Manufacturing Dichotomy
Dissecting Modern Antifeminism in Sweden

David Svanberg
Supervisor: Ann Towns
Examiner: Fredrik Sjögren
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International Program for Politics and Economics
Department of Economics and Informatics
University West
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the presence and form of contemporary antifeminism in Sweden. By adopting a single case study design coupled with qualitative approach to textual analysis antifeminism in both traditional print media and new media, as well as with the help of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, this thesis asks 1) what common themes are present in the objections against feminism in the current antifeminist discourse in established media venues? Additionally, this thesis also asks 2) is the current antifeminist advocate composition the same as before? The analysis indicates that there are three common themes in current antifeminist discourse, namely that it is conceived as an extremist, hegemonic and collectivistic ideology. Regarding antifeminist advocate composition, the results indicate that it has indeed changed since the last antifeminist surge in the mid-80s.

Key words: discourse, antifeminism, discourse theory, discourse analysis, antifeminist advocates
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Antifeminism is an old notion that has been present in Western society for long time even though the term did not rise to prominence until its antagonism, feminism, had been formulated. Support for antifeminism can be found among many classical political theorists and philosophers such as Aristotle and Rousseau, most of who claimed that there is a fundamental difference between men and women. This notion has been an apparent one in antifeminist discourse in the past where it was employed successfully as a rationale whereby women’s exclusion from the public sphere was regarded as something natural because of women’s ineptitude for such things. Antifeminist discourse was at that time, to use a term from Laclau & Mouffe (1985), a hegemonic discourse so omnipresent that it effectively limited the debate on women’s inclusion in the public sphere. However, while the feminist movement have successfully rectified a number of injustices since it emergence and thus reducing the power of the antifeminist discourse, the subordination of women is still present in society (e.g., Gemzöe 2002, Pateman 1989, Blais & Dupuis-Déri 2011), which is an indicator that antifeminism is not to be disregarded.

Surprisingly considering the impact feminism has had on society, antifeminism has not been examined by academics with the same vigour (Blais & Dupuis-Déri 2011). What the literature that does exist on antifeminism demonstrates is that it is a dynamic and heterogeneous current consisting of a varied advocate composition that is subjected to changes in discourse (e.g., Bacchi, 1982, Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2011, Burris, 1983, Hall &Rodriguez, 2003) as evidenced by the explicit antifeminist surges caused by the culmination of organized feminist demands. The literature refers to these surges as “waves” for the sake of conceptual symmetry with feminism of which three have been identified. The first wave was ill equipped to deal with the first wave feminist demands of political and property rights as it was the first time the hegemonic antifeminist discourse was challenged en masse. The most vocal advocates consisting of upper class men and the societal elite was therefore unsuccessful in maintaining the hegemonic power of the antifeminist discourse by objecting to their demands citing women’s ineptitude for the public sphere.
The second wave of antifeminism reveals the dynamic of the antifeminist discourse as it was better prepared to combat the feminist demands of sexual and reproductive autonomy by expanding the discourse to involve not only general objections regarding the nature of women but also specific arguments against the reforms proposed by feminists. Through the discourse expansion there was also a perceived expansion of advocate composition, meaning that antifeminism was not only confined to upper class men but also included people of lower socioeconomic status.

The current state of antifeminism is however largely unknown by scholars, despite that we are presently witnessing the third wave of feminism. There are however journalistic accounts of the current state of antifeminism that convey yet again the adaptive capabilities of the antifeminist discourse and yet another expansion of advocate composition. However, the lack of stringent application of theory and methodology among journalists makes one question the validity of their accounts, which is also true for the previous scholarship on antifeminism since the vast bulk of it is limited to America. This is problematic and thus interesting for political scientist not only because of the relatively small amount of research on the topic but also because the power that discourses holds. While not being hegemonic as it once was, antifeminist discourse still has the potential to limit the public debate and effectively silencing its opponent which constitutes a potential for a democratic deficit. The aim of this thesis then is to examine the current state of antifeminism in Sweden by asking what common themes are present in the objections against feminism in antifeminist discourse, and whether or not its advocate composition is constituted by the same categories as has been suggested in previous literature on antifeminism.

Using Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory and its constitutive concepts such as nodal point and element, this thesis aims to analyse antifeminism discourse in a variety of media outlets. The media forums that will serve as venues of discourse are Svenska Dagbladet, Expressen, Göteborgsposten, Aftonbladet Sydsvenskan, and Dagens Nyheter. The internet debate forum Newsmill has also been included to provide material to be analysed so as to not rely solely on traditional media. The articles provided by these media outlets will serve as the basis for the discourse analysis of antifeminism.
This thesis also asks whether or not the antifeminist advocate composition is constituted by the same categories as has been suggested in previous literature. This entails a different theoretical approach than discourse theory and thus “advocate positions” and “professional archetypes” are introduced. Once again, the articles provided by the aforementioned media outlets will serve as the basis of this analytical component.
Literature Review

This section serves as an introduction to the academic writings on antifeminism in which it is demonstrated what is known about the phenomenon and what problems persists in the scholarship. The section ends with a brief statement of the shortcomings of the previous research as well as the research questions to be answered by this thesis.

The Study of Antifeminism

As many scholars have noted (e.g., Gemzöe, 2002, Strong-Boag, 1996, Pateman, 1989), misogyny has rarely, if ever, been absent from Western society, but when organized feminist demands for political rights, employment opportunities, and an end to violence against women etc. has manifested, it has provoked explicit anti-feminist crusades around the world. However, whereas the study of feminism has generated much scholastic attention in a variety of different fields, its aforementioned ideological counterpart, antifeminism, has not been examined with such vigour by academics and consequently remains a poorly understood phenomenon despite being global in scope (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2011).

The existing literature on antifeminism agrees that it traverses different ideologies and that it is a dynamic and heterogeneous current that is subjected to changes in discourse (e.g., Bacchi, 1982, Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2011, Burris, 1983, Hall &Rodriguez, 2003). Some researchers have therefore suggested that one should refer to “waves” of antifeminism (Bacchi, 1982, Strong-Boag, 1996). This is not only for the sake of conceptual symmetry with feminism, for which the wave metaphor has become customary to use to describe its distinct trends, but more importantly because of the ebbs and flows of antifeminism and the shifts in argumentation and advocate composition that have occurred. Therefore, the literature on antifeminism can be divided into three segments, each examining one of the three waves of antifeminism that coincided with the already identified waves of feminism.

The literature that explicitly deals with and scrutinizes the first wave of antifeminism is scarce. Nevertheless, the academic inquires of the first wave antifeminism states that it originates from the late 19th century as a countermovement to the first wave of feminism to
which it coincided with, which was primarily focused on gaining women suffrage, political rights and property rights (Strong-Boag, 1996, Saltzman & Dworkin, 1987). The first wave antifeminism was in ideological terms generally posited on the existence of a higher order, be it the will of god or human nature (Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2011). As many scholars have noted (e.g., Pateman, 1989, Gemzöe, 2013) the arguments used by its proponents are almost identical to the sentiments expressed in the classical treatises of social contract theorists such as Rousseau, who began like many other Enlightenment thinkers by endorsing sex equality but upon reflection changed his mind and has since become a wellspring of antifeminist thought: “Natural freedom and equality were the birthright of one sex. Only men are born free and equal (...) sex difference [is constructed] as a political difference between man’s natural freedom and women’s natural subjection” (Pateman, Caroline, 1989, p.38). The first wave antifeminists, of whom upper class men were the most vocal supporters, thus generally based their arguments on claims that women, by virtue of their nature and biology, merited their domestic and subordinate place in the order of things (Strong-Boag, 1996). This conception of antifeminist composition is consistent with other academic research on the topic, for instance Saltzman & Dworkin (1987). They refer to the aforementioned antifeminist advocates as being part of the “capital interest group” which is characterized as being composed of the male elite who are in a position to capitalize on the societal structures that subordinated women. The rationale for the antifeminist sentiments of this group is founded in a concern that their positions as elite might be threatened if women were to achieve the same status as men.

As with the first wave, the second wave of feminism prompted yet another surge of antifeminism (Klatch, 2001), a dynamic that is common in terms of countermovements (Saltzman & Dworkin, 1987). Relative to the first wave, the second wave of antifeminism has attracted somewhat more academic attention (Burris, 1983, Himmelstein, 1986, Lo, 1982, Saltzman & Dworkin, 1987). Most of this scholarship examines the culmination of the second wave feminism which broadened the scope of the feminist debate to include such issues as reproductive and sexual autonomy, and the failed ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Research on the second wave of antifeminism states that while it remains to be closely associated with religion and conservatism, antifeminist arguments developed from the general objections put forth by the first wave antifeminist to more specific arguments against for
instance abortion rights (Burris, 1983, Himmelstein, 1986). Furthermore, a perceived expansion in the social basis of antifeminism has also been observed by academics as people of lower socioeconomic status became more involved (e.g., Lo, 1982). This is consistent with the second category of antifeminist advocate composition proposed by Saltzman & Dworkin (1987) who describe this composition of advocates, unlike the “capital interest group”, as being from the same social class as the women of the corresponding feminist movement. This entails that antifeminists were also perceived of being of medium socioeconomic status. The antifeminist sentiments of this group’s advocates is based on concerns that if the demands of the feminist movement are realized, their economic situation might be threatened because of, for instance, affirmative action initiatives that would increase competition on the labour market. However, a direct correlation between lower socioeconomic status and antifeminist sentiments has not been determined (e.g., Burris, 1983, Himmelstein, 1986).

The current state of antifeminism is however largely unexplored by scholars. This may be related to the fact that the third wave feminism encompasses a large number of topics, rendering identification and examination of its ideological counterpart problematic. Emerging in the 1990s partly as a reaction to the perceived shortcomings of the second wave, third wave feminism (the term post-feminism is often used interchangeably) emphasizes the need for contextualization contrary to the second wave which have since then been described as being as “triangulated in essentialism and universalism” (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2007). However, while there is little if any academic scholarship on the third wave of antifeminism (and none on Sweden) there is burgeoning journalistic writing on the topic of third wave antifeminism that elucidates its current state in Sweden (e.g., Hallhagen, 2013; Rosengren Falk, 2013; Bromseth, 2013).

Synthesising the journalistic medial accounts of a third wave antifeminism in Sweden, it becomes apparent that it follows a logical trajectory from the second wave in that the arguments used by its proponents to discredit feminism are in general context-specific, such as claims that gender studies are ideologically biased and therefore not scientific. However, there are also those that generally object to feminist notions by stating that feminism does not promote gender equality but rather the interests of the “feminist elite”. In terms of advocate
composition, yet another perceived demographic expansion of support for antifeminism has been observed, as more intellectuals appear to once again be subscribing to antifeminism.

What I have demonstrated in this literature review of antifeminism is that it is a vibrant, heterogeneous ideology that is responsive to discourse changes. Despite this, however, this has not warranted much academic examination, and so antifeminism and its dynamic remains enigmatic. Few accounts of who today’s antifeminists are and what arguments they use are available, and those that exist are largely journalistic in nature. More importantly, the vast bulk of the literature originates from North America (e.g., Bacchi, 1982, Blais & Dupuis-Déri, 2011, Burris, 1983, Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2007, Hall & Rodriguez, 2003 Himmelstein, 1986, Klatch, 2001 Lo, 1982, Pateman, 1989, Strong-Boag, 1996) which severely damages the potential for understanding other settings. Similarly, the journalistic accounts of antifeminism in Sweden that exist are plagued like all journalism with a severe lack of both theory and stringent application of methodology which means that those accounts fail to be relevant in an academic sense. The aim of this thesis is to provide additional research on the poorly understood phenomenon of antifeminism by investigating the current state of antifeminism in Sweden. This will be achieved through systematic review of articles of an appropriate medial forum in which antifeminist sentiments are distinguishable so as to provide a contemporary account of the dynamic movement that is antifeminism as well as a new perspective to the Americentric literature on antifeminism.
Theoretical Approach

In this section I will discuss and define the theoretical concepts necessary for my examination of antifeminism which will culminate in the presentation of an analytical framework. I will also briefly present my ontological stance prior to the aforementioned review.

Ontological Considerations

This thesis is about antifeminism, which in its most basic form refers to an opposition of feminist notions as evidenced by its negative prefix. The nature of a societal oppositional force is that it seeks to influence other “conformist” actors through a variety of different channels, all of which rely heavily on language to convey their opinion. To that end, many political scientists have stated (e.g. Thompson, 1987) that an inquiry such as mine dictates that one must take into consideration language and conduits thereof because they serve as intermediaries between different social actors as well as the principal medium in which ideas are transmitted and produced in the social world. Given the importance of language and mediums of exchange (e.g., the media) for the understanding of meaning, as language greatly influences the values of social actors, this thesis will employ constructivism as its ontological position.

Although there are many different form of constructivism, the basic argument of this ontological position is that social phenomena and their meaning are created and recreated by social actors, implying not only that such phenomena and categories are produced through social interaction but also that they are revised continuously. Thus, the theoretical assumptions of constructivism are that social actors have a symbiotic relationship with one another, as they influence each other through communication. Studying social meaning and ideological movements are centrals concerns in this approach, making constructivism an appropriate ontology for an inquiry such as mine (Marsh & Stoker, 2010).
Defining Antifeminism

As briefly mentioned above, antifeminism is in its most basic form an opposition of feminist ideas as is evidenced by its prefix. On the topic of antagonism and how it articulates feminism, Laclau and Mouffe (1985:168) state that

“Feminism (…) exists in multiple forms, which depend upon the manner in which the antagonism is discursively constituted. Thus we have radical feminism which attacks men as such; a feminism of difference which seeks to revalorize “femininity”; and a Marxist feminism for which the fundamental enemy is capitalism, considered as linked indissolubly to patriarchy. There are therefore a plurality of discursive forms of constructing an antagonism on the basis of the different modes of women’s subordination.”

An antagonism can therefore only be discerned algebraically by defining what it is opposite of. Thus, to make sense of the term one must first define feminism as the meaning of antifeminism is derived from the meaning of feminism.

As Gemzöe (2002) notes, this is a problematic task as there is a plurality of approaches to feminism. In an attempt to synthesize the distinct intellectual traditions of feminism so as to arrive at an acceptable definition for the heterogeneous school of thought, she presents what she refers to as “the dictionary definition” of feminism consisting of two claims: Feminism is a school of thought that claims 1) that women are in subordinate position to men and 2) that this relationship should be altered. Being opposite to feminism, antifeminism can thus be defined as a movement that claims that women are not in a subordinate position to men. The second claim made by feminism is thus irrelevant for antifeminism as it pertains to correcting an imbalance that in their view does not exist.
Laclau and Mouffe’s Discourse Theory

As one could imagine from the brief discussion above, discourse is a central concept of constructivism. Stemming from such a varied ontology and being employed by a multitude of scholars in both a theoretical and methodological manner, there are many different definitions of discourse (Bergström & Boréus, 2012:103). Illustrating the multifaceted manner in which discourse operates, Wetherell & Porter (1992) provides one with an appropriate analogy

“The study of discourse can […] become something very like the geology of plate tectonics–a patchwork of plates/discourses are understood to be grinding violently together, causing earthquakes and volcanoes, or sometimes sliding silently one underneath the other. (Wetherell and Potter 1992:90)”

Discourse is thus a powerful, if somewhat abstract, force that operates through language which is central in all approaches of discourse analysis. Discourse can thus be defined as a specific way of communicating about the world or an aspect thereof (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999:12), emphasizing that our understanding of the world is conditioned on language (Bergström & Boréus, 2012).

Navigating the veritable swamp that is discourse theory, the need for repurposing various approaches of discourse analysis for my study becomes apparent. This is in no way frowned upon by discourse analysts; rather, it is encouraged. As Winther Jørgensen & Philips note“(…) it is possible to create one’s own package by combining elements from different discourse analytical perspectives and, if appropriate, non-discourse analytical perspectives. Such multiperspectival work is not only permissible but positively valued in most forms of discourse analysis” (1999: 4; italics in original).

I will use Laclau and Mouffe’s approach to discourse analysis (often simply referred to as discourse theory) as my foundation for this study as it can be repurposed with relative ease (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999:45). Furthermore, unlike traditional Foucauldian discourse analysis which is commonly employed when processing extensive and intertemporal discourse material, discourse theory is universally applicable to many social phenomena regardless of scope which is preferable in this case (Börjesson & Palmblad, 2007). Providing one with a general framework for discourse analysis, discourse theory can
be applied successfully in a multitude of mediums of exchange by identifying the constitutive parts of a discourse through the introduction of a number of theoretical concepts. The most fundamental of these will be outline below which will assist me in analysing relevant texts.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, every discourse consists of *positions*, or *signs*, that are interlinked and are only meaningful in relation to each other. Therefore, all signs are also *moments*, or *differential positions*; their meaning being fixed through the difference to one another (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999). In their original work, Laclau and Mouffe refer to these concepts in the following way:

“We will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105; italics in original)

Simply put, signs/moments are the foundation of a discourse which, in textual form, can be used synonymously with words. But whereas all signs are words, not all words can simply be described as signs as there are words that have an elevated position within a discourse, which will be discussed further below.

In the excerpt above, Laclau & Mouffe identify two other important theoretical concepts, *articulation* and *element*, which will be elaborated on further so as to make them more apparent. Elements are signs which are open for interpretation in a discourse, whose meaning have not yet been fixed which could entail that they might have multiple meanings (i.e. they are polysemic). Elements are thus different from moments, as the meaning of a moment is fixed and not open for debate. An example of a possible element in feminist discourse could be the meaning of feminism itself (see “Defining Antifeminism”) as it might be ascribed with different meanings by different interpreters. It is only through articulation an element becomes fixed, i.e. it is transformed from an element to a moment. Thus articulation refers to a practice which aims to position elements in relation to moments so as to make the discourse coherent and therefore more accessible and authoritative. One articulatory practice in feminist
discourse would be to define an element such as feminism (again, see “Defining Antifeminism”).

However, there are signs that are in a privileged position relative to the other signs outlined above because they influence the meaning of other signs in a greater way by being the “benchmark” after which they are ordered. These privileged signs are called nodal points and they are the essence of a discourse. For instance, a nodal point in feminist discourse could be “gender”, and all other moments would acquire their meaning from that nodal point (e.g., equality, hierarchy etc.). Another example of a nodal point from political science could be “democracy”, or “the people” in national identity discourse.

If one agrees that “gender” is a nodal point in feminist discourse, this is only because that sign has been made comprehensible by being in relation to moments. “Gender” as a singular sign has no intrinsic meaning until it is has been inserted in a particular discourse; “gender” in medical discourse is employed in a different manner than “gender” in feminist discourse. This means that the nodal point “gender” is also an element. However, when an element is particularly open for different ascriptions of meaning they are referred to as floating signifiers. Floating signifiers are not unlike nodal points, but whereas the term nodal point refers to a point of crystallization within a specific discourse, the term floating signifier belongs to the on-going struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of important signs. Once again, feminism becomes a good example as it is a highly contested sign in different discourses. In feminist discourse, “feminism” is denoted as a positive force and as a perspective that should be included in many areas of society, whereas in antifeminist discourse it is considered to be a negative force and a perspective that should be excluded.
The Order of Discourse: Defining the Realm in which Antifeminism Operates

As the meaning of discourse and its constitutive parts has been defined, this section will elaborate on how discourses are created and how one can define the venue of discourse which requires the introduction of additional theoretical concepts. Discourse was previously defined in as specific way of communicating about the world or an aspect thereof emphasizing that our understanding of the world is conditioned on language. This is a somewhat general definition of the term so as to include the isomorphic uses of the term in different discourse analytical traditions. Discourse in Laclau and Mouffe’s can thus more accurately be denoted as the structuring of a particular domain in moment (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999:56). Thus it can be argued that the objective of a discourse is to reduce elements into moments through articulation so as the discourse becomes authoritative and, in the eyes of those subjected to the discourse, true. This process is however obstructed by the fact that different discourses also aspire to reduce its elements to moment. Given that, all moments of a particular discourse are under constant threat of becoming an element due to combating discourse in the same domain trying to establish a different meaning to a sign. Thus, it can be said that discourses are never fully established but constantly changing and adapting (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999:27).

According Laclau and Mouffe (1985), a discourse is always constituted in relation to what it excludes and uses the term field of discursivity to denote that. The field of discursivity is a reservoir for the “surplus of meaning” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:111) produced by the articulatory practice—that is, the meanings that each sign has, or has had, in other discourses, but which are excluded by the specific discourse in order to create a unity of meaning. There are scholars however (e.g., Bergström & Boréus, 2012) who have question the vagueness of the term regarding difficulties in determining discourse venue influences each other and others who claim that this aspect of discourse theory is “undertheorized” (Winther Jørgensen and Philips, 1999:56). The essence of the objection is that whether or not the field of discursivity refers to everything that is excluded in a specific discourse through articulation, or if it more narrowly refers only to potentially competing systems and fragments of meaning.
In feminist discourse, for instance, football is not a topic of discussion, but if one follows Laclau and Mouffe’s conception of discourse construction there is theoretically nothing to stop elements from a football discourse from featuring in feminist discourse at a given point in time. Does that mean then that football is part of the field of discursivity of feminist discourse? Or is it only discourses about, for example, antifeminism which inhabits the same terrain as feminist discourse that constitutes the field of discursivity of feminist discourse? In Laclau and Mouffe’s theory, these two situations are fused in the concept of the field of discursivity. Winther Jørgensen and Philips (1999:27) argues therefore that one should include the concept of order of discourse if one wishes to more precisely define the venue of discourse. The order of discourse is a concept in critical discourse analysis that delimits the discursive battle between two or more different discourses to a particular domain and thus limits the theoretical possibility of discourses that are currently not related to influence one another. To illustrate this, consider once again feminism and its claims. It is an ideology that claims that women are in a subordinate position relative to men and that this relationship should be altered. Through the introduction of the concept order of discourse this means that feminist and antifeminist discourse primarily operates in the gender equality debate.

In this debate, there are a number of different discourses that occupy and operate in the same domain. The order of discourse in the gender equality debate can thus be conceived as being
constituted by a feminist discourse and an antifeminist discourse. There are however additional discourses that operates in the same gender equality debate as the two aforementioned discourses which I have termed a gender equality critique discourse. This is an umbrella term for various other discourses for instance liberal discourse, conservative discourse, communist discourse, and so on that are a part of the debate Given that discourses are never fully established due to the unstable nature of its moments caused by discursive struggle in the order of discourse, all of these discourses exert its influence on each other.

Through the introduction of these concepts, I will be able to analyse relevant antifeminist texts and explore their constitutive parts and the relative importance of different signs, much like I have done with the sign “feminism” throughout this review of discourse theory (i.e. as an element, a nodal point and a floating signifier). Attention is now directed towards constructing an analytical tool based on said concepts. The theoretical manoeuvrability of Laclau and Mouffe’s conception of discourse analysis has been referenced above but unfortunately it is a double-edged sword as it provides one with little if any instructions for the actual analysis for any given phenomenon both in terms of analytical tools and how to conduct the analysis. Therefore I have decided to construct an analytical tool that is inspired by Carol Bacchi and Joan Eveline’s (2010) “What’s The Problem Represented to be?” approach which is derived from the discursive psychology school of thought of discourse analysis. “What’s The Problem Represented to be?” (WPR) is originally an analytical tool design for policy analysis but the simplicity of the construct allows it to be repurposed with relative ease to other fields of inquiry. Given that, the spirit of the original construct will be retained but will be modified to suit my needs for this thesis. Through extrapolating the theoretical concepts outlined above, I have constructed the following WPR-style analytical tool:
The Meaning of the Antifeminist Discourse

- What is feminism made to be?
- Can the answers generated by the aforementioned question be aggregated so as to reflect an antifeminist discourse?

Despite being unrefined, this very simple analytical tool will facilitate the analysis as it acts as a reminder of what the nexus of this study is, namely what common themes are present in objections against feminism in the current antifeminist discourse. The first question involves the identification of articulations attempts and therefore elements in antifeminist discourse, as well as its nodal point and the existence of floating signifiers. However, the first question is limited to single texts and therefore the second question is needed to determine if the signs identified as elements and so on are accurate reflections of the antifeminist discourse as a whole. This is a crucial component of the analysis as it is possible that for example the articulation identified in a single text might differ from the articulation of the same sign in another text. If it is then the common aspects of said articulations must be discerned. In short, the second question is a control question so as to present an accurate reflection of the antifeminist discourse in its entirety.

However, this analytical tool disregards the second research question that I pose, namely who the advocates in the current antifeminist discourse are. The rationale for my decision to exclude them from the analytical tool presented above will be elaborated on in the next section.
On Subject Positions: Is There Nothing Outside the Text?

One considerable disadvantage of the discourse theory for my study is its distinction between the discursive and non-discursive; that it does not recognize that the external discursive sphere influences discourse. An appropriate analogy would be that of a Marxist who does not believe that base influences superstructure, which in this case is ironic as both Laclau and Mouffe are proclaimed post-Marxists (Börjesson & Palmgren, 2007:32) which dictates a different, if isomorphic, ontology (Marsh & Stoker, 2010). What this entails more specifically is that social actors and their intentions are believed to be discursively produced by how they refer to themselves, being meaningless if they are external to the discourse (see discussion regarding floating signifiers). This notion brings to mind Jacques Derrida, a scholar who has had a great influence on Laclau and Mouffe, and one of his often-quoted passages: “there is nothing outside the text” (Derrida, 1967:158). This belief is not confined to discourse theory alone but is present in varying degree in all discourse analysis, the implication being that the object of study is what is being said and not who has said what. Social actors in discourse theory are thus being reduced to subject positions, meaning discursively constructed actors. In discourse theory, the concepts master signifier and chain of equivalence are used to denote how a subject position is created.

Master signifiers, or “the nodal points of identity” as they are referred to by Winther Jørgensen & Philips (1999, p. 42) refer to how a subject position is created through the linking of descriptive signs into a synthesis, or chain of equivalence For instance, feminists can possibly be portrayed as apostates and enemies of equality by promoting policies that favour one sex in antifeminist discourse. The master signifiers are thus given by passages in the text in which feminists are described in one way or another. Discursively constructed groups and actors (often referred to as agents or subjects in discourse theory) are also by its nature fundamentally split according to discourse theory since the meaning ascribed to them is being constantly re-established. In other words, all discursively constructed groups and actors are can be said to be subjected to the same principles as elements. In order to arrive at the conclusion that feminists are agents of inequality, one would have to link together possible master signifiers in a chain of equivalence that establishes such a portrayal relationally (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999).
In discourse theory, and in discourse analysis, societal actors are thus not autonomous but are created but also confined by discourses through *interpellation*. Interpellation is the process through which language constructs a social position for an individual, by defining, denoting or addressing a position for the individual (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999:23). For example, the authors of a political science text book are being interpellated to be political scientists, scholars and researchers by the academic discourse.

There are, as already stated, a number of problems with this conception of social actors as confined and constricted to such a degree for my study since my aim is also to investigate who the participants in the antifeminist discourse are. To illustrate this, let us return to my previous example of interpellation wherein the authors where denoted as political scientists, scholars and researchers. The denotation of the authors in such a way acts exclusionary as there are many ways to categorize them; as men or women, as rich or poor, as Swedish or Norwegian, and so on. However, because these categories are not mentioned in their work, it becomes irrelevant and therefore such extra-discursive categories (the external discursive sphere) are disregarded by the discourse analyst. As has been demonstrated in the literature review however, extra-discursive categories such as religiousness and socioeconomic status do seem to be recurring phenomena regarding antifeminist sentiments.

Furthermore, as one of the questions posed in this thesis is who the advocates of the modern antifeminist discourse are, the notion of subject position becomes problematic for another reason: a subject position is not necessarily equivalent to *actual* position. In the previous example in which the authors of a text book being interpellated as political scientists and scholars, the notion of subject position acts constricting whereas in other cases a subject may be interpellated into a subject position that does not reflect their own position.

An example of a false subject position that has been interpellated to an individual is that of Michael Foucault, the founder of discourse analysis. His fundamental contribution to textual analysis has garnered him reference in virtually all discourse analyses and a scholar of note in academic discourse. However, because of his contribution to in-depth textual analysis he is interpellated as a constructivist in academic discourse whereas Foucault considered himself to be a positivist.
The danger of being interpellated into a subject position that is not one’s own is likely to be present in my study as well. One could of course locate the master signifiers of antifeminists in the antifeminist discourse and by adding the master signifiers in a chain of equivalence find out how they perceive themselves. The problem of such an approach is that the identity of antifeminists constructed through a chain of equivalence is unlikely to reflect their actual identity. For instance, it is possible to conceive of a chain of equivalence that conveys the identity of antifeminists as enlightened individuals of note that have witnessed the errors of feminism. After all, why would not one attempt to convey that one is an authoritative and credible person in a debate? That this is actual identity of antifeminists is unlikely however, given the previous research on antifeminist advocates which proposes that antifeminists are a heterogeneous group that traverses the socioeconomic spectrum. The same issue would most likely be prevalent in feminist discourse as well, if one were to identify master signifiers and chain of equivalence of antifeminists to use as a control unit, because why would feminists portray antifeminists as enlightened individuals of note and thus granting their opposition credibility?

The discussion above regarding the shortcomings of the concept of subject positions for my study leads me to reject such a stringent view of the individual, thus insisting on that there is a reality outside the text that is external to our understanding of it through discourse. This represents a departure from discourse analysis in general and discourse theory in particular but the need to repurpose the theory to suit my needs and the acceptance to do so has been reference above, making the departure from traditional discourse analysis a sound decision for my study.

My ambition is therefore to expand the categories used to describe the participants in the antifeminist discourse beyond that of subject positions through the introduction of extra-discursive categories, which will henceforth be referred to as advocate positions
Operationalizing the Advocate Positions

What I have termed advocate positions refers to the extra-discursive categories proposed by previous scholarship on antifeminism advocate composition as recurring among those who express antifeminist sentiments. These include high and low socioeconomic status, religiousness, and conservative sentiments. Journalistic accounts of antifeminism also claim that it has attracted intellectuals which will also be examined. Furthermore, I have opted to include yet another extra-discursive category, namely sex. It is a category that has not been examined regarding antifeminist sentiments; rather it is a taken for granted notion (or, to use a discourse theory term entailing an unchallenged conception of a notion, a *myth*) that such sentiments are confined to men which makes it an interesting to examine.

It is however necessary to elaborate on how the aforementioned extra-discursive categories have been operationalized, but generally the examination of the aforementioned categories will involve extrapolation. Some categories (i.e. “sex”) can simply be operationalized as given by the advocate’s name, but the other categories require much more attention. I perceive the categories “intellectual” and “socioeconomic status” as intimately connected to the advocate’s profession, much like previous research on antifeminist advocate composition (e.g. Burris, 1983; Himmelstein, 1986). Socioeconomic status (SES) however requires more attention as it is constituted by many factors, such as education, income and occupational prestige. One way to operationalize socioeconomic status is to construct professional archetypes of high, medium and low socioeconomic status serving as benchmarks to which others are measured. Building on operationalizations of Burris (1983) and Himmelstein (1986) complemented with the highly influential Four Factor Index of Social Status (Hollingshead, 2011) which involves a weighting of occupations on the basis of the average education and income of those in the occupations, I have constructed such archetypes which will be presented below.
**Advocate Position: Socioeconomic Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Archetype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Teachers, Public Administrators, Welders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Bartenders, Bus Drivers, Hairdressers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The construct of archetypical professions can also function as an operationalization of the characterization of some antifeminist advocates as “intellectuals”, which will be derived in a same manner as SES.
Advocate Position: Intellectuals

Professional Archetype       Professors, Philosophers, Linguists

As stated above, the interpretations made regarding advocate positions will entail some extrapolation and it should be noted that the archetype constructs above will only act as a facilitating instrument for the analysis. The purpose of said constructs is not to classify the advocates in the antifeminist discourse as one of the archetype professions (i.e. antifeminist advocates are either lawyers or philosophers). Rather, they have been constructed so as to facilitate the classification of them as having high, medium or low socioeconomic status and whether or not they can be conceived as intellectuals.

The archetype construct does not however provide any insights pertaining to antifeminists being religious or having conservative sentiments. Instead this will be discerned by posing questions to relevant parts of the texts to be analyzed. This will also be the starting point of categorizing the advocates’ socioeconomic status and whether or not they can be regarded as intellectuals. These questions will be discussed in the section “Discourse Analysis in Practice and Advocate Positions”.

My decision to use discourse theory and the introduction of advocate positions will of course have methodological implications, which will be elaborated on in the upcoming section. How I intend to use the analytical tools presented in this section will also be elaborated on in the upcoming section.
Specified Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the presence and form of contemporary antifeminism in Sweden. With the help of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, this thesis asks 1) what common themes are present in the objections against feminism in the current antifeminist discourse in established media venues? Additionally, this thesis also asks 2) is the current antifeminist advocate composition the same as before?

Design and Methods: Optimizing the Inquiry

This section is devoted to a discussion regarding research design, case selection, research method and analysis method including possible implications of the methods I have chosen as well as the rationale for said choices. The section begins with a discussion regarding research design in which the time period to be studied is defined as well as the possibilities of generalization. Then the venue of discourse is made clearer and arguments for the data selected will be presented. The section ends with a review of how I intend to analyse the data and how I intend to interpret the results.

A Descriptive Single Case Study Design

The research design that will be employed in this study is a single case study design of antifeminism, namely contemporary antifeminism in Sweden. My categorization of this inquiry as a case study refers to that the nexus of this study is the antifeminist discourse which is a singular unit, but this inquiry also contains comparative elements as evidenced by the theoretical discussion above (Bryman, 2007). For instance, to discern what common themes are present in the current antifeminist discourse, comparison between different newspaper articles becomes imperative. Moreover, the study is limited to Sweden as there is little reason to believe that results generated by this study could be generalized to other national settings. This is because of my ontological orientation which dictates that one must reject absolute statements about the nature of a given phenomenon as the meaning of which is a construct
derived from norms, behaviour and cultural conventions that differ substantially between national settings mine (Marsh & Stoker, 2010). The results from this study are thus unsuitable for generalizations to other countries. However, that does not mean that there is not a modicum of external validity in an inquiry such as mine. Whereas constructivists argue that generating universal laws is fruitless as it is ontologically unsound, they do retain that results can be generalized to a wider array of cases if they exhibit similar characteristics like the ones found in the original study that generated said results. It is therefore conceivable that the results of this inquiry can be generalized to for instance the new media frontier and other media venues which provide this study with external validity (Esaiasson et.al., 2011).

Reflecting upon the ontological directives mentioned above, this study will be largely descriptive in nature. This is also in accordance with the aim of this thesis as my ambition is to examine the current state of antifeminism in Sweden who its advocates are, which does not dictate that I generate a causal relationship between antifeminist sentiments and a proposed extra-discursive category such as socioeconomic status.

The time period that will be covered in this descriptive single case study is 1998 to 2013. The aforementioned temporal aspect of this thesis has been discerned with two reasons in mind. Firstly, there is little research on antifeminism since the emergence of third wave feminism which makes it suitable to examine a post third wave time period considering the cumulativity criterion which all research is subjected to. Secondly, and more importantly since previous research lacks external validity since the vast majority of it originates from North America, the journalistic accounts of current antifeminism in Sweden have observed different advocate compositions than those found in previous research. These accounts thus provide me with additional extra-discursive categories that allow me to construct a more accurate analytical tool for the examination of the second question of this thesis, namely who the advocates of the current antifeminist discourse are.
Data and Data Collection: Medial Debate Forums as Venues of Discourse

Discourse was previously defined as a specific way of communicating about the world or an aspect thereof (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999), emphasizing that our understanding about ideas, notions and conceptions are conditioned on language (Bergström & Boréus, 2012). The implies that a particular discourse can be discerned and examined by reviewing data generated from a variety of different methods of data collection such as interviews, questionnaires, newspaper articles and so on. Reflecting their ontological position, discourse analysts in general reject the traditional methodological notion that some material reflects reality more accurately. This means that reality can be studied through examining tabloids just as successfully as if one were to study public inquiries. However, what kind of material that is best suited for discourse analysis is somewhat controversial (Börjesson & Palmgren, 2007), the essence of the debate revolves around questions of ecological validity which denotes to what extent manufactured results can be generalized to natural settings (Bryman, 2007).

Ironic in relation to the previous statement, some discourse analysts believe that material that have emerged organically (i.e. newspaper articles) are superior to other kinds of material that needs to be manufactured (i.e. interviews and questionnaires). The rationale is that the social interaction that resulted in the emergence of for instance newspaper articles would have taken place even if the researcher was not present, and that such data therefore is “truer” (Börjesson & Palmgren, 2007:24). I am inclined to agree with that sentiment not only for the ecological validity argument, but also because of potential reactive effects that might occur by relying on primary data.

One major advantage of using secondary data such as newspaper articles rather than primary data such as interviews is that it is an unobtrusive method of data collection. Newspaper articles are thus unresponsive to my examination of them, unable to reflect on the questions and purpose that I have. This is bound to happen when utilizing an interview method or a questionnaire method of collecting data. Being subjected to such obtrusive methods, subjects might even relay an account that is not their own and thereby decreasing the validity of the study. The possibility of that occurring if I were to choose an obtrusive method is likely to be
high because of social desirability bias. Given the nature of my study, it is possible that potential respondents could be deterred to answer truthfully to questions regarding their antifeminist sentiments fearing stigmatization by others. One way one could limit the social desirability bias would be to ensure the respondents’ anonymity. However, that would defeat the purpose of my study since I am also interested in who the actors in the antifeminist discourse are. Therefore, newspaper articles will serve as the data for my study because of its high ecological validity relative to other potential methods as well as the absence of reactive effects present in other potential methods (Bryman, 2007). However, newspaper articles are not the only source of data that is relieved from reactive effects as well as retaining a high ecological validity. Virtually all naturally occurring material meet such requirements which is why this study will also feature accounts of antifeminism in new media so as to provide a more accurate reflection of the common themes in antifeminist discourse.

For my study I have chosen that medial debate forums capable influencing public opinion will provide me with the relevant articles, namely the following: *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD), *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) *Aftonbladet* (AB), *Expressen* (E), *Sydsvenskan* (SDS) and *Göteborgsposten* (GP) and *Newsmill* (www.newsmill.com). Of the six newspapers, SvD, DN, SDS and GP are right-wing oriented while AB and E are outspokenly left-wing oriented. I have chosen to include two left-wing oriented newspapers so as to not skew the outcome of analysis of advocate positions as one of the extraneous variables to be examined is ideological orientation. Through the examination of newspaper that traverse the ideological spectrum it is reasonable to believe that the results of this study can be generalized to other newspapers, whether they are local or national (Bryman, 2008; Esaiasson et.al., 2011). Newsmill has also been included in this study as it provides nuance to the sample as a whole. Furthermore it is theoretically possible that Newsmill could provide more accurate portrayal of the antifeminist advocate composition as it is a debate forum that is open for all with less stringent editorial control of the material published.

Relevant newspaper articles will be acquired through using the established internet search engine [www.mediearkivet.se](http://www.mediearkivet.se) by specifying the year (e.g.2012) as well as the name of one of the newspapers to be examined which have been outlined above (e.g. *Svenska Dagbladet*). Internet sources to be analysed will be acquired through using the internal search engine
of www.newsmill.com in the same manner. As the order of discourse has been identified above, the search words that will be used will pertain to the gender equality debate. The search words used to generate the sample for this study are the following: “feminis*+debate” (“feminis*+debatt”), and “feminis*+critique” (“feminis*+kritik”). The use of an asterisk in the aforementioned search words denotes the declination and agreement of the word which results in the inclusion of for instance articles with the word “feminism” as well as “feminist/s” (or, in Swedish, feminism, feminismen, feministisk and so on).

In order to generate total number of articles (N) to be analysed I have consulted the discourse analysis literature. While there seems to be a consensus that discourse analysis is best employed in small-N analyses, N differs wildly depending on the nature of the analysis, varying from N=1 to N=300 (Börjesson & Palmgren, 2007, Bergström & Boréus, 2012, Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999). Likewise, Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory does not inform a prospective discourse analyst with any instructions or recommendations on how to generate N. The literature thus cannot provide me with any recommendations for an optimal N as it depends on the research question.

There are however a number of additional criteria the articles to be analysed must attain. One criterion stems from the discussion regarding order of discourse. The theoretical insights provided by the order of discourse, apart from defining the realm in which antifeminism operates, is that there is a myriad of different discourses that operate in the gender equality debate. This means that without a stringent definition of antifeminism that is applied consistently to the material one might generate a N which in fact includes articles that is not antifeminist, but simply critical of an aspect of feminism or gender equality. Thus, one criterion that the articles selected must have is that they must exhibit clear signs of antifeminism.

Furthermore, the introduction of advocate positions poses yet another restriction to the material that can be analysed as the extra-discursive categories outlined above may not be present in all articles. Data that can be extrapolated in such a manner will most likely be found in op-eds and chronicles and therefore the study will rely on such articles. This is however not likely to affect the sample size adversely since such articles are likely to be the foundation in the order of discourse.
The search words outlined above generates thousands of articles in the previously defined time period. While all of these articles were not surveyed due to the decreasing relevancy of articles inherent in all search engines, it becomes apparent that purely antifeminist articles are very few. Thus, the total number of articles to be analysed in this study is 15. This is however not an insufficient N since discursive patterns can be maintain by just a single individual (Winther Jørgensen and Philips, 1999: 147). As the venue of antifeminist discourse and the number of articles to be analysed have now been defined, the next section will discuss how the analysis will be conducted.

**Discourse Analysis in Practice and Advocate Position**

In its most basic form, discourse analysis entails intensive study of texts but beyond that few instructions are provided for the actual analysis despite being a popular interdisciplinary method for analysis for a variety of different data to (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). The lack of transparency and analytical strategies is evident in scholarly work on the topic (e.g. Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Börjesson & Palmgren, 2007) as well as noted in a number of text books (e.g. Bergström & Boréus 2012). According to Winther Jørgensen & Phillips (1999:165), the lack of transparency and analytical approach is particularly apparent in discourse theory and hence they suggests that one can repurpose the analytical strategies of critical discourse analyst Fairclough to compensate. Said analysis method entails a thorough deconstruction of the texts to be analysed in terms of their linguistic structure, vocabulary, grammar, and use of metaphors. However, given the level of detail demanded for a Faircloughian discourse analysis it is mostly employed in very small-N analyses (N=3-5) and is therefore unsuitable for my study. Nevertheless, one can still incorporate some aspects of said analysis strategy. The use and meaning of metaphors can be inducted to the analysis relatively effortlessly although it will not be uses excessively for reasons concerning intersubjectivity (see Criteria for Conclusion), a methodological aspect which is downplayed in Faircloughian textual analysis (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips ,1999:90). I have thus come to rely on the general strategies put forth by Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (1999) for my analysis which will be elaborated on below.
As stated above, discourse analysis entails that one reads and rereads the texts to be analysed carefully which is a self-evident point of departure for the analysis. Apart from that it is common practice in all qualitative textual analysis to pose questions to the text relating to what one’s research question pertains to (e.g., Bacchi and Eveline, 2010), a notion that is reaffirmed by Esaiasson et. al (2012:210) by stating it facilitates the identification of the essence of a text. This is where the first question presented in The Meaning of the Antifeminist Discourse, “What is feminism made to be?” comes in. The question entails the identification of articulations and elements, which can be conceived as theoretical concepts pertaining to the common themes in the article. The analysis will also feature a number of quotes from the articles so as to elucidate my interpretation of the material and make the analysis of the discourse more authoritative. Since the material used is in Swedish, all subsequent quotes featured in the “Results and Analysis” section have been translated.

However, the first question was designed for the intense analysis of single articles and not the antifeminist discourse as a whole. This is where the second question of the analytical tool comes in, “Can the answer generated by the aforementioned question be aggregated so as to reflect an antifeminist discourse?” This question allows me to attain an understanding of the antifeminist discourse as a totality. The analysis is thus a circular process, involving interplay between an overall understanding of the material and closer analysis of selected aspects of the material using the theoretical concepts and the analytical tools outlined above. Only then can its nodal point and floating signifier be discerned.

The analysis of advocate positions will take on a different form than the analysis of the common themes in antifeminist discourse. As stated in the previous section the analysis will involve extrapolation of known data about the author typically found at the end of an article, for example name, occupation, who the author represents, and how the author positions himself/herself in the debate. This part of the analysis will also feature questions posed to the text, or more specifically the data outlined above. The questions posed will be as follows:

- What is the name of the author?
- What is the author’s profession?
- Can the author be categorized as an intellectual?
- Does the author subscribe to conservatism?
• Is the author religious?

The first question is pertaining to the author’s sex, as was mentioned in the previous section. The second question is an operationalization of socioeconomic status, in which the profession of the author will be compared to the professional archetypes related to high, medium or low socioeconomic status. Related to the second question, the third question denotes an operationalization of intellectuals in which the author’s profession is once again compared to archetypical profession for intellectuals. The fourth and fifth question relates to the extra-discursive characterization of antifeminists as conservative and religious, which will be discern through examining the author’s positioning in the debate (i.e. as a liberal debater, a conservative debater, a Christian debater).

Criteria for Conclusion

This section is devoted to a discussion of a vital component inherent of all textual analysis, namely interpretation and how one draws conclusions from said interpretations. According to hermeneutics, the study of meaning, there are a number of guidelines one should follow in order to make an interpretation as valid as possible. First and foremost, what is referred to as the “hermeneutic circle” is of importance in all interpretative practice (Bergström and Boréus, 2012; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). The term denotes that a text is interpreted by its parts and that its parts are interpreted by the totality of the text in a circulatory process. In discourse analysis, as in hermeneutics, this is an integral part for the establishing interpretation and thus important for the analysis.

Another important aspect when interpreting texts is what is referred to as preconceived understanding. This is an inescapable part of interpretation as it shapes the conception of the phenomenon by the interpreter, and without it interpretation would be impossible. The preconceived understanding of the interpreter is in turn constituted by individual, societal, and cultural experiences that facilitate the interpretation. Given that it influences one’s interpretations, Bergström and Boréus (2012:32) suggests that one should acknowledge this and include an argument of the interpretation being made. The analysis will thus feature a number of arguments to support the interpretations of the material. According to
hermeneutics, such arguments should lead to an interpretation of “good character” (god gestalt), meaning that there are no logical inconsistencies to said interpretation (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009:226). The criterion of good character is of great importance for this study as the aim is to establish what common themes are present in the objections against feminism in current antifeminist discourse. This entails that the common themes discern in the antifeminist discourse must take the form of a synthesis of meaning. For example, if some of the accounts of antifeminism conceive of feminism as being a fascist ideology while others conceive of it as communism, the criterion of good character dictates that the interpretation made must entail a synthesis of both conceptions and not to make a dichotomous interpretation.

Somewhat related to the statement regarding the nature of interpretations and arguments thereof is the question of reliability, or more specifically intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity refers to the whether the results generated by a given study can be replicated by another researcher, given the same methodology and theoretical approach (Esaiasson et.al. 2011:25). It is thus a desirable trait in any study and it is garnered in a number of ways, for instance by avoiding what can be termed tendentious subjectivity (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009:228). The terms denotes a situation in which one’s preconceived understanding of the phenomenon being studied influences the interpretations being made. This may take the form of the researcher overlooking aspects of the material that does not support the researcher’s preconceived notions about the phenomenon, selective interpretations, and only demonstrating evidence that supports one’s own conclusions and disregarding material that indicates otherwise. Since possible tendentious subjectivity was one of the objections to the previous literature on antifeminism, this study aims to limit the extent of it through for instance operating with a consistent and stringent definition of antifeminism.
Results and Analysis

In this section I will present the results of my inquiry and the answers to my research questions in a structured and coherent manner. Firstly the common themes in the objections against feminism will be answered, followed by the examination pertaining to who the antifeminist advocates are.

What is Feminism Made to Be?

As one could imagine, feminism is a nodal point in antifeminist discourse as the opposition to feminism is defined though the meaning constituted by the sign feminism. I have concluded that feminism is a nodal point in the discourse as it is referenced in virtually all the material that has been examined. Interestingly, the specific nature of the sign is not fixed but rather it subjected to different interpretations which indicate that feminism is not only a nodal point but also an element in antifeminist discourse. Given that it is an element, there is a great deal of articulatory practice resulting in three discernable themes in the discourse which is apparent in the much material presented below. This presents difficulties with regard to a coherent structure of the analysis which is desirable so as to facilitate the reader’s understanding of the results generated. In an attempt to rectify this, I have decided that each sub-heading will feature article excerpts that are particularly indicative of the theme that has been discerned. To provide a succinct answer to the question posed in the title above, feminism is made to be an extremist, elitist and collectivist ideology. Each of the common themes will be elaborated on further in the following sections.

Feminism as Extremism

As stated above, there are a number of different articulations pertaining to the meaning of feminism. One often-recurring theme is what ideological basis feminism is founded upon. While portraying feminism as fascism is the most common one, there are many other articulations imbuing the meaning of feminism as pertaining to for instance communism and...
anarchism. I have interpreted such objections to mean that a common theme in antifeminist discourse is to conceive of feminism as extremism. Said interpretation will be argued for below interwoven with article excerpts pertaining to the meaning of feminism.

“For over three decades the Swedish state feminism has been spreading its poisonous message about us fathers and men in general. For this dissemination of propaganda they have been granted billions of the taxpayer’s money. They have with this money conveyed a picture of the man that is scorched in our collective consciousness. Violent, abusive, dangerous, threatening, sex-crazed, pedophile, the list could go on and on. (…) But we fathers and our children that have fallen victim for this extremist movement will never forget. Never forgive. Some things are simply unforgivable. Feminism is and always will be an ideology that judges people according to exterior attributes, just like racism and Nazism. We who have had our blinders removed will never understand why this barbarism is allowed continue without anyone objecting” (Ramsted, 2009)

The author of the article excerpt above, writing about the damage feminism has caused the judicial processes involved in custody cases, equates feminism with totalitarian ideologies such as fascism and that it is extremist because he conceives of feminism as an ideology that is integral to current power structures that judges people on exterior attribute. To conceive of feminism in such terms is recurring in antifeminist discourse:

”(...) that fanatic vulgar feminists are allowed to express their thoughts, as if they were not directed towards men but towards for example gypsies, the handicapped or women, would most likely result in prosecution and conviction in a Swedish court as hate speeches or pure fascist baloney. With the black standards of hate raised to fly in the estrogen wind the screaming furies stand on the non-existing barricades of the tabloid press with ovaries and uteri as weapons, since the hammer and sickle has become somewhat out of fashion.”(Birro,1999)

Writing from a somewhat similar viewpoint, the short excerpt point exemplifies the nature of the nodal point “feminism” (i.e. as an element) in an eloquent manner by containing three separate articulations. Firstly, it is claimed that feminism consists to some extent of “fascist baloney”. Then in the following sentence feminism is, through the use of the words “black standard”, equated with anarchism as it is a universal symbol of said ideology. Towards the ends of said sentences, it is compared to communism through the use of the words “hammer” and “sickle”. The author then continues:
“With the intellectual table manners of jackals and hyenas feminists engage in nefarious persecution (...) or they also practice the infamous and undemocratic political method of rooting out and stigmatize political opponents which was used by the paranoid anticommunist McCarthy in the 50s” (Birro, 1999)

Through some extrapolation from the text above another articulation can be discerned, namely that feminism is undemocratic as its practitioners stigmatize political opponents. These seven descriptive terms are recurring in much of the antifeminist discourse. However, given that feminism is an element as has become evident in the review above it becomes difficult to discern one of the common themes of the antifeminist discourse. It therefore becomes necessary to discern the common features of the objections in the antifeminist discourse. For example, one cannot claim that a common theme in antifeminist discourse is to describe feminism as a fascist ideology if it is also described as being “almost as bad as communism” (Fransson, 1999) as one author put it and being “just like racism and Nazism”, since these terms are not mutually exclusive. The interpretation made must take into account the hermeneutic criterion of good character. Thus it becomes necessary to synthesize the objections to feminism in antifeminist discourse, i.e. a synthesis of the portrayal of feminism as fascism, Nazism, extremism, racism, communism, anarchism, undemocratic and engaging in persecution. As the ideologies presented above that is said to be very much alike feminism operates on the peripheries of the ideological spectrum by proposing radical reconstructions of society, one can characterize the critique put forth in the antifeminist discourse as objecting to the perceived extremism of feminism. To classify the critique as pertaining to extremism also goes well with the statement that feminism entails undemocratic methods such as persecution of political opponents as it is an integral part of extremism due to the radical nature of its propositions. While racism traverses the entire ideological spectrum, it is not incompatible with the characterization of feminism as extremism if one examines the context in which it is used. The author of the article in which racism is featured uses the term coupled with Nazism to illustrate what damage feminism has caused the judicial processes involved in custody cases, claiming that feminism is “and always will be an ideology that judges people according to exterior attributes, just like racism and Nazism”. Racism in this context thus denotes anomie, i.e. a lack or a reduction of current and acceptable social norms, which in this case entail that fathers are discriminated against to which feminism is to blame. If one, as I do, perceives racism as anomie in this case, it can effortlessly be related to extremism as it is
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concerned with radically transforming society and its norms. Thus one common feature of the objections to feminism in antifeminist discourse is that it is an extremist ideology.

Feminism as a Hegemonic Ideology

A second issue that is recurring in antifeminist discourse pertains to the influence feminism exerts in society. Many conceive of feminism as inseparable from authority, be it the state, the media or politician. I however have opted to interpret such criticisms as indicating that feminism is believed to be hegemonic. The rationale for said interpretation will present in a similar manner as the previously identified theme, interweaving article excerpts and commentary resulting in a synthesis of the objections featured.

“Feminism today has devolved into a juggernaut of demands that has become inseparable from power, demanding privileges for women while at the same time ignoring the problems men face while spreading hateful propaganda against men”(Ström, 2012)

The article excerpt above claims that feminism is intrinsic to current power structures and that it disregards men, and in discourse theoretical terms this can be conceived as an articulation which equates feminism with totalitarianism. However, this is not the only articulation that can be discerned concerning the influence of feminism:

“There is a widespread but silenced oppression against men in Sweden. Men are in a subordinate position relative to women in a number of areas. The publicly financed feminism pretends to fight for gender equality but in reality it seeks to acquire privileges for the own group.”(Ström, 2008)

Feminism is thus once again affirmed as being synonymous with power, but in this excerpt it is also conceived as being hegemonic as evidenced by a “widespread but silenced oppression of men” through publicly financed feminism. To conceive of feminism as hegemonic is somewhat symptomatic in antifeminist discourse:

“It is true that Sweden has become a nation in which only one opinion is sanctioned in any given debate. We have developed an opinion hegemony which is maintained by a journalist collective who has largely ignored their professional responsibilities. Even if there are some exceptions to that statement, the journalist collective as a whole has
founded a guild in which one is afraid to question the one true school of thought.” (Ström, 2012)

In this excerpt the hegemonic nature of feminism is conceived of as being maintained by a journalist collective that silences dissidents, thus ensuring that feminism maintains its influences. The omnipresence of feminism can also be discerned in academia:

“Though feminist falsification of history is a far more recurring than a neo-Nazism equivalent, it is not at all as morally upsetting (…) the politicization of science that is currently enforced by the public authorities and sadly by some in academia is a deeply regrettable part of our current intellectual situation”(Nordin, 2000)

The excerpt above reasserts the extremist nature of feminism as well as expressing outrage caused by feminist perspectives being promoted in various disciplines through the hegemonic practice of the public authorities, or as the author put it, “the politicization of science”. The conception of academia as yet another venue for feminism to exert its hegemony is not an anomaly in antifeminist discourse:

“According to the feminist rhetoric, which oddly enough is being accepted as a truth in much of the media as well as political establishment, is that men is a bunch of lazy and egotistical leaders who beats their wives and who are conspiring how to best subjugate women. (…) This miscomprehension is reinforced by scientific studies that are often blatantly biased, conducted by devoted feminists who predetermine the sort of the results they wish to generate.”(Ström, 2008)

Once again the hegemonic influence of feminism is referenced in relation to academia. However, though it is a recurring theme in the gender equality debate to question the influence feminism should exert in academia, the debate as a totality does not convey antifeminist sentiments. Instead, much of the critique is based on intellectual differences rather than objections to the core premises of feminism. The supposed antifeminist critique against gender studies mentioned in the literature review can thus be regarded as exaggerated as only a handful of the accounts in the debate concerning the feminist influence in academia regard feminism with such disdain as the authors of the excerpts above. The excerpt above also expands the notion of the feminist hegemony to the media, which is also conceived of as being integral to feminism. As with the perceived influence feminism has on academia, there is a plurality of antifeminist accounts that agrees with that statement:
“(...) the city folk in the trendy media business have no idea of this. Sometimes I feel like
the wrong people have a say in society. Those who take their lives seriously, and their
children and their families often have little energy left to engage in such goings-on. But it
is the decent men, the considerate men who are the most silenced. There are a lot of them,
but they are without influence. The aggressive women are so much more. The aggressive
women have so much more status. The aggressive women mandate the interpretive
prerogative.” (Bengtsson-Norén, 2001)

Questioning the influence feminism exerts in the media, the excerpts above
reaffirms the idea of feminism as a hegemonic ideology that effectively silences
others. However, the excerpt also contains yet another articulation of feminism as it
is argued that it is an ideology that the common man is not familiar with, nor does it
relate to the world view of most people. Instead it is believed to be confined to “the
city folk in the trendy media business”. The articulation denoting feminism as
elitism is not an uncommon one in antifeminist discourse:

“(…)above all an ideology for people in power so that the word “feminism” itself
unmediated brings to mind Göran Persson, Gudrun Schyman and other bosses”(Nordin,
2000)

The straightforward articulation of feminism as elitism in the excerpt above relates feminism
exclusively to people in power and the elite, a notion that can be found in other articles as
well:

"The left-wing feminist Lisa Magnusson mandates the elite’s right to decide who should
have a say in the public debate and who should be reduced to the topic of discussion. I am
one of those who are to be banned. The cause: I am a racist, an antifeminist and
irresponsible. There seems to be an inflation of sorts regarding these concepts”
(Dagerlind, 2013)

This excerpt includes a conception of feminism as both hegemonic and elitist as is evidenced
by its first sentence. It also draws attention to an, by antifeminists perceived, interesting
phenomenon, namely the interpellation of them as antifeminists. Those who express
antifeminist sentiments rarely, if ever, regard themselves as antifeminists; rather it is ascribed
to them exonymically by feminists. This in itself can be regarded as an extension of the
perceived feminist hegemony in antifeminist discourse as interpellating a political opponent as an antifeminist is an effective strategy of discrediting them.

Feminism is thus conceived as being closely affiliated with power, be it the state (“For over three decades the Swedish state feminism has been spreading its poisonous message…”), an unnamed entity which exercises authority (“Feminism today has devolved into a juggernaut of demands that has become inseparable from power”), politicians (“above all an ideology for people in power…”) or the media (“The left-wing feminist Lisa Magnusson mandates the elite’s right to decide who should have a say in the public debate and who should be reduced to the topic of discussion…”). Since power is an abstract term which has no significance without context I deem that objections of this kind can best be described as referring to perceived hegemonic nature of feminism. It is a more appropriate term rather than power since those who exercise power (i.e. politicians, members of the media and state) are perceived to do so in service of feminism and with little or no regard for deviant opinions. However, the characterization of one of the common themes in antifeminist discourse as hegemonic is not simply because it is the most recurring conception of feminism with regard to the influence it exerts. It is also related to the issue of mutual exclusivity of the articulations which is less prominent in this area than in the previously identified common theme. The articulation of feminism as hegemonic can with ease be related to the other articulations identified (i.e. feminism as elitism and feminism as totalitarianism), rendering the issue of synthesizing the objections against feminism easy. The conception of feminism as a hegemonic ideology is not however the only common theme in antifeminist discourse.

Feminism as a Collectivist Ideology

A third common feature in antifeminist discourse concerns what view of humanity is prevalent in feminism. As is evident in many of the excerpt above, feminism is believed to entail a hatred of men as the reforms and initiatives promoted by feminists are constructed to correct an imbalance that in their view does not exist which results in men being marginalized. Some go so far as to conceive of such measure to entail “that woman should exert dominance over men as a kind of revenge for historical injustices” (Ström, 2009).
However, there are additional articulations pertaining to the meaning of feminism in this regard. Therefore, I conceive of the objections regarding this aspect of feminism to entail more than just hatred of men and I will argue that such objections instead are stemming from conception of feminism as collectivist ideology. The arguments for my interpretation will be presented following the same structure as can be seen above, with different articulations being discussed resulting in an acceptable synthesis for the discourse as a whole.

“The aggressive and mutated mass medial type of feminism in Sweden has for a long time not only impinged the realm of fascism, but has with premeditation abandoned all decency and has been reduced to a hatred of people in general and men in particular that stinks. With the help of infantile generalizations about what is feminine and masculine, through appointing blame collectively to all men despite their individuality, and through political and rhetorical demagogue akin to the fascist spirit of Goebbels.” (Birro, 1999)

Other than reaffirming many of the articulations regarding the meaning of feminism discussed in the aforementioned sections, this excerpt expands the meaning of feminism beyond that of a gynocentric ideology by claiming that it is a collectivist ideology that includes a hatred of people in general. The collectivist notion inherent to feminism according to antifeminist discourse becomes evident through its perceived practice to wrongfully aggregate all men as a group responsible for the state of gender equality. To conceive of feminism not just as hatred of men is can be discerned in a number of antifeminist articles:

“The feminist debate of late tires me. The political correctness in Sweden is founded on an erroneous premise. To be aggressive and uncouth is rewarded, while being decent and considerate is despised. There is much talk about that women should be more assertive, to embrace the masculine ideal and to leave the traditional feminine behind. The foundation of this discussion is based upon an unspoken hatred of weakness and decency. We believe that the most oppressed in our society is women. The truth is that the most oppressed group is the decent men. Women have an army of debaters behind them who are not unlike men in their aggressiveness, their egoism, and their moral absolutism who we ordinary women have nothing in common with. We ordinary women have much more in common with the ordinary men than the women of the newspapers’ op-eds. We ordinary women have nothing to say about the militant opinions expressed by the fashionable debaters in the newspapers’ op-ed sections. 70 percent of the population is made invisible
in the debate, and without these 70 percent the society would probably come to a grinding halt.” (Bengtsson-Norén, 2001)

The excerpt above claims that feminism’s core premise, that women are in a subordinate position relative to men, is a miscomprehension and argues that it is instead the decent and considerate men who are the most disadvantaged group in society. Much like the previous excerpt it contains a number of articulations outlined above (i.e. feminism as a hegemonic ideology, feminism as elitism etc.), but it also reaffirms the articulation of feminism as collectivism. Following the previous excerpt’s more inclusive meaning of feminism, it is argued that “ordinary women” are being ascribed opinions and values by morally absolute media elites that are essentially doing their thinking for them. Thus is feminism not believed to be exclusively gynocentric but rather that it entails a disregard for people’s individuality. On that note there are other accounts of antifeminism that argue in similar fashion:

“I stand up for the right of every individual to live as he or she pleases, within the boundaries of the law. We who drive the ideological debate forward may have different opinions about what makes a person happy, but in the end it is up to the individual to choose their lifestyle. This train of thought is incompatible with the behest that we must achieve total, static gender equality. In my world it is allowed for both men and women to wholeheartedly invest in their careers, but also to work part-time in order to spend more time with their children. If this individual freedom results in that men and women make partly disparate choices in life, I regard this as a consequence of our democratic rights. In today’s political feminism it is however controversial to think that anything other than a 50/50 sex distribution in both the workplace and in the home can be accepted. Thus ordinary people are shamed and blamed for how they choose to structure their lives.” (Billing, 2012)

To conceive of feminism as collectivism is once again a discernable theme, as it is argued that feminism stifles individual freedom and choices through its perceived insistence on “total, static gender equality” that can only be realized through collective action. This conception of what view of humanity is prevalent in feminism is recurring in antifeminist discourse:

“People’s free will must be allowed to determine their life choices. A woman who chooses to live as a housewife for example should not be criticized for doing so. Likewise, a woman who chooses to give priority to her career rather than her children...
should also not be criticized for doing so. Professional debaters should not dictate how people should live their lives.” (Ström, 2012)

“It is nowadays often implied that when one talks about gender equality, one is referring to a standardization of the collective women and the collective men. We can only be conceived as having attained gender equality when we have just as many men as women in the boards of directors and when we have just as many men as women who are stay at home parents. Thus gender equality has become afflicted with a demand that there can no longer be any differences between the group men and the group women.” (Billing, 2010)

As with previously defined common themes, a similar difficulty concerning mutual exclusivity regards the conception of feminism in antifeminist discourse regarding its view of man. Some conceive of feminism as being gynocentric and thus anti-men, conveying a “picture of the man that is scorched in our collective consciousness. Violent, abusive, dangerous, threatening, sex-crazed, pedophile…”, while others claim that feminism is “spreading hateful propaganda against men” vis-à-vis others still claim that feminism entails a “hatred of people in general and men in particular that stinks”. One way in which one could reconcile these different conceptions of feminism with regard to view of humanity is to characterize the critique as stemming from an objection of the perceived collectivist connotations of feminism. Thus, one common theme in antifeminist discourse is to conceive of feminism as a collectivist ideology.

As the articulations that were not mutually exclusive have been defined, one can now present a synthesis of the common themes in antifeminist discourse, namely the meaning of feminism. While still an element, feminism in antifeminist discourse is conceived as being a hegemonic, extremist, and collectivist ideology. These are notions that are present in varying degree in all accounts of antifeminism in analysed in this study.

Moreover, the discursive construction of feminism in modern antifeminist discourse logically follows the trajectory discerned in the literature on antifeminism, moving away from categorical rejections of feminism as such to be tempered with specific objections regarding custody cases, influence on academia, and so on. However, that is not to say that there are no sweeping declarations regarding the evils of feminism as is evident in some of the excerpts but overall the findings are in accordance with
previous scholarship. The findings of this study do suggest that there is one anomaly pertaining to the previous literature on antifeminism, namely that gender studies is a preferred target for antifeminists. While there are many who question the merit of gender studies and claiming that it as a discipline has an ideological bias towards feminism, such critique cannot be classified as antifeminist. Thus no such accounts have been featured in this study since it is only possible to conceive of them as antifeminist if one chooses to speculate about their purpose. One is reminded of Jacques Derrida once again, but in this aspect his often-quoted passage “there is nothing outside the text” is more valid.

Furthermore, as all the aforementioned quotes pertains to the meaning of feminism, i.e. they are articulations, it is evident that the meaning of feminism in the antifeminist discourse is not given which means that the nodal point “feminism” is also an element. The articulatory practice of the discourse as a whole has thus been unsuccessful since there is an array of different conceptions of the nodal point “feminism”. Also, the meaning ascribed to feminism in antifeminist discourse is thus wildly different from the meaning of feminism in feminist discourse, which also makes it a floating signifier. What this entails
Advocate Positions: Who are the Advocates in the Antifeminist Discourse?

Now follows the examination of antifeminist advocates featured in this study with reference to the extra-discursive categories suggested by previous literature on antifeminism. Each of the five extra-discursive categories will be treated separately starting with the sex of the antifeminist advocates followed by their socioeconomic status, whether they are intellectuals or not, whether they harbour conservative sentiments and whether or not they are religious.

Antifeminists are Almost Exclusively Men

The vast majority of the antifeminists featured in this study are men, but it should be noted that there are certain antifeminist advocates that have been featured multiple times. These are Per Ström (five times), Peter Birro (three times) and Pelle Billing (two times). Thus the total number of advocates featured in this study is not equal to the total number of articles featured. The actual number of advocates is eight, and of those all but one are men.
Antifeminists are can be Categorized in General as Having Medium SES

Advocate Position: Socioeconomic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Archetype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Teachers, Public Administrators, Welders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Bartenders, Bus Drivers, Hairdressers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Socioeconomic status (SES) was conceived as being intimately relative to profession. As stated above their socioeconomic status was to be derived from by comparing their actual profession to those that were featured in the archetypical indicator of high, medium or low SES. The most vocal of the antifeminist, Per Ström, is stated to be an author, a blogger and an entrepreneur. (Ström, 2012;2011;2008). Comparing those different professions to the archetypes, I would argue that he can be conceived as having medium SES. Pelle Billing, having seemingly unrelated professions, is stated to be a dance teacher as well as a physician and a blogger (Billing, 2012, 2010). Billing, being a physician, can thus be considered to be an indicator of high SES. Mats Dagerlind works as a writer for SD-Kuriren which I interpret as an indicator of medium SES (Dagerlind, 2013). Roger Fransson is a politician by trade who is working on a municipal level which seems to correspond well with the archetypical profession public administrators which would indicate a medium SES (Fransson, 1999). Kerstin Bengtson-Norén, the only women in the sample, is stated to be a social worker which would entail that she can be categorized as a person of medium SES (Bengtsson-Norén, 2001). Svante Nordin however is a professor and an author which I interpret to entail a high
SES (Nordin, 2000). Peter Birro can be classified as a person of medium SES due to the fact that it is stated that he is a poet and an author (Birro, 2000; 1999), as can Joakim Ramstedt who is a musician and a blogger (Ramsted, 2009).

Few Antifeminists are Intellectuals

As with SES, antifeminists were to be categorized according to similar standards though new archetypical professions associated with intellectuals were devised.

**Advocate Position: Intellectuals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Archetype</th>
<th>Professors, Philosophers, Linguists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Given these archetypical professions of intellectuals, only Peter Birro and Svante Nordin can be classified as intellectuals.

Few Antifeminists Harbour Conservative Sentiments

Evidence of harbouring conservative sentiments was operationalized as being denoted as a conservative debater. Only two of the antifeminist featured in this study, Svante Nordin (Nordin, 2000) and Peter Birro (Birro, 2000: GP).

Almost none of the Antifeminists are Religious

As with harbouring conservative sentiments, religiousness was operationalized as being denoted as a religious debater. Of all the antifeminist featured in this study only Pet Birro (Birro, 1999) refers to himself as a Christian. Of all the extra-discursive categories that were identified in the previous literature on antifeminism, only the conception of antifeminists as being of medium SES appear to be a common feature among many antifeminists. However,
the other extra-discursive categories can be discerned in the data as well but they are of a negligible nature. This suggests that the generalizability of the previous literature on antifeminist advocate composition is exaggerated and that context-specific, extra-discursive categories must be constructed if one wishes to examine who the antifeminist advocates really are. Furthermore the extra-discursive category pertaining to the sex of the antifeminist advocates which was added to the already suggested extra-discursive categories confirms that the vast majority of antifeminists are men. However, support for antifeminism is not solely confined to men as is evidenced by the fact that one of the advocates featured in this study is a woman. This could be an anomaly but in order to determine that the extra-discursive category pertaining to the sex of antifeminism advocates should be included in future studies.
Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study was to analyse the presence and form of contemporary antifeminism in Sweden. With the help of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, this thesis asked 1) what common themes are present in the objections against feminism in the current antifeminist discourse in established media venues? Additionally, this thesis also posed the question 2) Is the current antifeminist advocate composition the same as before? The analysis of what common themes are present in the objections against feminism in antifeminist discourse reveals that feminism is conceived as an extremist, hegemonic, and collectivist ideology. Regarding the current antifeminist advocate composition it has indeed changed since the previous waves of antifeminism.

I have determined that feminism is perceived as an extremist, hegemonic, and collectivist ideology in antifeminist discourse through identifying the various nexuses in said discourse. One nexus is what ideological basis feminism is founded on, with some claiming that is akin to fascism and communism vis-à-vis other who argue that is similar to Nazism. I argued that a way to reconcile these different articulations of feminism is to view such criticism to be pertaining to a perceived extremist nature of the ideology. A second nexus was concerning the influence feminism exerts in society, where many argued that feminism is inseparable from power and authority. I interpreted such criticisms as stemming from a notion that feminism is hegemonic. Thirdly, many argue over what prevalent view of humanity is present in feminism, with some antifeminists claiming that entails solely a hatred of men while other perceive feminism as hatred of people in general by limiting freedom of individuals through oppressive reform initiatives. I argued that criticisms of this kind can best be regarded as originating from a conception of feminism in antifeminist discourse as a collectivist ideology. Through the synthesising practice I have engaged in throughout the analysis of the antifeminist discourse, I can present three common themes in objection made against feminism in antifeminist discourse, namely that it is an extremist, hegemonic and collectivist ideology.

Regarding the second question posed in this thesis, namely if the current antifeminist advocate composition is the same as before, I have concluded that it is not exactly the same.
By categorizing the current antifeminist advocates into extra-discursive categorize suggested or implied as important by previous scholarship and journalistic accounts on antifeminist advocates, I constructed a simple analytical tool which involved extrapolation of extra-discursive components. The results indicated that none of the identified extra-discursive categorize claimed to be important accurately portray the antifeminist advocates featured in this study, save for the conception of antifeminists as having primarily a medium SES. But while this was identified as a common feature among most of the antifeminist advocate, none of the other extra-discursive categories were particularly apparent in the data.

This study reaffirms the constructivist notion that phenomena should be examined in specific cultural and temporal aspects and that one should not accept without question generalizations about a given phenomenon. As has been demonstrated, the antifeminist advocates featured in this study are a heterogeneous group who possess to some extent many of the characteristics claimed to be important in previous research and journalistic accounts. This implies that if one wishes to discern and characterize the antifeminist advocates, one should not primarily focus on the extra-discursive categories outlined in this study but rather one should construct context-specific, extra-discursive categories. One way this can be achieved is to construct extra-discursive categories according to what myths exists about antifeminists, as was done in this study. While it became evident that predominantly men harbour antifeminist sentiments it would appear as if antifeminism does not solely appeal to men as evidenced by the fact that one woman featured in this study of antifeminist advocate composition. This could be an anomaly and future research should more rigorously examine the sex dimension of antifeminist advocate composition, as well as other extra-discursive categories derived from myths about antifeminists. Another aspect that future research could examine is to what degree antifeminist discourse has influenced other discourses in the same order of discourse. By constructing an antifeminist discourse “ideal type” from what I have presented in this study, one could examine if such themes are present in other discourses which are critical of gender equality. By doing so, one could examine the power antifeminist discourse exerts on other discourses which would be a very interesting study indeed.
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