

SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE AND INTERNALIZED SEXUAL PREJUDICE:
PERFORMING MASCULINITY AT THE SUMMIT CHURCH

BY

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ABSTRACT

My thesis explores and analyzes the interwoven relationship between constructions of gender and sexuality, and how ideologies around gender difference function among some conservative evangelicals in the United States. I utilize theoretical concepts from Raewyn Connell, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu to identify and examine particular practices evident at the Summit Church in Durham, NC. I theorize how collective beliefs become embodied by church participants. I explain how gender and sexuality are socially constructed, reproduced, and constrained through repeated practices associated with masculinity and femininity. Specifically, I analyze how the practices of preaching, biblical interpretation, prayer, and exclusion form a hostile social environment for sexual minorities. Patriarchal notions of gender, and specifically conservative Christian manhood, are practiced by members and leaders at the Summit, in part through the categorical stigmatization of gays. Individuals at the church may understand their specific beliefs in terms of faithful obedience to God, and a demonstration of God's love, but they often fail to recognize the harmful effects of their discourse. Overall, I argue that the various collective practices which reproduce and legitimate an anti-gay discourse in churches like the Summit, are often embodied by sexual minority individuals within the social environment, and cause serious negative effects related to their mental health and physical well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Rigid expectations of gender and sexuality and performance of gendered roles permeate conservative evangelicalism in the United States. Throughout the various traditions and churches within this larger category, individuals possess distinct notions of a normative heterosexual family dynamic, which are in part legitimized by certain biblical interpretations. The importance of family and the Bible have always characterized core values for American evangelicals, but these values have transformed in light of cultural and political shifts in the past four decades.¹ As gay people increased in visibility throughout the twentieth century, conservative Christian attitudes toward the group began to change.

In the 1950s many conservative Christian groups focused on ministering to gays, with the ultimate goal of their redemption and salvation. However, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, most conservative Christians developed an ambivalence toward gays and other sexual minorities. They began to view gay men and lesbians as “an anti-Christian force,” who supported heretical views pertaining to family, sexuality, and gender.² During these decades, conservative Christians came to perceive themselves as a persecuted minority within the larger American culture, and reinforced their religious and political commitment to define gender and sexuality within the bounds of heterosexual marriage.³ They recognized a decline in America’s overall commitment to traditional Christian values, and saw this cultural shift as a distinct threat to Christian life.

¹ Gallagher, Sally K. 2003. *Evangelical identity and gendered family life*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.

² Herek, Gregory M., and Kevin A. McLemore. 2013. Sexual prejudice. *Annual Review of Psychology* 64 (1): 309-33, p. 318

³ Ibid.

Conservative Christian commitment to “family values,” and opposition to gay rights became core aspects of their collective identity.⁴ The condensed social and historical sketch of conservative Christian attitudes toward gay rights provides a useful contextual framework as I move to the specific problem addressed in my thesis.

The Problem Identified

Across all conservative Christian communities in the United States, religiosity is positively correlated with sexual prejudice.⁵ There are various reasons why conservative Christians tend to demonstrate higher levels of sexual prejudice, and many of these are examined in subsequent sections of my thesis. Nonetheless, sexual prejudice is practiced in numerous social environments where individuals and groups espouse anti-gay attitudes. Conservative Christian church communities, which hold institutional stances about the sinfulness of homosexuality are toxic environments for gays. These environments are toxic for gay people regardless of whether they choose to conceal or disclose their sexuality to the group. Exposure to anti-gay environments, like those created in some conservative Christian churches, causes gays to internalize negative attitudes associated with homosexuality. In other words, gay individuals who grow up in non-affirming religious settings often direct communal anti-gay attitudes toward themselves.⁶ Research has demonstrated that internalized sexual prejudice increases one’s

⁴ Dowland, Seth. 2009. “Family values” and the formation of a christian right agenda. *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 78 (3): 606-31. Dowland demonstrates how conservative Christians in 1980s developed a collective identity around their opposition to abortion, feminism, and gay rights. The group framed their opposition to cultural trends as renewed support for “family values.”

⁵ Herek & McLemore, 2013, p. 317

⁶ Barnes, David M., and Ilan H. Meyer. 2012. Religious affiliation, internalized homophobia, and mental health in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82 (4): 505-15, p. 506

risk for mental health disorders such as depression.⁷ Additionally, one's experience of internalized prejudice produces higher rates of suicidal thoughts and attempted suicides among sexual minorities. For example, sexual minority individuals who frequently attend non-affirming religious services, and whose parents hold anti-homosexual religious beliefs, are twice as likely to attempt suicide compared to the larger gay community.⁸ The potential effects of anti-gay religious environments on sexual minorities are lethal. They also demonstrate the need for further investigation into how and why certain church communities continue to propagate ideologies that exclude and stigmatize gays.

Research Goals

My thesis explores and analyzes the interwoven relationship between constructions of gender and sexuality, and how ideologies around gender difference function among conservative evangelicals in the United States. I focus on a specific church community, and investigate how particular formative practices inscribe certain collective beliefs in minds of church members.⁹ I explain how gender and sexuality are socially constructed, and reproduced through practices associated with masculinity and femininity. My primary goal is to analyze how the practices of preaching, biblical interpretation, public prayer, and exclusion at the Summit Church form a hostile social environment for sexual minorities. I contend that patriarchal notions of gender, and

⁷ Barnes & Meyer, 2012, p. 506

⁸ Ibid., pp. 506-507

⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Vol. 16:16: Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press. Bourdieu uses the language of inscription throughout his theory of practice to describe a metaphorical process that contributes to an individual's internal disposition. I use this language of inscription in a similar sense throughout this thesis to describe how preaching and texts become embodied in members of a particular church congregation.

specifically conservative Christian manhood, are practiced by members and leaders at the Summit, in part through the categorical stigmatization of gays. Although members at the church understand their beliefs as an authentic reflection of God's love, individuals often fail to realize how their discourse around gender and sexuality affect sexual minorities in the church. Overall, I argue that the various collective practices which reproduce and legitimate an anti-gay discourse in churches like the Summit, are often embodied by sexual minority individuals within the social environment, and cause serious negative effects related to their mental health and physical well-being.

Methodology and Trajectory

The first main chapter of my thesis outlines theoretical concepts from Raewyn Connell, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu. These theorists provide a critical lens for my analysis. In the second chapter, I implement a case-study, which examines prayers, sermons, position statements, biblical interpretations, and blog posts to identify how traditional notions of gender are reproduced at the Summit Church. My rhetorical and textual analysis reveals a distinct gender hierarchy at the church, and explains how practices inscribe forms of embodied knowledge. My third chapter draws on evidence from the Summit, and proposes an explanation as to why certain heterosexual men delegitimize gay sexuality through a cultural domination that renders it invisible. In the last main chapter, I return to research associated with social stress and sexual prejudice, and evaluate data through the specific findings at the Summit. I conclude my thesis with a general discussion of my research project, and by isolating potential sites of resistance for sexual minorities involved in non-affirming Christian communities.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL TOOLS

In this chapter I utilize the work of Raewyn Connell, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu to provide the theoretical tools required for my analysis of the Summit Church. I examine how gender and sexuality are socially constructed, and reproduced through practices. Additionally, I describe how and why certain practices are reproduced within a given social environment, and inscribe a particular worldview in the minds of people engaged in their reproduction. As practices are reproduced over time in a given space, they legitimate and naturalize certain ways of thinking and being. I argue that men who practice a dominant form of masculinity gain cultural esteem and power, and that they often impose that power on marginalized persons, such as gay men. Specifically, this power is imposed through practice, by acts of negative categorization. I contend that gay sexuality is delegitimized by certain men in order to preserve the social order, and further legitimate the dominant form of masculinity. The concepts introduced in this chapter provide a useful framework to proceed my analysis of the Summit Church.

Raewyn Connell

Raewyn Connell, or R.W. Connell, has made significant contributions to the field of sociology over the past several decades. While her earlier work focused on class and social inequality, Connell is most known for her work on gender, and particularly the social construction of masculinities.¹⁰ Masculinity refers to patterns of social practices which are associated with the position of men in the gender order, and they are

¹⁰ 'Bio', in *Raewyn Connell*, c.2010, http://www.raewynconnell.net/p/about-raewyn_20.html.

categorically differentiated from practices associated with women or femininity.¹¹

Although many people often associate gender with biologically sexed bodies, Connell demonstrates how gender is assigned to bodies through social and historical practices. She states, “Gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body.”¹² In other words, masculinity and femininity are not direct manifestations of biological bodies. Biology does not produce gender. In this way, gender is not a specific type of practice, but a way of structuring social practices. Gender is also a social structure which defines parameters of normative behaviors for men and women. Generally, gender is structured in part through power relations, specifically the cultural subordination of women, and domination by men.

Multiple Masculinities

Masculinity is not a monolithic identity. Connell states, “Historians and anthropologists have shown that there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct masculinity differently.”¹³ Constructions of gender and sexuality vary between cultures and institutions, and “in large-scale societies there are likely to be multiple definitions of masculinity.”¹⁴ Connell demonstrates how this is true with respect to differences in class, ethnicity, and generation. Furthermore, there are multiple masculinities which manifest in specific cultural contexts, and across institutions. In this respect masculinities are

¹¹ Connell, Raewyn. 2015. masculinities: The field of knowledge. *DQR Studies in Literature*: 39.

¹² Connell, Raewyn. 2005. *Masculinities*. Second ed. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, p. 71

¹³ Connell, 2015, p. 43

¹⁴ Ibid.

complex, and their qualities must be identified through specific practices within a given social context. It follows that various and conflicting masculinities encounter one another through social interactions between people.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell calls the dominant form of masculinity in a given social context *hegemonic masculinity*. She defines the term “as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominate position of men and the subordination of women.”¹⁵ Hegemony refers to a form of cultural domination, and it is often established through the correspondence between cultural ideals and institutional power.¹⁶ However, it does not refer to total dominance, but instead exists as a strategy for organizing social relations. Hegemony also denotes a position of cultural authority and leadership, and in a patriarchal society hegemonic masculinity is defined as “exclusively heterosexual.”¹⁷ Although hegemonic masculinity may not be the most common type of masculinity observed in a given social context, it tends to be a cultural ideal, and its practice is “highly visible.”¹⁸ For example, men who practice hegemonic masculinity often occupy positions of leadership, and they tend to speak with certainty and authority. Its practice is a means by which to legitimate one’s perceived manhood, and therefore it must be seen by others. Connell states, “Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole.”¹⁹ This

¹⁵ Connell, 2005, p. 77

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 163

¹⁸ Connell, 2015, p. 44

¹⁹ Ibid.

means that men who embody and practice a particular form of hegemonic masculinity, defined by the given social group, maintain a privileged status in the social hierarchy. In the next two chapters I argue that in the context of the Summit Church, hegemonic masculinity takes the form of godly manhood. Godly manhood represents a patriarchal idealization of masculinity associated with male leadership in marriages, adherence to biblical authority, and exclusive heterosexuality. Moreover, hegemonic masculinity is often practiced by subverting other forms of masculinities, and I provide an important example in the section that follows.

Subordinate Masculinities

Subordination of other masculinities takes many forms, and can work through additional structures such as race and class. However, Connell argues that in contemporary American society “the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men,” is one of the most important examples.²⁰ Gay men are subordinated not just through cultural stigmatization, but also through specific practices of hegemonic masculinity. These practices consist of political and social exclusion, as well as “cultural abuse.”²¹ For example, gay men in the United States are a symbolic target for members of the religious right. The dichotomy between hegemonic masculinity and subordinated masculinities is meant to provide a framework for understanding the social hierarchy among men within the gender order. Connell insists that these terms are “not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships.”²² In conclusion, to observe

²⁰ Connell, 2005, p. 78

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p. 81

how the practice of hegemonic masculinity subverts subordinated masculinities, one must examine specific practices, and the ways in which relations are structured within a specific social context. In the next chapter, I examine practices of hegemonic masculinity observed at the Summit Church, and analyze their specific cultural qualities.

Judith Butler

Judith Butler is a post-structuralist thinker, and her work in feminist theory and philosophy challenges readers to criticize and reconsider notions of identity. Butler undermines the subversion and stigmatization associated with sex, gender, and sexuality by deconstructing categories of difference, which contribute to the reproduction and perpetuation of marginalized persons. In her books, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler challenges assumptions regarding the biological naturalness of sex difference.²³ She focuses on the materiality of bodies and calls into question feminist scholarship which contended the naturalness of biological sex. She argues that “since culture is the means by which we name and understand ‘sex’, then ‘sex’ itself is just as much a social construction as gender is presumed to be.”²⁴ Her works analyze the violence enacted on those who do not adhere to the traditional gender binary, which is imposed through the very acts of naming ‘men’ and ‘women’. She draws on the work of Michel Foucault, and recognizes the discursive formation of bodies.²⁵ The body is a product of both language and material effects. For example, the body is inscribed with

²³ Division of Philosophy, Art & Critical Thought, The European Graduate School. “Judith Butler Biography,” Accessed March 20, 2017. <http://egs.edu/faculty/judith-butler>

²⁴ Keane, Angela, and Avril Horner. 2000. *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 2

²⁵ Keane and Horner, 2000, Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*. First American ed. New York: Pantheon Books.

cultural meaning, and it is shaped by history and discourse. Specifically, patriarchal discourse has materialized on bodies, such that some bodies matter, while others do not.

Materiality of the Body

Butler argues that the body does not possess a fundamental or ontological essence, but instead insists that “words, actions, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produces this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause.”²⁶ Butler contends that sex and gender are written on bodies through bodily gestures. Although Butler contends that bodies are sites for social inscription, she rejects the notion that passive bodies pre-exist their social inscription. Instead, she emphasizes how discourse and language have been reproduced by people throughout history, and they manifest on the surface of bodies. Butler argues that bodies are inscribed with meaning through “a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter.”²⁷ Thus, the process of materializing the body takes place through performative human actions over time, and this provides the perception of natural categories of gender and sexuality.

Performativity

The concept of performativity is central to Butler’s argument, where in she challenges the naturalness of sex, gender, and sexuality. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler explains how the heterosexual regulatory model is a fiction, arguing that “the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at

²⁶ Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, p. 136

²⁷ Butler, 1993, p. 9

all.”²⁸ In other words, gender is a construction of human action. It is reproduced by people, and structures of gender hierarchy are legitimated through language, history, and tradition. Butler calls gender norms “compelling social fictions,” and “over time [have] produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another.”²⁹ The repetition of certain acts associated with gender difference, causes people to view gender and sex as natural and determinate categories, and collapse these categories into one another. Through performativity, Butler argues that these categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are mutually reinforcing, where membership to one implies membership to others.³⁰ For example, maleness is normatively restricted to masculine gender performance, and thus a presumed desire for the opposite sex. Performative acts take on a socially ritualized form, and “the effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.”³¹ There is no preexisting identity from which gender is expressed, but instead gender exists within, and due to the performative acts themselves.

Constraint and Performativity

In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler expands on her concept of performativity, and clarifies certain assumptions regarding the agency of actors. She insists that performative acts associated with sex, gender, and sexuality, are “neither free play nor theatrical self-

²⁸ Keane and Horner, 2000, p. 2

²⁹ Butler, 1990, p. 140

³⁰ McLaren, Margaret A. 2002. *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

³¹ Butler, 1990, p. 140

presentation.”³² Performativity, as the stylized repetition of certain acts is not a simple performance of acts chosen by completely autonomous actors. Performativity implies constraint, which is “not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity.”³³ Stated another way, there exist within social arrangements perceived norms and expectations related to gender and sexuality, which are themselves continually reproduced through performativity. For Butler, norms constrain and regulate the performance of gender and sexuality, and therefore societal norms reinforce and perpetuate themselves. The ritualized performance of stylized acts is repeated and regulated through constraint, “under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of production.”³⁴ Sexuality is always performed within the boundaries of productive power and constraint. The constraining function of power operates through inscribing in people’s minds an imaginary threat to the body, and precludes the prohibition of any given act. The performative acts constrained by systems of heterosexual and hegemonic norms, “functions to produce what it declares.”³⁵ Hence, repeated performative practices, viewed as regular and normative, function to legitimate arbitrary regulatory sanctions.

Butler applies her conceptual framework to the function of law and authority. The author describes a judge who enforces law through naming the law, but does not possess in his person a legitimate source of authority. When making a ruling, the judge engages

³² Butler, 1993, p. 95

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 107

in performative speaking, and reproduces the law through language, according to conventions already in place. The laws and conventions to which the judge appeals are “grounded in no other legitimating authority than the echo-chain of their own reinvoation,” yet he “seeks to recourse to an authoritative legal convention that precedes him.”³⁶ This begs the question: What is the source of authority from which the law itself originates? Butler argues that there is no primary source of authority, except *in* the performative practice of uttering the citation. In the context of gender and sexuality, and their material enforcement, the continual reproduction of normative citational practices, yields the perceived legitimation of determinant categories. Butler argues that “the law will constitute sexed subjects along the heterosexual divide to the extent that its threat of punishment effectively instills fear, where the object of fear is figured by homosexualized abjection.”³⁷ In other words, many social environments regulate one’s performance of gender and sexuality, and restrict bodily acts to a normative heterosexual model. For example, in my next chapter I demonstrate how practices at the Summit regulate cultural expectations associated with godly manhood. At the church, men are compelled to reproduce and perform a type of hegemonic masculinity, or they risk implicit and explicit threats to their perceived legitimacy as godly men. Specifically, they must signal strong leadership in their marriages, and adhere to orthodox beliefs regarding the sinfulness of gay sexuality. As certain masculinities and femininities are reproduced, they legitimate and naturalize perceived gender roles. For men to maintain their privileged status, they must avoid and subordinate femininities, and homosexuality.

³⁶ Butler, 1993, p. 107

³⁷ Ibid., p. 110

Pierre Bourdieu

The third theorist I present is Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu was a French sociologist and anthropologist, whose theories continue to influence scholars in a variety of fields. Bourdieu's methodological approach to the study of culture was influenced by Max Weber, Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.³⁸ His guiding motive throughout numerous published works concerns "the examination of the means by which inequalities and distinctions between people are reproduced in society."³⁹ *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) is one of Bourdieu's most important books, which draws on his fieldwork in Algeria to develop a complex theory of what he calls "practice." Through key concepts such as habitus, doxa, capital, and symbolic violence, Bourdieu reveals a critical framework for the analysis of human behavior. Although Bourdieu produced few writings on the sociology of religion specifically, his theoretical approach has been utilized by scholars of religion such as Otto Maduro, Catherine Bell, Thomas Csordas, and Joan Martin.⁴⁰ What follows in the subsequent sections of this chapter is a brief outline of Bourdieu's main theoretical concepts.

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is fundamental in his theory of practice. Habitus is formed from systems of practices, and refers to an internalized cultural framework from which people think and act, and it "results from the homogeneity of the conditions of existence."⁴¹ In essence, one's habitus represents a system of dispositions, or way of

³⁸ Rey, Terry. 2014. *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy*. London, GB: Routledge, p. 31

³⁹ Ibid., p. 29

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 58 & 108

⁴¹ Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80

being, thinking, acting, feeling, and knowing. It serves to shape a person's unconscious understanding of the world, and organizes their actions as such. For example, humans have developed over time the ability to understand appropriate ways to act, and their actions become almost second nature. People often act without having to think deliberately about why they are acting in particular ways. This common social understanding is what Bourdieu calls "habitus." The theory of practice presented by Bourdieu is complex, and the concept of habitus seems abstract at first. However, habitus achieves more clarity through defining a few additional elements of the theory. I will use the concept of habitus to explain the sets of dispositions, or patterns of thought and action, that are embodied by members of the congregation at the Summit Church.

Fields and Structures

In his later work, Bourdieu recognized the organization of human relations as they function in a variety of fields, such as the religious field, the legal field, or the bureaucratic field.⁴² Fields are "historical and highly differentiated."⁴³ The gendered ordering of social relationships is demonstrated in a variety of fields of social organization. Although fields are often unique with regard to specific cultural values, and the types of resources available, most fields impose an androcentric framework for thinking and acting. Therefore, social fields reinforce masculine heterosexual power and domination. For example, the legal field and religious field tend to support and perpetuate a dominant heterosexual family model.⁴⁴ Specifically, the differentiation of social groups

⁴² Bourdieu, Pierre. 2001. *Masculine Domination*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, p. 104

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 84-89

can be observed in the institutions of family and church, where “the sexual division of labour and the legitimate representation of that division, guaranteed by law and inscribed in language, imposes itself. . . .”⁴⁵ For example, conservative Christian churches reproduce a discourse, which emphasizes God’s prescribed vision for families and sexuality. In these churches, leaders utilize specific biblical interpretations to legitimate the gendered order, and restrict sexuality to heterosexual marriage.

The use of language is paramount within a field, because it is a strategic place of inscription, where the hegemony of men is established, in part through oppositions. Examples of these sexually characterized oppositions, such as dominant versus dominated, above versus below, or active-penetrating versus passive-penetrated, are inscribed in structures. Bourdieu states, “The oppositions inscribed in the social structure of the fields serve as the support for cognitive structures, practical taxonomies, often recorded in systems of adjectives, which make it possible to produce ethical, aesthetic or cognitive judgements.”⁴⁶ Overall, to analyze a field, one must bear in mind that gender and sexuality are structured in part through institutions, and hence by people who operate within and compose institutions like churches and families. This mutual reinforcement is evident at the Summit, where the normative family model is legitimated by the church. Each institution supports a form of patriarchal morality.

As I previously alluded, individuals within a field compete over specific and unique resources. David Swartz discusses Bourdieu’s field analysis approach to sociology, stating, “Fields denote arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of

⁴⁵ Bourdieu, 2001, p. 85

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 105

good, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize different kinds of capital.”⁴⁷ The struggle between people in their accumulation of social capital, a concept I explain in a subsequent section, generates a hierarchy between dominant and subordinate classes. The specific types of goods and services offered and exchanged within a field vary. For example, within the religious field one’s personal salvation from sin and damnation, represents an important good offered by churches, and specifically church leaders.⁴⁸ However, fields are interrelated in certain respects, as individuals can enter into a number of different fields, and institutions within distinct fields interact with one another within the larger field of power.⁴⁹ Power refers to one’s overall ability to influence or control the behavior of others. Fields are also structured in part by their own “internal mechanisms of development,” in the context of the religious field these mechanisms refer to “its capacity to control the recruitment, socialization, and careers of actors, and to impose its own specific ideology.”⁵⁰ Additionally, specific fields are distinguished by their histories and traditions, and their cultural *doxa*.

Doxa

After briefly defining habitus, structure, and field with regard to a theory of practice, it is possible to identify a process that takes shape in which people come to understand an established order as naturally occurring. Connell and Butler have already

⁴⁷ Swartz, David. 1996. Bridging the study of culture and religion: Pierre Bourdieu's political economy of symbolic power. *Sociology of Religion* 57 (1): 71-85, p. 79

⁴⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991a. “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,” *Comparative Social Research* 13: 1-44. pp. 20-23

⁴⁹ Rey, 2014, pp. 45-46

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81

demonstrated how gender and sexuality do not represent natural and determinant categories, but instead are socially constructed through repeated practices. However, Bourdieu provides a unique lens through which one might understand how an established order produces “the naturalization of its own arbitrariness.”⁵¹ To state it simply, over time through consistently repeated actions derived from one’s habitus, people come to *misrecognize* their given social reality as natural, and Bourdieu calls this experience doxa.⁵² There are a couple of crucial items to unpack as they pertain to this use of terminology. The word *misrecognize* describes what takes place when people fail to realize the structures ingrained in their dispositions, and come to understand them as self-evident. I should also state that the use of doxa to describe the aforementioned experience, is an effort to emphasize and differentiate that experience from orthodox or heterodox belief. For these categories of belief imply an understanding of an alternative to those beliefs, where doxa is “the world of tradition experienced as a ‘natural world’ and taken for granted.”⁵³ Doxa functions within a social group in such a way that an established order maintains a privileged status of unquestionability. Additionally, implicit rules embedded in the doxa are understood by everyone within a given social field, even by those who are lower within the classificatory system, and these rules are derived, sustained, and reinforced through collective beliefs and practices. In other words, a collective and embodied worldview regulates strategic ways of acting, and individuals who effectively navigate implicit rules within their social environment are able to better advance their own interests. The unquestionability of doxa is important in my analysis of

⁵¹ Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

the Summit Church, and I use this concept of doxa to describe the naturalization of an established order as observed at the church.

Cultural Capital

Cultural, social, and symbolic capital constitutes another critical concept in Bourdieu's theory of practice. Bourdieu contends that capital is observed in three identifiable forms: *embodied capital*, *objectified capital*, and *institutionalized capital*.⁵⁴ Although each form of capital is useful in many respects, I will focus on embodied and institutionalized forms of cultural capital, because they are relevant for my analysis. In some instances, cultural capital can be converted into economic capital and vice versa. However, cultural capital is broadly used to describe the cultural esteem accumulated over time through socialization within a particular culture or tradition.⁵⁵ Cultural capital functions as a resource that people can use to advance and legitimate their own interests, and "covers a wide variety of resources, such as verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, scientific knowledge, and educational credentials."⁵⁶ The embodied form of cultural capital refers specifically to the cultural knowledge one accumulates over time, which allows them to reproduce practices consistent with cultural norms and expectations.⁵⁷ I use the concept of embodied cultural capital to discuss the cultural advantages afforded to men who embody and practice a culturally accepted form of godly manhood, and also to highlight the institutionalized privileges obtained by these men.

⁵⁴ Bourdieu, P. 1986. "The Forms of Capital," In J. Richardson, ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood.

⁵⁵ Bourdieu, 1986, p. 46

⁵⁶ Swartz, 1996, p. 75

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51

Bourdieu has received harsh criticism from feminist scholars due to his perceived androcentric interpretation with regard to his concepts of both habitus and embodied cultural capital. For example, according to Leslie McCall, Bourdieu's original discussion of dispositions, or habitus, viewed gender as secondary to race and class, "and fails to capture the logical extension of his own development of capital and habitus."⁵⁸ The author argues that one must consider the gendered habitus, and in turn the cultural capital associated with embodied gendered dispositions, especially considering the family as a modern institution. Bourdieu responds to many of his critics in his book *Masculine Domination*, where he specifically addresses the gendered habitus, and provides key insights around cultural capital and symbolic violence as they pertain to gender and sexuality.⁵⁹ He recognizes the importance of feminist scholarship on gender and sexuality, and advances his own analysis of masculine power, and how it is perpetuated.

Symbolic Violence

Lastly, with regard to theoretical terminology, we need to discuss Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, or "a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling."⁶⁰ All of the previously mentioned components that conceptually frame a given social environment contribute to the infliction of symbolic violence on marginalized

⁵⁸ McCall, L. 1992. does gender fit - bourdieu, feminism, and conceptions of social-order. *Theory and Society* 21 (6): 837-67, p. 844

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, 2001, pp. vii-ix

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 1-2

groups who exist within a given field. Bourdieu states that symbolic violence is needed to achieve social domination, because:

the only way in which relations of domination can be set up, maintained, or restored, is through strategies which, being expressly oriented towards the establishment of relations of personal dependence, must be disguised and transfigured lest they destroy themselves by revealing their true nature; in a word they must be *euphemized*.⁶¹

For certain groups to achieve this kind of social domination, symbolic violence must be misrecognized, where people give others the privilege of legitimate authority. This form of violence is euphemized such that it does not appear harmful on the surface. For example, in the context of conservative Christianity, negative messages about marginalized people are often disguised in language associated with God's love and redemption, which makes it an effective strategy for the preservation of the collective worldview. Symbolic violence often exists in the form of embodied knowledge inscribed through repeated practices. I argue that this embodied violence is enacted through specific practices at the Summit Church, and that symbolic violence is imposed on gay persons in the church community. When specifically discussing the symbolic domination suffered by gays and lesbians, Bourdieu writes that it is "imposed through collective acts of categorization which set up significant negatively marked differences," and that it "takes the form of a denial of public visible existence."⁶² Bourdieu's theory of practice explains how embodied knowledge associated with gender difference manifests in collective practices. In the following chapter I examine specific practices at the Summit, and then analyze how they function as a form of symbolic violence. This violence

⁶¹ Bourdieu, 1977, p. 191

⁶² Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 118-119

functions to delegitimize gay sexuality, and in turn enhances the perception of godly manhood, while preserving the social order.

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives offered by Connell, Butler, and Bourdieu provide critical tools for my investigation of the intersection between gender, sexuality, hegemony, language, tradition, and embodiment in the context of social relations. Each scholar maintains the importance of analyzing the social practices among groups of people, and supplies an important conceptual framework for understanding the function of gender and sexuality. Specifically, Connell demonstrates the hegemonic effects of power within the gender order, and how masculinities are constructed through a variety of cultural mechanisms. She also identifies ways in which hegemonic masculinity subverts other masculinities, especially homosexual masculinity within a patriarchal arrangement of relations. Butler's concept of performativity reveals how sex, gender, and sexuality are materialized on the surface of bodies through the constrained performance of gender. And, Bourdieu's theoretical model demonstrates how, through the reproduction of practices in time and space, those practices inscribe types of embodied cultural knowledge in one's disposition, or lived sense of themselves. Through this process people come to misrecognize a learned and embodied worldview as natural and authoritative. Bourdieu also theorizes how this knowledge functions as cultural capital within a field, and is enacted on subordinate groups through symbolic violence. Together these theoretical approaches provide a lens for critical investigation of the members of the Summit Church.

CHAPTER TWO: PRACTICES AT THE SUMMIT

Church History and Description

In January 2017, the Summit Church celebrated fifteen years since its relaunch, and I was in attendance as a participant observer. The Briar Creek auditorium was filled at the eleven o'clock service, and lead pastor J.D. Greear occupied center stage soon after the service began. Greear was accompanied by his wife Veronica, and a couple additional church members. Greear was introduced, and was given numerous accolades for his fifteen years of service. He was thanked for his steadfast leadership, and the substantial role he has played in growing and developing the Summit Church since his arrival. These remarks were followed by a standing ovation from the crowd gathered at the celebratory service, and then by a public prayer, in which gratitude was expressed for all that had been accomplished by the Summit Church since Greear's appointment. With J.D. and Veronica standing hand in hand, the prayer requested divine wisdom and guidance for the couple in their ministry, and bestowed upon J.D. Greear providence in his marriage and leadership.⁶³ Greear is a central figure for the church, and his preaching represents a powerful social influence in the lives of church members. Before discussing Greear more specifically, I provide a brief contextual history outlining the development of the Summit Church.

The Summit Church began in its original form as Grace Baptist Mission, founded by Sam James in 1961, and was located in Durham, North Carolina. The church grew quickly, and soon united under the name Homestead Baptist Church. The church

⁶³ Greear, J.D. "Disciple." Church Worship Service, The Summit Church, Durham, NC, January 22, 2017.

saw small growth and decline throughout the next several decades, reaching its peak membership in the 1980s. Throughout the 1990s Homestead Baptist Church acquired very few new members, and averaged around 300 members during most of the decade.⁶⁴ After James left the Summit, the church called Dr. Keith Eitel to become their interim pastor in 1998. Dr. Eitel encouraged the church to implement a new plan and vision, which involved a “commitment to do whatever God called them to do.”⁶⁵ In December 2001 church members voted to call J.D. Greear as lead pastor, and Homestead Baptist Church was re-formed as The Summit Church.

Under a new name, and new leadership The Summit Church developed a strategic plan to increase membership over the next year. On Easter Sunday in 2002, The Summit Church had over 1,000 attendees at their worship service.⁶⁶ By the Fall of 2002, The Summit Church had begun attracting numerous college students located in the surrounding areas. In 2007, the Summit Church grew to 2,000 regular attendees at worship gatherings, and continued to seek opportunities to grow. After meeting at River Side High School for a couple years, the Summit moved to a new building in the Briar Creek area of Durham, at which time the church began to implement a “multi-site strategy,” which provided the space for continued growth.⁶⁷ The Summit Church currently occupies nine campus with thousands of attendees at weekly services. At an event as recently as 2013, the Summit Church met for a collective gathering between all campuses, which was held in the Durham Bulls Athletic Park. This event was the second

⁶⁴ “A Long History.” The Summit Church. Accessed January 23, 2017.
<http://www.summitrdu.com/about/history/>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

of its kind, and filled the stadium with over 11,500 people.⁶⁸ The Summit Church has a contemporary style of worship, and continues to place a significant emphasis on growth and baptism.

Despite changes in name and leadership, the church is affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and the Southern Baptist Convention, which have certain requirements related to orthodox belief.⁶⁹ For example, the organization recognizes that women “are an integral part of [their] Southern Baptist boards, faculties, mission teams, writer pools, and professional staffs,” but that “scripture teaches that a woman’s role is not identical to that of men in every respect, and that pastoral leadership is assigned to men.”⁷⁰ The organization also condemns any form of sexuality that is outside a heterosexual marriage relationship. The Southern Baptist Convention has a long history of opposition to gay rights, both politically and in the church. They state, “Homosexuality is not a ‘valid alternative lifestyle,’” and that “The Bible condemns it as sin.”⁷¹ These short statements direct one’s attention to a particular framework of morality represented at the Summit, but a closer examination of practices reveals how these beliefs around gender and sexuality are acted out within specific church environment.

J.D. Greear - The Summit Church Lead Pastor

J.D. Greear has authored several books, which are widely read by church members at the Summit, and he represents a central figure in defining the church.

⁶⁸ Greear, J.D. *The Summit Church 15 Year Anniversary*, “Five Defining Moments for The Summit Church,” Durham, NC. January 2017.

⁶⁹ The Summit Church. “Bylaws,” <http://www.summitrdu.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015-summit-bylaws.pdf>

⁷⁰ Southern Baptist Convention. "Position Statements." Southern Baptist Convention. Accessed January 10, 2017. <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/positionstatements.asp>.

⁷¹ Southern Baptist Convention. "Position Statements."

Although he preaches primarily at the Briar Creek campus of the Summit Church, video projections of his sermons are broadcast to each campus, where members watch him on large screens.⁷² Greear pronounces particular theological stances, and his abilities in speaking and scholarship attribute to him a significant degree of cultural authority. J.D. Greear received a Ph.D. in Theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and serves as a faculty member at the institution. Greear regularly writes blog posts which allow “Summit members to share in ‘Pastor J.D.’s’ theological and pastoral thoughts.”⁷³ On a given Sunday, Greear dresses in jeans, and a casual button-up shirt with the sleeves rolled. He maintains a short gelled hair style, which is tapered on the sides. Greear keeps subtle facial hair scruff, and has a tall athletic build. When he occupies the stage to preach at the Summit, he sustains a wide stance and commanding presence. Greear has a deep tone to his voice, from which he projects loud, confident, and passionate messages. Overall, his style and performed charisma give him a near celebrity status among church members, and he is widely respected among the community. Additionally, he embodies a style of hegemonic masculinity that can be observed through his performed behaviors, and more obviously through his gendered rhetoric, both in his preaching and public prayers.

Practices

The theorists introduced in my previous chapter demonstrate how practices are strategic ways of acting, and that people act in accordance to particular cultural

⁷² General observations regarding practices at the Summit are generated from personal experience, as I attended services from August 2010 through November 2012.

⁷³ Greear, J.D. “About J.D. Greear,” The Summit Church. Accessed January 23, 2017. <http://www.jdgreear.com/about>

expectations. At the Summit, practices are derived from a specific conservative evangelical framework, and they represent a significant component of the social environment. Practices also contribute to the social construction of gender and sexuality, and at the Summit they reinforce heterosexual and patriarchal hegemony. In the sections that follow I focus on the practices of prayer, reading scripture, preaching, and exclusion at the Summit Church. I argue that these practices, among others, form a particular worldview that members embody, and their reproduction legitimates an authoritative discourse around gender hierarchy and sexual exclusion. Specifically, the performance of godly manhood is exemplified by Greear's preaching, and reveals an idealized cultural expectation for men at the church.

Prayer

At the outset, prayer can easily be understood as a corporeal practice, which produces material effects on the bodies of members at the Summit. In his article "Christian Prayer as Political Theory," Matthew John Paul Tan argues that prayer is closely related to political life, and that "prayer, recognized as an embodied practice, generates a polity that is constituted and operationalized alongside and across, but not in accordance to, the established institutions and rules of statecraft."⁷⁴ The author highlights a misconception in common thought which situates prayer primarily in the mind, and renders its implication on biological bodies as secondary. Drawing from the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and discussing the effects of prayer on bodies in a particular environment, Tan states:

⁷⁴ Tan, Matthew John Paul. 2014. Christian prayer as political theory. *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15 (3): 366-79, p. 367

Thus, the body does not merely frame the horizons of what is known, as mentioned above, and the involvement of the body with its environment imprints on that body a creation of a field of dispositions from that environment which then orients the subject and commits him or her into acting in particular ways and to accepting a particular shape of the world which is pre-cognitive.⁷⁵

Therefore, prayer represents an embodied practice, which overtime shapes the way members of a social group think and act. To describe a person's embodied worldview as "pre-cognitive," implies a misrecognition of how, and through what mechanisms prayer shapes patterns of thought and action. Prayers are also practiced within a certain social environment, which informs the act of prayer, structures its content, and compels the behavior of the practitioner.

Within the context of conservative evangelicalism, public prayer holds a prominent place in church services, and is a common practice both before and after sermons. This practice is evident at the Summit Church during almost every service, and the church describes prayer as "a way to experience and express intimacy with God."⁷⁶ It is one of the church's self-identified foundational practices. Greear wrote in a recent article, "Prayer doesn't fuel the ministry; prayer is the ministry."⁷⁷ Members are also instructed how to pray, and encouraged to pray while reading scripture to discern how God is speaking in one's life. For members of the Summit, prayer is used to confess sins and failures in one's Christian life. The church's instruction for the confession of sin states, "The Word of God will do it's work of exposing and uncovering sin. Respond to

⁷⁵ Tan, 2014, p. 370

⁷⁶ The Summit Church, "Prayer - A.T.C.S.," <http://www.summitrdu.com/resources/prayer-bible-study/prayer/>

⁷⁷ Greear, J.D., "Plumline #5: Prayer Doesn't Fuel the Ministry; Prayer is the Ministry," *The Summit Church*, September 7, 2016. <https://jdgrear.com/blog/prayer-doesnt-prepare-for-ministry-prayer-is-the-ministry/>

that conviction by agreeing with God that what he says about your sin is right. Pray for the desire and willingness to follow Christ in full obedience.”⁷⁸ This instruction reveals the complex framework from which one is supposed to pray. Prayer is not politically neutral, because for members of the Summit, the act is informed by specific biblical interpretations. Tan explains that prayer is not “a vague stirrer of internal dispositions or an inspiration towards political action,” but is “a political action in and of itself.”⁷⁹ Further, the author states, “It is a political action by its situating some kind of public that in turn conditions the knowledge categories that we bring to prayer.”⁸⁰ This is clearly the case regarding prayer at the Summit. Members of the church bring certain “knowledge categories” associated with gender and sexuality to the practice of prayer, which the practice itself reinforces.

An example of pre-cognitive knowledge members may possess is demonstrated by some of the church’s institutional stances. I have already highlighted some larger organizational stances regarding gender difference, male leadership, and gay exclusion. However, Greear reproduces similar ideologies through blog posts, sermons, and biblical interpretation, and this discourse will be furthered analyzed in subsequent sections of my thesis. I emphasize these beliefs here, to explain how rigid parameters around the expression of gender and sexuality likely pre-exist the act of prayer in the minds of many Summit Church members.

Now I turn to a specific example of public prayer at the Summit. J.D. Greear has preached on homosexuality several times over the past few years. His most recent sermon

⁷⁸ The Summit Church, “Prayer - A.T.C.S.”

⁷⁹ Tan, 2014, p. 372

⁸⁰ Ibid.

on Christian faith and gay acceptance was titled, “God’s Love and Same Sex Attraction: Cor 6:9-11.”⁸¹ Although I discuss this sermon in greater depth in a following section, here I provide a particular example of the practice of prayer, and analyze a couple of prominent features. Before speaking about the issue of gay acceptance in his sermon, Greear asks members at all campuses to bow their heads, and ask the Holy Spirit for help with discernment on the issue at hand.⁸² This act of bowing one’s head is in and of itself a practice that has important associations with reverence and divine authority. Even though church members were prompted to bow their heads by Greear, many participants are also responding to historical and cultural knowledge. It is a learned behavior. Given the particular time and place of the prayer, many church members possess an embodied knowledge that over time prompts a response of bowing one’s head that seems almost second nature. Following this initial request, Greear states:

Father I pray for the Spirit that spoke with grace and truth, the Spirit God upon Jesus who was so clear that they crucified Jesus, yet the Spirit of grace that drew people so effectively to himself. I pray that it would now cover me entirely, so that I would decrease in this, and you would increase. God our hearts are humble, and we want to tremble at your word. We stand ready to hear from the God of the universe. God give us faith to believe, and give us courage to act on what you say. I pray in Jesus name, amen.⁸³

In this prayer, Greear speaks on behalf of all persons participating with him in the practice. He asks to be covered by the Spirit, who theologically is the source of divine knowledge, which in turn gives Greear a heightened degree of authority as he begins preaching. This phenomenon is further exemplified through Greear’s pronouncement that

⁸¹ Greear, J.D., “Is There Anything Wrong with Same Sex Attraction?” Church Sermon, The Summit Church. Durham, NC, April 26, 2015.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

participants in the practice will hear from the God of the universe. Lastly, the assertion that God will provide the courage to act in response to the message being presented by Greear, demonstrates how the bodies of agents are politicized through the reproduction of the practice of public prayer.

In addition to the way the practice of public prayer can implicate individual bodies, and motivate certain actions, the practice of prayer when performed in public has a larger social dimension. Tan explains that, “The fact that the body already comes discursively with transcorporeal knowledge categories means that the material body is already politicized, it already has built into it an organized public reasoning,” which was “made by others before him and that comes prior to one’s consciousness of it.”⁸⁴ In other words, public prayer is a response to collective cultural beliefs and expectations. When Greear leads a prayer, the prayer cannot be analyzed as a singular act. Instead, one must consider how Greear’s prayer is constructed and reproduced within the social environment of the church, among like-minded Christians, and toward particular goals.

The unspoken, and often misrecognized goals of a given social practice reveal what Bourdieu calls “the whole truth.”⁸⁵ The idea is that practices like prayer serve a social function, which they can only serve when a certain “self-deception” is maintained by participants.⁸⁶ For example, on the surface the public act of prayer signals an authentic belief that Greear seeks divine guidance before he delivers a sermon. However, in the example of prayer provided above, Greear is about to deliver a sermon he has already prepared; one he has prepared in accordance to pre-existing orthodox beliefs. Therefore,

⁸⁴ Tan, 2014, p. 372

⁸⁵ Bourdieu, 1977, p. 6

⁸⁶ Ibid.

there must be a hidden objective that underlies his use of prayer. For instance, I argue that the prayer which precedes Greear's sermon on "same-sex attraction," is a strategic mechanism to condition church members, and legitimate the authority of his message. This notion will achieve more clarity through my analysis of the sermon itself.

Reading Scripture

Of course, the Bible represents an important source of authority for members of the Summit Church. It is commonly referred to as 'the Word,' highlighting the belief that the text contains the words of God. In a statement about core beliefs, the Summit states, "We believe the Bible to be God's Word, a true and fully accurate account of God's love for us. It's purpose is to teach us how to have a relationship with him, worship him, and bring him glory."⁸⁷ Before he begins sermons, J.D. Greear prompts those who brought their Bibles to turn to the specific passage from which he is preaching. The collective practice of bringing Bibles to the space demonstrates the importance of scripture, and indicates a certain degree of cultural knowledge possessed by members. For example, those who regularly attend services at the Summit know that bringing one's Bible is a common practice, because they have learned over time to understand its importance among the group. However, they may misrecognize this practice as natural, something one simply does, and in this way the practice continues to reproduce itself. Additionally, the specific verses are projected onto screens at the front of the room, such that all seated members can view the words. Numerous scholars have pointed to the importance of belief in biblical authority found in conservative evangelical Christianity, and Greear has

⁸⁷ The Summit Church. "Beliefs," <http://www.summitrdu.com/about/beliefs/>

preached entire sermons aimed at demonstrating the inspired infallibility of scripture.⁸⁸

Given this historical and cultural belief in scriptural authority, I argue that trusting in the divine authority of scripture is part of an embodied worldview. It is a primary assumption upon which an entire moral discourse is formed. To quote, collectively read, and interpret scripture is also a strategic way of acting, and serves numerous political functions for church members and leaders. For example, when Greear roots an ideological message in a passage of scripture, he legitimates that message to the community. He also legitimates himself as an authority, and interpreter of God's word.

Furthermore, Butler emphasizes how certain public figures appeal to pre-existing sources of authority, from which they speak into being regulatory sanctions. However, despite the collectively embodied belief that God instituted the Bible as source of wisdom, sanctions are "grounded in no other legitimating authority than the echo-chain of their own reinvocation."⁸⁹ In other words, the authority is not in Bible as it may appear to be. Instead, the reproduced discourse pertaining to scriptural authority, which is spoken through citations by figures such as Greear, is in and of itself the source of legitimating authority. Through the performative act of speaking, Greear and other church members, create the formative power of constraint. For example, as citations are reproduced to define parameters of authentic Christian practice, they limit what behaviors

⁸⁸ Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. 1990. *Baptist battles: Social change and religious conflict in the southern baptist convention*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; Cothen, Grady C. 1995. *The new SBC: Fundamentalism's impact on the southern baptist convention*. Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys Pub; Greear, J.D., "The Word: John 14:23-24" Church Sermon, The Summit Church. Durham, NC, August 21, 2011. In the sermon Greear explains the divine nature of the Bible, and that Jesus viewed all the words in the Bible as the Father's words.

⁸⁹ Butler, 1993, p. 107

and beliefs are acceptable for members of the group. This critical observation is pertinent to my analysis with regard to cultural constraints around practicing normative acts of gender and sexuality. Since the Bible is interpreted through a specific hermeneutic to limit sexuality to heterosexual marriage, when Greear reproduces sanctions that condemn gay sexuality, he produces a perceived threat to gay persons in the church. The threat includes stigmatization and exclusion, which I discuss in depth at the end of this chapter.

Preaching

Preaching in the form of sermon delivery represents an important practice in Protestant churches, and a primary element of any given service. Preaching occurs at a particular time and place, and has ritualized significance for church participants. The most obvious human subject for analysis is the preacher. For the duration of the sermon, church members focus their attention on the person speaking and they expect to learn from the material presented. Although the preacher and the message delivered are important components of the social experience, there are additional practices in which church members themselves engage. At the Summit Church the sermon begins about half-way through the service, after members have engaged in corporate worship through singing and collective prayer. Services at the Summit are large gatherings of people, where participants are seated in rows facing the front of a dimly lit room. Located at the front-center of the room is a stage where a band plays music with words projected on screens, which encourages member participation in signing. This stage, or pulpit, is where J.D. Greear preaches at the Briar Creek campus of the Summit, and his sermons are projected on screens at the front of other campus auditoriums. Many church participants engage in active learning during and after the sermon, which includes note

taking and post-sermon reflection. I argue that the practices of preaching, and active participation by members constitute a strategic place of inscription, and that these practices actively reproduce themselves within the organized social space. They also contribute to an embodied knowledge maintained in the consciousness of members.

In his article “Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context,” Scott Thumma identifies key features characteristic of megachurches, which were identified from data collected over five years, sampling over 350 such congregations.⁹⁰ Thumma explains the importance of charismatic leadership in the development of megachurches. The author states, “Megachurches are more often than not the product of one highly gifted spiritual leader. The majority of contemporary megachurches were either founded by or achieved mega-status within the tenure of a single senior minister.”⁹¹ This phenomenon is representative of Greear’s influence in growing the Summit Church. Thumma goes on to explain that, “These pastors are usually personally charismatic, exceptionally gifted men. As senior minister, and often the church’s founder, these persons occupy the singular, most prominent, high profile position in the congregation.”⁹² Greear is the holder of this position at the Summit Church, and I contend that his charisma is exhibited in his practice of preaching. I also argue that Greear’s practice of preaching is a mode of production used to acquire a

⁹⁰ Thumma, Scott. 1996. “Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context,” *Hartford Institute for Religious Research*, Hartford, CT., p. 1

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁹² *Ibid.*

significant degree of cultural and symbolic capital, which I analyze in a subsequent section.⁹³

Before turning to a couple examples of Greear's preaching, one must understand that Greear speaks with the presumed influence of divine authority. This is demonstrated by the prayer highlighted in a previous section. Greear is the only one speaking during the sermon, while participants listen and take notes in a receptive pedagogical arrangement. This relationship exhibits a key power dynamic, which Bourdieu addresses in *Symbolic Power and the Political Field*. Bourdieu writes:

This means that symbolic power does not reside in 'symbolic systems' in the form of an 'illocutionary force' but that it is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e. in the very structure of the field in which *belief* is produced and reproduced. What creates the power of words and slogans, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief.⁹⁴

In other words, symbolic power is not a metaphysical force enacted from or on actors, and it requires more than just speaking. The power embedded in language is reinforced through one's belief in the speaker's authority, and the structured relationship maintained between Greear and church members. However, Butler would contend that the legitimate belief in Greear's authority and spoken words, is itself generated through the performative act of preaching as it is ritualized over time. In addition to Greear's powerful method of delivery in the practice of preaching, his words are given power and legitimation through appealing to a particular scriptural hermeneutic. As previously stated, the practice of reading scripture, given its significance within the Christian

⁹³ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991a. "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field," *Comparative Social Research* 13: 1-44. pp. 20-23

⁹⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991b. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 170

tradition, inscribes a particular type of embodied knowledge in the minds and bodies of church members. Therefore, when Greear interprets biblical texts in the practice of preaching, listening participants come to understand the prescribed worldview as natural and authoritative, which solidifies the relationship and networks of power.

In the following paragraphs, I analyze three examples of Greear's preaching, highlighting key aspects of his rhetoric. Greear often preaches sermons which assert a fundamental difference between men and women. These sermons are preached by Greear, both at men's conferences, and in the church at large. Normative understandings of gender and sexuality are embedded in embodied structures that have been continually reproduced over time, and are reproduced through practices such as preaching. A specific sermon given by Greear at a men's conference in 2016 exemplifies the call for the spiritual leadership of men. He discusses, as many have before, a crisis among men in the twenty-first century. He argues that the decline of "manly" leadership has caused major problems within the larger society. He uses Genesis throughout his sermon to explain how "the world went wrong when men weren't leading spiritually," and that "gender roles were created to reveal the image of God."⁹⁵ Greear also states, "Men are made in the image of God," and that, "a characteristic of God is that he rules."⁹⁶ As Greear makes these statements, he does so with passion, conviction, and authority. They are not phrased as mere opinions about gender differentiation, they are presented as divine revelations rooted in sound biblical interpretation. Additionally, the entire sermon is preached to men

⁹⁵ Greear, J.D. "Men's Conference: Session Pt. 1." Church Sermon, The Summit Church. Durham NC, March 4, 2016.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

about leading women, which presumes that godly manhood can only be achieved through a certain type of heterosexual relationship. As Bourdieu explains:

In fact, the theological subfield itself is a field of competition and one can hypothesize that ideologies produced for purposes of this competition are more or less predisposed to be taken up again and utilized in other struggles (e.g., the struggles for power within the church) according to the *social* function that they fulfill for the producers occupying different positions in this field.⁹⁷

Although Bourdieu writes specifically about power struggles between hierarchical differentiations in the Catholic Church, as they pertain to clergy and laypersons, I contend that this theoretical hypothesis can be applied to the Summit. Ideologies associated with gender difference which afford men a particular place of power, most obviously serve the purpose of elevating producers of knowledge such as Greear. However, inasmuch as these ideologies are embodied by other men at the church, they can be reproduced in a form that enacts a social domination over women, and gay persons.

With regard to theology as a subfield of competition, I argue that heterosexual men at the Summit may utilize ideologies inscribed through preaching, in order to legitimate their superiority through the institution of traditional marriage. In his sermon “Marriage and the Gospel,” Greear appeals to the authority of scripture to argue that women should submit to the authority of their husbands.⁹⁸ Greear’s appeal to the authority of scripture is clearly demonstrated as he begins the sermon stating, “we don’t follow Jesus because each issue he teaches makes the most sense to us, but because He is

⁹⁷ Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 27

⁹⁸ Greear, J.D. ““Marriage and the Gospel’ // 1 Peter 3: 1-7 // *I am an Alien #6*,” Church Sermon, The Summit Church. Durham NC, December 4, 2011.

Lord and His word is sovereign.”⁹⁹ Greear also addresses the contradiction which exists between his message and the cultural narrative, blaming divorce and children born to unwed parents on American society’s collective abandonment of traditional Christian marriage. Greear argues that wives are not told to be subject to their husbands because they are inferior, but then insists that women are physically “weaker,” “weaker” in their position of authority, and “weaker” in their emotional sensitivity.¹⁰⁰ To explain how women are weaker emotionally, Greear discusses generalized perceptions about sexual behavior within the marriage relationship. He suggests that if one’s wife has had a bad day, men think, “Let’s just have sex and forget about it. Start over. That’s not how she works. For guys, sex is like a way to deal with a bad day; for wives, sex is like the topping on a sundae. There has to be a lot of sweetness and building up to it.”¹⁰¹

Although these statements are made while addressing the emotional capacity of women, it is clear that the concern is fundamentally connect to bodies, and what should or should not be done with those bodies.

Greear uses metaphorical language in asserting that men are like Jeeps, and women are like Ferraris. He states:

A Jeep: you take it off road. You beat it up. You get it dirty. Who cares? You kind of like it that way. You don’t want to get in a Jeep and have it smell like the perfume section at Nordstrom. You like it to have a certain rugged quality. Ferraris though, you don’t take that off roading. It’s well-crafted. It’s got nice lines. You just want to look at it. That’s what you do. That’s reality right?¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Greear, J.D. “Marriage and the Gospel”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

In this explanation, not only does Greear contend an ontological difference between men and women, but he also hints at what defines gender performance; how men must act to be perceived and legitimated as masculine, and how a woman's femininity is defined by physical beauty. After this illustration, Greear explains that wearing skinny jeans is wrong for both men and women. He argues that for women, it is wrong because it is tempting for men, and for men it is wrong because it is nauseating.¹⁰³ There are two critical points one might consider while analyzing this particular statement. First, there is a concern for controlling women's bodies by constraining the performative act of wearing clothing that may tempt a man. Second, Greear reveals how the stylization of men's bodies are policed along the lines of a heterosexual gender binary. The subtext suggests that men should not wear skinny jeans because they are perceived as feminine, which is fundamentally opposed to what it means to be a man. Based on Butler's concept of performativity, it is evident that performing gender is what provides the perception of real gender. She states, "we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right," and the "construction [of gender through reproduced acts] 'compels' our belief in its necessity."¹⁰⁴ The threat of punishment is necessary because apart from the acts of gender, gender does not exist. The idea of gender is maintained by its performance, and constraining performative acts within the bounds of heteronormative associations produces and legitimates the gender and sexual binary. Greear's sermon "Marriage and the Gospel," reveals a strategic way heterosexual men at the Summit can perform a

¹⁰³ Greear, J.D. "Marriage and the Gospel"

¹⁰⁴ Butler, 1990, p. 140

culturally encouraged form of hegemonic masculinity, or godly manhood, through adhering to certain prescribed requirements regarding their marriages.

Another sermon preached by Greear pertains specifically to the issue of sexuality, and the practice of preaching in this context specifically functions as a strategic means by which structures of heterosexual dominance are inscribed. During his sermon “God’s Love and Same Sex Attraction,” Greear begins by recognizing a cultural divide on the issue, and explains that secular society insists that one must react to gay persons with either affirmation or alienation.¹⁰⁵ However, throughout his preaching Greear attempts to tow a line between these two distinct positions by maintaining the sinfulness of homosexuality, while not overtly dismissing gay persons. Greear refers to the six biblical passages said to address homosexuality, and tells church members “to be open to God’s lordship,” and “open to what the Bible says.”¹⁰⁶ After some theological interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11, Greear asserts that, “the Bible is clear, thus God is clear: homosexuality is wrong, and a deviation from God’s plan.” Greear preaches about God’s love numerous times throughout the sermon, but maintains that members must love those who are gay enough to tell them the truth, “that those who practice a gay or lesbian lifestyle will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”¹⁰⁷ Much like his sermons on godly manhood, Greear leaves no room for debate or compromise. His passionate and direct preaching insists that God has spoken with definite clarity on the issue, and that members must be obedient to God’s instruction.

¹⁰⁵ Greear, J.D., “Is There Anything Wrong with Same Sex Attraction?”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

After the analysis of these three examples, I want to clarify that Greear's words alone do not generate a standard monolithic ideology among all church members. Church participants, belonging to numerous social fields, can hold various conflicting ideologies. Drawing from J.G. Merquior, John B. Thomas, and Bourdieu, Catherine Bell argues that ideology is more than belief. She states, ". . . ideology is best understood as a strategy of power, a process whereby certain social practices or institutions are depicted to be 'natural' and right."¹⁰⁸ Bell also contends to, "rethink ideology as a lived and practical consciousness, as a partial and oppositional process actively constructed by all involved and taking place in the very organization of everyday life."¹⁰⁹ Understanding ideology as a strategy of power which is reproduced through certain practices, emphasizes the significance of Greear's preaching, because it is the comprehensive collection of practices, not simply Greear's words that work to inscribe specific forms of knowledge in the minds of church members. With regard to performances of gender and sexuality, they are reproduced by both Greear and church members, and the various collective acts are a strategy for maintaining the appearance of 'natural' sex, gender, and sexuality. I argue that members reproduce various practices within the social environment of the Summit, and they do so according to a particular embodied worldview that shapes their daily lives. In turn, this process causes the members to misrecognize the world of tradition as natural, authoritative, and determinant. It may be that this worldview is so intimately embedded in members' consciousness, that to question its legitimacy would deconstruct a fundamental component of their collective and self-identities.

¹⁰⁸ Bell, Catherine M. 1992. *Ritual theory, ritual practice*. New York: Oxford University Press., p. 192

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191

Exclusion

The last realm of practices I analyze before turning to a discussion of cultural capital and symbolic violence, are practices of exclusion. Although there exist certain institutionalized regulations that exclude openly gay persons from church participation at the Summit Church, to understand exclusion as a practice draws attention to the active role of human persons play in reproducing structures inscribed in their dispositions. The condemnation of homosexuality written into organizational law has already been documented. The question remains: How is exclusion practiced? First and foremost, exclusion of gay persons is enforced by individual and collective persons within the church, and by leadership and laity alike. Membership to the church community depends on one's adherence to orthodox beliefs, and embracing a gay identity violates that orthodoxy, thus disqualifying gay persons from membership. Additionally, practices of exclusion exist in "a refusal to legitimate."¹¹⁰ Greear's sermon "Is There Anything Wrong with Same Sex Attraction?," demonstrates evidence of this exclusionary practice, in the very language of 'same sex attraction' used throughout the sermon. This categorization delegitimizes those belonging to the group, by focusing solely on the aspect gay persons associated with sexual attraction. In the same sermon, Greear contends that gays and lesbians will not inherit the Kingdom of God, which assumes that openly gay persons cannot be true Christians, and thus excludes them from Christian fellowship at large. Greear mentions a college student named Dustin who formerly (past-tense) worked on his staff. Greear explains that Dustin came to him to confess a "dark

¹¹⁰ Bourdieu, 2001, p. 119

secret,” with which he had dealt for many years.¹¹¹ Dustin explained that he had been dealing with feelings of ‘same sex attraction,’ which had lead him to an addiction to internet pornography, and miscellaneous hook-ups with men.¹¹² Based on all the material presented, one can assume that Dustin was not met with affirmation and healing. These practices of exclusion manifest from the consciousness of Greear and church members, which is culturally and historically conditioned with schemes of embodied knowledge.

Writing about homosexual exclusion, Bourdieu states:

The strength of the orthodoxy, in other words the ‘straight’ and conservative *doxa* that every form of domination (white, male, bourgeois) imposes, is that it constitutes the particularities which result from historical discrimination as embodied dispositions invested with all the signs of naturalness.¹¹³

For example, Greear recalls hearing that a church member said, “there is a special place in hell for gay people,” and although Greear condemns the sentiment, he fails to realize how culturally accepted practices of exclusion are complicit in legitimating such statements.¹¹⁴ To conclude, I argue that the historical tradition from which the Summit Church originates, has continually reproduced certain discriminatory practices, which are embodied by members at the church. These practices, inasmuch as they are embedded in structures of masculine domination, legitimate and naturalize an arbitrary worldview pertaining to normative sexual behavior. The previous sections have focused on *how* practices inscribe embodied knowledge, while the following sections will use the

¹¹¹ Greear, J.D., “Is There Anything Wrong with Same Sex Attraction?”

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Bourdieu, 2001, p. 122

¹¹⁴ Greear, J.D., “Trying to Respond Like Jesus to the SCOTUS Pronouncement on Same-sex Marriage,” *J.D. Greear: Pastor, Author, Theologian*, The Summit Church, June 29, 2015, http://www.jdgreear.com/my_weblog/2015/06/trying-to-respond-like-jesus-to-the-scotus-pronouncement-on-same-sex-marriage.html#more-17262

concepts of cultural capital and symbolic violence to explain *why* this social order continually works to legitimate itself.

CHAPTER THREE: CULTURAL CAPITAL AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital in the context of the Summit Church is acquired through a variety of mechanisms, and its acquisition is not exclusive to church members or leadership. Both groups engage in a labor of production, often in the form of practices, which accumulated over time grant certain cultural advantages within the church. I begin by discussing Bourdieu's concept of religious capital, and argue that J.D. Greear, in his role as church pastor, continuously reproduces practices which result in the accumulation of religious capital. This religious capital is both embodied and institutionalized. Additionally, I argue that church members at the Summit acquire certain forms of cultural capital through reproducing a conservative Christian discourse, and by demonstrating their adherence to a specific dogma, or what Bourdieu would call *doxa*. Lastly, as Leslie McCall has contended, one's gendered disposition can function as a form of embodied cultural capital.¹¹⁵ Given the structures of heteropatriarchy inscribed in members at the church, the performance of hegemonic masculinity, or godly manhood, functions to elevate the status of certain heterosexual men. Each form of cultural capital is associated with social differentiation among people, and maintains the legitimation of power exercised by dominant groups, over and on dominated groups.

Religious and Institutionalized Capital

In *Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field*, Pierre Bourdieu applies his theory of practices to the religious field, and provides an instrumental focus on religious habitus, as well as religious labor and capital. From the outset of his analysis of the

¹¹⁵ McCall, 1992, p. 844

religious field, Bourdieu contends that religion can be understood as a language. The author states:

Considering religion as a language, that is as both an instrument of communication and an instrument of knowledge or, more precisely, as a *symbolic medium* at once *structured* (therefore receptive to structural analysis) and *structuring*, as a condition of possibility of the primordial form of consensus that is the agreement on the meaning of signs and on the meaning of the world that they permit one to construct. . . .¹¹⁶

By insisting that religion is both structured and structuring, Bourdieu highlights the fact that religion is a social system created by people, and that it also reproduces itself through ritualized practices. Drawing from the work of Max Weber, Bourdieu states, “religion conserves the social order by contributing, in his own words, to the ‘legitimation’ of power of ‘the dominant’ and to the ‘domestication of the dominated.’”¹¹⁷ Bourdieu situates his focus on the political functions religion fulfills, and adds to previous theory by drawing attention to what he calls *religious labour*. Religious labour is “carried out by specialized producers and spokespeople invested with power, institutional or not, to respond to a particular category of needs belonging to certain social groups with a definite type of practice or discourse.”¹¹⁸ This religious labour exists in the form of social practices at the Summit, and produces a form of cultural and religious capital, which grants those who possess it a privileged status within the differentiated social hierarchy.

The ritualized practices identified at the Summit Church in the previous section are forms of religious labour.¹¹⁹ The embodied conservative Christian worldview members may possess in their consciousness contributes to their legitimation of Greear’s

¹¹⁶ Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 2

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 4

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 5

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 22

authority and power, which he exercises through public prayer, reading scripture, preaching, and exclusion. Bourdieu explains that, “religious capital is the generative basis of all thoughts, perceptions, and actions conforming with the norms of a religious representation of the natural and supernatural world.”¹²⁰ In addition to the embodied religious capital possessed by Greear, he also maintains some degree of institutionalized capital given his recognized role as church pastor, and his academic degrees, described as “a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture. . . .”¹²¹ Bourdieu also contends that, “the capital of strictly religious authority of which a religious claimant can dispose depends on the material and symbolic force of the groups and classes the claimants can mobilize by offering them goods and services that satisfy their religious interests.”¹²² The most obvious goods offered by producers of knowledge, such as Greear, are those associated with the promise of salvation.

Greear preaches on Christian salvation often, and one such sermon is titled, “The Assurance of Salvation: John 5:10-13.”¹²³ The initial focus of the sermon is on believing in the finished work of Jesus’s sacrifice, which in and of itself grants salvation to those who believe in the testimony. However, as Greear continues preaching, he discusses the manifestation of Jesus’s testimony in one’s life. This implies that particular actions must be evident in order for someone to have assurance of salvation. Greear quotes 1 John 2:3-6 stating:

¹²⁰ Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 22

¹²¹ Bourdieu, 1986, p. 50

¹²² Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 22

¹²³ Greear, J.D., “The Assurance of Salvation: John 5:10-13,” Church Sermon, The Summit Church. Durham, NC, October 2, 2011.

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.¹²⁴

To be clear, Greear does not assert that he administers the goods of salvation directly. He attributes this responsibility to God through the sacrifice of Jesus. However, inasmuch as Greear interprets Jesus’s commands through a particular scriptural hermeneutic, he does dictate provisions around authentic beliefs and practices. The manifestation of these beliefs and practices are a crucial part of one’s assurance of salvation, and therefore I argue that Greear does to some degree control and administer the goods of salvation to church participants within the institutional context of the Summit Church.

Among conservative Christians at large, I have explained how the promotion of the normative heterosexual family model is a fundamental aspect of their collective identity. These Christians often view the legitimation of gay relationships, both within the church and American society, as a serious threat to traditional marriage. In *Generous Spaciousness*, Wendy VanderWal-Gritter argues that among Conservative Christians, one’s stance on gay sexuality is often used as a “litmus,” or “orthodoxy test.”¹²⁵ For example, if someone believes that a person can be gay and Christian, they have failed the test, and have demonstrated their inauthenticity as true Christians. In the conservative Christian view, this also proves a form of idolatry, where personal feelings are privileged

¹²⁴ Greear, J.D., “The Assurance of Salvation,” Greear quotes 1 John 2:3-6 ESV during the sermon.

¹²⁵ VanderWal-Gritter, Wendy. 2014. *Generous spaciousness: Responding to gay christians in the church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Publishing Group, pp. 47-48

over the authoritative mandate of scripture. In a four-part blog series titled “Homosexuality, Christianity, and the Gospel,” Greear provides a clear example of how one’s stance on gay sexuality is used to test orthodox belief. Greear describes the Summit’s stance on homosexuality stating, “Our stance on this issue may be one of the most important tests of faithfulness in our generation.”¹²⁶ Greear argues that there is no room for disagreement on the issue of homosexuality for faithful Christians, and writes, “We believe that the God we claim to love considers this practice to be an *abomination* to Him (Romans 1:26-27), and we can’t say that we love God and have fellowship with what He finds abominable.”¹²⁷ These statements serve as clear examples of how Greear administers and restricts the goods of salvation among Christians.

Given that the goods of salvation are a commodity offered to members at the Summit, the ability to administer them must be guarded by the institution. For the church to maintain cultural capital related to administering these goods, they actively delegitimize oppositional ideologies that contradict their prescribed worldview. In the context of the Catholic Church, Bourdieu identifies a conflict between oppositional ideologies represented by the church and the prophet, and he recognizes that the institutional church acts to delegitimize prophets.¹²⁸ The competition between the two represents a struggle for power. Although Bourdieu highlights the opposition between the *church* and the *prophet*, I argue that Greear and the Summit seek to delegitimize secular

¹²⁶ Greear, J.D. “What is the Summit’s Stance Toward Homosexuality?,” *J.D. Greear Ministries*, April 17, 2012. <https://jdgrear.com/blog/homosexuality-christianity-and-the-gospel-part-4/>

¹²⁷ Greear, J.D. “Frequently Asked Questions,” *J.D. Greear Ministries*, April 17, 2012. <https://jdgrear.com/blog/homosexuality-christianity-and-the-gospel-part-2/>

¹²⁸ Bourdieu, 1991a, p. 23

culture in order to maintain institutional authority over the goods of salvation. In a variety of sermons and blog posts, especially those in response to issues of sexuality and gender, the Summit has made culture the enemy of Christianity. In a blog post written following the United States Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), Greear condemns the secular state and culture stating, “we know that the struggle between God and the Enemy rages in every sphere, especially the halls of power.”¹²⁹ Greear also addresses the church’s opposition with the larger American culture in the sermon I analyzed on Christian marriage, where he recognizes two conflicting ideologies as they pertain to the gendered ordering of relations. Lastly, in Greear’s sermon on ‘same-sex attraction,’ he states, “The narrative our culture puts forward regarding homosexuality is that we have only two options: affirmation or alienation.”¹³⁰ Following this statement, Greear insists that the narrative is false, and thus he delegitimizes cultural as incorrect, and at odds with the legitimate truth of scripture. Additionally, the church states, “There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.”¹³¹ Given organizational and institutional stances on issues of gender and sexuality, I contend that personal faith is not legitimated apart from one’s adherence to defined orthodox beliefs, thus limiting the distribution of the goods of salvation to those who accept the notion that women should submit to men, and believe that homosexual relations are sinful.

¹²⁹ Greear, J.D., “Trying to Respond Like Jesus to the SCOTUS Pronouncement on Same-sex Marriage,” *J.D. Greear: Pastor, Author, Theologian*, The Summit Church, June 29, 2015, http://www.jdgreear.com/my_weblog/2015/06/trying-to-respond-like-jesus-to-the-scotus-pronouncement-on-same-sex-marriage.html#more-17262.

¹³⁰ Greear, J.D., “Is There Anything Wrong with Same Sex Attraction?”

¹³¹ Southern Baptist Convention, “The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message,” June 14, 2000. <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>. This online document is linked to the Summit Church’s website page titled “Beliefs”.

This struggle against culture is better understood in the context of organizational competition within the field of power. Writing about symbolic power in the religious field, David Swartz states, “The field analytic perspective calls for situating particular entities, whether denominations or congregations, within a broader framework of struggle over the significance of religion.”¹³² Within the religious field, and among other interconnected fields, there exist various organizations and institutions which compete within the larger field of power. The field of power refers to a person's or institution's ability to control and regulate other people. In the religious field, organizations compete for legitimacy, and in some cases for the monopoly over the distribution of religious goods. The Summit's claim to legitimacy rests in their self-understood adherence to a particular orthodoxy pertaining to normative expressions of gender and sexuality, which they claim to be divinely mandated through scripture. Bourdieu states, “the emergence of sexuality as such is also indissociable from the appearance of a set of fields and agents competing for the monopoly of the legitimate definition of sexual practices and discourses. . . .”¹³³ Through their continued support of strict definitions around gender and sexuality the Summit actively differentiates itself from secular cultural, and other religious institutions perceived as giving in to cultural demands.

Embodied Capital - Godly Manhood

Social, cultural, and symbolic capital are not exclusive to church leaders such as Greear. In fact, I contend that the cultural practice of hegemonic masculinity functions as form of embodied cultural capital. Connell argued that masculinities, and hegemonic

¹³² Swartz, 1996, p. 83

¹³³ Bourdieu, 2001, p. 104

masculinity have various definitions between cultural groups. However, hegemonic masculinity always manifests as the dominant form of masculinity, and as a cultural ideal.¹³⁴ Within the social context of the Summit Church, godly manhood represents the idealized form of masculinity. Although its performance differs in certain respects from other varieties of hegemonic masculinity, it maintains many similar qualities. For example, as I've demonstrated through an analysis of specific sermons, biblical interpretations, blog posts, and institutional stances, the practice of godly manhood is associated with heterosexual male dominance in traditional marriages, as well as the subordination of gay masculinity.¹³⁵ These characteristics are fundamental components of hegemonic masculinity across cultures. However, at the Summit they are practiced in softer and more subtle ways. This reality makes the performance less obvious, but no less dangerous for those whom it subjects. In reality, this conservative Christian form of hegemonic masculinity might be more menacing due to its cultural disguise.

As I noted earlier, Leslie McCall utilizes Bourdieu's conceptual framework of capital and habitus to rethink the gendered forms of social organization. McCall argues that Bourdieu "hides behind the pervasiveness of gender symbolism through his ambiguous and multi-faceted definition of *secondary*, failing to detail or acknowledge the intricacies and complexities of gender identity and its intersection with sexuality and gender status."¹³⁶ McCall departs from a strict focus on biological bodies, which draws attention to how gendered dispositions function as a form of embodied cultural capital. She states:

¹³⁴ Connell, 2015, p. 4

¹³⁵ Connell, 2005, pp. 77-78

¹³⁶ McCall, 1992, p. 851

On the one hand, the multiplicity of gendered dispositions in the form of capital contributes to the construction of positions: gendered dispositions are multiple and not, of course, attached only to sexed biological bodies, yet they become attached to the body in the form of embodied gendered dispositions shaping individuals' social trajectories. Yet on the other hand, the dichotomous actions of gender acts to constrain and subordinate the meaning of women's activity, whatever so-called capital.¹³⁷

McCall contends that biologically sexed bodies are not the primary source of cultural capital, but capital is accumulated through the gendered dispositions that are attached to those bodies. The Summit Church grants institutionalized privileges to men, and specifically heterosexual men. This is demonstrated through the belief that, "scripture teaches that a woman's role is not identical to that of men in every respect, and that pastoral leadership is assigned to men," and the church's exclusion of gay men from open participation.¹³⁸ It is further exhibited through Greear's sermons addressed to men and women regarding the importance of traditional marriage, specifically compelling men to practice spiritual leadership in their relationships. However, situating these practices in the context of embodied cultural capital demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity as a practice, functions as a form of capital. This form of capital can be accumulated by all men who practice a culturally specific type of hegemonic masculinity, which is godly manhood. The question is: How do men practice godly manhood at the Summit?

A recent Bible study implemented at the Summit Church in 2016 is titled *Manhood Restored* (2013), and Eric Mason provides some clear examples of godly manhood in practice. This Bible study uses Genesis to justify a hierarchal structure that places God at the top, followed by man, and then women and animals. Mason explains

¹³⁷ McCall, 1992, p. 846

¹³⁸ Southern Baptist Convention. "Position Statements." Southern Baptist Convention. Accessed January 10, 2017. <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/positionstatements.asp>.

that this relationship was inverted, which caused the fall of humanity.¹³⁹ He asserts that this initial inversion of the hierarchy has created a crisis of manhood that continues to cause problems for men to this day. Mason explains that manhood is fundamental to the identity of Christ, and states, “Jesus’ death on the cross created a new manhood (Eph. 2:15). Though this passage is about mankind in general, it includes the restoration of God’s intention for the individual genders. In Christ, then, men are being restored into true men.”¹⁴⁰ Some practices of godly manhood counter general observations of hegemonic masculinity within the larger American society. For example, Mason argues that godly manhood is sober-minded, self-controlled, sound in faith, and sound in love.¹⁴¹ However, godly manhood is clearly patriarchal. Mason contends that men are called to be decision makers, to lead their wives and families, and to be financial providers. In sum, Mason argues that godly manhood involves developing a biblical worldview.¹⁴² The biblical worldview is a conservative Christian one.

Hegemonic masculinity in the form of godly manhood also defines itself against that which it is not, and what it opposes. Mason argues that manhood has been attacked throughout the Bible, and provides several interpreted examples of male genocide. He continues to allude that homosexuality is a threat to American families and godly manhood. Mason states:

As men, we must not become lethargic in our vigilance against things that would attempt to destroy manhood. Literal genocide is no longer politically correct today, but the enemy’s threats continue in more covert ways. Homosexuality is of great debate in the world today and surprisingly in the church. The redefinition of

¹³⁹ Mason, Eric. *Manhood restored: how the gospel makes men whole*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2013.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 183

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-172

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 100

the family calls for a redefinition of God's intention for the genders. Manhood has to be redefined for this ideology to work. This political ideology is a similar tactic to the brutal methods of those biblical rulers. Manhood is under attack. Again. Still. The sooner we realize it's happening, the sooner we can begin to fight back.¹⁴³

There are several important observations one might make related to an analysis of Mason's description of threats to godly manhood. First, the normative family model represents a fundamental means by which men attempt to achieve godly manhood, and this model was ordained by God. Second, homosexuality is a threat to manhood, because it destroys the normative gender order. Lastly, active opposition to homosexuality preserves God's design for families, and defends godly manhood. Mason's call for men to fight back implies a practice associated with the achievement of godly manhood.

The practice of godly manhood takes a variety of forms as it relates to opposing homosexuality. Mason asserts disdain for the feminization of the church.¹⁴⁴ He also laments the church's perceived promotion of an "effeminate Jesus."¹⁴⁵ The author argues that churches are unfriendly environments for men, and suggests practical strategies for creating a masculine worship space. One of his main points proposes that "effeminate musicians" turn men off from churches.¹⁴⁶ After this assertion he defends the point of view stating:

I am not in any way homophobic and pressing us to treat people who have and do struggle with the sin of immorality in the form of homosexuality by denying them blessings that come from forgiveness through Jesus. However, it is important we

¹⁴³ Mason, 2013, p. 40

¹⁴⁴ The general notion of church feminization has existed within American Christianity for over a century. See; Putney, C. 2001. *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

¹⁴⁵ Mason, 2013, pp. 83-85

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 192

recognize who and what we are placing before God's people in leadership of the worship gathering.¹⁴⁷

Mason's discussion of worship leaders who are perceived as feminine acting, demonstrates how his observation of femininity in someone's performance is directly associated with homosexuality. He never states that the worship leaders described are actually gay, but then immediately suggests that their perceived feminine behavior is a manifestation of homosexual desire. This example serves two purposes. First, it demonstrates how gender performance is policed within the boundary of hegemonic heterosexuality. It alludes to a perceived threat that men in churches like the Summit may experience if they "fail to do their gender right," and the cultural punishment for this involves categorizing and stigmatizing non-adhering persons as gay.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, godly manhood is practiced by policing gender performance, and constraining bodily behaviors to normative gendered associations. Mason's example also highlights another concern, in that godly manhood excludes and rejects those who do not perform masculinity in accordance with the idealized cultural standard, and this is especially true with gay men. In general, heterosexual men maintain greater levels of sexual prejudice toward gay and bisexual men than women. Several studies have demonstrated that this reality correlates with a desire in some men to prove and bolster their perceived masculine identity.¹⁴⁹ This is clearly consistent with the form of godly manhood described by Mason.

In sum, I contend that hegemonic masculinity at the Summit is performed by men through their perceived leadership in traditional marriages, and through their adherence to

¹⁴⁷ Mason, 2013, p. 192

¹⁴⁸ Butler, 1990, p. 140

¹⁴⁹ Herek & McLemore, 2013, p. 321

cultural expectations around gender. This particular form of godly manhood also defines itself through its opposition to homosexuality, and men who are perceived as feminine. Therefore, the categorization, stigmatization, and exclusion of gays at the Summit, are practices directly related to performing godly manhood. These practices allow men who are perceived as godly men, a type of capital among other members at the church. Symbolic and cultural capital are forms of unrecognized power, understood by members “as legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience, or services to others.”¹⁵⁰ This power is exercised upon subordinate classes within the hierarchical gender arrangement observed at the Summit in the form of symbolic violence.

Gay Men and Symbolic Violence

Hegemonic masculinity is practiced through social control and domination, and in a patriarchal society it is defined as “exclusively heterosexual.”¹⁵¹ This form of masculinity, as a socially practiced gender configuration, actively subverts alternative expressions of masculinity to differentiate itself. In her article “Between Subordination and Sympathy: Contemporary Christianity and LGBT Sexualities,” Kristin Aune examines the intersection of hegemonic masculinity and gay sexuality in the context of evangelical Christianity. The author argues that, “Gender, or more specifically masculinity, provides the key to understanding how evangelicals negotiate gay sexuality.”¹⁵² The author also contends, “Given that evangelicals’ attitudes and practices of gender are somewhat more conservative than the general population, it follows that if

¹⁵⁰ Swartz, 1996, p. 77

¹⁵¹ Connell, 2005, p. 163

¹⁵² Aune, Kristin. 2009. “Between Subordination and Sympathy: Evangelical Christians, Masculinity and Gay Sexuality,” in *Contemporary christianity and LGBT sexualities*. Burlington, VT; Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Pub, p. 49

people in the general population construct masculinity by subordinating homosexuality, evangelicals will do this even more.”¹⁵³ I argue that subverting homosexuality through practices is a form of symbolic violence enacted on gay men at the Summit Church. This symbolic violence is needed to achieve symbolic domination over the marginalized group, and to ensure the perpetuation of the social order within the church. Symbolic violence enacted on sexual minorities at the church also functions as a legitimating form of power, which defines the Summit’s brand of Christianity against the perceived enemy of secular American culture.

One reason symbolic violence is an effective theoretical concept for my analysis of the Summit Church, pertains to Bourdieu’s characterization of symbolic violence as misrecognized violence. The misrecognition of symbolic violence as violence makes it an effective strategy for achieving social domination. For example, in numerous illustrations of anti-gay discourse demonstrated at the Summit, the language utilized by Greear attempts to convey love and sympathy for gay people, and he asserts that gays are “made in the image of God.”¹⁵⁴ In my analysis, Greear and members of the Summit, do not see their stance toward gay sexuality as discriminatory or hateful. They frame opinions and statements around gay sexuality within a narrative of God’s love, and obedience to God’s authority. They view “same-sex attraction” as a condition of humanity’s sinfulness, and a struggle that gay individuals must suppress and overcome in obedience to God’s command. However, whether this view is an unconscious strategy to preserve a collective worldview around a normative gender model; a strategy to sustain and bolster a form of

¹⁵³ Aune, 2009, p. 49

¹⁵⁴ Greear, J.D., 2012, “What is the Summit’s Stance Toward Homosexuality?”

godly manhood, or both, the practice of symbolic violence is harmful to the wellbeing of sexual minorities, and it must be identified as such.

Inasmuch as social practices inscribe a form of embodied knowledge on members of the Summit Church, each ritualized practice identified at the Summit may negatively implicate the minds and bodies of gay participants. The systematic categorization of gender and sexuality expression (normative/non-normative or blessed/sinful), subverts all forms of sexuality outside the context of heterosexual marriage. Bourdieu examines the symbolic violence inflicted on gays and lesbians, stating that it is “imposed through collective acts of categorization which set up significant negatively marked differences,” and it “takes the form of denial of public visible existence.”¹⁵⁵ Bourdieu argues that symbolic violence enacted on gay persons can cause them to apply the dominant categories of perception on themselves, and “to feel ashamed of the sexual experience which, from the point of view of the dominant categories, defines them, oscillating between the fear of being perceived, unmasked, and the desire to be recognized. . .”¹⁵⁶ In the context of the Summit, I contend that a gay person may likely feel shame due to embodied knowledge associated with categorizing homosexual practice as sinful.

Bourdieu provides more clarity, stating:

Inscribed both in objectivity, in the form of instituted division, and in bodies, in the form of an internalized relation of domination (revealed in shame), the parallel oppositions which are constitutive of this mythology structure the perception of one’s own body and of the uses, especially sexual ones, that are made of it, i.e. both the sexual division of labour and the division of sexual labour.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 118-119

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 119

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 120

As demonstrated at the Summit, practices of excluding gay persons from church participation take on explicit institutional forms, and also revolve around a refusal to legitimate any same-sex relationship they may have. Structures of heteropatriarchy are reproduced through social practices, inscribed in a collective and embodied worldview, and function as a form of symbolic violence within the social environment of the church. Gay sexuality is categorized as inherently sinful, and thus delegitimizes openly gay persons through a condemnation of their very being. The condemnation of gay sexuality, inasmuch as it may be embodied by gay individuals at the church, enacts a symbolic violence reproduced through anti-gay discourse and practice.

Conclusion

In these two chapters I analyzed social practices at the Summit Church, and argued that public prayer, reading scripture, preaching, and exclusion are continually reproduced from the embodied dispositions of church members. I also argued that participatory members often acquire a form of embodied cultural knowledge related to membership at the Summit, which functions as a form of cultural and symbolic capital. Lastly, some heterosexual men at the Summit possess a form of embodied capital accumulated by performing a culturally specific form of godly masculinity, and this capital functions to elevate the status of these men within the social hierarchy. This culturally legitimized capital is produced in part through delegitimizing homosexuality as sinful, and imposes an embodied symbolic violence on gay men and other sexual minorities within the church.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTERNALIZED SEXUAL PREJUDICE

Introduction

Utilizing the conceptual framework of symbolic violence and social domination enacted on gay men at the Summit, in this chapter I focus on research pertaining to sexual prejudice, and the produced effects related to the mental health of sexual minorities. The studies analyzed propose a *minority stress* or social stress conceptual model toward understanding how the stress process operates among sexual minorities in their experience of prejudice events, expectations of rejection, hiding and concealing, internalized homophobia, and the ways in which individuals cope with these stressors.¹⁵⁸ Minority stress is experienced and internalized in a variety of social environments, especially those where collective practices produce anti-gay discourses. Among the general population, quantitative and qualitative research demonstrates that gay men and lesbians suffer from more mental health issues than their heterosexual counterparts, and these concerns include, but are not limited to, substance use disorders, affective disorders, and suicide.¹⁵⁹ In explicating data around processes of minority stress, I contend that minority stress represents the psychological designation of embodied symbolic violence. I also argue that sexual minorities embedded in conservative Christian communities demonstrate a higher prevalence of physical and emotional stress than persons within the LGBTQ community at large, which is the result of a particular type of embodied

¹⁵⁸ Meyer, Ilan H. 2013. Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 1 (S): 3-26.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 3-4

theological knowledge associated with ascribing sinfulness to sexual relations outside of the traditional heterosexual marriage model.

Social and Minority Stress

Ilan Meyer (2013) discusses what scholars understand as “the stress concept.”¹⁶⁰ Phenomenologically, stress refers to “physical, mental, or emotional pressure, strain, or tension,” and these forms of stress result from specific events and conditions.¹⁶¹ Additionally, *social* stress theory contends that stress occurs not just through individual events, but also from influences derived from one’s social environment. Meyer presents a particular view of social stress that focuses on social structures and conditions, which conceptualizes an important aspect of one’s position in a social hierarchy of relations. However, utilizing the theoretical approach provided by theories of practice enables one to understand the ways in which certain social structures and environments themselves are shaped by reproduced collective practices, and thus directly contribute to inscribing social stress in sexual minorities.

There are two methodological approaches utilized to examine minority stress. Meyer categorizes these approaches as *within-group* studies and *between-groups* studies. The former is concerned with the stress process itself, reflects on how it takes place, and examines its potential impact on mental health. On the other hand, the latter category of scientific inquiry tests differences between the prevalence of disorders among individuals who belong to a minority group compared to those who belong to the majority.¹⁶² Through a comprehensive meta-analysis, citing an array of sociological research, Meyer

¹⁶⁰ Meyer, 2013, p. 4

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 8

contends that the minority stress hypothesis is supported by substantial evidence. That is, persons within the sexual minority group experience the stress process through particular mechanisms, and those who have experienced certain types of stressors tend to exhibit a higher prevalence of mental health disorders. Also, sexual minorities do demonstrate higher rates of mental health disorders than heterosexuals.¹⁶³

Stigma - Expectations of Rejection and Discrimination

There are three categories of internal processes which generally correlate to increased minority stress, and they represent trends among the social group as a whole. However, a variety of internal and external circumstances contribute to, or help mitigate, the social stress experienced by sexual minority individuals, and thus the probability of increased mental health concerns. First, sexual minorities often experience social stress associated with a perceived stigma, which increases expectations of rejection and discrimination. This stress process is directly related to practices of exclusion, which were previously observed at the Summit. Additionally, Meyer discusses a variety of perceived threats related to this exclusion. Sexual minorities often perceive that they will be categorized by a dominant group against their will. They also perceive threats associated with denial of membership to a given group, or related to the possibility of that group negatively assessing their value or morality. Lastly, sexual minorities experience social stress related to a fear of rejection from one's group.¹⁶⁴

In addition to increased rates of perceived stigma among sexual minorities within the general population, studies have found higher rates of discrimination and stigma

¹⁶³ Meyer, 2013, p. 20

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 10

associated with non-affirming religious communities. Maurice Gattis, Michael Woodford, and Yoonsun Han (2014) demonstrate that sexual minority youth involved in religious non-affirming environments reported higher rates of “perceived interpersonal discrimination,” as opposed to those belonging to affirming religious communities.¹⁶⁵ The Summit’s institutional stance on same-sex relationships designates the religious community as “non-affirming.” Therefore, it is likely that sexual minority youth in the congregation experience higher rates of perceived stigma and discrimination.

Given the social structures reproduced and inscribed in agents at the Summit, sexual minorities within the church population likely experience each type of perceived threat described above. For example, Greear’s preaching, which asserts the sinfulness of homosexuality, may likely inscribe perceived threats of rejection, as well as threats pertaining to the negative moral assessment of sexual minority individuals. Since symbolic violence is imposed on marginalized persons within a given social field through “collective acts of categorization,” and “negatively marked differences,” practices which contribute to minority stress at the Summit are forms of symbolic violence.¹⁶⁶

Concealment of One’s Sexuality

Hiding one’s sexuality in a given social environment signifies another potential stressor for sexual minorities. Concealing can operate as a coping mechanism, such that sexual minorities might evade stigma or discrimination in social environments known to

¹⁶⁵ Gattis, Maurice N., Michael R. Woodford, and Yoonsun Han. 2014. Discrimination and depressive symptoms among sexual minority youth: Is gay-affirming religious affiliation a protective factor? *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43 (8): 1589-99. The authors of the study designate religious organizations with institutional stances supporting same-sex relationships as “affirming,” while religious institutions which prohibit same-sex relationship are identified as “non-affirming.”

¹⁶⁶ Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 1-2

be non-affirming. However, Meyer argues that concealing one's sexuality, especially out of guilt or shame, is a significant source of social stress. Quoting Hetrick and Martin (1987), the author notes, "Each successive act of deception, each moment of monitoring which is unconscious and automatic for others, serves to reinforce the belief in one's difference and inferiority."¹⁶⁷ These authors describe an internal process maintained by some sexual minorities of attempting to pass as heterosexual in order to avoid social stigma, and this often leads to significant emotional distress. Studies have shown that at non-affirming Christian colleges, the majority of sexual minorities reported concealing their sexuality publicly, even if they have disclosed it to some close friends.¹⁶⁸ This behavior is prominent in social environments where perceived threats of prejudice and stigma are high. Concealing one's sexual orientation also restricts access to supportive communities, which have been demonstrated to increase self-confidence and emotional wellbeing.¹⁶⁹ Lastly, concealing one's sexuality in non-affirming social environments can lead to prolonged exposure to anti-gay attitudes, and an embodiment of those attitudes.

Internalized Homophobia

Internalized homophobia, or what some scholars call internalized sexual prejudice, is an embodied form of prejudice sexual minorities direct toward themselves, due to their exposure to negative societal attitudes associated with homosexuality. David Barnes and Ilan Meyer (2012) investigate the correlation between one's socialization in

¹⁶⁷ Meyer, 2013, p. 10; Hetrick, E. S., & Martin, A. D. (1987) Developmental issues and their resolution for gay and lesbian adolescents. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 14(1-2), 25-43.

¹⁶⁸ Wolff, Joshua R., and Heather L. Himes. 2010. Purposeful exclusion of sexual minority youth in christian higher education: The implications of discrimination. *Christian Higher Education* 9 (5): 439-60.

¹⁶⁹ Meyer, 2013, p. 11

non-affirming religious communities and internalized homophobia.¹⁷⁰ The authors begin by stating:

For LGB people growing up in nonaffirming religious settings, religious teachings can be an important part of their socialization into antigay attitudes and stigma. As the LGB person continues to attend in nonaffirming religious settings, these settings may continue to foster and sustain internalized homophobia.¹⁷¹

The study conducted by Barnes and Meyer, collected survey responses from lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons in located in New York City, and the sample included 396 participants from 128 different zip codes. A variety of social groups are represented in the research, including ages ranging from 18 to 58, and respondents identifying as Black, Latino, and White. Overall, the authors found that sexual minorities are less likely than heterosexual persons to engage in institutional religion. However, sexual minorities who do attend services at religious institutions are 2.5 times more likely to participate in nonaffirming communities.¹⁷² The figure is statistically significant given Barnes and Meyer's hypothesis that sexual minorities engaged in non-affirming religious communities will exhibit higher levels internalized homophobia.

To test their hypothesis, the authors measured predictor variables such as religiosity, distinguishing between religious traditions, frequency of attendance, and the community's attitudes and stances pertaining to gays. They also measured outcome variables such as internalized homophobia, self-esteem, psychological well-being, and depressive symptoms. The results demonstrate that higher levels of internalized

¹⁷⁰ Barnes, David M., and Ilan H. Meyer. 2012. Religious affiliation, internalized homophobia, and mental health in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82 (4): 505-15.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 506

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 506-507

homophobia are found among sexual minorities involved in non-affirming religious settings, and the result is statistically significant across age, gender, and racial differences.¹⁷³ Addressing the limitations of their research, Barnes and Meyer explain that surveys were collected in one United States city, and that sexual minorities represented in their research were less religiously affiliated than those within the general U.S. population. They also sample a large age range, and contend that many respondents have likely dealt with conflicts between religious identity and and their sexuality by leaving organized religion, or moving to affirming religious communities. The authors explain that the relationship between religious belief and internalized homophobia begins early in life, stating:

Children and youth are partly inducted into homophobic beliefs through places of worship at a time when they are most susceptible to internalizing such beliefs. The authority of the religious environment and the apparent concurrence of an entire community gives such socialization a special force.¹⁷⁴

In other words, reproduced practices situated in time and space, inscribe a form embodied discourse in persons socialized in non-affirming religious environments, and collectively embodied structures contribute to the misrecognition of their naturalized authority.

Finally, given the discussion of specific limitations observed in the analyzed study, I examine research which demonstrates differences in key variables contributing to sexual prejudice, as they exist among geographic regions in the United States.

In the beginning of this thesis, I contended that conservative Christian beliefs around biblical authority contribute in part to negative views of homosexuality. With this observation in mind, one must consider the prevalence of such beliefs as they are

¹⁷³ Barnes and Meyer, 2012, p. 509

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 512

represented culturally across geographic areas of the U.S. Based on data collected by Pew Research Center in 2014, there are trends related to religious beliefs and practices which characterize the Southeastern area of the U.S.¹⁷⁵ For example, the study found that adults in the American South are more likely to view religion as very important in their lives, attend services weekly, view scripture as the literal word of God, and oppose homosexuality and gay marriage than any other geographic region.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, it stands to reason that sexual minority youth in the South are more likely to be socialized in non-affirming religious communities than those represented in Barnes and Meyer's study, and thus increasing the probability of internalizing homophobia. The specific trends associated with religion in the South, contribute to a greater understanding of practices at institutions like the Summit Church, and reveal how internalized homophobia and symbolic violence are inscribed in gay persons.

I contend that sexual prejudice, perceived social stigma, and internalized homophobia are effects of symbolic violence. Referencing research by John Gonsiorek (1988), Meyer explains how internalized homophobia, and its residual effects are “covert,” and affect the wellbeing of sexual minority youth even after they accept themselves and their sexuality.¹⁷⁷ Bourdieu contends that symbolic violence enacted on gay persons within a given social field occurs when individuals apply the dominant categories of perception on themselves, and “feel ashamed of the sexual experience

¹⁷⁵ “Religious Landscape Study.” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (2014) <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/region/south/#>. Accessed March 31, 2017

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Meyer, 2013, p. 11; Gonsiorek, J. C. (1988) Mental health issues of gay and lesbian adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*, 9, 114-122

which, from the point of view of the dominant categories, defines them, oscillating between the fear of being perceived, unmasked, and the desire to be recognized. . .”¹⁷⁸

The application of dominant categories, or anti-gay attitudes and beliefs as described by Bourdieu, is what takes place when sexual minorities experience internalized homophobia, and this self-categorization is embodied over time. Additionally, Bourdieu mentions an internal conflict between feeling the need to conceal one’s sexuality and desiring recognition. In the context of minority stress, concealing one’s sexuality out of shame contributes to emotional and embodied stress, while presenting serious potential consequences related to one’s mental and physical well-being.

Mental Health and Suicide

A comprehensive meta-analysis, isolating between-group studies of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, demonstrates that sexual minorities have a higher prevalence and risk of mental health disorders than heterosexuals among the same sample groups.¹⁷⁹ The authors conclude that sexual minority individuals are at least 1.5 times more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety over a twelve-month period than heterosexual persons. They also found that across gender and race differences, suicidal ideation among sexual minorities is twice as prevalent compared to heterosexuals. Lastly, the meta-analysis demonstrates that lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons have a 2.47 times higher risk for attempted suicide throughout their lifetimes, than heterosexuals.¹⁸⁰ In their conclusion, the authors contend that future prospective studies should seek explicate the

¹⁷⁸ Bourdieu, 2001, p. 119

¹⁷⁹ King, M., J. Semlyen, SS Tai, H. Killaspy, D. Osborn, D. Popelyuk, and I. Nazareth. 2008. A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people. *Bmc Psychiatry* 8 (1): 70-87.

¹⁸⁰ King, et al., 2008, pp. 76-80

potential mechanisms which contribute to the higher rates of mental health concerns among sexual minority youth, but they recognize the challenges associated sampling a population which may not feel comfortable identifying as LGBT until late adolescence or early adulthood.

Jeremy Gibbs and Jeremy Goldbach (2015) provide an important within-group study, which explores how religious identity conflict impacts suicidal behaviors among LGBT young adults.¹⁸¹ The authors recognize scholarship which demonstrates the positive correlation between religiosity and internalized homophobia. They also contend that qualitative studies have identified important trends related to religious and sexual identity conflict, as a contributing factor associated with depression and suicide in sexual minorities. However, Gibbs and Goldbach explain that no previous quantitative study has explored the “relationship among religious identity conflict, negative mental health outcomes, and internalized homophobia as a mediator, nor done so using a large national sample of only LGBT young adults (18-24 year olds).¹⁸² Therefore, their study contributes to the current research by offering a unique perspective, and targeting a more precise demographic.

The data obtained from a restricted sample of LGBT young people, demonstrated that 45 percent of respondents identified their current religious affiliation as some form of Christian denomination. Gibbs and Goldbach measured variables such as demographics, indicators of religious and sexual conflict, internalized homophobia, and suicidality.¹⁸³ Of

¹⁸¹ Gibbs, JJ, and J. Goldbach. 2015. Religious conflict, sexual identity, and suicidal behaviors among LGBT young adults. *Archives of Suicide Research* 19 (4): 472-88.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 474

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 477

those who were raised in a religious community, 43 percent demonstrated a conflict between their sexuality and their religious identity, and twelve percent maintained unresolved conflict. Overall, the study shows that unresolved conflicts between religious beliefs and one's sexuality, significantly correlates with higher levels of internalized homophobia, as well as increased rates of suicidal thoughts and attempted suicides. Of the total sample, 33 percent reported having suicidal thoughts in the past month, and three percent reported a suicide attempt in the past year.¹⁸⁴ One of the strongest correlations discovered by the research exists in the relationship between having parents with anti-homosexual religious beliefs, chronic suicidal thoughts, and attempted suicide. LGBT individuals whose parents held anti-gay religious beliefs were twice as likely to attempt suicide in the last year, compared to the rest of the sample.¹⁸⁵ As the authors mention, the research findings are more alarming considering that the survey sample represents young adults, most of whom were living outside their parent's homes.

Conclusion

On the whole, the research explicated and analyzed in this final chapter, furthers a critical understanding of how minority stress and internalized homophobia function as forms of symbolic violence. From a social and minority stress framework, the scholarship put forth demonstrates the positive correlation which exists between anti-gay religious environments and internalized homophobia, as well as the correlation between internalized homophobia and mental health disorders. Therefore, the various collective practices which reproduce and legitimate an anti-gay theological discourse in churches

¹⁸⁴ Gibbs & Goldback, 2015, p. 479

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 483

like the Summit, may be embodied by sexual minority individuals within the social environment, and can cause negative effects related to their mental health and physical well-being.

CONCLUSION

Overview and Discussion

Through my analysis of specific practices at the Summit Church, I have demonstrated how gender, and specifically godly manhood functions as a reproduced performance. I have argued that hegemonic masculinity represents a cultural ideal, and in churches like the Summit, the ideal is associated with particular notions of godly manhood. Godly manhood at the Summit is performed in part through a traditional marriage relationship, where men validate themselves by being strong leaders, decision makers, and financial providers. It is also performed through reproducing a conservative Christian discourse, which affirms biblical inerrancy, distinct gender roles for women and men, and the sinfulness of homosexuality. Through engaging in practices associated with godly manhood, certain men at the church accumulate a form of cultural and symbolic capital, which is recognized as esteem and power within the community. I have argued that hegemonic masculinity, or godly manhood is practiced, in part, through the delegitimation and stigmatization of gay sexuality, which enacts a form of symbolic violence on the minority group. The violence operates through covert messages that express anti-gay attitudes alongside pronouncements of God's love and redemption, but nonetheless creates a toxic social environment for sexual minorities. The cultural domination of sexual minorities preserves the perceived legitimacy of the patriarchal social order, and conservative Christian worldview.

In addition to my analysis of the Summit, I explored current research pertaining to social stress and internalized sexual prejudice among sexual minority individuals. Various studies demonstrate how non-affirming religious environments are harmful to the

mental health and physical well-being of sexual minorities. I have argued that social stress and internalized homophobia are effects of the symbolic violence directed at sexual minorities within church communities like the Summit. Inasmuch as symbolic violence is enacted through social practices, it becomes clear how practices of exclusion and stigmatization, and certain types of preaching and biblical interpretation are complicit in the lethal effects experienced by sexual minorities.

Sites of Resistance

On the surface, my thesis seems to present a deterministic analysis, where sexual minorities are rendered helpless victims of a particular scheme of cultural domination. This could not be further from my intended goal. Instead, I have proposed a framework from which one might better understand how anti-gay discourse functions in some conservative Christian churches, and the ways in which sexual minorities come to embody dominant categories of difference. Undoubtedly, many sexual minority individuals who are socialized in non-affirming religious environments, are successful in mitigating internalized homophobia, and demonstrate resilience in their ability to overcome conflicts between religious and sexual identities.

Gibbs and Goldbach highlight three common trends among sexual minority individuals raised in non-affirming Christian environments. These individuals might abandon institutional religion altogether, move to an affirming community, or continue their participation within a non-affirming environment.¹⁸⁶ I contend that each option presents potential sites of resistance, and strategic opportunities for sexual minorities to subvert the normative conservative Christian discourse around gender and sexuality.

¹⁸⁶ Gibbs and Goldbach, 2015, pp. 484-485

For example, sexual minorities who choose to leave organized religion demonstrate their resistance to the dominant narrative simply through their abandonment of a non-affirming church. Although one's choice to leave such environments decreases internalized homophobia among sexual minorities, it can become a source of serious social stress.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, these individuals would benefit from finding a supportive community, from which they might receive solace.

In a similar sense, sexual minorities who leave their previous non-affirming church environment for an affirming Christian community also chose to resist the dominant constraints on their sexuality. Affirming Christian communities often interpret biblical texts around sexuality through a more critical social and historical lens. This alternative interpretation allows one's sexuality to be understood holistically, and enables gay persons to resolve the conflict between their sexual and religious identities. The resolution experienced by gays who move to affirming Christian communities can have positive effects for their mental health and wellbeing.¹⁸⁸ These churches may also provide emotional support as individuals navigate their sexuality, and work toward healing previous harmful experiences.

The third option for gay persons involved in non-affirming churches is to continue their participation in the community. Surprisingly, many gay individuals do choose to stay in their non-affirming church communities, and they do so for various reasons. Most individuals who are socialized in conservative Christian churches have been members since their childhood, and before they came out as gay or lesbian.¹⁸⁹ In these instances,

¹⁸⁷ Gibbs & Goldbach, 2015, p. 484

¹⁸⁸ Barnes & Meyer, 2012, p. 513

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

the specific religious tradition likely represents a significant component of one's identity and sense of self that can be difficult to abandon. In order to continue their participation in non-affirming churches, gay persons may employ coping strategies to tolerate their experienced tensions. For example, they may adopt a more liberal view of scripture, or compartmentalize their sexuality when they participate in church services.¹⁹⁰ Another potential site of resistance within non-affirming churches can be hypothesized due to generational shifts in acceptance of gay sexuality. For instance, nearly half of all millennials who identify as evangelical Protestants express support for same-sex marriage.¹⁹¹ Although this data does not distinguish between affirming and non-affirming churches, it might suggest that even within non-affirming church communities, there are likely many young people who would support their gay friends in the church.

In my final analysis, with a specific focus on the Summit, I propose that many church participants hold private views around gay sexuality that differ from those represented by official church doctrine. Many people are attracted to the Summit Church due to its casual style and contemporary music. The church also attracts numerous college students involved with various campus ministries. These students often attend because of friends who already go to the Summit, or simply due to the church's size and community influence. Individuals who regularly attend church gatherings for these various reasons may not attend because they agree theologically with the church's views on gender and sexuality. This reality would provide certain sites of resistance, where

¹⁹⁰ Barnes & Meyer, 2012, p. 513

¹⁹¹ Cox, Daniel, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, and Robert Jones. "A Shifting Landscape: A Decade of Change in American Attitudes about Same-Sex Marriage and LGBT Issues - PRRI." PRRI. February 26, 2014. Accessed November 22, 2016.

sexual minority individuals might attend services, but espouse a counter-narrative about gay inclusion among their close friends. Nonetheless, religious environments like the Summit present a serious threat to sexual minorities, especially younger individuals who might be navigating their sexuality, and not have a choice regarding church attendance. For this reason, the toxicity of non-affirming churches must be analyzed, and their harmful effects on sexual minorities must be exposed. Greear and the Summit paint a dim portrait of sinful brokenness regarding gay sexuality, but as gay individuals continue to have meaningful, healthy, and prosperous lives, they actively resist and subvert the narrative cast upon them by the church.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Chase Martin

Campus Box 7749, 1834 Wake Forest Road, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem,
NC 27109
martce15@wfu.edu

EDUCATION

- *Wake Forest University* Winston-Salem, NC
Master of Arts in Religious Studies May 2017
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stephen Boyd
GPA: 3.85
 - *Appalachian State University* Boone, NC
Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies December 2014
GPA: 3.85 Dean's List Each Semester
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RESEARCH AREA AND INTEREST

Throughout much of his graduate education, Chase Martin has focused on the intersection of gender, sexuality, and religion. Specifically, he concentrates on social constructions of masculinities in the context of Protestant Christianity. His master's thesis focuses on the performance of godly manhood, symbolic violence, and sexual prejudice directed at sexual minorities within non-affirming churches. His work is guided by theories of practice, and influenced by scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, Raewyn Connell, and Judith Butler.

UNIVERSITY RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Graduate Hall Director

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC August 2016 - Present

- Conduct weekly staff meetings and performance meetings with RA staff
- Manage building facilities, community-wide budget, and building procedural tasks
- Facilitate conflict mediation with residents, and balance administrative duties
- Oversee crisis management response, and student follow-up

Teaching Assistant

Spring Semester 2016

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC

- Collaborated in grading student assignments, and returned graded work
- Attended class meetings, and balanced various administrative tasks

LGBTQ Center Student Intern

Fall Semester 2016

Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC

- Worked on a university project to adopt a policy around preferred names and pronoun
- Contacted representatives from various universities
- Created a portfolio to highlight best practices among other academic institutions

Research Assistant: Department Recruitment Project

Fall Semester 2014

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

- Drafted and programmed recruitment survey
- Implemented the survey across various academic departments
- Collected and analyzed data
- Prepared presentation on statistical results

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Fudge Works Store Manager

April 2014 - August 2016

Tweetsie Railroad, Blowing Rock, NC

- Supervised ten employees, generated weekly work schedules
- Collaborated with upper management to create promotion and marketing strategies
- Managed store inventory, purchased store materials, created products for sale

Family Group Leader

Summer 2017

The United Methodist Camp Tekoa, Hendersonville, NC

- Coordinated and lead daily activities
- Taught skills such as backpacking, climbing, biking, rafting, etc.
- Mentored high school and middle school students

Student Fundraiser

September 2011 - January 2012

North Carolina State Alumni Association, Raleigh, NC

- Personally raised over \$50,000 for the university's annual fund
- Solicited donations for North Carolina State University

RELEVANT COURSES AND PAPERS

Master's Thesis

Spring Semester 2017

The Department for the Study of Religions

Wake Forest University

“Symbolic Violence and Internalized Sexual Prejudice: Performing Masculinity at the Summit Church”

History of the Baptists

Fall Semester 2016

School of Divinity

Wake Forest University

“Southern Baptist Fundamentalism in the SBC: Outlining a Religious and Political Crisis With Regard to Gender and Sexuality”

Life, Death, and the Body

Spring Semester 2016

The Department for the Study of Religions

Wake Forest University

“Black Masculinity, Sexuality, and Messianism”

Men, Masculinity, and Power

Fall Semester 2015

The Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality

Wake Forest University

“Muscular Christianity and Constructions of Masculinity in Protestant America”

Religion and Law

Fall Semester 2015

The Department for the Study of Religions

Wake Forest University

“Sharia, International Human Rights, and LGBT Discrimination”

Senior Seminar: The Emerging Church Movement

Fall Semester 2014

Religious Studies Department

Appalachian State University

“LGBT Inclusion and Acceptance: A Growing Trend Religiously and Politically”