Manhood Over Easy: Reflections on Hegemonic, Soft-Boiled, and Multiple Masculinities

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> A "crisis of masculinity" has erupted in every period of backlash in the last century, a faithful quiet companion to the loudly voiced call for a "return to femininity." In the late 1800s, a blizzard of literature decrying the "soft male" rolled off the presses. "The whole generation is womanized," Henry James's protagonist Basil Ransom lamented in *The Bostonian*. "The masculine tone is passing out of the world; it's a feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age."

− Susan Faludi, *Backlash*, 2006

The fear that traditional forms of masculinity are being undermined in ways that are harmful to society has taken root in public consciousness since the 1990s. A recent manifestation is Hana Rosin's *The End of Men and the Rise of Women,* in which she laments the decline of male dominance and the end of men's economic and social stranglehold over women. Her gleeful and often unsubstantiated claims about men's loss of power in the new economy feeds into riotous alarm bells being sounded in popular culture over the feminization of men and boys, a discourse that Susan Faludi traces back to the turn of the twentieth century. Similar to past reactions, current backlash tendencies have led to the emergence of numerous men's movements. The emergence of the "mythopoetic" men's movement in the 1990s was based on the philosophy that modernization has led to the feminization of men. To rectify this problem, the movement embraced rituals and storytelling to facilitate a reconnection to the "deep masculine" and enable the unleashing of men's animal nature (Messner 1997). Similarly, the Promise Keepers (PK) was a movement that grew in the 1990s with a goal of transforming and altering the norms of

masculinity by challenging men to reestablish their leadership role in the family (Bartkowski 2004; Donovan 1998; Newton 2005; Williams 2001).

In the late 1990s, I conducted ethnographic research on the Promise Keepers to examine how this movement helped men to reform or to shore up power in their families and in society (Heath 2003). PK is an all-male organization of evangelical Christians. Bill McCartney, then the head football coach at the University of Colorado at Boulder, founded the movement in 1990, inspired by his dream to fill a sports stadium with men, not to watch football, but to enact a godly manhood. He realized his vision, as the movement grew from a small gathering in 1991 to millions of men attending stadium events nationwide, especially witnessed by the sea of men who gathered at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. in 1997 for the Stand in the Gap gathering. Since its peak in 1997 attendance has ebbed and flowed, but the organization has endured.

The philosophy of the PK movement has focused on the changing meaning of manhood, and a goal of the organization has been to unify men of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds under a single Christian banner. The most controversial aspect has revolved around its stated mission: "The Making of Godly Men," which includes recovering men's leadership positions within their families and communities (Conrad 2006; Heath 2003). In studying the PK movement, I sought to uncover how these men and their wives understood masculinity. Since the late 1980s, sociologists have theorized the ways that masculinity involves multiple, contextual and historically shifting configurations (Connell 1995). Theorizing gender as relational, this literature has outlined the ways that hegemonic masculinities—or dominant forms of masculinity—depend on other subordinated or marginalized varieties of masculinity and femininities to be situated at the top of the gender hierarchy.

Reflecting back on my research (2003) that drew on participant observation and in-depth interviews with twenty PK husbands and their wives, this chapter analyzes the case of the Promise Keepers as a way to think through the multiple masculinities approach to gender. What can this group of Christian men tell us about masculinities after a decade of research has developed? My reassessment of the PK movement indicates that the multiple masculinities approach can be enriched by the additions of Bourdieu's concept of "field" and as well as insights from intersectionality theory. This chapter examines how PK men play the "field" to embrace a softer image of masculinity as "enlightened" but as still hierarchical to maintain their position as leaders. The evangelical field allows non-privileged men to participate alongside those who are privileged in the benefits of hierarchical gender relations while at the same time maintaining a racial hierarchy that does little to address the structural inequalities that marginalize men of color. Similarly, PK men are able to be more emotionally expressive, but only in spaces without women to ward off possible challenges to their heterosexuality. In the following, I show how these combined approaches of field theory and intersectionality offer a powerful conceptual metaphor for illuminating the structural arrangements of gender hierarchies and their intersections with race, class, and sexuality.

Hegemony and Playing the Field

Assessing two decades of research on hegemonic masculinity, Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmidt in 2005 called for a comprehensive re-examination of what they assessed to be a troubled concept, criticized for being structurally deterministic and denying agency (Whitehead 2002), and for being detached from everyday experience (Jefferson, 2002; Wetherell and Edley, 1999). In the past twenty years, since Connell first introduced the multiple masculinities model,

scholarship on masculinities has detailed the ways that gender hierarchies differ according to the production of gender relations in particular social settings. In fact, as Connell and Messerschmidt argue, models of hegemonic masculinities do not necessarily correspond to men's lived experiences and can be more about "widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires" (2005: 838). In this chapter, I introduce Bourdieu's concept of fields as a tool to locate configurations of hegemonic masculinities that depend on discursive ideals and fantasies, produced in specific historical processes and locations.

Bourdieu theorizes a social system of relatively autonomous fields that are founded on hierarchies, and that depend on configurations of social arrangements able to sustain and reproduce them. Similar to conceptions of hegemony, Bourdieu argues that the persistence of these arrangements depends on the systematic misrecognition of their oppressive nature both by those in dominant positions and those in subordinate ones (Bourdieu 1977). Bourdieu identifies the strong ties in a given field:

> The intellectual field, which cannot be reduced to a simple aggregate of isolated
> agents or to the sum of elements merely juxtaposed is, like a magnetic field, made
> up of a system of power lines. In other words, the constituting agents or system of
> agents may be described as so many forces which, by their existence, opposition
> or combination, determine its specific structure at a given moment in time. In
> return, each of these is defined by its particular position within this field from
> which it derives *positional properties* which cannot be assimilated to intrinsic
> properties. (Bourdieu 1971:161)

Conceptualizing the hierarchical structures of masculinities in terms of fields can help to identify the multitude of fields in which masculinities operate, and to specify how different versions of

dominant (and subordinate) masculinities exist in each (Coles 2009). While concept of fields implies an enclosed and bounded space, Bourdieu envisions it as relational and elastic in a manner similar to Connell's theorization of gender relations. Accordingly, it has the ability to include a broad range of factors and to overlap with other fields in its influence on behavior (Swartz 1997).

My research on the Promise Keepers offers an opportunity to consider the ways that multiple masculinities are produced in the evangelical field by analyzing the ways that the fields of race, class, and sexuality intersect with other fields in producing a hierarchy of multiple masculinities. The PK movement uncovers the importance of religion in maintaining gender hegemony; in the evangelical context, men are exhorted to reclaim their spiritual leadership roles as the heads of their families and as exemplars in their communities. Within the field of evangelical religion, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity characterizes men as "born" leaders who are naturally assertive, confident, and able to control their emotions. The ability to act as a born leader can be attributed to "habitus," a matrix of dispositions that allows men to perform "masculine" activities as part of the cultural unconscious (Bourdieu 1984). Successful practice of leadership requires men to adjust their dispositions according to the situation in play and to act creatively based on past experiences that are developed over time (though not consciously). Thus, the habitus of practices such as male leadership mirror idealizations of hegemonic manhood and position men within the social space of the gender hierarchy as more competent and powerful than women.

Interviews with men and their wives uncovered an understanding of men's natural ability to lead in contrast to feminine traits of emotional instability. In PK movement literature, women are characterized as less able to take an objective and rational approach, as "nurturers" and

"developers of life" called to be their husbands' "helpmates," and therefore not born leaders (Conrad 2006: 313). The movement calls for strong male leadership as central to bringing moral order to modern society, which lacks a strong moral compass. An advertisement for the 1999 conferences states:

> In this day of compromised values, where popular thought denies the existence of absolute truth, our world is crying out for someone to take a stand-for holiness, righteousness, family and Christ! Promise Keepers understands the urgency of our times and strongly believes that you have a critical role to play in reversing the current moral and spiritual downfall our nation is facing. (The Promise Keeper 1999:3, quoted in Conrad 2006:313)

Alice[1], one of the wives in my study, summed up how PK could help men to reclaim their leadership roles in society where what it means to be a man has become problematic: "Men . . . for all these years have not had a base. They've been on their own trying to make it, trying to support their family, and they are constantly being sucked in by what the world says they ought to do. Finally, men are going to be men." In other words, PK helps Christian men see the importance of recognizing their "natural" authority to be the spiritual beacons for their families and communities in a sinful world.

The field of evangelical Christianity, therefore, situates an ideal manhood at the top of the gender hierarchy based on a standard of strong leadership and positioned against women's "supportive" roles as men's helpers. However, there is ambiguity in the organization's interpretation of leadership, which exhorts men to lead by becoming more emotionally available to other men, to their wives and children, and by participating more in the domestic realm associated with feminine labor. In the following, I consider the ways that the evangelical field

intersects with the fields of gender, race, class, and sexuality to produce contradictory gender and racial meanings among hegemonic and other multiple masculinities and the way in which these meanings support a gendered hierarchy.

Intersectionality: Taking It to the Margins

A substantial literature has emerged in contemporary masculinity studies to examine the interactions of race and class in the construction of marginalized masculinities, and cutting-edge research has begun to examine transnational and global contexts (e.g., Hirose and Kei-ho Pih 2010; Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Lu and Wong 2013; Messner 1997; Montes 2013; Morrell, Jewkes, and Lindegger 2012; Pyke 1996; Scrinzi 2010; Ward 2008). Empirical studies of masculinities, however, still sometimes overlook race and class when analyzing privileged men, as if these two fields are not important to understanding whiteness and privilege. McCormack and Anderson (2010), for example, offer a compelling ethnographic study of the ways that high school boys adopt a pro-gay stance and eschew homophobic language but still privilege and regulate heterosexuality. While they offer a trenchant analysis of how boys manage their heterosexual privilege, they chose not to analyze race and class and the importance of these to embracing pro-gay attitudes, arguing, "We have not focused on class and race in this article because they do not explicitly impact on these participants the way sexuality and gender do" (2010:856).

As a relational category, research on masculinities needs to account for the social processes in which race and class privilege produce gender hegemony and multiple masculinities and femininities. In this regard, I employ an intersectional approach. Intersectionality is a concept introduced in the late 1980s to uncover the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of difference and sameness in the ways that gender, race, class, and other axes of power operate in

producing and sustaining inequalities (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013). My research on the PK movement uncovers two insights on how the concept of fields is important in intersectional thinking. On the one hand, the evangelical field offers marginalized men a way to participate in hegemonic practices of masculinity alongside more privileged men. On the other, it sustains a racial hierarchy by failing to address the conditions that perpetuate marginalization and racism. Here is how it works.

Research on the PK movement has found it to incorporate predominantly white, class-privileged men (Newton 2005), and the men I interviewed were predominantly middle to upper-middle class. Out of the ten couples, fourteen men and women identified as white, two self-identified as Black, and two were Latino/a (the latter were interracial couples—a white man married to a Latina women and a Latino man married to a white woman). In my interviews, I found that PK offers men specific tools to grapple with contradictory gender meanings, allowing them to make positive changes in their lives around issues of masculinity without challenging their position of authority in the family.

PK men and their wives, no matter their race or class backgrounds, described their ideals about familial roles that drew on the language of feminism and the importance of gender equality. All agreed that it was the man who needs to be at the helm of the household. At the same time, these couples demonstrated an awareness of the critique of the relations of domination and subordination between men and women that characterize the history of "traditional" marriage. To conceptualize equality, the couples discussed gender relations as "different but equal." For example, George, a 63-year-old white professional, emphasized the notion of teamwork in his characterization of leadership:

We are a team. We make our decisions together. I can't state any specific thing

that I've made the sole decision on. As far as knowledge about what's going on

out there I have a heavier lead on that. She's the nurse and I don't know what's

going on in nursing. This is not a domineering relationship and it never has been.

George fended off criticism that he might be perceived as domineering in taking on the role of

head of household. Yet, his depiction of the equality in the relationship designates his superior

understanding of how the world operates and relegates his wife's knowledge to the field of

nursing.

Megan, a 26-year-old, white, self-identified stay-at-home mom, offers a striking

assessment of her relationship with Gary, also white, as "different but equal," using the analogy

of making pie to focus on the fact that they both were busy taking care of what needed to be done

for the family:

It is equal; it's different equal but it's equal. [Gary] is the financial provider for

the family and I am the housekeeper, child care giver, taxi driver, and maid, ha,

ha, ha—no, I don't mean to be negative. But, I take care of the baby and the

house. I think it is divided equally. I think he is making cherry pie and I am

making apple pie, but we're both making pie. . . . We are both busy doing things.

The idea of "different but equal" portrays equality as equal commitment to and responsibility for

gendered tasks while skirting the issue of the structural advantages involved in such a division of

labor. Megan's sarcasm as she lists her duties provides a glimpse into her struggle to define her

relationship as equal.

James and Linda, an African American middle-class couple in their late thirties, used

similar language to describe their relationship. When I asked them about whether James is the

head of the family, they both gave an emphatic yes. James explained, however, that the bible

verse dealing with headship his been misunderstood. Headship, according to him, is about the

man taking responsibility to ensure the needs of his family are meet. Linda offered her

perspective on "different but equal,"

> It's a two way street, the husband has to do things for the wife and the wife has to
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> do things for the husband. We even had that passage in our wedding so that
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> people would understand my submission to him is not showing me to be weak, it
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> is not a weakness. It's a sign of reverence for him; I am showing reverence to him
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> and if I'm doing that I am showing reverence to God.

Ed and Mary, a lower-class African American couple in their late twenties echoed the words of

Linda and James, saying that headship is a "two-way street," and that both of them are two

individuals who have to work out how to make the best decisions together. Ed went on to explain

that the relationship "is pretty fair and even. She might do more. Thinking and pursuing

something to get it done, I think I do more." His words about being better at thinking and

pursuing goals echo those of George who discussed his superior knowledge of "what's going on

out there."

PK discourses of leadership offered men from different race and class backgrounds the

ability to perform an "enlightened" masculinity as leaders who are willing to share power with

their wives. In this case, the field of evangelical religion interacts with that of the family to

position men, regardless of race and class, in a superior position to women. The idealized type of

masculinity for Christian men rests on a notion of leadership that is often attributed to privileged

men who have the power and authority to act as benevolent patriarchs. Participating in the PK

movement allows men who are marginalized by race and/or class to participate in a hegemonic model of masculinity that calls them to be leaders in their communities and families.

In contrast to the homogenous understandings of leadership that PK men embraced, the men in my study differed markedly in their recognition of the issue of race. Within the PK movement, the evangelical field intersects with the racial field to strongly influence the ways that men understand and perform what evangelicals call "racial reconciliation," a central PK goal asking men to pursue better relations with believers of different races. PK speakers advocate breaking through racial barriers by recognizing the sin of segregation and creating friendships with men of different races. Patrick Glynn (1998) argues that religious groups have an important role to play in improving race relations in the U.S., and that evangelical approaches to racial reconciliation that involve collective apology among religious groups, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Promise Keepers, can have more impact than that of secular groups, particularly the government.

I attended a PK large stadium event in Sacramento of about 50,000 men in 1998 and had the opportunity to discuss informally with a number of men their views on important issues that PK addresses. I found that a minority of white men (three of the eight) identified race as an issue that they had not considered before involvement in the PK organization. In contrast, the two men of color I informally interviewed mentioned race as a central reason for involvement. My formal interviews similarly showed that only two of the seven self-identified white men directly addressed the problem of segregation in churches and the need for racial reconciliation. In contrast, all three of the men of color discussed race as one of the most important issues to be addressed by evangelical Christians. James, a 38-year-old Black professional, discussed the importance of addressing race in the events:

They stress racial reconciliation and it was really good to hear. A couple speakers

at the event approached it from a Biblical point of view, challenging men to put

barriers aside and see we are all brothers in Christ and not this race or that race.

Ed, a 32-year-old Black man, recounted his experience of PK events as one of brotherly love

among Christian men regardless of race. He felt that being involved in PK was "a new

experience where a bunch of men from all different races were together, hugging and loving."

He felt supported by other PK men as he struggled to find employment.

While PK events emphasize the need to foster racial reconciliation, the majority of the

white men I interviewed did not indicate this as a central theme. Five didn't mention the need for

racial reconciliation at all as an important goal for the PK organization, and three only briefly

mentioned the benefits of bringing men of all races together. When I pushed them on this

subject, they were clearly uncomfortable and mainly repeated the idea of the need to bring men

together in brotherly love. Ted, a white man in his thirties married to a Latina women, had a

much more nuanced assessment of the need for racial reconciliation. When I asked him what he

believed were the goals of the PK organization, he discussed the idea of keeping promises and

then turned to the issue of race:

I think the other thing that stands in my mind is that there are tremendous racial

barriers that still exist in the Christian community. Now they don't have the

solutions to all those yet, but I am willing to admit that this is true. And we can

then do something about it. If I can get to that point, then it is a beginning.

Being married to a Latina woman gave Ted insight into the racial barriers and discrimination that

people of color experience in the United States, and he was more attentive to this message of

racial reconciliation in the PK events. He described one stadium event where a Korean minister

recounted the fact that "Americans tend to be a little bigoted, and even if you don't think you are, that's how we tend to feel about a white person. This was quite enlightening." For Ted, PK events helped him understand the marginalization that men of color experience.

Another white man, George, a businessman in his 60s, also had a positive reaction to the idea of racial reconciliation. He discussed in detail this PK goal: "The way our society has gone, it is torn apart with segregation and hate in so many areas involving different people. One goal of PK is to heal these differences and make you more accountable in how you act with your fellow men." Even though he embraced the PK message of reconciliation, George was at a loss for words when I asked him about what he had concretely done, in his own words, "to build more relationships outside my own group." In contrast to Ted and George who appreciated being "enlightened" on the issue of race, Jim, a white man in his late 50s, expressed his exasperation with the recurring theme of racial reconciliation:

> I think it is one of the things they kind of overdo myself. In Oakland,
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> [McCartney] spoke, and I felt that he was preaching to the choir. We got
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> harangued all day from a group of speakers, and I felt they were talking to the
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> wrong people.

Other studies have also found a range of responses to the issue of racial reconciliation from white attendees (Allen 2000; Newton 2005). Although the PK leadership promotes the idea of breaking down racial barriers, it is clear that the message of reconciliation is much more essential to the identity of men of color than to white PK men.

Thus, there are two ways that the racial field impacts the evangelical field. Firstly, the evangelical field allows a space for men marginalized by race and class to perform masculinity in concert with non-marginalized men who maintain their status over women. Secondly, even

though marginalized men participate in the same practices around hegemonic masculinity, a racial hierarchy is still maintained as the PK organization seeks to move evangelicals in the direction where racial considerations are no longer entertained. Rather than pursuing institutional, political, or structural solutions to the problem of racism, PK focuses on spiritual solutions to purge individuals of the "sin" of racism and to build relationships with men of different racial backgrounds (Allen 2000). While the message of reconciliation is important for white men to hear, the lack of focus on institutional racism means that there is little emphasis on the mechanisms in the church and in society that sustain racism and facilitate discrimination. If the PK movement does little to shift the racial hierarchy among hegemonic and marginalized men, what impact does it have on subordinated masculinities? To answer this question, I turn to a consideration of what it means to be soft-boiled.

Becoming Soft-Boiled

In the field of gender, subordinated masculinities, and most notably homosexual forms of masculinity, are organized according to patriarchal ideologies that act as "the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity," and can be "easily assimilated to femininity" (Connell, 1995:78). Yet, it is also the case that the relationship between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities can challenge and transform gender hierarchies.

In the case of PK, the fields of evangelical religion and gender that uphold an idealized masculinity of male leadership interact with the sexual field in the negotiation of changing gender relations. In my research, I identify "soft-boiled masculinity," a type of masculinity that provides space for men to be more emotionally connected with one another and to express themselves in a manner that can challenge the norms of hegemonic masculinity and its strict

boundaries surrounding the performance of heterosexual male behavior. While men are being instructed to take on spiritual leadership roles in their families and communities, the large stadium events help them to build bonds with other men and form what PK calls accountability groups. Ted, a 36-year-old manager, described the benefits of these groups:

> The men you sit with or you sleep with in the campground become your group. We started a study. And then we learned to open up and share, and that there is a true value in it. It's not just that you're doing it, but you begin to feel a longing to share. Most men long to have relationships with other men, but they don't know how to go about it and are quite frankly ashamed to admit that they need it.

His words point to a desire for intimate, emotional ties with other men outside the norm of what most heterosexual men consider "natural." Intimate and close friendships are more common among gay men who subvert the norm of masculinity by becoming emotionally involved (Nardi 1992; Weeks, Heaphy, and Donovan 2001).

The field of evangelical religion opens a space for men to push the boundaries of conventional manhood and thereby shift the habitus that produces an emotionally disengaged masculinity as ideal. The men I interviewed expressed a need to challenge this hegemonic ideal. Jeff, a 39-year-old white father of three, told me about how PK events offer a way to express the fragility men feel:

> There are 50,000 guys praising the Lord, realizing that we are all fallible, we all make mistakes, and we all need Jesus as our Savior. It's singing, worshiping, hugging, and emotions—things that guys struggle with.

The men's ability to challenge masculine norms is based on their identities as Christians who are called on to live by a higher standard than non-Christian men. Jeff offered Jesus as an example of

a man who had integrity and was loving and emotional, modeling a different kind of masculinity to strive for.

When I attended one of the large stadium events in Sacramento, I was struck by the level of emotion displayed: many in the crowd of over 50,000 were dancing and singing, and some openly cried when one of the speakers discussed the pain that men carry with them, such as having an absent father. Certainly, for men, such sentimentality and display of emotion could be marked as nonmasculine, effeminate, or "gay," behaviors to be avoided at all costs. Within the field of sports, men are able to bond and express a range of emotions with their buddies but not those that would make them appear weak or effeminate (Messner 1992). Within the field of gender, hegemonic masculinity polices male relationships such that "gayness is easily assimilated to femininity" (Connell 1995:78), and these subordinated masculinities are situated at the bottom of the gender hierarchy.

Sociologist C.J. Pascoe (2007), for example, in her research at River High School, uncovers the ways that boys hurl the "fag epithet" at one another to bolster their masculinity and reject fag-like behavior or same-sex desire. In contrast to the word "gay" that is used as an insult to generally mean "lame" or "stupid," the word "fag" is a specific insult concerning gender used by and for boys. A fag refers to a failed masculinity and to a feminine man who is most likely gay. Pascoe's research demonstrates how gender hierarchies are constructed in different fields. The interaction of the education, gender, and sexual fields puts subordinated masculinities in relation to a hegemonic form that is by definition antithetical to the "fag."

Do stadium events and group activities that enable Promise Keepers to express homo-social bonds disrupt hegemonic masculinity by sanctioning expressive or feminized masculinities? Roger, a white man in his 50s, suggested just this kind of dislodgement: "I think

that one thing about the rallies people would probably have trouble understanding or believing is that men's feelings could be shared so deeply." There was also general agreement among the wives I interviewed that their husbands and other PK men they knew were more willing to express their emotions as a result of the Promise Keepers. Sally, a white educator in her early 50s, recounted to me the change in her husband, Sam's, behavior who was now much more willing to touch and hug other men. Even more striking was her description of how Sam had never felt comfortable hugging his own father but now did so on a regular basis. This embrace of "soft masculinity" reorganizes the evangelical field to enable an expressive masculinity that is shunned or avoided in other fields where dominant conceptions of hegemonic masculinity are at play (such as in high schools or sport events).

Soft masculinity, however, is not necessarily non-hegemonic. Instead, the men and women in this study offered definitions of what it means to be expressive that incorporated a hegemonic understanding. For example, they described the importance of excluding women from rallies and accountability groups to ensure that men had a safe space where they could be emotionally available to one another *because* women were not present. PK men articulated enthusiasm that the events were held in football stadiums where they could bring their coolers, wear "team hats," and chant team slogans, facilitating sport-like rituals that reaffirmed their masculinity. The trappings of hegemonic masculinity and the absence of women made activities like hugging, crying, and holding hands palatable. Sally summed up the reasons that women needed to be excluded, stating that men would become more self-conscious and inhibited:

> I felt that going to Promise Keeper rallies would be a place where men could be
> themselves and do what men do without worrying about what women will think

of them or making an impression. They could be emotional or cry without

worrying about women seeing them or feeling like they have to take care of them.

Her words point to the way that soft masculinity interacts with a "hard" masculinity to maintain

its hegemonic position.

Men can display soft masculinity only in environments where women are not present, and

they don't have to worry about what women will think. Moreover, as one wife expressed, the

men can sing and hold hands without anyone "looking at them funny." In this way,

heteronormativity infuses the evangelical field to mark a strict boundary between homosexuality

and heterosexuality. In the homo-social environment of a PK event, men can perform what some

might mark as a subordinate masculinity without worrying about whether their behavior would

be perceived as gay by women or by non-Christian men. Alice made it clear that women wanted

men to be more emotional but "they also wanted men to be men." In other words, it would be a

problem to display too many emotions in settings other than a stadium event, rendering PK men

as nonmasculine.

Research on masculinities has demonstrated the importance of attending to how

whiteness and privilege allows men (and boys) to embrace soft or other hybrid masculinities.

Messner (1993) theorizes the construction of the New Man based on the lives of white, class-

privileged, heterosexual men who shift their lifestyles and behavior away from aspects of

"traditional masculinity," such as being the strict father figure who is head of the household. The

New Man is able to express emotion in public *and* can still practice a hegemonic masculinity.

For example, commenters have remarked on the shift among political leaders in the United

States in which it has become more acceptable to cry in public. Back in the 1990s, supportive

depictions praised U.S. General Schwarzkopf—a highly decorated four-star general known as

Stormin' Norman—for his sensitivity when he shed a tear in public for the U.S. men and women who were killed in Gulf War. More recently, President Barack Obama broke down in tears as he thanked campaign workers for their tireless work for his re-election. Speaker of the House John Boehner cries so frequently that Twitter jokesters now call him the weeper of the house. Such public displays of emotion seem to signal a significant shift in the way that hegemonic masculinity is performed among men who hold some of the most powerful positions in the U.S. government and military. Yet, ultimately, in the field of politics white men still predominantly hold positions of power. The act of elite men crying in public can thus translate into a new hegemonic understanding.

In conceptualizing the ways that soft and hard masculinities might facilitate new hegemonic forms, Demetriou (2001) identifies two types of hegemony: an external form that institutionalizes men's dominance over women, and an internal one that promotes the preeminence of one group of men over others. The two exist in a dialectical relationship where hegemonic masculinity can appropriate elements from subordinated and/or marginalized masculinities to perpetuate dominance. The result is an intertwining of multiple patterns, creating a process of negotiation and reconfiguration. For Demetriou, hegemonic masculinity is "capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures" (Demetriou 2001:355). For example, gay masculinity is increasingly visible in Western societies, making it possible to appropriate aspects of gay men's styles and behaviors into a new hybrid configuration of gender practices.

Masculinities scholars have employed the concept of hybridity as a new and productive direction for analyzing contemporary changes in gender relations. The central question that hybridity poses is whether such new configurations of masculinities challenge or preserve gender

and other social inequalities (Bridges 2013). In the case of the Promise Keepers, as I show above, the men incorporate aspects of subordinated and feminized masculinities to configure a hybrid form of soft masculinity that it is still able to perpetuate gender and sexual inequalities. Within the field of evangelical religion, the gender and sexual fields interact to produce a more "enlightened" manhood; yet, this hybrid manhood is one that still maintains a hierarchical relationship between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities and femininities. Thus, becoming soft-boiled can still allow "men to be men."

Conclusion

Critical assessments of research on hegemonic masculinity have noted that its use is often overemphasized in research as the more prominent concept (Wedgwood 2009). While many empirical studies do explore non-hegemonic forms of masculinity in relation to hegemonic ones, there are many that still treat hegemonic masculinity as a master category without recognizing the multiple ways that it intersects with other historically situated masculinities. In contrast to this tendency to over-utilize the theoretical concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell argued for the importance of attending to gender relations among men; this interactional approach is "necessary to keep the analysis dynamic, to prevent the acknowledgement of multiple masculinities collapsing into a character typology" (1995:76).

Applying the concept of the field to gender relations can avoid this tendency to conceptualize a rigid hegemony and typology of masculinities. Instead, it can be a powerful tool to recognize the dynamic manifestations of multiple masculinities within the matrix of gender hierarchy that rely on an idealized and historically situated model of hegemonic masculinity. Identifying how different fields influence one another illuminates the possibility for social

change, as hierarchical relationships are negotiated and reorganized. At the same time, an intersectional approach facilitates the recognition of the ways that privilege structures and restructures a field. Thus, what appears as social change on the local level can be reconfigured within a field to reestablish gender and other hierarchies.

The PK movement shines a stark light on the ways that privileged men are able to reshuffle the field to incorporate elements that can provide a softer image but still facilitate a gender hierarchy. PK men of all race and class backgrounds in the evangelical field benefit from embracing an "enlightened" masculinity in which they can claim their leadership roles as men willing to share their power with their wives. Likewise, PK men are able to perform a soft-boiled masculinity in spaces where women are not present and where their heterosexuality will not be called into question. The field of evangelical religion thus reinstitutes the hierarchy of men over women and of heterosexuality over homosexuality while incorporating the language of feminism and gender equality. I found that the racial hierarchy within the evangelical field was also re-institutionalized, even as the PK organization has sought to redress racial injustice within the church. Some white men on an individual basis were willing to consider and try to incorporate greater racial inclusion, but, as a strategy that only focuses on personal relationships, the PK organization easily maintains the structural inequalities that perpetuate the marginalization of men of color.

In the contemporary landscape, moral panics abound over fears concerning the end of man. These occur at the same time that new spaces are opening for men to "try on" hybrid masculinities and borrow elements of subordinated and feminized masculinities that resist a dominant construction. This chapter has considered some theoretical innovations in field theory and intersectionality that can facilitate a more nuanced analysis of such efforts. There is little

doubt that future research on masculinities will need to assess new configurations of soft-boiled

and other variations of masculinities to understand the ways these can shift and reproduce

hierarchical gender relations.

End Notes

1. All the names of Promise Keepers and their wives are pseudonyms. Alice is a 55-year-old white, self-identified housewife.

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