Tolerance or Truth?

The good, the bad and the political in the discourse of the American Family Association

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Abstract

This master’s thesis conducts a discourse analysis on a political organization within the New Christian Right (NCR), the American Family Association (AFA). The purpose of the study is to analyze the conditions of possibility for a politics that aims to prevent progress for LGBT rights and does so by analyzing the political terrain where operations of power produce particular and meaningful political practices. As analytical tools the study relies on a theory of the political by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who together with Michel Foucault also provide an elaborate theory of power. Theoretical work by Wendy Brown provides insights into how politics can be expressed when social antagonisms are prevented from engaging in political contestation. Results of the discourse analysis trace social antagonisms in AFA discourse to a dislocation of the social where new articulatory practices have established new relationships between elements of discourse and thereby also changed the nature of social intelligibility and interaction. AFA discourse articulates family values based on the privileged signifiers of freedom, democracy and rights, which is utilized both for a separatist politics of discrimination and an inclusive politics of social assimilation. AFA discourse shows many points of antagonism and organize an enemy in postmodernism. Freedom as a mode of governmentality conditions the political demands that are and can be made which can be traced to a hegemonic neoliberal articulation. AFA discourse challenges neoliberal hegemony through the process of separatism, yet is intimately bound to the hegemonic way of making political demands in order to gain discursive strength and legitimacy.

Keywords: New Christian Right, Religious Right, the political, LGBT rights, neoliberalism, progress, political polarization
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REFERENCES
1. The Promise of Progress

And then there was modernization.

Ever since the Enlightenment the nature of the social has come to be understood as one with a teleological and progressive history. Like an organic process whereby a seed realizes its true potential by sprouting buds and blooms, so society and the human grow in their true potential by becoming more rational and advanced. G.W.F. Hegel visualizes the progressive unfolding of human reason; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels predict a progressive sequence of proletarian liberation; Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel identify cultural changes along a human development sequence whereby societies become progressively democratic with progressing socioeconomic development. Progress promises to free the human from gendered constrains through mainstreaming gender in public policy, a process that according to Hege Skeije and Mari Teigen, is typically viewed as a journey. Regarding gender equality, the Nordic countries are epitaphs of success while other countries still have ‘far to go’.

More recently, the increasingly vibrant demands of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual (LGBT) movement have invigorated the progressive trajectory towards gender equality. In June 2011 LGBT rights, for the first time in history, were proclaimed human rights in a resolution adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Commission. In the United States President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have pledged to make LGBT rights a foreign policy priority. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission celebrates 2011 as an unprecedented year for LGBT human rights and gazes expectantly on a hopeful future as gender identity and sexual orientation have been included as grounds of discrimination.

As the narrative of progress predicts, will gender inequality in a Hegelian tradition of progressive rationality become more obsolete and irrational as reason, freedom and democracy unfold?

Some forces predict another trajectory for the narrative of progress, believing that progressive rights for certain groups of people will wreak societal havoc. In Europe, far-right wing parties are voted into parliament with a politics of anti-immigration, and the New Christian Right (NCR) poses a major obstacle to LGBT rights in the USA. Family Research

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3 Skeije & Teigen 2005
4 The White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2011-12-06
5 IGLHRC 2011-12-17
Council (FRC) states, “that homosexual conduct is harmful to the persons who engage in it and to society at large, and can never be affirmed”.

Rather than a promise, democratic progress for LGBT rights is conceived by organizations such as FRC as a Huntingtonian threat to society. In light of the numerous international, regional and national agreements on human rights, anti-discrimination and democracy, how can we understand these simultaneous and diametrically opposing processes? Why are certain groups of people denied the privilege of others”? What are these forces expressions of? What do these competing forces imply for present and future possibilities of gender equality?

2. Purpose and research questions
The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the discourse of a political organization within the NCR in order to identify the conditions of possibility for a politics aimed at preventing progress for LGBT rights. In this thesis I focus on the discourse produced by the American Family Association (AFA) and conduct a discourse analysis on the group’s periodical, the *AFA Journal*. I aim to analyze the political terrain in which AFA discourse is constituted in order to identify the operations of power that produce AFA politics. As the NCR constitutes the main obstacle for the LGBT movement in their struggle for equal rights, analyzing NCR discourse is fundamental to advancing a pro-equality movement. Analyzing the conditions of possibility for AFA discourse also provides insights into how such stark polarization between political forces is formed and reveals what kind of politics is possible to formulate within that particular political terrain at all.

1. What issues and demands does AFA stress as political between 2001 and 2011?
2. How are the issues and demands articulated and legitimized?
3. In what kind of politically strategic situation is AFA discourse located?

3. Previous research
There is a growing literature on the subject of the NCR and scholars have been intrigued by what seemed like the sudden resurgence of a Christian canon entering political discourse. The following literature review is divided into different categories to give a clear picture of what research has been made within the field.

3.1 A constant conflict
Research has shown that the NRC has been in constant conflict with other groups in society who have played a big part in their development. J. Brooks Flippen documents the rise of the

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6 Family Research Council
Religious Right, asserting importance to Jimmy Carter who managed to mobilize the Christian evangelical society and gain the popular vote by emphasizing his evangelical faith and family politics. However, he failed to deliver on core issues such as abortion and homosexuality, and that disappointment empowered Reagan to take over.7 Seth Dowland concurs with Flippen’s analysis and shows how Carter’s politics of the family backfired when they refused to define family as heterosexual and considered including homosexual and single parent households as family. This ignited the NCR and groups such as Falwell’s Moral Majority and Focus on the Family. Dowland notes that before the late 70’s, evangelicals were not too concerned with opposing feminism, abortion and gay rights, but towards the end of the 70’s the family as strictly heterosexual came to be carved in stone.8 In opposition to the uprisings during tumultuous 60’s, the NCR constructed itself as a stable and loving.9 Lisa McGirr also highlights the economic crisis of the 1970’s and the civil rights movements as significant factors in shaping the emerging New Right. Issues that were previously contained under the banner of anticommunism broke off into single-issue campaigns based on moral corruption and traditional values, a process that McGirr views as a reaction to the major social changes.10

According to some of these authors the ‘rise of the right’ is neither surprising nor unforeseen; the conflict has been there all along and some key moments have made their momentum possible. The development of the NCR intertwines with the relationship to progressive liberals, as the authors above suggest. Jon Shields goes as far as to state that progressives and liberals constructed the NCR by pitting religion against modernism and extensively critiquing orthodox Christianity. Religious factions such as Catholics and Protestants, who shared some animosity between them, now became able to create alliances as they all opposed secularization and modernism, which was viewed as paving the way for communism.11 Jennifer Butler contends that secularity has become an ideology of the US political left, which exacerbates a polarization between the two camps.12 Steven Shiffrin analyzes along the same lines and views the secular Left as part of the problem because a fierce secular rhetoric only strengthens the identity of the Religious Right. Shiffrin states that the question is not whether religion should be part of politics but how.13

7 Flippen 2011
8 Dowland 2009
9 Ramet 2005
10 McGirr 2001:255-261
11 Shields 2011
12 Butler 2006
13 Shiffrin 2009:1-7
David Sehat gives an exhaustive historical account of American religious freedom. He shows that contrary to the common understanding that American history is one of progressive and increasing freedoms, American society has always been ravaged by religious conflict. In his writing Sehat underscores the importance of language and the meaning asserted into certain words. Words such as religious liberty and moral have been contested since the founding fathers; where one party viewed religious liberty as the *freedom from* religion in the public, the other party understood it as the *freedom to* declare one’s religion publicly.\(^{14}\)

3.2 Framing religious discourse in non-religious terms

Scholars have also poked hole in the idea that NCR discourse is always conservative and resistant to societal influences. Instead, rhetoric of Christian groups has proved to be very flexible with an ability to adjust to context. Clyde Wilcox, a prominent figure in NCR research, has along with Carin Robinson shown how the discourse of the NCR has changed shape over the years by studying how political demands have been strategically framed in different ways. From an aggressive and confrontational rhetoric, the movement has during the 1990’s cleaned up their language and entered mainstream politics. Explicitly religious language is avoided and framing in terms of rights is now more commonly used.\(^{15}\) Ronald Hopson and Donald Smith also conclude that shifting rhetoric away from explicitly religious language has enabled some unlikely alliances. Asserting that their political ideology stems from religious convictions is too simple an answer. Secularism hasn’t really been a problem for the NCR, but has always been easily handled and even embraced, write the authors.\(^{16}\)

Cynthia Burack emphasizes that because NCR discourse is so flexible, it is important to study the NCR’s multiple modes of address. Burack writes that it is the use of various rhetorical strategies that in the end makes them successful.\(^{17}\) David Peterson has noted this as well. He shows that the increasing influence of neo-liberal discourse in the Family Research Council is causing them to adjust their institutional rhetoric. Families are for example framed as economic units to which the preservation of the nuclear family is vital, and so homophobic discourse is increasingly being legitimized through neo-liberal co-option.\(^{18}\) In exploring the globalizing tendencies of the NCR, Butler has shown how they reframe issues upon entering the United Nations context in order to build new alliances. Robert Fisher and Sally Tamarkin

\(^{14}\) Sehat 2011  
\(^{15}\) Wilcox & Robinson 2011  
\(^{16}\) Hopson & Smith 1999  
\(^{17}\) Burack 2008  
\(^{18}\) Peterson 2010, 2011
accord the success of the Christian Coalition to framing themselves as grassroots activists opposing big government, a strategy also present in the contemporary Tea Party movement.\textsuperscript{19}

3.3 The NCR and society

A common theme within the field of research is the rejection of simplistic dichotomies between progressives and NCR groups. Shields writes that social scientists and intellectuals have accused the NCR for rejecting democratic values and compared them with Islamic Fundamentalism. However, he writes, this conceals the diligent and modest aspects of their work where they practice civility, rejection of theological appeals and moral reasoning.\textsuperscript{20} Richard Lints also criticizes the common opinion that religion is nothing but a conserving force while liberals and protesters are progressive and anti-religion. He shows that during the 1960’s evangelism co-opted some of the radical rhetoric of the time. Like the civil rights movements, young evangelicals mobilized in a struggle against the establishment and sought to make religion an important aspect of the changing society.\textsuperscript{21} David Courtwright is on the same mission to give a nuanced account of what to the naked eye looks like a polarized climate between progressive liberals and religious fundamentalists; struggles are actually fought between many different groups and ideologies in society.\textsuperscript{22} McGirr continues that simplistic assumptions further downplay the role of conservatism during the years of liberal domination. Conservatism was never ‘outside’ mainstream politics, but actively engaged.\textsuperscript{23}

Scholars have also ventured upon the task of evaluating the NCR. Steve Bruce fails the NCR, stating that they have not been successful and can never become successful in a democratic society that values pluralism; their existence is oxymoronic to modern democracy.\textsuperscript{24} Derek Davis along with Sehat, on the other hand, claim that though there has been some letdowns, the movement is flourishing and more people than ever belong to a church.\textsuperscript{25} Concerning the relative success or failure of the NCR, Hopson & Smith write that the popular view of NCR failure is mainly due to that research has focused on their legislative victories and evaluated them in relation to actual political victories. But as there is evidence of the NCR seeking to reposition itself in a postmodern world by toning down religious language, it is not sufficient to study institutional practices, but how well they can sway hearts

\textsuperscript{19} Fisher & Tamarkin 2011
\textsuperscript{20} Shields 2007
\textsuperscript{21} Lints 2010
\textsuperscript{22} Courtwright 2010
\textsuperscript{23} McGirr 2011
\textsuperscript{24} Bruce 1990
\textsuperscript{25} Davis 1999
and minds. “What will matter in the question of the NCR’s status is the overcall cultural shift of meanings and interpretations and to what extent they are successful in making their opponents’ views signifiers of public ills in the mind of an anxious electorate.”

3.4 My position and contribution
In my study I follow the reasoning expressed above by Hopson & Smith; meanings and interpretations carry political weight, and how well one is able to articulate a desired vision for the good society is what eventually will determine the direction for politics. This is why I choose to focus my study on the production of political meaning instead of evaluating the success of AFA, or studying AFA as an actor in representational politics. The assumption that there are political winners and losers assumes that a party becomes less significant when it is not in power and is an understanding of power that is limited to physical and visual political practices, the power to hold office. I therefore understand power as a force that creates regimes of knowledge in which certain politics become intelligible and possible; political practice can consequently not be separated from the production of meaning. This is finely presented in Sehat’s work regarding American religious freedom that illuminates the interconnection between meaning asserted to a concept and the material practice that follows from this understanding, and in Peterson’s work on how neoliberal discourse is re framing political demands in FRC and thereby repositioning them accordingly.

There have been tendencies in research to assume ideological positions for the subjects of research, such as conservative, progressive, liberal and homosexual, and here I follow insights from Shields and Lints. My approach to the field of research of the NCR begins with the basic postulation that political positions for the NCR cannot be assumed in advance as assumed ideological positions lead the analysis in a certain direction. In a circular and tautological fashion the results of research will more than likely create a notion of immense polarization, as the assumption lies within the very concepts used to guide the analysis. It is my contention that positions such as liberal, conservative or homosexual play a more complex role than their categorical identity would allow, which is why I do not analyze the conflict between the NCR and the LGBT movement or focus solely on the sexual and family politics of AFA. This chapter has shown how a constant conflict between competing forces have produced various expressions of NCR discourse, and it is within this field that I position myself. I analyze AFA discourse in order to grasp these competing forces that constitute AFA politics.

26 Hopson & Smith 1999
27 Hopson & Smith 1999:11
I therefore do not make claims about the NCR in general or treat it as a homogenous movement, as many have done before. I investigate one group in particular and can only make claims as to how discourse is organized in AFA. With this approach I wish to avoid sweeping generalizations that erase certain aspects of power and conflicts that do not conform to the movement at large.

4. Theoretical and methodological framework
My understanding of the nature of the political has been heavily influenced by a combination of theorists who are all presented in this chapter: Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Michel Foucault and Wendy Brown. The theory of discourse developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe constitute the backbone of the study by providing a theory of discourse and politics as well as methodological tools for studying politics and power. The theory embodies both theoretical and methodological premises and the two are not easily separated. I thus discuss my theoretical and methodological framework within the same chapter to avoid unnecessary repetition and show clarity of my epistemological and ontological foundation.

4.1 A discursive approach to the study of politics and power
Discourse theory has contributed in significant ways to political science research due to an elaborate and broad theory of power that embodies an analysis of the production of meaning; how is meaning of objects defined? How can we know their purpose? What is politically problematical and why? Laclau and Mouffe have through their discourse theory expanded the field of the political to the forces that condition political practices. There is thus a distinction between politics and the political, where politics is understood as the set of practices and institutions through which the social is organized, and the political is the field of antagonism that is constitutive of meaning and a very notion of the social. Whereas previous studies have situated the politics of the NRC, this study situates the political dimension of AFA.

My scientific approach follows Laclau and Mouffe’s non-essentialist approach where power is central to studying politics and understood as a multiplicity of force relations that constitute the sphere in which they operate. Power is an inherent feature of every social relation and object of knowledge. Foucault, whose theory of power is very similar to Laclau and Mouffe’s, additionally influences my understanding of power. Power is a complex strategic situation in a particular society with necessary but contingent aims and outcomes,

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28 Torfing 2005
29 Mouffe 2008: 17-22
30 Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 93-105
not a set of institutions that subvert citizens to its might, nor a personal asset that can be won or lost. Rather, power is everywhere, comes from everywhere, and operates with aims and intentions but without a subjective will.\textsuperscript{31} Power is the \textit{condition of possibility} for society and has a productive character that creates intelligibility and objects of knowledge through discourse. Language is subsequently central to our understanding of the world around us, which is why it is not possible to distinguish discursive from non-discursive elements; every object is understood as an object of discourse and nothing can be ‘outside’ of discourse. The social is constituted in a field of discursivity where endless possible social formations compete in gaining control over meaningful signifiers in order to establish a hegemonic articulation, a process whereby elements of discourse are articulated together into a system of meaning that governs the premises for how society is lived and conceived.\textsuperscript{32} As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the meaning, purpose and identities of political subjects such as liberal, conservative and homosexual cannot be understood outside the discourses in which they are articulated.

Establishing meaning hence requires differentiation and exclusions of other alternative meanings, for if every element should be co-opted into one single discourse there would only be an endless status quo of cemented meaning. Constitutive of the social is thus a field of antagonism in which meaning is produced. Political frontiers separate the discursive inside from elements that it excludes, but the eternal power struggles ensure that the social is never once and for all determined.\textsuperscript{33}

4.2 Politics and depoliticization

Wendy Brown has many similar ideas regarding the nature of the political. The works of Laclau, Mouffe and Foucault deal extensively with how power produces meaning and the many varying effects of power. The works of Brown deal, on the other hand, on the effects of curbing and denying operations of power through concealing social antagonisms in a belief that universal values will promote lasting social cohesion. Such assumptions are purely fictitious according to Brown, democracy needs to be challenged and critiqued on a continual basis from every corner, especially by anti-democratic forces, in order to remain democratic. This is not the case today where political issues are recast as personal lifestyle choices, such as consumption, or made into culturally determined issues such as religion. Brown calls the eradication of political contestation for processes of \textit{depoliticization}, as the relations of power

\textsuperscript{31} Foucault 1978:92-96
\textsuperscript{32} Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 122-145
\textsuperscript{33} Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 93-114
that are constitutive of the social and of all social relations have been confined to essentialized identities outside democratic renegotiation and political challenge.\textsuperscript{34}

Politically this produces tensions between groups and a politics demanding recognition for a wounded identity that feels oppressed by the masses. Brown calls this \textit{political moralism} as the wounded identity moralizes against power, and what could be legitimate political contestation becomes understood as a personal offence. Politics become moralistic when no political demands for change are made but only appeals to one’s fundamental hurt, which is a characteristic feature in politics of discrimination and identity. But she also applies the reasoning to feminism’s dependency on the woman subject – can she ever be ‘freed’ within a discourse of oppression?\textsuperscript{35} Brown traces depoliticization to the promises of progress within liberal democracy that was supposed to install universal freedom and justice. The political narratives that shape social and political understanding have however been proven false, but the reliance on them remains as no alternative has been offered.\textsuperscript{36}

4.3 The case for my discursive approach

Using this approach in research has certain methodological implications. Upon entering my research project I realize that my role as a researcher can never be fully neutral and the discursive world in which I write is one with specific regimes of gender and sexuality. This is partly why I find the discursive approach correspond to the demands of reliability in the process of academic research, as the aims with a discursive approach is to keep the research process open to a multiplicity of meaning. The goal of my discursive approach is to interpret the social processes that establish regimes of truth, rather than search for truth.\textsuperscript{37}

To study the political is accordingly the study relations of power operating within a particular political struggle. The combination of Laclau & Mouffe, Foucault and Brown allows me to analyze AFA discourse from three different, yet interrelated, perspectives. Laclau & Mouffe provide me with analytical tools to detect tensions and antagonisms that figure in AFA discourse and what societal processes these antagonisms are expressions of. Detecting the political frontiers that are drawn indicates which kind of political struggles that are expressed. Foucault’s concept of power informs me that power always has a direction; power operates with certain aims and objectives. By drawing on Foucault I can analyze the strategic context of AFA discourse and the overarching strategy of power. What is \textit{the will} of

\textsuperscript{34} Brown 2001: 18-61, 121-137, Brown 2006: 78-106
\textsuperscript{36} Brown 2001: 3-22, Brown 2006: 1-25
\textsuperscript{37} Howarth 2007: 143-153
power and what part does AFA discourse play in that strategic context? While Laclau, Mouffe and Foucault give me a comprehensive understanding of the nature of power and how meaning is produced the level of the political, Brown provides valuable tools for analyzing the kind of politics that follow. How are relations of power expressed through politics? What does the course of AFA politics reveal about contemporary political climate and what kind of politics is possible to within the logics of AFA discourse?

In her landmark work *Epistemology of the closet* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick articulates seven axioms that shape her methodology and analysis of gender and sexuality. I have taken inspiration from the first four axioms that have encouraged me to not explicitly analyze LGBT politics, or how LGBT identity is constructed, but to use theory and methodology without preconceived assumptions about sexuality, gender or the subject.

Axiom 1: People are different from each other.
Axiom 2: The study of sexuality is not coextensive with the study of gender; correspondingly, antihomophobic inquiry is not coextensive with feminist inquiry. But we can’t know in advance how they will be different.
Axiom 3: There can’t be an a priori decision about how far it will make sense to conceptualize lesbian and gay male identities together. Or separately.
Axiom 4: The immemorial, seemingly ritualized debates on nature versus nurture take place against a very unstable background of tacit assumptions and fantasies about both nurture and nature.

We cannot know in advance what the relationship between objects and subjects will be before commencing on an analytic journey. What identities and structures mean and what their effects are cannot be pre-established if one wants to fully grasp the political implications of social phenomena. Somehow though, these very basic and painfully obvious axioms seem to be forgotten occasionally, especially in feminist and LGBT studies where research often depends on stabilized identities. Judith Butler continues along the same lines, writing that to postulate political subjects for theory and analysis is to forego the very construction of the subject. This effectively conceals the political processes that create the subject as political.

Methodologically this has direct bearing on the formulation of a research problem and the research questions that follow. The problem and the subsequent questions must be formulated to capture the discursive practices and struggles of power that are present in the material at hand. This means that my research problem cannot be isolated to an antagonism between the NCR, or AFA, and the LGBT movement, as this would imply establishing a relationship between elements of discourse in advance and thereby directing the course of the analysis. I have thus formulated my research problem and questions according to the following rationale

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38 Foucault 1995: 195-228, Foucault 1978: 15-49
39 Kosofsky Sedgwick 1990: 22, 27, 36, 40
41 Butler in Butler & Scott 1992: 3-21
inspired by Foucault: the statement – what is being uttered? The context – how, when and where is it uttered? The purpose – what is achieved and blocked by this particular utterance? 42

4.4 Methodological tools
Within the field of discourse analysis there is no definite way to ‘operationalize’ theory or conduct research – the researcher must develop own research strategies fitted to the problem at hand43 and so the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to developing a method for discourse analysis of the AFA Journal. Each research question is aimed at capturing one aspect of AFA discourse and thus requires different methodological tools. In order to provide transparency to this rather tricky venture, I first explain the concepts from discourse theory that I use throughout my analysis, after which I discuss how I use them in relation to the specific research question they aim to provide an answer for. The chapter is concluded with a presentation of the AFA Journal and a discussion of my research strategy.

4.4.1 Analytical concepts from discourse theory
The central concept of articulation refers to the process whereby objects are filled with meaning and purpose. Articulation brings elements of discourse into a relationship with one another, which also means that the identity of the elements change as a result of the articulatory practice. It is hence the differential positions between elements that determine the meaning of the articulated elements. When a discourse manages to organize a large variety of differential elements under its logic and dominates a discursive field it has become a hegemonic articulation, a norm seen as natural, uncontestable and unchangeable. A hegemonic discourse is a dominating discourse that aims to establish both political and moral-intellectual leadership in society; it has the privilege to define the organization of the social and other discourses must adhere to that organization.44

Meaning is also created differentially through excluding a constitutive outside that embodies the antithesis to the discursive inside. The constitutive outside defines the discourse’s identity while at the same time keeping it from ever fully constituting itself. Sometimes the constitutive outside can become increasingly threatening and cause a dislocation in discourse through challenging the discourse’s claims to certain signs. The Enlightenment can be seen as a dislocation in Christian hegemony by challenging the religious truth on the creation of life and society. Elements that had previously been articulated within the hegemony have now been detached and become floating signifiers that

42 Foucault 1978: 97-102
43 Howarth 2007: 143-150
are now up for grabs by competing forces that aspire to articulate them within their own political project. The tension field between a legitimate narrative and competing alternatives and is called *social antagonism*. This is the presence of power that reveals the limits of discourse; the discourse is confronted with a situation it cannot articulate as a moment within discourse. The Christian discourse can thus not simultaneously accept the Darwinian evolution and the story of creation provided in Genesis. The constitutive outside is easily blamed for the disruption of stability and gets viewed as a mortal enemy responsible for the disruption. This is usually connected to the creation of *chains of equivalence* by which the discourse aims to bring coherence to its shattered identity by establishing metaphorical relationships between elements that are excluded from the legitimate narrative.45

4.4.2 What political issues and demands does AFA stress as political between 2001 and 2011?
This first question concerns the level of the *statement* and provides a strictly empirical account of the most important issues raised by AFA. I define most important issues as recurring issues to which length of article and temporal durability is credited. Whereas every issue raised is worthy of analytical scrutiny this thesis can only, due to spatio-temporal restrictions, provide for the issues articulated with loudest emphasis. This section is entirely based on empirical journal statements and provides the foundation for the analysis in the following questions. It is my contention that providing an empirical narrative not only facilitates transparency into the analysis and the conclusions, but also reduces the risk of subjective interpretations made from my own position as a non-heterosexual academic writing within a context of critical-feminist and queer research.

4.4.3 How are the issues and demands articulated and legitimized?
This question moves from statement to *context* and I analyze how the discourse is organized focused on the level of the political; how is meaning created? With this question I use the concept of *articulation* to identify which signs are connected to the political demands identified by the above question. Articulation discerns which signs are systematically, prominently and routinely brought into a relationship with each other and especially pivotal is locating statements claiming truth. In my research *freedom* has emerged as a sign that organizes other elements of discourse within a particular articulation, such as *choice* and *culture war*. Articulation is therefore also a fruitful tool in detecting discursive change, what the change consists of and what implications it has.

I use the concepts of constitutive outside, social antagonism, chains of equivalence and floating signifier to analyze political struggles in my material. Using these concepts I am able to detect which political positions and demands that are opposed and excluded from a legitimate narrative. When a demarcation is drawn between AFA discourse and demands that are articulated as illegitimate I understand this as a political frontier being established and an indication of social antagonism. This part of the analysis consists of identifying statements that create enemies made to represent illegitimate political narratives that AFA discourse cannot accept. When certain political demands and positions are repeatedly articulated as negative to AFA identity I view this as a process of establishing a constitutive outside against which AFA defines itself. Here chains of equivalence is an important concept. I use this concept to see how AFA discourse classifies its political opponents and who these opponents are, which indicates to me what and who is considered politically illegitimate. In my research chains of equivalence have for example been established between materialist, humanist, molester and Muslim. Radically different positions have thus for certain political purposes been brought into a metaphorical union. Lastly, the concept floating signifier helps me detect which signs that a discursive battle is fought over, which signs that AFA discourse aims to articulate within its own narrative. Together these tools help me identify the limits of AFA discourse – what cannot be articulated as legitimate within their political narrative?

4.4.4 In what kind of politically strategic situation is AFA discourse located? This question digs further into the realm of the political and concerns the last level of analysis, the purpose. The question identifies which technologies of power are present in shaping political demands and what effects the particular articulations of political demands have on AFA politics. That is, what effects does the political have on the shape of politics, and what kind of politics is even possible to conduct given the conditions of possibility in the political? The main tool for this question is dislocation that has proven to be a fruitful tool to identify the political terrain in which AFA discourse is produced. As dislocation refers to a discourse being shattered, I view indications of dislocation in my material as expressions of existential crisis by repeated and vocal political demands related to a fear of being annihilated. I also apply hegemony as a tool to distinguish if AFA discourse refers articulations of the social that ‘do not belong’ inside AFA’s discursive logic, to articulations that cannot be escaped and thereby relate to. I understand presence of hegemonic forces in AFA discourse as indicated by political demands that repeatedly show dependency on another greater discourse that influences the shape of those demands. Political demands by AFA that are made against the background of a hegemonic force cannot escape certain articulations that flow from the
hegemonic way to made political demands, and so significant contradictions can also indicate the presence of hegemonic forces.

4.5 The New Christian Right in America
I now move on to discuss the empirical material that constitutes AFA discourse within the context of this study. First I give a short presentation of the contemporary status of the NCR in the United States in order to place AFA in a national context. I then go on to introduce AFA as an organization and the choice of analyzing this particular group. Presenting the AFA Journal is next in line, including a discussion of the kind of material at my disposal and why I have chosen the journal as a representative for AFA discourse. Finally I provide a methodological discussion of how I have read and approached the journal analytically.

The NCR has since its emergence in the 1970’s grown into an abundantly well-funded movement with considerable connections in politics. The theological positions of the various groups that make up the NCR differ, as do their methods and tactics. Common ground for these groups is however a deep resentment towards separating church and state and the enduring conviction in Christianity’s authority. According to a survey by Rob Boston, the leading NCR groups together raise more than $750,000,000 annually. Between them the groups own and operate radio stations and television networks, universities, law centers and research centers. Many operate as non-profit organizations with tax-exempt status while others include a Political Action Committee that enables a more direct political activity. The largest groups in the United States include the Pat Robertson Empire, the Falwell Empire, Family Research Council, American Family Association, Alliance Defense Fund, Traditional Values Coalition and Concerned Women for America.46 For my thesis I have chosen to analyze AFA. AFA is one of the largest and oldest organizations promoting Christian values in the United States and has as of yet not been subject of academic research.

4.6 The American Family Association
Donald Wildmon founded the American Family Association in 1977 and continued as President until 2003 when he stepped down due to health problems. His son, Tim Wildmon, is since his father’s decline the acting president. AFA gathers over two million online supporters and operated with the annual budget of $21,408,342 between 2009 and 2010. Approximately 180,000 paying subscribers receive the AFA Journal that is also available for free online. AFA further owns and operates nearly 200 radio stations across the country, American Family Radio, and provide two Internet television channels, AFA Channel and Home School

Channel. Each month, AFA web sites average over 40 million hits and five million visits. The activist divisions within AFA aim at rallying Christian activists to boost the moral foundations of American culture.47

4.6.1 The American Family Association Journal
The AFA Journal is the monthly magazine published by AFA to inform journal readers and supporters about religious, cultural, social and political issues that are important and relevant for American families. It is as such more of a lifestyle magazine, covering issues relating to the Christian lifestyle, rather than a news magazine with a documentary character. An AFA perspective characterizes the writing style of the articles: “Discover creative and challenging ways to be salt and light in a dark world. You will find the AFA Journal an invaluable tool for the Christian who wants to make a difference in our culture.”48

The AFA Journal has a few head writers who return every month and author the majority of the contents. The team consists of AFA Founder Donald Wildmon, AFA President Tim Wildmon, News Editor Ed Vitagliano, Editor Randall Murphee and staff writers Rebecca Grace, Jason Collum, Pat Centner and Rusty Benson. The team provides various types of articles that can be sorted into four main categories that form the structure of the journal. These four categories figure in the journal as headlines for the articles that follow. Interviews and Profiles are recurring types of articles, but are not standard material:

1) **Featured** articles are long reads highlighting pressing social concerns. These articles form the backbone of the journal and contain arguments from an AFA perspective on the issue. These articles are formal and argumentative in character.

2) Donald Wildmon, until resignation, and Tim Wildmon provide columns each month covering anything from a fond memory to a personal take on a social problem under the section Commentary. These articles are personal and informal in character. A financial advice column is most often included.

3) A section called News of Interest is a selection of the most important news for Christian families summarized in short articles. These news stories are picked from other sources and are hence not a product of the AFA Journal staff writers.

4) **Review** articles review contents in movies, music and television. These articles vary in length and contents are reviewed from an AFA perspective.49

48 http://www.afa.net/JournalSignup/
4.6.2 Choices and delimitations

The *AFA Journal* is due to its genre and communicative style appropriate for my analytical purposes. The journal provides a considerable volume of analytical material that I consider representative of AFA’s political agenda and has the advantage of providing political discourse both in the form of elaborate and exhaustive articles as well as informal and personal stories. This enables me to get an in-depth comprehension of how political meaning is produced in AFA discourse. Analyzing text however means that the volumes must be restricted, but since discourse theory is focused on societal and political processes rather than linguistics or individuals’ speech acts, the amount of text must be able to capture these processes. The original choice of a 20-year period proved to be an unmanageable task within the confines of this study. I have therefore settled at a ten-year period for analysis and used every issue during those years available at the *AFA Journal* webpage, which adds up to 120 issues. It is not possible to download entire journal issues online for the issues and articles are available as reads on the webpage. I have therefore no possibility of providing a count of how many page numbers an issue has. Translating the contents of the issues into Microsoft Word documents however gives a count of 15-30 pages per issue, with an average of 20 pages per issue. Owing to this I reference direct quotes with the year, issue number and the name of the article and general arguments and processes with the year and issue number.

Norman Fairclough has written extensively on media discourse within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). He defines genres as different modes of discursive interaction, which establish different relationships to the reader. The particular angle of the *AFA Journal* and the regularity of articles by AFA founder and presidents Donald and Tim Wildmon suggest that the journal is representative to AFA as an organization. The genre can be seen as normative and authoritative as it, in a formal yet familiar style, argues and informs on issues central to AFA and urges its readers into action.

Fairclough continues that media texts are produced collectively and are results of transformations along a chain of communicative events between editorial staff, journalists, producers and technical staff. According to Fairclough’s reasoning I view the articles as products of the AFA organization and not produced not by solitary individuals with personal viewpoints. Articles often present arguments and viewpoints as AFA’s arguments and

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50 cf. comparison between discourse theory, CDA and discourse psychology in Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:25ff
51 CDA is a form of discourse analysis, but with a heavier focus on the linguistic character of texts and their ideological effects. CDA distinguishes between discursive and non-discursive practices and is consequently a radically different approach to discourse theory.
52 Fairclough 2003: 26
53 Fairclough 1995: 48-49
viewpoints with phrases such as ‘According to AFA’ and ‘AFA says’, indicating that the articles are representative to the organization. The genre of the journal further suggests that articles are produced collectively in order to reflect a unified organization with a clear message. The non-existence of articles featuring alternative perspectives to the Christian lifestyle indicates to me that the AFA Journal consists of articles that can be read as part of an official political standpoint of the American Family Association.

4.7 Reading the AFA Journal
First of all, my role as researcher is not to search for origins or to ‘debunk AFA discourse’ and accuse it of constructing lies or manipulating truths. Instead I regard the narratives as strategic operations of power with a purpose and I examine the processes by which a narrative is established as truth. Much like in a genealogical approach to text, my reading is one where I aim to uncloak narratives from their established foundations by asking which interpretations are silenced in the process of portraying the narrative as true or neutral. The reading of the journals is therefore part of the methodology of this thesis, a reading that might be termed multi-layered as the journals are read with the triple analytical levels in mind mentioned above: the statement, the context and the purpose. These levels are not really distinct from each other, but in terms of reading analytically they need to be identified in order to grasp the constitution of the discourse. The journals have thoroughly and systematically been read to find regularities in articulation, recurring statements of truth, changes and additions to discourse and the underlying mechanisms of those changes.54 Reading the journal in this manner means that the very articulation of concepts and formation of discourse are considered political endeavors, and the texts produced by AFA are not separate from their political practice; they are political practice.55

I have therefore approached the different articles in the journals from different angles and credited most analytical importance to what I above call featured articles and columns. Where interviews and profiles figure, and entertainment reviews exceed a few sentences into the form of essay I consider them equal in importance. These types of articles are very suited for a discourse analysis as a high level of modality characterizes them. Fairclough defines modality as the level of certainty asserted to propositions, ranging from truth statements to tentative proposals. It is a crucial dimension of discursive expression as modality is the process by which facts or doubts of social phenomena are established.56 I therefore view the

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55 Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 105-114
56 Fairclough 1992: 158-162
featured articles and columns as the discursive expressions that tell me most about AFA’s
discursive constitution, as this is journal space where arguments are elaborated and
viewpoints allowed to flourish.

The news articles are content-wise the least important as they are authored by another
source, yet they are very important from another angle. I view these articles as discursively
utilized to underline the points made in the featured articles and columns with empirical facts.
A short news article may inform the reader that more children than ever are being home-
schooled. The news statement contains highly modalized statements, yet in this case the
purpose (why here and why now?) of the article is of interest rather than specific contents.

Using this understanding of discourse also implies that my role as researcher is not to
simply incorporate theoretical concepts into my analysis and search for signs and structures
that correspond to those concepts. I use this approach as a map through the text, as a guide to
identify operations of power. The approach does however not tell me what these operations of
power are, merely how to detect them, which signs to look for in the textual wilderness. I do
not look for hegemony per se, but use the concept as a tool to understand a certain systematic
relationship between textual signs. This means that the reading of the journal has been one
where I constantly ask questions to the text: what purpose does this statement serve? In which
context is this statement uttered? Who speaks and to whom? Why now? By asking questions
such as these, the narratives in the journal are given a precarious history through my reading,
a history that reveals how the narrative has come to be and the forces responsible for that
specific becoming. In order to do justice to this approach I provide quotations throughout my
analysis from the *AFA Journal* that are representative of the process or politics I discuss. In
the following chapter I provide a lengthy account of the journals’ contents so the reader can
easily follow the deconstructionist process and become witness to how “[t]he ‘things’ of
history decompose under the genealogist’s scrutiny.”57

5. AFA discourse 2001 – 2011

5.1 2001 – 2003: The end of the world
Many featured articles during this period minutely cover the vulgarity in mainstream movies,
such as *Summer of Sam* containing 435 uses of the F-word. In review articles own rating
systems are developed for movie content, 10-step programs and 30-day media fasts are
recommended by journal authors to aid parents in protecting their children from vile content,

57 Brown 2001: 103
that in time can become addictive.\textsuperscript{58} The growing number of hate-crime laws is brought up as indicative of a shift away from the moral fabric that through the reproductive family unit binds society together. Authors warn that these laws will be used to suppress the Gospel\textsuperscript{59} and criminalize Christian thought.\textsuperscript{60} Featured and review articles conclude that society and the entertainment industry grow in hostility towards Christian values.

Second, as far as America’s moral sky is concerned, it has already fallen. Just look around. It’s obvious. Abortion. Pornography. Homosexuality. Rebellion against righteousness, decency and proper authority. Open sacrilege and anti-Christian activity in popular culture.\textsuperscript{61}

Abortion and pro-life are highlighted as vital political issues that are brought up time and again. Abortion is expressed as a matter of civil rights as babies are murdered everyday in their mothers’ wombs in genocidal proportions.\textsuperscript{62} And “[p]ornography, with its intrinsic potential to ensnare anyone, is quickly becoming available to everyone”\textsuperscript{63} through the Internet and businesses promoting porn. Homosexuality is another issue that occupies multiple featured articles. “The tragic reality of the homosexual lifestyle—the disease, the broken relationships, the heartsick parents, the emotional costs.”\textsuperscript{64} The largest concern, that many articles express, is homosexual take over of schools. Some authors express the concern of intentional indoctrination of the homosexual agenda while others are distressed by the fact that homosexuals as a group molest children and youth.\textsuperscript{65}

The school has chosen to openly embrace homosexuality and bisexuality, and it does not welcome dissenting points of view. What is especially troubling is the school’s open hostility toward student support of committed man-woman relationships.\textsuperscript{66}

Even families devoted to God are affected by pornography and homosexuality, so authors pay close detail to address what constitutes porn, warning signs of addiction, programs for dealing with porn addiction and unwanted same-sex attractions, Christian counseling and the consequences of not treating these conditions.\textsuperscript{67} Many articles minutely recount the

\textsuperscript{58} 2001:4, 2002:3, 4, 5, 2003:2, 8
\textsuperscript{59} As defined by Webster’s online dictionary: The Gospel consists of four books in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that tell the story of Jesus’s birth, life, actions, including the death, resurrection and doctrines of Christ revealing the grace of God and the teachings of the salvation for mankind. These authors are referred to as “Evangelists” – bringers of a good message.
\textsuperscript{60} 2001:5, 2003:1
\textsuperscript{61} 2003:4 The Sky Has Already Fallen
\textsuperscript{62} 2001:1, 2002:1, 2003:1, 3
\textsuperscript{63} 2001:6 Should the Church Be Concerned About a Few Dirty Pictures?
\textsuperscript{64} 2001:1 Why I Can’t Be Silent
\textsuperscript{65} 2001:5, 2002:10
\textsuperscript{66} 2001:5 Homosexuals Push for Control of Schools
\textsuperscript{67} 2001:1, 2002:4, 8, 9, 11-12, 2003:2
blasphemies Christians are bombarded by and provide lists and graphic descriptions of all objectionable contents on TV.68

Models posed sensuously and seductively throughout the hour, promoted as the “sexiest night on TV,” and the “sultry Super Bowl of underwear.” True to its billing, the women wore the barest of bikinis. Parts of one fast-moving [sic] segment bordered dangerously on soft-core [sic] pornography, as models posed in bed. In another scene, a model simulated oral sex.69

A Levi’s commercial starts with the full screen view of a woman’s midriff – just above her bare bellybutton down to mid-thigh. The viewer sees a bare stomach with a pair of low-riding jeans. Then two female hands appear and unbutton, unzip and pull down the pants! The woman is wearing nothing but a pair of skimpy silk underwear. This scene repeats itself with other female models turning around to reveal their rear ends, and jumping up and down, laughing and frolicking for the camera.70

In 2002, an initiative is launched to stem TV indecency for good, onemillionmoms.com and onemilliondads.com, rallying concerned parents to send e-mails and make phone calls to companies and TV stations.71 AFA launches an AFA Internet filter to safeguard families from the porn epidemic, calls for nationwide boycotts and pushes for the Attorney General to prosecute Internet obscenity. Yahoo!, General Motors and Kmart are a few of the large corporations targeted by AFA boycotts and TV channels such as MTV, Disney and Nickelodeon are targeted for promoting the gay agenda.72 AFA also calls for boycotts of companies, such as Disney, for granting health benefits to same-sex couples and hosting a ‘Gay Day’ celebration. The Salvation Army is brought up as an example of when heavy protesting by pro-family organizations, including AFA, has led to health benefits being withdrawn for same-sex couples.73

Writers are also concerned about divorce and marriage, both heterosexual and homosexual. The problem being that heterosexual couples often end up divorcing, and homosexual couples cannot wait to get married.74 Marriage, the nuclear family and God are the only safeguards against personal, financial and family breakdown and articles often provide information about a wide rage of services for married couples in crisis, including counseling, several-step programs to make marriages last and behavioral prescriptions for the husband and wife. To open up the marriage to God is the most important part, for without God neither family nor society can function properly.75 Problems such as welfare, drugs and alcohol, crime, taxes and education are exacerbated with government programs and staff writers and AFA President

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68 2002:2, 3, 5, 2003:2, 3, 7
69 2002:1 Disney/ABC Assaults TV Barriers
70 2002:5 TV Programs Not Alone in Selling Sex
71 2001:8, 2002:1
72 2001:6, 2002:4, 5, 8, 11-12
73 2001:8, 2002:1
75 2001:1, 2, 2002:3
alike instead highlight sharing the Gospel.\textsuperscript{76} “I don’t know anyone who believes government can save us in any kind of spiritual sense, do you?”\textsuperscript{77}

The federal government has long surpassed the amount of power and authority the founding fathers intended it to have. Worse, the failure of 20th Century Americans to uphold and defend the religious values and freedom principles held sacred by the founding fathers has resulted in a national downslide into immorality and licentiousness that seems to know no bounds.\textsuperscript{78}

5.2 2004 – 2006: Uncivil wars
As the years progress, issues of pornography and profanity on television decrease in recurrence. Profanity remains a major issue and pornography is still recognized as one of the most addictive and progressive substances on the market with dire effects on children and families. But the detailed personal stories of homes ravaged by pornography and the meticulous accounts of profanity are slowly receding as 2005 approaches. However, a new aspect of the detriment of pornography, writes one author, is that it is no longer a male problem, but spreading to women as well.

“If you look at women 30 to 35, in that age range and under, they’re getting more visual. They’re getting more aggressive…. Culture is rewiring the female brain. And I literally mean rewiring – neurochemically, neuroanatomically, women are getting rewired to be more visual and aggressive.”\textsuperscript{79}

The issues of abortion and homosexuality remain top political priorities. Same-sex marriage becomes a huge political reality in 2004 as the LGBT movement is pushing for marriage equality. San Francisco starts distributing marriage licenses to same-sex couples between February and March 2004, Oregon continues to do the same between March and April that same year. Same-sex marriage ignites a political flame throughout the nation and demands for marriage equality echo to the beat of constitutional amendments to save marriage as a heterosexual institution.\textsuperscript{80} According to Tim Wildmon, 2004 is a crossroads for America where the cultural and political future will be decided; the only hope for the future of USA is a constitutional amendment and AFA calls for its supporters to stand up for righteousness.\textsuperscript{81}

“Christians must be involved. It is the year of the activist, and those willing to stand for God’s truth have an opportunity to help turn the tide.”\textsuperscript{82} To some degree AFA blames itself for the continued downslide of USA and criticizes Christians as a group for taking a separatist stand towards society. “Those of us who stand in the pulpit and sit in the pew have withdrawn from

\textsuperscript{76} 2002:5, 2003:5, 7
\textsuperscript{77} 2002:5 Redeeming Culture Not Contrary to Sharing Gospel
\textsuperscript{78} 2003:5 A Radical New Agenda
\textsuperscript{79} 2004:3 A Woman’s Struggle, Too
\textsuperscript{80} 2004:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11-12
\textsuperscript{81} 2004:1, 9, 11-12
\textsuperscript{82} 2003:7, 2004:1 Amending Constitution Only Hope for Saving Marriage, AFA Says
the public square so much and so often that we are no longer allowed in the public square. [...] We have abandoned our responsibility to society."

2004 is also an election year and battles in Congress, the legislature of the US government, take on increasing importance according to many featured articles. The AFA Journal and the American Family Radio aim to provide incentives for ordinary Christians to become more politically active. The AFA Center for Law & Policy battles in courtrooms all over America for Christians’ constitutional rights and freedom of religion. Political demands include laws banning abortion, a constitutional amendment to protect heterosexual marriage and laws to ensure that parental rights are upheld and government intrusion into family life limited. Minors should not be able to have abortions without parents being informed and public schools should not conduct sex education when it is a parental responsibility to teach children the value of abstinence. Parents must be able to opt their children out of such classes. Articles express this as another piece of evidence of homosexual indoctrination and homosexual rights trumping parents’ rights.

AFA became concerned that, along with the innocuous content of a children’s video, public school teachers who were sympathetic to the homosexual movement might use WAFF materials to initiate a discussion of tolerance and diversity that would include homosexuality. And might do so without parental knowledge or approval.

In order to step up efforts for moral decency a number of pro-family organizations came together at the request of AFA to form the Arlington Group. The group is according to one journal writer not a one-issue organization, even though the major demand is a constitutional amendment to protect heterosexual marriage. Because the US is in the middle of a culture war between good and evil forces a hands on approach is most necessary, and those who choose to not engage in the culture war lack courage and values worth defending.

There are very few people who don’t believe that our freedom and our way of life are worth defending, with military force if necessary. I know there are some folks known as “pacifists” who don’t believe that anything is worth fighting for, but their numbers are minimal. I have always been perplexed with the idea of pacifism, because if everyone converted to their way of thinking, then we would not have a country, much less a free one, which – irony of ironies – protects a pacifist’s right to be what he is. In truth, pacifists enjoy the hard won fruits of freedom, without having to risk anything.

The rhetoric of war, country and democracy takes on escalating importance from 2004 and onwards and is increasingly appropriated in featured articles; the culture war over America becomes more intertwined with the war in Iraq and the war on terror. The July issue of 2005

83 2004:2 The Truth Hurts
84 2004:1, 2, 3, 2005:2, 4, 7, 8, 2006:3, 5, 6
85 2005:3 Setting the Record Straight: Spongebob Controversy Highlights Media Bias on ”Gay” Issue
86 2005:1 Pro-Family Groups Multiply Effectiveness in Cooperative Effort
87 2002:11-12 Is Anything Worth Fighting For?
is an Independence Day Special discussing freedom – freedom’s blessing, gift, promise, requirement, cost, foundation and courage.\textsuperscript{88} The culture war has become more than a spiritual matter and one journal writer states that morally and sexually liberated people clamor around the Democratic Party, so it is imperative to engage in politics to keep states from turning blue. The culture war is a cleavage between Democrats and Republicans, not only between Christian and secular morals.\textsuperscript{89} As the Democratic presidential candidate Kerry supports women’s right to abortion and civil unions for homosexuals, AFA sides with President Bush and urges readers to storm the polls and vote for conservative values.\textsuperscript{90} The President of AFA believes that the reelection of Bush is a window of opportunity for conservative values; even African-American pro-family leaders are gradually pulling away from the Left.\textsuperscript{91}

A suspicion of the Muslims faith also positions AFA behind the Republican Party; authors express their support for the war on terror as a struggle for freedom. Many featured articles discuss Muslim life, faith and activity during these years under headlines such as: “Liberal media lashes out at Christians: has political success triggered a jihad?”\textsuperscript{92} and “Muslims in America: mission field or mine field?”\textsuperscript{93} Featured articles and columns state that no country ruled by Islam is democratic; Saudi Arabia has condemned democracy as un-Islamic and in Indonesia Muslim groups are fighting for a full Muslim state with no tolerance for other religions. Evangelical culture warriors on the other hand are engaging in racial reconciliation through missionary work; traveling abroad to spread the Truth is seen as a process of democratization. As Christians are introducing the Gospel they hear for the first time that they were created in the image of God, and so Christianity is the only religion that can guarantee democracy. This historic opportunity brings spiritual freedom to people in bondage “and the sociopolitical freedom that often comes with it”.\textsuperscript{94} The high ideals of freedom and liberty guide missionaries in their duty to bring light to dark places, such as Africa, where American missionaries are educating, serving, motivating and challenging the African people. AIDS is now slowing down in Uganda thanks to abstinence training.\textsuperscript{95}

Journal authors increasingly see Christianity as a civil rights movement, struggling for the freedom and justice of oppressed groups. This struggle is however restricted to the pro-life movement struggling for the most basic right of all – the right to life. Success stories of ex-

\textsuperscript{88} 2005:7  
\textsuperscript{89} 2004:6 Uncivil Wars  
\textsuperscript{90} 2004:9, 10  
\textsuperscript{91} 2004:6, 9, 2005:2, 3  
\textsuperscript{92} 2005:7  
\textsuperscript{93} 2004:7  
\textsuperscript{94} 2005:3, 2005:10 Silent Exodus: Is Christ Visiting One of the World’s Most Oppressed People Groups?  
\textsuperscript{95} 2004:3, 2005:4, 7, 10, 2006:5
gays start filling the journal pages and the writing staff vigorously counters the civil rights arguments made by the LGBT movement. In unison they reject the argument that homosexuality is biological and push for therapy and other modes of change. As expressed in the quote below, homosexuality is unnatural, which is why homosexuals cannot produce babies and families of their own. Homosexuals have no civil right to demand what they cannot produce themselves, which is why they seek to gain support for their cause by ideological indoctrination.96

She wrote, “What same-sex marriage advocates have tried to present as a civil rights issue is really a bid for special preferences of the type our society gives to married couples for the very good reason that most of them are raising or have raised children.” We need to remember that homosexuals don’t reproduce, they recruit.97

5.3 2007 – 2011: Sin or salvation?
The years between 2007 and 2011 are tumultuous years in which AFA interacts more with the political establishment than in previous years and AFA demands are more tightly articulated together with Republican values. Many laws were passed that AFA reacts to by asserting that religious freedom is yet again trampled on and the Constitution tampered with: the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) would prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) would grant women the right to choose freely in matters of abortion. AFA, calling this act the Death Act, claimed it would be an Obamination if it passed. Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (DADT) was repealed allowing gay men and women to serve in the military, but to AFA’s delight, Oklahoma passed the Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act.98

In 2008 California voted yes to marriage equality, and for the first time in the United States history same-sex couples were legally allowed to marry. This prompted pro-family organizations from all over the nation, including AFA, to protest and gather resources into repealing the law. With Proposition 8, proposing the unconstitutionality of the law, same-sex marriage was brought to an end.99 Featured articles and columns in particular, now move from emphasizing the undemocratic state of the American society and the ubiquitous discrimination of Christian values, to cheering democratic participation. As expressed by Tim Wildmon:

So we work through the legal and the political systems to elect representatives who share this view. This is how the American process works. All we do is participate the same way other groups do. We have no desire to send an atheist to prison because he doesn’t confess John 14:6. If you argue that religious people

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96 2004:9, 2005:9, 2006:9
97 2004:4 Consequences of Same-Sex "Marriage" Will Be Far Reaching
99 2009:1
should be excluded from the public debate because their beliefs motivate their political activity, then you would have said the American civil rights movement was illegitimate.100

Islamification takes an increasing importance as a political issue during these years. In contrast to the US, Europe is seen as a continent in moral ruins, where escalating Islamification ravages city after city. Many columns and featured articles discuss the Muslim antipathy to religious freedom as perplexing to Westerners, explaining that within Islam non-Muslims are not equal to Muslims, which is why there is no room for religious pluralism. Christianity is the only force field against radical Islam’s plans for world domination by delivering the fruits of democracy and freedom. Secularization is hence somewhat in service of Islamification.101

First, you can’t understand American history or government without understanding the religious convictions of the men and women who laid its foundation. Second, the Judeo-Christian ethic is the foundation of our rights and freedoms and if we are forced to remove that same ethic altogether, what is going to happen to those rights and freedoms?102

Columns during this time often blame multiculturalism and political correctness that obscure reality and common sense, that retard progress and sound judgment.103 Correlations are made between the Koran and Hitler’s Mein Kampf as enemies of freedom, democracy and tolerance. According to the author, Hitler knew that in order to gain societal control he needed to separate church and state, as Christianity was the only force that could prevent a totalitarian takeover. The same threat is today posed by the dogmatic and totalitarian New Atheists.104

Two new groups are incorporated into AFA discourse, the New Atheists and the Religious Left. New Atheists, such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens, conceive of religion as irrational superstition, writes Andrew Linscott. Humanity’s true nature is scientific inquiry, rationality and will to liberty and democracy, which are all impoverished by religion.105 The Religious Left is almost equal to size as the Religious Right according to Steven Shiffrin. He covers the Religious Left as various religious groups politically allegiant to liberal, or progressive, politics of social justice issues and poverty rather than the traditional conservative values of the Religious Right.106

The New Atheists and the Religious Left figure in various articles as enemies of Christianity, society and AFA. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) crafted a document calling conservative Christians to go beyond their usual issues of homosexuality

100 2008:4 The Irony of Intolerance
101 2007:3 2008:1, 2, 3, 4 2010:1
102 2010:3 On the Shoulders of Giants
103 2010:8 Seeing the World Through PC Glasses
104 2007:2 2010:1, 2, 8
105 Linscott 2012
106 Shiffrin 2009: 98
and abortion to focus more on social issues such as poverty and human rights. AFA, reading this document as a production of the Religious Left, is highly critical. The document includes a principle for seeking justice and compassion for the vulnerable poor and protection of human rights in addition to family values and religious freedom. But according to AFA some issues are nothing but clear from a biblical perspective: homosexuality is always a sin and a committed relationship based on love just is not enough. And the proposal of universal healthcare from the Obama administration and the ongoing economic crisis further mobilizes political discourse in the AFA Journal away from the Obama administration and against redistribution of state resources as expressions of class warfare. There is no biblical justification for the expansion of the welfare state:

Such mantras are repeated constantly by liberal evangelicals, and few conservative Christians would argue with the proposition that justice or poverty, for example, are important concerns of Scripture. But what is it exactly that the Bible says about such things? Surely a solid Scriptural case could be made against racism, but does that mean that Jesus Christ would personally favor affirmative action as a specific policy? And while a Christian should certainly feel compelled to help the poor, is it more Christian to support an increase in entitlement programs or to cut the capital gains tax to spur more hiring?

AFA accuses the Religious Left of moving away from the power of the Gospel and in the process invalidating the societal efforts made by conservative religious groups focused on missionary work and spreading the Gospel in society. The condition of sin that humankind is wallowing in produces symptoms of poverty and disease, and the only way to tackle these problems is through the Gospel. The ‘social Gospel’ is further not biblically corroborated – Jesus did not come to save societies, he came to save sinners, and any human tinkering with Scripture is unacceptable.

The Religious Left invalidates the conservative evangelical commitment to humanitarian relief because we are achieving our ends in the name of Jesus Christ through the Gospel, without the assistance of government funding. The fundamental tenant of modern liberalism is that a government program funded by redistributed wealth is the preferred method of humanitarian relief rather than what the church is accomplishing by faith through compassionate hearts.

And in regards to both the Religious Left and the New Atheists one writer replies that democracy should never discipline religion. “The claims of Jesus Christ are absolute and universal. They apply to every man, woman and child in every place and in every time.” Some journal authors have lost faith in democratic deliberation and see the democratic system crumbling under the crude selfishness and volatile hyper-individualism flowing from moral

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108 2007:2 Tugging Left: a Critique of the Liberal Evangelical Movement
109 2008:7, 2009:10
110 2008:7 Defining Evangelism Down
111 2007:3 Blurring the Message
relativism and secularization. The democratic challenge posed by homosexuals, Muslims, the Religious Left and the New Atheists finds a solution in apologetics, i.e. the task of sharing the Gospel with the public. Sharing the Gospel is envisioned as a social movement that can spread democracy since the democratic system has failed.\textsuperscript{112} Adoption is an issue increasingly pushed as part of a Gospel movement, an act of love towards fellow human.\textsuperscript{113}

This misses the point completely. Christians currently cannot “win the debate” on any number of critical issues because the culture has rejected the underpinnings of the Judeo-Christian worldview. As a result, our society will continue to reject the propositions that flow out of that worldview. It is difficult, for example, to win an argument about abortion when a culture does not recognize the sanctity of innocent human life in a womb.\textsuperscript{114}

During this time many articles highlight the close relationship between Christianity and democracy, but as is clear from the above quote, many other articles are equally claiming that the federal mandate is corrupted and the democracy is biased against Christians. Christians are in these articles recommended to put political efforts on a local level and turn to the Gospel. Self-government is the only way for individuals to be free from oppression and the only way for the individual to flourish. Only a minimal government guided by Christian ethics that secures personal freedoms in a capitalistic economy can accomplish this.

Free the individual from the control of other men and/or control from the state, and he will achieve great things beyond the imagination. Especially if there is personal incentive for him to profit financially from his invention. Take away the opportunity for personal gain and one can see how the desire to create, invent or discover would be greatly diminished.\textsuperscript{115}

6. Analysis: Once upon a dislocation

6.1 Outline of chapter
In this chapter I analyze the political demands and issues raised in the previous chapter. First I analyze the context and political terrain of AFA discourse. Following this I discuss in two sections how AFA discourse is constituted, first through an analysis of the elements that are excluded from discourse and second with an analysis of how the internal structure of AFA discourse is constituted. The next section analyzes the operations of power that are present in creating meaning for the political demands, after which I analyze how these operations of power produce a particular type of politics. Lastly, I relate AFA discourse to a hegemonic articulation that plays a vital role in the constitution of AFA’s political demands.

\textsuperscript{112} 2007:7, 2007:11-12 \textsuperscript{113} 2006:6, 2010:2, 6, 2011:5 \textsuperscript{114} 2007:3 Blurring the Message \textsuperscript{115} 2007:5 Freedom Spawns Initiative, Creativity
6.2 The trauma of being born again

The journal texts echo a nostalgic loss for a society that used to be. Time, as it happens, has brought full-blown turmoil and a marked cleavage between now and then. AFA remembers a past when Christians were a respected part of society and their morals a pillar of justice and truth. “Now I’m considered hateful because I have said that sex—homosexual or heterosexual—outside marriage is a sin”\(^{116}\), writes a woman in distress. If the postmodern agenda is not reversed, it will ultimately mean the end of the western civilization and the culture war will be lost.

At stake in this spiritual war is the very foundation, not only of our country, but of the whole of Western civilization. The progress we have made, the freedoms we have enjoyed these past two centuries, have come primarily because our society was founded on the Christian view of man. There is an intentional, powerful effort currently being made to change the base of that foundation, to rid it of Christian influence, and to replace that base with a secular, materialist, humanistic view of man.\(^ {117}\)

The majority of featured articles and columns express an acute anxiety about western civilization being torn apart by the forces by a secular, materialist, humanistic view of man—a fear of the world literally ending. Statements such as the quote above express a disorder and fundamental political change in the organization of society and can be seen as an effect of a dislocation. Laclau calls power “the trace of contingency within the structure”\(^ {118}\), meaning that power is internal to every articulation and discourses are therefore always vulnerable and threatened by subversion, even in the most naturalized discourse. When established truths are faced with their innate contingency, the structure collapses.

The expressions of existential crisis are according to this reasoning effects of power that has introduced new articulatory practices into the organization of society and thereby redefined the very nature of the social. The several truth claims regarding the nature of society and of the human made in AFA discourse can be seen as indications of an antagonistic field where multiple forces are competing to define the social; should society and human be articulated as part of a secular, Christian, materialist or humanist discourse? The dislocation has set loose an avalanche of floating signifiers and AFA discourse is operating in an undetermined terrain where elements such as ‘country’ and ‘western civilization’ no longer have definite meanings but multiple forces, of which AFA is one, aim to articulate them within their own social narrative.\(^ {119}\)

Making truth claims thus becomes a discursive strategy to claim and determine the meaning of valuable floating signifiers that other forces are competing for as well. Yet in the

\(^{116}\) 2001:1 Why I Can’t Be Silent
\(^{117}\) 2002:6 Shall We Have Respectability at the Loss of Responsibility?
\(^{118}\) Laclau 1993: 435
\(^{119}\) Torfing 2005: 16f
process of making truth claims, AFA discourse expresses an ontological contingency in the elements they aim to claim, through the very articulations by which truth and stability is sought. The discursive strategy of claiming truth is only intelligible in relation to that which must necessarily be excluded, the untrue. So by claiming truth about the family, the human and sexuality, AFA discourse implicitly opens up questions such as: Who is able to procreate and form families? What constitutes a family? Is the state an aid to its population or does it inhibit personal and societal growth? Is the human a rational being in charge herself, determined by the economy, by one’s sexuality or determined by God? The excluded elements are in this sense internal to AFA discourse because they provide AFA discourse with a meaningful identity.

The presence of dislocation is accordingly indicated by the creation of an enemy who is blamed for the crisis and hence must be abolished. In AFA discourse the enemy is postmodernism. The ideology of postmodernism, as AFA understands it, not only opposes Christian truth and morality, but is inherently out to destroy it. The monstrous problems facing society are seen as emanating from moral relativism because in the postmodern world everybody is free to set their own moral standards and there is neither truth nor false.

A dark cloud is descending upon our land. It is enveloping us in a darkness from which there is seemingly no escape. Instead of trusting the God who created us to determine what we should believe and how we should live, we look to ourselves. Morality is relative, or more precisely irrelevant. As a culture we have embraced the secular humanist definition that what is moral is whatever the individual decides. Each one is encouraged to establish his own personal morality which is seen as no better or worse than anyone else’s.

Imagine a world in which logic and reason carry little weight compared to experience and feelings; history is not valued as something from which to learn; there are no universal truths; what is believable is more important than what is true; and the world doesn't need to make sense—in any sense.

AFA utilizes history and time as discursive strategies to explain and handle this contemporary reality. Narratives about an orderly, natural world are spoken that I view as coping mechanisms to a dislocation that has created disorder.

Sadly, however, since 1986 the more traditional Judeo-Christian views which prevailed in Bowers have been steadily eroding in our culture, in favor of the more postmodern views of the minority in that case. […] Most sodomy laws have already disappeared anyway. In 1960, all 50 states had such laws on their books — now only 13 states do. However, the repeal of these laws — either by state legislatures or judges — indicates that the statutes represent a worldview that is rapidly being abandoned in favor of postmodern relativism. Sodomy laws derive from an older recognition of an orderly natural world, reflecting an intelligent design and, thus, purpose within nature, called natural law.

120 Torfing 2005: 16f
121 2001:8 In God We Do Not Trust
122 2001:2 Whatever!
123 2003:4 Morality Hanging By A Thread
Dowl and writes that before the 1970’s however, the NCR was not very preoccupied with social issues such as homosexuality, and as pinpointed by Hopson & Smith, not very worried about secularism.\textsuperscript{124}

The triumvirate of political positions that came to constitute the core of "family values"—opposition to abortion, feminism, and gay rights—did not command much attention from evangelicals before 1975. In fact, most evangelicals who spoke publicly about these issues in the early 1970s supported the Equal Rights Amendment and equivocated on abortion. Gay rights, to be sure, never found favor among conservative Christians, yet it seemed a marginal issue until the end of the decade. In short, on these three issues, evangelicals in the early 1970s seemed ambivalent.\textsuperscript{125}

Before the 1970’s there was no American Family Association, which was formed in 1977. This indicates a profound reorganization of the social, for surely there were homosexual and secular people during those times, yet they were not articulated as lethal enemies to the Christian subject, or made to serve a strategic purpose within the context of social survival. According to Lisa McGirr this is because a discourse of anti-communism had, in the words of my discursive approach, organized significant elements of society under its logic and become a hegemonic discourse. Individual positions such as secularist and homosexual were therefore not intelligible within that articulation as a direct threat to social survival as they were subsumed under the logic of anti-communism.\textsuperscript{126} That these positions have now been utilized discursively can be seen as a result of a monumental change in society where new articulatory practices have enabled a narrative around individual homosexuals and secularists as threats to social survival. The civil rights movements, as covered by Flippen, Dowland and Lints, can be seen as playing an important part of this social change.\textsuperscript{127}

In the 1960s, a determined and idealistic cadre unleashed a revolution trumpeting a hyper-individualism that, over the last four decades, has transformed American culture. These people began as a “counter-culture,” challenging the presuppositions and principles that formed the bedrock underlying the status quo of an entire civilization.\textsuperscript{128}

The quote above indicates a violent rupture between the past that enjoyed a natural order and the present that does not. Groups demanding human rights based on gender, sexuality and race can be seen as having expanded the concept of rights to individuals previously disarticulated from the concept, but simultaneously opened up discursive possibilities for competing social forces to articulate individual secularists and homosexuals as threats.

He offered the example of the Golden Age of Hollywood from 1933 to 1966. During those years, Protestant and Catholic clergy, at Hollywood’s urging, read every script before the production of a movie.

\textsuperscript{124} Dowland 2009, Hopson & Smith 1999
\textsuperscript{125} Dowland 2009: 607
\textsuperscript{126} McGirr 2001:255-261
\textsuperscript{127} Flippen 2011: 30-60, Dowland 2009, Lints 2010: 13-87, 113-134
\textsuperscript{128} 2007:3 Blurring the Message
“You can still let your kids watch any movie, practically, that was made in that time period,” Farah stated, “because the church was involved”.\textsuperscript{129}

AFA also expresses the longing for the utopian past in form of stories told to its readers, particularly a prominent feature in columns. One tells the story of a young boy visiting his grandfather. He asks him, wouldn’t it be nice to live in a country where doors needn’t be locked? If he and his friends weren’t tempted by sex on movies and TV, but encouraged to live clean lives like grandma and grandpa? Grandpa says that it would be nice, and he knows, because he used to live in such a place.

“Gramps, I didn’t know you ever lived anywhere but America.”
“Son,” Gramps said, “it was America. All these things, and many more good things were a part of our life.”
“But Gramps,” the grandson said, “we live in America.”
“I know, son. But America isn’t America anymore,” Gramps said.\textsuperscript{130}

I view this storytelling of the past as another indication of a dislocation of discourse, in which myths about the past envisioned as future are utilized to deal with the trauma of dislocation. In times of dislocation the creation of myths function as band aids for the exposed contingency. Myths cover up and explain the structural inconsistencies\textsuperscript{131} and inconsistencies expressed by AFA, such as family values being recast as “hate speech”\textsuperscript{132} and the Christian identity as a “bigoted”\textsuperscript{133} are managed. This highlights how the rearticulation of the social has changed the regimes governing what the body may and may not do. There are now legal repercussions for certain actions, below illustrated by Peterson getting fired and another man getting sued.

Peterson believed he had a duty to expose the sinfulness of the homosexual lifestyle. So, in response to the diversity posters, he posted some Scriptures inside his work cubicle which made clear the Bible’s teaching. Among the Bible verses he posted was Leviticus 20:13: “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be put upon them.”\textsuperscript{134}

A few weeks ago I read that a Christian man was sued because he would not rent a house to an unmarried couple. It was, he said, against his Christian beliefs to do so. He was immediately sued by the unmarried couple.\textsuperscript{135}

I have so far discussed three aspects of dislocation that are expressed in AFA discourse: the undecidability of the social, the discursive strategies of time and history and the enemy they articulate. The quote below summarizes these three aspects:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{5} 2003: 5 A Radical New Agenda
  \item \textsuperscript{7} 2003: 7 Wouldn’t It Be Nice?
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000: 15, Laclau 1993, Torfing 2005
  \item \textsuperscript{4} 2001: 4 Federal Court Strikes Down “Hate Speech” Code
  \item \textsuperscript{8} 2001: 8 In God We Do Not Trust
  \item \textsuperscript{3} 2004: 3 Using Caesar’s Sword
  \item \textsuperscript{7} 2002: 7 When You Take A Stand, Who Is Standing With You?
\end{itemize}
Then there is post-structuralism. We don’t teach all the black founders who were there during the Revolution. We don’t show all the pictures of whites and blacks together. We don’t point out that the heroes of Bunker Hill and Yorktown were black soldiers who received more commendations than any others. We don’t point out Massachusetts never had a time when blacks could not vote, or that women voted throughout the colonial period. Back then, we were all Americans. Whether black or white, man or woman, red or brown.136

The enemy, post-structuralism, is responsible for contemporary social turmoil, before post-structuralism society was harmonious and intelligible. Time and history are utilized here to create a narrative where post-structuralism is blamed for racial injustice, which manages the dislocation and the demands of the civil rights movements in three ways. First, by stating that there were no racial or gendered quarrels in the orderly, natural world before postmodernism, the narrative disarticulates itself from a history of racial and gendered oppression. Second, that women and black founders/soldiers are articulated as internal to the orderly, natural and legitimate narrative disarms any demands of the women’s and black civil rights movements made in the name of gender and race directed at AFA. Lastly, articulating women and black founders/soldiers as internal to their narrative grants social legitimacy, and the strategy of making illegitimate alternative political demands on gender and race, can be understood as a discursive strategy to drive a wedge between the many civil rights struggles.

6.3 Making sense of the senseless: creating an enemy

*Racist* is such an element of discourse that is significant in the process of articulating the constitutive outside. The discursive strategy of history writing is once again utilized to create a harmonious past if only a representative of the constitutive outside, Planned Parenthood (PP), would not figure in it. The history of PP and eugenics is one and the same; abortions, together with forced sterilizations, were originally used to diminish birth and fertility rates in the black population until extinction. This articulation radically changes the meaning of the element ‘colonization’:

The history of PP cannot be studied without first considering the American Eugenics Society (AES). After the Civil War, many wealthy, former slave owners sought a solution to what they deemed the “Negro Problem.” The first idea was to send all former slaves back to Africa. It was termed “colonization” and was abandoned shortly after its conception. Then Francis Galton, cousin to Charles Darwin, birthed the idea and coined the term “eugenics.”137

The articulation of a racist constitutive outside and the strategy of history writing are also utilized, as mentioned above, to articulate the pro-life movement as a civil rights movement.138

136 2010:7 Deism and the Declaration
137 2010:1 Worth Saving?
138 2001:1, 2 2005:3, 2009:10
A Black pastor is arrested and jailed for his participation in a public demonstration. Later, to spotlight their cause, black ministers lead a march from Newark, New Jersey, to the nation's capital. Along the way, rallies are held in Philadelphia, Wilmington, Delaware and Baltimore.

1962? The civil rights movement?
No. The year 2000. The “new civil rights movement”. 139

These discursive expressions of making correlations between the legalization of slavery and the legalization of abortion are discursive strategies to render illegitimate the demands of the pro-choice side, as these positions are articulated as expressions of racism. But this particular articulation also erases certain aspects of the history of the civil rights movement, indicated by use of new as prefix for civil rights movement. Articulating civil rights movement together with pro-life has the same effects as discussed above regarding women and black founders/soldiers; alternative articulations are blocked from being conceptualized as part of a civil rights movement. Another implication of this articulation is that political opposition against Islam and missionary work in Africa cannot be viewed in racist terms, as the meaning of racist and racism has already been discursively established.

It may seem strange for many in the West to hear the adherent of one religion argue against allowing members even the option of converting to another religion. […] The radical Muslim antipathy toward religious freedom must seem quite alien to Westerners, but it becomes comprehensible when one considers the Islamic view of religion and state in Muslim countries. […] And yet this analogy is helpful because it reveals the stark contrast between the mindset inherent in much of the West and that in the Muslim world. While in the U.S. there are frequent arguments about where to draw the line between church and state, there is apparently no similar dichotomy in Islam. There is no need to argue about the line between mosque and state because religion and the state are one and the same. […] This obviously runs against the grain of Western notions of the equality of all people – which undergirds the entire premise of religious freedom. 140

Mobilization against the Muslim faith becomes not an issue of racism but an issue of essentialized culture cleavages, and ultimately about freedom and democracy. Through chains of equivalence a process of Islamification is connected to a process of secularization.

It is my opinion that our leaders don’t understand the difference in the way the Eastern mind and the Western mind function. One wants forced submission to Allah achieved by the sword; the other desires voluntary submission to God achieved by a changed heart. 141

While it flirts with oblivion across much of Europe and fights to avoid irrelevance in North America, the Christian faith in the West seems unable to confront a resurgent and aggressive Islamic fundamentalism that sees cultural and religious weakness as an opportunity for domination. […] The religious vacuum into which Islam is pouring seems to have been generated in part by an aggressive secularism, but also by a weak and effete Christianity. 142

Articulating elaborate chains of equivalence is a central strategy in AFA discourse that aims to stabilize meaning through excluding elements of discourse that become equally

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139 2001:1 Black Community Waking to Most Basic Civil Right
140 2008:1 Mosque and State
141 2007:3 Without Christian Ideals, Democracy Dies
142 2008:2 Islam and the West
threatening. A purely negative identity to which AFA discourse juxtaposes itself serves the strategic purpose of attaining positivity, stability and legitimacy.\textsuperscript{145} Between 2001 and 2011 the journal articles make connection between homosexuals, murderers, pedophiles and child molesters,\textsuperscript{144} which are connected to the music industry, television, humanists, liberals and government brainwashing,\textsuperscript{145} modern man, eugenics, human cloning, postmodern morals, violence,\textsuperscript{146} to liberal evangelicals, fundamentalists, radical homosexuals, Muslims, Hitler, abortionists, Planned Parenthood and racists.\textsuperscript{147}

And just what is the problem? Basically this: Our country is on a downward spiral of immorality like none we have ever seen before. Special rights for homosexuals have become the latest project for Hollywood and the liberal elite. Pornography fills our Internet, our TVs, our movies. Killing of the unborn continues unabated. Drugs ravage our society. Promiscuous sexual activity is a game. Public education, to a large degree, is deteriorating in a continual exercise of political correctness. Violence is a means of resolving an argument or just an activity for sheer enjoyment. The institution of marriage is under severe attack. Religious freedom is in danger. And who is to blame for this downward spiral? It isn’t the pornographers. It isn’t Hollywood or the liberal elite. It isn’t Planned Parenthood. It isn’t the people who make the guns. It isn’t the people who run our schools. It isn’t the drug dealers. They’re only doing what is expected of them.\textsuperscript{148}

By constructing this particular constitutive outside AFA discourse juxtaposes itself to a selfish, bigoted and intolerant constitutive outside fuelled by unrestrained individualism without consideration and creates an identity as compassionate, reasonable, tolerant, democratic and inclusive in service of peace, progress and equality.

No other major world religion practices acts of charity and compassion like Christianity. It’s not even close. Hospitals, orphanages, schools, food, shelter, the list goes on. Catholics and Protestants alike carry on this work around the world. And they do so with absolutely no expectation of ever receiving anything in return from the people they help and serve.\textsuperscript{149}

If I may broaden this concept, do you know what country has been the most giving, most generous, most caring country in all of history? I would say, without hesitation, it is the good ol’ U.S.A. […] It’s because of the influence of Christianity. […] if you look at our history, an objective person can see the good that Americans have done for people around the world. And even the wars we have engaged in have been ultimately for the cause of human rights and freedom.\textsuperscript{150}

While creating a constitutive outside has stabilizing effects in times of trouble, these extensive chains of equivalence also lead to fewer and fewer positions that can make legitimate political demands within the logic created in AFA discourse. These extensive chains of equivalence create an immutable polarization where political demands are sorted under mutually exclusive binaries like rebellion or redemption, respectability or responsibility, social issues or moral

\textsuperscript{143} Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 112ff, 122-127
\textsuperscript{144} 2001:4, 5, 2002:3
\textsuperscript{145} 2001:9, 2002:2, 4
\textsuperscript{146} 2001:10, 2002:1
\textsuperscript{147} 2001:1, 11-12, 2007:3, 2010:1, 2011:7-8
\textsuperscript{148} 2010:2 The Truth Hurts
\textsuperscript{149} 2011:7-8 The World’s Most Generous People
\textsuperscript{150} 2002:8 Southern Hospitality by the Numbers
issues, safety or salvation, common sense or bigotry, tolerance or truth, Janet or Jesus? \(^{151}\) A social problem like poverty can accordingly be equated with the pornography addict’s desperation and need for lust. “These images are like Third World beggars crowding around him, clamoring for another handout. No matter how much you give them, they’re never satisfied. Indeed, every gift only emboldens them to demand more.” \(^{152}\)

Laclau and Mouffe write that in the case of social antagonism society is increasingly viewed in narrow terms and political frontiers are drawn between good and bad. Social problems thus become simplified, and a highly unstable society will have more points of antagonism. \(^{153}\) The articulation of AFA discourse can consequently be understood as an effect of a highly instable political terrain with many points of antagonism. In AFA discourse these points of antagonism are all articulated as posing a threat to the panacea for social good – the family.

6.4 Making sense of the senseless: rearticulating family values

The central role of the family is hardly news as the family has been central for NCR politics since the outset. “Regardless of what people might choose to call families, or how the idea of family has ‘evolved’ in our culture, the concept of the ‘natural family’ asserts that there is a reality to the family unit that exists beyond human opinion or changing cultural norms”. \(^{154}\) What is changing however is the way the family is articulated as a result of a dislocation.

AFA appropriates three discursive elements to keep the concept of family values intelligible and are systematically appropriated when making political demands against the constitutive outside: freedom, democracy and rights. These three discursive elements can be viewed as floating signifiers that AFA tries to claim as privileged moments inside discourse. AFA articulates the freedom and rights of parents’ contra that of big government with headlines such as “Parental rights vs. Big Brother” \(^{155}\), accuses the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of being a group that “wants to deny freedom of speech to those with whom they disagree” \(^{156}\) and states the importance of democracy informed by family values. \(^{157}\) The articulation of family, freedom, rights and democracy creates a new logic, as the meaning of these concepts change as a result of the articulatory practice. \(^{158}\)

\(^{152}\) 2007:10 Slay the Serpent
\(^{153}\) Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 127-131
\(^{154}\) 2006:10 Replacing “Mom and Dad”: Does It Matter How We Define Marriage and Family?
\(^{155}\) 2003:7
\(^{156}\) 2001:5 This Time Mississippi Is First In The Nation
\(^{157}\) 2004:9, 2006:6
\(^{158}\) Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 105
The articulation of family together with freedom and rights can be seen as a mobilization against political demands based on individual rights as the articulation precludes the possibility of individual rights over that of the family. When the family becomes the smallest societal unit, the individual does not make legitimate sense outside that of family, outside the positions of mother, father or child. By connecting rights and freedom to that of the family, individual rights and freedoms over those of the nuclear family’s become acts of selfishness and self-indulgence and traits of the constitutive outside.159

Our country has always celebrated the individual and the freedom to pursue a personal vision of the good life. But that individualism always fit into the wider context of traditional morality. The term hyper-individualism refers to an increasingly common belief that the needs and desires of the individual trump all other community concerns and any sense of shared values. When the views of the community infringe on the view of the individual, the community must yield.160

With this articulation AFA discourse can dodge political demands made in the name of individual human rights and make impossible the right to an abortion, as that would imply the killing of family. It also becomes coherent within the logic of the new family articulation that individuals precluded from the family are equally dangerous as they serve the same strategic purpose. A homosexual, a pedophile, an abortionist or postmodern liberal teaching kids in school are all representatives of the constitutive outside and children growing up outside the heterosexual nuclear family are thus confronted with the darkness of the constitutive outside.

When parents part, or fail to marry, their children seem to suffer from increased risks of poverty, mental illness, infant mortality, physical illness, juvenile delinquency and adult criminality, sexual abuse and other forms of family violence, economic hardship, substance abuse, and educational failure, such as increased risk of dropping out of school.161

Through the positioning of the child marriage and family are disarticulated from love, romance and lust as traits of individual desire. Personal choice, selfishness and individual desire are qualities of the constitutive outside, where pornography, homosexuality and pedophilia are equated as acts of destructive self-indulgence. Replacing the bond of love between individuals with the bond of reproduction places a biological duty in families. When love is detached as constitutive for a family, relationships based on love or attraction fall into the category of selfish self-indulgence. A marriage based on individual desire is therefore likely to fail because marriage and sex are not aimed for individual pleasure.162

There is something unique, however, about the type of sex that joins a man and a woman into the special union that defines marriage. […] The central and justifying point of sex is not pleasure (or even the

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159 2007:5, 2009:6
160 2010:6 Revolution
161 2010:8 Divorce: Who Really Pays?
162 2004:6
sharing of pleasure) per se, however much sexual pleasure is sought – rightly sought – as an aspect of the perfection of marital union; the point of sex, rather, is marriage itself, considered as an essentially and irreducibly (though not merely) bodily union of persons – a union effectuated and renewed by acts of sexual congress – conjugal acts.  

LGBT people do not reproduce and therefore, as quoted previously, they recruit. Altering the concept of family would hence mean the ultimate ruin of society and the new articulatory practice of same-sex marriage would redefine the nature of humanity.  

Oddly enough, for the past several decades our government has been attacking and weakening the very best program we have to address these problems. That program is the intact, nuclear family with a father, mother and children. Yet government support for the family is nearly non-existent. How government programs affect the family is not an issue. Now we have another attack, perhaps the final attack that will destroy the family as we have known it and as our Creator planned it — the push for homosexual marriage. If those pushing homosexual marriage are successful — and they will be unless the public rises up and gets involved — our social problems will only increase. A man marrying another man? A woman marrying another woman? Three men and one woman marrying? A father marrying his daughter?  

The articulation of family based on biological duty and altruism, rather than love, also leads to new social practices. As mentioned in the empirical chapter, the family politics of AFA is through the Gospel movement expanded to include orphans, embryo donation and other non-biological children, as long as they are placed with a mother and a father. “Adoption: a profound picture of the Gospel” says one writer and the structure of the family has thus changed as a result of the articulation. In 2001 the traditional family had strict limits: The traditional model, after all, is a strictly heterosexual construction. The nuclear family is built around the marriage of one man and one woman, who are sexually complementary beings. […] It is possible to argue persuasively using scientific studies that children, for example, fare much better in virtually every respect when they live with both biological parents in a loving home environment.  

The definition of the family has radically changed by 2005 to: “A family, as traditionally defined, is a group of people related by blood, marriage or adoption.” Foster families and adopted children are by 2005 equal to biological children in value. Yet the family is not detached from the concept of reproduction, but the way reproduction is conceptualized is expanded. The quote emphasizes the natural capability for reproduction within a heterosexual family and so embryo donation becomes a wonderful way to choose life.  

The move to capability of reproduction still manages to keep alternative families at bay; no matter how monogamous and loving, a same-sex couple cannot reproduce within its union,
and can thus never become a family. Likewise it remains equally immoral for a Christian single mother to adopt an orphan, who should wait until she is married.\textsuperscript{172} The increasing articulation during the last half of the decade of alternative forms of heterosexual families can be seen as a discursive mobilization against increasing demands made by the LGBT movement for adoption and other ways to create LGBT families. This highlights the discursive imperative to articulate pro-life as a civil rights movement in order to delegitimize the ACLU and any political demands based on civil rights arguments. The renegotiation of reproduction however enables new family positions not represented before. When family is detached from DNA statements such this one become intelligible made by a single mother about her Caring People group for single mothers: “I feel so at home here. We’re a family and I thank Jesus every day for sisters!”\textsuperscript{173}

6.6 Freedom as technology of power

The articulation of family is appropriated in different, and sometimes contradictory ways depending on which political issues AFA mobilizes against. The articulation of family serves two different strategic purposes and \textit{freedom} is a central concept through which power operates to create these two processes. The first operation of power pulls AFA away from society while the other incites AFA to engage in societal and political processes. Though these two processes overlap and intertwine, the first operation of power is more characteristic of the first years of the decade while the second operation of power dominates during the latter years.

The first process is one of withdrawal from society. In featured articles and columns the world is articulated in apocalyptic terms; popular culture has gotten darker, the church weaker and Christian discrimination is omnipresent. Articles under \textit{News of Interest} prominently provide survey results and news supporting evidence of moral decline: 80% of Americans do not believe in moral absolutes and now accept homosexuality, gambling, cohabitation and sexual fantasies as normal,\textsuperscript{174} teen pregnancies are rising for the first time in 15 years, women are having children with multiple fathers and religion is becoming extinct in nine countries.\textsuperscript{175} The quotes below illustrate how freedom is utilized to make political demands related to the absence of freedom. This technology of power creates an introvert politics characterized by the recurring speech of oppression when making political demands and commenting on

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\textsuperscript{172} 2006:6 A Difference Worth Embracing: Why Mother-Father Couples Are Superior to Gay Couples When it Comes to Adoption
\textsuperscript{173} 2010:5 Caring People Bring Single Moms to Christ
\textsuperscript{174} 2004:1, 2, 2005:2, 2006:1, 2009:2
\textsuperscript{175} 2005:6, 2008:9, 2009:3, 2011:6
political issues; the rights of the family are refused, the freedom to defend the family on religious grounds is denied. The government that used to be on the Christian’s side has now been occupied by villainous forces that change the nature of family, state and nation:

A certain country was going down a road to morality which led to freedom and prosperity. But groups such as People For The American Way, ACLU, National Organization for Women, Planned Parenthood and others who wanted no set standard of morals attacked the country. The country was beaten and robbed of its moral values, its foundation ripped to shreds by those who were angered by Christian morals.176

The less obvious problem for Christians is that our relationship to the media is not all that different than that of the unbelieving world. […] Harris warns that neglecting Christian standards in entertainment can cause a separation from God. “If you have been desiring growth, but feel cut off from God, examine your media habits,” he says. The reason is clear: “God wants our hearts. The world wants our hearts. You can only love one, so which one are you going to give your heart to?”177

Attacks on Christianity are not only attacks on a religious point of view, but on the very essence and soul of the Christian person; Christians must hear the full range of atrocities they face, every suggestive whisper must be called out, profanities must be counted, sexual content graphically illuminated and the toil and persecution of Christians in society pronounced. In this fashion freedom produces incentives to reveal the darkest secrets of the soul as a path to salvation. Freedom demands that individuals speak about their sinful identities and create ways to manage the darkness that flows from it. Because the more you reveal about yourself, the darker the secrets you confess, the closer you are to freedom and the closer you come to spreading the Truth in society. The flesh must confess the pleasures and lusts of the flesh, which is why more and more areas require strict rules and control for the flesh. It is a power that penetrates the individual and incites the individual to adhere to systems of governance without a governor, a technique of power that disciplines the body. Foucault writes that the most deceptive form of power is that which creates the illusion of absence of power, such as disciplinary power, where power masquerades as lifestyle or individual choice.178

I fear succumbing to sexual sin. I am so fearful in fact that I go to great lengths to guard my life. Here are a few safeguards I have put in place:
My wife has full reign over my computer. She checks my e-mail. She views my Facebook. She has access to my mobile phone text messages. One of my ministry assistants can log into my computer from Nashville and surf my hard-drive and Internet history. I don’t allow myself to be in a room alone with another woman. I don’t have “intimate” conversations with other women (even if they’re friends) about my life’s struggles, nor do I offer an ear to their struggles. In other words I keep an emotional desk between us. Sometimes I unplug my hotel TV or have the hotel cut off cable capabilities. At the least, I might set two channels on the remote – ESPN and a news channel. While traveling, I have a friend who calls me to basically say, “Jarrod, you have a wife who loves you and two precious boys. You have a beautiful family. Don’t ruin it.” I repeat the following mantra to myself when lust creeps within me, “Lust never satisfies!” When the girl appears on the billboard, or in the magazine, newspaper, or coffee shop and her clothes are just too tight or too short or too bare, I close my eyes, repeat the mantra, and either

176 2002:2 Trying to Tell the Good Guys From the Bad Guys
177 2002:5 Half a Poison Pill Won’t Kill Me
178 Foucault 1995: 195-228
turn away or walk away. Often I reflect on how I don’t want to pass any generational sexual sin on to my sons through what I do in my own life.179

Whereas the first process is preoccupied with the downfall of Christianity, the second process centers on how Christian culture is blossoming in society. This technology of power incites engagement in society and freedom here highlights how family values have made the American society the greatest nation on earth. This operation of power brings AFA out of hiding and into social interplay: “It’s time to do something – speak up. If Christians won’t speak up to protect religious and political freedom, who will?”180 Rather than the American democratic society and government being the villains, as in the case of the previous process, they are now the ultimate symbols of freedom.

And if you look at what our nation has accomplished for us and for the world, without her, the world could very well be living without electricity, without cars and without planes, just to name three things off the top of my head. And certainly without much freedom, human rights or security, thanks in large part to the military superiority that comes with being the world’s wealthiest country.181

News of Interest articles accordingly express optimism about the trajectory of society; it is a myth that Christianity is waning in the US, church attendance is up, teen pregnancies are declining as are rates of divorce and a majority of Americans pray regularly.182 Featured and review articles cover Hollywood as experiencing a spiritual awakening and Christian films top the box office. As it turns out, atheism constitutes a tiny fraction of public belief, and their influence is miniscule.183 In this second process freedom is conditioned by family values. This technology of power legitimizes AFA as a responsible, reasonable and moderate political actor promoting democracy and racial reconciliation by standing up for family values, which effectively mobilizes against Islam.

Islam has not proven itself conducive to individual rights, respect for varying opinions, free speech, freedom of religion, etc. Some American Muslims have come to respect freedom, but I don’t see it in the Middle East. I see a bunch of dictators and terrorists.184

Power here works through the articulation of freedom in another way; the focus is not to lure out the darkness within for personal salvation, but to spread the light of freedom immanent within the Christian person to society. In both cases freedom can be seen as a technique of power that governs social interaction yet conceals its operations of power. The quote below illustrates how power creates effects of common sense and masquerades as absence of power.

179 2009:3 Porn and Marriage
180 2011:9 Fired For Belief in Morality, Marriage
181 2002:9 Nation's Christian Heritage Is Evident
183 2006:11-12, 2009:4
184 2003:6 Does Worldview Matter? Consider Iraq
Our founders knew that you couldn’t have an army big enough to create an order of freedom that was imposed from the outside. Freedom required inner standards, inner principles. So, at the very core of a true republic is the ability for self-government. Without self-government there can’t be freedom.  

Foucault’s concept governmentality elaborates on his earlier work on disciplinary power and connects the mechanism of power whereby individuals voluntarily submit to systems of governance to a neoliberal political project. This technique of power organizes individual bodies as well as public and private institutions under a logic of self-government and social risks are transformed into an individual responsibility of self-care. Governmentality links the mode of governing to systems of thought informed by a political rationality.  

Freedom can in this light be understood as a mode of governmentality originating from a neoliberal political project as AFA discourse shows increasing appeals to self-governance and freedom from a federal mandate. The particular trajectory of freedom that is never present but always at a distance is also peculiar to neoliberal normativity. Thomas Lemke, covering Foucault’s governmentality concept, writes that neoliberalism as a political project is not conceptualized merely as ideological rhetoric or as a political-economic reality, but, as Lemke puts it, “above all as a political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists.” Neoliberalism can therefore become dominant as governmentality without being dominant as ideology as it effectively cloaks its operations of power as emanating from individual desire.  

Freedom moreover provides AFA discourse with a myth that attempts to mend the open wound caused by structural dislocation. Subjects of freedom voluntarily submit to revealing the dark depths of the soul, and subjects of freedom strive for a social order organized around family values in a belief that freedom can be achieved. Freedom as governmentality thus relies on neoliberalism in three ways: as a source of intelligibility for its discrimination, as a source of legitimacy for political demands and a source of political vision. Freedom as governmentality is due to its normative underpinnings a particularly alluring technique of power because the ontology of the social makes it impossible to reach freedom, yet its normative constitution fuels a conviction that it will.

6.5 Villains and victims: the politics of discrimination

The ambivalence that freedom as governmentality entails conditions a particular type of politics. In the empirical chapter it becomes clear that very few political proposals have been

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185 2011:10 Preserving the Sacred Fire of Liberty
186 Lemke 2010: 190-201
187 Lemke 2001: 203
188 Brown 2005: 37-50
189 Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000: 15
made between 2001 and 2011. Freedom as governmentality leads in one instance to mobilization against mainstream culture, rather than developing a political agenda aimed at social and political change, and produces a politics of discrimination.

What would you say to those who argue that, as the dominant religious group in the U.S., Christians are absurd to claim persecution?

It is absurd to say that a majority cannot allow itself to be discriminated against – look at South Africa [during apartheid], look at women in this country. Majorities are discriminated against all the time. And we don’t have to talk about theories or possibilities or potential here. I have evidence in the book – some 800 footnotes, and I could have had twice that many if people were able to digest an 800-page book – which demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that a systematic pattern of discrimination is going on against Christians and Christianity.190

Freedom as governmentality also produces a politics where AFA discourse demands inclusion into society by claiming that family values are the foundations for freedom; freedom incites assimilation into the public square and Christians are encouraged to become political activists fighting against discrimination in defense of freedom. Both of these processes however move AFA discourse away from tangible political proposals to the power of the Gospel, in the first instance as a necessary solution to a body tempted by sin, in the second as a solution to societal ailments. Proactive demands vanish and salvation becomes an issue of personal endurance and commitment to Scripture.

Pro-family and pro-life groups have been courageously fighting on the front lines for decades, resisting these false ideas. In Washington, D.C., in state legislatures and in communities across the nation, Christians have labored tirelessly to overturn bad laws and hinder pernicious movements such as that spawned by homosexual activists. However, such efforts can only hinder – and never stop – the inevitable triumph of the pagan hosts that storm the gates of our culture. There is only one thing that can prevail; there is only one way that the Christian culture warriors can find relief as they battle, exhausted, on the walls; there is only one weapon of war which God has placed in the hands of His church: the gospel.191

Issues of discrimination and tolerance, then, occupy center stage for AFA discourse in which nearly everything in the public arena is somehow offensive and the smallest wave of the hand is construed as an existential insult.192 One journal writer feels personally attacked as parents are misrepresented on television, another when characters in sitcoms don’t experience real life consequences for having casual sex, or for lying and deceiving.193

Such consequences are rarely, if ever, seen on TV. If television reflects reality, why don’t 46% of teenage girls on TV, after having sexual intercourse just one time, contract the human papilloma virus – just like they do in real life? Why don’t one in five television characters 12 years old and older test positive for genital herpes – just like they do in real life?194

Brown conceives of these wounded political identities as a symptom of depoliticization
brought on by a neoliberal articulation of the individual with a value neutral rationality. Because political issues, through neoliberal governmentality, are transformed into lifestyle choices and culture, the space for legitimate political contestation is narrowed. Politics therefore tend to take a stand of moral judgment and react against social developments, however without providing any substantial political proposals.\textsuperscript{195}

The politics of discrimination that AFA discourse expresses can in this light be seen as symptoms of depoliticization, as a wide range of political issues are mobilized and moralized against, yet without proposing political alternatives. Neoliberal discourse thus provides AFA with strategic tools that enable both a rhetoric of society as oppressors \textit{and} as the source of freedom at the same time. Neoliberal discourse can thereby be seen as prompting a discourse of discrimination, because demands for freedom are only intelligible in relation the un-free. The demand for freedom and rights requires a rhetoric of oppression, for how can one demand freedom and rights when one already has them? AFA discourse is in this sense caught in a discursive loop where political demands directed against society need to be framed as oppression, yet in order to gain societal legitimacy, political demands need to acquire strength from a neoliberal articulation. This limbo results in an AFA identity politicized as either suffering or key to societal salvation, both of which are unable to alter the political structure.

Freedom as governmentality thus positions wounded identities from which political demands are made that function as alibis for political action. Brown writes that demanding recognition becomes a way to restage an original trauma, which is a camouflage for action against the social order as no demands are directed at changing the system that produces the injury. Neoliberal governmentality creates depoliticization precisely because political conflicts are concealed and the only recourse for political action is the substitute for political action found in politics of discrimination.\textsuperscript{196}

\textbf{6.7 Neoliberal intervention}

Neoliberal discourse is more articulated and incorporated into AFA discourse as the years progress, and with magnitude as Obama became president in 2008. As freedom entices an articulation of family values to claim inclusion into society, Christians are articulated in new ways and self-government is emphasized. Homeschool families become entrepreneurs, taking responsibility for one’s finances and avoiding welfare become an act of good stewardship towards God contrary to the federal government that wastes away tax dollars.\textsuperscript{197} Featured

\textsuperscript{195} Brown 2001: 28ff
\textsuperscript{196} Brown 2001: 56ff, Brown 2006: 153
\textsuperscript{197} 2011:2, 3, 5, 6, 12
articles often mobilize against the corruption of the federal government that legally plunders citizens through the redistribution of wealth; freedom negates government control.

America was once nothing more than an idea. It was a vision of freedom and liberty. A place where every person was free to be who and what he wanted. Success was determined by the individual pursuing it, not a government controlling it. As long as those ideas survive, hope is still alive.\textsuperscript{198}

Financial freedom must be a good thing because it’s exactly how it will be in heaven. No worries of any kind, including financial.\textsuperscript{199}

Brown writes that rather than claiming ontological reality of economic rationality, neoliberalism involves normative claims about the rational and sovereign individual. The state gains legitimacy based on how well the market functions according to this logic, and the individual, now \textit{homo economicus}, solely bears the burdens of ‘bad choices’.\textsuperscript{200} The quotes above illustrate a normative articulation of freedom that constitutes both a desired trajectory for political action and a desired goal. The quotes also illustrate how the articulation of freedom detaches the state from responsibility for its citizens, and conceive of the state as a roadblock to individual freedom. Freedom has through this articulation produced a sovereign individual who is free to be whom and what she pleases and social problems, such as poverty, become personal failures based on bad choices: “That’s a much bigger factor today than in Biblical times, when nearly everyone was poor through no fault of their own.”\textsuperscript{201}

Neoliberal influence is further suggested by the use of scientific arguments to legitimize and reinforce AFA political demands. Appeals to human rationality and scientific sound judgment are increasing in frequency to undergird both political and religious demands. Between 2007 and 2011 AFA becomes preoccupied with neurological science to prove that biblical statements relating to the family are true. Women and men are hormonally and neurologically bonded in the brain and so the heterosexual nuclear family is superior.\textsuperscript{202} Likewise science has proven that gays can change, that no such thing as a gay gene exists and that homosexuality is a condition brought on by poor parenting, parental divorce, short cohabitation with both parents or being raised by a single mother. Science, writes AFA, has caught up with what parents have always known to be truth and common sense.\textsuperscript{203} Appeals to rationality are also made in regards to the pillar of Christian faith, the Resurrection.

\textsuperscript{198} 2010:6 Dangerous Idea
\textsuperscript{199} 2002:6 Both Life and Ministry Require Constant Funding
\textsuperscript{200} Brown 2005: 37-59
\textsuperscript{201} 2005:5 Priorities: Should Christians Be More Concerned About Social Issues and Less About Moral Issues?
\textsuperscript{202} 2010:10, 2011:12
\textsuperscript{203} 2006:6, 11-12, 2007:1, 11-12, 2010:4
SIDE BAR 1: EVIDENCE
Execution – Virtually every scholar in the world admits Jesus was put to death on the cross under Pontius Pilate.
Early accounts – The reports of Jesus’s resurrection aren’t legends that grew up in the many decades of His life, but are included in the Gospels and are summarized in the creed reported by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:3ff.
Eyewitnesses – More than 515 individuals of all sorts encountered the resurrected Jesus.
Empty tomb – No explanation other than the resurrection makes historical sense.
Emergence of the church – How can we explain the sudden emergence of the church in the very city where the Resurrection took place just a few weeks earlier if the apostles were lying about what happened? 204

Neurological science has also corroborated religion. The human is hardwired for religion so to shy away from religion in public and make religion a private personal matter is therefore both irrational and biologically dishonest. Political demands such as these can be seen as interpellating to a human rationality, rather than to a religious conviction, for which scientific arguments would be redundant.

Morality was also one of the things emphasized by the commission’s report. In fact, Hardwired stressed even more than morality – it stressed religion. The commission said a significant body of scientific evidence is beginning to demonstrate that "we are hard-wired for meaning, born with a built-in capacity and drive to search for purpose and reflect on life’s ultimate ends." The report stated that the human brain appears to have a built-in capacity for religious experience. Using brain imaging, for example, scientists have discovered that such spiritual activities as prayer or meditation actually increase the activity in specific areas of the brain. 205

Political demands framed in this way indicate to me the presence of a hegemonic articulation that fuels legitimacy into AFA discourse and informs how successful political demands are made. The reliance on appeals to human rationality and hard facts indicates that neoliberal discourse can be understood as such a hegemonic articulation that has managed to articulate identities and elements into a coherent system that governs a large political field. Religious truth is here sidestepped in favor of rational truth, which can be understood as a consequence of the fiction of the sovereign individual. Brown writes that within neoliberal discourse culture and religion are constructed as external to the subject, something that the individual can choose or discard. Religion therefore becomes an increasingly private matter separate from the rational and sovereign individual, 206 and appeals to human rationality can in this light not be avoided because of the moral-intellectual leadership that hegemony establishes. 207

As mentioned above, the articulation of freedom creates effects of reclusion and separatism. These effects can also be connected to the hegemony of neoliberalism, yet it a diametrically different way. Through AFA discourse the floating signifiers of freedom, rights

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204 2010:7, 2007:4 If Christ Had Not Risen
205 2005:1 Hardwired For Religion: Christianity Has the Truth About Community, But Are We Living Up To the Biblical Model In the Lives of Our Children?
206 Brown 2006: 153
207 Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 134-145; Howarth 2007: 125f
and democracy are aimed at being rearticulated within family values, which means they become disarticulated from neoliberal values of individual freedom and rights. AFA discourse can in this sense be understood as seeking an intervention in the way neoliberalism has articulated freedom and rights, in the form of individual choice. The effects of separatism and reclusion can thus be seen as power operating through an articulation of freedom that challenges a neoliberal hegemonic articulation. Laclau and Mouffe write that hegemonic practices require a presence of multiple antagonistic forces and floating signifiers that can be articulated by the multiple antagonistic forces as moments within their respective political projects. AFA discourse is thus one antagonistic force that tries to claim the floating signifiers as its own.

The triumph of hyper-individualism
Our country has always celebrated the individual and the freedom to pursue a personal vision of the good life. But that individualism always fit into the wider context of traditional morality. The term hyper-individualism refers to an increasingly common belief that the needs and desires of the individual trump all other community concerns and any sense of shared values. When the views of the community infringe on the view of the individual, the community must yield. [...] The triumph of self-expression
[...] However, there are those who seem to want self-expression to be given an almost unlimited right-of-way in our culture. As an outgrowth of the first point – the triumph of individualism – when the individual wants to express himself, the community must endure it. [...] The triumph of postmodernism
[...] The soil in which hyper-individualism and unlimited self-expression grow is postmodernism. While not an easy term to define, postmodernism is essentially a denial of absolute truth. Everything “real” becomes the construct of the individual, and no one is allowed to deny the validity of that person’s experience.

The enemy is, as elaborated above, articulated as postmodernism, the ultimate representative of a callous and calculating individual. However, I understand the mobilization against postmodernism as a redirected mobilization against a neoliberal hegemonic articulation of the individual. AFA discourse mobilizes against assumptions of sovereign individuals’ freedom outside a communal context and an inhibited freedom of choice. Because AFA discourse acquires strength and legitimacy from neoliberal discourse it cannot however undermine neoliberalism without undermining the source of legitimacy and intelligibility that neoliberalism bestows upon its political demands. Neoliberalism is further not directly available as an enemy because, as Brown writes, neoliberal governmentality conceals its operations of power through the two fictions of the sovereign subject and of freedom as choice. Since choice is the instrument with which this fiction is reproduced, neoliberal governmentality can govern being neither visible nor responsible.

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208 Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000: 15
209 2010:6 Revolution
210 Brown 2005: 197, 2001: 3-14
Another indication that neoliberal discourse, rather than postmodernism, is a target is the hostility towards the concept of *tolerance*. “From a Christian perspective, it’s not that tolerance is bad – it’s just that it no longer means what it used to mean.”

Intolerance has been cloaked as tolerance.

There is much said in today’s society about tolerance. It is extolled as a virtue of the highest order. One thing I have learned in the last 25 years is that those who preach tolerance the loudest are often the most intolerant people you will meet. Take, for instance, the radical homosexual rights movement. All they want, they say, is tolerance. Yet that is precisely what they refuse to practice. They disrupt worship services. They have name-calling and hate-filled speech down to an art.

Brown theorizes tolerance as a mode of governance within the neoliberal project that aims to manage political antagonisms and keep them in check, rather than letting political conflict manifest itself. But because conflict is internal to the concept it is therefore a poor tool to prevent antagonisms. “Designated objects of tolerance are invariably marked as undesirable and marginal, as liminal civil subjects or even liminal humans; and those called upon to exercise tolerance are asked to repress or override their hostility or repugnance in the name of civility, peace, or progress.”

In this light AFA discourse can be understood as a force that challenges the depoliticizing effects of neoliberal discourse, as the tool by which antagonisms are concealed – tolerance – is opposed. Many articles express injustice that certain issues are not available for political contestation, and the ‘new tolerance’ is blamed for this injustice. Discursive expressions such as these can be seen as questioning the illusion that tolerance can prevent antagonisms from manifesting and highlight how social antagonism is made illegitimate and prevented from entering the political. In the March issue 2004 Tim Wildmon writes that the world will always be defined by culture and morals; nobody can be free of culture. Since morals and culture are determinant of social and political conduct, somebody’s morals are always going to be translated into politics and lawmaking. As the headline suggests, “[s]omeone’s morality will become law: why not the Bible’s”?

Ever heard someone say, “You can’t legislate morality”? Most of us have. But if you think about it, that is really one of those statements that – and Bill Clinton would love this – is both true and false at the same time. It depends on what one means when one uses the statement. If you mean you can’t change a man’s heart with the law alone, I would agree. But, if you mean you can’t impose with the law someone’s or some group’s definition of right and wrong behavior, then I would disagree.

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211 2003:1 The Gospel of Intolerance
212 2002:7
213 Brown 2006: 28
214 2011:3 The Highest Virtue – Tolerance or Truth?
215 2004:2 Someone’s Morality Will Become Law: Why Not the Bible’s?
AFA discourse can in this light be seen as both mobilizing against the neoliberal fiction of an a priori subject autonomous from a cultural context who can freely choose culture to her heart’s desire, and a mode of governance that render political antagonisms illegitimate. But, as discussed above, as neoliberal discourse provides discursive strength and legitimacy to AFA discourse, it also prohibits an articulation of a political project than can challenge its hegemony and politics of discrimination is an inevitable effect.

Tolerance not only produces, organizes, and marks subjects, it also delineates a purview and the availability of alternatives to tolerance. We do not tolerate what is outside of our reach, what is irrelevant to us, or what we cannot do anything about. And tolerance is a selected alternative to actions or reactions of a different sort: rejection, quarantine, prohibition, repression, exile, or extermination. If these are not viable, expedient, or morally acceptable responses, if we have little or no choice about living with peoples or practices to which we object, then we cannot properly speak of tolerating what threatens or repels us; rather we are subjected, oppressed, or undone by their presence.

Freedom as governmentality can therefore be understood as creating a dependency of sorts on the very concepts by which control is established; freedom provides concepts of resistance, yet these concepts are internal to a neoliberal articulation, meaning that AFA discourse ends up validating a neoliberal hegemonic articulation through resisting it. In this sense, neoliberalism becomes a condition of possibility for AFA discourse.

7. Summary and conclusions

My three research questions have figured under quite a few headings in the previous chapter and I now end by lucidly summarizing my findings according to the questions posed to the material in the beginning.

7.1 What issues and demands does AFA stress as political between 2001 and 2011?

AFA discourse expresses a universe of issues and demands relating to different social, cultural, financial and political phenomena. Pornography, abortion, abstinence, religion, Islam, homosexuality, marriage and divorce are among the issues that AFA places on its political agenda, and as I have shown they are all interconnected under the destructive banner of postmodernism. AFA discourse institutes deep moats of political frontiers between its own political narrative and those that it disputes who are seen as oppressors of Christians and Christianity. An existential distress is conveyed through discursive mobilization against moral relativism and hyper-individualism that threatens to undo Christians and Christianity; when there is neither right nor wrong and everyone can choose their own morals the Christian pillars of truth, freedom and democracy will be annihilated, as will society. Social upheaval and disintegration loom in same-sex marriage, divorce, integration of Islam into society,

216 Brown 2006: 29
liberal takeover of schools, the entertainment industry and progressive politics related to poverty and social justice, that are all opposed within a frame of discrimination. Against the humanists, liberals, homosexuals, materialists, secularists, Muslims and progressives the power of the Gospel is the only hope. The Gospel movement is envisioned as a civil rights movement, as the patron for freedom and democracy and the only safeguard against moral and societal ruin.

7.2 How are the issues and demands articulated and legitimized?
The issues and demands are made intelligible and legitimate through the double process of differentiation. AFA discourse is internally constituted by the differential relationships between elements established through articulatory practices. I have shown above how an articulation of family values is established through the privileged signs of freedom, rights and democracy that organize elements within AFA discourse. When the family becomes the smallest unit in society demands based on individual rights become acts of selfishness, such as LGBT human rights, and the right to an abortion becomes equal to murder. By articulating the civil rights movement as a moment inside AFA discourse, AFA identity is articulated both as oppressed and struggling for justice as well as protector and promoter of democracy. This articulatory practice blocks any alternative demands in the name of civil rights by other movements.

AFA discourse is also constituted through differentiating the discursive inside from a constitutive outside that embodies the antithesis to AFA discourse, elements that cannot be articulated as moments inside. Elaborate chains of equivalence are established between such disparate positions as racist, homosexual, murderer, materialist, humanist, pedophile, Religious Left, secularist and Muslim, which stabilizes the flow of meaning within AFA discourse yet instigates numerous points of antagonism. There are therefore very few positions that can make legitimate political demands within the internal logic of AFA discourse.

New articulatory practices can be noted towards the end of the decade when the ontology of the family has changed from blood relations only to include adoption, embryo donation and foster parents through the Gospel movement. Families other than heterosexual constellations are precluded from the articulation through disarticulating love and desire from the family’s purpose and instead highlighting the biological capability and social duty of heterosexuality. Alternative family constellations, cohabitation between heterosexual couples and divorce become detrimental effects of selfishness and hyper-individualism.
7.3 In what kind of politically strategic situation is AFA discourse located?

In my empirical material I have traced social antagonisms in AFA discourse to a dislocation of the social. A former political project with established regimes of truth about the organization of the social has been challenged and renegotiated. The revolutionary demands based on individual human rights posed by the civil rights movements also made these individuals available for articulation as societal threats within other discourses, which has since the 1970’s been made evident through AFA discourse, and other NCR organizations, where individual rights for certain groups of people are persistently opposed. By utilizing time and history writing as discursive strategies AFA discourse aims to gain stability and intelligibility in a political terrain where multiple forces are competing to articulate floating signifiers within their respective political projects. I have shown that freedom, democracy and rights can be understood as floating signifiers, which is why AFA discourse needs to claim these as moments inside the own narrative.

I have identified freedom as a mode of governmentality in AFA discourse that provides two trajectories of political action and a myth about the good society. Freedom as governmentality appropriates the articulation of family values to make political demands for recognition of Christian discrimination and makes individual subjects such as LGBT people, Muslims and abortionists available as threats to the legitimate political narrative articulated through family values. It also utilizes family values to articulate Christianity as a precondition for freedom and democracy, which establishes AFA identity as compassionate, respectable, altruistic and noble against the increasingly dire threats of the radical and dogmatic LGBT movement, Muslims and New Atheists. Yet regardless of the political direction that freedom as governmentality takes AFA discourse, whether separatism or assimilation, it is characterized by an unwavering reliance on the Gospel. This creates effects of political moralism and depoliticization as tangible political demands for change are surpassed.

I have shown how freedom as governmentality is informed and conditioned by a neoliberal articulation in the political on which AFA discourse relies for intelligibility and legitimacy. This is expressed by promoting self-care, self-government and freedom from a federal government. Freedom as governmentality creates a moralism in politics, as more issues are removed from the political where social antagonisms are expressed, to the depoliticized field of lifestyle and choice. AFA discourse can be seen as a force that challenges the neoliberal paradigm that poses as politically neutral while it is not. The reliance on religious rhetoric and hostility towards individualism indicates this aspect. The radicalization and hostility of AFA can in this light be understood as an expression of being both insider as well as an outsider of
society; living in a system that it needs to embrace in order to make political demands, yet is cast to the margin by.

AFA discourse can also be seen as a force that is increasingly co-opted by a neoliberal hegemonic discourse, as political statements are gradually aligned with a neoliberal logic that justifies both politics and a religious conviction. This suggests that AFA discourse is incredibly flexible and can accommodate social changes and still remain sufficiently intact. It also suggests that neoliberal discourse has a cunning potential to transform political opponents and discursive challenges into moments inside neoliberal logic in order to neutralize competition and consolidate hegemony.

A process of neoliberal consolidation is suggested by the findings of Peterson and Wilcox & Robinson, who have noted how the NCR is moving away from religious rhetoric and frame political demands in neoliberal lingo. What is interesting in AFA discourse, however, is the unwavering reliance on a biblical and religious framework when making political demands. AFA discourse appropriates neoliberal concepts, but also denies the sovereignty of the individual and mobilizes against the neoliberal eyestone of freedom in rational choice. This indicates to me that AFA discourse can be understood as a resistance to forces gaining discursive privilege to define a new social order. This is however also a resistance that is necessary for a new hegemony to be established, and in this respect AFA discourse is somewhat in service of neoliberal consolidation.

7.4 Epilogue is prologue
Emerging from the AFA Journal are hence particular operations of power and antagonisms between societal narratives of how the social should be organized. The discursive approach is often blamed for relativism and subjective ratiocination, but as I have hoped to show during the course of conducting this study there is nothing relativistic about the antagonistic relationships that emerge in my material that are outcomes of a particular strategy of power. As Laclau and Mouffe put it: “Relativism is, actually, a false problem. A ‘relativist’ position would be one which affirmed that it is the same to think ‘A is B’ or ‘A is not B’”217, as if to suggest that every position on a topic is equally valid and equally true. The multiverse of philosophical and political perspectives about indicate that this is clearly not so. Another analytical approach might certainly arrive at other conclusions, as the analytical premises for research are different, but the centrality of power in the discursive approach precludes relativistic conclusions; within a particular political terrain meaning is established according to particular systems and rules of formation.

217 Laclau & Mouffe 1987: 85
The relativist argument further assumes that objects have an essence that is definitive of the object; the object *is being* separate from other *beings.*218 This is not the case with the antagonistic relationships emerging in my material; it is not a simple difference between apples and pears where the entities are different but on equal footing. The points of antagonism are those where AFA is confronted with anti-AFA, the very antithesis of AFA discourse making it impossible for the two to coexist harmoniously.219 This is not to say that change it impossible, it is not. In my study I have shown how the structure of the family has changed through articulatory practices, which has both enabled new constellations and expanded the possibilities for who can *be* a family. Yet the ontology of the family is entirely determined by force relations within discourse that establish the family as knowable and intelligible; a certain group of people has *existence* outside discourse but no *meaning* in terms of *family.* “It would be absurd, of course, to ask oneself today if ‘being a projectile’ is part of the true being of the stone (although the question would have some legitimacy within Platonic metaphysics); the answer, obviously, would be: it depends on the way we use stones.”220 The relativist argument is therefore pointless since the constituting nature of power is disregarded.

I therefore hope to have shown that operations of power are a crucial aspect when studying and understanding the NCR, as my findings are somewhat different from previous studies’. AFA discourse never abandons a religious foundation regardless of neoliberal discourse and AFA discourse has neither ‘cleaned up’ its religious nor condemning rhetoric, and a question for future consideration is, should they? Would society benefit from a totality of tolerance? Is a totality of tolerance possible? Or is tolerance a myth utilized by competing political forces dealing with social dislocation in another way?

Steven Shiffrin believes in the political promise of the Religious Left as a counterforce to the Religious Right; the Secular Left will not be able to convert the devout of the Religious Right to secularism, only have counterproductive effects of making the Religious Right more radicalized and hostile. Findings from my study suggest that in the American context this might be the case. In my material increasing forces of secularism mobilized AFA discourse in a direction of increasing depoliticization and moralism, as secularism, Islamification and Hitler were equated and more points of antagonism were instituted. Maybe a radical democratic movement in this context is one that does not disregard religion, but one that renegotiates and expands the concept of what religion can be and what it can mean?

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218 Laclau & Mouffe 1987: 84-86
219 Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 122-127
220 Laclau & Mouffe 1987: 85
Chantal Mouffe and Wendy Brown conclude that political extremism is an inevitable effect if social antagonisms cannot find legitimate channels for expression. Social antagonisms cannot simply be wished away, as liberal political theorists such as Rawls and Habermas have aimed to do by politicizing rationality, consensus and neutrality as mechanisms for universal liberty and justice. In the words of Mouffe, pretending the irrelevance of power does not entail its eradication, only perplexity of its manifestations as society, and theory, are left incapacitated to deal with the effects. This suggests that in order to successfully counter the democratic threat posed by groups such as AFA, a political project that can counter processes of depoliticization is necessary, for as long as the political battle is fought between beings whose existence invalidates and offends the other, one will have to go. The promise of progress as a political endeavor might in this sense condition political polarization, as progress is envisioned as a path towards the good society, yet articulated in diametrically different ways within competing forces such as the NCR, the civil rights movements and neoliberalism.

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221 Rawls 1999, Habermas 1990
222 Mouffe 1987, Mouffe 1994, Mouffe 2008: 9-14, 21-28
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