, conservatives, who, unlike political liberals, have no qualms about the strategic use of morality, use it effectively in their rhetoric. As we have seen through my discussion of the rhetoric of CWA and the FRC, there is tremendous pathos appeal in the explicit discussion of what is moral, right, and good for citizens, families, and the nation. And so

[l]iberals need to understand that there is an overall, coherent liberal politics which is based on a coherent, well-grounded, and powerful liberal morality. If liberals do not concern themselves very seriously and very quickly with the unity of their own philosophy and with morality and the family, they will not merely continue to lose elections but will as well bear responsibility for the success of conservatives in turning back the clock on progress in America (Lakoff 18-19).

The sense of urgency that Lakoff expresses here and the urgency that can be witnessed in the activist efforts of progressive organizations indicate a pervasive understanding of the seriousness of the current political climate. If we can recognize our
own moral arguments and embrace the fact that arguments about morality need not be authoritarian, narrow-minded, and hierarchical, we might incorporate our morality more explicitly into our progressive rhetoric, and expose that conservative morality is not the only morality out there. In short, we can broaden the current popular understanding of morality. Morality could be a strategic and effective rhetorical tool for progressives, as it is for conservatives. But if we want our moral rhetoric to be as sound as possible, we should ensure that our moral politics are as conscientious as our rhetorical practices.

It is my belief that the intentions of politically progressive organizations, at the very least, are more meritorious than those of conservative Christian organizations like CWA and the FRC. Political progressives are important to the political terrain because of the ways that we emphasize unequivocal human rights without exclusionary moral prescriptives. I also hold that it is extremely important to examine one’s own rhetoric and the ways in which one’s own agenda is coordinated. If we are to be as truly effective as we hope to be, we must — if the reader will forgive the religiousness of the phrase — practice what we preach.
APPENDIX

CWA AND FRC IMAGES

Figure 1: Cover of CWA’s Family Voice March/April 2000
Figure 2: Parker and her daughters at the Statue of Liberty
Figure 3: Image from the FRC’s Homepage
Figure 4: Image from the FRC’s Web Site
Figure 5: "Right-Wing Like Me": Beverly LaHaye (pictured left) and the author (passing for conservative) at Concerned Women for America’s Convention 2000
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