Crucified Christians, Marked Men, and Wanted Whites

Victimhood and Conservative Counterpublicity

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the rhetorical significance of persecution claims

produced by demonstrably powerful publics in contemporary American culture.

This ideological criticism is driven by several related research questions. First,

how do members of apparently powerful groups (men, whites, and Christians)

come to see themselves as somehow unjustly marginalized, persecuted, or

powerless? Second, how are these discourses related to the public sphere and

counterpublicity? I argue that, despite startling similarities, these texts studied

here are best understood not as counterpublicity but as a strategy of containment

available to hegemonic publics.

Because these rhetorics of persecution often seek to forestall movements

toward pluralism and restorative justice, the analysis forwarded in this dissertation

offers important contributions to ongoing theoretical discussions in the fields of

public sphere theory and critical cultural theory and practical advice for

progressive political activism and critical pedagogy.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who have loved and supported me throughout this process: my parents, Bruce and Theresa, who have always cheered me on; my best friends, Crystal, Dyanna, Katy, and Kelsey; and Dr. Dan Brouwer, who has been my teacher and mentor.

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Finally, I owe thanks to Chad, Buck, and Chance at Solo Café, who provided wit, hospitality, and the several hundred espresso drinks which helped fuel this project.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"Just like what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, so liberal America is now doing to the evangelical Christians. It's no different. It is the same thing. It is happening all over again. It is the Democratic Congress, the liberal-biased media and the homosexuals who want to destroy the Christians. Wholesale abuse and discrimination and the worst bigotry directed toward any group in America today. More terrible than anything suffered by any minority in history." ~ Pat Robertson in an interview with Molly Ivins (ADL, 1994)

"Christmas is under attack in such a sustained and strategized manner that there is, no doubt, a war on Christmas." ~John Gibson (2004)

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"We have no Great War. No Great Depression. Our Great War's a spiritual war... our Great Depression is our lives. We've all been raised on television to believe that one day we'd all be millionaires, and movie gods, and rock stars. But we won't. And we're slowly learning that fact. And we're very, very pissed off." ~Tyler Durden, *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999)

"My job consists of basically masking my contempt for the assholes in charge, and, at least once a day, retiring to the men's room so I can jerk off while I fantasize about a life that doesn't so closely resemble Hell." ~Lester Burnham, *American Beauty* (Wlodkowski & Mendes, 1999)

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"The President has exposed himself as a guy over and over again who has a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture." ~Glenn Beck (Petterson, 2009)

"A particularly painful cost of affirmative action is the 'noncareers' of bright white males who either bail out of graduate school or wind up with endless one-year temporary positions at third-rate schools. . . . They probably never will get an academic job interview, let alone a job offer. At the same time, of course, black, Hispanic, and female job candidates, many of whom are not very well qualified,

are on national tours going from one campus to the next receiving the most outrageous offers. All this often comes as a terrible shock to the victims." ~Robert Weissberg (1993)

We are under attack. Innocent American people—Christians, Whites, and Men—are being persecuted simply for being who they are. And our days of security and safety are numbered. This is the tacit, and sometimes explicit, concern that seems to drive a great deal of public discourse as of late. It permeates our national conversations about same sex marriage, reproductive rights, immigration reform, fair pay laws, feminism and women's rights, and affirmative action. This research project aims generally to explore the rhetorical significance of persecution or victimhood rhetoric produced by and about men, whites, and Christians. This endeavor was inspired by several incidents which occurred throughout the course of my graduate career. My hope will be to render them as they occurred and then to describe the process by which I came to understand them as part of a larger pattern of discourse.

Masculinity in Crisis

In the final year of my master's degree program, I was required to craft a rhetorical criticism despite rather scant training. My professor, open-minded for the small East Texas town of Nacogdoches, suggested that I try to apply rhetorical theory to my parallel interest in the media rather than a more traditional speech

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analysis. I began thinking about the films that had moved me the most and began

crafting a list: *American Beauty*, *Falling Down*, *Fight Club,* and *Office Space*

were quick additions. There were many others, but these were the ones that

struck me as the most powerful and memorable. Furthermore, I began to see the

films as representative of a genre. There was something in the films which spoke

to my experiences as young white male. The films seemed to be talking about

something that I had heard many times before in the media and from friends:

Manhood was in trouble. The films rendered likeable well-intended men being

crushed by corporate bureaucracy (e.g., *American Beauty*, *Falling Down*, and

Office Space) and depicted them as henpecked by entitled and materialistic

women (e.g., *American Beauty, Office Space,* and *Fight Club* especially). In the

films, traditional masculinity characterized by ruggedness, individualism, and

honor was shown to be somehow incompatible with modern American life. I was

particularly struck by the power of *Fight Club's* Tyler Durden. Durden, the

absolute picture of masculine strength and bravado, diagnoses the problem of

modern man with anger:

> I see all this potential, and I see squandering. God damn it, an entire
> generation pumping gas, waiting tables; slaves with white collars.
> Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we
> can buy shit we don't need. We're the middle children of history, man. No
> purpose or place. We have no Great War. No Great Depression. Our Great
> War's a spiritual war... our Great Depression is our lives. We've all been
> raised on television to believe that one day we'd all be millionaires, and

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movie gods, and rock stars. But we won't. And we're slowly learning that fact. And we're very, very pissed off. (Fincher, 1999)

Men—the people who controlled every major industry and nearly every political office—were in trouble. And the cause of that trouble was clear in the films too: Women and corporate bureaucracy were slowly turning men into shadows of their former selves. Women, in the films, had pressed men to be softer, sensitive, wimps. And corporate bureaucracy—often in response to demands made by women—had tamped down men's creativity and individualism, forcing them to become sycophants and bureaucrats to survive.

I had heard these arguments before. To some degree, they resonated with me: From a young age, I knew that I was expected to "be a man." Though never clearly explicated by my parents, athletics coaches, or friends, I understood that the injunction to "be a man" was a demand that I be tougher, that I suspend my emotions in favor of competitiveness, coolness, and rationality. Being a man also meant acting in a certain way toward women. Specifically, I was to hold doors, carry bags, modify my language, and be as polite as possible in the company of a woman. On dates, it was expected that I would provide transportation and finances for my companion. This training was probably little different than that which my father and his father received. But I also knew, mostly from my mother and also from the media, that I was expected to be a different kind of man than the

men of the past. I was supposed to be "in touch with my feelings"; I was told that

it was okay to cry; I was supposed to know what sexual harassment was and to

make sure never to enact it; I was supposed to be a good team member, a good

listener, and to be supportive of women. I had the sense, though not the means of

articulating that sense, that these parallel sets of demands were in tension if not

fully contradictory.

The films in my rhetorical criticism project explained the problem clearly

and proposed some extreme solutions. If the problem facing men was the

increasing demands women made of men to change (call it sissification), then the

solution was a vigorous return to traditional manhood. In *American Beauty*, this

meant a renewed heterosexual hunger, physical training, and a stern rebuke of

female meddling; in *Fight Club*, it meant a return to competition, to dog-eat-dog

brutality, and the redeeming power of pain.[1]

The Victims of Affirmative Action

As a second year doctoral student at Arizona State, I was surprised and

pleased when asked to teach an undergraduate course on critical theory. Though I

had been warned that ASU undergraduate students tended to be resistant to the

teaching of critical theory, I hoped to avoid major confrontation by starting the

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[1] I was somewhat disappointed later to find that Ashcraft & Flores (2000) had
written nearly the same argument and with far more élan than I had been able
to muster.

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semester with the explanation that their task in our course was not necessarily to agree with all the theories as gospel or even to consider them as true, but to understand them well enough to explain to a stranger what it might mean to advocate Marxism, feminism, and so forth. This disclaimer, which is problematic in itself,[2] did seem to forestall most of the expected objections to our discussions related to Marxisms and feminisms and even queer theory. However, student response to discussions of critical race theory and whiteness, in particular, have been rather volatile.

When we discuss issues of race in the US, my students frequently complain that the cause of racial equity has been taken "too far." One common complaint students (usually men) offer is that they feel that they, as white people, have been made into a universal target. Surely whites were not the only who practiced and continue to practice racism and race-based discrimination; but they may be unfairly imagined as such. Affirmative Action initiatives are particularly unpopular among my students. Often, their complaint is worded like so: "I didn't own any slaves and I don't burn crosses in people's yards, but I might lose a job because a person of color applied too. That's racism." Students also seem well-

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2   Suggesting that class work and discussion need not be troublesome because they are "not for real" potentially undermines the potential for class discussion to affect students and may neglect the notion that classroom performances constitute students' identities. Still, I found/find it a practical solution to rather staunch student opposition to critical theory.

aware of the notion of reverse-discrimination—the idea that initiatives meant to promote equity among historically disadvantaged groups are actually implicated in a kind of racism because they unjustly harm whites (*reverse* here seems to imply that racism is not expected to apply to the majority or the powerful). The argument, though rarely fully voiced my students, is that white people are now under fire, persecuted and discriminated against on the basis of the simple fact that they happen to be white.

I continue to hear this argument, and ones similar to it, in the mass media. Political pundits (e.g., Glenn Beck (Petterson, 2009)) have begun suggesting and, sometimes claiming without qualification, that President Obama's emphasis on promoting diversity in presidential appointments is evidence that he hates white people.

The War Against Christianity

Having grown up in Texas, I am quite used to the sight of churches. In fact, I would venture to guess that there are more churches in Texas than there are gas stations or banks. In any case, Christianity holds a central place in daily life for many Texans. But as I grew older, I increasingly heard my elders speaking of a disintegration of family values and, more recently, a war against Christians. Each holiday season, the Fox News network features stories about the War on Christmas. The War on Christmas is often used to refer to the disappearance of

the phrase "Merry Christmas" from public life as it is supplanted by the more

secular "Happy Holidays." Fox News personality Bill O'Reilly frequently

encourages his viewers not to patronize businesses which have moved away from

explicitly Christian greetings to broader sentiments.[3]

Last Thanksgiving, as I sat on the couch at my Aunt Debbie's house, I

noticed a copy of John Gibson's (2004) *The War on Christmas: How the Liberal*

Plot to Ban the Sacred Christian Holiday is Worse Than You Think sitting on her

coffee table. I read with a mixture of bemusement and ire as Gibson rehearsed

many of the arguments I had heard before: that Christmas was less a sectarian

holiday than it was a more generically American event; that Christianity had

always held a place of pride in American government and was being slowly

expunged; and that the removal of Christian iconography and vernacular from

public buildings and property marked a clear attempt to persecute Christians.

Gibson writes:

> Christmas is under attack in such a sustained and strategized manner that
> there is, no doubt, a war on Christmas. It is no longer permissible to wish
> anyone Merry Christmas. That's too exclusive, too insensitive … literally
> any sign of Christmas in public can lead to complaints, litigation, angry
> protest, threats, and bruised feelings. And every year we are treated to the

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[3] In addition to providing lists of retailers whose corporate greetings still bowed
to the Christian holiday, in 2008, O'Reilly's web site began selling bumper
stickers bearing the phrase, "We say Merry Christmas" (Kava, 2008,
November 10).

sight of more limitations placed on Christmas. (emphasis original, pp. xix – xx)

The "War on Christmas" is one of a number of political moments in which Christians have begun claiming persecution. When the Ten Commandments are removed from public courthouses and when crosses are removed from public land, some complain loudly that Christians are under attack in America. Frequently, the solution to this perceived deterioration is framed in terms of "taking America back."

These rhetorics were suddenly unified when I encountered, by chance, an informal sketch on a friend's online journal. The cartoon, which appeared to be rendered using Microsoft PowerPoint's graph features, depicts a pie chart that, however unscientifically, claims to depict the distribution of religious observance in America: a large Pac-Man shaped region is labeled Christian; a very narrow sliver represents Judaism; another narrow slice is marked Other, and perhaps 10% is reserved for Non-Religious. The Pac-Man region reserved for Christianity is drawn with a talk bubble reading, "Help! We're being oppressed!" It was this cartoon which prompted me to think of these three arguments as instantiations of a more general strategy. In each case, I observed members of groups which are or appear to be tethered to power characterizing moves toward equity or pluralism as tantamount to persecution. These individuals, however they may appear to be

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socially located to us, understand themselves as members of a persecuted

collective which must take an oppositional orientation in order to achieve a more

just social arrangement.
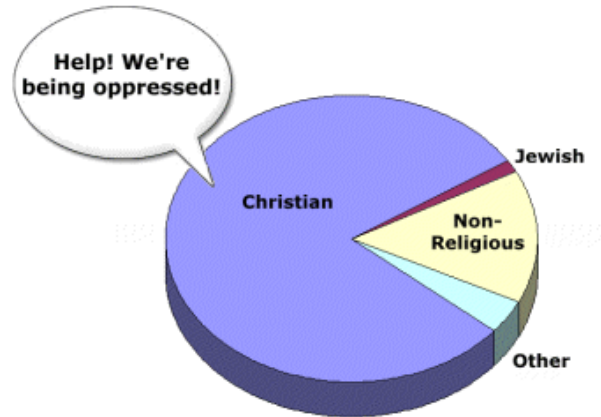
When Alexis de Tocqueville (2000) warned of the "tyranny of the

majority," the public intellectual was further sharpening a long-standing critique

of the potential for abuse in systems of governance premised upon the principle of

popular rule. The concern, voiced earlier by Nietzsche (1886/1992) and echoed

later by Mill (1991) and Jefferson, is that such systems may conflate that which is

widely agreed upon with that which is the best course of action.

This putative flaw has at least two significant implications: First, it means

that the public may often restrain those whose prowess and capabilities so outstrip

those of the general population that they appear to be eccentric, indecent, or

insane;[4] second, it means that an unrestrained public, seeing its own interests as paramount, may authorize any manner of atrocity to those who constitute a minority. And it requires little effort to observe such moments in the larger arc of American history, particularly at times when the long-term viability of the nation was an open question. I am thinking, of course, about slavery, internment camps, Jim Crow laws, detainment centers, the use of permanent detainment without trial, extraordinary rendition, and the like.

Perhaps it is a faint awareness of this deficiency, alongside the profound reach of Judeo-Christian ethics, which has also made Americans sympathetic to the character of the victim. Indeed, one might argue that the success of the American Civil Rights Movement was, in part, due to the ability of well-trained activists to sustain the most inhumane treatment imaginable and to then advertise this suffering as proof of the nobility of their cause. Activists who were previously characterized as dangerous or radical could now be recast as innocents, as victims, whose protection had to be provided by all of those with consciences. This dissertation is interested in claims of victimhood and persecution because of the particular political advantages such claims may often provide. In particular, I

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[4] This is chief among Nietzsche's concerns in his indictment of Christianity's altruistic morality.

am interested in making sense of claims of persecution and victimhood which issue from publics that are ostensibly large and powerful majorities.

As I understand it, this topic is worth studying because it helps to explain the rather slow progress made in regards to religious, racial, and gender equity in the US. That is, among a community of scholars committed to progressive politics and the normative goal of a more open and equitable public sphere, an investigation which helps to explain resistance to progressive political projects and offers means of minimizing or negotiating that resistance is a valuable one.

As I pursue the study of these discourses, I hope to ask several related questions. First, I want to know how members of apparently powerful groups (men, whites, and Christians) come to see themselves as somehow unjustly marginalized, persecuted, or powerless. How, for example, can men—a group who control practically every industry and every government office—claim to be an endangered species, as they do in white masculinity crisis films? How did they come to see the previous arrangement of society as natural and, furthermore, how do they understand the changes to the status quo as persecution? Each of these questions presupposes a sort of innocence that I am interested in questioning.

The theoretical import of this study has to do with the second research question: How do these discourses function within the public sphere? At first

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blush, they appear to satisfy the conditions of counterpublicity. However, Robert

Asen (2009) has written about the danger of such a possibility:

> If we treat counterpublic as a neutral term in relation to materiality and ideology, then the concept loses its critical purchase and instead forwards a decontextualized and dehistoricized perspective that fails to account for the ways in which relations of power and symbolic and material resources influence the production, circulation, and reception of discourse in the public sphere. (p. 265)

In short, if these groups may be defined as counterpublics, this realization would

appear to bankrupt counterpublic as a useful theoretical concept. Asen has

offered several criteria which he believes prevent this potentiality, but I believe

that there is a strong case to be made that these discourses do amount to

counterpublicity, at least insofar as it has been defined to date. If they do not

constitute counterpublics, then I wish to forward different explanation for this

rhetoric.

Thus far, I have attempted to offer practical and theoretical rationales for

this study. Practically speaking, this study offers insight into one sort of

resistance to progressive projects aimed at producing social equity. Theoretically,

this project offers an investigation and further refinement of counterpublic as a

useful conceptual tool for the study of the public sphere.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will begin introducing, in broad strokes,

two fields of scholarly literature, broadly termed ideological criticism and public

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sphere theory, which inform this study. Ideological criticism provides a critical

perspective toward human communication and robust conceptual foundation for

rhetorical criticism that connects the rhetorical act with consciousness and the

material conditions of existence. Public sphere theory links rhetorical acts to

social change and the functioning of liberal democracy. These two literatures,

which receive fuller explication in chapter two, form the critical lens I use in

approaching three discourses of victimhood; chapter three provides a necessarily

abbreviated discussion of the ways that whiteness, masculinity, and Christianity

have been privileged in American culture; chapter four takes up discourses of

Christian victimhood; chapter five considers discourses of male victimhood; and

chapter six examines white victimhood discourses.

Ideological Criticism

This study attempts to investigate recurrent discursive patterns by focusing

upon three structurally similar discourses of victimhood as they circulate in

American culture. These discourses are similar because they are giving form by a

common consciousness or ideology. Marx writes:

> In the social production of their life, men [sic] enter into definite relations
> … relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of
> development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these
> relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the
> real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to
> which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of

production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual
life process in general. (Marx, 1859)

From a materialist perspective then, all social productions arise from ideology

which arises from definite conditions of production. Michael McGee (1990) has

well illustrated the ways that ideology gives rise to numerous rhetorical fragments

which circulate in culture. For this reason, there seems to be no warrant to

assume that a speech, a film, a pamphlet, a protest, or a tee shirt is any more

ideologically representative than any other possible selection. Furthermore, the

temptation to go after the most bold-faced version of that ideology may distract us

from the mundane, ubiquitous (and, thus, more dangerous) instantiations of that

discourse. My goal, then, will be to see the operation of the ideology across

culture and to chart its various instantiations across contexts.

While this ideological approach to rhetorical criticism removes the

requirement of locating and defending the choice of any particular text as the one

most fit for analysis, it introduces a new problem: No longer tasked with arguing

for the primacy of some small subset of texts, it now seems that our range of texts

consists of the entirety of culture. However, this sort of effort is difficult for at

least two reasons. First, to examine the circulation of these discourses across the

whole of culture would take so much labor and time as to make the project

practically impossible. Additionally, much of this sort of analysis would be

redundant; communication scholars interested in genre have argued that much of

the discourse that circulate in culture is relatively predictable and regularized

because it responds to recurring rhetorical situations (Campbell, & Jamieson,

1978). Thus, Rush Limbaugh's commentary on a Wednesday afternoon differs

little in terms of ideological subtext from that of his broadcast on the next day.

In order to hew the range of texts to a manageable quantity and also to

produce a good-faith effort to provide a broad view of the circulation of these

ideologies across culture, I will select a bricolage of texts originating from a range

of contexts. By focusing on rhetoric in popular culture, public policy rhetoric,

and vernacular voicings, I hope to provide a sort of broad survey which, though

hardly exhaustive, is sufficient to show the pervasiveness of these ideologies and

to chronicle some of the variation that occurs as these arguments are adapted to

their contexts.

Ideological criticism represents a move in rhetorical criticism which takes

the critical act beyond comment on the mechanics of the rhetorical act and moves

into the terrain of politics by asking about the vested interests of those who

participate in the public sphere. Philip Wander (1983) famously wrote, "criticism

takes an ideological turn when it recognizes the existence of powerful vested

interests benefiting from and consistently urging policies and technology that

threaten life on this planet, when it realizes that we search for alternatives" (p.

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18). More than speech criticism, ideological criticism applies scrutiny to the ideological commitments which give rise to a particular rhetorical act and to the implications of that rhetorical act.

An ideological approach to criticism is warranted when we recognize two observations: Symbol-use is predicated on and constitutive of ideology; and these ideologies promote particular material relations which are frequently unjust. Communication is preceded by a set of assumptions that guide one's understanding of what is to be said, provide modes of decorous and indecorous expression, and qualify persons as appropriate subjects for conversation. Additionally, communication propagates ideology insofar as persons are prompted to accept, at least conditionally, a set of assumptions and values in order to make sense of symbol-use. When we communicate, we speak forth a social reality—we acknowledge some persons as subjects; we subscribe to some values; we attest to the worth of some pursuits. A simple love story, then, is not just a story about two people in love, but it is also a story about what things matter, what persons matter, what is enviable, and what is to be desired. In Burke's (1937/1984, 1969) lexicon, symbol-use reveals and urges attitudes or orientations toward the universe.

While not typically the overt content of an utterance, this ideological subtext may come to have profound material consequences as it circulates and

becomes part of the tissue of discourses that guide social interaction. Foucault's works on madness (1988) and criminality (1995), for example, offer an analysis of the ways that ideology prescribes appropriate topics for investigation, authorizes particular subjectivities to speak from particular locations, and provides appropriate modes of enunciation. In this way, then, ideologies promote particular material relations which empower some while disempowering others, make visible some objects of discourse while eliding others, and provide particular subjectivities. Even within the field of communication research, feminist scholars (e.g., Blair, Baxter, & Brown, 1999) have prompted an increasing awareness of the ways that dominant ideology structures the conduct and publication of research and, thereby, the evaluation and compensation of scholars laboring in the field, privileging masculine modes of address and silencing feminine voices.

The recognition that ideological discourses come to have material effects and that those effects are frequently unjust necessarily prompts another recognition: Those with a declared loyalty to progressive liberal politics are goaded to investigate the operation of ideology in culture with particular attention to the material circumstances that may be entailed. Ideology also specifies the relationship the ought to exist between persons and governments, sometimes in terms of subjects and sovereigns, sometimes citizens and representatives.

Public Sphere Theory

Public sphere theorists have long been interested in studying the ideological relationship between individuals and their government and the role of rhetoric in social change. In *The Public and Its Problems*, John Dewey (1954) theorizes the conditions which constitute the public and diagnoses the public's decline related to a failure of individuals to sustain a sense of community in light of increasing complexity and specialization. This grounded model, in which the public arises from individual interests, differs significantly from Jürgen Habermas' (1989) account of the formation of public opinion, the public, and the public sphere as a distinct discursive space as products of capitalism, Western literary culture of the 18th century, and the printing press.

Though hardly the only accounts of the public sphere,[5] both of these texts have been well received within the field of communication research, likely because of the way that each offers communication as key to the upkeep of democracy or as a palliative to the deficiencies observed in the status quo. For Dewey, the public declines when citizens are no longer able to identify their common interests; the cure to this sort of anomie is a revivified sense of consubstantiality supported by modern telecommunications. Habermas, too,

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[5] Jodi Dean (2003) offers a neat summary of the public sphere as theorized by Arendt, Sennett, and Habermas.

prizes rational critical debate as the engine of democracy. In this conception,

members of the public hold the state accountable by scrutinizing its actions and

rationally debating that which is the best interests of the people. Habermas also

offers a narrative of entropy: The public sphere begins to disintegrate, to become

re-feudalized, when the putative separation between public and private begins to

blur and when the media moves from selling news of the state's activities to

providing mass entertainment and distraction. Though the possibility of ever

achieving this ideal is unlikely,[6] Habermas' bourgeois public sphere provides a

rich metaphor for theorizing about the ways that individuals come to identify

themselves and represent their interests in relation to other individuals and to the

state.

A significant body of contemporary research has been devoted to

responding to Habermas in order to provide more sophisticated models of how

change occurs in the public sphere. In particular, a number of scholars have taken

exception with Habermas' assumption that a singular public sphere is preferable

multiplicities of publics and discursive spaces. One result of this dissent has

produced theorizing about counterpublics—oppositional publics that "derive their

'counter' status in significant respects from varying degrees of exclusion from

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[6] A number of critiques have attacked the notion that such an ideal public sphere
    ever existed in the first place.

prominent channels of political discourse and a corresponding lack of political

power" (Asen & Brouwer, 2001, p. 2). This project's aim is, in part, to ask about

the ways that the victimhood discourses addressed earlier relate to

counterpublicity. The following chapter will be devoted to the careful explication

of two bodies of literature: The ideological turn in rhetorical criticism; and public

sphere and counterpublic sphere theory. After more fully developing each

literature, the chapter will argue for the synergistic value of using these theories

and vocabularies together.

The Installation of Privilege

The first research question driving this project asks about the conditions

which allow those who are arguably members of the most powerful groups in

American society to claim to be oppressed, persecuted, or endangered. Perhaps

this question might be restated, "How did we get here? How do Americans arrive

at the present moment, where it is normal that white male Christians hold nearly

every elected office, earn more, and see their values and beliefs echoed in

shopping malls, public buildings, and the national news media?" If, as Marx

argues, consciousness is the product of the material conditions of life, it stands to

reason that an analysis of those real conditions helps make sense of

consciousness. Chapter three presents a selective retelling of contemporary

American history which highlights the momentous and mundane instances where

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white, male, and Christian privilege has been installed into American life. This labor is necessary, first, in order to justify the earlier assertion that these groups are, in fact, rather powerful relative to other citizens. Furthermore, this effort historicizes and, thereby, deepens our understanding of contemporary utterances which take these historical development as a given. Against this backdrop, chapters four, five, and six attempt to chart the circulation of three discourses of victimhood. Though each chapter will devote significantly more attention to warranting the inclusion and investigating the substance of these texts, the following pages offer a brief synopsis of the work to come.

The war on Christianity.

Chapter four is dedicated to the investigation of three instantiations of what I have termed the "War on Christianity." Each of the texts treated in this chapter perceive an emergent attempt to marginalize Christian Americans, often framed in terms of a war metaphor.

John Gibson's (2005) *The War on Christmas: How the Liberal Plot to Ban the Sacred Christian Holiday is Worse Than You Think* claims to expose a conspiracy, led by a cabal of secular atheists, activist judges, and aided by well-intended bumbling state employees whose efforts to cater to special interests and "political correctness" lead them to join in an effort to expunge Christianity from public life. The "War on Christianity" is being announced not only by the self-

proclaimed culture warriors but also by well-financed special interests who provide legal defense to Christians who are "under attack" by "the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and other radical anti-Christian groups … on a mission to eliminate public expression of our nation's faith and heritage … forcing its leftist agenda on Americans" (ADF, 2010a). The Allied Defense Fund's Speak Up Movement web site calls on Christians, under siege from the ACLU and other secular humanists, to speak up and demand their rights to religious freedom which, they say, is in jeopardy. Lacking connections to a major news outlet like Gibson or to well-moneyed donors like the ADF, Vic Bilson's Jeremiah Project bombastically declares itself as a lone voice of warning "proclaiming God's Word to a lost and dying world" (Bilson, 2008). Part of this task is combatting the War on Christianity, which Bilson perceives as a worldwide phenomenon. For Bilson, this is not just "culture war," the increasing use of hot-button wedge issues to drive votes for otherwise indistinguishable middle-of-the-road Republicans and Democrats; the "War on Christianity" represents part of a larger plan to institute a "New World Order" whose establishment first requires the destruction of Christianity.

The goal of this case study will be to survey a range of texts—from the mainstream media, from public policy, and from vernacular—in order to chart the circulation of one discourse of victimhood in across contexts. And though each

makes a similar argument about the increasing marginalization of Christians in American life, these arguments are carefully adapted to their context.

Reverse racism.

The texts surveyed in chapter five decry the arrival of what has been termed the "war on white people" or "reverse racism." The use of the word reverse is not intended to suggest that the opposite of racism is occurring; those who use the phrase certainly mean to argue that racism is occurring. Instead, reverse racism is used to denote a reversal in the roles played in the act of racial discrimination—the once low now discriminate against the once high. And, though they would not say it, the implication often seems to be that those who *ought* to be discriminating are those who are now the target of discrimination.

Perhaps no commentator has worried publicly over the specter of reverse racism more than Glenn Beck. When conservative blogger Andrew Breitbart released a heavily edited tape of Shirley Sherrod delivering a speech to an NAACP in which she appeared to admit to discriminating against white Americans, Glenn Beck spoke out angrily against her. Beck (Petterson, 2009) asked aloud if the country had returned to the mid-1950s when blatant racism was still permitted. Claims of reverse-racism have a considerable history, however; Gary Weissberg (1993) warns in a *Forbes* article that Affirmative Action policies have meant that white academics are likely to find themselves without

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institutional homes, forced to become a new sort of gypsy as applicants of color, regardless of their relative merit, now snatch up most of the desirable tenure-track jobs. Grassroots activists on the right have also been publicizing the war on white people for some time now. The far-right[7] Counsel of Conservative Citizens, for example, was irate at what it perceived to be another salvo in what it termed the "War on White People" when *Newsweek* suggested that, in addition to receiving common messages about equality and fairness, white children ought to be educated about the histories of domination that have deprived many people of color from the resources and opportunities that are available to whites (CCC, 2010).

The crisis of masculinity.

Perhaps the most surprising group of texts surveyed in this project are those which bemoan the crisis of masculinity which has unfolded over the last few decades. Chapter six is dedicated to investigating a few of these arguments as they appear in political discussion, in mainstream advertising, and at the grassroots level. According to its advocates, manhood or masculinity—defined

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[7]   I want to be clear here that I am not using the label "far-right" to cast aspersions; The CofCC's statement of principles declares the US a Christian country, founded on the right to property and the right to keep and bear arms. The statement also declares allegiance to the "traditional family," "America-First" policies, and the preservation of "racial integrity." Also, the Anti-Defamation League classifies the CofCC as a hate group.

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by rugged independence, physical strength, and competitiveness—is now endangered by the encroaching forces of feminism and bureaucratic rationality that threaten symbolic (at least) castration.

In *The War Against Men,* Richard Hise (2004) argues that feminists have purchased progress for women by demonizing and attacking men and masculinity to such a degree that the future of the United States is at stake. Hise alleges that feminists and women's organizations demonize men on the basis of half-truths and lies, that federal funding and health care laws now grossly discriminate against men, and that women are increasingly funneled into hard sciences while men are neglected. In short, Hise is arguing that women have successfully made men into second-class citizens, a vilified easy target. The masculinity crisis was recently invoked in the service of marketing as well: Dodge Motor Company's *Man's Last Stand* advertisement (Romanek, 2010) renders men as sufferers of constant indignities at the hands of women and corporate bureaucracy. According to Dodge, these slings and arrows are tolerable, however, for the man who owns the Dodge Charger. The Internet has provided a widely available and relatively anonymous venue for men, and sometimes women, to decry the crisis of masculinity. One frequently linked site, *Men's News Daily* (*MND*, n.d.a), describes the situation thusly: "For two generations, masculinity and the male gender have been subject to an all-out attack covering every sphere … [whose

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effect is] hindering the entire male gender and in particular the younger generations."

Drawing Conclusions

Across these discourses, the arguments presented are remarkably similar. Chapter seven will draw these discourses together in order to examine how these arguments function in relation to the critical concept of counterpublicity. In each case, progressive projects are recast as malevolent attempts to create progress for some minority via the persecution of an innocent silent majority. Sometimes, these shifts are described as the unfortunate result of well-intended reforms gone awry. At other times, the attacks are imagined to be symptomatic of larger nefarious plots to unseat or destroy "us," the silent majority. Throughout, these texts appear to rise to the level of counterpublicity: They articulate the perception of exclusion or marginality and assume an oppositional stance toward what they perceive to be dominant culture. I intend to argue that such discourses mimic counterpublicity and are able to do so because of the way that counterpublicity always functions as a type of vernacular.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Criticism takes an ideological turn when it recognizes the existence of powerful vested interests benefiting from and consistently urging policies and technology that threaten life on this planet, when it realizes that we search for alternatives" ~ Philip Wander (1983, p. 18).

Ideology

Ideological criticism represents a move in rhetorical criticism that takes the critical act beyond comment on the mechanics of the rhetorical act and moves it into the terrain of politics by asking about the material conditions that motivate and result from utterance. Though rhetoric scholars have long been interested in studying political speech, the ideological turn means that criticism is now an overtly political act in itself. More specifically, ideological criticism applies scrutiny to the rhetorical act in order to illuminate the consciousness—the unacknowledged commitments and assumptions—which gives rise to that particular rhetorical act and to theorize about the ethico-political implications of that rhetorical act. This orientation toward the act of criticism is developed at length in the first half of this chapter. In the pages that follow, I will trace the emergence of the conceptual vocabulary of ideological criticism in the work of

Friedrich Nietzsche, in Marxism,[8] and in post-Marxist social theory. Though all utterance is ideological, as I will establish, this project is particularly interested in utterances directed toward and constitutive of publics. The second half of this chapter details major developments and controversies in public sphere theory, which attempts to explain the linkage between public utterance and social change in liberal democracy.

Ideological criticism arises from a line of critique inaugurated in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886/1992) in which Nietzsche condemns those philosophers who would urge others to accept as universally valid the starting premises and a priori values of their philosophical systems. For Nietzsche, self-interest and personal biases always undergird belief and utterance:

> Gradually it has become clear to me that every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; also that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant had grown. (p. 203)

This insight next prompted Nietzsche to write a treatise devoted to asking about the underlying motives of any sort of ethical philosophy; he concludes that that which normatively goes under the name "good" is simply that which fits the

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[8]   Though many others have written about ideology, these two figures are especially influential in ideological approaches toward the study of discourse the ideological turn in rhetorical criticism.

interests of the aristocratic classes and is often, in fact, contrary to that which is

life-affirming or productive of individual strength or growth.

> The source of the concept "good" has been sought and established in the wrong place: the judgment of "good" did *not* originate with those to whom "goodness" was shown! Rather it was "the good" themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian. It was out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for values. (1992, pp. 461-462, emphasis original)

The goal of what Nietzsche termed genealogical critique is to see behind any

moralizing utterance the confession of its author, to see the unspoken but not fully

submerged personal investments which necessarily motivate speech.

Marx and Engels take this line of thinking to its logical conclusion in

order to hypothesize that all consciousness, not just philosophy, is motivated by

material existence. In *The German Ideology* (1978), they begin by arguing that

any account of human history must begin with the empirical: Humans are born;

they exist; they die.[9] In the meantime, humans distinguish themselves from

animals insofar as they create their own means of subsistence and develop a

consciousness germane to that means of subsistence (pp. 149-150). This

consciousness, cultivated through the act of making do, forms the basis of our

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[9] Though hardly a shocking proposition now, Marx and Engels are here refuting Hegel and other idealists who would dissolve the material world into larger conceptual schema.

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interactions with the universe. Ideology, then, is used by Marx and Engels to refer to the "the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness … directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men [sic]" (p. 154). Our ways of seeing the world, of making sense of our experiences, are more or less abstracted from our everyday interactions with the material world—the visceral experiences of living, eating, reproduction, laboring to produce sustenance, and so forth.

Because life requires more than the accomplishment of a single task, because the satisfaction of one need tends to lead to the realization of another, and because added population allows specialization, the ensuing division of labor which inevitably emerges in human society means that individuals will begin leading materially different lives: Some will hunt while others gather, some will mend clothes while others wash them; some will build houses while others guard against predators (Marx & Engels, 1978, pp. 155-157). To the division of labor corresponds the establishment of asymmetrical[10] social relations and, thus, to the development of variegated consciousness. Marx and Engels observe division of labor and, thereby, social relations and consciousness in the family, in the schism

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[10] We may agree that one performs work equal to the value of the work performed by another, but these performances are not experientially the same and, thus, will not produce equivalent consciousness.

between town and country, commercial labor and industrial labor, among classes and professions of laborers, and among towns and nations.

The division of labor and the rise of asymmetrical social relations would seem, necessarily, to lead to a future in which individuals find themselves alien to each other, resulting in a cacophony of warring ideologies. However, even in the most tumultuous times, social dissent is rarely so atomized. What we observe more often is general conformity to one or two slight deviations or approaches to a larger consciousness that is widely adopted. In the contemporary United States, for example, both Republicans and Democrats are largely in agreement on the ethical supremacy of democracy, the existence of human rights, and individualism; one might argue that their disagreements are relatively minor disputes over process or priorities. This type of condition leads Marx and Engels to make another important claim:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make one class a ruling one, therefore, the idea of its dominance. (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 64)

So, while individuals in isolation will derive consciousness from their material existence, in society, the rulers of material production become the *de facto* rulers of intellectual production.

This argument, only a minor element of Marx's thought, is the cornerstone of Antonio Gramsci's political theory. Gramsci (2008) contends that political power "manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'" (p. 57). Though it is effective to employ coercive force in the short term, in order for any sectional group to rule for long, it must secure the consent of many others who must come to see themselves in solidarity with those in power. This manufacture of consent is a constant condition in process, termed hegemony. In addition to the periodic "liquidation" of uncontainable dissent, hegemony entails the careful management of consensus by co-option and negotiation. Of course, such diplomacy is always limited:

> The leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based upon the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the nucleus of economic activity. (p. 161)

Unlike in Marx, here the powerful do not simply stamp their ideas into the minds of the masses; instead, mass consciousness is forged through constant struggle and maneuver. The ideas of the ruling class become the ideas of the age because

the ruling class leads the masses to believe an ideology which seems to explain experience for them and, at least partially, responds to their needs. Dominant ideology must be made supple and expansive and challenges to it must be folded back within it or thoroughly exorcised. To this end, the powerful fund religious, political, and educational institutions whose function is, ultimately, to lead the masses to accept as natural, normal, and right the ideology of their rulers. And some labor must always be devoted to managing emergent dissent.

The works of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer are often termed para-Marxist in that they "treat Marxism not as a norm to which fidelity must be maintained, but as a starting-point and an aid to an analysis and criticism of existing culture" (Kolakowski, 2005, p. 1060). Their willingness to move outside Marxist orthodoxy allows them to innovate in theorizing about the terrain of ideology and about the way that ideology appeals to individuals. In Marx and Engels and later in Gramsci, ideology seems to be explicitly about the ways that humans make sense (typically distorted or mystified) of their relations to the conditions of material existence. However wrong-headed or over-simplified an ideology may be, in these initial formulations it seems always to be explicitly about one's work, the connection of that particular form of labor to the larger economy, and so forth. This restricted view of the function of ideology is clearly evidenced in Adorno's (2006) reading of popular entertainment that offers up the

pabulum of rugged individualism and rags-to-riches success. In *How to View*

Television, Adorno reads such instruction in the story of the quick-witted heroine

of a typical sitcom who succeeds on the basis of her wits and good humor:

> The script implies: 'If you are as humorous, good-natured, quick-witted, and charming as she is, do not worry about being paid a starvation wage.' … In other words, the script is a shrewd method of promoting adjustment to humiliating conditions by presenting them as objectively comical and by giving a picture of a person who experiences even her own inadequate position as an object of fun apparently free of any resentment. (p. 167).

But in addition to this traditional view of ideology they continue to uphold,

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that ideology *also* works to anesthetize the masses

and to bring their leisure time under the control of production.

Much of mass culture, Adorno (2006) writes, is "unadorned makeup" (p.

78). By providing constant transitory pleasures, the apparatuses of mass culture

provide empty entertainment that serves as an escape "from the last remaining

thought of resistance … freedom from thought and negation" (Adorno &

Horkheimer, 1973, p. 144). Addled with feel-good sitcoms about nothing, unreal

cartoons, and simple game shows, the common person has little time or incentive

to do the hard work of questioning the status quo or imagining a life different

from the present. There is no such thing, then, as meaningless entertainment; the

superficial chatter that fills the airwaves and the vast majority of broadcast time

serves the very important purpose of keeping the public's eyes and ears on the circus rather than Wall Street, the Pentagon, and the capitol.

Under Fordism,[11] it becomes necessary not only to train workers to accept their positions in the base and to stop the working class from questioning their predicament, but also to continue supplying demand for the base by increasingly organizing "leisure" time around the consumption of goods and services. Adorno and Horkheimer (1973) describe this as one important function served by the culture industry. They argue that ideology produced by the *kulturindustrie* helps to create economic demand by providing substitute gratifications, in the form of consumption, for real needs.

Here, Adorno and Horkheimer are theorizing about the way that ideology appeals to people by way of Freudian theory. In Freud, humans are driven to satisfy certain needs felt by the Id. The Ego attempts to satisfy the libido within the limits determined by the physical world and the prohibitions enforced by the Super-Ego. When these needs cannot be met, for physiological or social reasons,

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[11] Fordism here refers to a particular "regime of accumulation" made possible by the technologies of mass production. David Harvey (1990) describes Fordism as the "recognition that mass production meant mass consumption, a new system of the reproduction of labour power, a new politics of labour control …; in short, a new kind of rationalized, modernist, and populist democratic society" (pp. 125-126). In addition to the rise of mass production and the reduction of craft to semi-skilled and unskilled labor, Fordism also requires a relative increase in labor compensation to facilitate mass consumption.

we invent other ways of satisfying the Id. The satisfaction of needs by transformation is what Freud terms *sublimation*.

One can easily observe this process at work in the experience of hunger at inopportune moments. Our bodies routinely experience the sensation of hunger; however, our social arrangements often impose prohibitions upon eating. In this case, an individual may find her or himself unable to immediately satisfy a need perceived by the Id. In order to placate the Id, the hungry individual will likely imagine the food she intends to eat later. In Freud's theory, this act is the generation of a sort of consolation prize for the Id—a partial or substitute gratification for a need. These mental images may serve as an acceptable substitute until it is socially appropriate to eat. In this case, the need is temporarily satisfied with the promise of future fulfillment.

If a need is perceived which cannot ever be fulfilled according to the dictates of materiality or sociality, Freudian theory holds that the individual is likely to sublimate the need into a socially acceptable or useful desire. This insight helps Adorno and Horkheimer to theorize that ideology functions by offering substitute gratifications to individuals whose needs could not actually be met within capitalist society. High art, which had the ability to critique the status quo by illustrating the gap between utopia and the present, has been replaced by mass culture in which the present is endlessly replicated (Adorno, 2006, p. 63).

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Unable to satisfy the need for critical reflection and transformation, the consumer

accepts the command for more of the same instead, seeking in endless

consumerism some substitute for the lost satisfaction of critical engagement. The

difference between the two, for Adorno and Horkheimer, is between the sublime

and the pornographic (1973, p. 139): One elevates while the other titillates.

Thus far, ideology is always a distortion of reality, a false-consciousness

which deludes persons from the proper apprehension of reality (Kolakowski,

2005, p. 127). Althusser goes so far as to read Marx and Engels as saying,

> Ideology is conceived as pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness.
> All its reality is external to it. Ideology is thus thought as an imaginary
> construction whose status is exactly like the theoretical status of a dream
> amongst writers before Freud. (2001, p. 108)

Though willing to agree that the content of ideology is an illusion, Althusser

contends that critics ought to read ideological texts for allusion: Ideology may not

be accurate in its depiction of the world, but it does indicate for us our intended

relations to the real world. This, for Althusser (2001), is the most important

function of ideology, "of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects" (p. 115).

For the Althusserian critic, then, the goal of ideology critique is an un-masking of

ideology by showing the ways that it interpellates us as subjects to power. Of

course, the good Marxist is not simply content to unmask ideology; this

unmasking is but a preliminary moment in the larger task of social transformation

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(Adorno, 2006, pp. 98 – 106).

Though he did not refer to it directly, I want to contend that Foucault's work on the episteme serves as a further sophistication of ideological criticism.[12] While he wrote of *discourses* rather than *ideologies*, Foucault retains Althusser's interest in the formation of subjects. It is illustrated throughout his corpus, but Foucault devotes his attention more completely to describing his method in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). At any given moment, he writes, only some of the things that might be said are actually uttered. Foucault makes it his project to understand the conditions which allowed those utterances to occur:

> A language (a langue) is still a system for possible statements, a finite body of rules that authorizes an infinite number of performances. [Given that only some of those performances occur,] how is it that one particular statement occurred rather than another? (p. 27)

In short, he wants to provide a framework for attending to the ideology which structures utterances. Foucault's method entails an investigation of the discursive regularities—the rules—which allow the act of meaningful speech. In Foucault, then, ideologies/discourses structure subject positions, modes of interaction, sites of authority, and, indeed, the conditions of truth. Foucault's emphasis on speech and its effects has provided support for communication scholars who have labored

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[12] For more on Foucault's appreciation of Marx, see *Power/Knowledge* (1980, p. 52) in which he speaks of referencing Marx's concepts and theories without citation as similar to the physicist who refers to relativity or other laws of physics without explicit mention of Einstein or Newton.

to recast communication scholarship, and rhetorical studies in particular, as a kind of inquiry that connects speech with ideology and materiality.

Ideological Criticism in Communication Studies

Ideological criticism arrives in the field of Human Communication (then Speech Communication) in the late 1970s and early 1980s, after several decades during which neo-Aristotelian criticism had been the norm. Largely following the trajectory charted in Herbert Wichelns' (1925) landmark work, rhetorical critics had oft devoted themselves to studying great works of oratory in parallel with the wisdom of Aristotle and Cicero. This approach to criticism, well examined in Edwin Black's (1965) *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*, treats rhetoric as strategic communication crafted in response to a direct exigence, delivered to an immediate and rational audience, and best evaluated according to standards set forth in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Cicero's *De Oratore* and *De Inventione*. In 1972, Forbes Hill unknowing ignited controversy when he authored a neo-Aristotelian criticism of Richard Nixon's November 3, 1968, address. Hill's analysis, in fine neo-Aristotelian form, evaluates the context to which Nixon was responding, inquires about the probable audience of the address, and carefully analyzes the partition, proofs, and stylistic appeals Nixon used in persuading the public of his Vietnamization plan. Though he does not consider it a masterful outing, Hill

finds Nixon's speech to be constructed in general accordance with Aristotelian

wisdom, persuasive, and, thus, successful.

Philip Wander (1983) uses Hill's (1972) essay as a prime example of the

chief problem with neo-Aristotelianism: When the critic simply analyzes the

mechanics of a rhetorical act without asking about the ethics or material

implications of that act, she or he is little more than a persuasive speaking coach.

> We can clarify the issue by asking ourselves what in everyday language
> we would call the person Hill calls a critic. What would we call one who
> examines or rewrites drafts of official statements so that their impact on
> specific audiences can be ascertained or improved; for whom policy,
> audience, and situation are a given and the overriding question is how to
> assess the effectiveness of the speech? Not, I suggest, a critic. We would
> be more inclined to call him or her a "public relations consultant." (p. 9)

Though Hill (1983) would argue back that his hands-off approach to the world

beyond the text of the speech allowed him to make only those comments to which

his education entitled him, critical scholars would argue back that a failure to

address ideology and manipulation are not synonymous with a freedom from it.

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1983) sharply notes that Hill, in his original monograph,

repeatedly admits numerous moments when Nixon was clearly lying or, at least,

misleading the American people: Given this awareness, she finds that silence on

this matter is not neutrality but complicity. The choice, Sharon Crowley agrees

(1992), is not between a criticism which is invested in ideology and one that is

not, but a choice between a criticism which is reflexive and interested in the

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operation of ideology and another which denounces such an effort while silently affirming its own ethnocentric and partial perspective on rhetoric: "To define rhetoric (or anything else) in terms of the values or standards held by one group is to universalize a partial definition that excludes the values and standards held by other groups" (p. 455).

Though it is typically taught in rhetorical methods seminars and courses, Philip Wander (1984) has claimed that ideological criticism is less a method than a broad orientation toward the act of criticism. It sums up a set of assumptions about the connections between consciousness, human communication, and social justice. From this perspective, a number of methodological innovations have been proposed. Critical scholars frequently invoke the second persona (Black, 1970) as they investigate the ideal audience interpellated or hailed by a text; Wander's (1984) third persona inverts this concept in order to ask about the audience(s) elides or negated by the text; and Charles Morris' (2002) fourth persona identifies an audience acknowledged by an interlocutor attempting to "pass." Michael McGee's (1980a) ideograph offers a tool for investigating the way that abstract terms exert ideological weight in public controversy. More recently, Kevin DeLuca (1999) has suggested mating the ideograph with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's articulation theory as developed in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001).

Critical scholars still understand ideology to be constitutive of and constituted by discourse (McGee, 1980a, 1980b[13]). But in the wake of postmodernity, critical scholars are generally less inclined to proclaim false-consciousness, as it is now more common to imagine all speech as ideological, even critique itself (McKerrow, 1989). To say that there is no way to stand outside ideology is to abolish the old distinction—clearly evidenced in Marx and Engels, Gramsci, and Adorno and Horkheimer—between false-consciousness and liberation or enlightenment.   However, to say that all speech is ideological is not the same as to say that all ideological positions are equally desirable. Critical scholars are typically invested in promoting a progressive politics with an emphasis on equity, inclusion, and diversity. With this in mind, McKerrow's (1989) critical rhetoric project calls for a dual critique: a critique of domination which entails a more traditional critique of the status quo; and a critique of freedom which turns the critical perspective back on itself to ask about the new forms of domination which might be enacted by the solutions proposed under the aegis of emancipation. So, while it is no longer possible to claim a value-free position from which to critique rhetoric, critical scholars believe that it is

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[13] McGee, in his historiographic study of the ideograph <liberty>, does a particularly smart job at describing the ways that lived experiences create consciousness that drives discourse and, then, how that discourse exerts influence over social life and future discourse.

important to look for moments of contradiction or rupture in dominant ideological discourse and that these openings or aporia represent "spaces of invention" (Phillips, 2002) from which it may be possible to imagine new ways of structuring society based upon the values of democracy, justice, and reflexivity.

In Foucault's (1972) terms, we are interested in analyzing the particular communicative statement in order to say more about the discursive regularities that made such a statement possible. In doing this, we arrive at an understanding of the oft-unstated ideologies that structure sociality. Specifically, we ask about who may speak, what subjects may be spoken of, which locations confer appropriateness upon speakers, which proprieties bear upon speech, and what prior assumptions give rise to new speech. So, in the short run, ideological criticism produces an awareness that attempts to analyze communication at the metal-level to get at the conditions of speech and knowledge-making.

The *telos* of this *ideologiekritik* is social transformation. That is, the hope of all ideological criticism is that the demystification of the discourse of power will prompt a rethinking of our society and a reorganization in the direction of equity. This approach is particularly valuable to this investigation because it attempts to get at the ways in which consciousness (ideology) and social discourse interanimate. The public sphere represents an important rhetorical venue, and an ideological construction in itself, in which the conditions of citizenship and the

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role of the state are perpetually under deliberation. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to detailing the scholarly conversation that has developed around this concept.

The Public Sphere, Publics, and Counterpublics

Public sphere theory, as it is derived largely from the works of John Dewey and Jürgen Habermas, tries to theorize about what it means to be a member of the public, the relationship between the public and the state, and the conditions under which democratic deliberation can occur. In the paragraphs that follow, I shall attempt to summarize the contributions offered by these two figures and a few of the most important theoretical controversies (particularly the notion of a counterpublic) which follow them.

In *The Public and Its Problems*, pragmatist John Dewey (1927/1954) offers a hopeful[14] model of the relationships between the notions of public, private, and state. Dewey begins with the notion of private individuals who, in a state of nature, exist as unregulated entities. In the absence of a government, individuals generally do what they like and interact as they see fit. However, as

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[14] This model is hopeful in the sense that Dewey seems to really trust that the state was, at least at some point, in the service of the public. This is especially optimistic in contrast with Habermas's vision of the state as antagonist to the public.

individuals interact, it is often the case that their behaviors create effects that bear

upon the experiences of others.

> We take then our point of departure from the objective fact that human acts have consequences upon others, that some of these consequences are perceived, and that their perception leads to subsequent effort to control action so at to secure some consequences and avoid others. (p. 12)

For Dewey, the public simply names that collective of persons who perceive

themselves affected by the actions of an other or set of others.

As Michael Warner (2002) has noted, the terms public and private travel

widely and carry numerous meanings; Dewey (1927/1954) is at pains to make

clear that, in his case, "the distinction between private and public is thus in no

sense equivalent to the distinction between individual and social" but is to be

found in the range of effects that an act or transaction produces. In Dewey's

parlance, a transaction committed in front of millions of people may be private if

its range of consequences is limited to the person or persons directly engaged in

that act. On the other hand, an act committed in a secluded laboratory on

individually held property may be public if the range of consequences that act

may produce affects others.

If a public consists in the collective of persons who have a mutual interest

in the actions of some others, it stands to reason that it will become increasingly

difficult to determine the public and its interests as the general population

increases and as individuals are increasingly capable of acting in ways that affect others. At some point, the job of monitoring this situation becomes all-consuming, and "it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for" (Dewey, 1927/1954, p. 16). This systematic care is provided by the selection of rulers who will work in furtherance of the public's interests and the establishment of political institutions—constitutions, regulations, ordinances, and so forth—to guide those agents. This set of rulers and institutions forms what Dewey refers to as the state.

One immediate implication of Dewey's definition of the public is the realization that "the public" is not an enduring entity but a conceptual label for an ever-changing body of persons. If the public exists in relation to the occurrence of an act or transaction which produces indirect effects, then the content of that public would, theoretically, change at every moment that a new act or transaction occurs. If the public is almost constantly being reformed, it stands to reason that the rulers and institutions that protect its interests must, likewise, be reformed such that they always reflect the public's interests. Unfortunately, "changes are extrinsic to political forms which, once established, persist of their own momentum" (Dewey, 1927/1954, p. 30). The momentum Dewey speaks of here is the sort of inherent rigidity, calcification, and recalcitrance that constitutions, regulations, and bureaucracies enact in the face of efforts at reform. The

structures once established to protect the public's interest may eventually come to endanger the public. For Dewey, this means that "by its very nature, a state is ever something to be scrutinized, investigated, searched for" (p. 31). Thus, the public must be vigilant in constantly reforming the state in its image.

A second implication of Dewey's model of the public is that membership in the public is based upon *perception* of interests. In other words, what matters in the determination of public interest is not so much the objective fact of indirect effects but the perception of those indirect effects. This means that the public will necessarily change as persons come to understand themselves as affected by some action or transaction, even if said act has occurred without notice in the past. So an act may come to be public even if it has previously been considered private. Here we may gain insight to much of the dispute over environmental regulation: What some perceive to be of public interest, and *ipso facto* state purview, is contingent upon the recognition of actions, previously assumed to be private, producing indirect effects. This is why the contemporary international discussion over the linkage between human action and climate change is so important.

Unfortunately, Dewey sketches a rather depressing image of the state of the public in the mid-20th century. What was once an engaged and vocal *demos* is now judged to be in decline. The public has been "eclipsed," he claims, for a number of related reasons: an increasing complex conception of public interest;

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diminished faith in the efficacy of the state; and the disappearance of homophily in contemporary Western society.

In his influential *The Phantom Public,* Walter Lippmann (1927) expresses significant doubt about the ability of the American public to skillfully judge the best course for itself. Democracy begins with the faith that members of the public can generally choose the course that is best for themselves. In ancient Greece, it may have been possible—though still not necessarily probable—that the average citizen was capable of apprehending and formulating an appropriate response to the exigencies that confronted the public and, thus, legitimately instructing the government to right action. By the end of the first World War, the public confronted issues of a breadth and depth never before imagined. Lippmann argues that the conditions of postwar life necessitate practically omniscient citizens. Who among us, Lippman would ask, is actually capable of knowing the best course of action with regards to national defense, international trade, energy and commerce infrastructure, economic regulation, education funding and curriculum, the proper role of the federal government in regulating the media, and so forth?

Though Dewey does not share Lippmann's conclusion that governance ought to delegated to technical experts, he does agree that it has become increasingly difficult for the public to perceive its interests. The emergence of

international business and increasing technological development have meant that

it is now practically impossible for the public to fully understand the scope of its

interests. Who is the public when a company strip-mines in India, sells its

products from Oregon to Florida, and has its finances in the Dutch Antilles? Plus,

the tendency of capitalism to increasingly divide existing markets and to invent

new ones has meant that the public finds itself affected by manifold new acts or

transactions. This broadening and diversification of interests continues today: In

an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* (Jenkins, 2010, August 14), Google

CEO Eric Schmidt recently remarked that children of the future will likely have to

consider changing their names in order to escape the privacy issues created by

social networking and information technologies currently produced by companies

like Google and Facebook. Under these conditions, Dewey sums the problem up

thusly:

> The machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified and
> complicated the scope of indirect consequences, have formed such
> immense and consolidated unions in action, on an impersonal rather than a
> community basis, that the resultant public cannot identify and distinguish
> itself. (1927/1954, p. 126)

This sense of the world as increasingly threatening and complicated is

compounded by the emergent sense among the common person that the state is no

longer at the service of the public. Dismayed, Dewey notes that "the ratio of

actual to eligible voters is now about one-half" (1927/1954, p. 117). Dewey

interprets this decline in public participation as part of a larger experience of disenchantment with civic participation. This disenchantment is fueled by a marked increase in business control of the state, the appearance of extra-legal state power, and a new distance between the state and the public.

First, Dewey finds that common thought now sees civic life as a "protective coloration to conceal the fact that big business rules the government roost in any case" (1927/1954, p. 118). This perception is not only announced by those who go under the banner of radical socialism (i.e., Marxists), but also business professionals who imagine that the government's function is primarily to produce conditions optimally conducive to the interests of semi-free trade, often couched in the notion of "prosperity." Here, Dewey presciently sees what would come to be called Neo-Liberalism.[15] In short, the state has been hijacked; once accountable for protecting the public's interests writ large, it now increasingly understands itself as responsible for health of the capitalist economy and all other concerns are routed through this preoccupation.

Not only has the public's interest been replaced with capitalism's interest, but the state is now increasingly overreaching its legal authority. An alarmed

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[15] The USA's military success was used as evidence of the supremacy of capitalism. Subsequently, the public's best interest was often conflated with the interests of semi-free trade capitalism. The policies and programs enacted were always "semi-free" insofar as they pursued free markets in the East and South, but sought to protect the West. See Chomsky (2003).

Dewey (1927/1954, p. 119) notes the appearance of extra-legal agencies, often operating outside the purview of the public or even its representatives in Washington, as further justification for the erosion of public faith in the state. Secret agencies, blacklists, classified reports, are increasingly with us. The state, initially formed by the people in order to systematically care for its interests, now says to the public, "In order to protect your interests, you cannot know exactly what the state is doing to protect your interests." And while those state agencies may, indeed, have the public's interests at the fore when they enact such policies, the result is to severely inhibit the public's ability to monitor and continuously reshape the state according to its emergent needs. In this way, the state looks less like an agent of the people and more like a malevolent entity to itself, one which keeps secrets and plays favorites.

A third reason for public mistrust of the state is related to the appearance of political parties who interrupt the linkage between the public and the state. Dewey writes:

> Instead of individuals who in the privacy of their consciousness make choices which are carried into effect by personal volition, there are citizens who have the blessed opportunity to vote for a ticket of men mostly unknown to them, and which is made up for them by an under-cover machine in a caucus whose operations constitute a kind of political predestination. (1927/1954, pp. 119-120)

The machinery of political parties not only intervenes between the public and the direct selection of its agents, but it also operates to consolidate those agents' positions on diverse issues. That is, citizens and officials are compelled to select a party and, thereby, to enroll in positions about all the manifold issues the party has taken a position on. If this were not bad enough, it also seems clear to Dewey that these positions rarely cohere under some rational philosophy or goal. In sum, the public has good reasons for losing faith in a government that is increasingly oriented toward the needs of business, overstepping its authority, and largely steered by political parties rather than by the public.

Finally, Dewey seems to echo Durkheim's (1897/1997) worries of "anomie"[16] when he writes that rapid industrialization and mass production have meant that "mental and moral beliefs and ideals change more slowly than outward conditions" (Dewey, 1927/1954, p. 141). In short, the social fabric that binds individuals together in society is increasingly lagging behind shifts in material life. In a world of ever-expanding complexity and plentiful diversions in the form of mass mediated entertainment, the public is at risk of losing its sense of unity, of

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[16] Durkheim conceptualized industrial society as being in transition from a more or less organic make-up to a mechanistic one, a machine whose parts were increasingly specialized. As society demanded increasingly compartmentalization and isolation, Durkheim worried that non-affiliation among members would lead to a sense of alienation and despair that he described as "anomie."

history, and of place, "seeking spasmodically for itself, but seizing and holding its shadow rather than its substance" (p. 142). This final worry seems the most pressing for Dewey, that members of a public will not only find themselves flummoxed as to what should be done but should ultimately fail to see their consubstantiality with each other and should fail to be a public whatsoever.

While traditional democratic theory had begun with the assumption that "each individual is of himself [sic] equipped with the intelligence needed, under the operation of self-interest, to engage in political affairs," Dewey (1927/1954) holds that individuals rely upon knowledge—a historical and communal product—to guide their decisions (p. 154). For this reason, "The Great Society" must become "The Great Community" if our public is to find itself and once again steer its state (p. 147). Community is not to be confused with conjoint action: "Association itself is physical and organic, while communal life is moral, that is emotionally, intellectually, consciously sustained … [and results in] general will and social consciousness" (pp. 151, 153). So, while Lippmann may have been correct in arguing that no person is omni-competent, the task is to create conditions such that individuals can craft that omni-competence together with a collective set of aspirations toward which that competence may be directed. The task for the ideological critic is, in part, to ask about the kind of morality forged,

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the kinds of social consciousness which emerge, and to problematize those aspirations.

If they are to be brought into the public, individuals must perceive the full range of activities whose consequences bring them into consubstantiality with others. Whereas in earlier times, it was sufficient to observe the world in one's immediate surroundings, it is now necessary to monitor a significantly wider periphery in order to protect one's interests. Dewey proposes that the people make use of the fruits of mass production: "a subtle, delicate, vivid and responsive art of communication must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and circulation and breathe life into it" (1927/1954, p. 184). In addition to providing a pragmatic corrective to idealist models of the state, Dewey's work here helpfully connects the democratic citizen to the community via a robust new communication and, thus, and offers a populist rebuttal to Lippmann's call for technical administration of the public's interests.

Though Dewey claims to offer an *a posteriori* account of the ways that individuals form publics which then form states, his account presupposes quite a bit. Specifically, Dewey writes as if it is unimpeachably obvious that private individuals precede the public and the state. One might well contend that this model of civil society is a distinctly American one insofar as it seems hard to imagine many of those with monarchies or colonial histories, for example, could

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imagine the state as being formed by the will of the common people. In addition

to his assumption of freely associated speaking subjects, Dewey presupposes the

existence of the public sphere, a "realm in which citizens came together as private

persons to form a public" (Asen & Brouwer, 2001, p. 4). He takes for granted

that individuals understand themselves to be entitled to pursue their own interests

and that there will exist some discursive space for collective deliberation.

Jürgen Habermas' (1989) influential *Structural Transformation of the*

Public Sphere describes the sociopolitical and economic changes that produced

modern notions of the public and public opinion which prompted the emergence

of a public sphere in the 18th century. Though he is often unfairly pilloried for

failing to account for non-Western experiences or for ignoring the numerous

populations excluded from the public sphere, his aims are rather explicit:

Habermas' project is to sketch the socioeconomic conditions which precipitated

the relatively brief emergence of a bourgeois public sphere in three Western

European capitalist countries.

The public sphere was preceded by a representative publicness under

which a state was legitimated by the virtue of its visibility before its subjects: "As

long as the prince and the estates of his realm 'were' the country and not just its

representatives, they could represent it in a specific sense. They represented their

lordship not for but 'before' the people" (Habermas, 1989, p. 8). The distinction

between public and private was quite different from the way it is often understood at present: That which was public was more or less synonymous with the sovereign who *was* the state while the private was the realm of that which was aside from the sovereign's. Though there sometimes existed common facilities or spaces—fountains, wells, and so forth—these were held under the benevolence of the sovereign. For this reason, "a public sphere in the sense of a separate realm distinguished from the private sphere cannot be shown to have existed in the feudal society of the High Middle Ages" (p. 7). The notion of a public sphere could only exist at a point where there was a separation between the state and the sovereign.

According to Habermas, the public sphere was made possible by three related developments: the birth of a literary public sphere in which rational debate and personal opinion became popular, the rise of capitalism, and the development of the printing press and the subsequent rise of newspapers (pp. 14-26). Habermas (1989) writes of the literary public sphere which flourished in salons and coffeehouses across Western Europe:

> The bourgeois avant-garde of the educated middle class learned the art of critical-rational public debate through its contact with the "elegant world" … became independent from the monarch's personal sphere, naturally separated itself, in turn, more and more from the court and became its counterpoise in the town. (pp. 29-30)

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This reading culture produced a self-clarifying subject that imagined him or herself as capable of rational and intelligent opinion and trained that subject in the art of disputation (p. 29).

Habermas identifies three common features of this emergent coffeehouse culture: Its discussion of literature and works of art "preserved a kind of social intercourse that … disregarded status altogether"; it "presupposed the problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned"; and "established the public as in principle inclusive" (pp. 36-37). Though it was, in fact, limited to those with the education and means, there was nothing in the content of the social intercourse that precluded participation; indeed, it was supposed that the discussion was of general interest. Furthermore, the notion that everyday patrons would engage in the previously specialized acts of interpretation and criticism represented a broadening of the horizon of possibilities for public discussion and a challenge to established authority. The subjectivity formed in the literary public sphere of coffeehouses and salons would contribute, along with important shifts introduced by capitalism and the press, to the formation of a bourgeois public sphere.

The rise of capitalism had two significant impacts: a weakening of the feudal system and an increase in general interest in the state's role in economics (Habermas, 1989, pp. 14-15). Though capitalism initially enriched traditional

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elites, the rise of private firms meant a general weakening of the ties between individual and the manor.

> Initially, to be sure, they [capitalism and finance] were integrated without much trouble by the old power structure. … As long as it lived from the fruits of the old mode of production (the feudal organization of agricultural production involving an enserfed peasantry and the petty commodity production of the corporatively organized urban craftsmen) without transforming it, it retained ambivalent characteristics. … [However,] it unleashed the very elements within which this power structure would one day dissolve. (p. 15)

The ability to trade across the old vertical structures of power would eventually work to unseat the estate system of rule. The men who had ruled with nearly absolute authority over an estate would soon become mere nodes or outposts in diffuse networks of commerce.

According to Habermas, by the sixteenth century, merchants sought to expand their operations beyond the trade of agricultural staples (1989, p. 17). This recognition produced two important shifts: first, the need to expand operations and to increase production led to the formation of the modern stock company; second, the need to move into new markets led to a call for "strong political guarantees" in the form of mercantilism (Habermas, 1989, p. 17). The first way devised for companies to secure capital in order to expand operations was to become stock companies. No longer beholden to a particular estate ruler, companies conducted business with other private entities.

Increasingly, companies responded to the need to generate more profit by seeking out new markets to exploit. This moment marks the beginning of mercantilism, where companies increasingly relied on the state's ability to use force to open new markets to capitalism. This protection required a significant outlay that outstripped the sovereign's ability to pay. Habermas attributes rise of the modern state to this need for funding: "Only an efficient system of taxation met the demand for capital. The modern state was basically a state based on taxation" (Habermas, 1989, p. 17).

These phenomena began to create a sense of a public interest—individuals had increasing interest in the functions of other private entities, both as taxpayer and as stockholders. By undercutting the authority of the estate ruler, merchant traders and stock companies "created room for another sphere known as the public sphere" (Habermas, 1989, p. 18). Individuals, now trained in rational public debate, had a legitimate stake in the economic fortunes of the state which was increasingly understood not as a ruler's court but as as "the functioning of an apparatus with regulated spheres of jurisdiction and endowed with a monopoly over the legitimate use of coercion" (p. 18).

Finally, increased participation in the production and trade of commodities created a market for the circulation of news. As individuals with a financial interest in the stuff of business, the public became consumers of news and

suppliers of news began search for ever more information to report (Habermas, 1989, pp. 20-23). And though the business in news was initially connected to the needs of trade, "the news itself became a commodity. …Each item of information contained in a letter had its price; it was therefore natural to increase the profits by selling to more people" (p. 21). The fourth estate became an important conduit through which the public could surveil the state and announce its opinion.

For Habermas, the confluence of these three developments made possible the emergence of a space of public deliberation that has come to be called the public sphere. Much like Dewey, however, Habermas (1989) narrates the decline of the public sphere in terms of a "refeudalization" (pp. 141-235). In particular, Habermas points to a mutual infiltration or interpenetration of the spheres; a polarization of social and private spheres; and transition from debate to entertainment in the mass media. The rise of the welfare state and transition from monarchy to representative democracy has meant that the simple distinction between the state, the public, and the private has deteriorated significantly. Furthermore, the movement of work out of the private sphere and into the social sphere has meant that the private sphere is no longer the means by which entry into the public sphere is earned. Finally, the injunction that the media continue to generate profits has meant that our time largely devoted to the consumption of entertainment rather than the careful surveillance of the state.

Though most follow Nancy Fraser (1992) in agreement that "something like the public sphere" remains an invaluable normative goal for a critical project, numerous theorists have begun the work of challenging the narrative offered in Habermas' (1989) work. In particular, critiques have consistently addressed the notion of the public sphere as inclusive, rational critical debate as unquestionably laudable, the possibility of bracketing personal interests, and the assumed supremacy of a unified public sphere.

Rita Felski (1989) has criticized the "enabling fiction" which holds that the bourgeois public sphere was open to everyone. This claim is made on the basis of two related assumptions: first, that the bourgeois may speak for all persons; second, that anyone who wished to be could join the ranks of the bourgeois. In addition to its obvious exclusion of women, Felski notes that the bourgeois public sphere was not even open to traditional burghers:

> The bourgeois public sphere is thus characterized by a blindness to the actual and unequal material conditions which render its own existence possible and holds fast to the illusion that humanity is adequately represented by the male property-owning public. (p. 165)

Indeed, Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1993) remind readers that the public sphere is a *bourgeois* public sphere which derives its existence from the ownership of property. In light of this, the notion of "the public" or "the public good" is a fiction used by the landed classes to pursue their sectional interests.

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Here again, an ideological perspective will draw us to attend to the way that

certain persons are made to stand in for "the public" and the way that sectional

interests are conflated with "the public good." As we shall continue to see, the

notion of the public sphere has always been more ideal than actual fact.

A second major facet of Habermas's public sphere is the enactment of

rational critical public debate as the means of conducting public debate. Critical

scholars have recently begun questioning the presumed neutrality and superiority

of this mode of deliberation. In particular, Kendall Phillips (1996) has argued for

a recognition of the ways that established rationality may foreclose modes of

deliberation which open new possibilities for discussion:

> Two possibilities are available to interlocutors. Conform to the rationality
> of the dominant discourse, and abide by its discursive rules, or challenge
> this rationality. Challenges to this rationality, however, are, by definition,
> irrational and, therefore, excluded from the discourse of the public sphere.
> (pp. 242-243)

Phillips is worried, for example, about established norms of rationality which

discount modes of experience and address which may be most familiar or

comfortable to marginalized interlocutors. The injunction to make one's case in

terms of rational critical debate—to the unschooled or disadvantaged

interlocutor—may also be read as a demand to make one's self intelligible to the

powerful in terms which are often alien and which already interpellate them into

power-down subject positions.

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Others have wondered about the possibility of the call to bracket personal interests in favor of discussing issues of public interest. How are participants supposed to bracket their personal interests, Nancy Fraser (1990, pp. 63-64) wonders, when those personal interests may affect their abilities to interact in the public sphere? Furthermore, there is reason to wonder whose interests may actually be bracketed when discussing matters of public interest. Surely there are some whose personal interests absolutely are matters of public interest. Can we really bracket Bill Gates' personal interest in Microsoft, for example? At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, it seems ludicrous to ask the homeless to bracket their personal interests as the public debates funding for public programs. The notion that public and private interests are so easily cleaved seems hard to defend. Furthermore, a number of scholars have attended to the ways that issues, notably intimate partner abuse, have been ferried into the realm of the private in order to stifle public investigation (Phillips, 1996; Fraser, 1992).

Finally, public sphere scholars have challenged the assumption in Habermas's mourning of the fragmentation of the public sphere: Habermas assumes a unified public sphere is preferable than multiple public spheres. This assumption would seem tenable under conditions of parity and efficacy but, according to Nancy Fraser (1990), "in stratified societies, arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics better promote

the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public" (p. 66). In other words, so long as parity does not exist among interlocutors, participants may have a better chance at being heard where there are multiple venues for public participation.

Counterpublics.

In the absence of some gloriously equitable public sphere, public sphere scholars have also attempted to theorize the way that marginalized individuals seek participation and work to change the functioning of the public sphere as it actually occurs. In her discussion of feminist activism, Rita Felski (1989) is the first to use the term *counterpublic* in English[17] to describe "critical oppositional forces within the society of late capitalism which cannot be adequately comprehended in terms of such a pessimistic thesis of one-dimensionality" (p. 166). Felski is careful not to reduce the counterpublic to a place, topic, or specific set of people: The members of the feminist counterpublic are "united only by a common concern to establish 'qualitatively new forms of social and political relations in which . . . mutuality, discussion, and concern with concrete needs predominate'" (p. 166).

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[17] Negt and Kluge (1993) precede her, though an English translation of their 1972 work had not yet appeared.

Nancy Fraser's (1992) popular essay conceptualizes the counterpublic as

"parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent

and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate

oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (emphasis

original, p. 67). Robert Asen and Daniel Brouwer (2001) note, in both Felski and

Fraser, the notion that counterpublics are characterized by "both inward and

outward address as a response to the experience and discernment of exclusion" (p.

7). This fluctuating pattern of address, which Jane Mansbridge (1996) has termed

"oscillation," suggests an important element of visiblity for counterpublics. The

counterpublic is not simply a safe place or a remote island of discontent for the

underrepresented; it may serve as an "enclave," as Squires (2002) terms it, from

time to time, but the counterpublic's orientation is, at least sometimes,

confrontational toward the broader public sphere. Warner (2002) has put a finer

point on this:

> Such publics are … more than simply … [a public] of subalterns with a
> reform program. A counterpublic maintains at some level, conscious or
> not, an awareness of its subordinate status … and the conflict extends not
> just to ideas or policy questions, but to the speech genres and modes of
> address that constitute the public and to the hierarchy among the media.
> (p. 38)

Perhaps the most specific, Warner's counterpublic must not only perceive its

marginalization and enact an oppositional stance, but its dispute with the broader

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public must extend beyond a particular substantive issue and also involve an effort to reform the conditions of speech—e.g., appropriate subjects of speech, appropriate modes of expression—in public.

Recently, scholars have begun devoting effort to strengthening the conceptual boundaries of counterpublicity. Michael Warner's (2002) work has forwarded the argument that counterpublics are constituted by the regular, though not necessarily frequent, circulation of discourses. This argument, which works especially well for Warner's interest in pamphlets, argues that publics are constituted at the point of mere attention: When individuals attend to discourses which hail them to see their mutual interest, they become publics. This perspective helps avoid the mistake of imagining counterpublics as being about a certain group or groups of people. In addition to this mistake, Robert Asen (2000) warns against the mistake of reducing counterpublics to some limited set of places, or topics and, instead, locates counterpublicity in the "recognition of various exclusions from wider publics of potential participants, discourse topics, and speaking styles and the resolve that builds to overcome these distinctions" (p. 438). And Daniel Brouwer (2006) writes that "most [definitions of counterpublic] share these key features: oppositionality, constitution of a discursive arena; and a dialectic of retreat from and engagement with other publics" (p. 197). In each of these efforts, the notion of perception becomes problematic when we consider the

phenomenon of conservative counterpublicity. What becomes of a concept like counterpublicity when we consider groups like Christians, men, and whites who may each perceive themselves as excluded, persecuted, and in opposition to mainstream society? Can it mean anything if occupied by those who are ostensibly located in the socioeconomic center of society?

In a very recent publication devoted to this concern, Robert Asen (2009) offers further clarifications which, he hopes, will preserve the counterpublic as conceptually coherent term. Asen proposes several additional criteria for determining counterpublicity: The rhetoric of this group must uphold its claimed values, particularly when these groups frequently speak of justice, liberty, equity and the like; the group must be found to be materially disadvantaged; and the group's agenda must seek an expansion of the public sphere. This project enters into discussion with Asen's most recent monograph to examine how helpful these criteria are and to see what further precisions may be offered in the task of keeping counterpublic a powerful critical concept.

Throughout this discussion of publics and public sphere theory, I have gestured toward moments where ideological criticism helps provide more sophisticated thinking about deliberative democracy. In particular, ideological criticism prompts a reconsideration of the notions of "the public", "public morality," and "the public good." The public is often imagined to be a stable

body of persons, always already known to each other and to the state. The public good, as well, is often cast about in casual conversation as if the words refer to a proscribed set of intrinsically valid ends and means. Even public morality may seem so blindingly obvious that we imagine that we know exactly what it means to pronounce someone's actions moral.

Each of these terms—the public, the public good, and public morality—is ideological; these terms operate alongside countless other symbols which form a conceptual apparatus through which we make sense of social life. An ideological perspective demands an investigation of the ways that these terms are articulated together and connected to materiality and, therefore, to power. If, as Dewey claims, the public consists of those who find themselves mutually interested, then how, and on what grounds, do people find themselves to be consubstantial? How are these criteria of exclusion and inclusion connected to materiality? An ideological perspective prompts us to ask how individuals are being interpellated, how they are called understand themselves, their relationship to others, and their relationship to the state. If, as Dewey claims, communities craft a kind of public morality, how does this morality relate to the conditions of their material lives? And if publics craft a set of aspirations, whose interests are served by these aspirations? In sum, ideological criticism replaces stable terms with contingencies and seeks to forge a linkage between these symbolic achievements

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and the real material conditions of life. In chapters four, five, and six, I will

employ this ideological perspective in my analysis of rhetorical texts that hail

males, whites, and Christians as victims of encroaching blacks, feminists, and

secularists.

Chapter 3

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Over the last several decades, Phoenix has become one of the most

polluted cities in the United States. I have been told that the city's thick blanket of

smog is due to its location in a valley; the surrounding mountains disrupt much of

the wind that would, under other circumstances, help to disperse pollution

produced daily by industry, automobiles, and the many millions of air

conditioning units that help to make desert life convenient. The odd thing about

that brown layer of smog is that folks living in Phoenix often fail to see it at all.

Those who grow up in the valley may think it entirely normal for a "clear" sky to

turn greyish brown at the horizon. And they may not have noticed the steadily

rising rate of asthma among children.

Without a frame of reference, that which we grow up with is often

assumed to be normal. And currents of change may progress in subtle ways that

elude our perception. In the preceding pages of this study, I have argued that the

publics investigated in this dissertation—whites, men, and Christians—claim

persecution while occupying positions of significant privilege. Social privilege

may often operate without notice in much the same way that smog becomes an

unremarkable part of a city's landscape. This chapter is devoted to providing

some context for this claim; it seeks to chart some, though certainly not all, of the ways that these sectional interests have been privileged in American society.

In everyday life, the social systems which deliver advantages to males, whites, and Christians sometimes overlap and even serve as warrants for each other: Nations are imagined to be Christian because they are white[18]; the imagined superiority of Christianity has served as a warrant for white supremacy over "barbaric" races; hegemonic masculinity is often synonymous with whiteness; and the threat of primal black sexuality has often served as warrant for the oppression of women. Feminists have theorized these overlapping and interlocking systems of privilege in terms of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality provides a more sophisticated concept of identity which resists the tendency to reduce individuals to their sex, gender, race, sexual orientation, or nationality and refuses to think of these "differences that make a difference" as discrete and aggregated. Instead, these and other facets of identity are conceptualized as dimensions in a matrix of constantly negotiated power relations.

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[18] The conflation of whiteness with Christianity is readily discernible, for example, in Samuel Huntington's (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* wherein he describes a coming international conflict spurred on by ideological schisms. Notably, he lumps Western Europe, North America, and other primarily white cultures together as parts of Western Christian civilization while somehow ignoring Latin America, South America, Africa, and other Westernized and Christian cultures.

A recognition of intersectionality has meant that individuals experience dominance and subjugation on multiple levels and often at the same time. For some feminists, it has meant that new feminisms must enact a coalitional politics that responds to the needs of women who experience various positions of power and disadvantage in numerous systems of racial, ethnic, religious, and geopolitical privilege. It is no longer possible—nor was it ever, if we are to be honest—to speak in the aggregate about what it means to be a woman, a person of color, a homosexual, an American, or a man.

However, it is not necessary for an individual to identify with all of these privileged publics in order to experience privilege as a male, as white, or as a Christian. White females, for example, may simultaneously experience privilege as a white person and discrimination as a female. For this reason, I shall attempt, as much as possible, to treat the development of male, white, and Christian privilege discretely while keeping a keen eye on the ways that these systems of privilege may function to support and reinforce each other.

Male Privilege

When she wrote *The Man-Made World* in 1911, Charlotte Perkins Gilman was working to draw attention to the way that maleness was already privileged in nearly every field of human inquiry. Gilman points out the way that scholars

have, at a sociolinguistic level, conflated maleness with normalcy and repeatedly

imagined femaleness as a deviation from that norm.

> Even in the naming of other animals we have taken the male as the race
> type, and put on a special termination to indicate "his female," as in lion,
> lioness; leopard, leopardess; while all our human scheme of things rests on
> the same tacit assumption; man being held the human type; woman a sort
> of accompaniment and subordinate assistant, merely essential to the
> making of people. (p. 20)

Not only have men continually conflated "man" with "person," but they have

imagined maleness as the normal or default position for all creatures, while

femaleness has been characterized as a subset, a deviation, or, at best, a reciprocal

to maleness, always defined in relation to maleness.

Gilman is hardly alone in pointing out the installation of patriarchy in

Western culture. Victor Seidler (1994) traces modern conceptions of manhood to

the Enlightenment, when Kant divided the universe into mind and body, reason

and nature. Men had long acted as *de facto* masters of the family and the *polis,*

often by characterizing women and femininity as dangerous, promiscuous, or

weak (Sutton, 1999). But during the Enlightenment,

> Authority had to be prepared to justify itself. … [Men] sought to
> legitimate the authority of reason. It is this which connects to the
> authority of a 'rational masculinity', as if men could think of reason as
> their own and so legitimate the organization of private and public life in
> their own image. (Seidler, 1994, p. 3)

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The democratic impulse demanded that authority validate itself; patriarchy accomplished this by articulating manhood and masculinity with reason while imagining women as being closer to nature and, thus, irrational and unruly. Just as the corporeal body represented an impediment to the functioning of the mind, nature represented an inchoate and dangerous force that had to be made to submit to reason. Though rarely illuminated in contemporary discussions of masculinity, the articulation of reason with maleness and masculinity remains and helps to account for the way that men continue to conceptualize masculinity in terms of rationality, instrumentality, independence, and stoicism.

Perhaps this also helps explain why masculinity has come to be treated as an *a priori* value while femininity has been construed as a deficiency. Drawing her examples from everyday speech, Gilman (1911) directs readers' attention to two adjectives—"effeminate" and "emasculate"—as simple proof of the way the each upholds this observation: To say that one is effeminate indicates that a person is "too female" while to be emasculate indicates one is "not enough male." Even the seemingly gender-neutral "virtue" derives from "vir"—a man (p. 20). Thus, not only have men been made normal, but masculinity is to be valued. Based upon these two claims—that man has been conflated with person and that masculinity has been granted inherent value over femininity—Gilman describes Western culture as androcentric.

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The product of androcentrism has been a culture in which maleness and masculinity are everywhere privileged. That which suits men has been defined as proper and good, while that which is preferable to women is classified as inferior or simply for women. Sometimes, this has meant that males have been granted legal authority over females. In the United States, women were denied the right to vote until 1920 and remained second-class citizens in terms of opportunity and participation through the 1950s. It wasn't until 1963 that the Equal Pay Act barred sex discrimination in pay. And though the nation has still not yet seen it fit to pass the Equal Rights Amendment which would make it unconstitutional for the government to discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual discrimination has been banned via the Civil Rights Act of 1964.[19]

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[19] The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), written by Alice Paul in 1923, would amend the constitution such that individuals were guaranteed equal rights under the law regardless of sex. The amendment was introduced to Congress each year between 1923 and 1970. On the rare occasions that the bill actually made it to a vote (1946, 1950, and 1953) it was defeated. Following the cultural upheaval of the 1960s, the ERA was finally passed by both houses of Congress in 1972 but failed to gain sufficient ratification by the states before the 1982 deadline. This failure has largely been attributed to opposition from conservatives like Phyllis Schaffly, who argued that the ERA would strip women of valuable privileges that patriarchal society had provided them (e.g., dependent wife benefits and exemption from the draft), and progressive activists such as the League of Women Voters, who worried that the strict equity enacted by the amendment would rob women of important protections already provided to them. See Baldez, Epstein, & Martin, 2006 and Mansbridge, 1996

Historically, women who married were even less substantial in the eyes of the law. Under the doctrine of coverture[20], Sir William Blackstone (1891) reports, women who married lost their identities in the eyes of the law: Simply put, once married, women were "covered" or subsumed under their husbands' identities. When a man and woman married, they became one person—one male person directed by the husband's will (Blackstone, 1891, p. 355). Though women no longer legally disappear within their husbands' identities, the sociocultural effects of coverture remain: It is still common, for example, for brides to relinquish their last names in favor of the surnames of their husbands. And especially where fundamentalist Protestant Christian dogma reinforces old patriarchal views, it is still often understood that males become the sole executive of the family upon marriage[21] (Bartkowski, 1997; Grasmick, Wilcox, & Bird, 1990).

Androcentric culture has also conflated men's experiences and aspirations with universals while women's lives have been dismissed as inconsequential.

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[20] The legal doctrine of coverture was imported from English common law and was practiced in the United States throughout the 19th century.

[21] Bartkowski (1997) points out, however, that fundamentalists have responded to feminism by attempting to recast patriarchy as a sort of "mutual submission" in which wives submit to their husbands while their husbands submit to God's will that they be good heads of their families. See Crabb, 1991; Dillow, 1986

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Gilman (1911) notes the way that male universalism has shaped the study of

culture in the West:

> When we are offered a "woman's" paper, page, or column, we find it filled
> with matter supposed to appeal to women as a sex or class; the writer
> mainly dwelling upon ... cookery old and new, of the care of the children,
> of the overwhelming subject of clothing, and of moral instruction. ... What
> parallel have we in 'masculine literature? "None!", is the proud reply.
> "Men are people! Women, being 'the sex' have their limited feminine
> interests, their feminine point of view, which must be provided for. Men,
> however, are not restricted--to them belongs the world's literature!" (pp.
> 87-88).

In many ways, little has changed in this regard: Men and their exploits still

occupy the center of cultural life, while women's experiences and interests are set

aside as distinctly for women. And when we are shown women, they are rarely

multi-dimensional independent characters; more often, they are simply props for

men to save, earn, hate, or long after.[22]

Furthermore, Gilman finds it unsurprising that men excel in games and

sports as these sports are governed by rules that promote the violence and

competition glorified in normative masculinity. Because men have continually

chosen those women whose bodies meet their approval (and the choice has

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[22] Allison Bechdel's queer comic *Dykes to Watch Out For* inspired what has come
to be called the Bechdel Test. The Bechdel Test consists of three questions:
Does the text include two or more female characters who know each other's
names; do the characters know each other; and do they talk about anything
other than a man or men. An astounding proportion of America's most loved
and most profitable films and novels fail this simple measure.

historically been reserved to them), differences in physiology have been increasingly exaggerated such that women are increasingly shapely rather than muscular.

These physiological shifts are often coupled with sociocultural demands that further restrain women: While men's fashion has been almost entirely devoted to increased function, women's fashion often makes strenuous activity impossible and, at times, seems to glorify uselessness. Thorstein Veblen (1899/1994, p. 110) went so far as to theorize that women's fashion increasingly functioned as a form of conspicuous consumption: The high heels, sheer stockings, short skirts, constrictive foundation garments, the long nails, the long hair, and the makeup together make it nearly impossible imagine to a woman successfully doing any work whatsoever and, instead, make her a testament to her husband's ability to provide for the household entirely without her help.

Male privilege, enthroned in dominant modes of thought, law, and culture, has produced long-standing material inequalities between men and women. Though women have secured the legal right to vote, to hold office, and to work, men still hold the overwhelming majority of leadership positions in the public and private sectors. According to *Fortune* (2011), only 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women despite the fact that 35% of all MBAs are women. Women, who now surpass men in college attendance, still only occupy 16% of congressional seats.

The reasons for this disparity are manifold and difficult to isolate. It is clear, however, that patriarchal gender norms help structure attainment of positions and evaluation of performance in business and politics. To begin, males are often prepared for entry into business and politics in ways that females are not. Masculinity is often made synonymous with leadership while qualities purported to be feminine are often disciplined or criticized (Atwater, Carey, & Waldman, 2001). From a young age, males are trained to be competitive, stoic, self-motivated, and instrumental. The violent, competitive, achievement-focused activities that males take up during primary school and secondary school (e.g., football and wrestling) may be seen as training for manhood and life under capitalism. Females, on the other hand, are often ushered into cooperative, relatively harmonious, supportive activities (e.g., cheerleading and dance) in which victory is either a team objective or secondary to some other communal goal. In short, males are groomed for success within highly competitive capitalist markets that demand self-interested individuals who will compete ruthlessly for profit. This training also translates well to the world of politics, in which putatively masculine qualities like rugged individualism, competitiveness, and stoicism are important markers of electability for many Americans.[23]

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[23] An episode in Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign well illustrates this point. Though her positions rarely deviated from other

When women do secure employment, they still earn less for the same work than do men. According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2010, September), women earn less than men in every single state and, even in the most equitable states, typically earn no more than 80% of what men earn. The Center for American Progress Action Fund (2008, December) reports that, over the course of a forty year career, the average female worker will make $434,000 less than her average male counterpart.

Some of this gap is purportedly related to the different amenities women ask of their employers: Women tend to take more time off work, tend to work fewer long shifts, tend not to be willing to commute great distances, and tend not to do the most dangerous jobs (Farrell, 2001). In part, this is probably related to the fact that, while dominant notions about what a woman should and can be have

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mainstream Democrats, her initial stance was judged by many commentators to be too shrill, too tough to be electable. In an op-ed for *Salon*, Frances Kissling (2008) castigated Senator Clinton as someone who "has run as a stereotypical male." Conservative bulwark Rush Limbaugh claimed, "She sounds like a screeching ex-wife. … Men will know what I mean by this" (Media Matters, 2006, March 7). And MSNBC host Chris Matthews complained that Clinton's senatorial victory speech was "barn-burner speech, which is harder to give for a woman. . . . It can grate on some men when they listen to it, fingernails on a blackboard" (Wakeman, 2008). However, when the Senator became visibly emotional during a campaign stop in New Hampshire, familiar voices began claiming that she was too emotional (i.e., too feminine) to be president. Limbaugh (2008, January 7) described the Senator's display of emotion as both "calculated" and a play on female victimhood that "sets feminism back fifty years."

changed dramatically over the last century, popular conceptions of masculinity have remained largely unchanged: Heterosexual men often still expect their female partners to perform the traditional women's work of caring for the home and raising the children, regardless of their work outside the home.

The same attitudes about leadership and femininity that motivate the selection of men and women for leadership positions surely play a role in the way that women's labor is evaluated and compensated. In fact, women are often penalized for showing the sort of expertise that for which men are rewarded (Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2004). Many women are also inexperienced in the process of negotiation; and when they do bargain for compensation, women are also viewed more negatively than males who do the same (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Wade, 2001). Moreover, though women increasingly pursue higher education, they still do not pursue educations at the same rate as men in the hard sciences—areas where incomes are often the most impressive (Hanson, 1996).

Though this has hardly been an exhaustive analysis of male privilege, it is intended to provide context for the claim that American males occupy a position of relative social and material privilege compared with females. Despite significant progress made toward equity, men continue to hold nearly every elected office, to occupy the most powerful positions, and to earn more while they see their experiences represented as being of universal appeal and value. And it is

from this point that claims of male victimhood will be viewed in the chapters
ahead.

White Privilege

White privilege refers to the enduring social systems and structures that
produce social and material privilege for white people in comparison with people
of color.[24] While patriarchy and the disparity it produces persists, the inequality
produced by white privilege has been steadily worsening. In the following pages,
I shall attempt to provide a brief summary of the emergence and significance of
white privilege in the United States.

Race has proven a thorny subject to pin down: Not only is it difficult to
establish boundary conditions (e.g., determining exactly how much melanin is
required to be considered "black"), but race seems to fluctuate over time.
Individuals who now identify as white could not have made such a claim only
fifty years ago. Furthermore, the notion of race is not even particularly old, only

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[24] In *White* (1997), Richard Dyer reflects on the difficulty of speaking about
people who have historically been defined as black, colored, or non-white.
Because *black* leaves out Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and so many
others, Dyer immediately eschews it. And because *people of color* bears an
unpleasant similarity to *colored people*, Dyer unhappily settles on *non-white.* I
have elected to use *people of color*, recognizing the problematic similarity
between this term and *colored people* because it, at least, avoids identifying
people in terms of what they are not. It remains troublesome, though, if I am
interpreted as imagining only these people as having color. Surely, white
people have color too, even if it has long been advantageous to behave as
though whites are without such specificity.

reaching something like its present meaning in the 18th century (Hudson, 1996).

Race has also been deeply connected with the ideas of nationhood. Jane Samson (2005) argues that race often functioned as a means of firming up support for empire and colonization: Once possessed of a belief in their consubstantiality, citizens could more readily be persuaded to assent to the subjugation of out-groups who did not belong.

When Europeans began to venture out into uncharted[25] territory, they were not well prepared with a cognitive or symbolic apparatus for making sense of the peoples they encountered. The Bible did not explicitly mention such different-looking persons. Nor was it immediately clear to all observers that the differences in appearance were significant. Indeed, Europeans sometimes described their encounters with indigenous peoples without any notice of deviation in skin color or physiology (Samson, 2005, p. 13). Others, however, found the differences so striking as to describe indigenous peoples of the Americas as savages, as animals, and as barbarians (pp. 13-15). The choice to categorize these peoples as subhumans or beasts became problematic for science, which found few warrants for such a distinction, and for the Catholic Church, which was in the business of saving human souls for God.

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[25] Of course, this territory was uncharted only to these European explorers. Indigenous people likely had their own mappings of these spaces.

The notion of race proved a useful means of making these new creatures human and, thus, candidates for colonization and conversion, while simultaneously creating a justification for their mistreatment relative to other humans. The term *race* derives from the Latin *gens*—lineage or stock. Initially, there were held to be as many races as there were states: "Medieval and Renaissance authors commonly found as many 'peoples' as there were cities or kingdoms. … Every group in Europe and elsewhere had its own national temperament" (p. 248). In this early usage, race appears to be synonymous with present-day uses of *nationality*.

While Romans and Greeks were characterized as especially stoic or sanguine, "Africans represented a special case, for they roughly constituted a single 'race' even in the traditional sense of lineage" (Hudson, 1996, p. 249). Authors who lumped all the kingdoms of Africa into a single race were following a precedent set in the Old Testament (Gen. 9:18-29) in which all Africans are the progeny of Noah's cursed son, Ham. As such, it was held that these unfortunate people were inheritors of Ham's inferior lot and fit for their subordinate standing within the new colonial regime. As colonial expansion and the creep of slavery began disrupting indigenous cultures and breaking down kinship systems, it became significantly easier for Europeans to consider all Africans the same race

(Hudson, 1996, p. 251). By the Enlightenment, the notion of race had been so broadened that it was common to imagine there were a total of five races (p. 248).

These newly raced Africans and Native Americans were humans to be sure, but characterized as an inferior, coarser, and less noble lot. A variety of means were used to theorize the boundaries and significance of race. Thinkers like Montesquieu theorized a relationship between geography, race, and personality (Livingstone, 2002, p. 164). External physiological characteristics were often linked to metaphysical infirmities or ontological deficiencies. Montesquieu (1748/1989), reciting the available arguments for African slavery,[26] expressed doubt that such black bodies could have been endowed with pure souls.

According to other schemas, indebted to Aristotle, "African and American peoples were scorned as 'beastly' (or often as 'rustic') to the extent that they appeared to fall short of European ideas of urbanity and sophistication" (Hudson, 1996, p. 250). David Hume (1748) also speculated, in an embarrassing departure from empiricism, the inferiority of Africans on the basis of a supposed dearth of ingenuity.[27] His claim, in short, was that a warrant for the subjugation of Africans

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[26] Despite this apparent racism, Montesquieu is, in fact, imagining the arguments he might offer *if* he were in favor of African slavery.

[27] In this case, Hume is essentially affirming a proposition on the basis of a lack of evidence to the contrary. As an empiricist and a skeptic, Hume should have known better.

was to be found in the lack of sophistication in their cultures. In hindsight, it is

astounding to see how parochial and self-aggrandizing these criteria were: It was

taken as a matter of fact that contemporary European thought represented not only

the highest level of sophistication achieved by Europeans, but of all human

experience.[28]

> Theorists created additional categories of 'barbarians' in order to cope,
> using standards of political and social organization to locate different
> peoples in a scale of civilisation. The lowest category included peoples
> 'without king, without compacts, without magistrates or republic, and who
> changed their dwelling-place, or – if it were fixed – had one that
> resembled the cave of the wild beast' (Elliot, 1992: 49). (Samson, 2005, p.
> 14)

Others, apparently blind to the arbitrary nature of ideas like north and south,[29]

theorized that Africans were inherently inferior on the basis of their origins in the

southern hemisphere (Samson, 2005, p. 21). Perhaps most ghastly, Africans and

Native Americans were even declared inferior on the basis of their devastating

experiences with the diseases, such as small pox, that European visitors brought

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[28] Such imagined distinctions persist to this day, enshrined in the common use of
the terms First World and Third World to refer to countries on the basis of
industrialization and the penetration of global capital with the submerged
assumption that Western lives characterized by commercialism, commodity
consumption, and compartmentalization are universal goods.

[29] From space, there is no clear justification for terming one magnetic pole of a
planet north. Similarly, there is no warrant for flattening the earth's surface
into a two-dimensional map wherein the continuous land mass is neatly
cleaved into East and West.

with them (p. 22). These piecemeal observations and postulates would be given

further weight with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*

(1859) which provided the raw material for the argument that these seemingly

wild and unsophisticated peoples were, in fact, transitional, less evolved versions

of the humanity which had finally reached its apex in Western Europe.

Over and against ideas about dark-skinned people, a new racial identity

emerged in the colonies that would become the United States. Richard Dyer

(1997) writes about whiteness as a social construct which helped forge a distinctly

American identity:

> A sense of being white, of belonging to a white race, only widely
> developed in the USA in the nineteenth century as a part of the process of
> establishing US identity. The appeal to a common whiteness addressed
> European settlers, on the one hand over and against the indigenous reds
> and the imported blacks, and on the other over and above the
> particularities of the different European nations from which they had
> come. (p. 19)

Indeed, it is hard to imagine eighteenth-century Irish, Scottish, English, French,

German, and Spanish people overlooking their different systems of government,

languages, currencies, and cultures and concluding that they were all essentially

the same sort of people. But in the colonies that became the United States,

working-class European immigrants began constructing themselves as white,

particularly in opposition to slave labor.

Hobgood (2000) argues that working-class European immigrants constructed their new identities as whites by disciplining themselves to satisfy the demands of industrial capitalism.

> Forced to sell themselves piecemeal to the nineteenth-century factory owner, these workers sought to salvage their self-esteem by distinguishing themselves from former slaves. … In this way, white workers tried to convince themselves that if blacks were excluded from certain forms of labor, the demeaning work they endured was not actually wage slavery. (p. 43)

This performance of self-subordination created physiological and psychological suffering which had to be recast as virtue; whites achieved this rehabilitation by projecting their anxieties and suffering onto people of color, particularly "blacks." It is from this perspective that Hobgood interprets minstrelsy and blackface performances as moments of escape and vindication for whites.

The racism which emerged by the late 1700s helped to provide moral justification for the expanding institution of slavery in Western Europe and the "New World." Slavery was hardly a new institution; what was new was the way in which whole populations were deemed fit for slavery by virtue of their race. When the ancient Athenians took slaves, they were typically former adversaries who had surrendered to the superiority of Athens. And it was their failure on the battlefield which led Aristotle to surmise that these slaves were legitimately subjugated before their betters (Samson, 2005, p. 19). While many Europeans

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were also enslaved and sent to the colonies that would become the United States, most of these individuals were made slaves on the basis of crimes committed in their local parishes. But large-scale slavery in the US became about race rather than class or personal merit. When Western Europe, with Portugal at the fore, began enslaving and selling Africans, it did so on the basis of the notion that these peoples were less civilized, less human, and, thus, suited to slavery (p. 20).

Slavery was particularly important to the development of the colonies in what would become the United States of America. The first African slaves were brought to the "New World" by European explorers as early as the mid 1500s. Slavery made it possible for the American south to wrench profits from the labor-intensive business of farming cotton. By the end of the 19th century, approximately twelve million Africans had been moved to the West (Segal, 1995, p. 4). The wealth that these men, women, and children created was reserved for their white owners and their offspring who emerged as the wealthy upper classes of the American South.

Though the Emancipation Proclamation technically only applied to the territories held by the Confederacy, it betokened the beginning of the end of legalized American slavery (Bates, 2006). Unfortunately, the end of slavery was hardly the end of the reification of white supremacy in the US. Newly freed slaves were ejected from their former masters' property, often with nothing more

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than the clothes on their backs. Without savings, education, or even simple shelter, freed slaves often found themselves returning to plantations to work as sharecroppers.

During the Reconstruction era, progressives successfully enacted constitutional amendments to ban slavery, to guarantee African Americans equal protection under the law, and to ban racial discrimination. However, the end of Reconstruction and the removal of union forces from the south marked the beginning of a period in which Southern Democrats began to roll back these reforms by obfuscating the voter registration process and by passing a body of laws, collectively known as Jim Crow, which effectively segregated all public facilities in the South. This shift was legitimated by the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* where the court found segregation allowable provided equal facilities were provided. Under the "separate but equal" doctrine, African Americans were again made second-class citizens, denied the franchise by labyrinthine registration procedures, given staggeringly deficient resources for education and health care (despite the call for separate but equal facilities), and kept in line by the threat of violent retribution by tacitly empowered militias and vigilante groups.

Though the abolition and civil rights movements eventually won legal prohibition of slavery, the end of Jim Crow, and formal prohibition of

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discrimination on the basis of race, the racist ideologies that served as warrants

for four hundred years of racial oppression continue to operate in cultural

productions and performances. Peggy McIntosh (2004) has described the

centering of whiteness in contemporary culture as analogous to the way that

maleness and masculinity have become hegemonic. Just as men do not often

recognize the ways that they have been positioned to succeed, white people are

often unaware of the ways that systems of dominance work to continually make

whiteness and the experiences of white people normal and natural.

As with sexism, individual acts of explicitly hate-motivated discrimination

seem to be relatively uncommon. What remains pervasive, however, are the

policies and actions of social institutions which have the effect of reifying

longstanding inequalities. What also remains, at macro and micro levels of

society, is the ideological investment in whiteness as normal, unremarkable, and

inherently good. McIntosh (2004) strives to explain the ways that white privilege

operates by narrating a few examples of the ways that the ideology of whiteness

benefits some while marginalizing all others:

> I see a pattern running through the matrix of white privilege …
> assumptions which were passed on to me as a white person. There was
> one main piece of cultural turf; it was my own turf, and I was among those
> who could control the turf. My skin color was an asset for any move I was
> educated to want to make. I could think of myself as belonging in major
> ways, and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage,
> fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural

forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely. (p. 191)

McIntosh is laboring to make visible that which is so taken-for-granted as to be invisible—the notion that, for some people, skin color is never a problem. Being part of the mainstream, white people are free to consider themselves un-raced, unmarked, just normal people. As Richard Dyer (1997) explains, "Whites are people whereas other colours are something else. … At the level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race" (p. 2). This disavowal of race allows whites to imagine their advantages—social, economic, and political—as being solely the product of individual effort and luck. It also allows them to recast the crushing poverty, unemployment, recidivism, and homelessness that disproportionately affect people of color as the results of individual failings.[30]

Having anointed themselves the norm against the particularities of people of color, white people have represented their cultural performances and productions as being of universal interest. As McIntosh (2004) notes, colleges

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[30] It is instructive recall the bootstrap individualism common in conservative political thought as exemplified in contemporary Tea Party rhetoric. The notion of the self-made man, the rugged individualist who achieves on the basis of his own ingenuity and work ethic, makes a great deal of sense to a nation of whites who have been trained not to see the systems that provide advantage to them.

have filled their catalogues with courses in the study of white writers, white composers, white leaders, and white theorists—these specialized courses are known as Literature 101, Music History 110, World History 100, and Philosophy 107. The power of privilege has meant never having to specify exactly whose literature, music, history, and philosophy are valued.[31]

The impacts of white privilege extend far beyond the cultural; whites experience astounding relative privilege politically and economically. Though African Americans have long made up over 10% of the population, they are underrepresented at nearly every level of government. This is even more true for Hispanic people: Despite making up significant percentages of the population in southern states, Hispanic people are still overwhelmingly represented by white politicians.

Equally as pressing, people of color continue to earn far less than do white people. In 2009, only five of Fortune's top 500 companies were headed by African Americans. Ursula M. Burns, head of Xerox, was the only African American woman to make the list. The disparity is hardly limited to top ranks either: In 2004, the typical African American family earned roughly 58% of the

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[31] From time to time, angry students in my critical theory classes have complained, "Why do we have to have Black History Month? What makes them so special? When do we get to have white history month?" Because whiteness almost always goes unmarked, these students are often sincerely unaware of the way that every month is White History month in most schools.

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average white family's income (MSNBC, 2007, November 13). This is actually

worse than conditions in 1974, when African American families earned roughly

63% what white families earned[32].

     Furthermore, African Americans still do not pass their economic

achievements on to their children in the way that whites typically do. According

to the Economic Mobility Project (2009), only 33% of African American children

are likely to surpass their parents in terms of economic success; conversely,

nearly 66% of white children will outperform their parents. This means that

African Americans are far less likely to accrue and pass wealth along in the form

of estates or family property. According to the Institute on Assets and Social

Policy at Brandeis University (2010, May), the gap between whites and African

Americans has only worsened in the last three decades. In 2010, the average

white family had a net worth of approximately $100,000. This number represents

a five-fold increase since 1984. The average African American family had a net

worth of $5,000, up slightly from $4,000 in 1984.

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[32] Much of this increasing inequality is due to white women's new earning power.
During the intervening 30 years, both white men and African American men's
earnings remained flat or fell. White men's incomes dropped from $41,885 to
$40,081 while African American men's incomes tumbled from $29,095 to
$25,600. African American men continue to earn less because they are often
underemployed. White women's earnings grew by nearly 500% while African
American women's earnings roughly doubled over the same period.

Over the past few pages, I have attempted to provide evidence sufficient to warrant the assertion that whiteness has been repeatedly and systematically privileged in American culture and that this privilege manifests itself culturally, politically, and economically. Over a period of less than two hundred years, people of color have won important battles on the road to equality— emancipation, civil rights, and affirmative action initiatives stand as testimony— but the playing field has hardly been leveled: People of color are still largely invisible in popular and high culture, they remain chronically underrepresented in political venues and may be as much as twenty five times poorer than their white counterparts. In future chapters, when I examine claims of white victimhood, it will be with an awareness of the stark inequalities that still characterize life for Americans of color.

Christian Privilege

Although the US Constitution explicitly forbids the establishment of a national religion, it remains common to hear pundits refer to ours as a Christian nation, to see elected officials endorsing Christianity, and to see public spaces decorated for Christian holidays.[33] Indeed, it is easy to see the myriad ways that Christian values and practices have become hegemonic in contemporary

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[33] E.g., The White House has frequently sponsored an annual Easter egg roll. And in my home state, former governor George W. Bush announced June 10, 2000 as "Jesus Day."

American society, "constituting a seemingly invisible, unearned, and largely unacknowledged array of benefits accorded to Christians, with which they often unconsciously walk through life as if effortlessly carrying a knapsack tossed over their shoulders" (Blumenfeld, 2006, p. 195).[34] Christian privilege, manifest in dominant ideology, creates real legal, economic, and cultural inequalities for those who will not or cannot identify or pass as Christian.

Despite constitutional guarantees to the contrary and significant evidence against such an assertion, it has long been possible to claim the United States as a Christian nation.[35] Concurrent with such claims is the submerged assumption that Christianity is superior to any other set of beliefs or philosophy. As I have already argued, these two convictions served as warrants for the establishment

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[34] The present discussion of Christian privilege should not be interpreted as a wholesale dismissal of faith traditions as inherently anti-progressive or anti-democratic. Quakers, the Amish, and the Catholic Church, for example, have often devoted themselves to advocating for peace, social justice, and restorative justice on the basis of a sincere commitment to Christian principles of compassion, mercy, and equality under God.

[35] The warrant for such a claim is typically found in references made toward "God" in the founding fathers' writings. However, Richard Dawkins (2006, pp. 60-69) refutes these claims on three fronts: first, several founding fathers, e.g., Jefferson and Hamilton, were explicitly opposed to Christianity; second, it is quite likely when God is referenced, it is a secular or naturalist God compatible with Deism and akin to that found in Spinoza, rather than the vengeful God of Abrahamic religions; finally, the overwhelming evidence suggests that these men were intent on creating an explicitly secular nation in direct response to the turmoil created by state religion in Europe.

and expansion of slavery in the West and later found their fullest expression in the

notion of Manifest Destiny—the idea that God has specifically blessed the United

States and wishes it to expand to the limits of the continent. American presidents

frequently cited Manifest Destiny as authorization for the steady expansion of US

territory via treaty and annexation—that is to say, theft—of lands occupied by

indigenous people.

While Manifest Destiny is no longer an explicit part of contemporary

political rhetoric, Christofascism[36] continues to steer political deliberation and

legislation, economics, and popular culture in the West, creating privilege for

God's chosen people and immiseration for the rest. Though American slavery and

the devastation of Native American culture stand as the most ghastly results of

Christofascism, they are hardly the only ones. During World War II, the United

States interned over 112,000 Japanese Americans in concentration camps around

the country (Blumenfeld, 2006, p. 197). Curiously, the United States did not

imprison German Americans or Italian Americans, despite the fact that Germany

[36] Hedges (2007) employs this term to draw a parallel between contemporary
fundamentalist Christians who wish to see the US become an authoritarian
state guided and authorized by Christianity's tenets and radical Islamists—
termed Islamofascists by the American right wing—who favor authoritarian
Muslim theocratic regimes. As Hedges sees it, both groups support
increasingly concentration of power in the state which is to enforce God's law.
Though their holy books differ, both groups are looking transform the state into
an arm of their religion and to empower it to regulate the citizenry such that
God's will is done.

and Italy were equally at war with the US at that time. Nor were the Germans and

Italians represented so viciously in US propaganda which typically caricatured the

Japanese as myopic, buck-toothed, diminutive, and conniving.

Christofascism has also meant that Christian practices and prohibitions

have been translated into law. Undoubtedly, the most obvious example of

Christofascism in law has been the prohibition of homosexual marriage in

practically every state in the union. Such legislation is typically based upon

references to tradition, morality, or family values. In each case, the missing term

is Christian: *Christian* tradition, *Christian* morality, and *Christian* family values

often prohibit homosexuality.[37] Christofascists are rarely as explicit about the

extent of their convictions as Alabama Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore, who

authored a concurring opinion approving stripping a lesbian mother child custody

on the basis of her sexual orientation:

> Homosexual conduct is, and has been, considered abhorrent, immoral,
> detestable, a crime against nature, and a violation of the laws of nature and
> of nature's God upon which this Nation and our laws are predicated. Such
> conduct violates both the criminal and civil laws of this State and is
> destructive to a basic building block of society-the family. The law of
> Alabama is not only clear in its condemning such conduct, but the courts
> of this State have consistently held that exposing a child to such behavior

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[37] Interestingly, Christianity also expressly forbids a number of other practices
(e.g., cursing one's parents, sexual intercourse during menstruation, shaving,
eating pork, wearing blended fabrics, eating shrimp and lobster) with equal
force. Somehow, the Christian right has not seen it fit to legislate away these
abominations (Leviticus 18:22, 20:9, 20:18, 19:17, 11:17, 19:19, 11:10).

> has a destructive and seriously detrimental effect on the children. It is an inherent evil against which children must be protected. (*Ex Parte H.H*, 2002)

In this short passage, Moore evidences Christofascism's tenets with aplomb: He imagines Christian belief as unimpeachable, describes ours as a Christian nation, and insists that Christian beliefs and practices be enforced on all Americans, in this case using Christian dogma to determine a mother's moral fitness. In fact, Moore goes on to suggest that the State "carries the power of the sword, that is, the power to prohibit conduct with physical penalties, such as confinement and even execution." And, the state "must use that power to prevent the subversion of children toward this lifestyle, to not encourage a criminal lifestyle." In other words, Moore finds that the state is authorized to go so far as to confine or execute homosexuals in order to prevent them from "subverting" children toward homosexuality which has been made synonymous with criminality.

Political leaders encouraging the enforcement of Sharia law in the Middle East are typically—and rightly, I would contend—characterized as extremists worthy of considerable concern. Yet, Justice Moore and many others have been able, without much protest, to suggest the execution of those who violate the dictums of Christianity. In fact, the ability to produce evidence of "mainstream" Christian faith appears to be a prerequisite for entry to American politics. During President Barrack Obama's 2008 campaign, the Harvard graduate and Senator was

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repeatedly called upon the prove that he was not, in fact, secretly a Muslim and, later, that his Christian church was not too different from mainline Protestantism. According to the Pew Research Center (2001, January 5), 86% of all elected representatives of the 112th Congress identified with mainline Christianity.[38] Another 7.3% identified as Jewish and less than 4% identified with any other faith tradition. None identified as atheist.

In many states, blue laws demand that citizens comport themselves in accordance with Biblical mandate, refraining from work or vice on Sundays (Laband & Hendry Heinbuch, 2008, pp. 37-156). Though the vast majority of laws which ban working on Sunday or the sale of particular goods have now vanished, restrictions on the purchase of alcohol remain. In Texas, for example, liquor is not sold between the hours of nine o'clock in the evening and ten in the morning or at all on the Christian day of worship or Christmas day. In many states, individual counties have further strengthened these laws to ban the sale of alcohol entirely. A number of states still ban hunting on Sundays as well.[39]

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[38] By "mainline," Pew means Protestantism and Catholicism.

[39] The National Rifle Association (NRA, 2005, March 14) reports that seven states—Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, and Connecticut—still ban hunting entirely on Sundays. Additionally, Maryland, South Carolina, North Carolina, and West Virginia permit limited hunting on a few Sundays during deer season or restrict hunters to private property.

Though most Americans are so accustomed to these restrictions that they hardly seem objectionable, it is hard to imagine the response to a new bill banning the sale of non-Kosher foods on Saturday, or the sale of beef on holy days observed by Hindus. One can easily imagine the complaints that would arise: *Why are we required to observe a faith that isn't ours? Why do they need the law to mandate their faith? What happened to the "separation of church and state?"*[40] But yet, this is exactly what has been done to non-Christians.

Hegemonic Christianity has also infiltrated public education. As a function of federal and state government, institutions of public education have an obligation to avoid appearing to endorse or establish religion, yet "even a cursory review of the public academic or employment calendar illustrates the centrality of Christian holidays; … inherent in the organization of the academic calendar in this way is the suggestion that everyone celebrates Christmas" to some degree or another (Clark, Vargas, Shlosser, & Alimo, 2002, p. 52). Clark et al. sharply remind readers that this is no superficial complaint: Exemplary attendance is clearly linked to desirable outcomes in the workplace and in the classroom. The result of the present arrangement is that Christians are always already assured

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[40] Schlosser (2003, p. 46) points out that even the phrase "separation of church and state" suggests the tacit understanding that there is but one religion from which the state is to be kept separate; and the use of the word "church" (rather than synagogue, temple, shrine, place of worship, etc.) further clarifies the identity of that religion.

ample leave for religious observance while non-Christians must frequently choose between their religious obligations or their educational and occupational obligations. This is also the case with regards to the typical American work week which regiments labor and vacation such that the Christian day of worship is also a day of vacation. Muslims, who would typically gather at their mosques on Friday, are not accorded this convenience.

Because they have successfully represented themselves as normal Americans, Christians do not typically have to specify their religion or the accommodations their faith obliges. And when Christianity is mentioned, it is almost always with reverence and positive regard; so long as it does not deviate from mainstream Protestant belief, Christianity a default position which arouses no suspicion. This invisibility, a sort of un-marked-ness, provides numerous cultural advantages. Lewis Schlosser (2003, pp. 48-49) inspired by Peggy McIntosh's work on white privilege, offers an abbreviated list of Christian privileges: never worrying that one's financial success will be attributed to the greed of her or his religious group; confidence that one's religious group will be included in chronicles of civilization; freedom from accusations of self-interest when speaking on the issue of Christian privilege; freedom to ignore non-Christian perspectives without reproach; the expectation of widely available instruction on one's religion; freedom from worry about the repercussions of

disclosing one's religion; confident expectation that school activities will expose

one's children to the imagery and iconography of one's own religion; freedom to

endorse one's own religion (e.g., the display of a bumper sticker or t-shirt) without

fear of vandalism or attack; and confidence that the God referenced in the mass

media is one's own. Christians also know that the God (never Gods) who appears

in the Pledge of Allegiance, on US currency, and on the great seal of the United

States is always theirs. Likewise, when primary school teachers are encouraged

to teach "Intelligent Design," the intelligence is always understood to be a

Christian God. Schlosser's list continues at length, but the overarching sense is

that being a Christian in the US means being normal, being accepted, never

having to ask for accommodation, and being represented widely and positively.

Though work on Christian privilege remains in relative infancy, it seems

clear already that hegemonic Christianity, embodied in Manifest Destiny and

Christofascism, has produced significant economic, legal, political, and cultural

inequalities that have positioned mainstream Christians at the center of American

life and marginalized all others. The wages of Christian privilege are staggering:

To it we can ascribe blame, in part, for American slavery, the destruction of

Native American cultures, the internment of more than 112,000 Japanese

American citizens, the often violent suppression of voices and bodies that deviate

from Christian morality, and the continuing operation of a proto-theocracy that

routinely denies access to all but the faithful. When, in a future chapter, this project takes up the analysis of claims of Christian victimhood, it will be with an awareness of the ways that Christian privilege operates by affirming Christianity while, at the same time, denying its specificity.

Chapter 4

THE WAR ON CHRISTIANITY

Over the last few years, and particularly with the increasing popularity of

conservative talk radio and the Fox News network, it has become common for

right-leaning commentators to speak of the "War on Christianity" or the "War on

Christmas."[41] These tag-lines refer to the claim made by Christians that their

rights to worship and to live according to the dictates of their religion are under

attack. Examples of this argument are manifold: It appears in conservative radio

broadcasts, in popular press, in stump speeches, on bumper stickers, and on

homegrown web sites. This chapter is devoted to analyzing three disparate texts

that forward this argument: John Gibson's *The War on Christmas* is a best-selling

meditation on the persecution of Christianity and Christmas in particular; the

Alliance Defense Fund's slick web site encourages Christians to protest the

abridgment of their religious freedoms and donate to legal fights over prayer in

school and the place of Christian belief in public policy and the judiciary; and the

Jeremiah Project is an independent website devoted to proclaiming Christian

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[41] In 2005, Fox News's Bill O'Reilly began a now annual campaign decrying a
"War on Christmas" which he claimed was "all part of the secular progressive
agenda" (Media Matters, 2005, November 21). The claim was common
enough in 2005 to warrant coverage and parody by John Stewart (2005, June
25) and *The Daily Show*. In 2006, the *Washington Post* reported the increasing
popularity of such claims. In March of that year, Rick Scarborough, a
conservative radio personality, led a conference entitled "The War on
Christians and the Values Voter." The conference was attended by Republican
representatives Sam Brownback, Tom DeLay, former candidate Gary Bauer,
and ERA opponent Phyllis Schlafly (Krattenmaker, 2006, March 26).

prophesy and combatting the "War on Christianity." For each text, I shall provide

an account of the major claims made with particular attention to understanding the

ways the text seems to enact counterpublicity, i.e., describing Christians as a

persecuted or marginalized group and urging an oppositional stance toward the

state. Following these individual treatments, I offer a synthesis which asks about

the ideological commitments that found and are constituted by the arguments

commonly found in these texts. In particular, this means asking about the

unspecified assumptions, the implied audiences, negated audiences, and

submerged values offered.

The War on Christmas

If *Fox News* anchor John Gibson is to be believed, a new form of

persecution is now underway in these United States. Gibson claims that forces,

led by the intellectual elite and girded by a corrupt system, have been massed to

push this group out of mainstream American culture and back into the shadows.

In fact, he characterizes society's relentless attack on this group as tantamount to

an all-out *war*. Is Gibson sympathetic to the cause of Muslim-Americans in post-

9/11 society? Does he worry about deeply-rooted histories of racism which have,

in some corners, been reactivated or strengthened in the wake of the election of

the USA's first African American president? Perhaps Gibson worries about the

continuing fight led by individuals and organizations to secure the right to

publicly and legally declare loving commitment to one's partner, regardless of sex

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or gender? No—John Gibson is worried about the Christians. His book, *The War on Christmas: How the Liberal Plot to Ban the Sacred Christian Holiday is Worse Than You Thought*, seeks to expose an alleged Leftist conspiracy bent on getting rid of Christianity.

Gibson (2005) devotes nearly 200 pages to the task of chronicling the increasing persecution faced by Christians in the US. Pulling no punches, Gibson intones menacingly:

> Christmas is under attack in such a sustained and strategized manner that there is, no doubt, a war on Christmas. It is no longer permissible to wish anyone Merry Christmas. That's too exclusive, too insensitive. … Literally any sign of Christmas in public can lead to complaints, litigation, angry protest, threats, and bruised feelings. And every year we are treated to the sight of more limitations placed on Christmas. (emphasis original, pp. xix – xx)

And though this volume centers on controversies directly related to Christmas, it is clear to Gibson that "it's really a war on Christianity" (p. 160). Throughout this polemic, Christians are painted as a persecuted public, increasingly castigated for simply wishing to practice their faith much as any Muslim, Jew, Hindu, and Buddhist might.

Who is responsible for this persecution? Gibson (2005) implicates a army of professions, demographics, and institutions in what he considers to be a conspiracy:

> No, it's not just the liberal Jews.[42] … The wagers of this war on Christmas are a cabal of secularists, so-called humanists, trial lawyers, cultural

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[42] This clause reveals much: Gibson expects that his audience already knows that

relativists, and liberal, guilt-wracked Christians. … Providing the legal muscle and pretzel logic to the anti-Christmas warriors are brand-name liberal institutions such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai Brith (ADL), and the Americans for Separation of Church and State (ASCS). (emphasis added, p. xxii)

Each chapter marks a recent skirmish in the War on Christmas: An incensed Gibson reports that, in Georgia, pressure from the ACLU has prompted a school board to remove "Christmas Vacation" from the school district's calendar; in Kansas, representations of Santa Claus have been banned from Baldwin City schools; in Plano, Texas, the colors red and green have been banned from school-sponsored winter parties; in Eugene, Oregon, Christmas trees have been removed from City Hall offices; the Dean of the Indiana Law School was compelled to remove a Christmas tree erected in its main building; and in Maplewood, New Jersey, school district officials banned a field trip to see "A Christmas Carol," and even instrumental versions of Christmas music were banned in schools.

Typically, Gibson reflects bitterly upon moments where public officials buckle under pressure from "a collection of radical secularists, led by local chapters of the ACLU" (p. 16), a "campaign by the ACLU and People for the American Way and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State" (p. 30), overly-deferential moderate Christians (p. 46), school district policies crafted in fear of the ACLU (p. 60), overly-sensitive city employees who wish to avoid controversy (p. 86), and the predictably liberal mass media which spotlights any potential

the "liberal Jews" are partially at fault. His writing suggests that his task is, in part, to explain *who else* is also behind this conspiracy.

endorsement of Christianity by a state agent. At each exigency, Gibson locates

common sense in the corner of the persecuted Christians. Gibson claims that

what we are witnessing is the hateful expurgation of Christianity from public life

at the behest of a rather narrow minority of radically leftist political voices.

Gibson is clearly talking to a specific audience. His comments make it

clear that he expects conservative Christian readers who are already aware of the

dangers presented by groups like the ACLU and who already expect that Jewish

people are, at least partly, behind attacks against Christianity. When he

chronicles stories of state employees being prevented from installing Christian

beliefs and practices in government institutions, Gibson expects readers to be

outraged. That is, the text hails an auditor who not only identifies as Christian,

but expects to see her or his religion projected onto the state.

Practically everything about this polemic declares an oppositional stance.

If one listens carefully, one can almost hear Kenneth Burke (1937/1984)

chuckling at Gibson's choice to cast controversies over the appropriate roles of

representations of Christmas in terms of a war. If our choice of language

represents an attitude toward life, Gibson could hardly have made his subscription

to the tragic frame more apparent. Perhaps worried that the previous 180 pages

had not yet raised the reader's hackles, Gibson (2005) closes his tome with a fiery

call to arms:

> Those who would ban Christmas and Christians should not mistake the
> signs on the horizon. The Christians are coming to retake their place in

the public square, and the most natural battleground in this war is Christmas. The war on Christmas is joined. (p. 186)

One can hardly imagine how this book might have read with a title like, "The Confusion Over Christmas," or "The Debate on Christmas." To describe a social controversy as a war is to evidence an attitude toward the exigency within which the interlocutors are soldiers on a mission to destroy each other; where practically all means of violence are acceptable if in service of the larger mission; and where only I Win-You Lose outcomes are sought. And while the use of war as a metaphor for social struggle or controversy is hardly new—we have witnessed the War on Crime, the War on Drugs, the War on AIDS, and the War on Poverty—the invocation of the war metaphor is particularly powerful in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001.

To term this a war, particularly in relation to a question of the public practice of faith, necessarily raises the specter of Holy War. To do so is to recall the crusades of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries as President George W. Bush did when he used the word *crusade* to refer to the War on Terror following the events of September 11, 2001. Though the president may have only hoped to suggest the magnitude of his resolve, its use was particularly alarming for many, particularly in the Muslim world, whose cultures were repeatedly disrupted by the bloody campaigns to restore the Holy Land to Christian control. So when Gibson describes a "War on Christianity" and calls for Christians to join this fight, some

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may well hear him as condoning a modern crusade that would retake America, a new Holy Land, for Christ.

The Alliance Defense Fund

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) bills itself as "a servant organization that provides the resources that will keep the door open for the spread of the Gospel through the legal defense of religious freedom, the sanctity of life, marriage and the family" (ADF, 2010a). Though the ADF was founded in 1994, its chief architects were seasoned conservative Christian evangelicals Bill Bright, Larry Burkett, James Dobson, James Kennedy, and Marlin Maddoux: Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ, an evangelical organization that preached to college students; Burkett headed Christian Financial Concepts and, later, Crown Financial Ministries, non-profits which encouraged the employment of Christian principles in the handling of finances; Dobson founded Focus on the Family, a non-profit that advocated for prayer in public schools, the restriction of marriage to heterosexual couples, the prohibition of abortion, and promoted the notion that United States is a Christian nation; Kennedy founded Evangelism Explosion International, Coral Ridge Ministries, and the Center for Reclaiming America for Christ, evangelical organizations that projected his Presbyterian messages to international audiences; and Maddoux headed International Christian Media and hosted Point of View, a successful Christian radio network and call-in radio show. These organizations were not dedicated to the simple mission of preserving a

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space of private observation of religious belief or for ensuring private individuals the right to public worship; they were, by and large, dedicated to evangelizing, converting, and pushing for a Christofascist state in which public policy would mirror Christian dogma.

The ADF produces a slick, professional-looking web site that seems to mimic mainstream print media in terms of composition and layout. In fact, the site most closely resembles a pamphlet or mailing for one of the major political parties. Throughout the site, the ADF culls most of its aesthetic from Americana, wrapping each page in star-spangled navy banners and red for sub-headings and accents. The omni-present ADF logo pairs the organization's acronym with two slogans: "Defending our first liberty" and "A legal alliance defending the right to hear and speak the Truth." Actual content is displayed within a single wide column of san-serif text, accented with small photos (typically 250 by 180 pixels). Occasionally, particularly powerful or inflammatory quotations are italicized and set in scarlet. In addition to pages detailing the ADF's origins, calls for donations, and legal support, the site includes a bombastic evocation of the "War on Christianity."

As in Gibson's tract, the ADF locates the ACLU as a particularly dangerous enemy to religious freedom in America. Superimposed over a photograph of a white-appearing male clutching a bible, the following text appears:

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> In schools and classrooms, offices and shops, public buildings, and even churches … those who believe in God are increasingly threatened, punished, and silenced. … For decades, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and other radical anti-Christian groups have been on a mission to eliminate public expression of our nation's faith and heritage. By influencing the government, filing lawsuits, and spreading the myth of the so-called "separation of church and state," the opposition has been successful at forcing its leftist agenda on Americans. (ADF, 2010a)

As in Gibson's writing, it is clear that the ADF perceives Christians to be a persecuted group. There are two interesting moments in this passage: the identification of victims and the naming of attackers. The victims in this passage are referred to first as "those who believe in God" and later, though indirectly, as Christians.[43] Though more attention will be devoted to this odd conflation later, it should suffice, for now, to note that it occurs. The ACLU, famous for its defense of John Scopes, opposition to interracial marriage bans (*Loving v. Virginia*), hardline support for free-speech (e.g., Skokie), opposition to same-sex marriage bans, and opposition to the teaching of Christian dogma in the guise of "Intelligent Design" makes a highly visible and easy target for Christian fundamentalists. Its hardline libertarian stance has led the ACLU to defend widely unpopular figures, e.g., neo-Nazis, alleged pornographers, and even Rush Limbaugh, against popular sentiment.

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[43] The ADF does not mention anti-Hindu, anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim groups, or any other hate groups, only anti-Christians, which suggests that the victims are, in fact, Christians.

It is not immediately clear who those "other radical anti-Christian groups" might be, but their intent to destroy Christianity in America is evidenced by a list of attacks on Christians' religious freedom:

> A then-second-grade student at a public school in New Jersey was told that she could not sing "Awesome God" in an after-school talent show. A pastor of a church in Arizona was ordered to stop holding meetings or Bible studies in his private home. Five Christian men were threatened with arrest for sharing their faith on a public sidewalk in Virginia. A Christian student at a university in Missouri was threatened with having her degree withheld because she refused to write a letter to the state legislature expressing her support for homosexual adoption. A pro-life nurse at a hospital in New York was forced to participate in a late-term abortion, even though her workplace had agreed in writing to honor her religious convictions. (ADF, 2010b)

Interestingly, the notions of public and private figure in most of these vignettes. The texts presume it obvious that both public and private spheres are stable and well-defined. Furthermore, they presume that in both spheres, individuals should have unlimited license to practice and evangelize. If the importance of these grievances is not already clear to readers, the ADF provides two further prompts: a rhetorical question and a warning. The web site asks readers to extrapolate from these injustices: "Can you imagine what tomorrow will look like in America if the opposition is not stopped today?" A quote, set in scarlet italics, from former President Ronald Reagan follows: "If we ever forget that we're one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under." Again the message is clear: Ours was once a Christian nation; and if the ACLU has its way, the US, along with the religion that keeps it on the path of righteousness, will enter decline.

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The ADF closes its appeal[44] with a call to action that hails readers to take their place in a pivotal struggle. Next to a photo of a young white-appearing girl, the following text appears:

> We must continue the fight for religious freedom and the right of conscience, so that the life-changing message of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed and transform our culture. Each win for the Body of Christ is a loss for the opposition. It's that black and white. Will you help us win? (2010b)

While the ADF prefers to frame itself as a response to the creeping advances of radical liberal secularists, this final call to action goes far beyond advocating for defense of civil liberties. The appeal begins with talk of freedoms and the right of conscience but concludes with a mission. The ADF is calling not for a defense but a transformation of the status quo; it is calling for an evangelical crusade to turn back the tide of pluralism and "win souls" for Christ.

A number of important moments in this text deserve consideration as ideological fragments of conservative counterpublicity. First, the conflation of "those who believe in God" with Christians is emblematic of the sort of Christian universalism commonly identified in scholarship on Christian privilege. When the ADF uses "those who believe in God" interchangeably with Christians, it fails to account for the many millions of people who believe in a God but do not wish to see American culture transformed by the word of Christ. In fact, it does not

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[44] It is important to note here that my treatment of this text is limited, for the sake of providing a reasonably discreet text, to the contents of the ADF's web page devoted explicitly to "Defending Christianity." In practice, however, readers likely augment this text with any number of additional materials.

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even imagine those who believe in the same God and, yet, do not exalt Christ as the son of God. This is only possible when Christianity occupies a position of privilege such that Christians experience little trouble thinking of their God as The God.

A second moment that should give readers pause occurs when the ADF provides a litany of indignities foisted upon Christians. Presented as "attacks on freedom," the list includes a young girl who was told she could not sing a Christian worship song at a school-sponsored talent show, five men who were asked to stop proselytizing on a sidewalk, and a pastor who was told to stop holding church meetings in his home. Given a nation whose constitution explicitly bars the government from acting in any way that would constitute establishment or endorsement of a religion, it would seem obvious that institutions of the state, i.e., public schools, have an obligation to avoid seeming to endorse religion in a school-sponsored event. The five Virginia men who were told to cease their sidewalk preaching are presented by the ADF as citizens exercising their religious freedom; however, police officers are equally obligated to protect the rights of other citizens to proceed on their way without being unduly accosted by evangelicals. The case of the pastor turns out to be one of simple legality: The pastor chose to reside in Gilbert, Arizona, a suburb with considerable zoning regulation. Specifically, Gilbert properties zoned for homes are governed by a Land Development Code that explicitly bars church meetings in

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homes on the basis of the traffic, parking, and safety concerns generated by the holding of such meetings in areas not built with such events in mind. Importantly, no one prevented the pastor from preaching in his church or from praying in his home; the city simply insisted the pastor not allow his religious events to infringe upon his community's right to the enjoyment of their homes and yards as well.

The phenomenon operant in each of these examples is a gross neglect of the notions of public decorum or public morality. The ADF complains about the restriction of Christians' rights, but cannot see the way congregating in residential areas, evangelizing in major walkways and thoroughfares, and installing religion into state activities infringes upon the rights of others to live their lives without coercion to think and believe as Christians would have them. This kind of inconsideration is, perhaps, explained if not excused by reference to the prior discussion of Christian privilege: If one takes Christianity to be an inherent good, an unimpeachably valuable and superior set of beliefs and practices, then it becomes unthinkable that enacting Christian worship and evangelism could be anything other than a public good.

Before departing this text, one other point should be made: Despite the strong language that begins the argument, it seems that when the ADF warns of "radical anti-Christian groups," it means local housing associations, local school districts, and peace officers. To say that these institutions do not explicitly announce an anti-Christian agenda does not necessarily preclude the possibility

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that they are discriminating against Christians.[45] However, the alleged attackers

involved in these examples are not just members of seemingly pedestrian groups

but are groups that are often largely Christian themselves.

For example, the city of Gilbert, Arizona, which prevented a pastor from

conducting church meetings in his home, is overwhelmingly Christian and, based

upon the voting patterns of its residents, was ranked the 7th most conservative city

in America by the Bay Area Center for Voting Research (BACVR, 2005). The

regulation cited in the decision to restrict the pastor's in-home meetings was the

Land Development Code—a text authored by the publicly elected and largely

conservative town council and mayor. Council members Dave Crozier, Jenn

Daniels, Les Presmyk, John Sentz, and Steve Urie, together with Mayor John

Lewis and Vice Mayor Linda Abbott, promptly issued a public statement

explaining that the Land Development Code had been intended to help ease

traffic, parking, and safety concerns and would, thus, be amended to eliminate this

sort of situation in the future and to correspond with the town's family values

image: "Gilbert is known as a family-oriented community and our faith groups

are a vital part of our Town. We want to keep it that way" (Town of Gilbert,

Arizona, 2010, March 15). What one finds, then, is hardly an attempt to constrain

or restrict religious practice but, in this case, a broadly worded document aimed at

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[45] Indeed, many of the most ardent segregationists did their work through
organizations with benign or even progressive-sounding names like the
Citizens' Council of America, now known as the Council of Conservative
Citizens.

reducing traffic and promoting safety in a sleepy white suburb. And when that document created even the slightest inconvenience for area Christians, local government moved quickly to amend the document.

From this example, it ought to be clear that the ADF's claims of persecution warrant skepticism. It seems that the ADF is loath to specifically mention the radical anti-Christians oppressing the Gilbert pastor because they do not exist. What exists in this case is a relatively benign local governing body which largely works to keep peace and order and is also primarily staffed by Christians. And when police officers stop evangelists from imposing upon passers-by, it is likely that they do so not on the basis of a radical anti-Christian agenda but on their obligation to keep order and safety on busy thoroughfares. And when educators prevent the staging of explicitly sectarian songs in state-run events, it is also likely that they act on the basis of their obligation to prevent the intertwining of church and state, not a desire to eradicate Christianity from American life. Over and again, I find that those who would restrict these Christians seem to be acting in the service of maintaining a public sphere rather than attempting to restrict it; given these considerations, it becomes difficult to understand the ADF's claims of persecution as counterpublicity.

The Jeremiah Project

The Jeremiah Project (JP) represents a vernacular text which forcefully forwards the "War on Christianity." Site founder, Vic Bilson, describes JP as a

"ministry of proclaiming God's Word to a lost and dying world" (JP, 2008a).

Like its biblical namesake, the Jeremiah Project warns readers that contemporary society has strayed from God's will and must reform or suffer dire consequences. While others have framed the "War on Christianity" as a matter of constitutionality, legality, or national welfare, the JP constructs it as a forewarning of armageddon.

In contrast to the slick layout and red-white-and-blue patriotism of the ADF, the JP announces itself as grassroots before the first word is read. Centered on a white background, "Jeremiah Project" appears in Tahoma font with simulated orange flames filling each letter. Beneath the logo, a simple text toolbar directs visitors to the various parts of the site. Photography on the site is sparse, low-resolution, and typically of amateur quality. The vast majority of each page, however, consists of long blocks of single-space text, occasionally punctuated by more flaming orange text, prophesying the existence of a conspiracy that will destroy American culture, the immanent rise of a "New World Order," and the need for "Culture War."

At the center of this conspiracy and collapse is the United States as a Christian nation. While Christianity is everywhere under assault, the JP (2008b) describes the attack in the US as steadily worsening:

> Never before in American history have Christians experienced being hated for following Jesus Christ as they are today. Here in America the persecution of Christians has not yet reached the feverish pitch as in other parts of the world. There is still a Constitution that protects them and

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allows them to freely practice their faith. But, broiling beneath the surface, the same hatred of God that exists in other parts of the world is festering in all our institutions. Slowly, methodically, and incrementally the anti-God forces are working to remove that Constitutional barrier and replace it with the 10 Planks of Communism[46].

As with the ADF, the JP frequently appeals to the founding documents and fathers as a defense and source of strength. This is certainly in keeping with the discussion of Christian privilege in chapter three: The claim that the founding fathers intended this to be a Christian nation is made possible only when one assumes that the God referenced by the Deists who constructed the Constitution is, in fact, the Christian deity. In other words, Christian privilege allows the JP to assume unproblematically that any mention of God refers to *the one and only* God, as described in the Bible. As in other texts, the JP is loathe to actually specify the identities of those who wage war on Christianity, save for referring to them as "those who hate Christ" and "anti-God forces." It is clear that, for the JP, Christians occupy a position of marginality.

Furthermore, the JP claims, this war has also already produced serious repercussions. Bilson writes:

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[46] According to the JP (2008d), these are the abolition of private property; a heavy progressive or graduated income tax; abolition of all rights of inheritance; confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels; centralization of credit in the hands of the state; centralization of the means of communication and transportation in the hands of the State; extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; equal liability of all to labor; establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture; combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country; and free education for all children in government schools.

> People today have willfully and philosophically turned away from …
> biblical principles of our Founders and have been promoting as
> 'constitutional' those things which God condemns … [including] the
> killing of babies, homosexuality as an acceptable life-style, and … the
> pagan worship of Mother Earth. (2008c)

Interestingly, these offenses—the legalization of abortion following *Roe v. Wade*,

a moderate improvement in tolerance for LGBTQ persons in the US, and the

steady decline of identification with Christianity—are social changes but not, I

contend, infringements on any individual Christian's right to religious belief or

practice. While it is now legal to abort an unwanted or unhealthy pregnancy,

Christians are, by no means, under any legal obligation or social pressure to abort;

Christians are not required pursue same-sex marriage; and they are not required to

worship Mother Earth. Indeed, while legal, all three acts remain controversial and

potentially physically and socially dangerous for those who undertake them. For

example, according to statistics on hate crime provided by the Federal Bureau of

Investigation (2010, November), in 2009, approximately 1,436 people were

mistreated solely upon the basis of their sexual-orientation and another

approximately 1,376 were singled out for their religious beliefs.[47] Yet, these

numbers hardly tell the whole story: They only account for occasions when law

enforcement personnel are able to establish a clear link between hate and the

commission of a crime.   These attacks seem quite different from the attack the JP

alleges. Nonetheless, the JP goes on to explain that this attack is clearly a

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[47] Victims of hate crimes on the basis of religious practice are overwhelmingly
Jurish.

coordinated campaign organized around the attainment of three strategic goals:

denying the Christian origins of the US; repainting Christianity as

unconstitutional; and intimidating Christians into silent acceptance of their

subjugation. Once these objectives are complete, the JP contends,

> Liberals today want to alter America's Christian heritage and replace it
> with the 10 Planks of Communism. They want to remove religion from
> our history and replace it with the Soviet doctrine of the separation of
> Church and State. They don't want to safeguard denominational neutrality
> by the state as the Founders intended, rather they want to eradicate every
> vestige of religion from our public institutions. (2008e)

As with the ADF, it is interesting to note two convenient slippages: first, the

conflation of individual practice and state endorsement of religion; and second,

the substitution of "religion" for Christianity.

As with Gibson and the ADF, the JP calls the faithful to action. Unlike its

mainstream peers, the JP advocates far more than a defense of the individual's

right to religion:

> What we need is a Christian nation - compared to the pagan nation we're
> becoming. By "Christian nation," I don't mean that everyone is forced to
> be a Christian or forced to go to church or to believe in God. … The job of
> the government is to do for the people what they can't do for themselves.
> And the job of bringing people to faith belongs to the private citizens, the
> churches, the synagogues and the religious leaders of our nation. That
> separation should always be kept. What I mean by a Christian nation is a
> nation whose laws are self-consciously built on the laws and principles of
> the Bible. (2008e)

If Bilson, the author of the Jeremiah Project, appears to be struggling here, it is

likely because he is advocating a state religion that denies itself, a state that stops

short of formally declaring Christianity the national religion while simultaneously

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and consciously enacting laws that specifically adhere to Christian dogma and prop up Christian religious practices. Bilson concludes with a call for reclamation, "Where there is no foundation, there are no laws and what results is anarchy brought forth by moral relativism. Their way has failed. The time has come for us to take back that which once was and let the healing begin."

There are three important moments in this text which deserve more attention. First, Christians and Christianity are once again conflated with religion and religious practice writ large. When the JP refers to "anti-God forces," it actually is referring to those who would oppose the perpetuation of Christofascism. Similarly, when the JP decries American culture's deviation from God's will, it is understood that God's will refers to the dictates found in the Christian Bible, not those found in the Qu'ran, the Torah, in indigenous faith, or in eastern philosophy. Much as males have made their experiences universal, the JP confuses the experiences of mainstream Christians with all the nation's faithful and confuses the Bible's account of God's will with all understandings of God's will.

A second moment that should give readers pause occurs when the JP bemoans the easing of government restriction on private action. When the JP names the legalization of abortion, same sex marriage, and the freedom to practice Wicca or other pagan religions as evidence of the "War on Christianity," it becomes clear that the problem is *not* that Christians are, in some way, being

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oppressed but, in fact, that the dictates of Christianity are no longer as severely imposed on the public.

This moment of recognition should lead to a third—that the call for a defense of Christianity is not a defense of a right to exist but a right to power. When Christians are called to enjoin this "War on Christianity," they are encouraged not to defend their rights to pray in their homes, in their cars, or even at the mall, but they are encouraged to defend the longstanding arrangement of church-in-state, where Christian beliefs and practices, e.g., prohibitions on consumption of alcohol, have been translated into law and pressed upon the public. They are called to ensure that the country remains a "Christian nation," meaning that when the law of the land and the Bible contradict, the law is to be bent into the proper shape. Even as the JP claims that it does not wish to mandate Christianity, it seeks to arrange public policy and institutions such that they are conformance with Christian dogma and conducive to Christian religious practice.

Crucified Christian Counterpublicity?

The texts surveyed in this chapter arise from dramatically different economic, political, and technical contexts. One is highly visible, well-advertised, and a popular hit published by a reputable firm; another provides a slick, carefully phrased web site that acts as a front-end for a political apparatus; the last is the fruit of one man's labor, a cry for wrong-doers to change their ways before they invite divine retribution. Only Gibson's book is directly a salable

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commodity; the Alliance Defense Fund's site serves as an appeal for donations,

but is, itself, free to all; and the Jeremiah Project appears to be entirely non-

commercial without direct link to any sort of economic venture.[48] Their goals

differ enormously, too: Gibson's book is a call for Christians to join the culture

war, to insist on saying "Merry Christmas" rather than "Happy Holidays" and so

forth; the ADF is seeking financial support in its myriad legal battles; and the JP

seeks a wholesale takeover of the state in order that Christians "take our country

back" from both Democrats and Republicans who are "beholding [sic] to the same

secret orders, codes and financiers" (2008f). Despite these different origins, aims,

and forms, each of these texts articulates an argumentative position that sounds

like counterpublicity.

All three texts hail a slumbering Christian auditor, ignorant of the trouble

facing our nation. Gibson, for example, presents his argument in the tradition of

the investigative journalist, who unearths surprising revelations about events

happening right beneath the readers' noses. The ADF speaks directly to a "you"

who can help end the war on "our" churches. There is no doubt here that "you"

care about "our" churches, that "you" know how important churches are, and that

"you" will see the inherent wrongness of a society that refuses to live according to

the dictates of the Bible. The JP demands that Christians attend to the signs all

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[48] The site does appear to be supported by advertising. For example, it provides
links to sellers of precious metals who claim that such commodities will retain
valued. The JP seems to recommend such sites on the basis of its prediction
about the coming collapse of American society.

around them[49] that bely the coming tribulations. According to the JP, "we" must make this a Christian nation, "we" must prevent the liberals and anti-Christian radicals from subverting "our" country's principles, and "we" must listen to God. In sum, each hails individuals into a "stranger relation" with each other (Warner, 2002, pp. 55-57).

Furthermore, all three texts clearly depict Christians as a marginalized, excluded, silenced group. Gibson describes Christianity as under attack and Christians as increasingly limited, restricted, and coerced, targeted by the ACLU and a gaggle of conspirators who seek to erase Christianity from the public sphere. According to the ADF, anti-God forces are bent on stripping Christians of their rights to religious belief and practice. And the JP (2008c) goes so far as to compare the plight of present day Christians to that of Jewish people during the Holocaust, claiming that Christians are increasingly demonized and depersonalized so as to smooth the way for their coming excommunication from American life.

Additionally, all three explicitly take an oppositional stance toward the state in order to defend the rights of American Christians. While Gibson is willing to imagine the state and its employees as well-intended but bumbling, the ADF and the JP paint the state as malevolent and conspiratorial. In any case, it is clear in all three that the state must be opposed and made to reform. The choice

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[49] Here, the text reminds one of wild conspiracy theories which interpret coincidence as unmistakable evidence of a plot.

of metaphor says volumes here: None of the sources depict this predicament as anything other than a matter of life and death—a war is underway and Christians must enlist or surrender. The attempts to parallel the experience of Jewish people under the Third Reich paint a vivid picture as well: The analogy connects Christians with, perhaps in the view of many, the most unimpeachable victims in contemporary memory. The corollary to this equivocation is that those who persecute Christians may be imagined as inhuman and brutal as the Nazis who slaughtered millions of their fellow citizens. Under examination, however, comparing these persecuted Christians to the victims of the Holocaust produces some unsettling dissimilarities. In fact, it seems hard to imagine a public more firmly ensconced in the center of US public life than Christians.

While they may perceive exclusion, a survey of empirical data reminds us of the centrality of Christianity in public life: politicians are sworn in on the Holy Bible; the Ten Commandments still adorn some public buildings; young children learn to pledge their love of country to God—not Allah, Brahman, or the Tao; men and women who identify as Christian hold practically every elected office, including a near-exclusive grip on the presidency; and their clergy are frequently called to consult with the government at highest levels.

Despite invoking the act of self-defense, what these texts uniformly call for is an offensive campaign. What Gibson, the ADF, and the JP seek is not to make sure that Christians are free to believe what they like and to pray to

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whomever they like but, in fact, to remake American society according to the dictates of their religion. When Gibson and the ADF recite examples of Christians being silenced, they are almost universally referring to examples where Christians have been prevented from allocating government resources for religious practice or from seeming to establish a link between the government and a particular religion. School children are not being disciplined for believing in Jesus, but they are not granted authority to proselytize to others during state sponsored activities; the clergy are not being prevented from leading their congregations, but they are being prevented from the assumption that their right to congregate supersedes the rights of all other citizens to peace and safety; Christian evangelicals are not being told that they may not believe in the deity of their choice, but that they may not use public property as a base from which to harass and scold passers-by who disagree. In short, these examples represent moments where a Christians' freedoms are limited by the expectation that their free speech and free practice do not infringe upon the rights and freedom of others.

Furthermore, these claims of victimhood do not conclude with calls for tolerance or pluralism—they demand social transformation culminating in the (re)creation of a Christian nation. In other words, these crucified Christians do not want an equal share—*they want their positions of primacy back*. And it is only from a position that unquestioningly accepts the longstanding myth that America originated as a Christian nation, and a willful ignorance of the injustices

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created by the installation of Christianity, that one can speak in the same breath about defending the right to religion and simultaneously call for installation of Christian dogma and practice in the state.

Finally, these claims of victimhood often obliterate the distinction between private, public, and state. When these parties complain about the infringement of their right to religion, they are often blind to the rights of other citizens—to be free of harassment, to enjoy safe and peaceful movement about their neighborhoods, and to practice any religion they choose as well. I am contending that what these texts enact is a sort of radical privatism—a position which refuses to acknowledge any obligation to other members of the public or to any sort of decorum but, instead, extends the individual's rights indefinitely. Unfortunately, this radical privatism is not extended universally: these texts find no fault with sidewalk preaching at passersby, disturbing a neighborhood to hold a church meeting at a residence, or to implicate one's religion with the state; but they object strongly to the private actions of others when those actions act in contradiction to Christian belief.

One is left to conclude that these persecuted Christians want unlimited religious freedom, but only for themselves; they want a state informed by religious belief, but only their religious beliefs. When these texts talk of defending Christianity, I find that they do not mean to defend Christianity from marginalization relative to equity but relative to its rightful place of superiority;

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they mean to ensure that Christians and Christianity retain their longstanding grip

on American culture and policy. Indeed, they want *their* country back.

Chapter 5

THE MASCULINITY CRISIS

The notion of a "masculinity crisis" has enjoyed considerable longevity.

At least as old as the Industrial Revolution (Ashcraft & Flores, 2000), it most

often refers to the perception that contemporary conditions threaten to neuter or

feminize men. Though the idea is hundreds of years old, it seems to enjoy

significantly more currency during times of economic upheaval: The industrial

revolution marked an obvious shift in men's private and public lives; perhaps the

current transition from industrial manufacturing to knowledge and service-based

business marks another such disruption and helps to explain the proliferation of

masculinity crisis rhetoric in recent times.[50]

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[50] A decade ago, noted sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2000) went so far as to refer
to contemporary conditions as constitutive of a "global masculinity crisis."
The present global economic downturn has likely exacerbated matters:
Unemployment now approaches levels not seen since the Great Depression.
The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011, April 1) reports that, as of March 2011,
13.5 million Americans are unemployed. Furthermore, men are more likely to
be unemployed than women. Approximately 5.9 million Americans have
given up seeking employment entirely and are not even included in
unemployment statistics (Harris, 2010, August 15). Though the federal
government does not officially track the number of Americans who run out of
unemployment benefits, the Labor Department reports disbursing final
unemployment benefits to approximately 1.7 million Americans between July
2008 and October 2010 (Delaney, 2010, October 28). This statistic simply
indicates the number who were jobless for 99 weeks exhausted their
unemployment benefits; the number who finally found employment is
unknown.

The texts investigated in this chapter are distinguished by a common feature: They each attribute significant blame for a modern-day masculinity crisis to the actions of women, feminists, and feminism.[51] As before, the texts selected for this chapter are intended to chart the argument as it circulates in different media, different economies, and different political contexts: The Chrysler Group's *Man's Last Stand* is a television advertisement that leverages the masculinity crisis to sell sports cars; Richard Hise's incendiary *The War Against Men* is a mass marketed polemic that diagnoses the masculinity crisis and provides personal and political "counter-attack strategies"; and *Men's News Daily* acts as a web portal, providing man-focused news and entertainment content on the basis of a foundational belief that men are under attack and must defend masculinity. Though the texts differ in medium, timbre, and specificity, each makes an argument which is structurally akin to those made by the texts alleging a War on Christianity: That is, social movements oriented toward the promotion of marginalized groups have done their work by persecuting innocent folks in the center; and these battered innocents must defend themselves or be crushed.

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[51] These texts nearly always refer to feminisms in the singular, homogenizing contributions from theorists from different eras and places with enormously different agendas and metatheoretical positions into a singular monolithic feminist project that most resembles radical second-wave feminists like Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon. This sort of ahistorical reductionism performs two disservices: It overlooks enormous differences in feminist theories, and it robs Dworkin and MacKinnon of the historical and political contexts which may help readers to understand their seemingly bombastic positions.

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Man's Last Stand

On February 5, 2010, the Chrysler Group (formerly of DaimlerChrysler) had America's attention: Their Super Bowl XLIV advertisement, entitled *Man's Last Stand* (Romanek, 2010), offered 106 million viewers the newly designed Dodge Charger not as a mode of transportation, not as a lifestyle choice, but as a last defense of manhood against the symbolic castration betokened by the encroaching forces of bureaucratization and empowered femininity. And though *Man's Last Stand* hardly qualifies as the first time a crisis of masculinity has been described in popular culture, the Dodge advertisement represents a surprising variation on this discursive regularity.

Without fanfare, the advertisement opens with a close shot of a man— visible from the shoulders up—laying on a pale sheet. The man is young, white-appearing, and handsome in a prototypical dark-haired, broad-shouldered, blemish-free, Clark Kent sort of way. His green eyes, fixed and wide, stare directly into the camera and, thus, seem to be looking at, or past, the viewer. The man's face remains expressionless as a male voice—most might guess the voice belongs to the man on screen, while devotees of *Dexter* may recognize the narrator as Michael C. Hall—forecasts his likely activities that day. The monologue begins: "I will get up and walk the dog at six thirty AM. I will eat some fruit as part of my breakfast. I will shave. I will clean the sink after I shave..."

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The shot changes and the camera focuses on a young dark-skinned man, dressed in a simple navy hooded sweatshirt over a white t-shirt. Once again, the man is the picture of vitality: young, handsome, with a strong jawline. Again, the shot is a closeup of the man's shoulders, neck, and face. This time apparently sitting at a kitchen table, viewers again hear the same male voice continue: "I will be at work by eight AM. I will sit through two hour meetings. I will say yes when you want me to say yes. I will be quiet when you don't want to hear me say no..."

The voiceover continues as a third man is introduced—again white-appearing, again young, and again free of blemishes, though this time sporting a beard and a slate-colored henley shirt. Looking somewhat groggy, the man sits at a kitchen table, again staring past or through the viewer. The monologue continues detailing the routine indignities and annoyances to be endured: "I will take your call. I will listen to your opinion of my friends. I will listen to your friends' opinions of my friends. I will be civil to your mother..."

Although the voiceover remains steady, the visual pacing changes: The shot moves from the stationary image of the bearded man to a dolly shot of another man—again white-appearing, again in his mid to late twenties, again signifying youth and normative male beauty—hair in a conservative cut, dressed in a dark suit, pale Oxford dress shirt, and Columbia blue tie standing in front of a fireplace. As the dolly closes in, it becomes clear that the focus is on the man's unblinking eyes. As the shot continues to tighten, it seems that audiences are

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intended to imagine that they are hearing these men's thoughts as they prepare for the workday. The litany continues:

> I will put the seat down. I will separate the recycling. I will carry your lip balm. I will watch your vampire TV shows with you. I will take my socks off before getting into bed. I will put my underwear in the basket. And because I do this...[the sound of an engine revving is heard]...I will drive the car I want to drive.

The sense of forward motion, established in the previous dolly shot, is amplified by the next shot. As the male voice intones, "And because I do this," the shot changes to a first person shot of deserted highway racing past the sharp contours of the new Dodge Charger's hood. This shot, which lasts for less than a second, is replaced with a low-angle view of the car which quickly whips around the front quarter view of the jet black Charger as it continues to devour asphalt. Less than a second later, this shot is replaced with another low-angle whip around the rear driver's corner of the car—evidencing the car's hard angular tail lights and pronounced spoiler. Another second passes, and the camera returns to the front of the car, this time from the front left, emphasizing the angular headlights and broad rectangular grille that has become a distinctive element of the Dodge aesthetic. The male voiceover continues, "Charger." Next, a series of sub-second crash cuts show the Charger constantly evading the camera; shot in close-up from the front, from the side, and from the rear, the Charger appears to be traveling so quickly that it cannot be contained within the frame for even a second.

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An overhead shot of the car's hood finally provides a few seconds of stability. The car's glossy black sheet metal serves as a canvas for the bold white type-face which appears on screen in all caps as the voiceover announces the copy: "MAN'S LAST STAND." Two more crash cuts (a quick closeup of the car's rear bumper and Charger emblems, and a tight shot of the front passenger headlight) precede the viewer's last glimpse of the Charger: another low-angle shot taken from dead-center. The car, approaching with seemingly impossible speed, drives straight into the lens, engulfing it in black.

Perhaps the most striking element of this text is the frequent address of "you" by the voice in the commercial. This personal address is potentially vexing: The voice delivering the monologue does not seem to belong to any of the men represented; furthermore, the "you" in question appears to shift. The voice speaking could be any of the men pictured; it could be none of them; and thus, represents all of them. Put simply, the "I" who speaks is an impersonal "I"; it is actually a "we" and, ex ante, the "you" being addressed is also necessarily a generalized other or series of others. Therefore, I contend that this structure of address functions much like an "open letter," which is ostensibly addressed to some person—often an authority figure—but is intended to circulate more broadly and perform other roles beyond simple refutation or attack of a particular individual.[52]

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[52] Rhetorical critics have long been aware of the power of the open letter to

In this case, the open letter format hails an audience of sympathizers and indicts generalized others for the indignities enumerated within. When the voice talks about what "I" do for "you," it serves to hail "we" men who are besieged by "them." The text hails an audience of fellow sufferers—those men who wake up early, perform annoying chores typically delegated to men (e.g., walking the dog), endure soul-crushing bureaucracy, and quietly tolerate the nagging demands of their (in)significant others. In short, Dodge seeks unhappy men who work enough and are paid well enough to afford a sports car.

Though it's hardly surprising that Dodge seeks men with disposable income, one might experience surprise at the notion that Dodge's appeal to men works by demonizing life under late capitalism and women. The litany of complaints delivered in the monologue are generally of three types: those relating to the demands made of men by society; those made of men by their superiors in the world of capitalism; and those made of men by their female partners.

The first set of complaints—rising early in the morning, shaving, observing punctuality, recycling, and eating fruit as part of a healthy diet—are made without direct reference to "you" whatsoever. These statements hail all those who suffer these daily slings and arrows as a result of their roles as civilized

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accomplish instrumental tasks—e.g., building a rhetors persona or arguing for a policy initiative—and to perform a constitutive function, to hail an audience into being (e.g., Leff & Utley, 2004).

men in society. They seem rather petty and seem to serve primarily to establish the cadence of the monologue.

The second set of complaints is largely directed toward a generalized capitalist superior. They take issue with the enormous amount of time spent at work, the boredom of corporate life, and the self-subordination required of members of organizations. Logically speaking, if these conditions constitute indignities or annoyances, it seems fair to conclude that manhood is defined as antithetical to inefficiency, boredom, and ingratiation.

The final set of complaints, and the largest set, consists of those directed toward a generalized female intimate other. The beleaguered man will tolerate unwanted phone calls, listen to unsolicited opinions about his friends both from his partner and his partner's friends (an even greater indignity, to be sure), he will tolerate his partner's mother, he will ensure that his partner may use the toilet without checking to see that the seat is down, he will carry cosmetics for his partner, he will endure the latest craze in formulaic romance and melodrama[53], he will be sure to properly stow his dirty laundry, and he will make sure not to offend his partner by committing the faux pas of joining her in bed while wearing his socks. Given that these commitments appear as grievances lodged against women and modern capitalism, one can conclude that, absent the nagging employer or partner's demands, a man would not do these things. In other words,

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[53] At the time of the Super Bowl, both *Twilight* and *True Blood* were hugely popular among children and women.

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an unfettered manhood would not tolerate unwanted intrusions, would not

consider the comfort of others, would not perform altruistic labor for others, and

would not invest in civility in general.

Having performed this reading, we can now speak of the second persona

authorized by the discourse and the third persona negated or elided by it.

Manhood—depicted as fiercely independent, spontaneous, strong, and

instrumental—is offered as a long-suffering victim and this text's audience. In

keeping with the genre of masculinity crisis, both women and capitalism are

identified as the sources of this crisis. What is surprising, however, is the way

that the text advocates consumption as the remedy to this crisis.

Perhaps my greatest surprise in considering this text was the realization

that the text simultaneously offers the bureaucracy symptomatic of life under late

capitalism as a threat to masculinity even as it advocates consumption of

commodities produced *under* late capitalism as the remedy to this crisis. This

revelation differs sharply from prior instantiations of masculinity in crisis. As

Ashcraft and Flores (2003) have noted, performances of masculinity in crisis have

historically concluded with a call to a masculinity rejuvenated through brutal

physicality (as in *Fight Club*) or asceticism (as in *Office Space*).

There is a hint of this violence in *Man's Last Stand* for those who have the

ears to hear it. The narrator is Michael C. Hall—an actor currently famous for his

role in television's *Dexter*. Those who recognize Hall's voice might well hear his

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litany of complaints delivered by Dexter, the sociopathic killer whose particular code of ethics allows him only to kill those who deserve it.[54] However, the text ultimately advocates a significantly more profitable solution to the crisis of masculinity. In order to use the discourse of the masculinity crisis for commercial gain, Dodge has a particularly challenging task—to persuade audiences that the solution to a crisis created, in part, by late capitalism is more capitalism.

This task is accomplished via a careful dance whereby the Charger is dissociated from the world of production. Although Dodge is perfectly happy to sell consumers their own 2010 Dodge Charger fresh off the assembly line, the Charger within this text is carefully presented as something other than a commodity. This is possible when we follow Arjun Appadurai's (1986) conception of the commodity as one state or phase which practically any material object may repeatedly pass through. Rather than imagining commodities as some specialized class of material objects, Appadurai sees commoditization as a process available to any object which might be exchanged.

Igor Kopytoff (1986) claims that objects may be commoditized and decommoditized repeatedly. High art offers a striking example here: pieces of art are repeatedly commoditized and decommoditized as they circulate through

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[54] In *Dexter*, the title character makes an unlikely protagonist whose heinous crimes are, to some degree, rationalized by their conformity to a strict code of ethics: Dexter may only kill those who are also killers. Furthermore, he may only kill killers who are likely to offend again. In this way, Dexter turns his pathological behavior into something that provides a sort of grizzly service to society.

society and are repurposed as show pieces, parts of personal collections,

investment vehicles, and status symbols. A widely known canvas from a master

painter is commoditized when it is made available for exchange; it enters the

market and is evaluated according to what will be traded for it. At some point,

that object is likely to be withdrawn from the market. A museum, or perhaps a

private collector, will determine that the piece is too beautiful or irreplaceable

and, thus, take it off the market. Perhaps ironically, this decommoditization may

significantly add to the object's value when it is next commoditized. For

Kopytoff, literally any entity may be commoditized. To emphasize this point,

Kopytoff sketches the process by which humans are made into social objects and

commoditized: "Slavery begins with capture or a sale, when the individual is

stripped of his [sic] previous social identity and becomes a non-person, indeed an

object and an actual or potential commodity" (p. 65). Thus, *commodity* names not

a particular type of object, but a social object in a set of social relations which has

(re)entered a particular phase of circulation. And decommoditization or

singularization represents another phase in which social objects frequently exist.

Though objects are sometimes intentionally decommoditized or "singularized"

(pp. 68-70) to inflate their expected future exchange value (e.g., investment

properties in exclusive neighborhoods), decommoditization serves another

purpose in *Man's Last Stand*.

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In all that is said during this commercial, there is no discussion of the car's fuel economy, capacity, or towing capability. In fact, there is not even mention of the Charger's impressive horsepower and torque—surely the manliest of all specifications. Nor is there any mention of the car's price—no MSRP, no lease terms for well-qualified buyers, and no discussion of an upcoming sales event. Further, the car's maker is never mentioned in the commercial. When the narrative names "Charger" as the appropriate response to the trials facing contemporary hegemonic masculinity, it nominates the car in the way that one would nominate a person for a task—on a first name basis. In sum, Dodge is able to advocate capitalism as the solution to problems created by capitalism by a subtle dissociation where the commodity is personified and de-commodified.

This time though, decommoditization is used not to inflate the value of a commodity, but to recommend the object as a part of a phallic economy[55] while disavowing its existence in the economy of late capitalism. The goal of such a strategy is to allow the viewer to understand the Charger as a singular object, an emotional object, which symbolizes the lost power that these emasculated men must possess again in order to reclaim their masculinity rather than as a commodity which, like a bottle of shampoo or a box of staples, is made and mass

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[55] Phallic economy, derived largely from Lacan (1972), is used to term the relations of exchange in a culture which structure society according to a rigid hegemonic masculinity which requires the subject to conquer, dominate, and exceed all others. See Irigaray, 1985/1977.

produced in the world of production, boring board meetings, and soul-sucking bureaucracy.

The War Against Men

Men are being torn apart: Pulled in opposite directions by their obligations to work, wife, children, and culture, good God-fearing men are increasingly victimized, marginalized, and silenced simply for being the men they were raised to be. This is Richard Hise's (2004) thesis in *The War Against Men*, which diagnoses men as "under attack, besieged, if you will, on a daily basis by the radical feminists and their unwitting dupes, the vast majority of American women" (p. 5). The book's nine chapters lay out the following claims: Men are under a concerted attack and increasingly face the specter of powerlessness; this war against men has been led by radical, often lesbian, feminists who want to feminize men and masculinize women; radical feminists are winning the war largely because they have been able to normalize discrimination against men; and if men wish to reclaim a position of equity, they must defend themselves politically and personally.

Hise's (2004) book begins like so many declarations of independence (and so many of the texts studied in this project), by offering a partial list of offenses suffered by his brethren (p. 3). One man's beloved wife berated and harassed him until the day he died, bequeathing to her a substantial fortune. Another lost over $100,000, his home, and custody of his children to his wife in a messy divorce.

Another was routinely publicly emasculated by his domineering wife. One man

lost his position as a professor when college administrators concluded he had had

a consensual relationship with a female student. And another man faced charges

of sexual molestation levied by an ex intent on securing sole custody of their child

by any means necessary. These examples offer anecdotal evidence of what Hise

claims is a much larger, systematic effort to marginalize men. Over and against

images of greedy, demanding, and conniving women, Hise depicts men as

oblivious dupes whose society has made masculinity pathological. He sees this

development as the culmination of an longstanding feminist project:

> Over the last 30 years, women have achieved decidedly greater levels of
> leadership and the subsequent increase in power … at the expense of
> males; as female levels of leadership and power have increased, those of
> males, quite naturally, have gone down; … it is a zero-sum game. …
> Undergirding these phenomena has been the blatant anti-male, pro-female
> discrimination which exists in most facets of our society and,
> unfortunately, is given legal sanction through legislation, the rules,
> regulations and edicts of female-dominated federal departments and
> agencies which have the force of law, and the biased decisions rendered
> by liberal judges. Also contributing to the vitriolic, anti-male rhetoric
> employed by radical feminists, the all-pervasive, relentless pro-female
> propaganda machine they employ, the gullibility of vast numbers of
> women, and the apparent hatred that many women have toward men. (p.
> 4)

This lengthy passage foreshadows much of Hise's labor over the first half of the

text. First, Hise perceives men as occupying a power-down position relative to

women. Second, he understands much of contemporary gender politics to be

discriminatory toward men. Third, he identifies a small army of enemies that

includes radical feminists, female-dominated federal agencies, activist liberal

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judges, and gullible women in general. Among these, feminists earn the lion's share of Hise's ire, though he also is particularly displeased with women's organizations like the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the National Organization for Women (NOW), which he later refers to as the most odious group in America (p. 90). And he describes the feminist movement as one that has "metamorphosed from demands for greater equality into gender warfare against masculinity" (p. 5).

Hise devotes the entirety of chapter two to chronicling the difficulty of living as a man in contemporary America. As he sees it, men struggle to satisfy mounting obligations while they receive less and less from their spouses, children, and society. Since the 1960s, the balance of power within heterosexual marriages has shifted:

> It has long been my belief that each partner in a marriage could use one particular weapon in order to gain ascendancy. Wives could withhold sex from husbands and the latter could exercise financial leverage. Women, and wives in particular, have been flooding into the work force in even greater numbers … so husbands' leverage with wives has been severely eroded. (2004, p. 9)

Two observations are immediately available: First, Hise seems to understand power relations within heterosexual marriages prior to the women's movement as relatively equitable; second, he seems to think of women as motivated to engage in sexual contact primarily by material compensation. To think of the balance of power within heterosexual marriages before the 1960s as relatively equitable is to ignore the numerous ways in which men were made the masters of their wives.

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As I have argued in chapter three, men did not simply hold financial leverage;

they held all the leverage—social, political, and legal—such that withholding

intimate sexual contact may well have been a wife's only leverage.[56]

Furthermore, Hise's description suggests that he believes women only engage in

sexual contact with their husbands insofar as such conduct obtains material

support. Not only does this conception of marriage rely on patriarchal notions of

the good woman as uninterested in sexual pleasure, but it reduces the institution

of marriage from an ethical and caring relationship between two consenting and

committed adults to a form of legalized prostitution.

Adding to their considerable worries, married men are increasingly

expected to help out with domestic labor. Hise (2004) discovers that, among

dual-income couples, "33.2% of fathers were expected to share equally with their

spouses in the child care responsibility" (pp. 9-10). While he approves of shared

labor when both spouses are working, Hise worries about fathers who are

expected to provide the sole income for the family and to help out at home as

well: "These added obligations will only sap his energy and, for the children, blur

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[56] Even this control was often tenuous because it was, in many places, held that a
man could not possibly rape his wife as she belonged to him. As Hasday
(2000, p. 1400) notes, "[In the 19th century,] intercourse with one's husband
was the obligation of wives; it was part of what being a wife signified."
Intercourse, characterized as the husband's "conjugal rights," it was owed to
husbands. So the taking of this owed service was considered perfectly legal.
Even now that rape has generally been criminalized, she writes, most states
"have chosen to preserve the exemption [of marital rape] in some substantial
manifestation. With rare exception, moreover, courts have not invalidated state
laws protecting marital rape" (p. 1375).

distinctions between males and females—a most unwelcome outcome" (p. 10). It

is worth noting that the corollary to this statistic is that approximately 66.8% of

men in dual-income marriages are still not expected to share equally in domestic

labor. Furthermore, Hise's worry that men performing domestic labor will "blur

distinctions between males and females" suggests his investment in essentialist

notions of masculinity and femininity which make women ideal candidates for the

unpaid labor of keeping house and raising children.[57]

Things are no better in the workplace: The 1980s and 1990s ushered in

times of enormous growth for the upper classes, but also heralded massive layoffs

as American manufacturing increasingly lost ground to Japan, China, Korea, and

Indonesia. Meanwhile, round after round of corporate merger also meant that

thousands of middle managers and administrative personnel were made redundant

and let go as well. Hise (2004, pp. 11-14) worries about the damage sustained

when men, whose self-image is often caught up in the ability to provide for wives

and children, are unable to find stable work. Though it is easy to see the linkage

between instability in the workplace and instability in a masculinity which

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[57] Importantly, empirical research does not appear to corroborate Hise's worries.
Contrary to the suggestion that women are demanding disproportionate labor
of their male partners, scholars who study issues of work/life balance have
found that males and females already provide roughly equivalent hours of
productive labor (LSEPS, 2012). Furthermore, research suggests that couples
with more equitable distributions of domestic labor also have sex more often
(Gager & Yabiku, 2009), suggesting that Hise's worry about the "blurring of
the distinction between males and females" is rather overstated.

frequently defines itself in terms of labor and power, it is hard to understand how these calamities are related to Hise's allegations of a feminist-led war against men.

In Hise's opinion, this war against masculinity is oriented toward delivering women to positions of leadership and power and, simultaneously, reducing men to second-class citizens. In order to accomplish this goal, he believes feminists are working to make women more masculine and to feminize men. He points to physiological and behavioral clues that suggest that women are becoming increasingly masculine. Among the physical clues are the proliferation of short haircuts, wearing of long pants rather than dresses, increased wearing of tattoos, and the increasingly common wearing of unisex athletic gear. Hise is more distressed by what he perceives as an increased predisposition in women toward acting mannish. Women increasingly are taking up occupations, sports, pastimes, diets, and types of discourse previously reserved to men. Hise finds fault with these developments on three separate grounds: First, these changes often contradict the Bible's guidance[58] on women's dress and comportment (p. 18); second, these changes have largely been wrought by "radical feminists who demean their own gender by making women who submit to their husbands and/or are 'stay-at-home' moms feel inferior" (p. 18); and third, the tendency for women to act more like men suggests a breakdown in the division of labor that has long

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[58] Here again, one may observe the way that systems of privilege often interlock. Hise relies on the obvious (to him) authority of the Christian Bible to support his affirmation of male privilege.

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been understood as the most efficient means of completing work (p. 20). In other words, Hise is worried here that, when both partners in a marriage work inside and outside the home, neither can devote her or his full effort to either cause and may become the proverbial jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none.

Concomitant with what he sees as the increasing masculinization of women, Hise (2004) observes a concerted attempt to feminize men. He suggests that this conspiracy has involved recasting dominant masculinity as pathological and training young boys to be ever more effeminate. Because grown men are unlikely to suddenly change their behavior, "they [radical feminists] turn their attention to our sons in elementary schools and day-care centers. … [They intend] to get little boys to play with dolls" (p. 21). He approvingly quotes William Bonner, head of Agora Publishing, eulogizing masculinity:

> Remember when a man could be a man? Proud and strong. Rough and ready. A provider for his family. You used to be allowed to admire a beautiful woman. It was okay to like sex, good steaks, and cigars. But those days are long gone, my friend. Rubbed out like a half-smoked cigar in a champagne-soaked ashtray. Now you've got to worry about "correctness" and "feelings." Your testosterone is considered poison. And if you're an average, over-40 male … you're guilty before you even open your mouth. Modern society is plagued by sensitive "artists" like John Tesh and Yanni...or talk-show hosts like Phil Donahue who encourage other men to cry on camera. Exercise gurus like Charles Atlas have been replaced by Richard Simmons. And our children idolize stars like Michael Jackson, who 'better' themselves with plastic chins and tattooed-on mascara. (p. 21)

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This, according to Hise, is our present condition: Men are now persecuted simply for being who their society, their God, and their biology tells them to be; and our little boys are increasingly trained to act more and more like girls.

Having argued for the existence of a war on men, Hise (2004) goes on to argue that tides have already begun turning, that the "level of power attained by women in the United States has expanded dramatically … [and] has eroded the power base formerly held by men" (p. 22). He cites their increasing dominance in terms of sheer numbers, economic resources, educational attainment, political representation, and a growing presence in the military and the church. His first claim, that women are rapidly outnumbering men, does not appear to be directly connected to the alleged war on men but is intended to lend credence to the idea that men ought to understand themselves as a minority which must be particularly aware of their position as a group which can be outvoted on any issue by women.

Far more importantly, Hise (2004) argues that women are gaining economic might. He notes that, by 2000, 62% of American women were gainfully employed. This number, up from 9% in 1920, suggests to Hise "almost inevitable consequences: neglect of children, husbands and home by working women and the increased opportunity for adulterous liaisons while on the job" (p. 22). Furthermore, Hise argues that women are fast matching men in employment even at the highest managerial positions. While he concedes that a disparity between men and women remains at the uppermost levels, Hise accounts for this

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by arguing that "the typical qualifications for such executive positions include 25 years of work experience and an MBA degree, resulting in an extremely small pool of female candidates because in the 1970s, women largely eschewed working and pursuing MBA degrees" (p. 23). In describing women as "eschewing" working and the pursuit of higher education, Hise implies that these decisions were made freely, thereby ignoring the numerous economic, legal, and cultural obstacles that often hindered such endeavors. As with disparity in attainment of employment, Hise dismisses claims of a pay gap between men and women; he argues, instead, that women have historically been paid less because they have not been willing to make the kinds of sacrifices—long hours, dangerous conditions, long commutes, high stress—that men have made in order to succeed in the workplace.

Women also now outperform men in terms of educational attainment. Hise (2004) dolefully notes that women are outperforming men in the earning of associates and bachelors degrees and, though still considerably behind men, are making "great strides" toward attainment of professional and post-graduate degrees (pp. 25-26). What this means, according to Hise, is that, in the future, men will disproportionately be funneled into physically demanding vocations, e.g., plumbing, electrical repair, or carpentry, which bring with them significant health risks.

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Hise (2004) also sees steady advances for women in terms of political access and representation. He reports that roughly a quarter of the elected officials at the municipal, county, and township levels are women (p. 26). At the state level, women have risen from a meager 4% in 1969 to a whopping 22% of legislators. At the national level, progress has been slower but similar—women made up 13.5% of all representatives in 2000, setting a new record. Furthermore, Hise claims that women are commonly appointed by elected officials to high-profile positions on regulatory bodies, advisory groups, and cabinets.

Finally, Hise argues that women now disproportionately occupy leadership positions in the church. While most Christian denominations still bar them from the premier positions of leadership—pope, bishop, cardinal, priest, pastor, and so forth—it is increasingly the case that women outnumber men in managerial and planning positions in many churches. Hise (2004) claims, without citation, that "on Sunday, in most Protestant churches, 80% of the attendees are frequently women" (p. 26). He goes on to point out that the majority of activities and organizations within the church are devoted to responding to the needs of women. Hise seems unwilling or unable to see the way that women's disproportionate involvement in the functioning of the church is, in fact, the product of patriarchy: Patriarchal society has long assigned to women functions which correspond to their allegedly feminine virtues (e.g., care, empathy, and

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nurturance). If there is an abundance of women in the church, it is likely because

of the same essentialist notions that Hise intends to prop up.

The third major piece of Hise's (2004) project consists in arguing that

women have achieved these economic, educational, and cultural advantages via

discrimination against men. He goes on to allege that women have largely

accomplished their aims by discriminating against boys in educational

institutions. Here, where women have a longstanding numerical advantage,

young boys are disciplined simply for being boys and, he claims, they are trained

to be ever more feminine:

> Boys are being forced to play with dolls, make quilts, wear high heels and
> dresses and skirts and role play, taking the part of such women as Etta
> James … and Anita Hill. … They are only allowed to play
> "noncompetitive" tag, their recesses are being eliminated, they are
> prevented from running, and have to face discipline meted out by
> "princessipals." (p. 29)

If readers are to infer that these developments represent a restriction of

masculinity, it appears that Hise understands masculinity to be caught up in

competition and physical exertion. Furthermore, to cite playing with dolls,

making quilts, and answering to female authority figures as proof of

discrimination is to make the tacit claim that masculinity is antithetical to such

behavior. Hise goes on, citing Christina Hoff Summers' (2000) popular *The War

Against Boys*,[59] to claim that organizations like the American Association of

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[59] Hoff Summers' project seems to differ from Hise's in terms of scope. For Hise,
the mistreatment heaped upon boys is only the beginning of a war against

University Women (AAUW) have brought a radical feminist agenda to bear upon our schoolchildren to such a degree that masculinity is now treated as an inherent evil, something that must be overcome or conditioned out of children.

Discrimination against males is even worse at the post-secondary level, Hise alleges. Though Hise (2004) finds that "males consistently outscored females on the verbal sections of the SAT and by a considerably larger margin on the math part, … [, and] men consistently do better than women in geography," considerably more women than men are accepted to colleges and universities each year (p. 30). Hise rails against the Center for Women's Policy which, in 1997, "made the preposterous demand that the College Board, the SAT's sponsor, drop any math question on which boys got a higher score than girls" (p. 30). These radicals will be content, he laments, only when they have so dumbed down the test that there can be no proof that males surpass females, regardless of the reality. Hise, quoting Diane Ravitch of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research,[60] asks, "Why not eliminate math altogether? Then, we can be sure of equal results."

Finally, Hise claims proof of discrimination against men in the feminization of curricula. Not only have institutions added explicitly woman-

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males being waged at all of levels of society.

[60] The Manhattan Institute (MIPR) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit conservative think-tank that advocates for neoliberal and conservative policies under the banner of "economic choice and individual responsibility" (MIPR, 2012).

centric courses to their catalogs but some have created entire departments

dedicated to women's interests and thought. Hise (2004) writes:

> [At] Texas A&M University … some of our courses in "Women's Studies" include Introduction to Women's Studies; Introduction to Gender and Society; Psychology of Women; Sociology of Gender; Women in Politics; Gay and Lesbian Literature; Women in the Bible; Women Writers; Women and Culture; Women, Minorities and the Mass Media; Women and Work in Society; Employment Discrimination Law; History of American Women; Women and the Law; History of Modern American Women; Studies in Women Writers; and Women in Modern European History. … Texas A&M University does not require that any of these courses be taken … but they are included as options in the Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences areas. At other schools, they are required. (p. 32)

Hise's concern here seems analogous to the complaints made by whites who

allege hypocrisy when people of color, who have long sought equality, announce

"Miss Black America" pageants or advocate for the recognition of a "Black

History Month." In short, he finds these choices exclusionary and discriminatory,

rather than egalitarian. Further, Hise claims that males who enroll in the courses

are "often subjected to male-bashing by female professors who, at best, are

vehement feminists and, worse, lesbians" (p. 32). Though this remark shall

receive more attention later, it is important, for the moment, to notice the scorn

Hise has for homosexual women who, he assumes, will be the most rabidly anti-

male feminists.

Hise's final move is to urge men to respond to this war by adopting the

personal and political "counter-attack strategies" he provides. To begin, Hise

implores men to play the "minority card":

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> Whenever a job opening contains the affirmative action line "We are sincerely interested in minorities and women," … [remind employers] of the fact that males are a minority. And we need to do the same when we see similar concessions being made to women in education, in the military, and so on. When we see an organization that has a disproportionately small percentage of men, we should demand equal representation—as a minority—at least equal to our makeup in the general population. And it would not hurt to refer to the Founding Fathers … [who] strongly feared that majorities would take unfair advantage of minorities. (p. 83)

Here calling for a fight-fire-with-fire approach, Hise is able to recast men as a minority by resort to a strictly numerical criteria. Furthermore, his argument seems to imagine that, where men are not represented—in elementary education, for example—it is because they have been shut out.

Hise's (2004) recommendations extend beyond appropriation of the arguments made by women and other historically marginalized groups. He advocates strongly for relying upon Christian dogma for affirmation and support in arguments (pp. 83-85). Further, he encourages men to become far more active in politics at every level and to particularly oppose Hillary Clinton, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), hate crime legislation, and placement of liberal judges on the Supreme Court. His opposition to VAWA and hate crime legislation is largely the same: Both categorize women as inherently vulnerable and men as inherently criminal.[61] He exhorts men to push for an expansion of the

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[61] Contrary to this argument, empirical data suggests that domestic violence is gendered and that women are disproportionately the victims of such crimes. The Centers for Disease Control (2011) reports, "Each year, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner related physical assaults and rapes …

definition of hate crime such that white males may also be protected and to adopt

a Violence Against Men Act which would serve as a corollary to VAWA.

Given that he has already accused the vast majority of educators of being

vehement feminists, readers are probably not shocked when Hise (2004) calls

upon men to disestablish the Department of Education (p. 87). Indeed, Hise

mirrors hardline conservative politics in saying he wants the "federal government

totally out of education" (p. 87). Eventually, he comes to the conclusion that

concerned parents really ought to be home-schooling their children in order to

ensure that they receive an education that aligns properly with their philosophical

and religious convictions.

A number of important concerns ought to be registered following this

reading. The first is the way that this text conceptualizes power as finite and

restrictive. Hise (2004) is quite clear in claiming that politics is a "zero-sum

game" (p. 4). That is, he thinks that one's empowerment must always result in an

equivalent disempowerment of another. For Hise, power is something which is,

in any social formation, limited in quantity, i.e., if one person is to become the

king, the current king can expect to be thrown out of power. Furthermore, he

seems to think of power only in terms of the ability to control and inflict suffering

upon others. When power is thought of in these terms, it is possible to think of

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[while] men are the victims of about 2.9 million intimate partner related
physical assaults." Among those who will lose their lives to an intimate
partner, roughly 70% are women.

the empowerment of marginalized groups as inherently dangerous to the center. Thinking about power in this way not only understates the effects or functions of power, but it limits Hise's ability to see the way that power works on and through individual males. However, if one supplants this view of power with a more complex voicing, as found in Foucault (1990), it becomes possible to think about power not only in terms of give and take or control and restriction but also in terms of diffusion, expansion, production, and creation. From this perspective, allowing marginalized groups to speak does not require that others must lose their voices.

Additionally, at numerous points, Hise interprets evidence of incremental advances in women's rights, access to power, and economic mobility as evidence of an attack on men. In a nation whose women amount to 52% of the population, all things being equal, even a novice statistician would likely assume roughly similar proportions of women in any particular place. That is, one would expect to find that a little over half the residents of Phoenix are women, that somewhere close to 52% of people in Washington, DC, are women, and so forth. Similarly, one would expect to find somewhere around half of all restaurant owners, plumbers, and teachers to be women. Readers, I hope, have wondered how, then, Hise feels justified in construing women's slow progress from 4% to 22% of state legislators as anything other than progress toward a statistical norm. In nearly every case where Hise argues about the increasing influence and access women

enjoy in the US, he is still referring to locations and contexts in which women have not secured resources commensurate with their status as the majority of the population.

I contend that interpreting women's incremental progress toward equity as an attack on males is possible only because of three dominant ideological features of this discourse: an unabashed misogyny authorized by reference to the Christian faith; a seemingly willful disavowal of history before the 1950s; and a judicial or punitive conception of power. When Hise's bemoans the increasing phenomena of married men helping around the house or women increasingly behaving in ways he considers masculine, he betrays essentialist notions about gender which not only stereotype but enact hierarchy. In short, Hise would have readers understand men and women as fundamentally different creatures with divinely-appointed roles to fulfill within the community and the family:[62] He evidences a belief that women are to be the ones to raise the children, to tend to the home, to be nurturing, supportive, emotive, and demure while men are inherently competitive, powerful, independent protectors and providers to whom women's

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[62] This also marks another moment where systems of privilege overlap and interlock: Hise's arguments frequently rely upon the assumed inerrancy of Christian dogma and the primacy of heteronormative relationships. That is, he never worries about convincing the reader of the authority of the Bible, nor does he worry about the reader's acceptance of the traditional heteronormative family as the social system through which men and women must relate to each other.

submission is natural and deserved.[63] In other words, Hise is able to construe

women's progress as an attack partly because he understands this advancement as

an inappropriate deviation from their proper place of submission.

When he describes the changes under way in contemporary American life,

Hise frequently charts them against the backdrop of an unnamed golden age that

sounds most like the 1950s.[64] Increasingly sounding like Archie Bunker, he

compares divorce rates, employment figures, and nearly every facet of the "War

on Men" in terms of a deviation from the days when men were men and women

were women—when men and women fell in love, bought houses together, had

children, and divided the labor between the male provider and the female nurturer.

Yet, the text evidences a near total blindness to the historical conditions that

produced the society of 1950s for which Hise so longs. To read the nuclear

family of the 1950s as an ahistorical status quo is to ignore the numerous

sociopolitical and economic developments which made such an arrangement

possible for a brief time. It is to ignore the centuries of legal prohibition and

social discipline imposed upon women in order keep them in their places behind

the stove, the wash basin, and the crib. It is also to ignore the geopolitical

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[63] See chapter three, particularly the discussion of male privilege routed through
the concept of "mutual subordination" in which women submit to their
husbands and fathers while, in turn, those men submit to God's will.

[64] This is hardly rare. The postwar boom of the 1950s seems to be a bulwark of
conservative nostalgia.

events—particularly the two World Wars—which decimated nearly ever major

power in Europe and positioned the United States to capitalize upon this

opportunity and become the world's manufacturer and the dominant Western

power for the next 50 years.[65] To think of the 1950s as the status quo, then, is to

ignore the systems of domination and exploitation that produced the possibility of

the white[66] male provider and reduced women's mobility to a choice between

being a mother, nun, or outcast.

A final major concern deals with the way that the text repeatedly

authorizes one monolithic masculinity. When Hise approvingly quotes William

Bonner's eulogy for the cigar smoking, womanizing men of old, when he

complains about women demanding that their male partners be more sensitive,

and when he dismisses artists like John Tesh, he is legitimating a very narrowly

defined version of masculinity. It is hegemonic masculinity, a gender identity

position that articulates maleness with independence, ruggedness, stoicism,

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[65] Gerson (1993) has argued that the figure of the male breadwinner who captains
the nuclear family is was a uniquely American one and a construction which
was only made possible by the economic surpluses created for the United
States by the decimation of nearly every other superpower following the two
world wars. As the only major power whose territory was not significantly
affected by the horrors of these wars, the US firms were able, for the first time
in American history, to capitalize upon enormous post-war demand such that
they could pay their laborers enough to permit their spouses to remain home
with the children.

[66] Because imagining the 1950s as a halcyon time of stability and opportunity
requires one to ignore the exploitation and brutality inflicted upon African
American males and other men of color throughout this period, this appeal is
likely to be effective almost exclusively with those who identify as white.

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heterosexuality, competitiveness, instrumentality, and domination. When he rails against calls for male sensitivity, Hise is suggesting that self-understanding and self-disclosure are antithetical to masculinity. When he dismisses Michael Jackson and Richard Simmons, Hise is policing the boundaries of appropriate masculinity: *Real men* do not wear makeup or perform solo dance routines, and they do not sweat to the oldies. According to this text, *real men* ogle good looking women, eat red meat, smoke and drink, and get in fights; and they definitely do not talk about their feelings.

Furthermore, it is hegemonic masculinity—which disciplines men against nurturance, empathy, and cooperation—that best explains the dearth of men in primary education and the church. I contend that what Hise interprets as evidence of a female takeover of two important social institutions is, in fact, a prime example of the violence done to men by hegemonic masculinity. When hegemonic masculinity splits human behavior into two uneven halves—with emotion, compassion, cooperation, and submission on one side and competition, stoicism, domination, and independence on the other—both sexes lose. Though it has long been understood that women are harmed by binary gender roles, dominant masculinity limits and disciplines males and, thus, harms them too. Women outnumber men in schools and in churches because teaching children and coordinating supportive activities within faith communities have been designated feminine duties. Dominant masculinity's wages extend far beyond one's

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occupation; being a *real man* often means being a dead man. When Hise notes

that women increasingly outnumber men, he fails to appreciate the numerous

ways that hegemonic masculinity has provoked men's untimely deaths: It is

overwhelmingly men who earn honor by fighting and die in wars, men who prove

their constitution by overeating, binge drinking, and substance abuse, men who

prove their strength by brushing off nagging health concerns, men who have

learned to internalize their stress, and it is men who disproportionately commit

suicide rather than disclose their feelings of weakness, inadequacy and

helplessness.

As in *Man's Last Stand*, *The War Against Men* hails sufferers to

understand their circumstances in relation to a larger conspiracy to unseat men.

And again, the text does not hail all men, but it hails those who have ears to hear a

message about how much worse things have gotten since the good old days. It

hails those who approve of the Bible as a source of proper instruction. And it

hails those who know that to be a man means to be a rough-and-tumble,

competitive, red-blooded heterosexual who has little time for political correctness

or idle chatter. In short, the text hails straight, white, Christian males, who

subscribe to hegemonic masculinity's strictures, to defend themselves and their

gender's rightful position in command of American cultural and economic life.

Mens News Daily

Men's News Daily (MND) offers this case study diversity in terms of medium and timbre. Not only is *MND* a web portal with a circulation closer to that of a periodical than a book or an advertisement, but it represents the masculinity crisis in a more measured and sedate manner than do Dodge or Richard Hise. The site bills itself as "the premier on-line publication for publishing articles, news stories and opinion on world politics with a foundational focus [on] men's rights and activism in western culture" (*MND*, n.d.b). It solicits both mainstream journalism and academic research on subjects pertaining to "men's rights and advocacy." In the case of *MND*, the masculinity crisis functions not only as as a primary point of discussion but as the foundation upon which a daily menu of news is presented.

MND invokes the masculinity crisis to describe the status quo in its statement of principles and goals (*MND*, n.d.a). The statement begins with a declaration of starting principles:

> We recognize and affirm … the existence of natural differences between the genders; … the extreme immorality of certain social forces, and the same time, the very real opportunity that these forces have to deny, ignore, compromise, and repress these differences and any expression of them; … the necessity of cooperation between the genders, and at the same time the inevitability of opposition between them; … [and] the scientific inconsistency and dubious morality of any claim by one gender to describe the state, condition, needs, experiences, or the value of the other gender.

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MND clearly embraces essentialist conceptualizations of gender that conflate gender with sex and reduce all of gender two a simple binary.[67] This observation will earn extended discussion in time, but it should suffice, for now, to note this conflation and reduction. It is also important to notice that males and females are described as immutable opposites who require each other as much as they oppose each other.

In addition to founding principles, the text includes a description of the status quo. Here, *MND* describes the masculinity crisis in terms of all-out war, systematic oppression, and conspiracy:

> For two generations masculinity and the male gender [sic] have been subject to an all-out attack covering every sphere, from the world of images and symbolism to that of common everyday existence, applied systematically and consistently in every manner and through all means of communication and cultural diffusion. The term male-bashing extends itself to aesthetics, opposing their attainment by men which includes the male body and men's physicality. Every level and gradation within contemporary culture, and every unit that elaborates on or transmits that culture, without a single exception, is a tool of this program. This phenomenon is the fundamental cause of psychological/emotional harm in individuals and social dysfunctions of an ever-increasing gravity, hindering the entire male gender and in particular the younger generations. (n.d.a)

In many ways, *MND*'s argument paints the masculinity crisis in the broadest strokes yet: It sees a conspiracy to attack men at every point in culture and claims that the attack has been under way for two generations, presumably referring to

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[67] Though the reduction of sex to a simple binary remains common, I do not wish to be read as condoning this practice unproblematically. See Judith Butler (1999) for persuasive arguments in favor of understanding sex as socially constructed, performative, and dynamic.

the second wave of American feminism. And to this attack, *MND* attributes

blame for psychological, emotional harm and social dysfunction suffered by all

males. *MND* is also the least willing to name names—unlike the clear outlines of

romantic partners and corporations in *Man's Last Stand* or the AAUW and NOW

in *The War Against Men*, those who lead this war on men are only known as

"certain social forces."

Next on their statement of principles, *MND* offers a paragraph on the

"value of femininity." Quite unlike *Man's Last Stand* or Hise's argument, *MND*

explicitly declares their commitment to equity and repudiation of misogyny:

> We reject any kind, however indirect, of denigration, of offensiveness and
> devaluation, of the ethical, aesthetic, and intellectual worth of the female
> gender [sic]; we repudiate any diminution of the symbolic importance of
> the feminine, and of the historical importance of female endeavors visible
> and invisible, past present and future. (n.d.a)

To be sure, this statement marks *MND*'s voicing of the masculinity crisis as

markedly different from the near-total rejection women have received in previous

texts. Though this statement still stops short of announcing the equality of the

sexes, it at least specifies women's worth in terms of several important

dimensions.

MND's statement of principles and goals concludes with a list of two sets

of objectives. The first set, worded in terms of advocacy, affirm "the essential

value of masculinity, … the irreplaceable role of the masculine in the world of the

image and symbol and of the male gender in every area of life, spiritual and

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material, for the benefit of present and future generations." Furthermore, *MND* is

committed to "the identification … condemnation … and moral opposition to

malebashing … in every form of expression and means of communication."

Next, *MND* applauds "the restitution of the value and dignity … of past

generations of men, by means of the deconstruction of feminist historiography."

Finally, and most stridently, *MND* champions "the struggle against the cultural

ideas of a Feminist Society and its basic values."

On the basis of this staunch opposition to "the cultural ideas of a Feminist

Society," the *MND* announces its opposition to a laundry list of beliefs and

practices:

> [*MND* opposes] the principle of the moral, aesthetic and intellectual
> superiority of the female gender; the denial of the existence of anti-male
> hatred; the criminalization both direct and indirect of the male gender; the
> planned inhibition of male consciousness; the psychological and chemical
> emasculation of the younger generations; the domestication and docility of
> men; the use of the male libido for purposes of speculation, manipulation,
> intimidation and blackmail; the demand for reparations, material and
> moral, for wrongs, real or imagined, sustained by the female gender; state
> control of sexual relations; the presumed permissibility of an autocratic
> imposition of behavioral rules upon the male gender; the principles of
> political correctness and the imposition of its vocabulary. (n.d.a)

Here, one finds that *MND*'s valuation of women does not extend to feminists,

particularly feminists who have been read as extolling the superiority of women

over men. Presumably, many of these declarations of opposition are intended to

respond to radical second-wave feminists who expressed militantly anti-male

perspectives, e.g., Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* (2004) which advocates for

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the systematic liquidation of the male sex or Andrea Dworkin's *Letters from a War Zone* (1988) which characterizes heterosexual intercourse as the founded upon contempt for women and describes male sexuality as predicated upon the annihilation of women's personality and character. *MND* makes no effort whatsoever to distinguish between these extreme voices and the many other feminists who advocate for equity for all humans.

This text's problematic deployment of the term *gender* deserves additional consideration. From the outset, *MND* conflates gender with sex. When it condemns the denigration of the "male gender," the text connects the physical characteristics which are read as male with the performative acts which have traditionally been interpreted as part of masculinity.[68] I am arguing that, by consistently pairing *male* with *gender*, the text suggests a necessary correspondence between sex and gender which denies the possibility of maleness outside of hegemonic masculinity. The implications of this operation are three-fold. First, the text implicitly denies the multiplicity of genders enacted by males. By speaking of gender monolithically, the text hails only those men who occupy identity positions within dominant masculinity and it negates those men whose identity positions fall outside these parameters. Second, the text makes it difficult

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[68] Anti-violence activist Jackson Katz (Katz & Jhally, 1999), for example, has devoted significant labor to teasing out the ways that manhood has been articulated with physical strength, intimidation, violence, control, and invulnerability. This vision of manhood has been termed *hegemonic masculinity.*

to understand feminism as pro-male while simultaneously opposed to some features of hegemonic masculinity. By connecting gender with sex, the text makes feminist attacks on the chauvinism, misogyny, and drive for domination which frequently mark gender performances equivalent to attacks against maleness. Finally, when the text renders gender as a natural extension of biological characteristics, it becomes easier for individuals to defend detestable dimensions of dominant masculinity on the grounds that they are immutable, simply a part of being a male. In other words, conflating sex and gender offers strategic advantages to those who wish to resist calls for reform insofar as it allows them to claim these abhorrent behaviors are just natural male instincts and are, therefore, not malleable.

The text's reference to the "female gender" poses similar problems. The implication, again, is that gender and sex are one and the same and, thus, that proper femininity arises naturally from female biology. Though *MND* does not stipulate exactly what kind of gender performance is to be understood as "the feminine" and "the female gender," it is clear that one informed by radical feminism does not qualify, given that *MND* declares the value of the "female gender" and "the feminine" and, yet, declares itself in stark opposition to "the cultural ideas of a Feminist Society." Thus, when *MND* declares its respect for "the female gender," it appears to mean that it hails those women whose

performances of femininity are congruent with patriarchal and heteronormative[69]

views of masculinity and femininity that render women as subordinate reciprocals

to men.

While *MND*'s (n.d.a) message does not reach the levels of bombast

achieved by Hise, it still depicts the masculinity crisis in terms of the now-

familiar war metaphor.[70] The text refers to the masculinity crisis as a systematic

"all-out attack" conducted in "every sphere." In a departure from practically

every text reviewed in this project thus far, *MND* is loathe to provide specific

examples of the offenses it alleges or the person or persons behind these attacks,

though it does provide a lengthy list of the types of offenses that fall under this

attack. To be sure, the text announces the perception that males are now a

marginalized group whose bodies, sensibilities, and achievements are everywhere

denigrated and even criminalized. Furthermore, the text clearly directs an

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[69] I follow Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998) in using *heteronormativity* to name "the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent-that is, organized as a sexuality-but also privileged."

[70] The war metaphor, common in each of these case study chapters, operates as a *conceptual metaphor* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) which directs readers to map a subject under discussion (the *tenor*) according to some already-familiar schema (the *vehicle*). In this case, readers are expected to interpret developments in the politics of sex and gender in terms of warfare. Such metaphors help auditors to make sense of potentially vexing developments by transferring extant knowledge, but they also may oversimplify or distort the tenor by forcing it into the logic of the vehicle. In this case, the War metaphor may suggest that the disputing sides are enemies (rather than friends, citizens, or partners) who may resort to any means to win, that compromise is unacceptable.

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oppositional stance insofar as it urges "moral opposition to male-bashing," and the restoration of men's "value and dignity … by means of the deconstruction of feminist historiography." Because anti-male sentiment has taken root in "every sphere, … every level and gradation within contemporary culture, and every unit that elaborates on or transmits that culture," the men hailed to stand with *MND* in opposition to this all-out attack are thereby called not only to oppose feminists but to oppose every facet of a society infiltrated by these allegedly anti-male ideas.

Masculinity Crisis Texts as Counterpublicity

In the course of this chapter, I have asked about the audiences hailed and negated by these texts. Further, I have asked about the ideologies which make these arguments tenable. This project is also interested in the notion of conservative counterpublicity. And each of the texts reviewed in this chapter appears to satisfy the conditions of counterpublicity—"oppositionality, constitution of a discursive arena; and a dialectic of retreat from and engagement with other publics" (Brouwer, 2006, p. 197). Indeed, one might argue that a feature of this crisis in masculinity which differs from previous instances lies in the way that men are being called not to reconfigure manhood, but to defend and retrench existing notions of masculinity and manhood.[71] Each text hails men to understand themselves as part of a marginalized group, and each advocates an

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[71] This position appears to be at odds with the earlier mythopoetic movement of the 1980s and early 1990s in which men, largely influenced by Robert Bly (1990), sought a reinvigorated masculinity that was not only primal and savage, but also compassionate, generous, and emotive. See also Mechling, 1994

oppositional stance. In *Man's Last Stand* (2010), a structure of address

reminiscent of an open letter hails fellow sufferers who live under the weight of

obligations to corporations that squelch creativity and competition and obligations

to women who demean and emasculate them. Richard Hise's (2004) *The War*

Against Men calls to men to open their eyes—to see their commonality as people

who do not know they are at war, as victims of the daily injustices heaped on men

by a society led by radical feminists bent on supplanting men as America's power

bloc. And *MND* (n.d.a) hails men to understand their joint suffering of the last

two generations as the direct result of the immoral anti-male agenda, exercised at

all levels of society, by "certain social forces."

Additionally, each text calls audiences to take up an oppositional stance.

Dodge advocates a return to a primal, aggressive, and competitive masculinity—

represented by the the über-manly Charger rather than actual physical violence—

that will make a "last stand" against the encroaching forces of industrialization

and femininity. In describing the war against men, Richard Hise (2004), who

expects readers to be confounded, exhorts men to take up for themselves:

> Has it surprised you? Were you incredulous? Did it make you cry? Did
> you become despondent? … To be candid, I experienced all of the above
> [but] … my despondency was offset by another more therapeutic,
> energizing feeling: anger. … Men in the United States are at war, whether
> they know it or not. … Let the men in the United States at least put up a
> defensive posture. However, it needs to be understood that an offensive
> posture will more likely achieve our aims and at a quicker pace than will a
> defensive one. (p. 82)

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The very nature of *MND*'s statement suggests oppositionality: Written in the form of a manifesto, the entire document serves as an enunciation of values and a renunciation of mainstream society twisted by feminism.

Though each of these texts appears to meet a simple definition of counterpublicity, several problems arise. A first concern pertains to the aims of counterpublicity. Dodge's *Man's Last Stand* articulates perceptions of marginality and advocates an oppositional stance but redirects that energy away from the public sphere and redirects it toward the purchase of private property. So, while the text works to constitute a public of individuals who relate to each other on the basis of their shared identity positions as marginalized citizens, the text directs their anger into the realm of private consumption rather than the public sphere. If counterpublicity entails at least partial engagement and opposition to other publics, this text fails that measure in all but the narrowest sense.[72]

Richard Hise's *The War Against Men* advocates for a public of marked men to oppose the dominant public, but it does so on the basis of a fundamental confusion: Namely, Hise interprets the decline of male power relative to women as evidence of marginalization. *MND*, as well, characterizes movements toward reform as attacks by characterizing the last 40 years of women's rights activism as an all-out attack on a natural status quo. Both, however, ignore the historical relations of exploitation and domination which delivered men to these positions of

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[72] I suppose one could contend that the purchase of a Dodge Charger is intend to symbolize engagement and opposition to other publics.

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superiority. Hise, especially, evokes the imagery of war on the grounds that

women are taking power away from men, are paid nearly as much as men, are

increasingly found in the halls of power, and are increasingly going to school.

However, his arguments do not begin to suggest that women are achieving

material and cultural success beyond their relative share of the population;

instead, Hise is able to characterize these shifts as an attack by way of the

submerged assumption that power was appropriately distributed in society prior to

the 1960s. When he rails against the prevalence of university coursework that

emphasizes women's lives and experiences, Hise is able to cast this development

as discriminatory so long as readers follow him in understanding the great

majority of university courses as of universal interest, despite the fact that they

focus overwhelmingly on men and men's experiences, values, and achievements.

Only when patriarchy is used as a baseline from which deviations are charted

does it become possible to characterize the shift from 3% female representation in

Congress to 13% as an attack on men.

I contend that these texts manifest a kind of cultural amnesia that allows

them to imagine men's prior positions of power as natural and normal.

Furthermore, a failure to account for the historical relations which delivered males

to positions of power enables these texts to reframe movements toward equity as

persecution or attack and to characterize their decline relative to their prior

dominance in terms of marginalization. In Burkean terms,[73] these texts so

dramatically shrink the scene that adjustments and reactions are interpreted as

unprovoked attack.

Upon analysis it becomes clear that these texts do not urge a demand for

enfranchisement or for the public sphere to accommodate new modes of

expression, but they are a call for the preservation of privilege. Therefore, these

texts represent a type of rhetorical discourse to be distinguished from texts that

call for the expansion of the public sphere or for the extension of the public

sphere's guarantees to a heretofore subaltern population. They are not so much

counterpublicity as they are calls for the protection of privilege cloaked in the

trappings of counterpublicity.

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[73] Kenneth Burke (1945/1969) contends that an auditor's assessment of any act
will be influenced by the setting—the *scene*—in which it occurs. The notion of
scene is quite broad—the scene could be as macroscopic as it is when
historians speak of the Iron Age or it could be as microscopic as the context of
an argument between friends. Burke uses *circumference* to refer to the scope
of the scene. By shrinking the circumference of a scene, an act may appear to
occur in isolation. When the circumference is expanded, an act that previously
seemed isolated may now be understood to be an effect or a reaction.

Chapter 6

THE WAR ON WHITE PEOPLE

On March 4, 2011, one of the most visited web sites in the world,

CNN.com, posed the following question: "Are whites racially oppressed?" The

copy that accompanied this headline detailed the growing numbers of individuals

and organizations alleging that white people have become "the new minority

group" (Blake, 2011). The article cites several developments which seem to

corroborate this conclusion: Census data suggests that whites will be a numerical

minority by 2050. In response to this worry, a group of Texans have begun the

"Former Majority Association for Equality" which offers financial aid to white

male college students; conservative pundit Rush Limbaugh has described

Republicans as an "oppressed minority"; a recent poll found that nearly two-thirds

of those who identified as members of the Tea Party felt that discrimination

against whites was as significant as discrimination against blacks and other

minorities; and Tea Party favorite Glenn Beck has alleged that President Obama

hates white people and white culture.

Despite the fact that white people experience disproportionate wealth,

representation, and political access relative to people of color, and that this

inequality has only worsened since the 1960s,[74] the final set of texts taken up by

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[74] As chapter three establishes, the average African American family's net worth
(58% of the average white family's net worth) is actually less than the average
African American family's net worth in 1974, when whites only held a 26%

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this project share the argument that white people are now targets of discrimination in America. There is no shortage of such claims, but what further distinguishes the texts selected in this chapter is that they also appear to meet the conditions of counterpublicity: Each depicts whites as a marginalized public and urges an oppositional stance toward a wider public. This chapter begins with the a missive from the European-American Unity and Rights Organization (EURO) which calls on European-Americans to recognize themselves as targets of "the most extensive racial discrimination in American History" (2005, May 13). Next, *Save Your Heritage*, a vernacular website, exhorts whites to fight against an anti-white genocide under way in America. Finally, the Council of Conservative Citizens (CofCC) makes use of a *Newsweek* article in order to warn of a "War on White People."

EURO

The European-American Unity and Rights Organization (EURO) represents the newest reformulation of David Duke's politics. The former Republican Louisiana state representative, one-time presidential hopeful, and Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard previously headed up NOFEAR, the National Organization For European American Rights. Under NOFEAR and EURO, Duke has eschewed baldly racist pronouncements in favor of nationalist arguments over immigration and affirmative action. Though nationalism is hardly rare, Duke's

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advantage (Economic Mobility Project, 2009).

variety is novel in the way that it connects nationhood with ethnicity. Duke's

nationalism connects American exceptionalism with white supremacy. In short,

Duke believes the United States has been able to become a world leader because it

has been guided politically, economically, and culturally by white people. So it is

not simply that Americans are exceptional but that to be American is to be white.

If it is true that the United States has been a white nation and has achieved its

position of dominance because of this white stock, then it stands to reason (to

Duke, at least) that any diminution of this stock represents a weakening of the

nation. This particular voicing of white supremacy allows Duke and his

organizations to advocate against multiculturalism, efforts to create diversity, and

efforts at reform to the degree that they are able to argue that these initiatives

threaten to diminish the United States' white stock and, thus, its future excellence.

A part of EURO's agenda is its call to end racial discrimination in the

United States. While the headline, "End Racial Discrimination," is hardly

controversial, the text that accompanies it almost surely is. EURO begins with a

bold declaration:

> European-Americans now face the most extensive racial discrimination in
> American History. It is true that some Blacks faced discrimination in the
> past, but the discrimination was limited, primarily practiced in the private
> sector; and even then there were many businesses and educational
> institutions that treated them fairly. Today, the Federal Government is
> forcing an across-the-board racial discrimination against European-
> Americans in employment, promotions, scholarships, and in college and
> union admittance. This racial bias is pervading all sectors of our national
> life, including civil service, education and business. (2005, May 5)

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This introductory warning provides several interesting moments. First, EURO

conflates race and ethnicity without trouble: To speak of European-Americans, an

ethnic group, synonymously with race, as EURO does when it alleges racial

discrimination against European-Americans, is to suggest that whiteness and

identification as European-American are synonymous.[75] As chapter three

suggests, the notion that Europeans are white has hardly been uncontroversial: For

example, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Polish people have historically

had difficulty earning acceptance in the United States and were not initially

considered white. One is left to wonder if each of these countries, not to mention

slavic nation-states like Croatia and Russia, are included in EURO's

conceptualization of whiteness.

The second clause in this paragraph works as an anticipatory rebuttal to

those who would challenge EURO's claims of discrimination. EURO concedes

that African Americans experienced a limited period and range of

"discrimination" but argues that what faces European-Americans now is more

pervasive. It is important to note the way that EURO deploys the term

discrimination as a one-size-fits-all signifier for injustices that range from

preferential treatment in the awarding of government contracts to the wholesale

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[75] This should also create a problem for the logic of EURO's white nationalism.
If the US has become a premier nation on the strength of its white, i.e.,
European, citizenry, then it stands to reason that countries with more purely
European stock (namely, countries *in* Europe) should have fared even better
than the US.

enslavement of millions of people. I contend that it is the enormous range of experiences obscured by this word which enables EURO to stage an equivalence between 400 years of African slavery and 40 years of Affirmative Action policy.

To claim that mistreatment of African Americans in the United States was "limited" is to understate history in the extreme. In addition to the misleading use of "discrimination" to refer to the African American experience of enslavement and segregation, EURO achieves this understatement by way of a manipulation of the notions of public and private. When EURO claims that mistreatment of African Americans was primarily limited to the private "sector," it evidences a blindness to the way that issues are shuttled between the public and private sphere, often to avoid intervention by members of the public. For example, intimate partner abuse has been construed as a private issue and, thus, not a matter of public concern or jurisdiction. Indeed, one might even claim that injustices visited against African slaves were always private issues insofar as these slaves were themselves considered private property. But to make such a claim is to avoid recognition of the way that the state, at national and local levels, enacted laws and policies which facilitated the institutions of slavery, segregation, and the establishment of separate and unequal lives for African Americans through the 1950s and 1960s. In other words, it ignores the way that the private sphere is frequently constituted by public policy. Furthermore, describing discrimination against African Americans as an unfortunate set of events in the past is to suggest

that discrimination and its effects do not continue to affect African Americans and their communities today. The third chapter of this project should offer significant evidence to warrant the claim that, despite important strides, African American still experience significant discrimination on individual and structural levels.

EURO goes on to single out Affirmative Action as a particularly blatant example of discrimination faced by European-Americans: "'Affirmative Action' is a euphemism for nothing more than blatant racial discrimination." As evidence of this claim, EURO provides examples in which putatively under-qualified African Americans have been elevated over their white competition:

> [Consider the] Bakke and Weber Supreme Court decisions that sanctioned racial quotas. Bakke, who scored in the 90's on his tests for medical school, was denied entrance in deference to Blacks who scored in the 30's. University of Texas Law School Professor Leno Graglia recently showed that there were only 16 Blacks in the entire nation who deserved to attend the UTLS by scoring at least the minimum qualification scores (LSAT) of the current White students. This kind of discrimination is grossly unfair and also drives down productivity and diminishes the quality of life. (EURO, 2005, May 13).

Of particular importance here is the way that the ideology of classical liberalism guides EURO's reading of the facts surrounding this important Supreme Court case. Classical liberalism treats the individual person as the locus of all social action and demands a minimum of intrusion by the state into individuals' lives. The individual is held to be the atomic unit of social life. And according to this perspective, individual persons must be as free as possible to act in their own self-

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interest, and governmental bodies ought to intrude only so much as necessary to provide reasonable safety for the population.

Under classical liberalism, social justice is achieved when individuals are allowed to succeed or fail on their own merit. Social outcomes are nearly always characterized in terms of personal choice and work ethic. When the state or some other institution intervenes in order to protect some person or group of persons, classic liberalism characterizes this act as unethical insofar as it rewards inefficiency or laziness and penalizes the hard-working and successful.

As Stanley Fish (1993, November) has argued, this ideological position begins with the problematic assumption that all individuals are equitably positioned within society: Like runners who all have the opportunity to prepare, to compete under universally applied rules of play, and begin from the same starting line, classical liberalism suggests that life's winners will be those most deserving of success. However, when one recognizes the gross inequalities which characterize life in modern capitalism, it becomes nearly impossible to cling to classical liberalism's prescriptions. If one returns to the metaphor of the foot race, one finds that competitors do not all receive equal training or equal starting points, and they are not all bound by the same rules of motion. And so the winners are all too often simply the ones who were lucky enough to draw the good starting positions with the best resources. By painting discrimination faced by African Americans as a thing entirely of the past and focusing solely on test

takers rather than the publics of which these test takers are members, EURO is able to force a direct comparison of test scores earned by applicants regardless of the material and cultural resources available to each. Furthermore, the suggestion that an applicant "deserves" entry suggests the assumption that application outcomes are solely to be determined on the basis of individual achievement rather than any other criterion—perhaps achievement relative to obstacles or the net benefits provided to the institution by admitting that particular student.

Affirmative Action is hardly the end of the problem, EURO (2005, May 13) claims; African Americans have pressured the government "about busing and forced integration of schools and neighborhoods, a program that is heightening racial tensions and drastically harming educational quality." EURO goes on to claim that a litany of abuses produced by this pressure:

> Government has forced higher taxes on productive Americans in order to finance exorbitant and wasteful welfare programs. [African Americans] … have practically handcuffed police and the courts, preventing them from dealing firmly with violent criminals (most of whom are Black). They have opened the floodgates of unrestricted Third World [sic] immigration, which increases unemployment and adds to already high welfare costs and crime. All these policies go directly against the interests of America's European America population.

While signifiers of Otherness are everywhere present in this text, the term *white* and even EURO's preferred *European-American* are rather uncommon. Instead, African-Americans are depicted as lazy burdens to be born by "productive Americans" who, one must conclude, are not African-Americans. Such an assertion ignores not only the increasingly sizable African American middle class

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which continues to help drive the economy and pays taxes but also the contributions of this nation's working poor, disproportionately comprised of people of color, who provide low-cost labor for industrial capital and help to fill the coffers of the credit industry.[76]

EURO's (2005, May 13) claim regarding "Third World immigration" is even more troubling. First, the term "Third World" invokes a Cold War-era analogy which assigns to the United States, the Soviet Union, and non-aligned countries the qualities of the first, second, and third estates of early modern Europe (MacDonald, 2005, p. 4).[77] This perceptual schema stands as a preeminent example of what Edward Said (1979) has termed Orientalism, an ideological discourse which renders Easterners and their culture as different, exotic, and inferior to Westerners and Western culture. I contend that it is the

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[76] David Harvey (2007) has forcefully argued that capitalism's tendency toward crisis, in which wealth is concentrated in the hands of the rich and no longer circulates, has been ameliorated largely by the extension of credit to the poor who are now allowed to purchase more, i.e., to stimulate the economy further, even as they own less and less.

[77] The United Nations began using this analogy as early as 1945 to define the "relative wealth of nations" (MacDonald, 2005, p. 4). In keeping with the estates of ancient Europe, the First World, i.e., the United States, imagined itself akin to the noblest classes of clergy on the basis of its free elections and enormous wealth. The Second World, comprised of the Soviet Union and its allies, was thought to occupy a sort of intermediate position between brute incivility and the progress achieved by the First World as it had amassed significant wealth and power but was communist. The Third World was to contain all those nations whose people had not yet aligned themselves with democracy or communism. And the Fourth World, which has now largely been collapsed into the Third, contained the "desperately poor nations."

half-acknowledged ethnocentrism embodied in this description of immigrants which helps EURO to paint immigration from Africa, South America, and the Middle East as an inherent detriment or burden to the United States rather than a potential boon. Furthermore, it is unclear how EURO means to suggest that immigration from any point of origin is now unrestricted in the United States. Each year, the US government allows only a limited number of immigrants to become citizens. And it is difficult to understand how African American groups—presumably the NAACP is implicated here—have influenced immigration law.

At this point, EURO (2005, May 13) offers a dire warning of the implications of these transgressions. "Unless European-Americans organize and act soon," EURO claims, "America will become a 'Third World' country – that is, European-Americans will become outnumbered and totally vulnerable to the political control of Blacks and other non-Whites." There is much to consider in this brief selection: The suggestion that a mere change in the proportion of white people relative to the rest of the nation's population is sufficient to drive the United States so far backwards as to make it a "Third World" country; the slippery slope drawn between becoming a numerical minority and being "totally vulnerable" to political control; and the submerged assumption that, once a majority, people of color will act against the interests of white people.

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The suggestion that the decline of a white majority in the United States will necessarily precipitate a cultural decline which will result in the United States becoming a "Third World" country is made possible by the tacit assumption that United States has become a "First World" country because of the continuing excellence of white people and white culture. As white nationalism suggests, it becomes necessary to protect white hegemony if one is to protect the United States' status as a First World nation.

Additionally, the claim that being "outnumbered," i.e., becoming a numerical minority, necessarily leads to white people being "totally powerless" to the political power of people of color requires at least two assumptions. First, one must assume that political power consists in maintaining a numerical advantage relative to other groups. Because of the way that power manifests itself in ideological apparatuses and state institutions, it seems far more likely that, as in the case of South Africa, an entrenched white public could maintain considerable control despite becoming a numerical minority. But furthermore, this argument assumes that people of color will vote monolithically and against the interests of whites. This anxiety is produced by an ideological investment in Orientalist attitudes toward difference which prompt whites to imagine people of color as essentially similar to each other and unlike whites. Attention to political conversations among African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians would suggest, to

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the contrary, that people of color are hardly in full agreement on the issues that face this nation.

EURO's call proceeds by amplifying these anxieties, suggesting the impending extinction of whites. EURO (2005, May 13) writes:

> There are 24 all-Black countries, but there are no all-White nations except Iceland, and Iceland is not enough! There is no threat to the continued existence of the Black Race, but there is a real threat to the White. If breeds of life like the blue whale, the rocky mountain cougar, or even the tiny breed of fish called the snail darter are worth preserving, shouldn't a beautiful and creative people such as the White Race, also, be worthy of our concern?

Readers should note the way that the term *European-American* has now been replaced with the *white race.* Many would quite understandably take this occurrence as proof that the use of *European American* was intended as a method of dressing old racism in the language of multiculturalism. I would suggest supplementing this reading with a different—though no less troubling— interpretation: The use of a signifier of ethnicity as synonymous with a signifier of race suggests the submerged assumption that a specific corporeality, namely whiteness, corresponds to certain cultural performances. In other words, the text suggests that one must be white to act white.

One of the reasons I have chosen to examine this text is that it eschews the trappings of baldly racist propaganda: It does not explicitly claim that people of color are inferior to whites, nor does it claim outright that whites ought to assert their dominion over people of color. Instead, it appropriates the language of

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endangerment and even begins to sound like the rhetoric of leftists groups like

Greenpeace and PETA in calling for the protection of an endangered species,[78]

thereby becoming far more insidious than unapologetic claims of white

superiority.

This appropriation is made possible by three false-equivalences staged in

this argument. First, EURO conflates the persistence of a race and, ergo, an

ethnicity with the survival of a species. When EURO compares white people to

blue whales, it relies on a seeming parallel: On the one hand, readers are offered a

whale distinguished from other whales based on its color; on the other, they have

a human distinguished from other humans on the basis of its color. However, the

name *blue whale* represents not just a deviation in color, but an animal genetically

apart from other species of whales. Humans of every ethnicity and race, on the

other hand, are of the same species and known to be at least 99.9% identical at a

genetic level (International Human Genome Sequencing Consortium, 2001,

February 15; Venter, Adams, Myers, et al, 2001, June 5).[79] So while humpback

whales and blue whales differ significantly, white people are genetically almost

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[78] This is not to suggest that EURO actually endorses arguments marshaled by
PETA and GreenPeace. I contend that this argument is meant as an
anticipatory appeal to those who might grant such claims: In essence, EURO
seems to be suggesting that those who care about the blue whale and the
spotted owl must logically also be concerned for the longevity of white people.

[79] This means that all human difference—not just those features commonly
grouped under the heading of race but also eye color, hair color, body shape,
and so forth—constitutes only one tenth of one percent difference among
humans.

exactly the same as all other people. Given that most contemporary notions of ethnicity refer to shared identification through common heritage, culture, or practices, it seems easy enough to imagine an ethnicity persisting across any imaginable permutation of human genetics. But even EURO, which imagines ethnicity to be coextensive with race, relies upon the false assumption that race/ethnicity are analogous to species. Second, the text imagines existence as coextensive with exclusive occupation. When EURO worries about the dearth of all-white nations, it seems to suggest that it is not enough for white people to exist in the United States or even to flourish, but that they must live apart from other people. And finally, the text ignores an important difference between the looming extinction of a sort of animal and the extinction the social construct of whiteness, the difference between extinguishing a life and diluting a mythological heritage. While environmentalists may well be worried about the implications of industrialization and globalization for the wellbeing of plants and animals, EURO is not worried that white people are, in any material sense, being killed off by people of color. EURO is worried that whiteness may recede as white people increasingly reproduce with people of color. In sum, I contend that this argument is, in the end, an argument about the dangers of miscegenation garbed in the language of environmentalism.

Having built the case for the mistreatment of its people, EURO (2005, May 13) concludes with a call for European-Americans to join together in

opposition to their mistreatment by the broader public and the federal

government.

> There is no doubt that our people continued [sic] to be denigrated by the mass media, … financially stripped by high taxes for wasteful welfare programs, and that our nation is being swamped by immigration. … The European-American Unity and Rights Organization is absolutely necessary if the rights of our people are to be defended, if our heritage is to be preserved, and if our magnificent potentialities are to be realized.

In addition to a restatement of its broad claims about mistreatment, astute readers should notice the sly opposition EURO stages between the lazy and shiftless masses who fill the ranks of the nation's welfare programs and European-Americans/whites who must foot the bill. The unstated claim being made here is that whites are hard-working productive Americans who continue to prop up a nation of greedy interlopers who prey on their largesse.[80]

Upon consideration, EURO's claim of discrimination is made possible only after several important ideological investments are made. First, in order to render Affirmative Action initiatives not as restorative justice but as malicious discrimination against whites, readers must understand mistreatment of African Americans to be something of the past which no longer has any bearing on the present. This attitude is helped along considerably by the ideology of

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[80] It is certainly not true that only people of color rely upon welfare. Despite the innumerable advantages provided by white privilege, approximately 9.4% of all Americans living at or below poverty level in 2008 identified as white non-Hispanic (NPC, 2009). Anti-racism activist Tim Wise (2008) has often noted the ways that racism intervenes to obstruct a sober accounting of the vast numbers of whites and people of color who face crushing poverty.

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individualism which does not include an accounting of the ways that privilege is often distributed at kinship and class levels. Next, in order to see the expansion of immigration as a threat to European-Americans, one must adopt EURO's white nationalism which understands the health of the United States as a superpower as inextricably driven by white people and white culture. Finally, in order to characterize whites as victimized by the burden of supporting welfare programs, it is necessary to understand whites as uniformly the benevolent supporters, rather than clients, of such initiatives. In the final analysis, however, I contend that what this text calls for is not the right for European-Americans to express themselves or to participate in deliberative democracy, but for the protection of white hegemony.

Save Your Heritage

Save Your Heritage (SYH, n.d.a) is an independently run website that encourages whites to preserve their heritage or be "doomed" to "genocide." Operating outside the purview of any highly visible or deep-pocketed organization, the site represents a vernacular voicing of the "war on white people" argument. SYH's main page, which comprises some 38 pages of text and photos when printed out, is intended to raise consciousness among whites that their European heritage is being threatened and will disintegrate if it is not protected. SYH goes to great lengths to distinguish this agenda from anything like white supremacy. At every turn, the site declares its opposition to racism and race-

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based violence. The first of many disclaimers rebuts those who would paint SYH as racist:

> Truth is not racist. Facts are not hate. Yet we are called racist[,] bigoted[,] Nazis[,] Anti-Semitic and others for doing exactly what *Black, Yellow, Brown*, and other races of the world do[.] We Love Our Heritage! We Fight for Our People! (emphasis original)

SYH routinely insists that it simply hopes to provide an equivalent to initiatives such as the Black Pride movement or La Raza.

The imagery used on on *Save Your Heritage,* though simple, is evocative. The flags of numerous countries—Great Britain, USA, Canada, France, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Scotland, Italy, and Norway—are arranged in single columns on the left and right sides of the page. The site's banner sits in the center, flanked on both sides by these flags. In addition to the site's title, the banner includes digital renderings of a shield emblazoned with the Christian cross, two Celtic crosses, and crossed axes. Other images that figure prominently on the page include a painting of pilgrims atop Plymouth rock, a recent photograph of Buckingham Palace, and numerous contemporary reenactments of colonial settlements like Plymouth and Williamsburg accompanied by the words, "Your Heritage!"

Beneath the banner, two sets of crossed flags—the union jack and the star spangled banner on the left side and dual confederate flags on the right—wrap around the heading, "What is Heritage" (SYH, n.d.a). SYH offers two sources for its definition of heritage—Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary and the 1974 World

Book dictionary. Each source connects *heritage* with genetic and spiritual

inheritance. Webster's 1828 definition includes, "Inheritance; an estate that

passes from an *ancestor* to an heir by *descent* or course of law; that which is

inherited" and "the saints or *people of God*" (emphasis original). The 1974 World

Book Dictionary similarly defines heritage as "what is or may be handed on to a

person from his [sic] *ancestors* as land, a trait, beliefs, or customs[,]" or

"*Israelites*, God's chosen people" or "the Christian Church." SYH, apparently

worried by the sectarian timbre of these definitions, follows with the assertion that

"you don't have to be Christian to agree with the majority of this site" (emphasis

original).

Following these definitions, a stern warning is issued: "We must unite to

Save Our Heritage or we will are [sic] doomed. To save our heritage we must

know our enemy" (SYH, n.d.a). Readers, I hope, have begun to wonder: Who is

the *we* that must know its enemy? Whose heritage, exactly, is at risk? According

to SYH,

> The United States of America, Great Britain, Europe and the White
> countries of the world … were all founded on "Christian principles[.]"
> These principles were a part of our religion, our language, our literature,
> our laws and our moral concepts. These principles are all incorporated
> into our foundation[,] Our Heritage[.] Chip away the foundation and the
> house falls.

So now it is clear exactly whose heritage is under attack—the "white countries of

the world," depicted here as coextensive with Christiandom. The suggestion that

the United States and other western countries were "founded" upon Christian

principles is offered not as controversial but as a given, a point of departure. This

old canard, which justifies the interpenetration of church and state on the basis of

the supposed loyalties of the Founding Fathers, is treated in chapter three of this

dissertation as a particularly pernicious result of Christian privilege and one that

helps firm up support for Christofascism. SYH does not seem to perceive any

incongruity between white culture and white Christian culture. And despite

SYH's assurances to the contrary, it seems that the *we* being hailed is one who, if

she is not a practicing Christian, must at least be comfortable with the normative

idea of the United States as a Christian nation.

SYH illustrates the doom that awaits "our" heritage by way of a reference

to President Bill Clinton's 1998 remarks to the students and faculty of Portland

State University. The President commented that, according to contemporary

estimates of immigration patterns and population growth, it was likely that there

would be no such thing as a majority race in the United States within the next 50

years.[81] SYH (n.d.a) characterizes this comment, and the applause it drew from

the audience, as the announcement and cheering of "the genocide of White

Civilization." SYH detects hypocrisy in this moment:

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[81] The President's remarks characterize the steady flow of immigrants to the
United States as potentially chaotic but ultimately a boon for a nation that
desperately needs laborers to help revitalize a sagging manufacturing base.
Additionally, the President urges the audience to see these immigrants as new
iterations of an American story-- these new Americans are following in the
footsteps of our grandparents.

> Would they have cheered if Clinton had said[,] "The Jews are losing their majority in Israel"[?] Hell no! They would have gasped in horror! Would they have cheered if Clinton had said[,] "The Eskimos are becoming the minority in Alaska because of White migration into their native lands"[?] Of course not! Those liberally educated students would gasp in shame and wonder what was to be done to "save" the Eskimos!

The central claim here is that whites, unlike perhaps any other group, are not being valued as a co-culture whose specificity ought to be preserved rather than homogenized in America's capitalist melting pot.

Upon consideration, however, the comparison between whites and Jewish people or Eskimos is enabled by the equivocation of immigration and colonization or ethnic cleansing. The difference is an important one: Because of the histories of genocide and colonization that characterize the histories of Jewish and Native American cultures, the examples of Israel and Alaska suggest forceful imposition and violence. The change to which President Clinton alluded, however, is the probable outcome of overwhelmingly peaceful immigration by opportunity-seekers to the world's most robust capitalist economy. Furthermore, the President's comments were not intended to suggest that control would be wrested away from whites but, instead, to suggest that the political landscape would no longer be dominated by the notion of race whatsoever. Though such predictions—often described as a post-racial America—also present significant

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concerns,[82] they are hardly the same as a prediction of White decline. These important differences are elided in this text.

SYH goes further to suggest that a double-standard now operates in American culture. "If you dare express pride in your White heritage," SYH (n.d.a) intones, "*Be prepared*[:] Society says only people of *color* can be proud" (emphasis original). In response to this double-standard, SYH proposes its own position on racial pride: "*Every* race has a heritage[.] *Every* race is special[.] *Every* heritage is worth preserving[.] *This includes the white race*" (emphasis original). Interspersed between photos of European-American settlements founded in the colonial era, depictions of European inventions such as the sewing machine and the lightbulb, and photos of contemporary technological achievements like Hoover Dam and the Apollo 11rocket is the caption "We are all worth preserving[.] The white people of the world[,] *you and me!*"

SYH claims that discrimination against whites is the result of the widespread acceptance of anti-white ideologies. To provide further proof of this discrimination, SYH offers a bipartite table of organizations. The left half of the table consists of a list of organizations that advocate on behalf of people of color:

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[82] Predictions and pronouncements of a post-racial American society were common following the election of Barrack Obama in 2008. Surely, President Obama's victory marks a milestone in American progress toward racial equality. However, to suggest that this occurrence marks the end of race as a meaningful category of social identity is to ignore the numerous material and cultural obstacles facing people of color. That a man of color became president should not suggest that such an achievement is within equal reach of all races.

the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the

National Council of La Raza (NCLR), Asian Americans for Civil Rights and

Equality (ACRE), the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), the Puerto Rican

Defense and Education Fund (PRDEF), the Mexican American Legal Defense

and Education Fund (MALDE), and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs

(JCPA). On the right side, a lone name appears: the European-American Unity

and Rights Organization (EURO). SYH asks:

> Never heard of it? There's a reason! You've been conditioned to believe
> that you're Racist if you want to Preserve, Protect, and Honor your own
> People! If you're White[.] You can have "rights" if you're a Minority[,]
> Jewish[,] Homosexual[,] Lesbian[,] Transgender[,] Woman[,] Disabled[,]
> Father[,] Mother[,] Child[,] Youth[,] Fetus[,] Animal[,] Indigenous,
> Homeless, Student, Laborer, Author, Lawyer, Farmer, Atheist, Christian,
> [or] Arab[.] You name it, you have "civil" rights for it[;] *Unless you're
> White!* (emphasis original)

Without providing the historical context which precipitated these organizations,

SYH is able to construe the common acceptance of the NAACP or La Raza

alongside the denigration of groups like EURO as hypocritical. Missing here is

an accounting of the marginal positions historically occupied by members of the

publics represented by organizations like the NAACP. While EURO diminishes

the duration and extent of the mistreatment suffered by people of color in the US,

SYH is blind to it entirely.

The identity politics of the latter half of the 20th century which helped

members of many marginalized groups to claim their right to representation and

voice in American politics often included efforts at rehabilitating these

marginalized identity positions by encouraging members of these publics to

publicly announce their pride to be black, gay, and so forth. At the time, some

felt that an effort had to be made to encourage people of color to understand their

"blackness" as a point of pride, to encourage gays and lesbians to openly identify

as homosexual—often with the knowledge that these displays of pride might

expose them to violent retribution. Whiteness, long capable of defining itself as

both normal and beautiful in Western culture, has not suffered such obstacles and,

thus, has not needed such rehabilitation.

The discrimination SYH (n.d.a) alleges has also meant that whites have

not been granted the right to keep to themselves. They offer this argument again

in the form of analogy:

> Why is it "horrifying" to naturally prefer your own kind? Dogs naturally prefer their own kind in nature[.] Cows naturally prefer their own kind in nature[.] Birds naturally prefer their own kind in nature[.] Why can't People? Blacks can prefer the company of other Blacks[.] Asians can prefer the company of other Asians[.] Arabs can prefer the company of other Arabs[.] Mexicans can prefer the company of other Mexicans[.] Jews can prefer the company of other Jews[.] And no one cares[.] Why can't Whites?

At least two important omissions mark this argument. First, readers are presented

with yet another false equivalence: As I have already argued, the differences

among species are exponentially greater than the difference between different

members of the same species (e.g., whites and Hispanics).

Furthermore, SYH appears to be unaware of—or willing to ignore—the

historical circumstances which have necessitated the formation of counterpublic

enclaves. Though they may be tourist destinations now, major cities have a

"Chinatown," a "Little Italy," and numerous other enclaves because their

residents were not always welcome in the white parts of town. The enclaves that

SYH paints as privileged exclusivities denied to whites would, upon

consideration, be better understood as protective enclaves intended to provide a

measure of security for persons who find themselves marginalized in mainstream

society.

This argument appears throughout SYH—human races are compared to

species of flowers, whales, elephants, and eagles. This false-equivalence has long

been a component of white supremacist attempts to assign to people of color sub-

human status. Finally, the argument is concluded with an appeal to the highest

authority:

> God definitely did not make one *kind* of man with the ability to self-
> procreate into many kinds[.] *DNA just doesn't work that way. ...* Your
> Heritage is White! You're willing to believe that God made the endless
> varieties of plants and animals after their *kind*[.] Why not his most
> important creation[:] *You!* (SYH, n.d.a, emphasis original)

In addition to manifesting a curiously inverted understanding of the process of

human evolution,[83] this marks another important moment where Christian

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[83] That is, SYH seems to suggest that human difference as a constant, that
individuals have always possessed clearly defined racial traits which are to
propagate linearly through reproduction. Contemporary theories about human
difference, however, suggest that the qualities identified as constitutive of race
are the emergent results of migration into physical environments. Indeed,
SYH's (n.d.b) separate treatise on the development of races claims that "God
created the races separate and distinct, then placed each race in separate areas

privilege underwrites white privilege: It is unproblematically expected that a

quick reference to God (implicitly the Christian God) will provide sufficient

warrant for an assertion about the nature of human biology.

Having concluded its argument for white pride, SYH concludes with a

return to its warning of white genocide. Here, for the first time, a clear list of

offenses is provided:

> Now[,] due to massive amounts of immigration in every White nation [,]
> … due to non-stop mis-information on the TV, RADIO, [and]
> HOLLYWOOD MOVIES[,] due to the media relentlessly and powerfully
> beating it into White people that racial intermarriage is cool and
> fashionable[,] due to the media yet again, the "sexual revolution"
> convinced an entire generation into sexual irresponsibility resulting in
> sexual diseases that reduced fertility[,] due to the media relentlessly and
> persistently convincing women that men were "keeping them down"[,] …
> due to preachers not doing their jobs[,] due to manipulation of our
> economic system that has forced women into jobs when they would rather
> be home raising their children[,] due to the shameless promotion of
> homosexuality by the media instead of promoting traditional family
> values, again, lowering our birth rate[,] for these reasons and many
> more[,] We are facing genocide as a people!

Suddenly, and after countless pages of broad warnings of an attack on white

heritage, readers are provided a laundry list of offenses which have contributed to

this decline. Perhaps surprisingly, people of color do not figure significantly here.

Blame is heaped, however, at the feet of the mainstream media—which seems to

be bent on pushing interracial romance, homosexuality, and promiscuity in

general—and an overly lax laity which has failed to condone interracial marriage.

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of the world just as the Bible states."

Finally, SYH (n.d.a) moves to unmask the entities behind this war. "In a war," the site begins, "you must *Know your enemy*[.] We must not be afraid to declare the enemy of our people." Directly beneath this declaration is a link to a now-defunct YouTube video entitled "Jews Reveal Their Plans for the World." Nonetheless, it is now apparent that SYH believes Jewish people are behind many of the activities it construes as constitutive of white genocide. Even at this point, however, SYH insists, "Truth is *not* Racist[;] Facts are *not* Hate or *anti*-Semitic" (emphasis original). Furthermore, the page concludes with a final disclaimer:

> In no way should the information on this web site be used as an excuse for hatred, violence or to commit any illegal act against any person of color[.] This site is about information and education of White people and the preservation of our unique Heritage[.] *Be Respectful, Be Polite, Be Christian at all times*[.] *Remember – Truth is not Racist, Facts are not Hate!* Act accordingly[.] (emphasis original)

That what begins by announcing itself as explicitly anti-racist text concludes with the suggestion that Jewish people intend to destroy white civilization is certainly vexing. Indeed, there is so much here which invites consternation. For the purposes of this project, however, what is most interesting is not the site's lurking anti-semitic conspiracy theory but the way in which white Christians are hailed to defend themselves against an attack on their heritage.

The crux of this reframing seems to be about depicting the notion of white pride and white separatism as analogous to black pride and the enclaves that sometimes are found among members of marginalized publics. This is accomplished, in large part, by rendering race and discourses about race as

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unchanging, thereby de-historicizing race relations in America. When it repeatedly fails to acknowledge the centuries of discrimination faced by the people represented by the NAACP, La Raza, and similar organizations, SYH implies that such groups simply exist to advocate on behalf of privileged subsets of humanity. A sober recounting of the American experience for people of color, LGBTQ people, and non-Christians would suggest that groups like the NAACP arose not to advocate for the value of their constituents over and against the value of American people in general but to advocate for their inclusion in America's citizenry. And this recounting would likely conclude that initiatives encouraging "black power" or "gay pride" were not staged in an environment of equity and balance but, instead, were necessary correctives to wider publics which had long shamed and silenced members of these groups simply for being black or gay. Without this historical context, it becomes possible for the auditor to understand the call for "black pride" as equivalent to a call for "white pride."

The attempt to characterize calls for white separatism as equivalent to enclaves found among marginalized publics similarly benefits from this sort of cultural amnesia. Without a historical frame of reference, it may seem fair to suggest that whites ought to be welcome to aim to avoid diverse others in the same way that members of so many other publics do. A lack of context robs the reader of the information necessary to differentiate between a defensive strategy for minimizing danger and an offensive strategy intended to avoid enfranchising

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muted groups. SYH fails to mention that people of color, LGBTQ people, and non-Christians have often resorted to enclaves in response to the disparaging and often violent response they receive from the broader public.

Finally, and speaking of the broader public, SYH is able to argue for the necessity of white pride by way of a blindness as to the nature of the broader public. I am arguing that SYH evidences an inability to recognize the way that whiteness operates invisibly throughout American culture. The claim that whites must explicitly announce and protect their heritage flies in the face of the claim made by critical race theorists that American culture has long been synonymous with white culture. The Miss Black America pageant, for example, has long been an easy target for those who wish to argue that African Americans have moved beyond the goal of equality and now wish for segregation but only on their own terms. This claim, like SYH's broader claim about the disappearance of white heritage, is possible only when one ignores the way that whiteness tacitly guides American culture. While there is not a pageant billed as the Miss White America pageant, there *is* a pageant judged by standards of white beauty and white decorum: It is called the Miss America Pageant. Similarly, one might remind SYH that there are few calls to preserve white heritage because white culture is perpetually absorbed and renamed *American heritage*. There is not a white history month devoted to emphasizing the great works and achievements of white people because those people and events have already been woven into a narrative

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commonly referred to as American History. And our schools teach it eleven

months per year.

The Council of Conservative Citizens

The Council of Conservative Citizens (CofCC) bills itself as an

organization of people who "believe in, commit themselves to, and pledge to

work for and support these fundamental principles of American civilization,

liberty, justice, and national safety" (n.d.). Despite these high-minded values, the

organization has been held by the NAACP as the "linear descendant of the White

Citizens Council" which was formed in 1954 to oppose racial integration and

defend white supremacy in the United States (Jealous, 2010, July 16). By 1956,

that group had changed its name to the more pedestrian Concerned Citizens

Councils of America. Though CofCC denies any attempt to equivocate between

its agenda and that of the White Citizens Council (WCC) or the Concerned

Citizens Councils of America (CCCA), it does grant that a number of former

members now occupy CofCC's board of directors (CofCC, 2010, July 16).

Described as an "uptown Klan" by Supreme Court Justice Thurgood

Marshall, the WCC/CCCA typically relied upon political and economic pressure,

rather than outright violence, in pursuing its segregationist agenda (SPLC, 2011).

CofCC, likewise, does not appear to involve itself in direct violence. Instead, it

attempts to leverage appeals to old-fashioned values and traditions in order to

persuade readers to donate to allied causes and to boycott individuals,

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organizations, and products which offend its sensibilities. Perhaps because of this, the group has enjoyed significant access to mainstream political figures: Bob Barr, Republican congressman from Georgia, provided CofCC's 1998 national convention with a keynote speech; Trent Lott, Republican senator from Mississippi, has addressed the group on five separate occasions; Charles Bishop, Republican senator from Alabama, earned applause in 2008 at a CofCC assembly when he denounced the prospect of southern states apologizing for the horrors of American slavery; and Lydia Chassaniol, Republican Mississippi state senator and CofCC member, addressed the group in 2009. Perhaps most famously, pictures of Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour attending a CofCC fundraiser for white private schools created a significant firestorm for the candidate's campaign when they surfaced on the Internet. In defense, Barbour claimed that he had not been aware of CofCC's agenda.

Though CofCC's website hosts hundreds of articles, this project is interested in one particular recurring argument that CofCC forwards in response to efforts toward diversity, multiculturalism, and anti-racism campaigns: These efforts amount to a war against white people. When *Newsweek* (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, September 5) magazine ran a piece entitled, "See Baby Discriminate," which offered advice to help parents avoid suggesting racist attitudes to their children, the CofCC responded with venom.

The *Newsweek* piece chronicles emergent research conducted by Birgitte Vittrup—a Texas Women's University assistant professor—on children and their attitudes toward race and ethnicity. Vittrup found that a significant number of parents had chosen not to discuss race with their children; "They wanted their children to grow up colorblind" (quoted in Bronson & Merryman, 2009, September 5). Despite this training, Vittrup found that young children reported typically racist and white supremacist beliefs.[84] Furthermore, Vittrup found 14% of children believed their parents did not like black people and another 38% were unsure if their parents liked black people.

Vittrup concluded that these results suggested not that parents were intentionally conveying racist attitudes but, instead, that the discourse of colorblindness they enact prevented their children from having important discussions about race and, thus, "kids were left to improvise their own conclusions—many of which would be abhorrent to their parents" (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, September 5). Even though her initial study instructed participants to discuss issues of race with their children, *Newsweek* reports, parents found themselves unable to say anything about race whatsoever, for fear of saying the wrong thing. As a result, many admitted to falling back on the vague and misleading mantra, "everyone is equal."

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[84] When asked how many white people were mean, children most commonly believed that almost none were. When asked about black people, children commonly answered that some or a lot of them were mean.

The article goes on to suggest that parents who wish to see their children grow up to be aware and welcoming of racial and ethnic difference ought to have regular discussions with their children about race and the history of racial discrimination in the United States. *Newsweek* (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, September 5) reports:

> White children who got the full story about historical discrimination had significantly better attitudes toward blacks than those who got the neutered version. Explicitness works. "It also made them feel some guilt," Bigler adds. "It knocked down their glorified view of white people." They couldn't justify in-group superiority.

Though Vitrupp suggests that members of groups (be they basketball teams, or workgroups) tend to invent reasons to believe their associations are superior to all others, a careful accounting for the roots of white privilege will help to minimize this tendancy.

Undoubtedly, the most incendiary part of this article occurs in a discussion of "ethnic pride." *Newsweek* (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, September 5) notes that African American children exposed to messages about black pride were more likely to assert the worth of their efforts and abilities. Though ethnic pride is deemed beneficial for children of minorities, *Newsweek* suggests:

> *It's horrifying to imagine kids being "proud to be white."* Yet many scholars argue that's exactly what children's brains are already computing. Just as minority children are aware that they belong to an ethnic group with less status and wealth, most white children naturally decipher that they belong to the race that has more power, wealth, and control in society; this provides security, if not confidence. So a pride message would not just be abhorrent—it'd be redundant. (emphasis added)

This passage, in particular, earns the CofCC's (2010, March 4) scorn. They claim the article represents an opening shot in a "War on White People." Furthermore, *Newsweek*'s article is described as one which "demands with religious fanaticism, that white children be made to shun all knowledge of racial differences and taught to feel guilty. *Newsweek actually printed 'It's horrifying to imagine kids being proud to be white'*" (emphasis original). Several observations arise here: First, CofCC amalgamates *Newsweek*'s reportage of scholarly research with its editorializing. As far as CofCC is concerned, when it reports the results of scholarship, *Newsweek* is endorsing it. More disturbing, CofCC appears to misrepresent the article when it cites *Newsweek* as advising that children be made to shun racial difference. If anything, *Newsweek*'s point, as it summarized research on the subject, was that the discourse of colorblindness fails to produce desirable understandings about race and ethnicity. While one could interpret this incongruity as proof that CofCC simply wishes to smear *Newsweek*, it seems to this author that something more important is happening here. I contend that CofCC is referring to the notion that white children ought to be educated about the historical circumstances which ushered whites into positions of power. When children are taught about these circumstances, *Newsweek* reported, they lose the false sense that white people are inherently better than people of color.

CofCC goes on to complain about the discussion of ethnic pride in the original article. Summarizing quickly, CofCC (2010, March 4) writes:

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> The *Newsweek* article actually states that white children should be made to feel guilty to "knock down their glorified view of white people," while black children should be built up with "ethnic pride." White parents, and only white parents, are called on to go to great lengths to brainwash their own children starting at age 3.

Twice in a row, CofCC employs the term *actually,* presumably to suggest that readers ought to experience surprise, shock, or even anger at *Newsweek*'s actions. When CofCC refers to white children being made to feel guilty while black children are to be built up it stages a direct comparison which, devoid of background information, suggests an attempt to single out whites.

Several important moments invite further analysis. First, this summary entirely effaces any discussion of the racist and white supremacist attitudes evidenced by the children under study. Without an understanding of the problematic socialization experienced by these children, it is nearly impossible to understand these suggestions as the correctives they are intended to be. Furthermore, the summary fails to explain the nature of the "guilt" that white children are expected to encounter: No one is suggesting that white children be made to feel bad simply for being white or for anything they individually have done. Readers will recall that *Newsweek*'s point was that unfounded delusions of white supremacy ought to be met with a sober accounting of the histories of abuse and exploitation which have characterized life for several generations of people of color in the United States. Calls for white pride are unnecessary, then, when mainstream society has long celebrated whiteness as the ideal. When readers lack

a sense of the gross inequalities that structure life for whites and people of color,

it is easy to understand these two suggestions (historicizing and minimizing racial

pride for those who have long benefited from racism; and encouraging racial and

ethnic pride for those whose groups have long been denigrated by racist social

structures) as unfair and racist.

Despite its significant disputes with the article, the CofCC (2010, March

4) cites approvingly several "bombshells about racial realities" culled from the

piece. Quoting directly, CofCC reiterates that children differentiate on the basis

of skin color. The use of "realities" seems to suggest that CofCC believes such

discriminations are natural rather than learned. Furthermore, white parents are

"terrified to talk to their own children about race for fear of what their own

children might say." CofCC also notes that a majority of people of color speak to

their children about race while only about a quarter of white people do. Three

more "bombshells" are set off in bold font:

> Whites are called on to begin intense multi-cultural indoctrination using
> videos and parental discussions at age 3, so as not to miss the right
> "developmental window." White children should be made to feel guilty
> for alleged wrongdoings by their race, to increase positive attitudes
> towards blacks. Black children need to be coached on "ethnic pride" to
> pump them up and make them more likely to succeed in life.

The choice to characterize learning materials about race and race-bias as

"indoctrination" speaks volumes not only about what the CofCC perceives as the

war against whites, but where it stands on contemporary issues regarding race,

diversity, and multiculturalism. More shocking, however, is the appearance of the

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adjective "alleged" used to describe "wrongdoings by their race [whites]." Here, the CofCC appears to go beyond EURO, which characterized discrimination against people of color as a thing of the past, or even SYH, which is silent on the issue altogether. The CofCC seems to be suggesting doubt about the occurrence or the moral status of the institutions of African American slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow. The third remark quoted above reads *Newsweek* as claiming that African American children must be pumped full of ethnic pride to succeed. This is, in fact, a subtle manipulation of the original article: *Newsweek* reported that African American children who received messages about ethnic pride were more likely to assert the worth of their efforts and ability. Recognizing one's value and abilities is hardly the same thing as actually possessing them, yet, CofCC's slant seems to suggest that African American children only succeed when carefully coached.

Considering White Counterpublicity

In addition to forwarding the argument that present attempts at multiculturalism or restorative justice are a sort of reverse discrimination, often phrased as a "war on white people" for maximum impact, the texts investigated here often seem to rise to the level of counterpublicity. They universally hail a white audience to recognize itself as marginalized. As I have argued already, these organizations largely accomplish this feat via three important tactics: by providing exclusively dehistoricized interpretations of contemporary policies

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pertaining to race and ethnicity; by interpreting the absence of obvious markers of whiteness as proof of their exclusion in mainstream culture; and by staging a false equivalence between a declining white majority and the decimation of whole species. First, when they characterize discrimination against people of color as either trumped up or exclusively something of the past, groups like EURO and the CofCC are able to recast efforts at restorative justice as offenses against innocent white people. Next, the texts frequently ignore the way that white people and white culture have been made synonymous with American people and American culture. When one ignores the way that the accomplishments of whites make up nearly all of what is taught under the heading of American History, it becomes easy to see a contradiction in teaching Black History but not White History. Confusing the invisibility of whiteness for its absence allows the texts to then claim marginal status on the grounds that white people and white culture do not find the same kinds of appreciation and protection afforded to people of color. Finally, these texts frequently appropriate the rhetoric of conservationism, depicting the decline of a white majority as essentially similar to the disappearance of an endangered species. The attempt to parallel these different experiences conceals important differences, particularly that whites aren't being forced out of existence but are, instead, living within increasingly diverse communities.

These three texts also appear to satisfy the condition of oppositionality. Each enacts an oppositional stance toward broader publics and the state. The metaphor of violent struggle is frequently deployed to describe the present political climate: SYH repeatedly describes the diminution of a white majority in the United States in terms of a genocide; and the CofCC describes efforts at reducing racism and promoting multiculturalism as a war on white people. While EURO eschews the popular war metaphor, it characterizes the issue of discrimination against white people as one of monumental import: They call for the need of a defense for white people and even go so far as to allege that a failure to correct this injustice threatens to reduce the United States to a "Third World" country.

Despite these initial indications, these texts present concerns which complicate any attempt to consider these counterpublicity. While it is conceivable that some white people truly do understand themselves to be marginalized, it is difficult to find these texts to be constitutive of counterpublicity if one follows Michael Warner's (2002) more rigorous conception of the term. Readers will remember that, for Warner, the counterpublic is to be distinguished from a social movement insofar as its agenda goes beyond some policy-level initiative and includes an attempt to expand or revise the conditions of entry and/or utterance in the public sphere.

Importantly, none of these texts calls for what might be considered expansion or enfranchisement within the public sphere. By and large, EURO and SYH are calling for a return to white supremacy: Upon analysis, it seems clear that they do not protest the silencing of whites[85] so much as they protest the disappearance of white dominance in terms of representation and control. Likewise, the CofCC is not distressed by a failure of the public sphere to allow whites to speak but, instead, is attempting to forestall efforts at restorative justice and multiculturalism. In effect, they are protesting the injunction to remain accountable for past actions and to play nicely with others.

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[85] As I have argued, SYH and EURO complain about the silencing of whites by ignoring the way whiteness is centered in American culture.

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Chapter 7

PARTING THOUGHTS

"Yes, the long war on Christianity. I pray that one day we may live in an America where Christians can worship freely! In broad daylight! Openly wearing the symbols of their religion—perhaps around their necks? And maybe—dare I dream it? Maybe one day there can be an openly Christian President. Or, perhaps, 43 of them. Consecutively." ~John Stewart, *The Daily Show* (2005, June 25)

"The playing field is already tilted by and for whom it was constructed in the first place. … And the resistance to altering it by the mechanisms of affirmative action is in fact a determination to make sure that the present imbalances persist as long as possible." ~Stanley Fish (1993, pp. 130-131)

"Men weren't really the enemy - they were fellow victims suffering from an outmoded masculine mystique that made them feel unnecessarily inadequate when there were no bears to kill." ~Betty Friedan (quoted in Shiers, 2007, p. 135)

Broadly speaking, rhetorical analyses are of two types: some investigate the internal features of a rhetorical text in order to discover how they function to form a persuasive whole; and others ask about the way that a rhetorical text relies upon and constructs human consciousness.[86] Michael Leff's (1992) close textual analysis exemplifies the first approach: Leff is interested in studying the subtle interplay of style and argument in order to discover the way that each part of the text—the word choices, the metaphors, the similes, the alliteration, etc.—works with the rest of it to create an effect in the persons of audience.

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[86] This is intended to be a productive, though admittedly reductive, simplification. In practice, nearly all forms of rhetorical criticism attend, to some degree, to the questions of a text's inner mechanics and its effects. However, I hope this temporary bifurcation helps to point out significant tendencies in approaches to rhetorical criticism.

The second approach, commonly termed ideological criticism, is commonly traced to Philip Wander's (1983) call for an ideological turn in rhetorical studies. Wander's approach eschews careful line-by-line analysis for a broader conceptual criticism that applies scrutiny to the rhetorical act in order to illuminate the consciousness—the unacknowledged commitments and assumptions—which gives rise to that particular rhetorical act and to theorize about the ethico-political implications of that rhetorical act. This methodology,[87] founded in the works of Nietzsche, Marxists, and post-Marxists, funds the present study.

The texts taken up by this project are rather disparate: They differ in rate and breadth of circulation, authorship, medium, and even in their explicit content matter. This project has engaged with mass media bestsellers and relatively unheard-of websites. These texts are authored by high-profile organizations and practically anonymous citizens. They are disseminated via broadcast television, popular press, and the Internet. And they pertain to the subjects of gender, religion, and race. What these texts share, and what this project has studied, is a structural similarity—a type of argument made in each text. This study poses implications for public sphere theory and critical rhetorical theory.

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[87] Wander describes ideological criticism as a "methodology" because ideological criticism does not term a specific critical tool so much as it sums up a critical orientation toward analysis and, by nature of its assumptions, warrants the use of certain methods which are attentive to the question of ideology.

Public Sphere Theory

Contrary to idealistic conceptions of the public sphere as an inclusive discursive space in which "the people" gather and deliberate about matters of general welfare, critical scholars have noted that "members of subordinated social groups—women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians—have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). Counterpublics have typically been differentiated from publics in general by way of two major features: Members of counterpublics address each other with an awareness of their marginal status; and counterpublics articulate an oppositional stance toward some broader public (Brouwer, 2006, p. 197).

The texts under study in this project often appear to satisfy these two conditions. Each text clearly perceives its public as discriminated against, persecuted, or in some way disempowered relative to others or to the promises made by the public sphere. Additionally, these texts articulate an oppositional stance, most visible in the constant allusions to violent confrontation: The texts speak of a war on men, attacks on Christians' religious freedom, and of white genocide. As I have argued in chapter five, the language of war serves as a conceptual metaphor which encourages audiences to interpret political events according to the schema of total warfare. To characterize an action or a policy as an act of war is to encourage an audience to respond to understand other groups as enemies and to respond to their actions or policies with a counterattack, a defense,

or surrender. Audiences are exhorted to stand up and defend their rights or watch their communities, and sometimes even their nation, crumble.

Throughout, I have argued that these claims are made on the basis of cultural amnesia, the invisibility of privilege, and false equivalences. I have used *cultural amnesia* to term the way these texts frequently ignore entirely or diminish the impact of historical relations of domination and exploitation which benefitted their publics.[88] When authors like John Gibson complain about the slow removal of symbols of Christian faith from public buildings and school calendars, they do so without a critical awareness of how those symbols got there in the first place. When Richard Hise complains about the erosion of male dominance in the workplace and in politics, he does so without ever questioning the appropriateness of a political apparatus that once excluded women entirely and social norms that coded masculinity as normal, rational, and good. And when *Save Your Heritage* complains that America's European heritage is disappearing, it does so by ignoring the often violent means that whites used to gain political, economic, and cultural control of this country. In each case, the result is that males, Christians, and whites are able to imagine their positions of authority and access as natural and static rather than historically situated products of long-standing political projects.

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[88] Theorists have used amnesia or cultural amnesia elsewhere to refer to the disorienting and defamiliarizing effects of post-Fordist capitalism's obsession with transience and newness (Harvey, 1990), the disappearance of the singular in favor of the clone and the copy, and a media system which "worships the present to the exclusion of all other dimensions of time" (Bertman, 2000, p. 4).

These texts also fail to appreciate the way that whiteness, maleness, and Christianity act as invisible norms which structure much of mainstream society. When *Save Your Heritage* complains that whites are the only group disallowed from announcing their ethnic pride, it fails to account for the fact that whites already see their ethnicities celebrated everywhere. White languages, religions, cuisines, folktales, literature, names, and music are everywhere with us, though they are rarely identified as white. When organizations like *Men's News Daily* complain about increasing feminization and the intrusion of feminist ideology into public institutions, they fail to recognize the way that masculinity and men's experiences have always been conflated with normalcy and humanity. Though many universities now offer courses in Women's Studies, one might say that every university has long required engagement with Men's Studies, even though such courses have been called History, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, and Rhetorical Theory. By failing to perceive these conflations, these texts are also able to complain that their audiences alone are prevented from celebrating their specificity.

Several texts, particularly those alleging a "War on White People," also perceive marginality by staging false equivalences comparing, for example, the diminution of an all-white majority with the extinction of a species. These arguments work by appropriating the rhetoric of endangerment most often associated with organizations like Greenpeace and People for the Ethnical

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Treatment of Animals (PETA). As I argue in chapter six, several important

differences are elided in order to make this metaphor work. Most importantly, the

equivocation between ethnicity and species is hardly an easy one. Species are

biologically dissimilar—differences among humans of different races, however,

have been found to be incredibly minute. Furthermore, the nature of this

endangerment is quite different. Groups like Greenpeace and PETA are typically

concerned about the likely deaths of animal populations due to human behaviors

like clear-cutting forests, mining, and the like. None of these texts actually

suggest that members of their public are in any physical danger: If anything is

endangered here, it is that public's hegemony or its supposed purity.

Nevertheless, each text articulates the *perception* of marginalization and the need

to stand up to a broader public.

A significant theoretical problem now arises: To understand the publics

constituted by these texts as counterpublics threatens to evacuate any meaning the

term possesses. The subjects hailed by these texts are, by almost any measure, at

the center of American political and cultural life: Their stories are told as

quintessentially American stories, their images are held up as the aesthetic ideal,

and their practices are codified into federal and state laws, customs, and manners.

Regardless of their perceptions of mistreatment, the third chapter of this project

provides ample evidence to suggest that males, whites, and Christians are

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anything but marginalized. If these groups can enact counterpublicity, one might wonder, exactly who cannot?

I contend that this study presents warrant for further consideration about the necessity for a more precise definition of the counterpublic. The first condition of counterpublicity, the perception of marginalization, has already proven problematic. Counterpublics have been defined as publics which perceive their position of marginality, I suspect, because a great many other publics have been marginalized, but not in ways which are obvious to their constituents. Counterpublics are unique, in part, because they are aware of their disempowerment. However, defining counterpublics on the basis of the perception of marginalization suggests the possibility that a counterpublic might imagine itself marginalized despite material indications to the contrary. Though it might be tempting to further stipulate that counterpublics must also be found to be materially marginalized, Rob Asen (2009) has already noted the problem of assessing counterpublicity on such grounds:

> Doing so would advance a discourse methodology *a priori* that oddly devalues discourse, since we could reach critical conclusions without considering an advocate's discourse. Further, this approach would elide critical judgment through unreflective application, requiring us simply to supply ''data'' for a pretested formula. (p. 265)

However, the problem with a discourse-centered conception of marginality is that perceptions of marginality may well stand in stark opposition to empirical fact.

That is, a group may truly believe itself marginalized even as it enjoys equity or even relative privilege.

The texts considered in this study manifest this condition—these are groups of people who are, by almost any standard, materially privileged and who perceive themselves to be marginalized. In order to eliminate such problematic possibilities, I would propose more precision here: Members of counterpublics understand themselves to marginalized relative to the rest of "the public," *not* relative to some prior position of dominance or some imagined ideal social arrangement.[89] This means that the critic is challenged not only to search out textual signs of marginalization but to inquire as to whether this marginality is one measured against an ideal of equity or against primacy.

Following a study of Irving Kristol's "conservative counterpublicity," a similarly concerned Rob Asen (2009) offers further precisions that help to narrow the definition of counterpublicity and, thus, to ameliorate this concern. According to Asen, the critic seeking to understand a text as counterpublicity must determine if the text in question "upholds or betrays an advocate's values, seeking out textual markers of access and influence that belie claims of marginalization" and

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[89] Even this more precise definition of the counterpublic could be troubled by the appearance of texts which perceive marginalization relative to an ideal of equality in total contradiction to the material "facts" of the matter. What is the critic to make of the text which bears almost no relation to the material conditions of its audience's existence?

ask "whether an advocate's discourse implicitly or explicitly widens or narrows discursive space for others" (pp. 266, 270).

Asen's first prescription becomes problematic when one recognizes that texts often circulate widely and constitute publics unlike those imagined even by their authors. So it may be that a text is authored by a person who enjoys considerable power or wealth, but the public hailed by the text is largely disempowered. Though Glenn Beck and his contemporaries likely enjoy significant privilege which may be manifest in his discourses, those discourses are likely taken up by a variety of Americans who are significantly less so. Surely counterpublicity generated on behalf of other marginalized groups has issued from powerful quarters: William Lloyd Garrison, for example, leveraged his personal wealth and status in order to advocate against the institution of slavery.

A second related objection to this first prescription is that any text will necessarily evidence markers of access and power.[90] Given a Foucauldian conception of discourse and power, there is no position which is entirely "out" of power. Indeed, even the power to speak, to be heard whatsoever, is a kind of privilege and power. While there are likely individuals whose subject positions

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[90] A poststructuralist, i.e., Derridean, perspective would also argue with the notion of ever locating a text which does not simultaneously evidence both power and marginalization. The conception of these two signifiers as mutually exclusive represents a problematic binary opposition which over-simplifies the operations of power in society.

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are almost entirely bereft of power[91]—I am thinking of victims of the global

human trafficking trade, for example—it is quite unlikely that any texts generated

by these people would reach the attention of the rhetorical critic. Any text

identified by a rhetorical critic would necessarily manifest markers of this kind of

power.

Furthermore, a recognition of the intersectional nature of social power

suggests that it is entirely possible to experience marginalization at the same time

as one experiences relative privilege. For example, the male African American

preacher who fights for the rights of African Americans may enjoy significant

privilege which allows him to speak in ways and make certain arguments which

would not, under other circumstances, be available to him. In fact, one might

contend that a significant part of Martin Luther King's success as a paragon of the

American Civil Rights Movement was founded upon his status as a male and a

Christian leader. This would not, in my opinion, disqualify King's rhetoric as

constitutive of counterpublicity. Feminist counterpublicity, as well, might also

betray markers of privilege. Continuing through the late 20$^{\text{th}}$ century, much of

feminist writing and activism was headed by relatively affluent white

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[91] Spivak's (1988) notion of the *sub-altern* marks subject positions which cannot
     express themselves to those positioned within structures of power. Though
     these subjects may be constantly speaking or even screaming, they cannot be
     meaningfully understood by those within the power structure. Though this
     position of utter disempowerment may exist, it is contradictory to suggest that
     sub-altern discourse would be apprehended and selected for analysis insofar as
     such a discourse would, by definition, evade the faculties of the critic.

heterosexual women. Though these women frequently found themselves

marginalized by men, they also experienced significant privilege relative to

women of color and lesbians. So, while it is attractive to argue that

counterpublicity ought to only be available to those who are "legitimately"

marginalized, it quickly becomes obvious that deciding upon a bright-line

becomes nearly impossible.

Asen's second prescription, the question of "whether an advocate's

discourse implicitly or explicitly widens or narrows discursive space for others,"

is a more attractive criterion, though it may become complicated. In this case, the

critic is not attempting to connect the text with the author but is simply asking

about the ideological underpinnings of the text. The critic is asking whether the

text advocates for an expansion of the public sphere—whether it asks for

enfranchisement or whether it simply advocates for the preservation of extant

relations of domination and exploitation.

This is the measure by which the texts examined in this project routinely

fail. Upon consideration, these texts do not call for equality so much as they call

for the preservation of dominance. The texts are also not seeking to expand or

reform the "enunciative modalities"[92] which regiment the public sphere. That is,

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[92] Foucault (1972, pp. 50-55) uses *enunciative modalities* to refer to the discursive regularities that govern utterance at any given time. These specify who is qualified to speak, which institutional sites are proper venues for such speech, and which situations permit authorized individuals to speak from institutional sites.

there is no call to enlarge our sense of what makes for appropriate subjects or forms of address. Men are called to defend their longstanding positions as the leaders, providers, decision-makers, and shot-callers. They are called to reject women who demand that they share domestic labor, to reject women who demand that they provide the empathy and compassion expected of women in romantic relationships, and to return to a violent, aggressive, virile masculinity that once ruled the world. Christians, as well, are not called to claim a place alongside Muslims, Jews, and Hindus as Americans with the right to free expression of their beliefs—they are called to defend their religion's position as the implicitly official religion of the United States. And the texts studied here are not calling upon white people to oppose the institution policies that would disempower whites relative to the standard of equity. Instead, whites are called to defend their power—to keep others from threatening their numerical, political, and economic majority.

Hegemony and the Maintenance of Power

Antonio Gramsci's (2008) *hegemony* names all of the processes by which powerful sectors of society maintain their dominance via the management of public opinion and the manufacture of consent. Though the powerful classes are typically able to command the use of coercive force—e.g., the use of the military and National Guard, the deployment of riot troops and police officers—to stifle dissent, it is not possible or desirable to resort to force each time disagreement

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arises. Not only could these projections of power become financially prohibitive, but they might even incite revolt. Instead, Gramsci theorized, the powerful must act constantly to lead the masses to accept their present condition as normal, natural, and right.

Exercising "intellectual and moral leadership" (Gramsci, 2008, p. 57) involves the careful shaping of public consent in two general directions: leading the masses to right belief and action; and neutralizing dissent. A great deal of ideological criticism has focused on the way that the powerful lead through the production and maintenance of hegemonic ideologies. Dana Cloud (1998, 1996), for example, has often written about the ways that America's mass media system is frequently leveraged in order to offer the discourse of the American Dream to the masses. I contend that these texts and others that make structurally similar arguments ought to be understood as examples the way that powerful publics leverage material and cultural privilege to contain and neutralize dissent. These arguments represent one clear example of the way that the powerful resist any disruption of their dominance—in this case, by playing the victim. The efficacy of this strategy relies upon three conditions: the rhetorical power of victimhood; cultural amnesia; and the inherent vulnerability of vernacular rhetorics of persecution.

First, as I suggested in the opening pages of this project, Americans are overwhelmingly sympathetic to the plight of the victim. Perhaps this is related to

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our collective self-image as an underdog, constantly besieged by those who despise our way of life or wish to usurp our position as an economic powerhouse.[93] Victimhood and persecution also play an enormous role in the Judeo-Christian narratives which remain hegemonic in American culture. In any case, by claiming victimhood, powerful publics hope to forestall the progress sought by historically marginalized groups.

Next, these arguments nearly universally rely upon what I have termed cultural amnesia—a certain blindness to the historical conditions which delivered our society to its present configuration. I have already argued about the way that the texts rely upon a narrowed or obliterated recounting of American history in order to successfully depict present actions not as adjustments or restorations but as offenses and attacks on the natural order of things. It is often said that history is written by the victors.[94] The ability to narrow or obliterate unpleasant histories is particularly available to hegemonic groups because such publics are often able

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[93] While it may seem contradictory to imagine the US an underdog while recognizing its position as the world's sole superpower, political discourse has frequently imagined the United States as a last, best hope—a last bastion of freedom—in a maelstrom of fascism, communism, and authoritarianism.

[94] This quote is commonly attributed to Winston Churchill, though I can find no scholar who corroborates such a claim. Nonetheless, it is accepted as a virtual truism among critical historiographers such as Howard Zinn (2003) who have begun to try to re-write history from the vantage point of the people who have typically been politically and economically disempowered.

to influence public memory: They are often in positions that guide the media, public education, and public policy.[95]

Finally, I contend that vernacular rhetoric as inherently vulnerable to appropriation. The vernacular represents the voice of the oppressed modulated such that it can be heard by the powerful: In order to have their claims heard, counterpublics must translate their experiences into arguments which resonate with broader publics. For this reason, these translations are ripe for appropriation.

For Martin Luther King, for example, the task of appealing to the powerful meant referring frequently to the Constitution, the founding fathers, and to the Bible. The struggle and exploitation which marked the experiences of many African Americans may have been almost impossible for many white people to comprehend, but King's calls for equality, framed in terms of Christian ethics and constitutional guarantees, were already sensible to a nation of patriotic Christians.

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[95] An opportune example of this phenomenon recently occurred in my home state. The Texas Board of Education, populated by a number of conservative Republicans, used its authority to carefully shape the state's education curriculum. Among other decisions, the board chose textbooks "stressing the superiority of American capitalism, questioning the Founding Fathers' commitment to a purely secular government and presenting Republican political philosophies in a more positive light" (McKinley, 2010, March 12). Additionally, board members mandated a diminished emphasis on Enlightenment philosophy in favor of more discussion of Thomas Aquinas, required a new discussion of the conservative movement of the 1980s and 1990s (but not liberal or libertarian movements), insisted that the US be described as a "constitutional republic" rather than a democracy, removed mentions of the constitutional separation of church and state, and removed mentions of heroic Latino-Americans.

Without an awareness of the numerous ways that American society has

continually violated these edicts, it may be that many whites derive from King's

oratory only the ideal that all people should be treated equally.[96] This is likely

why well-intended parents teach their children they are not to see race. When this

simplification propagates and cultural memory recedes, it becomes possible to

characterize initiatives like Affirmative Action as inherently racist because such

policies do not treat all humans identically.

Implications

These findings present both theoretical and practical contributions. This

project ought to be of great interest to public sphere theorists and to critical

scholars more broadly. The analysis of these texts offers strong evidence for the

need to sharpen the conditions of counterpublicity. On the one hand, I have

argued against Asen's (2009, p. 263) call for critics to search for "textual markers

of access and influence that belie claims of marginalization" on the grounds that

such an injunction is based upon an overly reductive conception of power and a

neglect of intersectionality. On the other hand, I have endorsed and elaborated

upon the notion that counterpublicity is to be distinguished by its *telos* toward the

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[96] Furthermore, many of King's later political positions—e.g., his opposition to
the Vietnam War and his desire for large-scale reform of capitalism's
excesses—has been obliterated as King is increasingly represented in
retrospectives and memorials as a warm, friendly, Christian preacher who
simply wanted whites to get along with people of color.

expansion of the public sphere either in terms of enfranchisement or enunciative modality.

Additionally, this project offers a contribution to ongoing conversations about the functioning of hegemonic power in late capitalism. Rather than dismissing these arguments simply as something other than counterpublicity, I have contended that they ought to be understood as a strategy of containment practiced by hegemonic groups. These texts offer concrete examples of the ways that hegemonic publics rely upon the invisibility of privilege and cultural amnesia to deploy arguments they have appropriated from the Civil Rights Movement, feminisms, and other counterpublics.

This project also offers practical contributions to activists and educators. These texts are authored and circulate among people who often seek to stall progressive projects aimed at equity. I argue that progressive activists can help defend against regressive campaigns that invoke this argument by continually pointing out the invisibility of privilege and by continually historicizing the present moment. Many of these texts articulate the perception of marginalization by ignoring the way maleness, Christianity, and whiteness are centered even as they are not named. For this reason, it is imperative that activists continually highlight this unnamed privileging to defuse claims of marginalization. This means that, in addition to calling for diversity and recognition of the

achievements of marginalized publics, activists ought to point out the unnamed whiteness, maleness, and Christianity that undergirds mainstream culture.

This project has also suggested the importance of historicizing the present moment: When these texts characterize initiatives like Affirmative Action as racism, they do so by ignoring the injustice that these policies are designed to correct. For activists, this means that it is important to continue to fight not only for reform but to struggle for broader publics to remember the historical conditions which necessitated these reforms.

These arguments may also surface in the classroom when educators attempt to address issues of power and marginality. Students are often well indoctrinated in the ideology of classical liberalism and are rarely well acquainted with history. As a result, they are often quick to criticize what they perceive as preferential treatment demanded by marginalized groups. Increasingly deprived of an educational system that prioritizes civics and history, they understandably are confused by groups that, on one hand, say that they want equality and, on the other, seem to be asking for a hand-out. Educators can help students expand their understanding of these moments, and to ease this seeming contradiction, by helping them to locate the often invisible systems of privilege which function—even in the classroom—to position some people as normal and unremarkable while making other people different, other, or deficient. Educators can further

help by offering the historical context often missing from contemporary discussions of the political terrain.

Future Directions

This project invites further investigation in numerous regards. As I have readily admitted, this project has analyzed social privilege discretely, taking male privilege, Christian privilege, and white privilege in isolation. An awareness of the intersectional nature of identity suggests that, in practice, systems of privilege overlap and interlock, providing cover and warrants for each other: Masculinity crisis rhetoric often relies on Christian privilege to suggest masculinity's proper definition and position; "War on Christianity" rhetoric often relies upon white privilege suggest Christianity's supremacy; and Reverse Discrimination rhetoric often relies upon Christian privilege for arguments about the nature and importance of race as a valuable category of social organization. Intersectionality also suggests that individuals frequently experience privilege and oppression simultaneously: For example, an individual may experience oppression as an African American while simultaneously experiencing privilege as a male.

Additionally, future work might trace this argument as it circulates more widely: These seven chapters have been devoted to analyzing an argument as it plays out across three facets of identity—gender, race, and religion. They are hardly the only axes upon which social identities are constructed. Sexual orientation makes an obvious next choice. The sort of argument found here is

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frequently forwarded in response to progressive efforts to create a sense of welcome or security for members of the LGBTQ community. After years of marginalization, queer activists have encouraged "gay and lesbian pride" events. In response to such efforts, some have begun calling for "straight pride" parades. Defending themselves, they say, *"Why can't we have a parade? Why are gay people the only ones allowed to be proud of their sexual orientation?"* This sort of argument appears to rely upon the same assumptions, cultural amnesia, and blindness to privilege that occurs in the texts treated here. Other axes of identity such as nationality, age, and ability also make attractive sites for investigation.

This project is limited, by necessity, in terms of the range of texts studied. It is simply not feasible to provide a comprehensive study of every text or even every kind of text which forwards the type of argument featured in this project. However, I have endeavored to engage with a diverse set of texts that differ in terms of subject matter, medium, circulation, and timbre. The texts under study here travel across a variety of media: This project takes up books, websites, and television commercials. They also differ in terms of breadth and frequency of circulation. Texts such as John Gibson's *The War on Christmas* and Dodge's *Man's Last Stand* exemplify popular discourse that circulates through the circuits of the mass media; texts from the Alliance Defense Fund, the Counsel of Conservative Citizens, and the European American Unity and Rights Organization represent exemplars which are more explicitly political; and the

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Jeremiah Project and Save Your Heritage serve as vernacular voicings. Despite the frequent invocation of war metaphors, the texts also differ significantly in terms of tone: Some treat the "war" as an indication of the impending collapse of American society; others see it as a political issue requiring reform; and still others treat it only as an obstacle to be overcome individually. To be sure, I have tried, within the limits of this dissertation, to engage with this argument across a diversity of texts.

Parting Words

The patriarchal, racist, and Christofascist ideologies that these arguments invoke and reify are obviously harmful to many marginalized publics striving for progress toward a more equitable society. They attempt to reframe policies aimed at restorative justice and pluralism as unjust, unprovoked offenses against a natural order. And if successful, such arguments threaten to reverse the marginal progress made in a country in which women, people of color, and non-Christians are still second-hand citizens in terms of economic, political, and cultural access.

But these rhetorics are also often harmful to those they intend to protect. Anti-racism advocate Tim Wise (2008) has argued that white privilege does more harm than good for whites: Though pervasive racism privileges the average white person relative to the average person of color, it ultimately serves to divide and conquer America's growing lower classes, foreclosing the possibility of a more effective coalition for worker's rights and systemic reform. Similarly, hegemonic

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masculinity delivers significant benefits to males relative to females, but does so at the expense of reducing males to one half a human—only permitted to identify as competitive, rugged, angry, violent, and instrumental. There are significant implications to this disciplining: Men disclose less, receive less affection,[97] adopt unhealthy lifestyles, and die earlier than women. Though Christofascism privileges Christians relative to non-Christians, it simultaneously props up a regressive and sexist politics that propagates patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies that limit men's potential and restricts freedom for women and LGBTQ people.

To be sure, things are not as they could or should be, but this awareness marks an important step in the right direction. There is much work to be done for those invested in pursuit of the ideal of the public sphere as an equitable space in which all members of the public converse about matters of general welfare. By attending to the functioning of victimhood in these counter-progressive rhetorics, this study takes up a vital part in this ongoing project.

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[97] Scholars contend that this is not because parents love their sons less than their daughters but because they are raising their sons to be the strong, independent, and competitive warriors that their society expects (Jensen, 2007, pp. 21-36).

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