"THAT'S WHAT A MAN IS SUPPOSED TO DO":

Compensatory Manhood Acts in an LGBT Christian Church

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In this article, I examine how gay Christian men constructed compensatory manhood acts. Based on more than 450 hours of fieldwork in a southeastern LGBT Christian organization, I analyze how a group of gay men, responding to sexist, heterosexist, and religious stigma, as well as the acquisition of a new pastor, constructed identities as gay Christian men by (1) emphasizing paternal stewardship, (2) stressing emotional control and inherent rationality, and (3) defining intimate relationships in a Christian manner. These subordinated men, regardless of their intentions, collaboratively drew on and reproduced cultural notions that facilitate and justify the subordination of women and sexual minorities. Specifically, their compensatory manhood acts symbolically positioned them as superior to supposedly promiscuous, self-centered, and effeminate others. In conclusion, I draw out implications for understanding how groups of gay Christian men engage in compensatory manhood acts, and the consequences these actions have for the reproduction of inequality.

An emerging line of research shows that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) Christians face significant conflict between their sexual and religious identities (McQueeney 2009; Moon 2004; Thumma 1991; Wilcox 2003, 2009; Wolkomir 2006). Implications of these studies include that LGBT Christians draw on the "cultural toolkits" (Swidler 1986) of Christian and queer culture to create "safe spaces" for the processes of ideological, identity, and emotion work necessary for resolving their identity conflicts. They also suggest gay men are more likely to face such conflict (Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000a), and LGBT

Christian organizations often become male dominated in terms of leadership, culture, and demographics over time (Wilcox 2009). While these studies have invigorated our understanding of LGBT Christian culture, they have thus far left the "politics of masculinity" (Messner 1997) among gay Christian men unexplored. How do gay Christian men construct identities as men, and what consequences do these actions have for the reproduction of inequality?

I examine these questions through an ethnographic study of a southeastern LGBT Christian organization. Specifically, I analyze how a group of gay Christian men, responding to sexist, heterosexist, and religious stigma, as well as the acquisition of a new pastor, constructed "compensatory manhood acts," which refer to acts whereby subordinated men signify masculine selves by emphasizing elements of hegemonic masculinity (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). In so doing, I synthesize and extend analyses of LGBT Christian cultures and masculinities by demonstrating how gay Christian men signify masculine selves, and the consequences these actions have for the reproduction of inequality. Importantly, it is not my intention to generalize my findings to the larger population of LGBT Christian churches. Rather, I use the data from this case to elaborate strategies of compensatory manhood acts subordinated groups of men may use in various social settings when they seek to compensate for their subordination in relation to other men and signify masculine selves (see Schwalbe et al. 2000).

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES

Over the past three decades, sociologists have demonstrated that men construct, enact, and negotiate a wide variety of masculinities shaped by both their social locations within interlocking systems of oppression, and local, regional, and global conceptions of what it means to be a man (see, e.g., Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messner 1997; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Rather than as a physical or personality trait embedded within male bodies, these studies conceptualize masculinities as collective forms of practice, belief, and interaction, which reproduce the subordination of women to men, and some men to others. These studies also show how the social construction of masculinities reproduces sexism (Kimmel 1996), heterosexism (Pascoe 2007), classism (Eastman and Schrock 2008), racism (Chen 1999), and ageism (Slevin and Linneman 2010). Overall, these studies suggest that understanding the reproduction of large-scale systems of inequality requires interrogating the social construction of masculinities.

Interrogating masculinities requires analyzing how men signify masculine selves. Following Goffman (1977), this process involves the dramaturgical work men do to establish and affirm the identity man (see also West and Zimmerman 1987). We may thus conceptualize masculine selves as the result of putting on a convincing "manhood act" (Schwalbe 2005). Schrock and Schwalbe (2009, 289) define "manhood acts" as "the identity work males do to claim membership in the dominant gender group, to maintain the social reality of the group, to elicit deference from others, and to maintain privileges vis-à-vis women." Whereas the elements of a convincing manhood act may vary historically and culturally and across different social settings, Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) argue that all such acts aim to signify a masculine self by exerting control over and resisting being controlled by others (see also Johnson 2005).

Interrogating masculinities, however, also requires making sense of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), or the most honored way to be a man in a given cultural or historical context. Even though very few men may enact the most honored version of manhood in a given culture or time, the hegemonic ideal typically carries enough symbolic weight to pervade the entire culture and provide the yardstick by which all performances of manhood are judged (Chen 1999; Connell 1987; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). As Erving Goffman (1963, 128) observed:

> In an important sense there is only one unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports. Every American male tends to look out upon the world from this perspective.

As such, all blushing males, such as the gay men at the heart of this study, may feel the need to find ways to compensate for their subordination vis-à-vis the hegemonic ideal.

Historically, one strategy of compensation available to subordinated groups of men living within systems of oppression and privilege is the imitation of the hegemonic ideal (Connell 1995; Johnson 2005; Kimmel 1996). Since such systems are dominated by, identified with, and centered on the most honored way of being a man (Johnson 2005), this requires enacting and/or affirming the beliefs, values, characteristics, and practices of hegemonic masculinity (Chen 1999; Connell 1995; Kimmel 1996). At times, these men may engage in "compensatory manhood acts"—emphasizing and/or exaggerating elements of hegemonic masculinity to compensate for their subordination and signify masculine selves (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009).

Previous research has documented compensatory manhood acts in many social contexts. Some of the men in Snow and Anderson's (1987, 1362) study of the homeless, for example, used "fanciful identity assertions" to define their future or ideal selves as sexual, desirable, and powerful men capable of possessing female trophies. As one man stated, "Chicks are going to be all over us when we come back into town with our new suits and Corvettes. We'll have to get some cocaine too. Cocaine will get you women every time." Similarly, ethnographers have shown how male racial minorities (Anderson 1999; Chen 1999; Ferguson 2001), poor and working-class men (Eastman and Schrock 2008; MacLeod 1995; Schrock and Padavic 2007), and female-to-male transsexuals (Schilt 2006; Schilt and Westbrook 2009) engage in exaggerated displays of masculinity to compensate for their subordination in relation to the hegemonic ideal. In each case, subordinated men unable to enact the most honored form of manhood engage in compensatory manhood acts to differentiate themselves from women, and bolster their claims to privileges conferred on men in a patriarchal society.

Researchers have also documented how some men who identify as gay reject heterosexuality as an index of manhood while emphasizing conventional notions of masculinity. Specifically, these studies have shown how gay men compensate for their subordination and signify masculine selves by emphasizing larger bodies and muscularity (Hennen 2005), athletic ability (Anderson 2011), sexual risk-taking (Collins 2009; Green and Halkitis 2006), brotherhood and the devaluation of women (Yeung and Stombler 2000; Yeung, Stombler, and Wharton 2006), the punishment of male performances of femininity (Asencio 2011), youthfulness (Slevin and Linneman 2010), and expressions of "macho" fashion (Mosher, Levitt, and Manley 2006). Similarly, Wolkomir (2009, 507) showed how gay men in mixed-orientation marriages emphasized their ability to provide for their wives and children: "A man takes care of his wife and family, and I could still do that." Whether they stressed physical, sexual, or paternal prowess, gay men in each of these studies emphasized elements of the hegemonic ideal to signify creditable masculine selves.

Previous research has also revealed the importance of evaluating socially constructed notions of Christian manhood. Sociologists of religion, for example, have shown how heterosexual Christian men redefine notions of male headship and spousal authority (Bartkowski 2001; Gallagher and Smith 1999) and make sense of competing discourses of instrumental and affective masculinity (Bartkowski and Xu 2000; Gallagher and Wood 2005) by drawing on a combination of Christian and hegemonic notions

of masculine authority. Similarly, scholars have revealed how heterosexual men in Christian subcultures (Wilkins 2009) and conservative Christian movements (Heath 2003; Robinson and Spivey 2007) emphasize immutable differences between women and men to reproduce masculine privilege. Whereas these studies suggest heterosexual Christian men may interpret manhood in a variety of ways, they also reveal that these efforts rely heavily on differentiating Christian men from women and other men.

Studies of gay Christian men, however, have generally neglected masculinities. Rather, these studies typically focus on how gay Christian men manage the emotional (Wolkomir 2006) and identity-based (Thumma 1991) dilemmas surrounding sexual and religious identity integration. When researchers have incorporated gender into their analyses, they have limited their focus to how notions of Black (McQueeney 2009; Pitt 2010) and Latino (Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000b) masculinities impact strategies of identity integration. Instead of evaluating the impact of gender on identity integration, the present study examines how gay Christian men draw on gendered, sexual, and religious discourses to construct compensatory manhood acts.

Finally, it is important to note that sociologists have tied the accomplishment of compensatory manhood acts to the reproduction of inequality (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Studies have shown, for example, how working-class men use violence to maintain control over women in heterosexual relationships (Pyke 1996). Similarly, researchers have shown how African American (Anderson 1999), working-class (MacLeod 1995), and homosexual (Yeung, Stombler, and Wharton 2006) men construct compensatory manhood acts in ways that unintentionally reproduce their own subordination. Although the gay Christian men I studied are in some ways unique, their example reveals how the construction of compensatory manhood acts is not only about resisting subordination but is also a means through which men may claim organizational power.

SETTING AND METHOD

Data for this study derive from participant observation in a church affiliated with the United Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC). The UFMCC is an international denomination composed of more than 300 congregations. It promotes an inclusive doctrine based on "the recognition of the inherent value of each individual regardless of sexual orientation, race, class, gender, gender identification, age, or abilities"

(UFMCC 2009). The church examined here developed in 1993 when LGBT Christians who felt excluded by churches in their community formed two Bible study groups. Over the next 15 years, these groups expanded into a regular church that purchased its own property and held weekly services.

My involvement with Shepherd Church (all names are pseudonyms) began when I contacted their office and explained my interest in studying the organization. At the time, I was seeking a setting to study the development of local religious and LGBT organizations over time. The representative I spoke with explained that since they were currently without a pastor, I would need to propose my research interests to the board. At their next board meeting, I introduced myself as a bisexual, white, atheist male raised in a working-class Baptist home, and presented members with a proposal for my study, professional references, and some articles I wrote while working as a journalist. Two weeks later, the members granted my request to study the church.

Over the next 36 months, I observed and participated in worship services (190), board meetings (30), Bible studies (45), choir practices (10), outreach efforts (5), and social events (105) with members of Shepherd Church. I also collected newsletters, newspaper pieces, emails, hymnals, pamphlets, and publications by the congregation and the denomination. On average, I spent about one to three hours with members during each visit conducting informal interviews before and after each activity. Throughout my fieldwork, I tape-recorded every meeting and took short-hand notes whenever possible. Afterward, I used these resources to compose detailed field notes, transcribed audio recordings in full, and took notes on any materials gathered in the field (for gender and sexual demographics in Shepherd Church over time, see Table 1).

I also conducted 20 life history interviews with members of the church. Interviews lasted between three and four hours, and I tape-recorded and transcribed each one in full. Apart from using an interview guide that consisted of a list of orienting questions about members' religious and social background and involvement in the church, the interviews were unstructured. My sample consisted of eight white lesbian women, two African American lesbian women, and ten white gay men including the new pastor. Each respondent held informal and/or formal positions of power in the church at some point during my study. All respondents held middle- and upper-middle-class jobs, and all but one had been raised in Protestant churches.

It is important to note that the racial and class characteristics of Shepherd Church may have played a role in the men's construction of

TABLE 1. Gender and Sexual Characteristics of Shepherd Church over Time

Demographic Category	Subgroup Characteristics	Population at Time of Pastor's Arrival	Population One Year after Pastor's Arrival
Women	Lesbian	59 (60%)	15 (33%)
	Transsexual	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
	Heterosexual	4 (4%)	0 (0%)
	Total	66 (67%)	15 (33%)
Men	Gay	25 (26%)	30 (67%)
	Transsexual	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
	Bisexual	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
	Heterosexual	2 (2%)	0 (0%)
	Total	32 (33%)	30 (67%)
Total church	Total	98 (100%)	45 (100%)

masculinities (for race and class demographics in Shepherd Church, see Table 2). Although studies of LGBT Christians have thus far left the construction of race, class, and gender identities unexplored, they have found that cultural notions of race, class, and gender impact the identity integration strategies of Christian sexual minorities (see, e.g., McQueeney 2009; Pitt 2010; Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000b). In the case of Shepherd Church, the congregation was mostly white (88%) and middle- to upper-middle-class (90%) prior to the arrival of the pastor. These men's construction of compensatory manhood acts may well have benefited from their locations in privileged racial and class categories.

Regional and religious factors may also have impacted the compensatory strategies of these men. Their surrounding community, for example, consisted of a minimal LGBT public presence, well-organized local and state anti-gay political groups, and a religious atmosphere dominated by conservative Protestants. Further, the vast majority of these men were raised in the southeast and came from conservative Protestant backgrounds. In a similar fashion, the newly acquired pastor was a white, middle-class man raised in the Southern Baptist tradition, and had, prior to openly coming out as gay, held prominent positions in conservative Baptist churches in Virginia. These men's construction of compensatory manhood acts may thus have been influenced by their collective regional and religious interpretations of Christian manhood.

My analysis developed in an inductive fashion. Following the arrival of the new pastor, many men began emphasizing the importance of being Christian men. Drawing on elements of "grounded theory" (Charmaz 2006), I began coding my data for changes taking place in the church, and

TABLE 2. Race and Class Characteristics of Shepherd Church over Time

Race/Ethnic Category	Social Class Category	Population at Time of Pastor's Arrival	Population One Year after Pastor's Arrival
White	Upper class	12 (12%)	3 (7%)
	Middle class	58 (59%)	17 (38%)
	Lower class	18 (18%)	18 (40%)
	Total	88 (90%)	38 (84%)
Black	Middle class	2 (2%)	1 (2%)
	Lower class	3 (3%)	5 (11%)
	Total	5 (5%)	6 (13%)
Hispanic	Middle class	1 (1%)	1 (2%)
	Lower class	4 (4%)	0 (0%)
	Total	5 (5%)	1 (2%)
Total church	Total	98 (100%)	45 (100%)

meanings of gender, sexuality, and Christianity promoted by the members, which revealed patterns that I sorted into thematic categories. Further, I examined the masculinities literature, and began to see the discourses mobilized by the pastor and gay men as part of the process through which they compensated for their subordination and signified masculine selves. Building on this insight, I generated labels to capture how they constructed compensatory manhood acts by (1) emphasizing paternal stewardship; (2) stressing emotional control and inherent rationality; and (3) defining intimate relationships in a Christian manner.

PROBLEMATIZING GAY CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

Prior to the arrival of the new pastor, women and men ran Shepherd Church in an egalitarian manner (see, e.g., Sumerau 2010; Sumerau and Schrock 2011). Specifically, they took turns leading worship services and Bible studies, holding formal positions of power, and delivering sermons and musical performances. Further, they stressed equal representation, sought to include all members in organizational decisions, and affirmed racial, gendered, classed, and sexual diversity in the church, thereby collectively establishing an LGBT Christian space that was growing in terms of population and finances at the time of the pastor's arrival.

During this period of rapid growth, the vast majority of members expressed concerns about being taken seriously in the larger religious community. Specifically, they believed they needed to acquire the services

of an ordained pastor in order to be a legitimate church. As a result, they began holding meetings and conference calls with the denomination. In response, the denomination selected three candidates, and the members had the opportunity to either veto or approve each candidate. Importantly, all three candidates were white, middle-class, gay men raised and trained in conservative Protestantism. After vetoing the first two candidates, the congregation approved and installed the final candidate.

The new pastor, however, brought a different image for the church. Specifically, he emphasized notions of Christian manhood predicated on masculine authority (see, e.g., Bartkowski 2001). As he explained to a group of men during his first week in the church:

> I think you have done well here with the lesbians running things, but inclusive doesn't mean anything goes. This is still a Christian church, and that means we have to act accordingly, and be responsible Christian men. Like a father does with his children, each of you needs to be the strong, dependable blocks we build this church on, and, like in a family, you have to model this behavior for the rest of the church.

Similar to members of the Promise Keepers (Heath 2003), the new pastor viewed masculine authority as a central element of both Christian manhood and a truly Christian organization.

The new pastor's arrival thus facilitated a dramatic transformation in Shepherd Church. Specifically, most of the gay men collaborated with the pastor to construct compensatory manhood acts. Four of the gay men, the majority of the lesbian women (44 of 59), and all of the bisexual, heterosexual, and transgendered women and men, however, began departing the organization in the months following the pastor's arrival. Rather than conform to the new "politics of masculinity" (Messner 1997) in the church, they formed a new Bible study group where they continued to promote their egalitarian version of Christianity.

It is important to note that the pastor's notion of Christian manhood may have been especially salient to the gay men at Shepherd Church because of painful experiences each of them faced in the course of their lives. Raised in conservative Christian churches, they all learned from an early age to base their sense of themselves as good people on their ability to be Christian men. Their development of homosexual identities, however, placed these claims in jeopardy. As a result, they experienced feelings of guilt, shame, and fear. As Michael recalled:

> I was supposed to grow up and be a man—be responsible for a wife and a family and my church. How was I supposed to do that? I remember feeling

like my life was over. I had heard what those gay people were like; I wasn't like that: I was a good Christian man.

For Michael and the other gay men, being a Christian man was a "moral identity" (Katz 1975; McQueeney 2009). Each of these attributes signified his worth, character, and value as a person. Being gay, however, created the possibility that he was not a good person.

The men's experiences were especially traumatic because their identification as homosexuals violated what they believed were valid scriptural interpretations of the sanctity of heterosexual marriage and traditional, complementary gender roles (see Ammerman 1987; Bartkowski 2001). Specifically, most conservative Christian churches defined homosexuals as sinners and abominations in the eyes of God. As Marcus explained one morning after church:

> Growing up you heard about "those gay people" and how they were ruining the world, but it didn't really sink in until I realized I was one of "those people." Then, whoa man, I spent so many nights crying, praying and asking why God would do this to me. Why did I have to be damned? Why couldn't I be good, just why?

For Marcus and the others, identifying as gay was similar to receiving a death sentence, and deemed their Christian identities invalid. As others have noted (see, e.g., Wilcox 2003), they joined an LGBT church in search of a "safe space" to express their Christian *and* sexual identities.

Their painful experiences, however, were not limited to their sexual and religious identities. Raised in conservative Christian churches, they also learned from an early age that God's will is expressed in a divine mandate requiring women's submission and men's leadership for the promotion of an ideal Christian society (see also Wolkomir 2006). Specifically, they learned that real men headed churches and families by leading, protecting, and providing for their wives, children, and fellow Christians (Ammerman 1987). As Micah noted:

> I still get it every time I go home: "When you going to grow up and be a man, boy?" and "What kind of man don't have no wife or kids?" Oh, and "When you goin' to grow out of the gay stuff?" It's hard sometimes because that's what a man is supposed to do right—raise a family, take care of a wife. What does that say about me?

For Micah and many others, identifying as homosexual generated a direct attack on their manhood. Similar to men in "bear" groups (Hennen 2005) and gay fraternities (Yeung, Stombler, and Wharton 2006), they

sought to claim masculine selves denied to them in the larger social world. In the following sections, I examine how the new pastor and the gay men who remained at Shepherd Church accomplished this by constructing compensatory manhood acts.

CONSTRUCTING GAY CHRISTIAN MANHOOD

What follows is an analysis of how the gay men at Shepherd Church constructed compensatory manhood acts. First, I examine how they constructed compensatory manhood acts by emphasizing paternal stewardship over the church and the LGBT community. Specifically, this strategy involved defining themselves as fatherly guides and financial providers. Then, I show how they constructed compensatory manhood acts by stressing emotional control and inherent rationality to differentiate themselves from women and effeminate men. Finally, I analyze how they constructed compensatory manhood acts by defining intimate relationships in a Christian manner, thus emphasizing responsible sexual conduct, monogamy, and immutable sexual natures. While these strategies allowed them to signify masculine selves, they also reproduced the superiority of men at the expense of women and sexual minorities.

Emphasizing Paternal Stewardship

On his arrival, the new pastor stressed resisting stereotypical depictions of homosexual men as selfish and irresponsible children. As he stated in his first sermon, the members of Shepherd Church could resist such stereotypes by being good stewards of their church:

> We all know how others try to clobber us gay guys by saying we're anti-family or irresponsible children who only want to play. Well, we know different, and part of our job as men is to show the world we are good providers and leaders in our communities.

Importantly, the gay men at Shepherd Church were already intimately familiar with these cultural depictions of homosexual men. As Troy explained during one Bible Study:

> You know how they see us, right? They talk about us like we're kids. We're too busy doing our makeup and partying to raise a family or support our partners or any of the other things real men do with their time or, more likely, with their money.

Seeking to refute such depictions, they constructed compensatory manhood acts by emphasizing paternal stewardship. Specifically, they defined themselves as fatherly guides and financial providers for women and other sexual minorities.

These gay men constructed identities as Christian men by defining themselves as fatherly guides providing the necessary leadership for their communities to survive. This tactic involved defining other sexual minorities as children requiring supervision. As Matthew noted:

> It's like being a father to your own kids. Many of these folks that come here and to other community events are fresh out of the closet, and, like children, they have no clue how to look out for themselves. That's where we come in. We can come to them like parents, provide them with the wisdom and experience we have, and they'll be better for it.

In a similar fashion, Tommy explained, during a Bible study, "Well, it's understandable that a lot of these little ones don't realize all the fighting and struggles we went through building this community. They just need some good fatherly teaching." Echoing others, Matthew and Tommy emphasized the importance of sharing the "wisdom and experience" they possessed with the "kids" or "children" that "have no clue" how to exist within an LGBT community. Similar to members of the Promise Keepers (Heath 2003), they constructed compensatory manhood acts by defining themselves as fatherly guides capable of providing for less informed others.

The gay men at Shepherd Church also constructed compensatory manhood acts by defining women as selfish creatures in need of fatherly guidance. As Micah noted:

> It's not a bad thing, just how they are, but the lesbians jumping beds and relationships so often that they often lose sight of what matters. It's just how they are. We have to kind of pick up the slack. It's not that they're bad people, but they need some strong guidance.

Similarly, Dante observed, "It's not a lesbian thing, I don't think. My mom's that way. Women are kind of flighty, I guess, and that's okay because, like in a family, the men can make sure things run smooth." Echoing others, Dante and Micah defined "women" as "kind of flighty" and in need of the guidance "men" could provide. Similar to gay men in mixed-orientation marriages (Wolkomir 2009), they defined women as subordinates in need of their guidance and direction.

After the pastor's arrival, these gay men also began defining themselves as financial providers. Specifically, this strategy involved differentiating between male providers and others:

Tommy says, "I think it's important to remember this is our church, and we have a responsibility to take care of it." Speaking up, Maria says, "Well, anyone can help with the cleaning. Alice and I have been doing it the last couple weeks, and it's important." The Pastor holds out his hand, and says, "That is good work ya'll are doing, Maria, but more importantly, like the check John and Michael put in this morning, is the financial well-being of the church. I mean, we can worship in some dirt, but we need for all of us to come together to take care of finances and be real stewards for our father's house."

In moments like this, they defined "financial" provision as the primary form of Christian stewardship. Whereas "anyone" could "help with the cleaning," they downplayed these traditionally feminine activities and emphasized the "financial well-being" of the church.

Importantly, the gay men at Shepherd Church often explicitly invoked gender when discussing financial provision without women around. As Marcus explained, "Well, it's a man job to bring in the money, and so it's okay that the lesbians don't kick in as much cash, but it's disappointing sometimes, but that's what men are supposed to do, right?" Marcus and others defined bringing in money as an activity that "men are supposed to do" while asserting that "the lesbians" often did not do so anyway. Similarly, they often defined financial provision as an essential element of manhood. As the Pastor observed, "It's important to recognize women trying to contribute, but it's more important to make sure the men understand it's their job, their responsibility, their calling from God." Echoing leaders of the ex-gay movement (Robinson and Spivey 2007), the pastor defined financial provision as a "calling," a "responsibility," and a "job" men receive from God, and emphasized "making sure the men understand" God's plan. On the contrary, congregational logs revealed that women often contributed more money than men. Importantly, none of the men ever mentioned this. In a culture where breadwinning is interpreted as evidence of a masculine self (see Kimmel 1996), the men may have ignored this information to preserve their compensatory manhood acts from possible challenges.

Overall, the gay men at Shepherd Church constructed compensatory manhood acts by emphasizing paternal stewardship over the church and the larger LGBT community. In so doing, however, they reproduced cultural

notions of male supremacy by defining women and other sexual minorities as irresponsible children incapable of taking care of themselves (see Kimmel 1996). Similar to leaders of the ex-gay Christian movement (Robinson and Spivey 2007), men active in the Promise Keepers (Heath 2003), and gay men in mixed-orientation marriages (Wolkomir 2009), they constructed identities as men by reproducing the supremacy of fatherly guidance, male headship, and breadwinning. As such, their compensatory manhood acts reproduced the elevation of men at the expense of women and sexual minorities.

Stressing Emotional Control and Inherent Rationality

On his arrival, the new pastor also stressed resisting stereotypical depictions of homosexual men as overly emotional and effeminate. As he stated in the first Bible study I attended where only men were present, the gay men at Shepherd Church could resist such stereotypes by controlling their emotions and drawing on their inherent rationality:

> It's important to talk about how we go about handling our emotions during these changing times. As men, we all know that the media seems to guess we are all weepy and girly like women, but we know, probably better than most, that our Father blessed us with an inherent rationality that we can draw on in times of struggle, and it's important for us all to do this and keep our emotions in check as we make necessary changes for the church.

Importantly, the gay men at Shepherd Church were already well versed in the importance of emotional control. As Michael noted in an interview:

> Sometimes, life can be hell. People will be really nasty when they hear you're a gay. Sissy, wimp, and fag are, like, words, but fists and damnation leave some deep marks. As a man, it's hard to control your feelings and deal with the pain; it's hard, but it's important.

Similarly, Troy recalled, "It was like in high school, if you lost control, even for a second let a tear slip, or your voice crack, you were automatically a queeny bitch." Seeking to refute depictions of overly emotional, effeminate homosexual men, they constructed compensatory manhood acts by stressing emotional control and inherent rationality.

These gay men constructed identities as men by stressing emotional control. This strategy often involved making references to Biblical figures

that suffered unfairly while remaining composed and faithful to God. As the pastor argued during one Bible study:

> "Now, you have to remember that it wasn't easy," the pastor says while Tommy passes the candy jar around the table. "I mean, Paul had it rough, and he could have sat down on the edge of the cliff and cried "Woe is me!" I don't think anyone would have blamed him, just like no one might blame some of us after the discrimination our people have faced." As he finishes speaking, four men offer "amens." Smiling, the pastor continues, "What we have to remember, like Paul did, is that God is with us, and we will be okay and make it through if we don't give up, don't give in. Part of that is keeping our emotions, our grief, our tears in check—there is no time for tears when you're working for God!"

Similarly, Daniel noted, "It's like a fight, you can't wimp out like some sissy or little girl. When things are hard, and they can be really hard, you just have to have faith and fight on." Echoing these sentiments, Jamie observed, "We all learned crying and whining is for queens. Real men have to stand up, not take stuff from bigots and idiots." As these statements reveal, the gay men at Shepherd Church defined emotional control as central to manhood, and the expression of emotions as something that only a "sissy or little girl" would do. Similar to mixed-martial arts fighters (see Vaccarro, Schrock, and McCabe 2011), these men thus constructed compensatory manhood acts by defining the expression of emotions as inherently unmanly.

They also constructed compensatory manhood acts by explicitly defining emotional display as feminine and differentiating themselves from women. As Donny stated:

> "The way those women were just a-crying, I can't imagine acting like that," he says while nudging my arm. Puzzled, I ask, "You do realize Manny was crying as loud as any of the women?" Smiling, he responds, "I said 'those women,' didn't I? You've met Manny before, if that ain't a true-blue queen I don't know who is, probably has more right to the title 'woman' than any of the others with all the whining and carrying on he does."

Similarly, Martin explained after a worship service, "I swear, those queens, the lesbian ones and the gay ones, give us such a bad name. Look at them crying over photos and such, you wouldn't catch me dead doin' that, damn girls." Echoing Donny and others, Martin considered that "crying" in the presence of others was something that "damn girls" and

"queens" did, which gave real gay men a "bad name." Further, as Donny's comments suggest, this type of behavior could disqualify males from the identity "man." Similar to some men in batterer intervention programs (Schrock and Padavic 2007), these gay men constructed compensatory manhood acts by defining emotional control as masculine and emotional expression as feminine.

These gay men also constructed identities as men by stressing inherent rationality. Specifically, they stressed the rational nature of men while accusing lesbians of falling victim to emotions. The following field note provides a typical example:

> Troy turns to James and I, and says, "You hear Jamie saying there's a new sheriff in town now that he's on the board," and James responds, "Well, I don't know what you think, but I got to say, good, it's just like bringing in the pastor. We need real leadership, no more of this lesbian drama and funny business. We need to focus on what really matters and how we can grow as a church." Chuckling and handing me a drink, Troy says, "Well, I can agree there. Sometimes they just, I don't know, things get so heated, so crazy, it seems like we need to make decisions with more composure or something."

Similarly, the pastor noted, "I don't know. I've dealt with lesbians before, but these just seem to take everything so personal. Real decision making needs to leave all those feelings at the door." As these examples reveal, these gay men stressed leaving "feelings" and "personal" concerns out of the "real decision making" while equating female leadership with "drama," "funny business," and "heated" or "crazy" decision making lacking "composure." Similar to how lawyers (Pierce 1995) define rationality as masculine, they constructed compensatory manhood acts by suggesting they, and not women, possessed the inherent rationality necessary to lead the church.

Further, they claimed men's inherent rationality made them naturally more suited for leadership. As Tommy noted, "Men are just built to make decisions, like my own talents for taking care of things; that's just something inside me." Similarly, Martin noted, "I think sometimes the drama gets the best of women, but it's not their fault, they're not built like us, and that's just how it is. Men just seem to know how to handle the important stuff." Micah also observed, "Sometimes I think maybe God did just make us different. I know a lot of people have left because they liked it better with the ladies running things, but it seems so much smoother, like a well-oiled machine now." These gay men thus stressed their own inherent ability to lead, and defined their God-given rationality as greater than the "drama"

of the "ladies." Similar to how ex-gay Christian advocates define mascu-
linity as a God-given good to rationalize the use of intervention therapies
(Robinson and Spivey 2007), they constructed identities as men by sym-
bolically positioning themselves above supposedly irrational women.

The gay men at Shepherd Church thus constructed compensatory man-
hood acts by stressing emotional control and inherent rationality. Similar
to men in batterer intervention programs (Schrock and Padavic 2007), law
firms (Pierce 1995), gay and ex-gay Christian support groups (Wolkomir
2006), ex-gay ministries (Robinson and Spivey 2007), and mixed-martial
arts groups (Vaccarro, Schrock, and McCabe 2011), they constructed iden-
tities as men by reproducing a long-held cultural mandate that "real men"
control their emotions (see Kimmel 1996). Whereas these strategies
allowed them to construct identities as men, they relied on depictions of
women as emotionally unstable and incapable of leadership, reproducing
the subordination of women by perpetuating stereotypical depictions of
immutable differences between feminine and masculine emotional subjec-
tivity (see Schwalbe et al. 2000).

Defining Intimate Relationships in a Christian Manner

On his arrival, the new pastor also emphasized resisting cultural depic-
tions of homosexual men as sexually promiscuous. As he told a group of
men at the first fellowship dinner he attended, they could accomplish this
by following Christian principles:

> As gay men, we have to be careful about our relationships. There are those
> out there just looking to clobber us and call us sickos, but if we model
> respectable, Christian, monogamous, and committed relationships, in time
> those same people will welcome us into the fold like states that have begun
> to recognize gay marriages.

Importantly, these gay men were already acutely aware of these issues.
As Barney explained:

> It's all over the place, this silly belief that all we do is screw and screw and
> screw. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm a man so I definitely like to screw.
> But we're not all roaming around looking in every corner for a piece of
> tail—that's just crazy!

Seeking to refute such depictions, these gay men constructed compen-
satory manhood acts by defining intimate relationships in a Christian

manner. Although they could have interpreted Christian principles regarding intimate relationships in a variety of ways (see Gallagher and Wood 2005), they defined Christian intimacy in ways that symbolically positioned themselves above supposedly promiscuous lesbians, bisexuals, and polyamorous others (see also Wilkins 2009).

The gay men at Shepherd Church constructed compensatory manhood acts by emphasizing responsible sexual conduct. This was especially true for single men, and men who had recently come out of the closet. Typically, they focused on using protection and viewing sex as part of a quest for a long-term relationship. As the new pastor explained in an interview:

> Like any other man, the boys coming out of the closet feel like they gotta get their numbers up. But what's important for them to know is it's not about being gay, it's about becoming responsible gay Christian men. It's not about who you sleep with, but how you do it. It's about building relationships, healthy exchanges between caring adults that could lead to more than a hook-up, and it's about being safe.

Similarly, Martin noted during a social gathering, "Oh, we can be as nasty as anyone, but the point is finding that special someone, not just out doing everything for the sake of doing it." As these illustrations reveal, these gay men emphasized forming "healthy, committed, adult relationships" that "could possibly lead" to something more serious, and "being safe" in regard to diseases and hook-ups. At the same time, they echoed elements of hegemonic masculinity by asserting that, "like any other man," all gay men would naturally seek to "get their numbers up."

Since single men were in much shorter supply in the church, the primary way these gay men constructed compensatory manhood acts involved emphasizing monogamy. Similar to some conservative Christian interpretations of heterosexual marriage (see Bartkowski 2001), this strategy involved defining monogamous homosexuality as the ultimate expression of God's will. Specifically, church members began holding holy unions, relationship workshops, couples retreats, and major anniversary festivities for committed couples after the arrival of the new pastor. As Michael observed during an anniversary celebration, "One thing about being back in the church is the opportunity to live right, settle down with a partner, and make a home together just like God intends." Similarly, Dante explained during a Bible study, "The whole point of this life, or the way I read the Bible, is to find someone special, someone you feel fits you right, and build a committed relationship." Echoing other men in the church as well as many heterosexual Christians, these gay men constructed compensatory

manhood acts by defining monogamy as the way to "live right," and "the whole point of this life" according to the "Bible."

Whereas the dual emphasis on responsible sexual conduct and homosexual monogamy challenged dominant Christian conceptions of homosexuality, gay men at Shepherd Church also constructed compensatory manhood acts by using these discourses to denigrate promiscuity on the part of lesbian, gay, and bisexual others. The following field note excerpt offers an example:

> Barney asks, "So what does a lesbian bring to a second date?" I say, "What?" Chuckling erupts as Barney says, "A moving van," and slaps me on the back. Allan adds, "Don't get me wrong, the lesbian drama is a lot of fun, but sometimes I wish they would grow up." Patrick adds, "Well, it's just weird, the way women hop from relationship to relationship, from bed to bed; makes me wonder if there is something about the cunt that causes all the heterosexual adultery out there." Grinning at the laughter, he continues, "Men just aren't like that, we get around and then find a partner; women just go crazy, on to the next every two weeks or so. It's freakin' scary!" Softly, Martin adds, "It's just un-Christian, I think, and maybe that's why they have so many troubles, the lot of them."

In exchanges like these, gay men denigrated lesbians for failing to obtain long-term monogamous relationships. While these men were obviously aware of stereotypical depictions of lesbians, they reinterpreted such depictions to proclaim their own superiority. Rather than simply as an example of getting their numbers up, they defined lesbian serial monogamy as evidence of immaturity and immorality. Similarly, many men expressed dismay and even disgust at the dating practices of lesbians. As Troy explained, "It's just odd, hopping around the way they do. It's just unseemly, and it makes the rest of us look bad." Echoing others, Troy felt the way lesbians "hop from relationship to relationship, from bed to bed" made gay men "look bad," and, like Patrick and Martin, he felt the way "women just go crazy" was "just unseemly" and "un-Christian." Similar to how some boys use language to turn girls into props for signifying heterosexuality (Pascoe 2007) and some female rugby players use notions of femininity to distance themselves from lesbians (Ezzell 2009), these men used their definition of monogamy to turn lesbians into props for constructing compensatory manhood acts.

These gay men also constructed compensatory manhood acts by emphasizing immutable sexual natures. Specifically, this strategy involved defining bisexual and polyamorous desires as a sign of weakness or an inability to accept one's sexuality. As Micah explained in an interview:

> In my experience, bisexuality doesn't exist. Don't get me wrong, I messed with a girl or two before I accepted that I was gay. But I feel like bisexual is just for before they realize if they are gay or straight. I think you're just born one way or another.

For Micah and many others, bisexuality was not a possibility. Most of the men felt they had been "born" gay, and just did not "realize" it until a certain point in their lives. As the pastor observed: "Bisexuality is tricky; I mean, I was just talking to Dana and, I don't know, sometimes I think ya'll need to get off the fence, but other times I don't know." Echoing the pastor, these gay men often spoke of bisexual and polyamorous others as "on the fence" or "in between" sexualities. Similar to many Christian treatments of homosexuality (see Moon 2004), they sanctified immutable sexual natures by dismissing alternate sexual desires and practices.

Because of the emphasis on immutable sexualities, bisexual and polyamorous members often faced the same conflicts lesbian women and gay men face in other churches. As Dana, a bisexual man, noted, "They're as bad as the Baptists. They want me to join the opposite team, but it's the same damn message—narrow-minded bullshit." Further, many gay men spoke of "accepting your God-given sexuality" and your "sexual nature." As Martin noted at a gathering:

> I think people need to be honest with themselves. We're all born gay or straight. We all know this. God doesn't mention other options in the Bible, and why should we expect otherwise? The point is to find a partner, a companion, a lover, and how are you supposed to do that playing both sides of the field? It seems weird to associate with the bisexuals, and polywhatevers in politics. It makes the rest of us look like freaks.

Echoing Christian notions of immutable sexual natures, Martin and others stressed an obligation to follow the sexual design laid down by "God" in the "Bible," and to recognize that "we're all born gay or straight" so we should not "expect otherwise" or "associate" with "bisexuals," "polywhatevers," or other "freaks." Similar to ex-gay Christian depictions of homosexuals and feminists (Robinson and Spivey 2007), these gay men constructed compensatory manhood acts by differentiating themselves from unnatural deviants unwilling to submit to the demands of God.

In sum, the gay men at Shepherd Church constructed compensatory manhood acts by defining intimate relationships in a Christian manner. In so doing, however, they reproduced narrow definitions of sexuality often used to justify the subordination of sexual minorities in mainstream Christianity

(see, e.g., Wilcox 2009; Wolkomir 2006). Further, they accomplished this by turning women into scapegoats, and symbolically positioning the sexual desires of gay men above those of lesbians, bisexuals, and polyamorous people. As such, their construction of compensatory manhood acts ultimately reproduced sexist and heterosexist notions of sexuality.

CONCLUSION

The gay men at Shepherd Church learned from an early age to base their perceptions of themselves as good people on their ability to be Christian men. Their development of homosexual identities, however, placed these claims in jeopardy. While they could have rejected dominant notions of manhood, as they all once had and those who left the church continued to do, the arrival of a new pastor provided them with an opportunity to go in a different direction. As a result, they worked with the pastor to construct compensatory manhood acts—emphasizing elements of hegemonic masculinity to compensate for their subordination and signify masculine selves. Specifically, they did so by emphasizing paternal stewardship, stressing emotional control and inherent rationality, and defining intimate relationships in a Christian manner.

While their construction of compensatory manhood acts allowed them to successfully compensate for their subordination and signify masculine selves, it also reproduced cultural notions that facilitate the subordination of women and alternative sexualities. By characterizing women as overly emotional and incapable of handling leadership positions, for example, they reproduced conventional gendered discourses used to justify masculine authority in occupational (Padavic 1991), religious (Robinson and Spivey 2007), and legal (Pierce 1995) settings. Similarly, their promotion of immutable sexual natures reproduced rhetoric (see, e.g., Moon 2004) used to deny equal rights to LGBT people. Whereas religious researchers have sought to understand why LGBT churches tend to become male dominated in terms of leadership, demographics, and culture (see, e.g., Wilcox 2009), these findings reveal that part of this answer may lie in the "politics of masculinity" (Messner 1997) promoted in these social settings.

These findings also support research on the impact of cultural notions of masculinity on gay Christian men (see, e.g., McQueeney 2009; Pitt 2010; Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000b), and extend this research by revealing how gay Christian men draw on conventional notions of gender, sexuality,

and religion to construct compensatory manhood acts. Specifically, the gay Christian men at Shepherd Church drew on notions of Christian manhood to deflect cultural stigma against homosexual men, fashion creditable masculine selves, and claim gender-based privilege in their local organization. Similar to leaders of conservative Christian groups, such as the Promise Keepers (Heath 2003) and the ex-gay ministries (Robinson and Spivey 2007), they promoted a "politics of masculinity" (Messner 1997) characterized by the elevation of men at the expense of women and other sexual minorities. Whereas researchers have generally treated LGBT and conservative Christian groups as purely oppositional forces (see, e.g., Wolkomir 2006), the case of Shepherd Church suggests that in some cases these organizations may share more similarities than previously thought. These findings thus reveal the importance of examining and comparing the social construction of masculinities in specific religious settings.

These findings also extend previous treatments of compensatory manhood acts by drawing our attention to the ways subordinated men may use such actions to claim power over women and effeminate men. Whereas previous studies have shown how subordinated men construct compensatory manhood acts to claim power over women in intimate relationships (Pyke 1996), they have generally focused on how such actions unintentionally reproduce subordinated men's *own* disadvantage (see, e.g., Anderson 1999; MacLeod 1995; Yeung, Stombler, and Wharton 2006). The gay Christian men at Shepherd Church, however, constructed compensatory manhood acts in ways that explicitly defined women and other sexual minorities as inferior beings. While these actions did in fact reproduce cultural notions that facilitate the oppression of gay men, they also reproduced societal patterns of gender inequality by justifying the superiority of men within the context of their church. These findings thus reveal the importance of addressing not only how subordinated men compensate for their disadvantage at the societal level but also how such actions may ultimately result in the oppression of women and sexual minorities in local settings.

These findings also reveal the necessity of examining how subordinated men construct compensatory manhood acts in ways that simultaneously deflect stigma *and* claim organizational power over women. Whereas previous studies of subordinated men generally focus on *either* attempts to deflect stigma or efforts to claim privileges over women, the case of Shepherd Church reveals that these may often be interrelated results of the construction of compensatory manhood acts. Further, examples of this interrelation may be seen in many arenas where subordinated

men seek to resist controlling images while bolstering claims to male privilege. African American men during the Civil Rights movement, for example, sought to de-stigmatize cultural notions of Black men while devaluing the contributions of African American women (see, e.g., Collins 2000). In a similar fashion, poor and working-class men may fashion themselves as hard workers while denigrating women who enter their occupational domains (see, e.g., Padavic 1991). Unraveling the ways subordinated men may accomplish these interrelated goals, however, requires asking questions beyond the scope of the present study. Researchers could, for example, examine how subordinated men accomplish these goals in nonreligious settings, such as social movement organizations, occupations, and schools. Further, researchers could examine what role women might play in the construction of compensatory manhood acts as well as the ways women may resist such acts. Finally, researchers should explore the ways that cultural notions of race, class, age, and/or nationality might play a role in these actions.

These findings also demonstrate the importance of examining when and where subordinated men are more likely to engage in strategies of compensation. Previous studies have, for example, conceptualized men's strategies of compensation as—seemingly automatic—responses to marginalization vis-à-vis the hegemonic ideal (see, e.g., Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). In the case of Shepherd Church, however, all the gay men experienced marginalization in relation to the most honored form of manhood, and yet none of them constructed compensatory manhood acts prior to the arrival of the new pastor. Rather than merely a reaction to religious and/or sexual marginalization, their construction of compensatory manhood acts relied on the establishment of organizational leadership conducive to the elevation of men at the expense of women. Whereas future research may reveal important variations, these findings suggest that subordinated men may be more likely to construct compensatory manhood acts when they find themselves in settings where organizational leaders promote and affirm masculine authority and privilege (see also Dellinger 2004).

To fully understand the reproduction of gender and sexual inequality, we must analyze how subordinated men construct identities as men and the consequences of these actions (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Specifically, this will require critically investigating how men who belong to marginalized social groups interpret notions of manhood as well as the factors that lead some men to act in ways that reproduce the elevation of men at the expense of women and sexual minorities. As the case of

Shepherd Church reveals, the construction of compensatory manhood acts relies on both the adoption of notions of male supremacy and organizational conditions conducive to the subordination of women. Unraveling and comparing the variations in compensatory manhood acts and, more generally, the multitude of ways men collaborate to signify, interpret, and affirm the oppression of women and sexual minorities, may deepen our understanding of the reproduction of inequality as well as possibilities for social change.

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