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Masculinity among the Amish: Characteristics, Hegemony, and 'Soft Patriarchy'

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Abstract: This article examines both Amish masculine cultural norms and practices and the characteristics of Amish men specifically as men. The first goal is to pull together information from the secondary literature on Amish men and masculinity. Salient characteristics or traits such as egalitarianism, pacifism, and rationality are discussed, and placed in the context of *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness), of the gender relations within families, and of Raewyn Connell's notion of "hegemonic masculinity." The second goal is to assess the appropriateness of general characterizations of the Amish gender regime, such as one with women as second-class citizens to men or as a "soft patriarchy." It is argued that Amish society is better described as a "strong patriarchy" with a questionable gender power imbalance. Throughout, the intent is to show the mutual relevance of Amish Studies, Men's Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies. [Abstract by author.]

INTRODUCTION

This essay provides an overview and analysis of both Amish men and Amish masculine culture, as well as an examination of the role of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy in Amish society. It adds to the recent, welcome increase in the number of publications on Anabaptist (especially Amish) women. Though much written about the Amish has implicitly been about Amish men, I examine them here specifically *as men*, and Amish culture and practices in terms of masculinity. Particularly in this time of major changes, Amish masculinity needs to be explicitly addressed, in relation to standard American masculinity and as a distinct form. This requires consistently seeing Amish men in relation to other Amish men and women.

This paper has a number of goals. The first is to bring together information and arguments from a selection of secondary literature on Amish men and masculinity in the hope of generating new insights and investigations. To do so, I treat men and culture as two closely interacting, often indistinguishable aspects of society; masculinity as a matter of cultural norms and ideals, enacted in social practices; and men as the ones who carry (and carry out) these ideals and norms, shaping practices as they enact them.

My second goal is to examine different ways of characterizing the Amish gender regime in general terms. It is commonly described as patriarchal; I ask whether it is appropriately termed a *soft* patriarchy or something stronger. I also discuss other ways of characterizing the regime or patriarchy, namely, in terms of second-class citizenship, oppression, and power. This is a quasi-philosophic task, since these terms are "essentially contested concepts" involving intertwined empirical, normative, and contextual elements (Gallie 1956).

My third goal throughout is to bring together Amish Studies, Men's Studies and the larger fields within Women's and Gender Studies to show their relevance and what each has to gain through finding intersections. I hope to expand the "diet of examples" in Men's Studies and to help better understand the Amish as they go through unprecedented growth and change. As an aspect of a "peace church" committed to pacifism, the place of non-violence in the Amish gender regime is discussed.

I have not had significant contact with Amish. Consequently, I base my theoretical arguments on an extensive analytical review of a selection of recent secondary literature about the Amish in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. I draw on passages written for different purposes, hoping that I am not misusing them because of my different objectives. I also realize limits exist to drawing primarily on studies from one set of collaborators, however excellent, who primarily published from the 1990s to early 2010s. Finally, I caution that there is much more to be studied, for example, differences among Amish churches, affiliations, and settlements.

AMISH MASCULINITY – AMERICAN SUBCULTURE OR NOT?

In an obvious sense, the Amish are American: they are American citizens, and many of their customs have been developed and shaped in America, especially starting in the 19th century. Yet customs that distinguish the Amish as different can be seen as direct rejections of defining American customs, such as driving automobiles and attending high school and college. Amish culture is remarkably different from what we would consider normative by American standards. I will briefly explore that, but then take up an examination of Amish as a distinct culture – not a subculture.

Amish and mainstream American cultures differ in both obvious and unseen ways, some more easy to identify than others. For example, Amish men and women dress differently from each other, and from "English" (non-Amish) people. Amish men work as farmers, shop owners, craftsmen, and laborers; women work as housewives and gardeners, with some having small, home-based businesses. Fathers are considered heads of the household, while mothers play the primary nurturant role with children. Unlike most American Christian churches, during worship services, gender trumps family; that is, men and women enter and sit separately, in an otherwise very family-oriented society (Kraybill 2001, 121). Men hold all religious offices, as they do in other community organizations such as school boards. One could continue with examples, adding up to a quite gendered society.

Raewyn Connell (2005), one of the leading scholars of Men's Studies, is perhaps best-known

for her notion of an "authorized" or "hegemonic masculinity": the culturally dominant form of masculinity, the one from which other forms are defined. She places other American masculine sub-cultures, such as Southern and gay masculinities, in relation to the masculinity that is hegemonic, familiar to most everyone and infiltrating diverse social practices and institutions.[1] The sociologist Erving Goffman gives a good encapsulation of what was hegemonic for American males in the 1950s and early 1960s, which still has significance today:

> In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and a recent record in sports. . . . Any male who fails to qualify in any of these ways is likely to view himself – during moments at least – as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. (Goffman 1963, 128, quoted in Kimmel and Messner 2019, 2)

A typical Amish man shares nine of these characteristics of American masculinity—being married, white, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, a father, fully employed, of good complexion, and of good weight—but the contrast between stan-dard American hegemonic masculinity and Amish masculinity is striking. It is not urban, it does not value education, it is much more hierarchical, and unabashedly patriarchal.

Rather than thinking of Amish masculinity as part of a "marginalized" subculture (Connell 2005, 81), it is more fruitful to think of the Amish gender order as self-marginalizing—intentionally func-tioning as separate and different. Thus seen, Amish masculinity is neither complicit nor subordinated, Connell's terms for other, non-hegemonic forms of American masculinity. I take Amish society to be culturally distinct though embedded within America. Karen Johnson-Weiner (2001) describes it well as a paradox, "a pre-state society within a modern state, a folk society coexisting with and subject to the demands of the larger, non-Amish world" (p. 234). Thus American masculinity is not

significantly hegemonic over Amish masculinity. Below, I address what is hegemonic *within* Amish culture.

MASCULINE CHARACTERISTICS

I connect Amish masculinity both to that in the surrounding American society, and to gender within Amish society, following Connell's injunc-tion to see gender regimes always in terms of rela-tionships. Some elements (for example, readiness to forgive) are possessed by both Amish women and men, but are discussed here because of their notable absence in standard American masculin-ity. The following discussion of masculine char-acteristics is not meant to be comprehensive but addresses those most prevalent in the surveyed literature.

Christianity

A fact which is so obvious that it might not need to be mentioned is that Amish men, and not just women, are pervasively religious. This is un-like much of American society, in which Christian women are significantly more likely than men to say that they pray and attend church regularly (Pew, 2016). Gender discourse is directed around biblical verses such as 1 Corinthians 11:3 (KJV): "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God." The Amish see their gender regime as religiously justified. For example, they "see the professional woman as a negative role model, a distortion of God's created order" (Kraybill 1989, 73). Most of the traits cov-ered below—pacifism, forgiveness, *Gelassenheit*, egalitarianism, and more—have an integral re-ligious component. While many in American society are similarly religious, American public discourse is not nearly so integrally religious.

Pacifism

By eschewing military service, Amish culture is decidedly oppositional to current American society. Joshua Goldstein (2001), in *War and Gender*, argues "that war, like gender, has deep roots. It is not overlaid on our 'true' selves, but runs deep in us" (p. 27). He similarly notes that warfare is nearly exclusively a male occupation.

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[1] Until recently much of Men's Studies has involved under-standing variants in terms of class, ethnicity, geography, race, sexuality, and more in relation to what Goffman de-scribed as the 1950s American male.

(He does not discuss the Amish, perhaps treating them not as a distinct culture, but as a subculture.) The anthropologist David Gilmore (1990), in *Manhood in the Making*, classifies most cultures as violent or war-faring, with a very few—such as the pre-European-contact Tahitians, or the Semai, an interior Malaysia people—as nonviolent and relatively less gender-differentiated. In these few cultures, he says, men have "no economic incentive to strive or compete, no agonistic ethos . . . There is little pressure for worldly success" (p. 217). Gilmore observes that in these other nonviolent societies, "Men have no interest in defining themselves as different from or superior to women, or their defenders. In short, there is little basis for an ideology of manhood that motivates men to perform under pressure or to defend themselves" (pp. 217-18). Gendered egalitarianism and pacifism seem correlated.

In comparison, the Amish combine a strongly gendered society with an ethic of pacifism, to which is added non-resistance to, and non-participation in, most governmental functions. (I discuss below my reservations about describing them as nonviolent.) The fact that the Amish challenge Gilmore's typology by combining pacifism with significant gender differentiation puts them in a very small category among human societies – and makes them well worth studying.

Competition and Success

Though adult business and farming achievements are noteworthy, those do not seem to promote financial striving and success in other areas of Amish life. Because the final selection of ministers and bishops is determined by lot, personal wealth is not a factor. However, it would be interesting to learn the background of the men—they are all men—who serve on one of what Kraybill (2001) describes as "Networks of Social Capital," "such as Amish Aid Society, Old Order Book Society, and Product Aid" (pp. 101-05). Still, there is a countervailing suspicion of too much business success; one Amish businessman stated, "My people think evil of me for being such a large businessman and I don't need any more aggravation right now" (p. 264).

Unlike young American males, for whom competitive sports are often integral to their identity, Amish men—and for that matter, Amish women—do not seem strongly competitive in athletics. As an example, volleyball is a sport very popular among youth, and "Most view it as the perfect form of Amish athletics; it involves teamwork, cooperation, and a sizable number of players; both men and women can play with little training or expensive equipment" (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt 2013, 111). That does not mean that young men do not compare physical achievements. Hostetler (1993) reports that a physically weaker than average young teenage boy, who could not load a wagon as did others, "walked from the scene and cried for hours" (p. 354).

Kraybill, Nolt, and Wesner (2010) quote some Amish entrepreneurs who take a different stance:

> A church leader who manufactures furniture components says, "You gotta go out and look for work instead of waiting for it to come to you." Describing the importance of growth, one entrepreneur explained that good businessmen "do not consider themselves successful… They never reach the goal… they don't ever say, 'Ah, I'm successful, now I stop.'" (p. 15)

The question of how widespread and influential an emphasis on aggressiveness or assertiveness could become in the coming decades is an important one. It's a common, central theme in 'English' masculinity, and will be especially influential as more Amish set up businesses and thus necessarily come into contact with American masculine business norms.

Forgiveness

Recently, the Amish captured the attention and imagination of the American public when they forgave the man who brutally murdered five Amish girls in the Nickel Mines school tragedy. The evening after the shooting, a number of Amish men went to the shooter's family to "express [their] sorrow" and forgiveness. Though most accounts do not explicitly emphasize gender, there is an obvious prevalence of Amish men among those expressing forgiveness and "a spirit of grace" (Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 2007, 44-46). This is in contrast to American men, who have more difficulty than women in forgiving (*Science News* 2008) and too often focus more on revenge. Admittedly, Amish men in general

interact with non-Amish more often than Amish women do, and so may be more likely to contact them in cases of tragedy. But the substance of the intervention was strikingly unlike what is associated with American masculinity.

This is simply the most well-known instance of forgiveness. In numerous cases after accidents of automobiles hitting horse-drawn carriages, the family members of those killed or injured forgive the car driver. This occurs irrespective of the driver's culpability. Though most Americans see these actions as very surprising and directly contrary to what is expected, they are not out of the ordinary for most Amish. A bishop commented, "It's just what we do as nonresistant people. It was spontaneous. It was automatic. It was not a new kind of thing" (Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 2007, 49).

This norm of forgiveness is an aspect of the Amish acceptance of events as being part of God's plan. It is a form of yieldedness to His will, like accepting a serious illness or death. And it does not only govern tragedies that end lives, but also moments of their beginning. Though birth control is used by some, "Most ordained leaders… especially those in the Andy Weaver and Swartzentruber affiliations, still maintain that family size is strictly a matter of 'God's will'" (Hurst and McConnell 2010, 100, also 246).

Gelassenheit

The concept of *Gelassenheit* is not easily described. Indeed, *Gelassenheit* is not commonly used by Amish to describe their views and behavior, but, rather, is used by scholars to describe what underlies a complex of shared beliefs, norms, and practices, including but going beyond the forgiveness just described. Trying to characterize the general tenor of these practices, Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher (2010) emphasize notions such as *ufgevva*, giving up, or giving way, as pervasive in Amish culture (pp. 14-15). The term itself is rooted in the European Anabaptist heritage going back to the medieval period (Friedmann 1955). Other near-equivalent phrases are "self-surrender, resignation in God's will (*Gottergebenheit*), yieldedness to God's will, self-abandonment, the (passive) opening to God's willing, including the readiness to suffer for the sake of God; also peace and calmness of mind" (Friedmann 1955).

What is involved here is not simply a matter of free-floating beliefs, but culture embodied in Amish practices among men: in church services, there is the little "back-and-forth," in which men urge someone else to be the song leader (Kraybill 2001, 122); there is the practice of *Zeugnis* (testimony) after sermons, in which other "ordained men comment on the sermon and correct any errors the preacher may have made" (p. 66), keeping him humble; and, at the end of Communion Sunday services, there is the process of kneeling and foot washing, always of men with men and women with women (Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 2010, 73-74). A culture that has *The Martyrs Mirror* as one of its prized texts—with its horrific stories of Anabaptists being persecuted—takes nonresistance seriously, and it is found in a multiplicity of practices between men.

Gelassenheit is also evident in the reserve, or *silence,* common among the Amish. John Hostetler (1993) provides an excellent general treatment of silence, delineating the numerous ways in which Amish worship practices embody silence. Some common instances include how religious services and meals begin with silence; and that "between hymns there are long periods of silence" (p. 388). This norm can be challenging for Amish males interacting with non-Amish. Developing the ideas of Erving Goffman, Marc Olshan (1994a) points out that American business owners typically have to develop a specific form of "face-work" to provide standard customer service. They are expected to be "polite, friendly, outgoing, and ready to please" (p. 140). This is in contrast to the form of masculinity that an Amish farmer might adopt, "free to be aloof, contemptuous, or indifferent to unwanted visitors" (p. 139). In order to succeed in business, "[t]he Amishman is confronted with working out a strategy that will allow for commercial success as well as cultural survival" (p. 140). So far, they seem to be negotiating these two worlds successfully; Amish businesses have high rates of success, and Amish communities have high rates of retention.

But the prevalent norms of silence and yieldedness do not produce milquetoasts. Indeed, there is a certain cross-grainedness to Amish culture, a willingness—at least on some issues—to take an uncompromising stand. For example, there is the resistance of the more conservative affiliations, such as Swartzentrubers, who wish to wear their

typical soft hats on construction sites instead of wearing protective helmets. This is paralleled by the refusal of some conservative affiliations to even place reflective orange triangles on buggies (Kraybill 2001, p. 67). With the aid of non-Amish supporters, they certainly have been quite successful in dealing with bureaucracy. As one Amishman said, "It's probably not a bad thing that we get crowded once in a while by the law. It helps us draw the line" (Olshan 1994a, p. 142).

One might think that given the spirit of *Gelassenheit,* differences in religious and social practice would be settled amicably and tolerantly, aided by a social structural independence. (Each district has its own *Ordnung* and bishops, unlike other Christian denominations, preside over, at most, two districts.) In fact, however, there have been several schisms. Whatever the doctrinal differences at stake, these are differences men have not been able to resolve. Over the course of the twentieth century, the Amish have had several major schisms (Petrovich 2017; Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt 2013) plus many local church problems. For example, Petrovich (2017) reports that some Swartzentruber-specific divisions have been "largely the result of personality clashes or miscommunication rather than disagreements about doctrine or community practices" (p. 136). Reconciliation of differences does not always seem within the reach of the male leaders doing the negotiating.

Egalitarianism

The choice of bishops, ministers, and deacons by lot is the obvious way in which men are treated equally—at least for those who are nominated. This implements the brotherhood of believers. (I address the equality of all believers – men and women – below.) This egalitarian approach applies to more than just religious contexts. Thomas Meyers (1994) reports that in the Elkhart-LaGrange settlement, the *Dienersversammelung* (minister meeting) chair rotates annually, "to prevent any individual from becoming too powerful" (p. 173). For example, "When a government official went to inspect an Amish school under construction, he asked to speak with the foreman and the response was silence. Finally someone spoke up and said 'we don't have one'" (Meyers 1994, pp. 173-74).

Social pressure can enforce equality in business growth and success—or, at least, enforce the appearance of equality. It is feared that success, and concomitant wealth, will lead to arrogance and pride, diametrically opposed to the "Humility, gentleness, and meekness that are the marrow of the yielded life" (Kraybill and Nolt 2004, p. 129). Kraybill and Nolt relate an Amishman setting out his expectations of an entrepreneur:

> He's got a big business…. It's a lot bigger than anyone realizes. But see, he can go to church and sit beside you and sing the same songs, and after church he can have dinner with you and talk like anyone else. You'd never know his business is in the seven-digit range. He acts just like the farmer or small shop man sitting next to him. (p. 130)

I suspect that the egalitarian and non-competitive practices of Amish masculinity are genuine. The need to *appear* to be similar is also present, supported by the requirement of sameness of dress and hair styles. If entrepreneurial success continues, egalitarian practices will likely come under pressure.

Rationality

The Amish are not rational in either the Weberian sense of "rational authority embodied in impersonal laws, regulations, and organizations" (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt, 2013, p. 171), or in the sense of philosophic or Cartesian rationality of questioning and probing all beliefs. While a religious group, they do not even have a developed, rationalized theology to be examined! Rather, they have a "bounded rationality" within a range set by what Max Weber would term their traditional authority.

In discussion of changes in the *Ordnung*, a district's set of rules, the congregation engages in a very rational process approaching deliberative democracy (among men), at least about matters such as use of cars and the move to private Amish schools. They exhibit "a well-articulated series of arguments that can only be characterized as extremely rational. . . . a rational and innovative response to a threat that was perceived clearly and realistically" (Olshan 1994b, pp. 191 and 193). Women do not have the opportunity to display these capacities in the same realms as men; within governance, these capacities are expected and

developed among men, as will be explored more below.

Generational Respect and Male Support

The Amish spirit of equality is complemented by respect for a hierarchy of age in several modes. For example, a minister reports that "Many bishops will go to the oldest bishop to ask for his advice on a certain issue. And he will not hesitate to give his opinion, based on Scripture. Then he will conclude and say, 'Don't do it that way just because I told you, go home and work with your church.' So it is not a dictatorship by any means, it works on a priority basis and a submitting basis" (Kraybill 2001, p. 99, emphasis in original).

More than simple respect for one's elders is in play, as Thomas Matta (2001) found in his interviews with New Order Amish men. There was a strong concern that older Amish men had for younger males, for example, a need to "look out for the boys" in the gap between the ending of schooling and full membership in the church (p. 61). Matta breaks down these "stand-by" relationships into several categories: elder/peer, peer/peer, and peer/elder, in which the peer is "only a few years older than the youth, but because of his economic position or other advantageous circumstance, he can function as the boy's mentor" (p. 62). In some cases, these "stand-bys" function to mitigate cases in which there is some "insufficient or inadequate fathering in their own family" (p. 62) by a son. Identification with the mentor can serve to help the mentee separate the possible inadequacies of his father from the characteristics of the Amish culture. There is a contrast between the stereotypical American emphasis on the new and the young and the Amish emphasis on respect for age and hierarchy, and an unusual masculine association with consultation on one hand and care on the other.

I cannot resist mentioning the frequently displayed Amish barn-raising, but the support Amish men give to each other can extend well beyond that. It is not uncommon for one man or a group of men to do the chores on a distressed Amish or non-Amish neighbor's farm. In a Pennsylvania valley community, after an Amishman was released from a mental health clinic, Schafft reports that a

> mental health fellowship group was formed from members of the *Gemeinde* (community), and this group of five men met regularly with the patient in his home to discuss his concerns. He told the group about his anxieties and his ideations. . . They placed their advice to him in terms of what God and the community wanted from him. As the patient improved, members of the group took him along to their work sites . . . They were consistently supportive and reported that, in a few months, he had led a parent-school meeting very effectively. They were all very happy for his improvement, of which they felt a part. (p. 59)

Combining the collective action of barn-raising with a therapeutic approach is a particularly noteworthy form of male support for other men. Overall, this collection of mutually reinforcing characteristics and capacities shapes a recognizable, distinctively Amish masculinity. I turn next to variations within this Amish masculinity and the often-subtle distinctions that can emerge.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AMONG THE AMISH

At first glance one might think of Amish masculinity as basically a single form; quite egalitarian, as above, with common dress and prescribed lifestyle norms. There is a truth to this initial assumption or reaction; the different forms masculinity takes within Amish life are subtle. And though these gendered differences are nuanced, they are worth exploring further.

What Connell terms an authorized or hegemonic masculinity might be exemplified among the Amish by a successful farmer who occupies the office of bishop or minister, and whose adult children have all or mostly joined the church (Stevick 2007, p. 84). These ministers and bishops will, on the whole, tend to be or become more conservative, reluctant "to initiate or endorse new ventures" (Kraybill 2001, p. 101; see also Meyers 1994, p. 177). I suspect that this conservatism is not simply a desired Amish trait, but partly explained by the substantial time commitment these roles entail. Successful, established businessmen have greater interaction with the outside world; ministers and bishops, who serve for life, typically have less experience with the "outside world." A minister or bishop is expected to be committed to the community, serving them in a number of capacities, to model forms of *Gelassenheit*, dis-

play rationality, and offer support to both men and women.

A variant masculinity might be that of business owners who have accumulated substantial wealth (Kraybill 2001, pp. 263-267), many of whom likely possess traits more aligned with assertiveness, innovation, and rationality in workplace practices than with the yieldedness described above and consequently face potential tensions between the two. As Kraybill, Nolt, and Wesner (2010) point out, there is also a third "tier" of small farmers and laborers, neither ministers nor entrepreneurs (p. 15) within Amish society. Kraybill (2001) discusses still another variant, distinguishing those at the center of Amish society from those at the periphery, the "fence jumpers" or "fence crowders" who might push the *Ordnung*. These would overlap with the entrepreneurs in having a more competitive outlook and in being more likely to innovate or to surreptitiously use some new device (p. 298). Yet another group, though rarely studied, are the leaders in what Kraybill calls "special interest networks" such as the "Amish Aid Society" and "Helping Hand." They likely embody community-mindedness and leadership traits outside the realm of internal governance, deal with both the Amish and non-Amish, and are innovative but not necessarily profit-seeking.

Scholarly discussion of the bishop and minister selection process understandably stresses the unusual randomizing process of "casting of lots." But even prior to this, there is an earlier stage of the selection process, in which men and women whisper to a deacon the name of someone deemed eligible for leadership. The men who receive too few nominations, or none at all, do not move to the next stage. What are they seen to be lacking, and what is it that the others seem to have? Is there an economic or social dimension for who is seen as eligible for these roles? Do laborers get nominated proportionally, as compared to farmers and business owners? What masculine characteristics are being preferred, and which are seen as disqualifying? Is this widely discussed?

These questions undergird how Amish masculinity is constructed and reinforced through the particular practice of minister and deacon selection. This is just one site where we can see how masculinity operates within an Amish context, and there are other locations that are of equal interest. I turn next to a focus on variations of masculinity in how men relate to both women and children as a way to further demonstrate the unique features of Amish masculinity.

MALE-FEMALE AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

Gendered differences appear in and affect many aspects of familial life and intimate relationships. In the realm of Amish fashion, it can be seen in how *both* men and women dress distinctively. In contrast, when I walk past my nearby mosque on Fridays, I notice that Muslim men seem to dress like the other men on the sidewalk while Muslim women – to a greater or lesser degree – have attire that marks them as distinctly Muslim. With their distinctive beards, hats, and clothes, Amish men stand out. Women may be more marked – with specific "modest" dresses and bonnets — but men are nonetheless clearly marked (Graybill 2002).

The division of labor on a farm between husband and wife is defined but still somewhat permeable, if circumstances necessitate. Around a farm or nearby workshop, children interact with their fathers as they do chores. Recently, however, farming has become a less economically viable occupation. Men working away from home in a factory or large business or on a carpentry crew have become more common. This has led to much greater involvement of men with the American economy, and, for many fathers, leads to less time spent with their children. Matta (2001) notes that for the New Order Amish he interviewed:

> the division of labor between men and women was clearly delineated. One area where [men] exclude themselves is childcare. In instances where a father actively participates, he is more likely to care for young children rather than infants or toddlers. Upon occasion he may help with "spelling", i.e. taking care of middle of the night feedings. . . it is the women's domain to serve as the primary nurturer and caregiver of infants. (pp. 68-69)

While Amish masculinity has aspects of caring associated with it, as discussed above, there seem to be more limits to where and toward whom that care is extended than there are for women.

Another gender difference in families is in the mode of production—the fashion in which one contributes. On a farm, both men and women

contribute time and effort, and create tangible products. With increasing numbers of men running businesses or working in shops or factories, men now contribute monetarily to the household. Even if the wife has a business, the financial income is likely to be much less because their businesses tend to be smaller. This difference in mode of production and amount of income generated may make a difference in financial decisions about consumption. One young Amish woman touched on this, saying:

> The joke among us women is that the men make the rules so that's why more modern things are permitted in the barn than in the house. The women have no say in the rules. Actually I think the main reason is that the men make the living and we don't make the living in our house. So you have to go along with what they need out there. You know, if the public health laws call for it, you have to have it. Even my Dad says that he thinks the Amish women get the brunt of it all around (Kraybill 2001, pp. 84-85).

Similar to many mainstream American households, this young woman identifies the inherent inequality associated with husbands working outside the home and wives working inside of it. In noting that those "making the living," or earning money, are given preference in expenditure decisions, she touches on a central critique of this household structure. Religious ideas of the man as the head of woman, cultural assessments of men as more "competent," and gender differences in production all contribute to men having greater economic access and a higher degree of household control.

PACIFISM AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Pacifism is typically understood as being an ideology against war and state administered punishment, and this is certainly the case for the Amish. (Separation from the state extends to matters such as nonpayment of Social Security, too.) I have not, however, seen their pacifism connected to matters such as corporal punishment or domestic violence—violence not of the state, but within the household. Pederson (2002), in her "Anabaptist Women and Antimodernism," asserts that "Although in Anabaptist men's relationship to the state pacifism is frequently a key principle,

nonviolence in family and social relationships is not" (p. 356 fn. 53). That is not to say that violence is approved of in these cases, but simply to suggest that the matters are not considered under the same rubric. Setting aside the incongruity of actively punishing to teach *Gelassenheit* and issues of the effectiveness and moral justification of corporal punishment, I want to discuss it here, even though not strictly gender related, because it is relevant to the place of gender violence among the Amish.

Charles Hurst and David McConnell found two prevalent views about corporal punishment of children (2010, pp. 115-16). For some, it is an accepted parenting method—one standard way of preventing a spoiled child, alongside encouraging and requiring chores. For others, it is a last resort, to be done cautiously, subsequent to other, more primary methods of teaching and encouragement. "Whereas the New Order Amish emphasize teaching as the most effective method, the more conservative churches stress that the bottom line has to be firm sanctions" (Hurst and McConnell 2010, p. 116). Johnson-Weiner (2007) reports greater reservations and regrets regarding parenting methods utilized among Old Order teachers than among more separatist Swartzentrubers (pp. 46-47, 119).

The matter of how violence is categorized is also an important aspect of Amish male-female relationships. Making judgements about domestic violence frequency in any community is fraught with complicating factors. Although there are certainly cases of wives being abused by their husbands (Hurst and McConnell describe it as "a handful" [2010, pp. 126-27]), this abuse is clearly proscribed and against the tenor of Amish society. It is also not Amish practice to take problems to outside police or legal authorities, or to seek therapy or counseling outside the settlement. Given norms of pacifism, attenuated norms of masculinity, etc., it is not unreasonable to suspect domestic abuse may be somewhat less common than in the rest of American society.

More frequently reported are cases of sexual abuse of children and young women by male family members. Recently, there have been articles by journalists and others reporting incidents told by Plain church women (Bradbury and Smith 2019; McClure 2020; Labi 2005, and Hurd 2015). One can only speculate about causal factors, given the paucity of relevant psychological and sociologi-

cal research. There is little or no sex education in Amish-run schools; there may be some in the fewer public schools that some Amish children still attend. Seeking therapy for perpetrators and victims is still not very prevalent. Bishops most likely have no training in how to deal with these situations or even how to think about them. Given his culture, he may be ill-equipped to deal with an abused child, but he can exercise his agency to seek counsel, from a more experienced bishop or a recommended therapist.

Saloma Furlong, a former Amish woman, asserts that domestic sexual abuse for Amish does not seem to be conceptualized as a crime of violence. She writes, "Very often Amish abusers do admit to their 'sins.' What they are admitting to is a different understanding than what most people think. In their understanding, they have committed the sin of adultery, same as if they had sexual relations with a consenting adult outside of marriage" (Furlong 2019). Though this perspective on the nature and severity of the action is startling—for instance, it seems implausible in cases such as brothers raping a younger sister—it may explain the hesitancy of districts to sentence these men to a lengthy period of excommunication, which, in some cases, is no more than six weeks.

There have been efforts by Amish, especially in the larger settlements, along with law enforcement and clinicians, to address this (Hurd 2015, pp 247-248). Sarah McClure acidly (and rightly) comments that the newly formed committee on sexual abuse in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, is all male (2020). District attorneys and other outside authorities seem to be more ready to seek court action and not allowing Amish districts to police themselves (Bradbury and Smith 2019).

Amish cultural definitions of abuse and violence should be questioned, as Pedersen's and Furlong's comments suggest; they seem strongly to favor men as agents over women and children, the survivors of violent domestic abuse. This is a problem at the level of culture, not of the individuals who are unaware of their lack of awareness. They can exercise agency once they are made aware to educate themselves and to organize caring efforts. One must question whether Amish society is as peaceful as it is often portrayed. The claim that "violent crime is virtually nil" must be questioned (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt 2013, p. 418). Regardless of the circumstance or cultural differentiation, instances of incest and rape are unquestionably violent crimes. Even gentler norms of Amish masculinity and pacifism are insufficient to prevent them.

THE AMISH GENDER REGIME

How do these characteristics and relationships fit together to form a gender regime? Amish men have a position of power in their societal hierarchy, and thus it is crucial to "look from below" to see how their place functions in relation to those below them in the hierarchy. While recognizing that the regime is multidimensional and varies between settlements and affiliations, I offer a general, relatively global characterization, building a more feminist analysis on what other scholars have observed.

Connell considers both social practices and discursive or cultural ideals and norms to fall under the rubric of power relations (2006, pp. 76-78). The first question to answer, assuming that Amish men would be the putative first-class citizens, is whether it is valid to describe Amish women as second-class citizens. The second question is whether, taking Amish society to be a patriarchy, as is commonly done, it is appropriate to term it a soft patriarchy. This leads into the third question, whether Amish women are oppressed, as is sometimes claimed (see Bonta 2018). I believe that answering this turns on what weight should be given to Amish women's self-assessments and reports. If they say they aren't oppressed, does that settle the issue? Should we follow a feminist principle and take women as reliable witnesses, at least until further evidence is available, or understand their statements, also from a feminist perspective, to be influenced by the patriarchal societies of which they are parts?

When asked whether "Amish women are treated like second-class citizens within their own community," Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt, whose studies are central to my analysis, answered "no," and, in their answer, linked classes of citizenship to patriarchy:

> The Amish have a soft patriarchy in the sense that men typically represent the household to the outside world. However, in the family context women have considerable authority and freedom regarding family and household matters, and their work and their opinions matter. Although

women may not serve as clergy, they are school-teachers and owners of small businesses. They are able to vote on church matters. (Young Center 2013, also see Johnson-Weiner 2010, p. 112)

In saying women are not second-class citizens, these authors seem to understand second-class citizenship only in a broader, more sociological sense of one group being given less respect or being discriminated against by members of another group. African Americans even today would fit under this. While I have some reservations about these authors' conclusion, I grant it for the sake of argument. But there is also a legal or political usage, referring to a class of citizens who are denied a significant opportunity or right. As an example of this right-denial use, Irene Scharf argues that since undocumented, unaccompanied minors who arrived in the United States seeking refuge are denied the right, upon attaining citizenship, of "ever using their status to bestow immigration benefits on their parents" they are in effect made second-class citizens (Scharf 2018, 581), because other immigrants have this right. Broader examples include not being able to serve in any of the governing offices of your community.

Given the scope of what the *Ordnung* covers, I would argue that an Amish district or congregation, and its leadership, is a quasi-political unit. As well as not holding any ministerial positions, women do not serve on the boards of social network organizations such as the National Amish Steering Committee or the Amish Aid Society (2001, p. 103). Though they may be schoolteachers, women do not serve on school boards. Typically, teachers teach for only a few years before marriage, further limiting their influence on policy. Though they may, of course, interact with their husbands, and thereby indirectly influence decisions, they are greatly dependent on their husbands' knowledge of the public realm, while men share with women significant direct knowledge about "family and household matters." They may have some social or political decision-making power, but it is clearly not equal to that of men. Thus, I disagree with Johnson-Weiner's conclusion that, excepting for ministerial roles, "Old Order women share privileges and responsibility with Old Order men in virtually all domains of social interaction" (2001 p. 232). It is men who largely determine the shape of these domains while women operate within them. Given the lack of women in positions of

some power, even in the ones outside of the ministerial, the difficulty some districts have in addressing sexual abuse, not accepting it as violent crime, is perhaps unsurprising. On my reading, Amish women are indeed second-class citizens.

That Amish society is patriarchal is commonly accepted; differences lie in how that is qualified. Steven Reschly has described a movement he terms "preservationist patriarchy" in nineteenth century Amish society to establish "a stable standard of female subordination to male household heads on behalf of the community" (2002, pp. 178-79). Joe Mackall describes the Swartzentruber district with which he is familiar as "an unadulterated patriarchy" (2007, p. 109). I take these to be "hard" forms of patriarchy. Others, however, call it a soft patriarchy.

To move forward here, we need to better understand patriarchy. It is described by Cynthia Enloe as "the structural and ideological system that perpetuates and privileges masculinity." It tends to infantilize or ignore "what is thought to be feminine." Such a system's functioning needs "enough women's acceptance or complicity to operate" (2004, pp. 4-6). Patriarchy operates at the level of social and cultural formation, rather than primarily describing individuals, and includes prioritizing masculine norms and ideals, and excluding women from influential social positions over men. People may endorse, accept, practice, or resist these forms. They may or may not even see or acknowledge them. In following them, they will be enacting and re-enacting them.

There is no accepted measure for degrees of patriarchy—hardness or softness—in the literature. Patriarchy seems to span the conceptual space between a society where the male gender, outside of the reproductive arena, is perhaps favored as much as we tend to favor, say, being athletic or right-handed, and a society in which those of male gender are pervasively dominant, with nearly all decision-making power – what might be called a hard patriarchy. Amish society is not the latter.

The alternative, soft patriarchy, is not a well-defined term. W. Bradford Wilcox (2004) seems to have introduced the term when he described an emerging norm for young American Protestant evangelical fathers. For this group, men are to retain final decision-making power, as do Amish husbands. Men are to be heads of the family and to hold most church positions. However, they are

to try to "help" with childcare, and, to a lesser degree, with housework. They are to be supportive of wives and nurturant toward their children, reminiscent of some of the norms of Amish masculinity discussed earlier. This is more patriarchal than the norms in current mainstream or liberal American households, though in practice women still do the majority of housework and childcare. It is certainly not what feminists call for; it is "soft" compared to a rather extreme version of second-class status for women but gives importance to women's traditional roles and capacities. Even if Amish women are second-class citizens politically, could the broader gender regime be aptly described as a soft patriarchy?

Though as I said it is not well defined, I would take soft patriarchy to be incompatible with women being oppressed, though some would disagree. Oppression has received more attention in the Women's and Gender Studies literature than patriarchy, and so is a more tractable notion. It well illustrates the value-ladenness of most "essentially contested concepts" in political theory (Gallie 1956). Being an agent of oppression is negative; being oppressed is to make a claim for action for change. Note that something might be oppressive, or restrictive, towards a person (or group) without the person being oppressed. They might, for example, have countervailing opportunities or benefits. And perhaps that is what Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt mean in the interview quoted above. Amish women may have sufficient authority, freedom, and respect within the household and their extended families to make up for the political and occupational restrictions on women that outsiders note as oppressive.

Many Amish women are quite happy with their general lot; they don't feel oppressed. Olshan and Schmidt remark upon Amish women's "manifest self-confidence [and] the high regard with which they are held in the Amish community" (1994, p. 224). Similarly, Hurst and McConnell report in an interview that:

> The women we interviewed did not see themselves as doormats under the feet of their husbands, and generally thought their relationships with their husbands were close to ideal. . . . [though] occasionally a woman would cite another woman who was controlled fully by her husband. Almost all the women we spoke with saw themselves as partners with their husband with whom they shared decision making. . . . In the routine practices of daily life, women make an impact, and interpret their positions in a way that helps to negate any lack of formal power they may experience.

> To the extent that power means a sense of security, almost all of the Amish women in our study felt they had freedom from many of the worries that occupy English women. They know their husbands will provide for their families, and not divorce them, and that they will not have to worry about the employment-related problems faced by many English women. (Wesner 2010)

I must note here Hurst and McConnell (2010) also found women pointing out that other Amish women were not nearly so well situated:

> 'It definitely depends on the husband' said one woman. 'Some men just have the idea . . . you know, they interpret the Bible wrong . . . It says the husband should be the head of the household, and they think he should be the lord of the household.' These particular Amish men, she concluded, 'have no respect for their women. . . . . And that gets passed down from generation to generation.' (p. 125)

What social structures and practices come to the aid of these women? That isn't clear. Apparently, informal corrective pressure from family or district members is sometimes insufficient. The prospect of no divorce for these wives is hardly reassuring, either—remaining in a problematic marriage does not amount to happiness, power, or equality, as early feminist fights for the right to divorce attest. Despite this view of a minority, some would take the majority's positive assessment of their own lives as dispositive for a general characterization, letting Amish men and masculinity off the hook, so to speak. (Note that the issue is here about husbands and wives, not about the place of young women and girl children growing up.)

Some feminists would point out that even for those who express contentment with their lot, neither a "sense of security" nor a feeling of contentment is the same as the possession of a full measure of social or "formal power." There are also debates over whether to accept people's professions, in this case, women's expression of contentment, as reliable or as ideologically imposed (Stoljar 2018). Nor does being influential

in daily household life translate into power in the general issues concerning a community – the sorts of issues covered by the *Ordnung* or by social networks such as the National Amish Steering committee.

There is also evidence of women being disparaged as unqualified to be decision makers or to occupy positions of social authority. For example, Tom Shachtman reports that "husbands, fathers, ministers, and frequently the women themselves write to *Family Life* to suggest that women are incapable of making important decisions on their own and continually require assistance" (Shachtman 2006, p. 215). Johnson-Weiner quotes a letter to *Blackboard Bulletin*: "When I think of the seriousness of teaching and training children, why would we want to choose a 'weaker vessel' to teach and to be an example to our children?" The editors apparently did not challenge this but responded that women teachers were under school boards, and only over children. Although in some districts or affiliations, women may freely speak at church meetings, an Amish man also writes that "Women are not free to say what's on their minds in a church meeting and do so at risk of making a confession for being out of their place" (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt, 2013, p. 202 and Mackall 2007, p. 116). If this is indeed widespread, it shows a disturbing aspect of male culture. This is especially troubling in terms of the prospects of changing norms dealing with sexual abuse, for example. Addressing new dilemmas posed by innovative technology may be much easier than addressing long-standing gender influences. Certainly much remains to be seen about whether or not the Amish culture is oppressive to women. These questions will continue to be of interest as researchers attempt to find both conceptual and definitional clarity on how we should understand patriarchy, oppression, and autonomy within the Amish context.

CONCLUSION

There are real advantages to Amish conceptions of masculinity. Their masculinity is not the "toxic" variety so justly criticized. There are aspects of it, we have seen, associated with pacifism, forgiveness, care, and community. Amish masculinity allows for women to be respected for their competence, care, and contributions. Amish

women's reports of contentedness with their situation cannot be irrelevant; neither, however, are they the final word, as social conditions require more than individual or subjective assessment to be judged fair and equal.

Individual Amish men are not solely responsible for the shape of their culture. They have agency, and thus are responsible for taking steps to change that culture. Amish men may see a future that, for example, allows women to hold positions of authority (such as on a school board), supports teaching of appropriate sex education lessons, strengthens the disciplinary process for dealing with sex offenders, and supports institutions for treating offenders.

Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner and Nolt describe the Amish gender regime as a "'soft patriarchy,' whose sinews stiffen and relax in different situations" (2013, p. 194). I think that some of those sinews are very tough, or damaged; too tough to be described as part of anything soft. It is necessary, I think, to describe the Amish gender regime as a *strong* patriarchy.

Even a soft patriarchy *is* still a patriarchy. Amish men are first-class citizens, and women are second class politically, economically, and socially. Accepting the Amish belief that bishops, ministers, and deacons are biblically required to be men does not, as far as I can tell, justify barring women from all positions of authority. And that ban, I believe, weakens the Amish response to the domestic sexual abuse of children and women. One can reasonably hope that in the future, Amish communities might carefully assess their gender regime with the care and detail with which they assess a new technology. Certainly, no less is at stake.

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