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Discovering the Evangelical Sexual Marketplace: An Ethnographic Analysis of the Development, Exchange, and Conversion of Erotic Capital in an Evangelical Church

by

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Abstract

This manuscript traces the development of sexual abstinence and virginity as a commodity and describes how this development has contributed to modern conceptions of sexual abstinence. Within this analysis, the author provides what demographic and statistical information is available on abstinence practice in North America as well as outlines some of the perspectives critical of abstinence and abstinence-only sex education.

More importantly, the author argues that within many Evangelical churches a defined social space—a sexual marketplace—exists where individual agents exchange and convert this commodity, among others, to attract potential marital partners. Furthermore, the manuscript outlines the effects and implications of this marketplace on its participants. The author derives these conclusions from the ethnographic observations and interviews he conducted while attending an urban Canadian Pentecostal Church.

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Chapter One: Introducing Abstinence and Evangelical Christianity

Introducing Abstinence

My interest in sexual abstinence developed from one of my first sexual relationships. Well, depending on one's definition of sex, it may be more accurate to describe it as one of my first *almost* sexual relationships. This relationship was my first and only attempt at an abstinent relationship. My conservative Catholic partner (now ex-partner) convinced me that an abstinent relationship was indeed the best form of premarital relationship, and being from a mainline Protestant background myself this philosophy seemed to make sense. While my life was void of the purity-related indoctrination she received growing up, my church, parents, and the rest of my early social world had taught me that sex was a serious matter and, vicariously, one's virginity was not something that should be simply thrown away. Thus, in spite of my biology, abstinence was a pretty easy sell on a young man who was desperately searching for some form of moral/ethical foundation.

Eventually, sexual non-practice would come to dominate the relationship. All we did was talk about not having sex and feeling guilty about the physical things we did. As a result, we never dealt with any other issues that did develop in the relationship; in my mind our focus on abstinence eventually poisoned the relationship.

From this experience, I had what I would consider my first sociological moment or, in the words of social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, my first experience of

"radical doubt" (Bourdieu, 1992). Bourdieu described radical doubt as a perspective that keeps one "on the lookout especially for those assumptions and punitive absolutes that establish and perpetuate social inequalities and injustice…" (Rey, 2007: 4). This moment was the first time in my life that I concretely realized that my actions and the actions of my peers were being shaped by forces external to ourselves. More specifically, I realized that abstinence can be a "punitive absolute," leaving no room for failure or negotiation.

Defining Sexual Abstinence

By abstinence, I mean the complete "principled and unerring" withholding of sexual activity prior to marriage (Warner, 2008: xi). That said, a person can abstain from anything, such as alcohol or fast food. Thus, sexual abstinence by this definition is simply heterosexual non-practice. What heterosexual practice entails is completely relative, although I think most Christians and a good portion of mainstream society would agree that it has something to do with genital penetration.

The definition of virginity is far more nebulous. To begin with, there is no medical definition of virginity (Blank, 2007: ix; Valenti, 2009: 20). Thus, virginity is not a physical state; it is a moral and social one.[1] Furthermore, feminist Jessica Valenti posits that the term 'virgin' only applies to women:

[1] The hymen, a tiny flange of flesh that separates the external uro-genital space with the inner vagina, has for been the symbol of physical virginity. In particular, many people have considered the 'breaking' of this hymen as the evidence of one's premarital virginity. In fact, the integrity of the hymen is a very poor indicator of virginity. For instance, many hymens are more flexible and do not break during intercourse, and some women's hymens are more fragile may 'break' several times in their lives (Blank, 2007).

> This has much to do with the fact that 'virgin' is almost synonymous with 'woman' . . . Even the dictionary definitions of 'virgin' cite an 'unmarried girl or woman' or a 'religious woman, esp. a saint.' No such definition exists for men or boys (Valenti, 2009: 21).

As such, the term virginity implies a concoction of morality and gender politics, and, in Christian circles, is tied intricately with the concept of 'purity.'

One Christian dictionary defines purity as "freedom from guilt or the defilement of sin; innocence; as purity of heart or life" (Crossmap Dictionary, 2010). Thus, purity extends beyond sexuality. Those involved in purity movements attempt to remove themselves from anything that could taint the "Christian soul." Often this practice involves abstention from sex, drugs, alcohol, and swearing. Sexuality, however, is still paramount. For instance, the previously cited dictionary adds the following alternative definition for purity "chastity; freedom from contamination by illicit sexual connection" (Crossmap Dictionary, 2010). It is the concept of purity and the historical baggage of virginity that transform benign sexual non-practice into a religio-spiritual concept and into an integral part of the Evangelical identity.

Primarily, I use abstinence to refer to sexual non-practice because it has become the academic word of choice. It is important, however, to clarify several other terms people use when referring to sexual abstinence and practitioners of abstinence. First, "chastity" is virtually identical to the concept of virginity. Second, "celibacy" implies that one has committed to abstain permanently from sexual intercourse and marriage, such as that practiced by Catholic priests and

monastics. Third, "pledgers" are those abstainers who have signed official virginity pledge cards through organizations such as True Love Waits (which I discuss later).

Introducing Evangelicalism

Religion has always been an integral element of North American culture. From the Puritan settlement of America as the "New Israel," to the current political debates over same-sex marriage and stem cell research, religion has been at the forefront of many social, political, and scientific issues. Throughout the twentieth century and into the new millennium, however, change has occurred in the American religio-political landscape—the rise of Evangelical Christianity.[2] By Evangelicalism, I mean:

> . . . [T]he branch of Protestantism that teaches traditional tenets of Christian faith, is deeply committed to the Bible as the only authoritative source of God's revelation, and stresses the adult conversion ('born again') experience and vigorous evangelizing (seeking converts); (Fowler et al., 2004: 15).[3]

Currently, approximately one third of Americans (Fowler et al., 2004: 37) and one in ten Canadians (Bibby, 2002: 20) claim to be Evangelical Christians.

This idea is important to note, since Evangelical Christianity has gained considerable influence since the 1970s. During this time that the Evangelical

[2] Evangelical Christianity can also be referred to as conservative Christianity or charismatic Christianity. The first connotes the political tendencies of Evangelicalism, while the latter connotes their worship habits.

[3] Of course this definition is a bit of an oversimplification as Evangelicalism is a rather diverse branch of Christianity (Balmer, 1993). For the most part, however, this definition encompasses the most central and defining aspects of Evangelicalism.

community increased its political influence through such groups as the Moral Majority (founded in 1979) and Phyllis Schlafly's campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment in the mid-1970s (Fowler et al., 2004: 37). These early groups laid the foundations for the vibrant and influential Evangelical youth movement that exists today (Sandler, 2006).

In Canada, this youth movement is lead by Faytene Kryskow, director of the Christian youth lobby 4MYCanada and the chief organizer of the Canadian chapter of the anti-abortion group Bound4life (McDonald, 2010: 150). Kryskow believes that Canada will occupy a special place prior to Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ, and therefore, is committed to "re-establishing" Canada as a Christian nation (Martin, 2010; McDonald, 2010: 14-15). She, and others in her camp, are attempting to complete this re-establishment through a strategy called "political incrementalism." This strategy entails the gradual shifting of a country's political environment through small political victories (McDonald, 2010: 38). Often, policies related to items such as marriage, abortion, and sexuality are often prime targets for these young lobbyists. Thus, if journalist Marci McDonald's arguments regarding the religious right and political incremetalism are correct, and that this group now has found a sympathetic ear with Canada's current governing body (McDonald, 2010), then it is not a stretch to assume that, at some point, this group will attempt to implement policies that support sexual abstinence, such as altering policies surrounding sex education.

Summary of Manuscript

In the following chapter of this thesis I provide a history of the commodification of abstinence and the development of abstinence discourses. In particular, I explain how Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian discourses surrounding sexual morality have affected contemporary understandings of abstinence. In chapter three, I continue to contextualize contemporary sexual abstinence. I provide a summary of the demographic, qualitative, and critical literature on the subject.

Chapter four provides an in-depth summary of Bourdieuian theory in relation to religion and sexuality. First, I define all of the terms central to Bourdieu's theoretical perspective. Most importantly, I outline the "sexual fields framework," which is central to understanding the formation of sexual marketplaces or "erotic worlds" (Green, 2008: 28).

In chapter five, I describe ethnography as a research method. Initially, I explain the intricate relationship between my theoretical perspective and my research method. Then I proceed to explain some of the difficulties conducting research in religious communities. Finally, I describe the process of doing research at Grace Pentecostal[4] and many of the problems and successes I encountered.

Chapter six explains the first two of three themes I observed at Grace: the importance of heterosexual marriage and relationships, and that the Evangelicals at Grace employed specific forms of erotic capital to attract a mate. Chapter

[4] All names and places relating to the locus of study in this document are pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

seven continues to build on these two themes and introduces the third: the existence of a defined sexual marketplace within the church where young Evangelicals can exchange and convert erotic capital. Finally, I discuss the implications of this marketplace on two specific hierarchies: age and gender.

In sum, this manuscript is intended to help myself and others understand how a segment of society can come to value something as "unnatural" as abstinence. More specifically, it examines how and where people who value abstinence exchange it, and what inequalities and social discourses they perpetuate while doing so.

Chapter Two: A Short and Selective History of the Value of Abstinence

"Since Christianity, the Western world has never ceased saying: 'To know who you are, know what your sexuality is.'" *–Michel Foucault*[5]

Introduction

Historians, anthropologists, and biologists have produced several theories as to why human society came to value virginity. The most dominant of these theories suggests that virginity's value coincided with the development of the concepts of property and patriarchy. In short, virginity became the easiest way to guarantee the paternity of a child, and greatly increased the bride price of a woman (Blank, 2004: 26). Other less effective theories suggested that physical features, such as the hymen, lead to the creation of virginity as a commodity. The existence of virginity, however, was far more likely to have determined the hymen's value rather than the hymen determining the worth of virginity (Blank, 2004: 24). Nevertheless, the development of virginity and abstinence into an item of political, religious, and spiritual reverence is a completely different story and requires a much longer explanation.

It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a complete history of abstinence and purity.[6] Nonetheless, a brief history of some of the most influential historical forms of abstinence will go a long way toward explaining how abstinence has became so valued in some segments of contemporary society. In

[5] (Foucault, 1977: 152).
[6] If one is looking for a more complete history of abstinence, then one may wish to examine Elizabeth Abbott's (1999) *A History of Celibacy* and Hanne Blank's (2007) *Virgin: The Untouched History*.

particular, I will trace how the value and practice of abstinence has changed from Greco-Roman understandings, through to early Protestantism and the Social Purity Movement of the late 1800s, focusing on those groups and events that have most influenced society's current conception of abstinence.

In this chapter, I first describe abstinence-related practices and institutions in the Roman Empire. I continue to speak about abstinence values in Judaism and Christianity. I proceed to speak about the influence of Saint Augustine and the Protestant Reformation on the value and practice of abstinence. I follow these sections with a discussion of early North American abstinence and its connection to modern purity movements. Then I finish by describing the Purity Ball Movement as an example of modern purity movements.

Virginity and the Empire

Female Virginity

Ancient Greeks and Romans highly valued women's virginity. Both the Romans and Greeks created powerful chaste goddesses, such as Athena, Artemis, and Hestia, whose associated legends constantly described them fending off the lewd advances of the not-so-chaste male members of the pantheon (Abbott, 1999: 10-11). Furthermore, ordinary people believed that these goddesses played an important role in protecting the sexual purity of everyday Greco-Roman women.

Like for the gods, social standards for women (but not men) in Greece and Rome required that they remain without child prior to marriage, in accordance to their fathers' rule (Abbott, 1999: 15). For the most part, women married early, often as young as 14 years, in order to prevent them (according to the logic of the

era) from becoming victims to their own lustfulness. For women who failed to meet these standards and thus disobeyed their fathers, the punishments were harsh. In most cases, becoming seduced or impregnated prior to marriage without the approval of one's father resulted in the complete loss of social worth and thus, the inability to marry. Without a daughter being able to marry, a father lost the opportunity to gain socially and financially by extending his family ties. Thus, faced with the baggage of an un-marriageable daughter, Greco-Roman fathers often sold their daughters into slavery to receive at least some return on their investment of raising the child (Abbot, 1999: 288-289; Blank, 2007: 123; Sissa, 1990: 87). One Athenian went as far as to feed his "ruined" daughter to a horse to gain something from his daughter's "worthless" body (Sissa, 1990: 89).

The Vestal Virgins are likely the most prominent example of Roman abstinence. Roman society charged these virgins with the duty of maintaining the official fire of state, which the Romans considered essential for the well-being of the Empire. Members of the order had to take a thirty-year vow of celibacy. Vestals lived a life of great prestige, and upon election into the order received a large dowry. They became free citizens and could participate in Roman political life, something no other Roman women could do (Abbott, 1999: 30; Blank, 2007: 228; D'Ambra, 2007: 168). According to historian Mary Beard, Vestals in fact possessed a combination of three sexual statuses: that of a virgin, a matron, and a man. Therefore, Vestals possessed a rather ambiguous sexual status, and this status was an important aspect of their sacredness (Beard, 1980; Braun, 2008: 26). If a vestal broke her vow of celibacy, however, then she faced premature burial in

the *Campus Sceleratus* (Field of Criminals). This vow, and the draconian punishment for failing to keep it, is a testament to the Roman obsession with Vestals' virginity and its connection to the wellbeing of the empire (Abbott, 1999: 31; Braun, 2008: 26).

Male Virginity

In terms of male virginity, social theorist Michel Foucault explained that for Greek men sexual activity was a matter of ethical fortitude.[7] The Greeks considered sexual desire to be natural and—as a need required to sustain oneself—similar to hunger and thirst. A person was to master these urges and live a temperate lifestyle of moderation: "the most kingly man was king of himself" (Foucault, 1985: 81). Individual men gained this mastery through an internal battle against oneself; a battle of the "good" and "bad" parts of one's soul (Foucault, 1985: 68). Thus, sexual desire was just another ethical battle, just another place where humans could separate themselves from animals. Or more importantly, this ethical battle was where "men" could separate themselves from women and slaves (Brown, 1988: 12; Foucault, 1985: 85).

For men, the two most immoral sexual practices one could take part in were excess and passivity (Foucault, 1985: 47). Excess indicated a lack of self-mastery (as described above), while passivity indicated lack of moral action:

> [I]mmoderation derives from a passivity that relates it to femininity. To be immoderate was to be in a state of nonresistance with regard to the

[7] I realize that a number of documented issues exist against using Foucault to understand Greco-Roman sexual ethics and practice (Karras, 2000; Ormand, 2009: 13). That, said, Foucault provided an in-depth account of the sexual politics in ancient Greece and Rome, and this politics is important to this study.

> force of pleasures, and in a position of weakness and submission; it meant being incapable of that virile stance with respect to oneself that enabled one to be stronger than oneself (Foucault, 1985: 84).

Therefore, the Romans tied the ethics of moral action to an ethics of penetration. As long as one was not being penetrated, a person could preserve one's good moral standing (Brown, 1988: 30; Foucault, 1985: 85; Ormand, 2009: 13; Walters, 1997: 30).

Furthermore, penetration became a means to separate people into genders and even classes (Foucault, 1985: 85; Walters, 30). For instance, one could not penetrate another citizen—a status determined by one's gender and by social standing—under Roman law, thus leaving women, slaves, and young males as the only penetratable members of Roman society (Walters, 1997: 31, 37). As such, sex (and penetration) was an incredibly political event loaded with power relations (Walters, 1997: 33). This politics of penetration helps to explain why women always have had so much more to lose when it comes to abstinence and virginity, particularly when combined with Judeo-Christian sexual ethics (which I will address later in this chapter).

Abstinence, Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible

Considering the Evangelical community's belief that the Bible is the true word of God, it only makes sense to conduct an analysis of abstinence found in those scriptures. The Bible pays a great deal of attention to numerous sexual mores, such as homosexuality (for example Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:26-27), divorce (for example Deut 24:1-4; Mal 2:16; Mt 19:6-9), marriage (for example 1

Cor 7:2; Gen 2:24; 1 Pet 3:1-7), masturbation (for example Gen 38:9-10), and celibacy (for example 1 Cor 7:1-9, 25-40; Mt 19:10-12; 1 Tim 4:1-3). The authors of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament[8] dealt with sexuality in much the same way they did with other bodily issues such as eating and defecating. They provided a list of complex rituals and laws that practitioners needed to follow in order to complete the sex act in a proper and ritually clean way. Nonetheless, the Hebrew Bible, and therefore much of Jewish thought that followed, is profoundly pro-sex (Abbott, 1999: 214). In contrast, the New Testament often describes permanent celibacy as the ideal sexual practice.

Ritual Purity in the Hebrew Bible and Judaism

Jewish conceptions of purity differ greatly from those in ancient Greece and Rome. Paramount for Jews is the Hebrew Bible's commandment to "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). This instruction has led to very different understandings of sexuality in Judaism and Christianity. Judaism is actually a rather pro-sex religion in comparison to Christianity. That said, for many Jews, the sex act has been, and still is, surrounded by a plethora of ritual requirements (Abbott, 1999: 214; Meirowitz, 2009: 172).

For instance, Judaism possesses strict laws surrounding sexual pollution. Menstruation is particularly tainting according to the Hebrew Bible:

> A menstruating woman is considered impure for seven days and contaminates anything upon which she sits or lies during that

[8] I will use the terms Old Testament and Hebrew Bible interchangeably throughout this manuscript depending on the context, even though they refer to the same text. For the most part, I will use Old Testament when speaking of the book in Christian contexts and Hebrew Bible when dealing with Jewish contexts.

> period. Anyone who has contact with her or something she has contaminated must bathe in water and is considered impure until evening (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1990: 178).

In addition, some biblical sources suggest that men who have sex with a menstruating woman should be excommunicated (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1990: 178). One such source states: "You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness . . . For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people" (Lev. 18: 19, 21). As a result, the biblical authors described women's menstrual blood as a powerful polluting force, a discourse that I believe most men still participate in today since most men still avoid copulation during a woman's menstrual cycle (Lee, 2003: 84-85).

It is interesting to note the gender biases implied by these laws. While the blood of a circumcised male is to be revered as a sign of the covenant, the blood from a woman's sexual organ is a powerfully polluting agent. In fact for Jews, circumcision, on the eighth day after birth, marks the end of a boy's seven days of impurity caused by his mother's blood while giving birth (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1990: 180).

Nevertheless, male bodies packed an almost equally polluting substance: semen. Anything touched by the ejaculated semen remained unclean until evening, including the woman, or whatever else the guilty male could have been fornicating with. The man himself also remains unclean for seven days past his moment of discharge (Lev. 15: 2-13). This directive against semen creates a very

complex sexual paradox within the Bible. God commanded the Israelites to reproduce and yet the act of doing so is severely polluting: "From the priest's perspective, Israelites are damned if they do and damned if they don't. There is no escaping the cultural conflict that surrounds sexuality" (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1990: 194). Therefore, while some scholars have described Judaism as a largely pro-sex religion, the rules that surround sexuality are difficult to negotiate.

This issue aside, the Hebrew Bible does not directly prohibit premarital sex. While it harshly prohibits adultery (Num. 5:12-31), masturbation (Gen. 38:8-10), and even forces men to marry in cases of rape (Ex. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29), surprisingly the Hebrew Bible does not address consensual premarital sexual relations (Jewish Virtual Library, 2009). Through this omission, the authors of the Hebrew Bible implied that the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" was of paramount importance (Meirowitz, 2009: 172). This position may explain why Onan, who was killed for spilling his "seed" (Gen. 38:8-10), was dealt with so harshly while consensual premarital relations are omitted from the text.

Biblical scholar Zvi Zohar argued that, in the past, premarital sexual relations were not prohibited in Judaism as long as the participants maintained ritual cleanliness in the process (Zohar, 2006).[9] At the center of this argument are the misogynistic values that define a woman's sexuality in the Bible and Judaism: "[W]omen are encouraged to be monogamous, preserving their virginity and procreative years for marriage; the man's concern is with his wife's purity status,

[9] Of course, this perspective on sexuality was not true for all Jewish groups. In particular, the Essenes, an early Jewish sectarian group, lived in male dominated communes, did not marry, and remained celibate for life (Abbott, 1999: 36). The Essenes' opposition to sexuality stems from their belief that the flesh was the root of all evil and they vicariously forbade sexual activity (because it is a rather 'fleshy' act) as a result (Abbott, 1999: 37).

not *his* sexual behavior or monogamy" (Meirowitz, 2009: 173). Thus, rather that extending purity requirements to men, some have argued that the sexual freedom men are given in the Hebrew Bible should be extended to women to better match modern sexual mores (Meirowitz, 2009).

Abstinence, Purity, and the New Testament

Sexuality in the in the New Testament is equally complex. The *Gospel according to Matthew* reports Jesus as having stated:

> For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can (Mat 19:12).[10]

This statement is one of Jesus' more direct statements surrounding sexuality, and for centuries Christians have used it to support the practice of celibacy. Biblical scholar J. David Hester, however, explained that eunuchs in the ancient world were not celibate and many considered eunuchs adept lovers (Braun, 2008: 30; Hester, 2005: 18). Hester further explained that this more accurate understanding of the eunuch as gender transgressors begins to problematize a conservative heterosexist reading of the Bible (Hester, 2005: 37). Nonetheless, most Christians, including Evangelicals, continue to read this section of scripture as support for abstinence and celibacy (Hester, 2005: 13-14).

Paul, however, more clearly supported permanent celibacy (Brown, 1988: 48). This understanding is not surprising, considering that Paul, and most of the early Christian community, felt the apocalypse was immediately pending, and

[10] All biblical citations as found in the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV).

thus there was no real need for procreation (Hahn, 2006: 25). Paul felt that marriage (and the sex that results from that marriage) diverted women and men from the Lord and made them focus on "worldly" things (1 Cor 7:32-38). For Paul, marriage was a defense against desire (Brown, 1988: 49).

Likely as a result of this focus on celibacy, the Bible is far less clear when it comes to premarital sex than many people think. First, Paul admitted that Jesus had nothing to say on the topic of virginity (1 Cor 7:25). As a result, much of the New Testament material on virginity came from Paul's own personal dispositions on the subject. Paul's letter to the Corinthians provided the most direct support for premarital abstinence in the Bible: "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1 Cor 7:8-9). In addition, he stated earlier, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman.' But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1 Cor 7:1-2).

In both of these cases, Paul presented marriage as an alternative to celibacy; marriage was not the ideal (Blank, 2004: 137). Furthermore, neither verse seems to condemn those who have sex out of wedlock. Instead, the texts simply suggest that it is better to marry the person one is having sex with than not to marry this person. In other words, while the New Testament may require a person to limit one's sexual escapades to a single person, it does not state, at least directly, if one has to marry prior to having sex.

Furthermore, the conceptual understanding of purity changes greatly in the New Testament. The authors change the focus from pollution being that which enters the body to being that which leaves the body (Lk 11:37-44; Titus 1:15). This change is made most explicit in the Gospel according to Mark: "Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile'" (7:14-15). This statement changes the focus of purity from acts of ritual cleanliness to one's own activities. As a result, the New Testament authors greatly expand the application of purity (Furstenburg, 2008: 177).

Paul developed what some of these "defiling" actions may be. For example, in 2 Timothy Paul states, "[s]hun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2:22).[11] Peter further enforced that being "pure" requires a certain lifestyle (1 Pet 1:22-25). He went on to ask his readers to "[r]id [them]selves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander," and suggested that by avoiding these actions, and thus living a "pure" lifestyle, one would begin to know the "Lord" (1 Pet 2:1). Paul required this sort of lifestyle to preserve the new temple of the Holy Spirit—the body of the individual Christian (1 Cor 6:19).

Mary and Eve: the Mother/Virgin Paradox

No single figure has influenced Christian understandings of virginity more than "the paragon of virginity," Mary the mother of Jesus (Warner, 1976: 68).

[11] Some mention of this type of purity exists in the Hebrew Bible as well (for example Ps 24:3-4).

Nonetheless, Mary presents a very confusing example of virginity. Marian mythology suggests that she lived as a virgin, died as a virgin, and 'miraculously,' even gave birth as a virgin.[12] As a result, Mary has provided Christian, especially Catholic, women with an impossible and contradictory model of sexuality (Taylder, 2004, 345).

Marian ideals dictate that it is a woman's duty to marry and have a family, yet according to these same ideals, women must also remain 'pure' at the same time (Blank, 2007: 170). The sacrament of marriage has become the vehicle that one can use to opt out of some of these ideals. Feminist biblical scholar, Sian Taylder, explained that this focus on virginity, along with women's duty to reproduce, has made Christian women "tools of their own oppression" (Taylder, 2004, 345).

During the Middle Ages, Marian belief reached its watershed. At this time, Mary became the most important figure in Christianity next to Jesus. The Roman Catholic Church argued (and continues to argue) about several issues pertaining to Mary's life. For instance, the Church debated if she remained a virgin after childbirth, if she actually died, and if she actually gave birth to Jesus' siblings, as described in the Bible, thus compromising her virginity (Blank, 2007: 161-164). According to an early Christian extra-biblical text called the

[12] Historian Marina Warner called all of the events and information surrounding the life of Mary into question:

> The amount of historical information about the Virgin is negligible. Her birth, her death, her appearance, her age are never mentioned. During Christ's ministry she plays a small part, and when she does appear the circumstances are perplexing and often slighting. She is never referred to by any of the titles used in her cult; in fact, she is not even always called Mary (Warner, 1976: 14).

Warner argued that much of the mythology surrounding Mary was developed because of the early church's struggles with sexuality and sin (Warner, 1976: 50).

Protoevangelium of James, Salome's hand was burnt while conducting a virginity check on Mary, and then miraculously healed when Salome reached for Jesus.

> And the midwife went forth of the cave and Salome met her. And she said to her: Salome, Salome, a new sight have I to tell thee. A virgin hath brought forth, which her nature alloweth not. And Salome said: As the Lord my God liveth, if I make not trial and prove her nature I will not believe that a virgin hath brought forth.
>
> And the midwife went in and said unto Mary: Order thyself, for there is no small contention arisen concerning thee. Arid Salome made trial and cried out and said: Woe unto mine iniquity and mine unbelief, because I have tempted the living God, and lo, my hand falleth away from me in fire. And she bowed her knees unto the Lord, saying: O God of my fathers, remember that I am the seed of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob: make me not a public example unto the children of Israel, but restore me unto the poor, for thou knowest, Lord, that in thy name did I perform my cures, and did receive my hire of thee. And lo, an angel of the Lord appeared, saying unto her: Salome, Salome, the Lord hath hearkened to thee: bring thine hand near unto the young child and take him up, and there shall be unto thee salvation and joy. And Salome came near and took him up, saying: I will do him worship, for a great king is born unto Israel. And behold immediately Salome was healed: and she went forth of the cave justified. And, a voice saying: Salome,

> Salome, tell none of the marvels which thou hast seen, until the child enter into Jerusalem (*Protoevangelium*, 19-20: 3-4). [13]

This event became one of the most popular images in medieval artwork (Black, 2007: 164). Furthermore, the Church proclaimed Mary the "Queen of Heaven" in the Middle Ages. She had some of the greatest churches in Europe bear her name, such as the Notre Dame in Paris, to glorify her queenship (Black, 2007: 169).

Following this devotion to Mary, the Church cultivated a pantheon of "virgin superstars." These virgin saints and martyrs maintained their virginity despite the pressure to marry and bear children. In many cases, they often were tortured or killed for refusing marriage (Blank, 2007: 158; Warner, 1976: 69).[14] Popular belief deemed that virgins had supernatural abilities; that they contained within them some of the same powers that Mary and the virgin saints held within themselves. Many medieval Christians believed that virgins were "impervious to sin and all things demonic or satanic" (Blank, 2007: 170). At times, alchemists even used virgins as a source of an ingredient in some of their concoctions, such as a virgin's hair or urine (Blank, 2007: 171).

Second only to Mary, Eve, who (theologically) was the source of original sin,[15] also has played an important role in defining the sexuality of Christian women. The early Christian theologian, Saint Augustine (354 – 430 CE), suggested that

[13] I cite all classical sources in this manuscript according to a standard method of citing classic and ancient literature (Swarthmore Department of Classics, 2010).
[14] One notable "virgin superstar" was Maria Gorretti. In 1902, a local farmhand stabbed her over forty times when she refused the advances of her suitor. A day later, on her deathbed, she forgave her attacker, and Pope Pius XII venerated her in 1950 (Mariagoretti.org, 2010).
[15] In Catholic theology, original sin refers to the first sin committed by Adam and Eve and the resulting entry of sin into the world (Harent, 1911).

when Eve ate the apple, all of her goodness became tainted and as a result, she gained sexual desire (Jantzen, 1995: 223). Therefore, Eve is evil because she is sexual (Taylder, 2004: 360). This is a concept that becomes problematic when one considers that procreation, and thus sexuality, are necessary for the continued existence of the species.

These two women share a rather intriguing relationship. When juxtaposed, these two figures produce a type of Mary/Eve duality (Ochs, 1977: 81; Taylder, 2004: 351). This duality forces women to reproduce certain characteristics associated with both these figures. In other words, women must be sexually receptive like Eve, yet maternal and pure like Mary. The sexual double-standard produced through these figures has been incredibly difficult for women to navigate, a fact that continues to this day (Nelson and Robinson, 2002: 299).

Saint Augustine and the Development of Christian Sexual Morality

Sexual desire and lust tormented Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the great fathers of the early Church. To satisfy these urges, Augustine had several wives and concubines at different points in his life (Abbott, 1999: 58; Blank, 2007: 143; Brown, 1988: 390-393). He gained a great disdain for his erection as it symbolized his inability to control his "bestial" impulses (Abbott, 1999: 58). Furthermore, Augustine actually pinpointed the development of an erection at a public bathhouse as the first moment that lust tormented him (*Confessions,* II 3:6). When he became a Christian at age thirty-two he promised to renounce sex and marriage (Abbott, 1999: 59; Blank, 2007: 143). He suggested that couples should have sex only with the purpose of procreation. For Augustine, the focus on

procreation was the only way one could experience the pleasure of sex without sin (Meilaender, 2001: 9). He believed that within the confines of marriage a couple had to acknowledge a certain amount of sadness prior to intercourse:

> Love your wives then, but love them chastely. In your intercourse with them keep yourselves within the bounds necessary for the procreation of children. And inasmuch as you cannot otherwise have them, descend to it with regret. For this necessity is the punishment of that Adam from whom we are sprung. Let us not make a pride of our punishment. It is his punishment who because he was made mortal by sin, was condemned to bring forth only a mortal posterity (*Sermons*, 51:25).

Thus, sexual intercourse was a sign of humanity's fall from God's grace, and couples should acknowledge that fact prior to sexual activity.

Augustine's ideas have gone on to influence many generations of Christians, particularly in terms of sexuality and celibacy (Abbott, 1999: 58). Most importantly, he clarified the relationship between morality and sexuality and made abstinence a moral matter rather than a bodily one. Augustine emphasized the need for one's "will" to triumph over one's "flesh" (Blank, 2007: 144). Augustine argued that if a person were to be raped, then a person only loses the physical part of one's virginity, while the spiritual portion remains intact (*The City of God*, I: 16). Thus, sexuality became an *individual* issue that could speak volumes about one's moral character. To this day, this connection has remained a cornerstone of Christian thought surrounding virginity (Blank, 2007: 145).

Abstinence and the Reformation

The Protestant Reformation,[16] started by Martin Luther, is likely the most significant post-biblical event in Christian history and this event would have profound effects on Christian understandings of celibacy and virginity. Most importantly, Luther ended the practice of clerical and ascetic celibacy. In addition, he also removed the veneration that Mary received within the Catholic Church (Blank, 2007: 178).

As a result, virginity became a transitional state, accounting for the time between childhood and marriage: "Just as it was considered 'natural' for women to marry and have children, it was considered 'natural' that they be virgins before they did" (Blank, 2007: 181). Therefore, while Luther devalued virginity and celibacy, he raised up marriage and family life in its place. Specifically, he pointed out that the Bible did not call for clerical celibacy and that the practice actually encouraged illicit sexual activities (Blank, 2007: 179).

Early North American Abstinence

The Development of the Erotic Virgin

Abstinence and purity have deep roots in American history. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Blank noted a serious rise of the erotic value of virginity and its historical affinity with the rise of capitalism and associated urbanization (Blank, 2007: 202). Furthermore, in Europe (and likely

[16] Martin Luther's (1483-1546) posting of the Ninety-five Theses on the church door in Wittenberg, and his eventual excommunication from the Catholic Church spawned the Protestant Reformation. Luther argued that the Bible had authority over church, pope, and tradition (González, 1985: 31). Therefore, Luther wanted to permit the laity to partake in both the cup and bread in communion, to allow for mass in the vernacular, and to alter the canon. In addition, he was against priestly celibacy and, most importantly, the selling of indulgences (González, 1985: 29-37).

North America) a virgin sex trade began to develop during this time (Blank, 2007: 205):

> Overall there was a sensibility, among the early modern men who pursued sex with virgins, that the only damage they were doing was mechanical and short-term. It was both natural and inevitable that a woman be penetrated by a man; every young woman would lose her virginity eventually (Blank, 2007: 205).

This early eroticization of virginity has provided the foundation for contemporary Catholic schoolgirl fetishes and the booming "virgin porn industry" (Blank, 2007: 198).

Purity as a Social Movement

Interestingly, this period also spawned numerous social movements dedicated to social change. Both the temperance movement and first wave of feminism took root in this period (Nelson and Robinson, 2002: 78-79). Groups began to advocate for the abstention from various substances and activities. For instance, the temperance movement sought to end the consumption of alcoholic beverages and successfully lobbied for prohibition (Warner, 2008). This era also saw the rise of the health reform movement along with the social purity movement, which sought to "achieve purity on all fronts – physical, mental, and sexual" (Warner, 2008: 73). After the end of prohibition in 1933, however, many purity movements experienced a period of relative decline throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s (Warner, 2008).

Sexual purity received a new lease on life in the 1980s after the sexual revolution, which stood to "free" people from rigid sexual mores of the 1960s and 1970s (Warner, 2008: 97). One central component of this effort was the complete devaluation of the mystical properties associated with female virginity, thus leveling it with men's virginity (Blank, 2007: 228). The discontent experienced by American conservatives, Evangelicals in particular, provided an opportunity for the rise of a purity-related countermovement. Thus, a movement that began as a movement "for change" in the 1800s transformed into a countermovement against change in the 1980s (Warner, 2008: 97).

Ironically, the values of the sexual revolution altered the purity movement enough to make it relevant on a large scale. In particular, it freed the abstainer from the doctrine of life-long abstinence—a prominent doctrine in the early health reform movement—and replaced it with the abstinence imbedded in the marriage doctrine we are familiar with today (Blank, 2007: 239; Warner, 2008: 167). Some modern purity organizations are direct descendants of earlier ones: for instance, the Anti-Saloon League (c. 1893), which was a temperance organization, launched the Christian Sex Education Project and True Love Waits in 1992 (Warner, 2008: 122). Nonetheless, the early purity movement survives, for the most part, in the tactics and doctrines used by the modern movement, such as pledging and spiritually inspired individual change (Warner, 2008).

One such tactic used by the modern, contemporary purity movement is pledging; a signed public declaration of one's commitment to abstain from various items and activities. Several temperance organizations, such as the

Teetotalers (c. 1832) and the Washingtonians (1840-1847), commonly used the "pledge" (Warner, 2008: 57, 61). In these instances, these organizations used the pledge to confirm, before one's peers and God, the commitment to abstain from alcohol (Warner, 2008: 61, 62). The Church of England Purity Society (c. 1864) had men sign pledge cards that affirmed five obligations:

- to respect all women and defend them from wrong;
- to reject indecent language and jokes;
- to maintain sexual purity equally for men and women;
- to proselytize these principles;
- and to maintain personal purity (Abbott, 1999: 307).

In the breadth of this pledge we begin to see how these early movement organizations provided the foundations for modern movements.

Modern Forms of the Purity Movement

Purity Related Social Change

Blank notes that the United States is the only developed nation to have implemented a "federal agenda having specifically to do with the virginity of its citizens" (Blank, 2007: 238). Beginning in the late 1980s, supporters of abstinence began to have some success lobbying for abstinence related legislation. In 1981, the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA), otherwise known as "The Chastity Act," required sexual education programs funded under this legislation to teach abstinence as the "normative standard and best practice for preventing pregnancy" (Blank, 2007: 239). In 1996, a small section of the legislation was tacked onto a much larger document relating to welfare reform. This section was

added without debate and notice, and now has become the most influential piece of legislation relating to the sexual education of youth in the United States. Title V, Section 510(b) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act provided a substantial amount of money to any abstinence education program that:

a) has as its exclusive purpose teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
b) teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
c) teaches abstinence from sexual activity is the only way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
d) teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of sexual activity;
e) teaches that sexual activity outside the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
f) teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;
g) teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances, and
h) teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity (Blank, 2007: 241).

Through this legislation, the United States government, and the George W. Bush administration in particular, was able to promote abstinence as a 'happy' and 'healthy' way to conduct oneself sexually. Two of the largest promoters of sexual abstinence, The Silver Ring Thing, and True Love Waits, have received substantial sums of money because of this legislation. True Love Waits has received over $120 million over the last ten years, while The Silver Ring Thing has received $700,000 from the government (Feldman, 2004). In 2007, the government of the United States directed $176 million to abstinence-only programs (Stein, 2007; Warner, 2008: x).

Both True Love Waits and the Silver Ring Thing promote abstinence through the lens of Christian family values. True Love Waits requires "active proselytizing" from its members in order to bring media attention and new members to the movement. In other words, the organization's members are required to take Jesus, as well as purity, to the masses (Abbott, 1999: 442). Another active purity organization, the Purity Ball Movement, exhibits the values and motivations of the American Purity Movement better than any other example.

The Purity Ball Movement

"Purity balls" are the "apogee" of the contemporary purity movement (Treays, 2008). A group called the "Generations of Light Ministry" held the first father-daughter purity ball in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1998. The group's founders, Randy and Lisa Wilson, are avid Evangelical Christians. Randy Wilson has worked as a conservative Christian advocate for numerous years with both "Focus on the Family" and the "Family Research Council" (Banerjee, 2008;

Emery, 2002). In addition, Randy and Lisa's entire family, which includes five daughters and two sons, are actively involved in the purity ball movement.

The Wilsons held the first purity ball in response to what they call the "culture of chaos" that existed in America. They felt that the increased access to pornography, the development of Viagra, and former U.S. President Bill Clinton's White House sex scandal were a testament to America's moral degradation. Since this time, the purity ball movement has grown from a single annual event in Colorado Springs to the over 4000 held in 2007 (Gibbs, 2008: 37). Furthermore, the Wilsons' efforts inspired the creation of numerous other purity ball organizations (for example The Christian Center, 2009; Hollywood Youth Group, 2007a). To this effect, Randy Wilson stated on the *Dr. Phil Show*, "I think the purity ball should be looked at as a countercultural revolution and something that becomes part of the norm" (McGraw, 2007: 14). Therefore, Randy Wilson is trying to do nothing less than change the cultural fabric of America.

The event has four essential components: the dinner, the covenant, the procession, and the dance. As the name implies, purity balls are set-up as a black-tie formal affair (somewhat akin to a high school prom and a wedding reception). Fathers wear tuxedos and suits while their daughters wear gowns suitable for their high-school proms. The dinner is like any other formal dinner: a catered meal with a choice of chicken or fish. Fathers sit with their daughters, who range from four to twenty-four years of age, and listen to others, such as Randy Wilson, speak about the importance of purity (Gibbs, 2008: 37).

A ballet performance and procession follows dinner. The ballet consists of several young women dressed in white, dancing around another group of dancers who carry a cross, draped in white cloth, and topped off with a crown of thorns. When the performance is finished, and the cross set at the front of the room, the fathers lead their daughters beneath two swords held by men. The daughters each proceed to place a white rose at the base of the cross. At this point, the young women are supposed to make a verbal vow to God, their families, and themselves to remain pure in their "thoughts and actions" until they marry (Banerjee, 2008).

The fathers' vow comes well before this occurrence. At the center of each table, there is a covenant for the fathers to sign and read aloud to their daughters. This covenant states:[17]

> I, (daughter's name)'s father, choose before God to cover my daughter as her authority and protection in the area of purity. I will be pure in my own life as a man, husband and father. I will be a man of integrity and accountability as I lead, guide and pray over my daughter and my family as the high priest in my home. This covering will be used by God to influence generations to come (Generations of Light, 2007).[18]

[17] Feminist author Jessica Valenti noted the interesting, and problematic, use of the word "covering" in the covenant. She stated covering is generally a word that is used to describe the breeding of horses. This reinforces patriarchal discourses in society, which view women as the property of men (Valenti, 2009: 66).

[18] The covenant varies slightly from purity ball to purity ball, but the basic formula remains the same. One Californian based purity ball has the young women sign a pledge in addition to the men:

> I (Name) pledge my purity to my father, my future/husband and my Creator. I recognize that virginity is my most precious gift to offer to my future husband. I will not engage in sexual activity of any kind before marriage but will keep my thought and my body pure as a very special present for the one I marry (Hollywood Youth Group, 2007b).

Some fathers follow this reading by placing a purity ring on their daughters' ring fingers; others give their daughters locked pink boxes and the fathers "symbolically" retain the key (Valenti, 2009: 67). In practice, this covenant gives fathers a great deal of influence over the sexual practices of their daughters. The covenant often gives fathers the right to vet potential suitors. In other words, young men have to pass an interview with a woman's father in order to date and/or marry her (Treays, 2008). Furthermore, this covenant places a huge burden on the shoulders of young women. At Randy Wilson's own admission, the guilt that results from failing to keep one's purity pledge is incredible (Gibbs, 2008: 37).

The male equivalent of the "purity ball" has quite different overtones. In these mother-son "integrity balls," the mothers do not pledge to protect their sons' purity; rather each son reads a statement declaring choice to remain pure (Valenti, 2009: 67). The pledge reads:

> I, (pledger's name), choose before God to remain pure in my lifestyle, as I grow toward the goal of manhood, and until such a time that I marry. I will be a young man of integrity and accountability as I strive to be an example to those around me. I will be bold and courageous, no matter what. Today, I choose to seek after the high calling of God in every area of my life (Ellis, 2007).

Thus, integrity balls encourage young men to be moral actors rather than "passive virgins."[19] As such, integrity balls echo the Greco-Roman attitudes that sexuality

[19] I would have liked to include more on the development of integrity balls. There is, however, almost no literature available on the subject at this time.

is a moral battle rather than the discourses of pollution that define female virginity.

Conclusion

Through this short and selective history, I have argued that society has come to value abstinence as far more than a way to guarantee paternity. This history containsthe source material for the language and discourses that I will discuss throughout this thesis. Over time, abstinence has gained moral, spiritual, political, and religious significance, and often determines the quality of one's physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing: "to interact with a virgin is to interact with parents, the law, maybe even God" (Blank, 2004: 196). In the United States, nothing exemplifies this interaction more than the purity ball movement, which has young women pledge their virginity to their father and God, all while that organization receives funding from the American government. Recently, the success of purity related movements, such as the purity ball movement, has garnered a great deal of academic and media attention, and has received both support and criticism from these sources.

Chapter Three: Understanding Contemporary Abstinence

Introduction

I encountered two central problems when I began to conduct this literature review. First, for all intents and purposes, no scholars have published on abstinence doctrine and practice in Canada. Therefore, the vast majority of the material included in this literature review is from the United States. Second, the arguments surrounding abstinence are heavily polarized. Most authors either are highly critical of abstinence or blindly support it. Very few authors have taken an approach that I would consider balanced (for example Wilkins, 2008); that is, few authors have attempted to understand the innate problems with abstinence discourses while still acknowledging the practical benefits of practicing abstinence. Despite these issues, one can use these sources to unearth the purpose and effects of the abstinence movement and the abstinence practice.

In this chapter, I first present the demographic information available on abstinence and the abstinence movement. Second, I describe the qualitative information available on the subject. Finally, I lay out two critical perspectives on abstinence: one from a feminist perspective and another from within Evangelicalism.

Demographics and Statistics

Most literature on sexual abstinence focuses on the successes, failures, and ramifications of implementing abstinence-based education policies. This literature usually relies on large-scale surveys and demographics to determine

trends in youth sexual practices. Researchers then use these trends to evaluate abstinence-based programs. One such study, conducted by Peter S. Bearman and Hannah Brückner, looked into the effects of "pledging" (that are public commitments to abstain from sexual activity until marriage) on the age one first engages in sexual activity (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 859-860). In short, they determined that pledging does indeed delay the age of first intercourse. They found that this delay, however, only happens when pledgers exist in the right numbers. In other words, pledgers struggled to abstain when there were either too many or too few of them; they need to exist as a substantial minority to be successful (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 869).

As such, Bearman and Brückner consider pledging an "identity movement" (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 870; Mullaney, 2006). If there are too few or too many pledgers, the identity, and the movement, lose their meaning. Furthermore, it is important for pledgers to display outward signs, such as purity rings, showing that they are abstaining from sexual intercourse (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 900). In addition, they found that pledgers were more likely to be religious, were less likely to use contraception during first intercourse, and that both pledgers and non-pledgers experienced similar changes in self-esteem after their first sexual encounter (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 878, 900).

In another article, Brückner and Bearman looked further into the relationship between sexually transmitted disease consequences and pledging. They determined that most pledgers do not wait until marriage to have sex; in fact, 88% of those who pledge fail in their efforts to remain virgins until marriage

(Brückner and Bearman, 2005: 275). In addition, they found that pledgers were more likely to engage in oral and anal sex as their only form of intercourse in comparison to non-pledgers. Furthermore, pledgers knew less about their own STD status than non-pledgers did, because they are far less likely to have themselves tested for STDs (Brückner and Bearman, 2005: 277). In terms of condom use, Brückner and Bearman replicated their results from their previous project, finding that pledgers were less likely to use condoms in first intercourse. Brückner and Bearman, however, found that pledgers were equally likely to use a condom in their most recent intercourse experience (Brückner and Bearman, 2005: 275). A recent study, similar to Brückner and Bearman's, found that pledgers were as sexually active as their "matched non-pledgers" (Rosenbaum, 2009: 114). In addition, the study found that, five years after taking a virginity pledge, 82% percent of pledgers deny taking a pledge (Rosenbaum, 2009: 110).

Further research, specifically on abstinence-only sex education, has found that these educational programs often infringe on the rights of their participants. Most notably, sexuality researchers Alice M. Miller and Rebecca A. Schleifer state that these programs withhold information and thereby violate a person's right to knowledge. In addition, these programs often discriminate against those with sexual orientations outside of heterosexuality (Miller and Schleifer, 2008: 40).

That said, a recent study, which tested the efficacy of sexual education programs, found that if the moralistic and religious overtones are removed from abstinence-only education programs, then the programs can successfully delay

teen sexual activity (Jemmott III, Jemmott, Fong, 2010). This program provided adolescents with skills to avoid sexual activity if they did not want it. Only accurate information on contraception use was provided and the participants were not told they "should not have sex" (Jemmott III, Jemmott, Fong, 2010: 158).

Qualitative Studies

Amy C. Wilkins has completed the only project that has combined an analysis of qualitative methods, religion, and abstinence. In her study of youth at an American university, she examined how the meanings surrounding race, gender, and class affected the social, political, and religious lives of students in three different social groups: Wannabees,[20] Goths, and Christians (Wilkins, 2008). More importantly, she dedicates an entire chapter to abstinence and Christian youth.

Wilkins, like Bearman and Brückner, considers abstinence to be an identity movement (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 870). She states that we should understand abstinence as more of a "style" rather than a behavior. Abstinence provides the practitioner with an identity marker that symbolically sets one apart from the rest of society. That said, Wilkins argues that these particular youth do not abstain solely because they are "good Christians." Rather, she feels that Christian youth abstain for numerous other reasons (Wilkins, 2008: 120).

[20] "Puerto Rican wannabees" are a group of young white women who Wilkins identifies in the local area she is researching. These women identify with local Black and Latino culture. Wilkins describes them as "Spectacularly outfitted in hip-hop style, 'Puerto Rican' hairstyles, and 'Puerto Rican' makeup, they don't look like 'normal' white young women" (Wilkins, 2008: 5).

Most notably, Wilkins believes these youth use abstinence as a way to navigate particular gender-based expectations. First, abstinence provides a mechanism for male practitioners to account for failure in the "normal" heterosexual arena; it becomes a technique young men use to deal with "rejection, heterosexual disinterest, and . . . vulnerability" (Wilkins, 2008: 125). Abstinent men emphasize that abstinence is a "choice" and that they are engaged in a constant struggle against temptation. Wilkins notes that these men often express this "struggle" collectively in what she calls "temptation talk." This "talk" is what transforms "heterosexual non-participation" into "abstinence" (Wilkins, 2008: 129).

For women, according to Wilkins, abstinence is linked to purity, which is enforced, in turn, by "shame" (Wilkins, 2008: 137). "Shame," states Wilkins, "teaches individual women to scan their inner selves to make sure they line up with social expectations" (Wilkins, 2008: 138). Therefore, shame not only forces women to avoid premarital sex; it drives them to fear *any* tarnishing of their feminine purity. Consequently, as Wilkins observed in her study, what begins as sexual abstinence can easily transform into "romantic abstinence," the complete withdrawal from any form of heterosexual intimacy until marriage (Wilkins, 2008: 138).

Wilkins notes several positive consequences of romantic and sexual abstinence for women. First, like the men, abstinence provides an escape from the mainstream pressures of the "heterosexual marketplace" (Wilkins, 2008: 133). Second, it enables women to escape the distraction of heterosexual relationships

and, therefore, allows them to focus on other aspects of life, such as education and the development of leadership skills. For women, abstinence emphasizes independence, confidence, and academic discipline, all items that stand in contrast to the general conception of Christian women (Wilkins, 2008: 143).

Nonetheless, despite the fact that many practitioners say abstinence allows them to escape the dominant heterosexual marketplace, Wilkins feels that it fails to provide any permanent resistance to the discourses that support this marketplace. Abstainers only draw meaning from their sexual practice when they define it in light of "normal" pre-marital heterosexual practice. Abstinence is predicated on the rewards of future romance; one only withholds because it will make one's Christian marriage even better (Wilkins, 2008: 143). In other words, the practice of abstinence appears to resist dominant heterosexual discourses prior to marriage, only to allow for the reification of these same heterosexual discourses in the practice of Christian marriage.

Additional material attempts to look into gender constructions and identities within heterosexual Evangelical relationships. For the most part, these works determine that gender roles within Evangelicalism are predicated on essentialism and patriarchy, and legitimized through biblical texts and popular psychology (Bartkowski, 2001; Gallagher, 2003; Gallagher and Wood, 2005; Pevey, Williams, and Ellison, 1996). Evangelical women do not conform exactly to the ideals of femininity as set out in dominant Evangelically-defined gender roles. First, contemporary Evangelical women are just as likely to participate in the workplace as other American women (Gallagher, 2003: 134). Second, they

also have learned ways of working around ideas of hierarchy and submission (Pevey, Williams, and Ellison, 1996: 189).

The Feminist Critique

While some feminists have argued that sexual abstinence and/or purity can provide women a powerful way to escape mainstream sexual discourses (for example Abbott, 1999: 440), most have been critical of the movement. Feminist author and founder of *feministing.org*, Jessica Valenti, argues that virginity and purity always have been defined and given value by men and male-led institutions (Valenti, 2009: 22). Moreover, she argues that purity sets up an unattainable norm for young women:

> The desirable virgin is sexy but not sexual. She's young, white, and skinny. She's a cheerleader, a baby sitter; she's accessible and eager to please. She's never a woman of color. She's never a low-income girl or a fat girl. She's never disabled. "Virgin" is a designation for those who meet a certain standard of what women, especially younger women, are supposed to look like. As for how these women are supposed to act? A blank slate is best (Valenti, 2009: 30).

The purity ball movement's use of the Wilson sisters, Khrystian in particular, as the "poster girls" of the movement is a great example of setting up of this unattainable norm. Frankly, Khrystian Wilson is gorgeous. One journalist described her as, "the kind of kitten-faced, mink-bodied all-American beauty who could break a dozen hearts with one bat of her silky lashes" (Robb, 2007). This is

whom the purity ball movement (and most other purity organizations) sets up as a "normal" virgin, as a "virgin" every girl can, and should want to, become.

Valenti argues that, for women, virginity has become a replacement for morality. Virgin women can act as ignorant and immoral as they want as long as they remain chaste; virginity is what American society requires to consider a woman morally virtuous. Thus, purity relies on a passive definition of womanhood (Valenti, 2009: 24). In terms of morality, woman are defined by what they *do not do* – "[female] ethics are the ethics of passivity" (Valenti, 2009: 25).

That said, the rhetoric of purity movement implies that purity takes strength and action (Valenti, 2009: 25). And to some extent, as mentioned earlier, purity does provide some temporary space within the tight conservative gender roles and scripts provided to them. This space, however, is legitimized by the future rewards of traditional Christian marriage where these dominant heterosexual discourses are reinstated (Wilkins, 2008: 133, 143). Therefore, despite the rhetoric of the purity movement, which asserts that purity requires strength and integrity, a woman's worth is still contingent on her "virginity" (Valenti, 2009: 25).

Discourses within the purity movement describe premarital sex as harmful to women. Abstinence-only educators often use fear as a tactic to make sexual activity appear risky. Educators perform this tactic by misrepresenting or providing incorrect information about contraception (Lin and Santelli, 2008:

62).[21] In particular, many of these programs misrepresent the condom's ability to prevent pregnancy and HIV (Lin and Santelli, 2008: 56).[22] Further, the rhetoric of abstinence-only programs attempts to incorrectly associate sex with various "scary" items, including:

> pregnancy, AIDS, guilt, herpes, disappointing parents, chlamydia, inability to concentrate in school, syphilis, embarrassment, abortion, shotgun wedding, gonorrhea, selfishness, pelvic inflammatory disease, heartbreak, infertility, loneliness, cervical cancer, poverty, loss of self esteem, loss of reputation, being used, suicide, substance abuse, melancholy, loss of faith, possessiveness, diminished ability to communicate, isolation, fewer friendships formed, rebellion against other familial standards, alienation, loss of self mastery, distrust of [other] sex, viewing others as sex objects, difficulty with long term commitments, various other sexually transmitted diseases, aggression toward women, ectopic pregnancy, sexual violence, loss of sense of responsibility toward others, loss of honesty, jealousy, depression, death (Levine, 2002: 447).

As such, author Judith Levine argues that to want to have premarital sex means one must also be prepared for death (Levine, 2002: 447). She also found that

[21] The abstinence-only education movement is yet another branch of the purity movement. For the most part, this movement provides and lobbies for the inclusion of abstinence-based sex education programs in schools (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 860).

[22] For example, one such program, studied by sexuality researchers Alison Jeanne Lin and John S. Santelli, relates pregnancy and HIV risk to the relative size of the human sperm and the HIV virus. This program states, "Since the HIV virus is smaller than a sperm and can affect you any day of the month, the failure rate of the condom to prevent AIDS is logically much worse than its failure to prevent pregnancy" (Lin and Santelli, 2008: 61). This assertion is problematic for several reasons. First, it depends on the myth that condoms are porous and have holes in them. Second, it confuses HIV transmission rates and condom failure rates leading to pregnancy, which are calculated in completely different ways and are thus not comparable. Third, the source for the information is a 1992 *Washington Post* letter to the editor (Lin and Santelli, 2008: 61).

these programs operate to infantilize young people in a way that holds back a person's "coming of age" (Levine, 2002: 449). Women are taught that sex will leave them as "damaged goods," treated as persons without moral worth (Valenti, 2009: 23).

In contrast, discourse surrounding male virginity makes virginity sound like a battle – a toil of inner virtue and vice (Wilkins, 2008: 124).[23] Some purity organizations even term men as "virginity warriors," charged to protect the virtue of women, therefore saving men from the "feminizing" discourses of purity (Valenti, 2009: 25). For men, purity is a choice and through this choice rhetoric. They are able to maintain a level of autonomy and authority with which women are not privileged (Wilkins, 2008: 124). Thus, purity for men is more about "saving" other men's daughters from premarital sex than "saving" one's own "virginity" for the marital bed.

The Early Marriage Movement: An Evangelical Critique

While virtually all Evangelicals support the idea of premarital abstinence, some have come to criticize the efforts of mainstream abstinence organizations, such as True Love Waits and the Silver Ring Thing (Gorski, 2009; Kempner, 2009; Medical News Today, 2009; Regnerus, 2009). One such Evangelical University of Texas sociologist, Mark Regnerus, argued that young Evangelicals are caught between two discourses: a religious one that suggests they should abstain from sex until marriage and another that suggests they should abstain from

[23] Society has feminized the terms "virgin," "virginity," or "purity" to such an extent that I struggle to use it when I speak of men. I have managed, however, to push past this rhetorical struggle for the sake of clarity.

marriage until they have a career and/or have completed post-secondary education:

> Evangelicals tend to marry slightly earlier than other Americans, but not by much. Many of them plan to marry in their mid-20s.Yet waiting for sex until then feels far too long to most of them. And I am suggesting that when people wait until their mid-to-late 20s to marry, it *is* unreasonable to expect them to refrain from sex. It's battling our Creator's reproductive designs (Regnerus, 2009 [emphasis in original]).

Furthermore, he states that Evangelicals, by buying into the latter of these discourses, have actually done a great deal of damage to the institution of marriage. In response, Regnerus believes that Evangelicals need to begin supporting younger marriages. He suggests that some young Christian relationships need to be regarded as "marriages in the making" rather than a youthful distraction (Regnerus, 2009).

Sexual health expert, Martha Kempner, cleverly calls this 'change' in strategy a "bait and hitch." She suggests that this strategic alteration is not an alteration at all and that abstinence has always been about supporting marriage and not about "health and prevention" as abstinence groups have often suggested. She states:

> But, after ten years of reading [abstinence only] curricula, I can tell you that the real goal of abstinence-only programs is not to prevent teen pregnancies or STDs and it's not even to prevent premarital sex—it's to make sure that all people get married (Kempner, 2009).

Notably, Jimmy Hester, cofounder of True Love Waits, disagrees with people such as Regnerus and Kempner, believing that the current format of the abstinence movement works and that "there are too many examples of people who have done it" (in Gorski, 2009).

Conclusion

As evidenced in this chapter, various groups have debated extensively the purpose and effect of the abstinence movement and general abstinence practice. While many sources argue that abstinence does not work and may even have harmful effects on youth (Levine, 2002; Sandler, 2006: 40; Valenti, 2009), many others, particularity those within Evangelical circles, believe it is beneficial for the individual and society (Warner, 2008: 3). Further disagreement exists about what constitutes 'success' when one speaks of abstinence in particular, and sexual health in general.

All of these debates have developed from the historical ideas, events, and practices that I described in the previous chapter. In the next chapter, I use Bourdieu's theoretical concepts to sort out how the value Evangelicals have bestowed on abstinence has affected everyday practitioners. Furthermore, I unearth how Evangelicals use abstinence; how they use their sexual status to advance socially within and outside of their subculture.

Chapter Four: Bourdieu, Religion, and the Sexual Field: A Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

Christians often characterize their churches as being the hearth of the modern community, and attempt to set themselves up as the last bastions of true solidarity and equality before God. Nowhere is this perspective more evident than in Evangelical Protestantism. Christian journalist David Goetz describes how the "pokey suburban church" can provide the perfect place for one to ground oneself in an ever-changing world (Goetz, 2003). From this perspective, the church can provide a foundation from which one can begin to understand a rather anomic society that has begun to deconstruct traditional values.[24] Various contemporary social scientists have supported this idea as well (for example, Berger, 1999; Bibby 2002). At least superficially, churches appear to provide individuals what the outside world cannot: stability, community, and even equality.

The Evangelical maxim, "to be in the world but not of the world" (Sandler, 2006: 56), defines the Evangelical community as distinctly different from the world around it. Evangelicals define their culture as being separate from the often immoral and sinful secular culture represented, for the most part, by the mainstream media (Kincheloe, 2009: 1). In practice, however, the Evangelical

[24] Anomie is a societal condition where a lack of consensus and rampant disagreement characterize a society's normative framework (Durkheim, 1897: 102).

community does very little to effectively change existing social structures.[25] Using Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus, field, capital,* and *symbolic violence,* we can understand how this situation comes into effect. Just like any other institution, the "pokey suburban church" comes complete with a hierarchy and a system that insures the reproduction of social difference; insuring that all those who attend these churches are both *in* and *of* the world. Furthermore, we can see that certain *practices,* such as premarital sexual abstinence, are paramount in maintaining the reproduction and legitimation of social structures.

In this chapter, I first explain the development of the religious field through Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Pierre Bourdieu. I then describe the key components of Bourdieu's theoretical perspective. In particular, I explicate several of Bourdieu's key concepts. I follow these explanations by providing examples of how these concepts apply to the Evangelical community. Finally, I apply Bourdieu's theoretical perspective to abstinence and purity discourses as they apply to Evangelical Christians.

Developing the Religious Field: Marx, Engels, and Bourdieu

Karl Marx understood religion to be a 'substance' that dulls the pain of exploitation (McKown, 1975: 52). In his own words, "Religion is the sigh of an oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people" (Marx, 1844: 72). For the most part, both supporters and opponents of Marxism have used this statement to describe the exploitive nature of religion and religious belief. Often what people

[25] Evangelical's are of course heavily involved in politics both in Canada and the United States. This involvement, however, usually stands to support current or revert back to more traditional social structures rather than envisioning new ones (Fowler et al., 2004; McDonald, 2010).

have missed, however, is the opening portion of the statement, which describes religion as a response to oppression.[26]

Friedrich Engels further developed this seemingly contradictory idea of religion as both a conservative force allowing for the continued exploitation of the working class, and a response to this exploitation and oppression. In particular, Engels explained that, historically, religion often acted as an "ideological costume" for revolts rooted in proletarian interests (McKown, 1975: 88). For example, in his analysis of early Christianity Engels stated:

> The history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern working-class movement. Like the latter, Christianity was originally a movement of oppressed people: it first appeared as the religion of slaves and emancipated slaves, of poor people deprived of all rights, of people subjugated or dispersed by Rome (Engels, 1895: 217).

Both movements offered salvation to their adherents and relief from bondage and misery. Socialism offered salvation in this world; Christianity offered emancipation in the afterlife (Engels, 1895: 217). Engels believed that the problem with early Christianity originated when the Roman Empire adopted it. This adoption cut Christianity from its revolutionary roots. Furthermore, historian Delos B. McKown went as far as to say that Engels did not advocate the complete abolition of religion as did Marx. Rather, Engels hoped that some of the revolutionary elements of religion, in particular Christianity, would continue into

[26] In his analysis of the Iranian revolution, Michel Foucault also noted the not-so-hidden nuances of Marx's statement: "People always quote Marx and the opium of the people. The sentence that immediately preceded that statement and which is never quoted says that religion is the spirit of a world without spirit" (Foucault, 1979: 255).

the socialist era (McKown, 1975: 83). Despite this fact, Engels stated that religion did not have a place in society after the Revolution (Engels, 1874). Thus, both Marx and Engels leave the reader rather confused in terms of a Marxist understanding of religion.

Pierre Bourdieu, who was one of the greatest social thinkers of the last half-century, succinctly negotiated this contradiction in Marxist thought. He argued that these two seemingly opposed functions of religion are impossible to distinguish from each other:

> In brief, religious wars are neither the 'violent theological quarrels' that they are most often taken to be, nor the conflicts of 'material class interests' that Engels discovers in them; they are both things at once because the categories of theological thinking make it impossible to think and conduct the class struggle as such insofar as they permit thinking it and conducting it as a religious war (Bourdieu, 1991: 15).

In other words, while these wars are the result of material conditions and class interests, religious authorities legitimized them theologically and thus these battles cannot be interpreted as a representation of class struggle. Bourdieu linked this critique of Engels directly to his conception of religion as primarily an "agent of consecration" that engages in "the legitimation and naturalization of social difference" which, for the most part, he developed from Max Weber's sociology of religion (Engler, 2003: 446).

Bourdieu argued that Weber's concept of charisma "must be understood in relational terms" (Engler, 2003: 446). Through this process, Bourdieu

conceptualized religions as having two primary forces: namely the "priest" and the "prophet" (Bourdieu, 1987; 1991). The priest represents the forces of orthodoxy that vie for control of "religious capital" against the prophet and the forces of heterodoxy. Thus for Bourdieu, Weber's concept of the "routinization of charismatic authority" represents the "consolidation of control over religious capital, as prophet becomes priest." Furthermore, Bourdieu emphasized that a charismatic prophet requires specific material conditions in order for his heresy to gain followers (Bourdieu, 1987: 130). In other words, the prophecy exists amongst the laity before it leaves the mouth of the prophet. This understanding of religion is what provided the foundation for Bourdieu's concept of "field" (Engler, 2003: 446), something that would become instrumental in his later works. In conclusion, through the concept of religious field, Bourdieu accounted for the motivations surrounding religious conflict, depicted in Marx and Engels's thought, and religious competition and adaptation in Weber's work.

Bourdieu: Key concepts and definitions

Field, Habitus, and Capital

Social space (i.e. society) for Bourdieu was multidimensional, composed of any number of "fields," which intersect and overlap in different ways and in different spaces. Simply put, a field is an arena for competition, a place where agents and institutions compete for various forms of legitimate capital. Furthermore, these fields are homogenous insofar as they function by similar logic (Rey, 2004: 332). For every form of capital a related field exists where agents and institutions jockey for position and the accumulation, consumption,

and/or production of the associated form of capital. The forms of capital acquired from these fields then prescribe one a position in the "meta-field of power" (Rey, 2007: 45). The field of power is where agents compete over the control of the state and its "*statist* capital granting power of the different species of capital and their reproduction" (Bourdieu 1998: 42 [*emphasis added*]).[27] The *field of power*, therefore, is the primary location for class struggle and domination.

Habitus is what provides agents with the knowledge and the tools to participate in this struggle for capital—providing individuals with a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1998: 25). It is a matrix of perceptions that predisposes an agent to act in a certain fashion (Rey 2004: 335). In *Practical Reason,* Bourdieu described habitus as:

> generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices – what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it, his political opinions and the way he expresses them are systematically different from the industrial owner's corresponding activities. But habitus are also classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, different tastes (Bourdieu, 1998: 8).

The habitus is what links agents to the material world, as it is fostered by one's material conditions. From here, through a person's tastes and dispositions, the habitus renders various fields of the social world meaningful, and vicariously the various fields of the social world shape the habitus of individual agents. Therefore, the habitus positions agents within a field, which in turn provides the

[27] For example, *statist capital*, gained through the *field of power,* can influence the ability of the educational institution to grant degrees and thus influence the educational field and its ability to produce (and reproduce) educational capital.

agent with a certain amount of capital relative to that position. For example, one's habitus determines an agent's position within the religious field, which gives the agent access to a certain amount of religious capital.

Bourdieu's understanding of capital began with a traditionally Marxist understanding. Essentially, capital, for both Bourdieu and Marx, is accumulated labour that enables social agents to engage in various forms of social action (Bourdieu, 1986). That said, Bourdieu greatly increased the efficacy of this Marxist concept by extending beyond its strictly materialist connotations (Rey, 2007: 52).[28] Bourdieu divided capital into three "fundamental guises" from which all forms of capital take their form:

> *[E]conomic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility (Bourdieu, 1986).

In short, economic capital is capital in the Marxist sense. People who have a greater degree of control over the means of production have greater amounts of

[28] Weber introduced the concept of "status" as an influential aspect in a society's class structure: "Status *may* rest on class position of a distinct or ambiguous kind. It is not, however, solely determined by it: Money and an entrepreneurial position are not in themselves status qualifications, although they may lead to them; and the lack of property is not itself a status disqualification, although this may be a reason for it" (Weber, 1925: 180). Weber's introduction of status is a key element that would eventually lead to Bourdieu's separation of the concept of capital.

economic capital. Cultural capital exists in the form of a person's tastes, values, education, and credentials of all sorts. Individuals derive social capital from the personal, intimate, and informal networks and bonds we form with others (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000: 20; Wuthnow, 2000). While cultural capital has to do with what one knows, social capital tends to depend on who one knows.

Furthermore, Bourdieu argued that agents or institutions could exchange or convert one form of capital into another through a process called "transubstantiation;" in other words, he believed capital was a fluid (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, an agent could convert capital acquired from one field into capital relative to another field (Rey, 2004: 332). This concept is central in understanding how social difference is perpetuated within secular and religious communities alike.

Symbolic Violence and the Reproduction of Difference

The game for which agents compete for the various forms of capital is not a fair one. Certain players enter into the game with knowledge, skills, and materials that allows them to play the game better than others:

> [Capital] is what makes the games of society – not least, the economic game – something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle. Roulette, which holds out the opportunity of winning a lot of money in a short space of time, and therefore of changing one's social status quasi-instantaneously, and in which the winning of the previous spin of the wheel can be staked and lost at every new spin, gives a fairly accurate image of this imaginary universe

> of perfect competition or perfect equality of opportunity, a world without inertia, without accumulation, without heredity or acquired properties, in which every moment is perfectly independent of the previous one, every soldier has a marshal's baton in his knapsack, and every prize can be attained, instantaneously, by everyone, so that at each moment anyone can become anything (Bourdieu, 1986).

Fields and the rules that govern them, develop in society to reproduce existing social relations. This reproduction is completed through the "double and obscure relation" between one's habitus and the various fields that structure it; the field structures the habitus while the habitus renders the field meaningful (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127). Furthermore, Bourdieu tied the formation of an agent's habitus intricately to one's objective material existence; an agent's habitus is an inevitably "class-ed habitus." As such, all those who exist at a similar position within a field are likely to have similar habits and tastes—a similar habitus (Rey, 2007: 50). And as the field structures one's habitus, it reproduces the domination of elite classes.

The practice of *symbolic violence* is central to this reproduction. Bourdieu described this concept as "a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling" (Bourdieu, 2001: 1-2). Symbolic violence leads dominated persons to "misrecognize" various social hierarchies as something natural (Rey, 2007: 54).

As identified by Engels, salvation in the afterlife is one of the most obvious examples of symbolic violence and misrecognition. The subtle forms of violence, which emanate from religious doctrines of salvation, prevent religious individuals and groups from identifying and resisting the "material" interests that cause their subjugation. Taken to the extreme, belief in the maxim "to be in the world but not of it" results in arguably even greater levels of misrecognition in the Evangelical community. It encourages Evangelicals to disregard the material world and its associated social order outside the church. It directs them to focus on their own salvation and the preparation for the second coming of Christ, which will right vicariously all the wrongs of a sinful material society. It is up to God to end the material inequalities that plague the social world (including the inequalities experienced by Evangelicals) rather than individual Evangelicals or the Evangelical community as a whole.[29]

Nonetheless, Evangelicals are heavily involved in charity work. In fact, Evangelicals are more likely to give to charitable organizations and volunteer than the majority of Canadians (Bowen, 2004: 148, 164; Hiemstra, 2009; Reed and Selbee, 2001: 773). Charity, however, does not alter the social relations that maintain the various systems of exploitation explicit in a capitalist society. Charity and almsgiving are palliative devices that stand to legitimize the ruling class—as Marx pessimistically stated in the *Communist Manifesto*: "Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat" (Marx, 1848: 264). Therefore, the emphasis on

[29] In his book *Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War*, journalist Joe Bageant argues that Evangelicalism and its anti-worldliness philosophies are intrinsic in the subjugation of the American underclass (Bageant, 2007).

charitable giving allows Evangelicals, particularly wealthy ones, to feel comfortable with their social position. It allows them to feel that the current social order is indeed *natural* (at least until the coming apocalypse).

Capital in an Evangelical Community

As described earlier, the Evangelical community is far more imbedded in the secular world than they would care to admit. Often, they are reliant on the very same structures that make-up the secular world they have come to define themselves against. That said, certain social items and qualities have far more value inside the community than outside of it.

Cultural Capital: Credentials for salvation

Credentials are an important aspect of cultural capital. The most important credential for an Evangelical Christian is conversion, most notably adult conversion, where one supposedly becomes *reborn* by the Holy Spirit (Fowler, et al, 2004: 15).[30] Theologically, this experience marks the moment where one is *saved*; where one's salvation is assured through God's grace. More importantly, however, is the story that comes with this experience of conversion—visions, and relief from depravity and/or sinfulness. As well, a realization of previous wrongdoing are common themes of these stories. Often these stories develop from what one journalist termed "The culture of personal crisis" that "defines so many Evangelical communities" (Blumenthal, 2009).

[30] For many Evangelicals, Pentecostals in particular, this rebirth symbolizes a second baptism by "fire." This second baptism follows from the events of Pentecost in the Book of Acts. Here the author described when Christ's Disciples first experienced the Holy Spirit. In addition, through the "gifts" provided by the Spirit the Disciples were able to convince thousands to convert and be baptized. This event provided the foundation for the early Church (Conkin, 1997: 288-289).

The better the conversion story one can tell (involving the utmost amount of personal trauma) the greater amounts of cultural capital one can accumulate as a result. For instance, often people construct conversion accounts in ways that match the requirements and terminology that is appropriate to their given group. In addition, often agents alter their accounts over time to fit their situations—to fit any changes in their social positions (Snow and Machalek, 1984: 176). If a community comes to consider financial turmoil to be a paramount issue in society, then parishioners may over-emphasize their financial situations at the time they converted. Conversion, along with other ritual events such as baptism and confirmation, act as "prerequisites" for further action within Evangelical circles.

Within Evangelical Christianity (and all other forms of religion for that matter), we can see the existence of another form of capital: religious capital. Despite being a form of cultural capital, religious capital is specific to religious communities. Religious capital is:

> . . . the degree of *mastery of* and *attachment to* a particular religious culture. The mastery of religious culture refers knowledge, skills, and rituals of a specific religion, e.g., Bible stories, making the sign of the cross, when to say amen, following liturgies, and so on (Finke and Dougherty, 2002, 106).

In Evangelicalism, knowledge of rituals and texts, especially the Bible, is very important. Being able to interpret biblical texts in a way that legitimizes and reproduces the community's perspective can help an individual to rise within the

church. These people become the core of the Evangelical priestly class, and knowledge of the Bible can help a person rise within it (Bourdieu, 1987: 127).

Economic Capital: the church and "mammon"[31]

In the *New Testament,* Jesus displayed obvious disdain for wealth. For example, in *Matthew* Jesus stated ". . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (19:24). Despite statements like these and the general unease that the majority of Christian's feel towards the prospect of commerce in church, a good number of churches have embraced corporate America (Allen, 1992; Boston and Conn: 1997; Burke, 1996). One can find Starbucks, Subway, and McDonald's in any number of places that used to be dedicated solely to worship in the past (MacDonald, 2004; Twitchell, 2007). This "unholy" merging of God and "mammon" provides an interesting point of analysis.

First, we can begin to see the overt convergence of separate fields: economic with the religious. This intersection helps to legitimize the economic capital obtained by the church. Now churches can make money by renting out space and allowing companies the opportunity to market to their parishioners. Essentially, they have sought for more legitimate and efficient ways to convert religious capital into economic capital. Second, the increase in economic capital within the greater Evangelical community has allowed for the development of a class of Evangelical elites, such as early American televangelist Pat Robertson and Focus on the Family's founder James Dobson. Third, these elites have

[31] Mammon is a biblical term that roughly translates into money or material wealth.

created a religio-spiritual industry that has now become virtually inseparable from the community itself.

Through the distribution of products intended to improve one's faith, such as books, television shows, music, and magazines, these elites are able to do two things. First, they are able to exchange their religious capital for economic capital in a very direct way. And second, through the support of those who buy their products, they legitimize their own position in the religious field. To conclude, the overlap of the economic and religious fields allow for the creation of a venue where one can become wealthy peddling the "goods of salvation" without feeling bad about it (Rey, 2004).

Social Capital: Getting "in" with God

Social capital is one thing that Evangelical groups provide their adherents in abundance (Putnam, 2000: 77). These communities develop and enact this capital in numerous ways:

> Churches provide an important incubator for civic skills, civic norms, community interests, and civic recruitment. Religiously active men and women learn to give speeches, run meetings, manage disagreements, and bear administrative responsibility. They also befriend others who are in turn likely to recruit them into other forms of community activity. In part for these reasons, churchgoers are substantially more likely to be involved in secular organizations, to vote and participate politically in other ways, and to have deeper informal social connections (Putnam, 2000: 66).

Conversion instantaneously gives one access to a vast social network of Evangelicals—of "born-again" believers. Congregants, however, can gain additional benefits from increasing one's connections within the group.

One possible result of increased social capital is the rise to ministry. Because many Evangelical churches select pastors from within the congregation, potential ministers are heavily reliant on their social networks within the church. This situation often means that churches do not require educational credentials of their leadership. As one pastor emphasized, "'God does not call the qualified, but instead qualifies the called'" (quoted in Finke and Dougherty, 2002: 105). Therefore, pastors who are called from the community gain their social capital from the congregation rather than from a body of professionals (Finke and Dougherty, 2002: 105).[32]

Symbolic Capital: How to act effervescently

Although not part of the three "fundamental guises" of capital, symbolic capital (or the symbolic nature of capital) is an important feature of Bourdieu's theoretical work. This form of capital is based on one's ability to use the capital that one possesses:

> Symbolic capital is any property…. when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which cause them to know it and to recognize it, to give it value…. More precisely, symbolic capital is the form taken by any species of capital whenever it is perceived through categories of perception that are

[32] Social capital also can aid one's rise up in the religio-spiritual industrial complex, such as the Christian music industry, by providing connections to other agents who have access to additional forms of capital.

> the product of the embodiment of divisions or of oppositions inscribed in the structure of the distribution of this species of capital… (Bourdieu, 1998, 47).

In other words, symbolic capital has a lot to do with performance and one's ability to "sell" one's capital. Symbolic capital accounts for the immaterial aspects of capital (including cultural capital, religious capital, or political capital [Rey, 2007: 156]), because capital is only capital if agents perceive it as such.

Bourdieu described symbolic capital as our ability to draw on our other forms of capital in ways that other people will recognize it for what it is (Bourdieu, 1998: 47). In more "effervescent" or charismatic forms of Evangelicalism, people often will concede that they have been taken over by the Holy Spirit, felt the spirit of God, or seen a divine vision during a worship service. Evangelicals consider these normal experiences as long as they take place at certain times, in certain places, and congregants perform them in certain ways.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim explained situations, like those described above, through his concept of collective effervescence: a "sacred" time where the normal boundaries of society are changed. Nevertheless, within these effervescent times there are rules; in fact, there are some very strict ones. Durkheim noticed that even in the height of effervescent activity there is a sense of order or "rhythm" (Durkheim, 1912: 110). In other words, one can argue that there is a *proper* way to act effervescently.[33]

[33] A Pastor I met in the field described a situation where he had to put in a great deal of effort controlling two Caribbean members of his church who have particularly lively worship habits (Fieldnotes, 19-20). This example exhibits how one can act incorrectly even in moments of effervescence.

The Evangelical identity requires certain actions in certain places in order for one to acquire additional status. Evangelicals then *act* out worship in such a way as to not exceed, or threaten, any norms, thereby creating an air of "conformance" rather than compliance (Goffman, 1963: 128). Effervescent Evangelicals become possessed by the spirit, fall flat on their faces, speak in tongues, and cry out for God not because they *have* to but because they have something to gain by doing it.

Evangelicals must learn the proper ways to express their religious and spiritual capital. Spiritual capital has to do with the methods that religious agents use to display their relationship with the divine. It is highly fluid and exists across religious lines, albeit in different ways (Verter, 2003). This form of capital is more easily traded than religious capital, because it is not confined to one specific religious denomination's texts, rituals, and dogmas. Rather, spiritual capital is what allows religious persons to better use religious capital. Buddhists, Christians, and New Agers all share some notion of the divine. No matter what form a deity or supernatural phenomenon may take, individual believers must attempt to communicate with it in some way. From my understanding, this notion is spiritual capital.[34, 35]

[34] Like religious capital, both Christians and secularists have exhibited a general unease with transfer of spiritual into economic capital. Tammy and Jim Bakker, both Evangelical televangelists, who made a small fortune exploiting others' spirituality, are an excellent example of this unease. They display perfectly how one can mis-invest their spiritual (and religious) capital (Verter, 2003: 169).

[35] "Prosperity Christianity" stands out as an obvious exception to this unease. This brand of Christianity preaches that wealth is a sign of God's favour and is the faith of many Christian rappers, such as P-Diddy, 50 cent and Ma$e (Sandler, 2006: 134-135).

Abstinence as Capital

Another example of cultural capital that is particularly important to Evangelical Christians is compliance to sexual norms. Just like many modern social groups, Evangelicals are sex-obsessed. As such, it is important to understand the ability of one's sexual status to evoke erotic desire in others. From this perspective, one's status as an abstainer acts as a form of "erotic" or "sexual capital" (Green, 2008; Martin and George, 2006). In short, erotic capital is "the quality and quantity of attributes that an individual possesses, which elicit an erotic response in another" (Green, 2008: 29). In other words, erotic capital is what social agents consider "sexy." Like all other forms of capital, the erotic variety links directly to one's habitus; what one considers sexy is explicitly related to one's objective social history (Green, 2008: 30). Unlike some other forms of capital, however, the field of where one can exchange erotic capital for other forms often is linked to a physical site, such as a bar, or in this case a church (Green, 2008: 28). That said, the goal for Evangelicals is not just to "elicit an erotic response in another," but rather, it to induce an erotic/emotional response that could potentially lead to marriage—in addition to sex. Nonetheless, from my understanding the addition of marriage only changes *what* Evangelicals consider attractive and does little to change how they use erotic capital.[36]

Abstinence is likely the single most important form of erotic capital amongst Evangelical youth. The "V-card" (Virginity card) gets one into the "V-club." And some persons asked for "forgiveness" and become "born again

[36] I had thoughts of creating a form of capital at this point, such as romantic or courting capital. I feel, however, this change would take away from the role sexual politics play in abstinence practices and discourses. Thus, I will continue to use the term erotic capital.

virgins." Although superficially these people are equal to virgins, they never really become full-fledged members of the *V-club*, who all still possess "physical virginity" (Stafford, 2001: 34). In other words, they have done no penetrating or been penetrated.

Therefore, the church, in particular the youth and young adult groups who exist within it, act as "erotic worlds" where agents can exchange their virgin status for other forms of capital at a higher value than outside the church (Green, 2007: 28).[37] This inflated value is tied to the common sexual habitus shared by many of the members in the Evangelical community. In other words, persons raised in the Evangelical community are more likely to have been taught that virginity is something that one should consider desirable in a mate; it becomes a symbol of an agent's, particularly a woman's, moral worth (Valenti, 2009: 13). Furthermore, agents can translate this moral worth into religious worth and vicariously religious/spiritual capital. That said, it is easier to observe the actual value of abstinence through transgression rather than adherence.

For Evangelicals, sexual contact outside of legitimate structures is polluting. Violation of sexual norms, such as sex before marriage or homosexuality, pollutes a person for life and it is often difficult to regain the social networks (social capital) lost through the violation of these norms (Ransom, 2000). The loss of one's virginity prior to marriage leaves one *stigmatized*. Sociologist Erving Goffman used the term stigma to describe, "bodily signs

[37] While I fully subscribe to Green's "sexual fields framework." I do not share his unease with the use of the word "market" when describing "erotic worlds" (Green, 2007: 28). As such, following Wilkins (2008) I will refer to "erotic worlds" as "sexual marketplaces" because the latter better connotes the physical attachment to space and the actual practices within this space.

designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier" (Goffman, 1963: 1).

After the community identifies someone as violator of the *V-club charter,* peers often describe the transgressor (especially if female) as a slut, whore, or as damaged goods (the latter example connecting rather overtly to Bourdieu's theoretical perspective). Often peers even will mention a difference in appearance (Carpenter, 2005: 12). For instance, it suddenly may become evident that the transgressor is wearing revealing clothing even though her (after all this discourse, for the most part, is directed at women) attire has not changed.

This situation is quite similar to an observation of Goffman's. He stated that physical changes often result in a perceived change in personality by both the individual and her peers (Goffman, 1963: 45). Although, there is no real physical change when one violates purity restrictions, one does conduct, however, a physical action. Losing one's virginity results in the guilt applied by the individual and the stigma applied by one's peers. Both reflect the cultural, religious, and erotic capital lost by the transgressor.

Purity as Symbolic Violence

The Subjugation of Youth

It is important to understand that the purity/abstinence movement is not a grassroots *youth* movement. Rather, the purity movement "is really a movement organized by adults for adolescents." In addition, the movement's rhetorical emphasis on "family values" has made it very attractive to parents (Bearman and Brückner, 2001: 860). Author Judith Levine explains:

> *Abstinence* connects powerfully to that deep parental wish: to protect and 'keep' their children by guarding their childhood. In this sense, abstinence is about reversing, or at least holding back, the coming of age, which for parents is a story of loss, as their children establish passionate connections with people and values outside the family (Levine, 2002: 449 [emphasis in original]).

Therefore, the youth of the movement have not shaped the majority of the actions undertaken by the movement. Instead, adults who claim to be acting in the "best interest" of youth have shaped the movement.

Sociologists James E. Côté and Anton L. Allahar explain this adult shaping of youth issues as the "manufacture of consent and dissent."[38] They argue that youth are a disenfranchised "class" with little to no social power. For example, youth are limited to low paying jobs despite whatever qualifications they may have. The also are the constant target of mass marketing, kept in an anomic state of identity searching, and have virtually no influence in any meaningful social arena (Côté and Allahar, 2006).[39]

The manufacture of consent is the efforts of those in the "ruling class" to prevent youth dissent.[40] In other words, it encourages youth to accept this exploitation as the "normal state of affairs" (Côté and Allahar, 2006: 80).

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[38] The manufacture of consent and dissent is virtually identical to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence.

[39] Côté and Allahar are reflecting on the prolongation of adolescence and emerging adulthood in Canada. They argue this prolongation is motivated by the corporate need for a cheap and exploitable labour pool whose miniscule incomes are completely expendable due to parental support (Côté and Allahar, 2006: 67).

[40] Côté and Allahar draw on Karl Marx and Frederick Engels's concept of the ruling class. Marx and Engels state, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force" (Marx and Engels, 1845: 192).

Conversely, the manufacture of dissent deals with those situations where consent fails and discontent with particular structures turns to dissent. Dissent is "manufactured" into a form that diverts it from challenging any of the real sources of youth disenfranchisement. Rather, the ruling class persuades youth to act within a certain set of confines and values (Côté and Allahar, 2006: 92).

The purity movement spawned from dissent surrounding youth sexual issues: the decrease in median age of first sexual intercourse, the increase in teen pregnancies, and the rise in sexually transmitted infections amongst youth (Abbott, 1999: 438-439).[41] Adults, namely conservative political and religious leaders, sensed this discontent and provided a narrow outlet, which does not challenge any of the ruling ideologies. The purity movement frames the previously stated social problems as matters of individual salvation, rather than *social* problems that require *social* solutions. For instance, this "individualization" prevents the purity movement from ever challenging the corporate entities that have benefited from the hypersexualization of young people, young women in particular (Côté and Allahar, 2006: 61). Simply put, the purity movement encourages change at an individual level in order to prevent any macro-level change.

Moreover, the purity movement relies on an "essentialist" view of youth, which stereotypes youth as essentially naïve, irresponsible, and immature (Côté and Allahar, 2006: 2). Through this lens, adults can easily trivialize grassroots collective action *by* youth *for* youth. The use of the colloquial saying "kids just

[41] Arguably the purity movement now relies on the construction of these problems since there is evidence that teen pregnancy and abortion rates have declined in Canada over the last decade (McKay and Barrett, 2010).

being kids" to explain youth discontent, is a great example of this trivialization. In consequence, youth are taken to be the social problem, rather than the social problems that produced their discontent.

The Subjugation of Women

Sexual "purity" through abstinence is far more valuable form of cultural and erotic capital for women than it is for men. Wilkins argues that often Evangelical men define abstinence as a lifestyle "choice" that one must struggle to uphold (Wilkins, 2008: 124). For Evangelical women, abstinence is a "nonnegotiable" that revives "inflexible assumptions about feminine purity" (Wilkins, 2008: 132). It becomes a key component of a woman's religious and erotic habitus and thus contributes to her religious and erotic worth. One's status as a pure woman reflects that person's moral value. At the same time, this pure status is central in attracting a long-term mate. In other words, the concept of "purity" is what legitimates the conversion of religious capital into erotic capital and vice versa.

Feminist author Jessica Valenti argues that, for women, virginity has become a replacement for morality. Virgin women can act as ignorant and immoral as they want as long as they remain chaste; virginity is what American society requires to consider a woman morally virtuous. Thus, purity relies on a passive definition of womanhood (Valenti, 2009: 24). In terms of morality, woman are defined by what they *do not do* – "[female] ethics are the ethics of passivity" (Valenti, 2009: 25).

As such, the predominant reason for women to abstain is to reap the rewards of a *better* heterosexual relationship in the future through the doctrine of Christian marriage (Wilkins, 2008: 143). In this fashion, the practice of sexual abstinence reifies various, and often patriarchal, gender constructs commonly held by conservative Christians. Through the concept of purity, abstinence, therefore, ensures the social domination of women in a very subtle, covert, and thus, symbolically violent way.

As a result, we can view the Evangelical church as a "corporate body" that facilitates the legitimation of gender differences. Both Evangelical men and women reproduce this difference through various discourses and strategies, such as fertility and matrimony. The fact that women's capital is most valuable when used in terms of matrimonial strategies decreases the likelihood of an Evangelical woman rising to any position of influence. Men are able to spend more time devoting their capital to educational and economic strategies, which are of higher value in the field of power.

Conclusion

In conclusion, often society, and some scholars, paint Evangelical Christianity and the "pokey suburban church" as being one of the last vestiges of traditional solidarity. By observing this community through a Bourdieusian lens, however, we can see that Evangelicalism is just as modern as any other societal institution. It is just another institution that provides a space for the legitimization and reproduction of social difference. Evangelicals are just as competitive, just as naïve, just as apathetic, and just as embedded as the rest of society. Furthermore,

core Evangelical doctrines, like many other religious doctrines, actually encourage the misrecognition of the material world. Non-Evangelicals deny this connection as well; but this denial is not essential for the continued existence of their group.[42] As such, this perspective inhibits self-critique and the evaluation of the material conditions of their existence. It allows the social ramifications of doctrines, such as abstinence, to go largely un-checked and un-criticized.

[42] Once again, the maxim "to be in the world but not of it" is a great example of this denial or misrecognition.

Chapter Five: Understanding Ethnography and Research in Religious Communities

Introduction

Officially, I labeled my methodology as ethnography, including participant observation and interviews of a local Evangelical church. The longer I spent in the field, however, the concept of "methodology" became increasingly problematic. In its simplest sense methodology makes complete sense to me. For instance, *The Collins Sociological Dictionary* states that methodology is "the techniques and strategies employed within a discipline to manipulate data and acquire knowledge" (Jary and Jary, 2000: 382). This definition implies a certain flexibility (because of the need to strategize) that I believe is necessary for good social research and science. That said, my experience as a graduate student has shown me that "methodology" can in fact be incredibly inflexible and, at times, dogmatic. Moreover, I have read texts, particularly those that come from more positivist and post-positivist perspectives, that present methodology as something that can restrict a researcher from making strategic decisions to improve one's ability to retrieve data in order to preserve a certain 'method.' In other words, supporting one's methodology becomes a more important task than retrieving meaningful data from the field.

Experiences such as these are why I have become attracted to ethnography and participant observation as a research method. In my view, ethnographers often are able to put aside the dogmatic aspects of 'methodology,' such as strict

researcher/participant separation[43] or the ability to change data retrieval methods in response to situations discovered in the field. Ethnography enables researchers to situate themselves in a place where they can best examine the subject at hand. This "method" leaves the researcher without a strict framework for data retrieval and analysis, which is a definite weakness if a researcher is looking to replicate his/her work. (Researchers, however, can mitigate against some of this weakness through triangulation.[44]) It greatly increases, however, the accessibility to one's research subjects. For this reason, ethnography was ideal for my project.

In this chapter, I first outline the connections between my theoretical perspective and my research practices in the field. Second, I reveal some of the difficulties of conducting fieldwork in a religious community. Third, I describe my research experience in the field. In particular, I describe how I gained entrée, developed rapport, and eventually acquired interviews from the community. Forth, I discuss my efforts as a participant observer and the emotionally taxing nature of this type of research. Finally, I reveal how I analyzed and stored my data and I discuss relevant ethical considerations.

Theory and Method

A researcher's methodological practice is grounded inevitably in some form of theoretical perspective; similarly, one inevitably has to put forth a

[43] Of course, considering the interest many religious groups often have in a researcher's "salvation," some form of researcher/participant separation is necessary in ethnography as well (Willey, 2010). That said, ethnographers are able to form close relationships with their participants, which often can lead to better research opportunities. Some other research methods require a researcher to maintain a distance from one's subject that prevents the formation of relationships in the field, something that some ethnographers consider essential in qualitative research (Wacquant, 2004a).

[44] Triangulation is the reinforcing of results using multiple methods or perspectives (Babbie and Benaquisto, 2002: 99)

methodological practice in order to make use of a theoretical perspective, whether the researcher is aware of it or not. Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant (1960-), who was Bourdieu's student, argued that the separation between theory and methodology was a mute point and, at times, problematic, "The most 'empirical' technical choices cannot be disentangled from the most 'theoretical' choices in the construction of the object" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 225). Thus, methodological concepts are always informed by theoretical ones and it is often difficult to decipher where methodology ends and where theory begins. Furthermore, considering my own methodological reservations, post-Marxist theory (via Bourdieu and Wacquant) helped me deal with these reservations in a constructive way.[45]

As such, the goal of my ethnographic work was to gain a better understanding of the common habitus of my participants. In particular, I intended to understand how the habitus of my participants affected their sexual practices and how these sexual practices effected their positions in various fields relevant to the community (such as the religious and erotic fields). Central to this relationship between habitus and practice is the connection between habitus and hexis. *Hexis* is the embodied representation of one's habitus; it is the dispositions, appearances, tastes, and practices produced by an agent's habitus (Bourdieu, 1989: 35; Green, 2008: 31). Wacquant revealed this connection through combining participant observation with life histories gained through one-on-one interviews (Wacquant, 2004a: 5). The observation provides the researcher

[45] By post-Marxism, I mean the "development of Marxist theories on the inequality of power in society, moving the focus away from upper/lower class-based distinctions and towards the power associated with access to technologies, education etc." (MediaDictionary, 2010).

with ready access to their participant's hexis while the life histories allow the researcher to draw connections to that person's habitus.

Bourdieu cleverly called this form of research "participant objectivation" (Bourdieu, 2003; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 253; Wacquant, 2004b: 395). He stated:

> Participant objectivation undertakes to explore not the 'lived experience' of the knowing subject but the social conditions of possibility – and therefore the effects and limits – of that experience and, more precisely, of the act of objectivation itself (Bourdieu, 2003: 282).

The researchers must focus on the relations that restrict and enable an agent's activities; they must "think relationally" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 224). Furthermore, the researchers need to position themselves within the fields relevant to her or his study. Bourdieu described this process as "the objectivation of the subject of objectivation" (Bourdieu, 2003: 282). This process enables researchers to describe reflexively the various forms of capital they possess and the various ways this capital influences the relationships formed while conducting fieldwork. While still I would describe Bourdieu and Wacquant's methodology as participant observation, the idea of objectivation greatly altered the ways in which they conducted their research.

Researching Religious Groups

Participant observation (or objectivation) is ideal for researching religious groups because it allows the researcher to exhibit the flexibility and adaptability necessary for researching religious communities. Flexibility is vital in participant

observation (Ayella, 1993; Hamabata, 1996; McGuire, 1982). Flexibility allows the researcher to create new questions and new frameworks of analysis as the project progresses and to take advantages of opportunities that may develop while in the field (Riemer, 1977).

Researching people in religious groups comes with issues that set them apart from many other subjects of research. First, researchers have to understand the implications of their participants believing in an abstract entity (a god or similar figure) whom everyone may describe somewhat differently, but who people believe gives them direct orders. In all likelihood, many secular researchers feel incredible frustration with having to analyze something that they themselves cannot understand. Research from this secular perspective can overlook the interactional aspects of religious activity (Ayella, 1993: 109). The positivist and scientific meta-narratives that often come with this perspective can cloud researchers' abilities to observe religious phenomenon (Barker, 1995).

I now navigate these problems through one of the first things I learned as a sociologist: the Thomas theorem. In this theorem, W.I. Thomas–who was one of the founding members of the Chicago school of sociology–stated, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas, 1928: 572). Therefore, it does not matter if religion is real; the social effects of religious belief are real for the believers and have real social consequences. Similarly, in post-Marxist terms, it does not matter whether capital is material or symbolic—it is capital as long as it is perceived as such.

Gaining Entrée and Developing Rapport

A key stage of ethnographic research is gaining access to one's research participants. This process can be rather tedious and can take far more time then one predicts (Hamabata, 1996; Wacquant, 2004a). In my case, gaining entrée was not very difficult. That said, what this process lacked in difficulty it made up for in tediousness. Most of this tediousness was the result of the process of passing my project by the appropriate members of the church leadership. For instance, I first had to run my project past the lead Pastor (who was the main contact I gained from the church in a previous project [see Willey, 2010]) who then needed to run this project past the church board and the various members he felt would need to be informed. The problem was that the lead Pastor went on holidays for two weeks between the time I spoke to him and when he could speak to the board and the relevant congregants (fieldnotes, 5:37; 6:3-4).[46] By the time I could speak to him and set-up a meeting with the young adults' pastor, my project was almost a month behind schedule. Nevertheless, one expects scenarios like these when doing qualitative work. After all, qualitative research is about *other* peoples' lives and the researchers has to make themselves 'fit' into the lives and schedules of the research community. In other words, once again flexibility is essential.

Eventually, I began attending young adult services at Grace full-time. During this time, Pastor Derek introduced me to Stan, my key informant. Eventually, Stan asked me to join his "small group" and attend its weekly Bible

[46] All fieldnotes and interview are cited by the following method: (reference item, page: line).

study (fieldnotes, 14: 35-36). Therefore, I found three main arenas of fieldwork: Sunday morning services, young adult services, and weekly Bible study.[47]

Participant Observation

My work at Grace and its associated young adult groups would be far more appropriately termed, what Wacquant calls "observant participation" rather than participant observation (Wacquant, 2004a: 5). By this comment, I do not mean that the church swept me away in some religious fervor. There were countless times that I found myself actively debating with the members of the congregation in discussion groups, conversing with individuals who would eventually become friends of mine, and contemplating the exact purpose of a sociologist in this context. Moreover, considering that contemplation was very much the goal of great portions of the young adult services, this activity was far closer to participation than observation.

That said, I did work to maintain certain frames of analysis while in the field. Sociologist Meredith McGuire lays out several of these frames:

1. The full participant: the observer fully participates in the moods and actions of the observed group.
2. The critical observer: the observer steps back from what is going on and observes critically as an academic.
3. The non-critical observer: the observer pretends that she or he has just walked in off the street and has no prior knowledge of what is going on.

[47] In addition, I gained access and received ethics approval to analyze an anonymous online confessional board from another local Pentecostal young adults group (fieldnotes, 8: 6-8). Primarily, I use this board as peripheral data to add breadth to my analysis.

4. The newcomer-who-wants-to-be-part-of-the-event: the observer asks her/himself "what does one need to know to participate?" This perspective can provide windows into the operant norms of the group. It also can help determine what roles are available to particular committed persons.[48]
5. The leader-participant: the observer takes the role of leader and observes from this perspective (McGuire, 1982: 23-24).

To some extent, I used all but the last of these frames at different times in my project. The intimacy of the small group Bible study required complete participation. Meanwhile, my time at the young adults' service at Grace allowed me to fully participate, critically participate, non-critically participate, and take the perspective of a newcomer. I use the term "participate" rather than observe in these examples, as (with the exception of the main Sunday morning service) I was never able to "observe" without participating. My research situation required me to participate at virtually every moment of this project.

The Interviews

Several weeks passed before I felt comfortable enough to solicit for interviews. Surprisingly, I had an incredibly difficult time gaining interviewees. As mentioned earlier, I wanted to conduct interviews with the people in the field I had come to know the best. As time went on, however, I came to realize that the individuals I was spending time with were avoiding any mention of my research topic or my work as a researcher, a surprising fact considering Evangelicals I have

[48] McGuire notes that there may be ethical concerns with this research stance, regarding intrusion into the lives of group participants (McGuire, 1982: 24).

met outside of my fieldwork readily spoke about their sexuality (fieldnotes 1, 36: 35-38). I have no idea if this effort was conscious on their behalf but it certainly made my work more difficult.

The first time I tried to attain interviews went horribly wrong. This failure was likely my own fault, because by chance I first asked the individual who was the most intimidated by the prospect of being interviewed (I, of course, was not aware of this fact at the time) and who then firmly rejected me (fieldnotes, 26: 32-34). Thus, several months passed before I felt comfortable enough to solicit for interviews again. My second attempt to gain interviews went much better. This time I forewarned the leader of the small group that I would be asking for interviews in the coming Bible study. He had no problem with my asking for these interviews and actually warmed-up the others to the idea of participating in my study prior to my arrival. When I did finally arrive all the members in attendance agreed to interview with me (fieldnotes, 39: 1-13). I attained the various other interviews conducted in this project through my own previous connections and various other encounters at Grace.

By the time I had terminated observation, I had attained seven interviews: five congregants and two pastors. Originally, I had intended to complete approximately ten interviews. Due to the issues described above, however, I was unable to do attain this number. Each interview followed a similar format (see Appendix 1). I began by asking the participants about their personal histories. In particular, I asked them about their family, occupational, and religious life while keeping in mind the purpose of the interview. In some cases, I needed to ask few

additional questions because some participants used their past history as venues to describe much of their sexual and relationship lives. I geared any additional questions to help me understand what each participant considered valuable in a mate. They also helped me recognize how each participant understood abstinence and how maintaining an abstinent identity had affected their lives. In addition to these questions, I asked the two pastors some questions relating to their work with youth and young adults. Most of the participants initially appeared quite nervous about the interview. As the interviews progressed and they realized that the interview would not focus on their actual sexual practices,[49] most participants tended to relax and become quite comfortable. The time I spent building rapport with my participants also helped this situation, since they had come to trust me and realized I was not out to exploit them.

Relationships and the Field

> [I]t is imperative that the sociologist submit himself to the fire of action *in situ;* that to the greatest extent possibly he put his own organism, sensibility, and incarnate intelligence at the epicenter of the array of material and symbolic forces that he intends to dissect (Wacquant, 2004a: viii).

Wacquant called this form of ethnography "carnal sociology" (Wacquant, 2004a: viii).[50] A term I enjoy because it evokes the visceral bodily feelings one often

[49] I had long since realized that I would not likely gain access to sexual behaviour in this project. First, I did not have the time to gain enough rapport to ensure that the information I gained on these subjects was accurate. Second, I did not need any information related to behaviour to understand how individual Evangelicals use abstinence discourses to their advantage. In other words, abstainers can use abstinence discourses whether they abstain or not.

[50] Some have criticized this form of research. For instance, sociologist Catherine Irwin examined some of the harm that researchers can cause when they "'go too far' in the quest for intimate

experiences while conducting fieldwork. If one accepts conducting research in this way, then one necessarily accepts the "risk" of forming relationships in the field that one will not easily leave behind. I accepted this risk and I feel that I have formed friendships through this project that will likely continue long into the future.

I earned the rapport that I gained from my participants (rapport that proved so beneficial in the interviews) through a great deal of effort and at some cost. I cannot emphasize how socially and emotionally taxing the project was. I started out endeavoring to form close personal relationships in the field. I felt this endeavor was important because it would keep me accountable to those I was researching and help to legitimize my research within Grace. Furthermore, I would find it difficult as a social being to spend eight months with a group of individuals and not form friendships.

Moreover, because of this project, I experienced, and continue to experience, aspects of my habitus that I had long since forgotten about or never even knew existed (fieldnotes, 44: 25-29). I began to ask questions of my own religiosity and relationships that I could not prepare for. I began to feel an uncomfortable incongruence between the version of myself that developed in the field and the version of my self that existed amongst my family and friends.

Ethnographer Matthews Masayuki Hamabata exemplified this feeling in his research of culture, class, and sexuality in Japan:

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familiarity" (Irwin, 2006: 155). For this project, however, intimate familiarity was necessary because of the intimacy of the topic I discussed with my research participants.

> One could say that the experience changed me in fundamental ways. But I do not live comfortably with this change. The very writing of this piece is symptomatic of that uneasy state of being. . . . But perhaps, at another level of interpretation, I may have been compelled to write in order to 'exorcise' the 'other me,' thereby reconstituting myself in ways somehow more familiar, in ways seemingly more real and authentic (Hamabata, 1996: 135).

He continued:

> I may have wanted the 'other me' to die when I left the field, but he simply refused to stop existing.
>
> He haunts me still (Hamabata, 1996: 136).

Hamabata almost perfectly exemplified the effects of long-term field research. As time in the field passes, we begin to experience portions of our habitus in different ways. More importantly, we begin to form new relations that permanently change our habitus and thereby, permanently change who we are and how we present ourselves to the world. In my mind, Hamabata and I will continue to grapple with this altered habitus for some time (Willey, 2010). In particular, my experience in the church profoundly affected my own religious and academic understandings.

Data Collection and Analysis

Throughout my time in the field, I kept detailed fieldnotes of all of my research activity. I took these notes from a reflexive perspective to preserve my awareness of the constructed nature of my observations (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 145). This process enabled me to bracket some of my own perceptions and

biases, and better understand my own position within the fields relevant to the community. In this way, reflexivity helped to increase the level of objectivity and validity in my observations.

Furthermore, through the duration of this project, I spent as much time as I possibly could at the church and related functions. In addition to the three main arenas mentioned earlier, I attended board game nights, watched hockey games, and went on numerous coffee and lunch dates to increase my time in the field (fieldnotes, 4: 36; 22: 32; 37: 7; 41: 15). Long-term ethnographers mention this practice as a key method to ensure the reliability of their data (Barley, 1990; Hirschaur, 2006; Wacquant, 2004b). Although I did not have the resources or time to conduct a true long-term research project, I feel there is an obvious correlation in fieldwork between the amount of data one collects and the reliability of the information.

I entered and stored all fieldnotes and interview transcripts in a word processing document. This procedure allowed me to return to my observations, adding memos, connections to literature, and reflections as they arose. At the completion of the observation period, I transferred all of the interviews and field notes into NVIVO 7 where I analyzed and coded them for any themes, patterns, discourses, and/or ideologies that were prominent. In this process, I particularly focused on codes involving abstinence and sexuality.[51]

[51]"A key procedure used by researchers in organizing and processing qualitative data, coding refers to applying labels to strips of data that illustrate ideas and concepts and the continuing process of identifying, modifying, and refining concepts and categories that sustain emerging themes and patterns" (Babbie and Benaquisto, 2002: 490).

Ethics

My work followed the guidelines set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethics, and therefore, the potential risk of harm that it created for those involved was minimal. Most of my research was non-intrusive and casual. For the most part, I attempted to "fit into" my surroundings, by taking up verbal and behavioral cues from the congregation, as to avoid disrupting anything within the church. Any line of questioning maintained the participant's integrity. I informed participants that they had the right to reject any line of questioning and I was wary of any issue that could make my participants uncomfortable.

Nonetheless, I understand the difficulties of researching within a religious space. Churches exist somewhere between the public and the private. While the church is actually public, society often views faith and religious activity as private matters. Therefore, it was hard to predict how the parishioners would perceive me as a researcher within the church. My background in religious studies and my previous experiences researching in churches, however, provided me with some religious and academic capital that greatly increased my research opportunities in the church.[52] In terms of ethics, this outside knowledge greatly increased my ability to negotiate certain ethical boundaries in the field. For instance, I knew it could be offensive to interview a Christian on Christmas Eve (fieldnotes 1, 22: 42-43).

[52] Sociologist Jeffrey W. Reimer calls this type of research opportunity "taking advantage of special expertise," which occurs when researchers take advantage of knowledge they possess outside the field of sociology (Reimer, 1977: 472). In other words, outside knowledge can act as capital, which can help researchers legitimize their position in the field.

To preserve informed and voluntary consent, I used the previously described meetings with the two relevant pastors, Pastor Albert and Pastor Alex, to ask permission to observe and interview anyone who was willing. I provided the Pastors with a script, which acted as a hard copy of my purposes within the church. These people had the ability to decide who should know about my purposes in the church and had a chance to refuse my presence outright. For the interviews, the participants read detailed consent forms prior to the commencement of the interview and signed them after the interview finished. This form outlined the purpose of the interview, my intentions for dissemination, and the rights of the participant.

In any work resulting from this research, I will preserve anonymity and confidentiality by using pseudonyms, for both informants and the church itself. In addition, for the five interviews with the congregants, I suppressed all data related to age and occupation to preserve anonymity. For the pastors, I suppressed gender in addition to these items. I recorded all the interviews digitally and stored them in a password-protected computer with the transcripts and field notes. I will store any hard copies in a locked filing cabinet to preserve confidentiality.

Conclusion

To conclude, my research method was intricately intertwined with my theoretical perspective. By collapsing my theoretical and methodological practices, I was able to gain a holistic account of sexual values and abstinence at Grace Pentecostal. Through the participant observation and the interviews, I was able to attain an understanding of the congregants' habitus as well as view the

material manifestations of that habitus. The next section reveals the results of this research project. In particular, it reveals that I was able to see how the habitus of my participants affected what they view as attractive in a mate and where they thought they could find this mate.

Chapter Six: The Foundations for an Evangelical Sexual Marketplace

Introduction

When I had finally finished my last interview and taken my final observation, I was left with just under 200 pages of fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and correspondence to analyze. After coding this data using NVivo 7, I came across three dominant themes, I examine the first two of these themes in this chapter while I analyze the third in the following chapter. The first of these themes was the importance of heterosexual marriage and relationships at Grace. Discourses surrounding marriage and family were prevalent in virtually every church group and event I visited. The second of these themes was that Evangelical young adults employ several key forms of erotic capital to attract life partners. In particular, I found that this erotic capital took three major forms: worldly capital, Christian capital, and virgin capital.

In this chapter, I first reveal the importance of heterosexual marriage and relationships to those involved in my project. Second, I describe the qualities that the participants in my project consider attractive and important in a mate. In other words, I examine what they considered erotic capital, focusing on the three different types that became relevant in this study: worldly, Christian, and virgin. Finally, I discuss some of the social implications of these themes.

Understanding the Importance of Heterosexual Marriage and Relationships

Through the duration of this project, I never doubted the importance of heterosexual marriage and relationships to my participants. In fact, I would argue

that Evangelicals have elevated marriage to one of the most paramount (if not the most paramount) rituals in Christianity, surpassing both the Eucharist and baptism. It is so important, that, as one of my participants described to me, even homosexual Evangelicals (such as Brian Pengelly who describes himself as "a Gay, Evangelical Christian Youth Pastor, who is married to a Lesbian" [Pengelly, 2010]) marry a member of the opposite sex (interviews 162: 10). Next to religious status, marital status is the primary means by which, my participants at least, defined themselves: one is either married, dating, single, or what Pastor Alex terms, "desperately single" (fieldnotes, 7: 27; interviews 162: 10-13).

The inclusion of this category by Pastor Alex reinforces the importance of heterosexual relationships for Evangelical young adults. These individuals desperately seek the validation of a partner, their community, and God. Alice, a married female participant, admitted that at one-time she feared that she would never meet someone (interviews 146: 30-31). Matt, a single male participant, also revealed similar fears:

> I just never could connect with girls and I found that I never even had an opportunity to be with a girl or have a girlfriend. And of course I had to look at it in a positive world light and again in my morals I was taught to wait for marriage. And so I decided that it was a good thing that I didn't have all these girls around me that [sic] would tempt me to do the things that I did not believe in. But it's been kind of hard and sad lately thinking that, you know, I still haven't had a girlfriend and I just am waiting until I find the right circumstance, the right social connections, that will allow me

> to meet the right woman…. So that's about it, you know, I want to meet a girl in the church but I—It hasn't worked out and I don't even know where to start (interviews 125: 3-13).

Matt lamented his struggles to find a mate and continues to wait for fate, or "the right social circumstances," to bring this person to him.

Furthermore, Matt and several other participants intricately connected the process of finding a mate with divine design and God's will:

> So I to said myself 'God I cannot ask for a very intelligent mate 'cause I may not be compatible with her. And I cannot ask for a beautiful mate because God may not work out either in loyalty. So, God, what can I ask for? And I must ask for the woman who is right for me.' So who do I know that is right for me? I don't know. Only God knows (interviews, 127: 15-19).

Allen, a married male, stated that he just had to wait for "God's timing," when it came to meeting his life partner (interviews, 142: 7) and Pastor Jordan suggested that it was a real "God kind of thing" that brought her/him to her/his partner (interviews, 153: 41).[53] Pastor Jordan also believed that young persons needed to place more trust in God when it comes to meeting a mate (interviews, 161: 4-9).

Several of the male participants firmly held that the sole purpose of dating was marriage. In one instance, Allen said:

> My view of dating has always been, well it can be for fun and hanging out and everything. Dating for me, its primary function is to find a life mate,

[53] In order to make the most of my data while preserving the anonymity of my participants, I needed to suppress pseudonyms and gender in some instances.

> right? Someone you want to spend your life with. If you don't, it is not like that is a failure or anything . . . but that is its purpose. And until you're ready for that I don't see it as serving any purpose. You know, fourteen-year-olds going out and dating, I just wouldn't agree with. There is no point in that (interviews, 133: 40-46).

Stan, a single male, reiterated this point. He acknowledged that he completely pushed off the idea of dating until he has resolved his "ambition" (interviews, 107: 27-31). In addition, Pastor Alex suggested that one should consider another's future husband or wife when dating, and even suggested that young men should vet a woman's father prior to initiating any sort of relationship (a process very similar to that supported by the purity ball movement [interviews, 165: 4-13]).

Furthermore, both Stan and Allen believed that there was a proper time for marriage and both were fully committed to wait until this time arrived; neither worried about struggling to find a mate (interviews, 107: 27-31; 142: 7). In fact, Allen revealed quite the opposite:

> My criteria? I have pretty high standards. I probably couldn't be with someone . . . who had been with someone…. But I felt that I was a pretty good catch, especially compared to so many other people out there. You know, I am not bad in most categories. So I set my standards pretty high. 'Cause for all intensive purposes I felt I deserved it. Why not shoot high? (interviews, 137: 33-38)

Both Stan and Allen revealed a great deal of confidence, even nonchalance, in their ability to find a mate. These comments stood in stark contrast to the more "desperately single" participants that I interviewed.

Courting and Capital

Evangelicals look for numerous qualities in a potential mate. Many of these qualities are identical to those of the general population. Those in the Evangelical sub-culture, however, tend to find several qualities more or less attractive. To describe these qualities, I am going to reintroduce Bourdieu's concept of capital. In particular, I am going to lay out three general forms of capital, which my participants believed Evangelical young adults exchange or convert while attracting and courting a potential life partner: worldly capital, Christian capital, and virgin capital.

Worldly Capital

Worldly capital includes those qualities that persons both in and outside the Evangelical sub-culture find attractive. Common items, such as physical appearance, intelligence, and compassion, fall within this category. Physical appearance was of particular importance for the male participants. Pastor Alex emphasized this fact when asked what young Evangelical men look for in a potential mate:

> Depends if the opposite sex is in front of them on what they will say. 'Cause if the opposite sex is in front of them they will like 'a nice personality a sense of humor.' If they are not there they are like 'big

boobs!' (laughter) I think they may say it nicer if the opposite sex is there. They may say 'I need to find them attractive' (interviews, 168: 42-46).

In addition, Stan and Allen both made statements to this effect (interviews, 108: 9; 133: 30-31). Allen actually spoke at length about a girl he once found attractive in a "worldly sense" (interviews, 133: 30-31). Later, he explained what he meant by "worldly:"

> Robin: You mentioned that one previous girl was attractive in a 'worldly sense.' What do you mean by that?
>
> Allen: She defined my 'type' . . . Defined my type. Just someone I would really like to get physical with mostly.
>
> Robin: So when you use the word 'worldly' that is what you are saying?
>
> Allen: Yes, smart and beautiful (interviews, 135: 11-19).

This section of dialogue is what led me to describe these qualities as worldly capital—elements of attraction that Evangelicals feel they share with the rest of society.

Nonetheless, the women I interviewed did not feel that physical attraction was as important when looking for a potential husband. When asked if physical appearance was important in a potential husband, Jackie, who is a single woman, responded, "No, I guess I am not really superficial. I don't know. Just as long as they don't look like a slob. You know what I mean? They actually have to make an effort to look presentable, I guess" (interviews, 119: 43-45). In addition, Alice, when asked what qualities she would hypothetically look for in a potential mate, stated: "They [sic] have to be so good looking! (laughs) No joking. For both me

and [my husband] that was kind of our last, our least one" (interviews, 142: 42-44).

These differences go a long way in explaining some of the things I observed while attending the young adults services at Grace. One (highly subjective) observation I made was the pattern of relatively good-looking girls dating relatively not-so-good-looking guys: "I am starting to see a pattern with these youth: pretty girls and nerdy guys" (fieldnotes: 17: 18). In comparison to men, the women at Grace appeared far less particular when it comes to physical appearance in a potential husband.

In addition to physical appearance, the participants mentioned several other more worldly items that they considered attractive. They described general qualities, such as intelligence (interviews, 109: 3-6; 135: 19; 146: 15), consideration (interviews, 119: 19-20), integrity (interviews, 154: 21), sense of humour (interviews, 168: 43), patience (interviews, 127: 21), and honesty (interviews, 129: 13), as being very important. Several participants also described having similar familial and social backgrounds as an important element in forming good relationships and marriages. Alice suggested that it was important to find a husband who understood and appreciated her "roots" and "background," and appreciated family the same way she did (interviews, 146: 3-5). Comparably, Pastor Jordan suggested that familial background was imperative in the success of one's marriage (interviews, 156: 43-45).

All but one of the participants neglected to mention that sexual compatibility would be something important for a relationship. Pastor Jordan,

however, did state that a person should trust that God would not provide someone with a mate that one would not be sexually compatible with (interviews, 161: 4-9). Conversely, she/he did mention that knowing he/she was 'compatible' with her/his mate helped her premarital relationship (interviews 160: 36-39).

Christian Capital

Christian capital is a more defined Christian version of spiritual capital. All of the participants stated they would only marry a "Christian" (interviews, 109: 28; 120: 1; 127: 10-42; 138: 8-12; 148: 23-26; 154: 22-25). Thus, a Christian identity became a virtual prerequisite for marriage. When I continued to inquire if denomination mattered in a potential wife/husband, all of the participants who were asked this probe replied that it did not (interviews, 109: 30-41; 120- 4-8; 138: 14-21; 148: 40-42; 156-157: 40-13). That said, many of the interviewees had rather specific definitions of what they considered the essential components of a Christian identity. To this effect Allen disclosed:

> I don't care about denomination. To me denomination just provides an opportunity to discuss, debate, so as long as they agree [sic] to the primary tenants of faith . . . Christ is the only way to heaven, the trinity . . . the Bible is absolute truth. As long as you believe those things, I don't care if you're Baptist or what (interviews, 138: 16-21).

A married female participant revealed this less stringent and more Jesus-focused definition:

> But I do want somebody who actually believes that Jesus Christ is the son of God. He is who the Bible says he is. He never sinned. He was

> crucified. He took on our sins. He defeated death and rose again, the resurrection, you know. The resurrection is key (interviews, 154: 25-27).

She continued to state that denomination did not matter, but she did admit that her and her husband came from identical faith backgrounds and that this fact was integral to their relationship (interviews, 156: 43-45). Therefore, while each of the participants openly stated that denomination did not matter when meeting a mate, how they defined the essential components of the Christian faith removes individuals from certain denominations as potential mates.

Several of the participants stated that they were looking for a "mature Christian" or someone who exhibited elements of "Christian wisdom" (interviews, 109: 3-22; 145: 38-39). In this regard, Stan stated:

> Stan: And then also we would think of it as Christian wisdom too. Or theological wisdom.
>
> Robin: How would you define theological wisdom?
>
> Stan: An understanding of the Bible. Like not someone who is a beginner…. 'Cause I grew up in a Christian home all of my life, right? And I see the verse in my head, 'Don't be unequally yoked.' But, yeah, that can be applied to non-Christian and Christians. But it also can be applied to two Christians at the same time. Where one person is very different in what they [sic] believe or very different in their position in their faith or whatever than another person, it's hard to, you know (interviews, 109: 10-21).

Alice referred to Christian wisdom slightly differently: "Well, I wanted, number one would be, a Christian. I would say a mature Christian . . . or a maturing Christian. Somebody who really took their [sic] Christianity to heart" (interview, 145: 38-39). Similarly, Pastor Jordan stated:

> So we almost have identical backgrounds . . . and we have very identical ideas of the future and ministry and how we are in ministry and what ministry means to us. So that is very important and I can't imagine being married to somebody who didn't have a similar calling or similar view or similar whatever. That would be so incredibly difficult. At first when I was more naïve before I knew what I was called to do or how important Christ and ministry and stuff became to me—before it became this important to me I wouldn't [have] thought about this kind of stuff. But now if I was to go back into this kind of stuff, go back into the dating world like my [partner] died or something and I eventually started dating again, it would be very important to me about like how they practice their faith and where they practice their faith and what they saw their future as in a faith sense. It would be very important now (interviews, 157: 2-12).

Thus, certain elements of faith, such as biblical knowledge and proper expression of faith, come to act as capital, which can potentially attract a mate.

Finally, Matt was the only participant to state that a belief in wifely submission was something he found important in a future mate. To this effect, he opined:

> And she has to be willing to submit as I believe in the Bible it says in Genesis, I believe in chapter three, that a woman would always submit to a man. It says in the New Testament as well that a woman will always submit to a man 'A wife should submit to her husband as husband should submit to the Lord.' I have dealt with this issue in consideration and thought and whatever thinking is it right that women should be treated this way. But I am quite willing, desiring to hear whatever potential mate or wife would have to say because it would help me to make clear decisions. But it will help also if I am the decision maker. As long as she trusts me to give her a fair chance to speak what is her mind or what is her thought. That way we won't have an argument [over] who makes the decision this time because it will be made by the man. But the man will understand his responsibility as husband to make the wise decision and so [sic: I] we will carefully seek the council of his wife (interviews, 127:22-26).

This was the only time I specifically heard of the doctrine of submission at Grace. For the most part, Grace appeared relatively progressive in terms of gender roles. For instance, [pseudonym suppressed] vehemently supported women in ministry and actually spoke against churches that do not allow women to hold these positions (fieldnotes, 29: 25-31). I also found instances where women had made significant concessions for their husbands, and men certainly remained the most vocal and influential members of the church community (fieldnotes, 45: 27-30; interviews, 146: 11-16).

Virgin Capital

From my first visit to Grace's young adult service, where the Pastor suggested that abstaining until marriage was a "universal" value held by all major religions (fieldnotes, 11: 11-12), to my last interview where Pastor Alex affirmed the pivotal nature of abstinence in forming good marriages, I never doubted the importance of abstinence for the Evangelicals at Grace (interview, 169: 10-11). Specifically, Pastor Alex said:

> Robin: How important do you feel premarital abstinence is in forming good marriages?
>
> Pastor Alex: I think it is really important . . . I think it is probably the best gift you can give someone. You know your virginity. There is [sic] not too many things that are held sacred, and even virginity is not even held too sacred. But there will only always be one first (interviews, 169: 22-27).

Earlier he/she explained that sex was meant for marriage (interview, 163: 43-44). Allen, however, described this concept far more clearly: "'Cause let's face it, I don't care what you believe, God set-up sex and marriage as the only way [sex] should ever happen" (interviews, 139: 5-7).

Of the seven people I interviewed, six were virgins or abstained until marriage (interviews, 110: 9-11; 121: 40-41; 124: 17-18; 143: 41; 163: 42-43), only one, Pastor Jordan, had sex prior to marriage (interviews, 159: 16-17). Interestingly, Pastor Jordan does not consider this premarital activity to be problematic:

> Like, the physical part of the relationship was good and hard. It was really good, then we felt the need to tone it down, which was really hard. We didn't wait until we were married to have sex but then as we were getting like, as we got engaged we . . . just decided not to sleep together anymore, which was hard but totally worth it. I think we lasted like eighty days that was our longest. We had like eighty days before we got married and we were like 'ok that's it! No more! We can't hang out any more! I will see you in May!' Basically, it wasn't quite like that. So it was interesting and hard. Not like I regret sleeping with [him/her] before or anything (interviews, 159: 14-22).

That said, Pastor Jordan later admitted that many people, such as the head Pastor at his/her church, assume he/she was a virgin when she/he was married and he/she fails to see a need to correct this assumption (interviews, 159: 24).

All of the interviewees said they would prefer to marry a virgin. Most said they would be willing to marry a non-virgin if that person was in a 'good' place when they met them (interviews, 120: 39-41; 128: 15-17; 147: 8-15; 156: 6-16). For instance, Jackie stated:

> Robin: Does it matter if [your future husband] is a virgin?
>
> Jackie: It depends what type of life they're leading at the time. Actually, I don't really care about the past so much . . . As long as they have changed I guess . . . I think it is hard to tell though, if they are different or they are not (interviews, 128: 15-17).

Allen and Stan, however, displayed more reluctance about the prospect of marriage to a non-virgin. They both argued that they deserved someone who put as much effort into remaining "pure" as they did (interviews, 110: 9-11; 137: 33-43).

The people of Grace intricately connected sexual activity and the lack thereof to one's moral character. Allen stated "But that means, that means, you are either someone who did that or someone who didn't. And that shows a certain strength in character. Not your strength, God gives you the strength" (interviews, 139: 8-10). Stan suggested that abstaining was a sign that a person was "responsible" and had a degree of "maturity" (interviews, 110: 20-26).

Jackie described abstinence as a key element in her Christian identity, something that separated her from the rest of the "world" (interviews, 121-122: 46-2). Moreover, Alice connected sexual purity directly to one's spiritual worth:

> Robin: So you were talking about purity earlier on, what would you consider purity? How would you sum it up?
>
> Alice: I think it's just a respecting your body as a holy temple. I guess if we are talking about sexual purity, or more specifically bodily purity, and it is connected very much with your soul. If you respect yourself and your body and you respect it as a holy temple, especially like sexually, then it's definitely interconnected with, I guess, your soul or your spirit or Christian faith your Christian walk. I think it's almost—I'm pretty convinced, but not 100 percent convinced, that if you disrespect your body sexually that over time your relationship with God is strained and that if

> you continue doing that over time than it runs the risk…. It goes into the same, sort of, what you believe in and you start not believing in it anymore. You can't have both. That has been my experience with my friends. Some friends, they just they gave up their Christianity when they started living with a guy. They couldn't do it. They might come back; I don't say they are giving it up forever. I don't believe that they are (interviews, 144-145: 36-4).

According to Alice, sexual activity prior to marriage may be incompatible with faith.

The participants noted numerous other negative consequences of premarital sexual activity. Most obviously, in both the interviews and my observations at Grace, premarital sex was constructed as a risky and even dangerous activity. In other words, to have premarital sex one necessarily risked sexually transmitted infection, pregnancy, and abortion (interviews, 123: 36-37; 140: 9; 148: 6-7; 160: 18-20; 162: 17-19). Furthermore, Pastor Alex explained that this risk began with virtually any physical contact:

> That goes back to my comment about where making-out leads to. And I have even heard some people say, making the promise that they will not do anything to their boyfriend or girlfriend that will bring on an arousal. And being a teenager, and I remember that holding hands that may happen. So where does holding hands lead? Right? The longer you can delay that initial physical contact I think the better. I think from my

> experience in seeing those things happen, I can see that being very beneficial (interviews, 164: 13-18).

Similarly, Alice, Pastor Jordan, and Stan explained that premarital sexual activity leaves a person with "baggage" and that this baggage can cause jealousy issues and/or "mistrust" in marriages (interviews, 110: 20-26; 147: 6-15; 155: 16-17). Pastor Alex described how premarital sex could result in sexual baggage in later sexual relationships; it leaves people comparing their current partners to past partners (interviews, 164: 34-39).

Some other participants connected this concept to a sense of loss. For instance, Matt stated:

> [Abstinence] has helped me because I will come to my relationship with my wife with a hope of purity, a hope of closeness. A greater relevance and depth that must be respected. It's like . . . when a woman loses her virginity, you know that there is something that bleeds because it is gone; it is no more. So once you go through this door there is no coming back out again. So when I go through the door of this relationship with a woman, not even in a sexual relationship yet, I want to go to this as my first relationship with a girl. This is hopefully my last one, which is a very odd thing to say but because that's my dream that God would lead me to the right woman. And that would be the woman I marry 'cause I don't want to go through dating. I don't want to have unpleasant memories of the last girl dumping me or I have to tell her 'you're not the one' and then she cries. And then the guy who does not want to 'bump' his coworker,

> does he want to dump a girl, you know? These things all are very important to me. So I go with reverence towards these (interviews, 129: 39-6).

For Matt, baggage is the "unpleasant memories" associated with failed relationships, and abstinence gives him an ability to avoid these experiences. That said, he also explains that sex causes one to lose something intrinsic to oneself.

Matt considers the hymen as a symbol of this loss. Pastor Jordan spoke of a similar sense of loss:

> And I do believe that when you do sleep with somebody you do become one and you leave like a piece of you with them, you know and so. I don't think that [you] can get that back when it's gone. And when I try to talk to kids about it I think about like. When you went to a grocery store and you wanted to buy a sandwich you wouldn't want to buy a sandwich with a bite taken out of it, you know, with a piece missing, you know. And it kind of trivializes it a bit, but it sort of brings it into perspective (interviews, 160: 2-7).

While I still do not quite understand what we lose when we have sex, this project is certainly not the first time I have came into contact with this notion of an incomplete self. In my previous project at Grace, I came across numerous examples of this discourse including a rather intense moment in an interview (see Willey, 2010).

When asked if it was more difficult for a particular gender to remain abstinent, the participants were split. Many acknowledged that men had a difficult time because of how easily they are stimulated visually (interviews, 115: 7-16; 122: 25-27; 161: 38-41). Several also stated that abstinence was easier for women because mainstream society still values female virginity (interviews, 122: 22-27; 139-140: 39-2). As Jackie described:

> I think [it is] harder for men. 'Cause it's like more of a, like it's a status thing for guys. 'Cause they like, it's sort of looked down on for women. They like call them 'sluts' maybe like call them all these insults. Well for like guys it's almost like a compliment…. So I think it is harder for a guy (interviews, 122: 22-27).

In addition, Allen stated:

> Women are generally, its fading, but are still generally expected to be good girls. A woman is looked on as higher if she remains abstinent until her wedding night. Well for men it's more of the influence like, 'hey alright you lost your virginity.' Right? 'Awesome.' That's just, they build you up. So, as a whole, those two can affect your motivation. Your peer pressure is a little bit easier because of that, because they are being pressured a little bit more to maintain their purity. But those two are drawing closer together (interviews, 139-140: 39-2).

Thus, both Jackie and Allen acknowledge that the additional pressure placed on women to maintain their virginity (which is the same pressure that Valenti [2009] and Levine [2002] are so critical of) can be a good thing.

Moreover, abstinence discourses pay a great deal of attention to the sexual rewards one will receive in heterosexual marriage (Wilkins, 2008: 143). To this effect, Pastor Alex stated, "Abstinence isn't very exciting until you get married! So that's kind of where the excitement starts." (interviews, 164: 2-4). Similarly, Allen lamented those who continued to have premarital sex and he struggled to understand how people do these activities in the first place:

> Like, how does the world do it? How do people who are very promiscuous and just, you know, the casual sex scene, how do they do it? How can it possibly be as good? You barely know the person, the intimate connection, the intimate connection! 'Cause [sex] is the greatest expression of love between a man and a woman . . . and frankly, the intimate portion of it is greater that the physical portion. I mean, depending on the night, yes, no. But overall, the intimacy is more important than the physical pleasure. And knowing that, having realized that over the last few months it makes you wonder, how the world does it? Like, why are we in such a sexualized society? If that is missing from the vast majority of sexual relationships or just the majority. But why do people love sex so much if they are missing the biggest part of it? And that is why we have, we keep getting deeper into it (interviews, 139: 14-26).

As such, Allen firmly committed to the idea that sex is best enjoyed within the confines of marriage, and that waiting to enjoy this act until one's wedding night only increases the emotional and physical satisfaction (interviews, 139: 14-26).

Finally, I did observe some slight criticisms of premarital abstinence while conducting this project. First, Pastor Jordan did not regret the fact she/he had premarital sex and even noted some positive things came from these experiences:

> Robin: Do you see any way of having sex before marriage might have helped [your relationship]?
>
> Pastor Jordan: How would've it helped. I am not sure I haven't thought about it like that before. I think that in some ways it may have forced us to take a look at the direction the relationship was going. 'Cause it was very physical in the beginning like and… so to have to look at it and, be, like 'what is the focus of the relationship and are we just focused on being physically satisfied or… like there is that.' It maybe brought it to light. Maybe. Maybe it didn't; maybe it would have been like if we hadn't. I don't know, that is a tough question. [I know] It is a good question (interviews, 164: 24-32).

In addition, several statements in the confessionals revealed that there are indeed Evangelicals questioning the practice of premarital abstinence. For example, one post read, "I am saving my virginity for marriage, but I'm frightened I won't be appreciated in my prime if I do" (web confessional, 86: 14-15). Another post stated:

> I've been going to church my whole life. Recently I've found myself more and more jaded towards Christianity. I am feeling more and more like saving myself for marriage, abstaining from alcohol etc. has caused

> me to miss out on so much that life seems to offer everyone else (web confessional, 95: 25-28).

Therefore, some Evangelicals do see problems with abstinence discourses. These discourses, however, lay far outside everyday conversation.

Discussion and Conclusion

As I stated earlier, Evangelicals do live both "in" and "of" the world just like the rest of us. Therefore, they have far more in common with the rest of society, in how they understand relationships and what they find attractive, than they have differences. In terms of this project, Evangelicals and mainstream society share a general understanding of monogamy and look for similar qualities in a life partner, such as a pleasant appearance, intelligence, honesty, and general interpersonal compatibility. I have focused, however, on those few but very important differences.

First, the Evangelicals in my study intricately connected the process of finding a mate and dating to one's spirituality. In other words, the hope is that one can become attracted to a person through a person's 'spirit' and 'personhood,' rather than through the 'flesh' and 'lust.' This stark 'spirit/flesh' dichotomy was a common motif at Grace (fieldnotes, 30: 8-9; 31: 15-16; 33: 22-23; 35: 5-7; 37: 1-5).[54] While this practice is intended to help individual Christians see past the superficial qualities in a potential mate, in reality it creates a perfect opportunity for outside social forces to influence how and who young adults choose as mates.

[54] Evangelicals often refer to this dichotomy in several other ways as well, such as 'Godly' and 'worldly' or 'secular' and 'Christian.' All of these examples, however, connote the same difference between what Evangelicals consider the design of God defined by the Bible, and those strategies and items of human design. One of my participants even separated virginity into two elements—"spiritual" and "physical" (interviews, 123: 23-30).

It causes these agents to "misrecognize" the material forces that are systematically limiting who they can potentially meet. In other words, an Evangelical's use of 'God' in finding a mate provides an ideal opportunity for "symbolic violence." It provides an opportunity for others in more powerful positions to "gently," "imperceptibly," and "invisibly" alter what young people see as desirable in a mate vicariously altering their sexual habitus (Bourdieu, 2001: 1).

Through my time in the field and the interviews I conducted, I found several qualities that Evangelical young adults find desirable in a mate that are slightly different from those outside the sub-culture. These qualities act as "capital," which individuals can exchange or convert to attract a mate. Earlier in this chapter, I described three sets of qualities and values that can act as "erotic capital:" worldly capital, Christian capital, and virgin capital. All three of these forms of capital are the result of one's habitus—one's social and cultural history. The latter two of these forms of capital are intricately connected to one's religious upbringing. In other words, one only comes to value Christian characteristics and virginity in a mate if one is exposed to discourses that support it. For instance, Pastor Alex described how abstaining until marriage was never really questioned when he grew up (interviews, 163: 19-24). Furthermore, Allen stated that sexual abstinence was just "assumed" behavior growing-up and that this behavior, amongst other Christian values, were firmly instilled through a Christian education at church, home, and school (interviews, 136: 43-46). In both instances, these individual's attraction to virginity came from that person's upbringing and the discourses they were exposed to from a very young age.

More importantly, as sociologist Adam Isaiah Green noted, the "erotic world" (the space where erotic capital is exchanged and converted), unlike other fields, often is tied to a physical location (Green, 2008: 28). As such, churches, and in particular young adult groups, act as sexual marketplaces where forms of Christian erotic capital are exchanged at a higher rate than in the rest of society. Or simply put, an abstaining person can use their virgin status to attract a better looking and more suitable mate in a church than they would likely be able to in a bar or any marketplace in the 'secular' world. The following chapter describes the existence of this sexual marketplace at Grace Pentecostal.

Chapter Seven: Young Adults Groups and the Evidence for an Evangelical Sexual Marketplace

Introduction

"As much as I try to convince myself otherwise, I feel as though I go to church to meet someone first and for God second. I hate this" (web confessional, 98: 27-28). Although I suspected that abstinence was a valued commodity within Evangelical circles when I started this project, this quote from a local Pentecostal online confessional was the first piece of data to confirm that a place existed within the church community to exchange this commodity. Not only does this quote affirm the existence of this "sexual marketplace" but it also reveals some of the discomfort Evangelicals feel about its existence. Thus, the third theme I derived from my work at Grace was that a defined sexual marketplace existed within the community where attributes, such as those described in the previous chapter, have greater value.

In this chapter, I first reveal the evidence for a sexual marketplace within Grace Pentecostal. I describe this evidence through the "sexual fields framework." Thus, I provide evidence for both "the site" and "the field" (Green, 2008: 28). Finally, through Bourdieu's concept of the "demon" I describe the implications of this marketplace on youth and women.

Evidence for an Evangelical Sexual Marketplace

According to sociologist Adam Isaiah Green's "sexual fields framework," sexual marketplaces have two central components: "the spaces of sexual sociality (the site), and an attendant social structure (the field)" (Green, 2008: 28). In this

project, the young adults group at Grace typifies *the site*, while the rules, hierarchies, and boundaries that young adults abide by to participate in this world composes *the field*.

The Site

During my time at Grace, I encountered a considerable amount of evidence that the young adults group was a site for the exchange and conversion of erotic capital—a place for young Evangelicals to meet potential life partners. Allen explained that when he finally decided to for a girlfriend, he began by looking around church and church-related groups. Eventually, he met his wife at a church-related function for young adults (interviews, 134-135: 32-9). Later, he explained why he felt young adults groups and small groups (which are smaller Bible study groups that branch off the main young adult group) helped young Christians meet members of the opposite sex:

> Allen: Yeah, just at church people feel more secure. You are around what are supposed to be good people, whether they are or not. You can let your guard down and the real you comes out a lot more. Plus there is a lot of discussion. That is what makes small groups the best place. Cause there is a lot of discussion about your heart. You can just assume that people are telling the truth and you can get to someone quite quickly. Those are the three biggest things I know.
>
> Robin: Do you think that is like one of the central purposes of young adults groups?

> Allen: It seems to be. Why not? There is something that happens when you get to a certain age and it becomes that (interviews, 135: 35-45).

In contrast, Jackie acknowledged that many people treated young adult groups as places to meet but felt uncomfortable with this fact:

> Robin: Now where do you think is the most likely place you will meet someone?
>
> Jackie: Probably a coffee house. I don't know why. I think like maybe one of the youth groups I am with at my church too. [That] would also be a good bet.
>
> Robin: So like young adults groups?
>
> Jackie: Yup.
>
> Robin: Do you think that is like the purpose of those groups?
>
> Jackie: Well they often say it is. Like I know bible colleges, they always call them 'bridal' colleges, which is sort of funny. But I don't think that is the purpose of them. I mean. I don't know. Sometimes I get annoyed when people like go into those other group orientated Bible colleges to meet someone. I'm like 'that is not really the point of it.' I actually get annoyed (interviews, 120: 19-31).

In this quote, Jackie reveals some of the discomfort Evangelicals feel about the existence of this marketplace. To this effect, Pastor Alex revealed that when she/he first began to pastor young adults it took some time for him/her to become comfortable seeing young people attempting to meet at her/his services (interviews, 166: 34-36). Pastor Alex also worried that if certain things went

unchecked, then young adults could become like a "meat market" (interviews, 167: 4-5). Arguably, young adults is already a "bar" scene with the manifest and latent functions flipped. Bars tend to function first to connect young people in various forms sexual relationships and second to bring people together and promote some version of community, while the church, in my view, does these things in the opposite order.

Nonetheless, Stan, like Allen, has no problem with young adults groups performing this function. At one Bible study session, Stan joked about leaving Grace for a church with more "good-looking girls" (fieldnotes, 37: 32-33). In addition, in the interview he stated:

> I have been thinking about that a lot. Because I am thinking about where can I find [a girlfriend] right? Young adults might be a possibility…. But, actually to tell you the truth I actually see young adults groups at churches equivalent to the bar scene in the secular world. 'Cause it's like, it's the place where Christians kind of go if they're interested in finding relationships. Young adults is a group. And I find that right after young adults, right after they get engaged and married or something, they just leave. 'Cause they found it. Why come to young adults anymore (interviews, 111: 24-31)?

Not only does Stan reveal the existence of a Christian sexual marketplace; he actually described its function in relation to a marketplace found in secular society. One participant even spoke of someone she knew who actually "church

hopped," going from young adults group to young adults group, looking for a potential mate (interviews, 148: 8-12).

All of my married participants met their mates at a church, church group, or church-related activity (interviews, 134: 32; 147: 19-20; 153: 22-23; 164: 35). Moreover, while attending Grace's young adults services, I noticed that great effort was made to celebrate marriages and potential marriages. In addition, a couple I dubbed "the cuddlers" could hardly keep their hands off each other during church services (fieldnotes, 19: 29-30). This couple typified the awkwardness that comes with the existence of this sexual marketplace. Congregants struggle to combine the "spiritual" components of the young adults service with the "fleshy" components of its associated sexual marketplace. In other words, while no one ever told the cuddlers to stop groping each other, it was often quite evident that this behavior was somewhat out of place—yet not (fieldnotes, 19: 29-30; interviews, 148: 3-7).

The Field

There are certain rules one needs to follow when it comes to meeting a partner in a church. Paramount of these rules is an intricate understanding of sexual boundaries. Pastor Jordan explained that premarital couples should avoid activities that involved body parts that would normally be covered by a bathing suite (interviews, 16: 1-5). Allen described slightly stricter version of these boundaries:

> To me there was always a line in between. On one side of the line is things like holding hands, rubbing backs, [and] kissing. On the other side

> of the line is things like groping, petting, [and] anything with your clothes off. So that's where I put the line, those things I mentioned and on either side of it (interviews, 138: 1-4).

In addition, Alice explained the difficulties she had maintaining these boundaries with her husband prior to marriage:

> It had its difficulties certainly. In the beginning, it wasn't so bad. It helped that [pseudonym suppressed] had very strong like ideas to the point where I thought was. I mean, he would not kiss until we got engaged. And I was like, 'I already kissed before.' So he put a lot more weight on it than I did and actually that helped because prior to that we did a lot of cuddling. He would kiss me on the neck. But he did enough to not to have to have [sic] kissing. Because kissing can be quite, you know? Closer to the marriage the kissing picked up quite a lot. It can definitely be . . . I guess arousing or make the situation more difficult. And he would leave at say eleven o'clock a lot of times, occasionally we would have a later night but he started leaving earlier before we became late at night where it becomes harder I guess or your inhibitions are lower you are tired you are not thinking as much.
>
> We talked about boundaries pretty early into the relationship. I mean, there was one point where, like, one day he never touched me at all. Like, I would put my arm around him and I was, like, '[why is he] not doing anything?' And I actually phoned him crying, thinking he was breaking up with me or something 'cause I didn't understand that happened with

> another guy who, like, stopped touching. I mean, put his arm around me, and broke up the next day or something. And he was, like, 'no' he just felt like he went too far and he was putting his hand you know a little higher up my thigh or something, you know, not actually doing anything. But for him it was, he was thinking about it too much, so to speak. So we both kind of went back a little, don't go above the knee type of thing. Like we had to be very, I guess very, strict in that respect (interviews, 149: 17-36).

Understanding the boundaries between sex and sin is an important aspect of the Evangelical sexual marketplace. The rules of sexuality define what one can and cannot do while dating. As Pastor Alex outlined there are many small things that young adults can do to help them meet potential partners, such as once a person has found someone whom one is interested in, use the groups set-up within the church to strategically place oneself close to any particular person (interviews, 168: 18-31). That said, besides the painful negotiation of sexual boundaries, the rules of engagement for meeting a potential mate in a church are similar to those for meeting outside of one.

Pastor Alex explained that young adults groups provided him an opportunity to "encourage" certain relationships that he/she felt were "good matches" (interviews, 166: 39-40). Furthermore, Pastor Alex suggested that one can really see the "parents' wisdom" in how young people select their partners (interview, 166: 43). Therefore, through the influence of leaders, such as Pastor Alex, and the values and knowledge with which young people enter into this marketplace, certain hierarchies and positions are reproduced through the careful

and subtle direction of who meets who; or in Bordieuian terms, matching individuals with a common habitus in order to reproduce the values and discourses associated to that habitus.

Nonetheless, the best way to understand the structure and hierarchies embedded within this sexual marketplace is to look at for whom this market does not work. For instance, Matt spoke of the difficulties he had meeting people at church. For the most part, he attributed these difficulties to a rather demanding work schedule and that this schedule has prevented him from fully participating in a youth group for many years. Furthermore, his beliefs and values as an Evangelical Christian prevent him from participating in sexual marketplaces outside the church, which further hinders his ability to meet a mate (interviews, 127: 10-43). He also exhibited a great deal of insecurity with his intelligence, appearance, and ability to socialize (interviews, 127: 10-43). In sum, while Matt was a committed, "wise," and abstinent Christian, he lacked the worldly capital, such as wealth, appearance, and intelligence, to find a mate.

Pastor Jordan was never given the opportunity to participate in this sexual marketplace. While Jordan did meet her/his partner through a church youth program, this program was outside the evangelical sexual marketplace. She/he mentioned several times how his/her identity as a Catholic/Evangelical left her/him as an outcast (interviews, 157: 32-35). Furthermore, Pastor Jordan failed to abstain until marriage (interviews, 159: 16-17. Therefore, these two points may signify that Pastor Jordan lacked the Christian and virgin capital to participate in the Evangelical sexual marketplace. First, she/he possessed

theological ideas that may not have aligned with typical Evangelical belief, which affected his/her Christian capital. Second, by breaking the rules of sexual conduct (i.e. having sex before marriage), she/he greatly altered his/her ability to convert or exchange virgin capital.

That said, a mechanism exists within evangelical Christianity that one can use to convert experiences, such as sexual misconduct, into positive capital. As mentioned earlier, there is a "culture of personal crisis" is embedded within Evangelical Christianity (Blumenthal, 2009). Thus, one can use this culture to convert 'sinfulness' prior to conversion or during a 'spiritual lapse'[55] into spiritual/Christian capital. One person I met while in the field spoke of what he called the "bad boy effect," which essentially describes the tendency for young women to be attracted to men who have gone off and 'sewn their oats' only to see the error in their ways and begin, or return, to their 'Christian walk' (fieldnotes, 25: 10-18). This example reveals exactly how young men (since this option is not available to women) can convert a deficiency in virgin capital into Christian capital.

Implications of an Evangelical Sexual marketplace

The Demon

In his analysis of the French education system, Bourdieu used a concept from physicist James Clerk Maxwell to explain the workings of the system. Maxwell explained that in order to suspend the second law of thermodynamics

[55] At a Bible study meeting, Allen spoke of "men" having "spiritual seasons," which are essentially periods of time when one feels closer or farther from God (fieldnotes).

one could use a "demon" to sort partials of different temperatures into separate containers. In terms of the education system Bourdieu stated:

> The educational system acts like Maxwell's demon: at the cost of energy which is necessary for carrying out the sorting operation, it maintains the preexisting order, that is, the gap between pupils endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital. More precisely, by a series of selection operations, the system separates the holders of inherited cultural capital from those who lack it. Differences of aptitude being inseparable from social differences according to inherited capital, the system thus tends to maintain preexisting social differences (Bourdieu, 1998: 20).

Christian churches (and likely other religious communities) work in the same way. Distracted by a guarantee of equality in the afterlife, a sort of spiritual meritocracy, Christians tend to ignore stark differences in their material lives. Evangelicals, through their efforts to be 'in' but not 'of' the world, receive a double-dose of this distraction.

Youth and young adults groups and the associated sexual marketplace play an important role for the "demon" in the church. These groups provide a space that helps guarantee the reproduction of Evangelical discourses and the social differences they produce into the next generation. In particular, young adults groups ensure that Evangelicals marry people of similar backgrounds and with similar values. Marriage, in this sense, is the Evangelical version of graduation. Bourdieu states that in the school system "[Graduation] institutes a social difference of rank, a permanent relation of order: the elect are marked, for the

whole of their lives, by their affiliation" (Bourdieu, 1998: 21). Marriage marks the point in which the Evangelical couple guarantees the continuation of difference. It marks the passage into adulthood—passage into social legitimacy.

The Reproduction of Age

Evangelical youth face the same problem as youth in mainstream society, namely they are part of the only social group that people literally leave by aging. In an Evangelical church, marriage marks the passage to adulthood and therefore is intricately connected to the Evangelical sexual marketplace. Moreover, through this passage, one is generally expected to leave behind the problems and questions associated with *young* adulthood.[56] As a result, they are able to move into forums within the church (and elsewhere) where their opinions carry far more legitimacy.[57] As Stan noted with a degree of frustration "And I find that right after young adults, right after they get engaged and married or something. They just leave [the young adults group]. Cause they found [what they came for]. Why come to young adults anymore" (interviews, 111: 29-31)?

Therefore, Evangelical youth and young adults rely on youth leaders, such as Pastor Alex and Pastor Jordan, to advocate for them. For example, Pastor Jordan was quite critical of the existence of youth and young adults groups and strongly advocated for an increase in mentorship within churches, thus building more connections between youth and adults rather than boundaries (interviews, 161: 33-34). Nonetheless, many church leaders are often far more inclined to

[56] Allen, a married male, stated that often he was frustrated with the questions asked by young adults while he was a member of Grace's young adults group and believed that as a mature Christian one should eventually learn not to question things (interviews, 135: 37-40).
[57] While I do know that a married male occupies virtually every important position at Grace, I am unaware if marriage is an official requirement for these positions.

subscribe to the very essentialist notions of youth that delegitimize young people in the first place. For instance, during my time at Grace one specific sermon focused on how youth lacked knowledge, and how they should learn to listen to their elders. The Pastor problematized the fact that youth turn to their peers for "wisdom" and continued to describe youth as prone to destructive behavior, such as drinking, sex, and/or having a part-time job (fieldnotes, 21: 33-39). In fact, during this service an individual actually suggested that young people have a "pride" problem and need to "surrender their rights" in order to hear wisdom (fieldnotes, 22: 1-4). In another instance, an adult member of Grace cried out for church members to pray for deviant youth who have turned away from the church (fieldnotes, 8: 20-21). Situations such as these are an excellent example of symbolic violence and the perpetuation of social difference. Church discourses continually construct young people as morally and socially deficient in comparison with their adult peers, even though at times the only real difference is a marital contract.

That said, part of what Grace's young adults group does, and secular society fails to do, is provide a space where young people can safely speak about issues important to them (even if this space leaves them as an Evangelical under-class). The group allows individuals to toy with certain theological ideas without fear of repercussion (fieldnotes, 1: 40-42) and meet in a place that does not require the ingestion of "mind altering substances" as a rite of passage. That said, it is assumed that one will eventually settle on orthodoxy and follow the general beliefs of the church (interviews, 137: 37-40; 166: 26-27).

The Reproduction of Gender

Not surprisingly since abstinence and its related discourses have tended to favor men historically, so does the sexual marketplace that deems abstinence valuable. Regnerus noted that one of the greatest problems facing Evangelical churches is the lack of Christian men. Furthermore, Regnerus argued that young men are taking advantage of this situation:

> Men get the idea that they can indeed find the ideal woman if they are patient enough. Life expectancies nearing 80 years prompt many to dabble with relationships in their 20s rather than commit to a life of 'the same thing' for such a long time (Regnerus, 2009).

Couple this situation with Evangelical women's fear of not meeting a man (as revealed by Alice and numerous web confessions [interviews, 146: 30-40; web confessional, 86: 14-15; 87: 9-12; 95: 25-28; 98: 1-3; 100: 25-31; 100: 33-35]), and Evangelical men are left in a good position. Stan and Allen are excellent examples of this phenomenon. Both firmly committed to the fact that God would indeed provide them with an ideal mate and, more importantly, that they deserve this 'gift' (interviews, 107: 27-31; 137: 33-38). In addition, Pastor Alex supported a father's ability to vet potential suitors (interviews, 165: 5-11). This vetting is eerily similar to the practices supported by the Purity Ball movement. More importantly, these practices give men even more control of the Evangelical sexual marketplace.

Furthermore, as Wilkins suggested, Evangelical marriage often solidifies conservative gender roles and ends the leeway many women experience prior to

marriage (Wilkins, 2008: 149). For instance, while all of the women whom I interviewed had attained a university degree, one of these women quit her academic ambitions as soon as she was married (fieldnotes, 17-18: 44-3; interviews, 146: 10-13,). In time, it became quite apparent that her own desires came second to those of her husband (for example: fieldnotes, 17-18: 44-3). Furthermore, her husband did not make any similar concessions and even said that finding a wife who would not inhibit his own ambitions and goals was important to him (interviews, 138: 37-40). Another male participant even noted that a woman's acceptance of the doctrine of "submission" was something he would look for in a wife. He suggested that marriages worked best when the husband made all of the decisions (interviews, 127: 24-36).

Thus, while abstinence does allow women some reprieve from the mainstream sexual marketplace, this relief is undone by the reintroduction of conservative gender roles in marriage. More importantly, many Evangelical men find the acceptance of this gender hierarchy attractive and thus a key component of a woman's Christian capital. Moreover, the acceptance of this gender hierarchy is preserved and naturalized through biblical interpretation (fieldnotes, 17-18: 44-3; interviews, 127: 24-36; 133: 8-9; 138: 19-20) and thus continually reproduced through the Evangelical sexual marketplace. Therefore, the "demon" in the church ensures that certain hierarchies and differences in the church are reproduced, particularly those associated with youth and gender.

Conclusion

During my time at Grace, I encountered a large amount of evidence to suggest that a defined sexual marketplace existed within the church and that this marketplace was instrumental in the reproduction of discourses related to sexuality, age, and gender. While young adults groups are not quite bar scenes, they are certainly close to being one in some respects. These groups provide a "safe" place for young Christians to meet potential mates, a place where they are more likely to find a mate who will not challenge elements of a person's habitus in any fundamental way. As such, young adults groups function to reproduce a common Evangelical habitus while maintaining all of the internal differences and hierarchies that exist within the church. In other words, material differences are spiritualized in such a way in the church that they are no longer recognized as such.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion: Inspiring Sexual Heresy

Summary of Central Argument

In this manuscript, I traced the development of abstinence and virginity as a commodity and described how this development has contributed to modern conceptions of sexual abstinence. More specifically, I connected Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian conceptualizations of abstinence and sexual ethics to contemporary forms of abstinence, such as the form proposed in the purity ball and the early marriage movements. Within this analysis, I provided what demographic and statistical information is available on abstinence practice in North America as well as outlining some of the perspectives critical of abstinence and abstinence-only sex education.

More importantly, I have argued that within many Evangelical churches a defined social space—a sexual marketplace—exists where individual agents exchange and convert this commodity, among others, to attract potential marital partners. Furthermore, I outlined the effects and implications of this marketplace on its participants, namely the reproduction of age and gender-related hierarchies. I formulated these conclusions from the ethnographic observations and interviews I attained while attending Grace Pentecostal Church.

Limitations

Several notable limitations exist about this project. First, as with all ethnographies, the problem of replicability remains. To the best of my abilities, I tried to offset this deficiency through triangulation. I completed this process by

using multiple methods: participant observation, interviews, and thematic analysis of internal and external resources. Nonetheless, I cannot guarantee that another ethnographer could return to Grace and draw the same conclusions.

Second, it took far longer to gain access to the group than I expected. Gaining the rapport necessary to ask for interviews related to a sensitive topic, such as sexuality and religious belief, proved incredibly time consuming. Moreover, because I am to complete this project as part of my Master's requirements and thus had to finish it by a certain date, I was unable to extend my project any longer to compensate for this issue. I feel that with additional interviews and observations, I could have provided a greater depth of analysis. For instance, with more time, I could have investigated if alternative marketplaces existed for single adults (singles over the age of 30).

Finally, my project was limited to a single site—a single Evangelical church. This situation greatly limits the conclusions I can draw. While I can state that Evangelical churches generally have similar structures and reproduce similar discourses (Reimer, 2003: 118), I obviously cannot guarantee that one will find a defined sexual marketplace in every Evangelical church one encounters.

Implications for Future Research

In terms of future work, my hope is that this project will provide a solid foundation for researching sexual marketplaces in religious communities. For instance, I am curious to see if similar marketplaces exist within other religious groups, such as Muslim, Jewish, Hutterite, Mennonite, or Latter Day Saints communities. Furthermore, if these marketplaces do exist, then I am interested to

see how the relevant forms of capital change between each religious community—if they change at all.

Similarly, inspired research could use a comparative framework to look into the differences and similarities between marketplaces. Researchers could conduct a comparative ethnography at two sites—at two known sexual marketplaces. In other words, if one could simultaneously complete a comparative ethnography at a bar and a young adults group, then one could better observe how the rules, forms of capital, and other social structures differ (or remain the same) between sexual marketplaces.

Future studies could investigate the effects of abstinence discourses later in life. As such, a project that focused on adults who remain abstinent or remained abstinent until marriage could reveal the effects of these discourses over the long-term. Finally, new research that actually tapped into abstinence practice in Canada would aid abstinence research in this country greatly, such as a Canadian version of Bearman and Brückner's work in the United States (Bearman and Brückner, 2001; Brückner and Bearman, 2005). This project would act as a benchmark that would enable researchers to compare abstinence practice between the United States and Canada.

Contribution of this Project

Like most researchers who have just finished investing a massive amount of time and effort into a project, I expect my work will contribute to discussions in academia, sexual education policy, and Evangelical communities in several ways. In terms of academics, this project can stimulate further studies, such those

described earlier, into abstinence and religiosity in Canada. In particular, this project will inspire further use of the "sexual fields framework" when researching the connections between sexuality, sexual practice, and social structure (Green, 2008). In addition, I hope my project will inspire additional ethnographies in religious communities. In my opinion, ethnography is the best way to engage and derive meaningful data from the Canadian religious habitus.

In terms of policy, this project can have an impact on discussions surrounding sexual education. In particular, this project brings to light many of the discourses that are attached unknowingly to abstinence education and promotion. Furthermore, if one adheres to McDonald's theory of political "incrementalism," then discussions surrounding abstinence education, specifically abstinence-only education, may soon be on Canada's political horizon (McDonald, 2010).

Nonetheless, I do hope this project has the greatest impact on individual Evangelicals who practice, and struggle to practice, abstinence. I intended for this project to provide abstinence practitioners with additional sexual scripts to negotiate the "punitive absolutes" of Christian sexual morality and enable the development of "radical doubt" amongst those who adhere to this morality (Bourdieu, 1992). Thus, I am not necessarily promoting "resistance," but I am rather providing the opportunity for "resistance" to be present (Butin, 2001: 171). I hope to provide ways for additional forms of capital to become relevant in the marketplace; to give people, such as Matt and Pastor Jordan, a chance to participate in and challenge some of the hierarchies supported by this

marketplace, such as those surrounding age and gender. Thus, I realize I may be thrown into the role of the "heresiarch," in what I hope is the most optimistic and innovative sense of the word (or in the least, to prevent those struggling with sexual abstinence from having to write a thesis about it).

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Appendix 1 – Interview Format

This is the final interview format I settled on. I altered it slightly with each interview I conducted; but, the general format remained the same.

1. Personal history (i.e. Family, occupational, relationship, and religious life.).
    a. How has this history effected who you are today?
2. How would you describe your current relationship status? Sexual status?
    a. How has this effected who you are today?
3. Envision you ideal mate… (this section was altered for married participants.)
    a. How would you describe him/her?
    b. Does his/her personal history matter?
        i. Is she/he a virgin?
    c. How and where do you envision meeting her?
        i. Could this place be a young adults group? Purpose of these groups?
4. Can you tell me about any dates or romantic excursions you have been on?
    a. How did this go?
5. Do you think abstinence is harder for men or women?
    a. How so?
6. What do you feel is the best term to describe premarital abstinence?
7. Do you consider yourself part of a purity movement?