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The Men You Will Become:
Single-Sex Public Education and the Crisis of Black Boys

By

Freeden Oeur

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Barrie Thorne, Chair
Professor Raka Ray
Professor Sandra Smith
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Abstract

The Men You Will Become:
Single-Sex Public Education and the Crisis of Black Boys

by

Freeden Oeur

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Barrie Thorne, Chair

Against a backdrop of massive public school reform, single-sex public schools have become an increasingly popular, but controversial, option for parents and their children. In this dissertation, I demonstrate that single-sex public education today is merely the latest twist in a long-term, historically-situated trajectory of gender- and race-separated schooling in the United States. Drawing on 11 months of intensive fieldwork, over 140 in-depth interviews, and an analysis of documents at two single-sex, nearly all-African American public high schools in the large east coast of "Morgan," I ask: What interventions do single-sex public schools make on behalf of their African American male students? And what impact do those interventions have on the boys' masculinity formation and life chances?

At "Perry High," a grades 7-12 neighborhood public school, officials and community members identified mass incarceration and the lack of caregiving as acute, interrelated crises facing their young African American male students. The administrators desired for their boys to grow to become responsible husbands and fathers, and the boys themselves aspired to be these men. The school, however, lacked the resources and strategies to remove many of the boys off the school-to-prison pipeline. At "Urban Charter," a charter school serving boys in grades 9-11, staff and "consumer" buy-in and a strong formal, academic curriculum enabled the school to remove more of their boys from the school-to-prison pipeline and to place them on a college track. The school also depended on a second hidden curriculum that sought to protect the boys from the perceived degradation of regular public schools, and in particular the threatening specter of the boys who attended those schools. School officials desired for their students to become respectable, middle-class workers in a global economy.

These findings extend knowledge on African American boys and schooling in several ways. I show that single-sex public schools that target this population rely little on beliefs in gender differences between boys and girls, and instead primarily on the unique vulnerabilities of African American boys. I also build on research on caregiving within schools and show how schools frame mass incarceration as a miscarriage of justice requiring certain provisions of care, and how boys desired care from adults. Last, I show how different institutional histories and capacities, particularly between regular public schools and public charters, greatly impact the ability of schools to intervene on behalf of their young Black men and to "save" them.

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at Raka's home. The other "Barrie's babies"—Jessica Cobb, John Kaiser, Louise Ly, and Raf Colonna—and I exchanged numerous works-in-progress. There was always plenty of support and constructive criticism. After I returned from my year of fieldwork, my research benefited greatly from a writing group consisting of Emily Gleason, Ingunn Eriksen, and Stian Overå, all extremely talented school ethnographers.

I've had the chance to present various parts of my dissertation research with the Race Workshop, the Gender Studies group, and the Center for Race & Gender at Berkeley, and was always appreciative of the support and critical suggestions I received from those in attendance. A Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship from the Graduate Division at Berkeley provided generous financial support when I began graduate studies, and more recently, a Dean's Normative Time Fellowship. From the sociology department, a Lynnea Stephens Memorial Research Fellowship, a Teagle Foundation and Spencer Foundation Teaching Fellowship, and a Leo Lowenthal Fellowship provided funding for my dissertation research.

I've been blessed with two incredible housemates during my time in the Bay Area. Paul Albertus and I had many great discussions over quarts of ice cream in our apartment in north Berkeley, and he possesses a curiosity about the world that's contagious. At our apartment in Rockridge, Christopher Chambers-Ju became my brother and my *wey*. We shared countless laughs during foosball games, epic meals, BBQs on our porch, and at the pull-up bar at the gym. And Chris's family—Werner Ju, Deborah Shoub Ju, grandma Nancy and grandma Jennie— always welcomed me into their home.

For many years I was lucky that my closest friend from growing up, Chris Curtis, was living across the bay in San Francisco, with his now-wife Jeannie McCabe, who has also become a dear friend. On many weekday and weekend nights Chris and I went in search of a great concert, occasionally played open mics at the Voodoo Lounge, laughed about high school memories, and once even spent an afternoon with the wild parrots that flock to Telegraph Hill in North Beach. After Chris and Jeannie relocated to Asheville, NC, my experience of San Francisco hasn't been the same. I've also been lucky to reconnect with fellow Eph Rod McLeod, a San Francisco native who never bored of reminding me that the west coast is the best coast.

My life is richer because of many other great people I met at Berkeley. Mark Nelson turned me onto jazz and brought a wealth of life experience to studying sociology. Adam Reich and I discussed issues of masculinity during our runs in Tilden Park (with Adam's dog, Herb, as our running buddy). Stephen Smith and I reminisced about Philly, and Andy Kohnen amazed me with his knowledge between bike rides on Grizzly Peak. Jimmy Tran pursued big projects that continually left me in awe. Juan Fernandez was a model of hard work and always kept the mood lighthearted in our office in Barrows Hall, and officemate Malgorzata Kurjanska also supported me during marathon writing sessions on campus. Kate Maich challenged me in a way I needed to be, even if I didn't recognize that at the time. As Kate well knows, the Magnetic Fields said it best: "Yeah! Oh yeah!" To all the carillon players atop the Campanile: thanks for your lovely music, which streamed through my office window and was always better than what was playing on my laptop.

I've had the good fortune of teaching and getting to know many smart undergraduates at Berkeley. In the fall of 2006, Kristin Schoonover gave a presentation on Walmart's corporate ethics in "Introduction to Sociology," and has continued to impress me with her sharp sociological eye. I'm also proud of everything Eivind Grip Fjær and Vivian Chang have accomplished since they left Berkeley. My students in my "Men and Masculinities" and

"Sociology of Gender" courses helped me to think through many ideas, and our discussions in those courses helped me to clarify important parts of my dissertation.

Much of how I think about schools, my interests in urban education, and my pedagogy were shaped during my time teaching 6th grade at Anna Howard Shaw Middle School in west Philadelphia between 2003 and 2005. My principal, Sharif El-Mekki, and my partner teacher, Hannah Powell, quite literally saved me many days at Shaw. My program director with Teach For America, Alison Serafin, didn't cut me any slack and demanded that I give more than I thought I could in my classroom. While I was completing my graduate coursework at Saint Joseph's University, Professor Terrance Furin once asked us in class to perform a traditional Japanese dance with him, and I've admired him ever since.

I've never felt camaraderie quite like I did with my three housemates in Philadelphia. In June of 2003, Steve Kollar, Dan Reagan, Matt Troha, and I danced in the rain after we signed our lease at 2315 Pennsylvania Avenue, the start of a transformative two years for us all. Following their lead, I began to attend weekly mass at St. Francis Xavier Catholic church. There, Father Phil Bochanski encouraged me to ask questions both spiritual and philosophical. My first year in Berkeley, I made the decision to begin the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. I've since shared many wonderful meals and laughs with Father Al Moser, who has lived a life of courage and good deeds that I try to follow in of my own life. Mark Lederer and Nicole Pagano have also provided spiritual guidance and have become good friends and my beloved godparents.

Matt Mugmon, Shaw Middle School's resident math specialist, and I discovered a shared passion for music during our second year in Philly. We've since experienced together all the highs and lows as Washington Capitals fans, and Matt has been a grad school confidante all these years over in Boston. I can't wait to soon be his neighbor. Mike Gann, Howie Brown, Damoun Delaviz, Ben Gross, and Emilie Reagan were also part of my Philly crew, and I hope we can organize that Teach For America-Philly corps reunion we've spoken so often about. And I can't bring up Philly without mentioning Jay Harris, one of my heroes. At one time a pint-sized 6th grader in Mr. Oeur's class, he grew and grew until he finally earned a full-ride basketball scholarship last year to Tennessee State University. Go Tigers! Jay overcame a lot to get there, and he possesses the kind of strength I hope I can one day find in myself. Thanks, Jay, for always reminding me to dream big.

At Williams College, I found a home in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. Peter Just first helped me to find my voice in his "Sacred Geographies" course. Michael Brown was always patient with my questions. Jim Nolan urged me to pursue a project on the "cultural defense" that would become my senior paper, and that would eventually spark my sociological imagination. Antonia Foias was always so caring and taught me to be confident with my writing. Nancy Roseman and Duane Bailey also encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone and to be a campus leader.

Justin Crowe and Ryu Yokoi were my closest friends at Williams. Justin and I have always been different, but we became close friends immediately. I've admired the scholar, husband, and father he's become. I like to think that he followed me out to California for a little while, and now I'm following him back to Massachusetts. When I was a freshman, Ryu invited me to hang out in the radio station during his DJ shows, and he occasionally left free promo copies of CDs in my dorm room. I still listen to some of his perfectly orchestrated mix CDs from college to help me get through stressful times.

When I became a public school teacher, I suddenly appreciated the hard work of many of my former teachers, and all they had done for me. In particular, I respect a great deal my 11th

grade U.S. History teacher, Eleanor Shumaker, who assigned lots of reading and asked tough questions. I've since learned to have similarly high expectations of my own students.

I owe my greatest debt to my family. My parents lived a hard life and endured much pain in Cambodia, and have worked harder than I could ever imagine to give me all the opportunities I've had. My sister, Friday, has been my biggest fan and supporter, and possesses a determination which she should be more proud of and which I try to emulate in my own life. As the first member of my family to be born in the United States, I hope I've made them proud.

Finally, I want to thank the boys, parents, grandparents, teachers, secretaries, social workers, college and guidance counselors, administrators, and school district officials who welcome me into their lives for a year. I collected far more quotes, observations, and memories than I could include. I hope what has made it onto the following pages captures the struggles but also the achievements of two schools that care for young, Black men.

<div style="text-align: right">

Freeden Oeur
August 2012

</div>

For my parents, Navy and Saran, and my sister, Friday

CHAPTER 1:

ONE CITY, TWO ALL-BOYS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

On a warm Tuesday in September of 2009, a small group of boys walked up a narrow street to Perry High School.[1] They passed by several abandoned homes with wooden boards nailed to the windows. City officials had placed bright orange signs on the front doors that read "IN DANGER OF COLLAPSE." The boys, however, did not pay much attention to these scenes of desolation, which were quite common throughout the southern region of Morgan and all across this large, urban city struggling with poverty. Instead the boys sported wide grins and laughed and teased one another. They were excited and anxious. It was the first day of school.

A gorgeous, double marble staircase greeted visitors inside the front entrance of the school, but most Perry students would not walk up or down it, that day or any other day. That's because they were not allowed to enter or leave through the front doors. Instead they met up with a large group of students standing outside the side entrance, across the street from an auto shop. Mr. Bradley, the school's principal, greeted the students and told them to tuck in their shirts, and he reminded a few to come back the next day wearing the proper uniform of black pants and a white collared shirt. Mr. Bradley towered over many of the students, but he carried an easy smile, and the students appeared at ease around him. He was clearly anxious, too, for the day to get started. But the line remained long as school staff members asked the boys to move slowly through the metal detector, next to a poster on the wall that read "ONLY YOU CAN TAKE THE 'U' OUT OF TRUANCY." After a summer away from school, it was a reminder of the ritual that began each school day.

The students headed straight for the auditorium. It was a raucous scene, with students jumping out of their seats, and the teachers, standing in the aisles, clutching their new class rosters in one hand and directing traffic with the other. Mr. Bradley soon walked onto the stage and grabbed the microphone. He looked out onto the students, in grades 7 to 12, who were unlike the vast majority of students in public school all across the country. There were only boys at Perry High. The girls were in their own school—Thompson High, Perry's "sister school"— about a mile up the road. And just as significant, all the boys were African American. "Our school is on a serious mission this year," Mr. Bradley told the boys. "There needs to be a sense of urgency."

The principal opened the first staff meeting of the year, held a week before, in a similar fashion by sharing statistics demonstrating how poorly Black boys perform on standardized tests, and how so many drop out of school. He then emphasized that many boys just like them—those who were poor and African American from their neighborhood—had been sucked into hustling drugs and had landed in a juvenile facility and later in adult prison. The students required assistance and care, and this study will examine the steps the administration and their staff took to provide it. Despite their best efforts, some of the school's messages, conversations, and practices still forecasted a dire fate for many of the Black boys.

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[1] All place and proper names are pseudonyms.

While single-sex public schools only make up a tiny fraction of all public schools nationwide, during the 2009-2010 school year, the time of my study, the city of Morgan had two. The other, Urban Charter, served boys in grades 9 to 11 in a building that had for decades housed a Catholic grade school. Although located in the eastern section of the city, the school was just a scant six miles from Perry High. Urban Charter was, in some important ways, like its all-male counterpart: public, with approximately 370 students, and a student population that was nearly all-Black. And like the Perry boys, those at Urban Charter came from mostly poor families, with a small percentage that were working poor and working class. Going into its third year, however, Urban Charter had already won acclaim for its distinctive curriculum—featuring mandatory Latin courses—and for providing its students with resources not available at most public schools in the city. Since this was a charter school, Mr. Pierce, the school's founder and CEO, had been able to assemble a dedicated Board of Directors that had led several successful fundraising campaigns in the school's first two years.

The 9th graders arrived to begin the school year a week before their classmates, and on one Wednesday they filed into the lunchroom for a "Student Convention," a weekly gathering of students and staff for important announcements, student recognition, and special events. They were meticulously dressed in the school's summer uniform of white golf shirt tucked into khaki pants, and in a few weeks they would be required to wear a regular uniform of blue blazer with the school's patch emblazoned on the left breast, a collared blue shirt, and a blue and maroon striped tie. Knowing that their sons were still growing, parents usually bought clothes a size or two too big, so many of the boys were swimming in baggy khakis and blazers that fell far below their waists. Each boy had a lanyard around his neck that carried his student ID card, and for many boys a bus pass as well. After the students stood and recited the school pledge, Dr. Green, the school's new principal, opened the Convention with a quote: "Good is the enemy of great." He then added: "Our focus is to be great at everything we do." Dr. Green set a serious tone— hinting at the school's rather strict culture of discipline—and occasionally asked the boys, "do you understand?" and "is that clear?" to which the boys replied "YES!" in unison. Mr. Green declared: "*you're* here because *you* realize that college is your pathway." Though the principal was standing before a room of only Black boys, race, unlike at Perry High, would be mentioned more subtly throughout the school year. But being male *and Black* was no less significant at Urban Charter. There was a major difference, however, between the two schools: as the year went on, Urban Charter's mission would be to inculcate more positive notions of manhood for the boys, putting them on a path that led in a quite different direction than the one many Perry boys would likely take.

This dissertation chronicles a year in the life of these two all-male, nearly all-Black high schools in a large city on the east coast. Drawing on 11 months of participant observation and over 140 interviews, I will demonstrate how various people—teachers, administrators, school district officials, and even the students—determined that separating Black boys from Black girls, in communities that already faced severe forms of race and class segregation, was a necessary or at least worthwhile intervention. In this introduction, I trace the history of single-sex—and just as important, *single-race*—education and how it emerged as a viable schooling option at the turn of the 21st century in the United States. Then I describe both the intra-institutional dynamics of each of the schools and various inter-institutional dynamics, noting how the schools were oriented toward one another, and the particular relationships the schools developed with other institutions, ranging from private schools and prisons to families. Understandings of the

configuration of institutions in low-income urban areas were used to justify the creation of single-sex schools for Black boys.

The overarching goal of this study is to examine the diversity of "all-boys education"; how two different public schools went about separating Black boys from girls, and held different beliefs about the specific problems and crises of Black boys and about the interventions required to address those problems. I explore how the schools set their students on somewhat divergent life paths, with consequences for the men those boys would become. A distinctive urban ecology of single-sex education helped to shape the boys' varied experiences of self. So in addition to comparing school practices and cultures, I focus on how the boys themselves, as targets of this schooling intervention, experienced, made sense of, came to grips with, and felt about being identified as "at-risk," in "crisis," and "endangered," or the conditions seen as requiring all-male education.

A History of Single-Sex Education

While contemporary debates over single-sex education have tended to focus on gender, this schooling arrangement has always been bound up in dynamics of race and class. In this section, I track that history in the U.S. since the late 19th century, focusing on three critical eras: the Progressive era, the civil rights era, and the contemporary era (beginning with the *Vorcheimer v. School District of Philadelphia* case that appeared before the Supreme Court in 1977).[2] In each era, single-sex education has proven to be unusually malleable: various groups, representing differing and at times conflicting viewpoints on race and gender equality, have advocated for this form of education. While some groups have opposed single-sex education using the logic of the unconstitutionality of public schools separated on the basis of race, the Supreme Court has yet to decide whether that principle extends to public schools separated on the basis of sex (Simson 2005).

The result is a continuing, and perhaps even intensifying, contemporary belief that "separate-but-equal" education is possible when boys and girls are split up. As the separate-but-equal doctrine was applied in various forms in support of single-sex education, and as it was contested by women's rights advocates following the passage of Title IX in 1972, an array of claims about "problems"—a "boy problem," a "girl problem," and most recently, a "black boy problem" (or crisis)—emerged in popular discourse, sometimes to support and sometimes to challenge single-sex education. In the contemporary era, three major camps have emerged in support of single-sex education (even if, quite significantly, some of those camps support single-sex education for girls but not for boys) by calling attention to either a girl problem or boy problem. Today, the pairing of a belief in a crisis of Black boys and the principle of separate-but-equal has encouraged some educators to support all-male schools, an historical turn that provides the context for my dissertation.

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[2] *Vorcheimer v. School District of Philadelphia* 430 U.S. 703 (1977).

"Separate-but-Equal" During the Progressive Era.

While coeducation was common in urban high schools prior to the Progressive era, major shifts in understandings of gender at the end of the 19th century resulted in different theories about how boys and girls should be taught in schools. By the end of the 19th century, economic troubles had spelled disaster for white, middle-class men, who dealt with financial insecurities by reconfiguring dominant manhood to be aggressive and more anti-feminist (Kimmel 2006; Rotundo 1994). The new manhood had an aggressive character that enabled middle-class men to hide their insecurities over the perceived feminization of coeducational schools. This dominant masculinity was also racialized—or more specifically, racist—as white, middle-class men dealt with their class instabilities by exerting a racial advantage over African American men. Popular discourses, for example, cast African American men as more primitive and less civilized in order to further legitimize Black men's social and political disenfranchisement (Bederman 1995).

These changes in understandings of dominant masculinity underscored a discourse of "recuperative masculinity politics," which refers to the struggle against perceived threats to white, heterosexual masculinity (Martino and Kehler 2006) and the need to heal the wounds caused by gender relations, and in particular by feminist movements (Connell 2005). Schools were a chief target of recuperative masculinity politics. During the Progressive era, which extended roughly from 1870 to 1920, educators were worried that schools were adopting practices geared toward girls, which feminized and discouraged boys (Bederman 1995; Tyack and Hansot 1992). Educators focused their efforts on a "boy problem," involving concern, relative to girls, about the academic underachievement of boys, as well as to the lower numbers of boys in school and the greater numbers of boys with behavioral problems (Kimmel 1999; Martino and Kehler 2006; Woody 2002).[3]

Educators believed that the problem rested not in the boys themselves, but in school practices that were ill-suited to their needs. Responding to this perceived problem, in the early 1900s school districts began to experiment with sex-segregated classrooms, differentiating curricula for boys and girls in order to prepare them for different vocations. Boys would be trained for work in the public arena and girls for their duties in the home, to align with the prevailing "separate spheres" discourse of that era (Tyack and Hansot 1992).[4] Meanwhile, in more affluent neighborhoods, some schools were sex-segregated. While first-wave feminism fought for a consideration of the "Woman Question"—"What ought women to be?"—and agitated for and won the right to vote, gender segregation and inequality in schools went largely unnoticed until second-wave feminism took up the cause in the 1960s (Tyack and Hansot 1992).

While general *de facto* gender segregation was a concern of first-wave feminists, who fought for more opportunities for women, *de jure* racial segregation—the result of the "separate but equal" doctrine under *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)—was more visibly pernicious and pronounced than various forms of gender segregation within schools.[5] Like white girls, many African American children received an education in accordance with their "separate sphere." The education Black students received, however, varied by region and by city, depending on the

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[3] While there are only scattered records available, Tyack and Hansot (1992) write that girls aged 10-14 were outpacing boys in school by as early as 1870.

[4] Tyack and Hansot (1992) argue that educators viewed the growth of competitive athletics during the Progressive era as vital for channeling "countercultural" boy behavior into more productive and school-sanctioned activities. Sports also helped to attenuate the fear that schools were becoming feminine spaces.

[5] *Plessy v. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

presence of African American leadership, the density of the African American population, and the degree of white prejudice (Tyack 1974).

While first-wave feminism considered the "woman question," white educators felt the need to address the "Negro Question" of "what ought black children to be and what type of education do they deserve?" Home economics courses were common for girls in white schools, while agricultural and mechanical schools were opened in order to educate African American children, who were considered intellectually unsuited for the regular curriculum because of the logic of scientific racism (Williams 2003). White educators who convened at the Lake Mohonk Conferences in the Negro Question in New York in 1890 carved out the strategy of offering African American children (boys and girls) an industrial education so that they could develop manual dexterity at an early age (Williams 2003). While some schools provided "home training" for African American girls, educators were less concerned with segregating African American boys and girls in school because African American men and women had shared many of the difficult jobs under slavery. Educators believed that African American boys and girls shared the same capacities for manual labor (Jones 1986). Unlike schools designed for whites, the earliest rural and urban schools for African American children were nearly all coeducational, in large part due to financial constraints (Tyack and Hansot 1992).

While coeducation remained the dominant form of public education through the 20th century (Minow 2010), the doctrine of "separate but equal" still shaped public education in important ways.[6] For many white girls and African American children, the curriculum was differentiated to fit their projected futures in a racialized gender hierarchy: white girls and African American children were receiving not only an appropriate education, but one they deserved, given their places in this hierarchy. Gender segregation, however, was less overt than the "structural separateness" of race, both in the north and in the south. Not only were white and Black students mostly separated, but normally only African American teachers taught African American students (Tyack 1974). The coeducation of white students was less expensive, but the "separate spheres" ideology was so deeply ingrained that educators viewed physical separation as unnecessary (Tyack and Hansot 1992).

"Equality through Sameness" During the Civil Rights Era

The school-focused efforts of the contemporary women's movement, beginning in the late 1960s, pushed for equality (Salomone 2003). These efforts were aided and informed by the 1972 Title IX law, which protects against gender discrimination in educational programs receiving federal funds (Minow 2010). Feminists argued that schools, much like the workplace, were sites of gender discrimination and gender stereotyping. At issue was a differentiated curriculum borne out of the Progressive era to address the "boy problem," but which feminists now argued had created a "girl problem." Research in recent decades has revealed various patterns of gender inequality in classrooms. While in the Progressive era educators had worried that schools were feminizing boys, second-wave feminism reversed the charge: schools were making girls too feminine and boys too masculine. This resulted in gender stereotyping and an asymmetrical distribution of power, income, and social status among adults (Tyack and Hansot

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[6] In the early part of the 19th century, Black leaders in some cities believed separate schools for Blacks were necessary because of the intensity of white prejudice (Tyack 1974).

1992). Feminists sought to educate teachers to give girls equal attention and opportunities and to give them fuller access to mathematics, science, technical, and athletic opportunities.

During the period when the "girl problem" supplanted the "boy problem" in discussions of schooling, the also public turned its attention to the "Negro Question," as termed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in his infamous "case for national action" (Moynihan 1965). The Moynihan Report can be interpreted as engaging in a peculiar form of recuperative masculinity politics while also portending a crisis of black boyhood (Noguera 1997). The report positioned African American men as victims of unemployment and race discrimination in the workforce, and African American sons as victims of their mothers, who were deemed ill-equipped to raise a family in the absence of a father. Although understanding African American men, in part, as victims, the report blamed them for a crisis of fatherlessness that required the assistance of a white, male establishment (Moynihan 1965; Ross 1998).

The Moynihan Report also displaced the cause of the reproductive disorder of the African American family from African American men to the Black Matriarch, "a monstrous surfeit" who jeopardized the reproduction of the black race (Ross 1998: 603), and spelled doom for African American children and boys in particular. In aligning the interests of the "white male establishment" with African American men and their failed masculinity, and African American boys and their future failed masculinity, Moynihan positioned hegemonic white masculinity in an antagonistic stance toward African American women (Ross 1998). This accomplished the goal of recuperative masculinity politics by positioning African American men as victims of African American women, rather than as the victims of policies serving white, class-privileged interests. Boys were also implicated because of the Moynihan Report's focus on the perceived reproductive failure of African American families and the threat that a female head-of-household posed to the masculinity of sons. Thus, African American boys were described as lacking a family environment which would allow them to mature and to grow into responsible male heads of families. Failed fathers became evidence of the failed masculinity of African American men.

While the Moynihan Report positioned dominant white masculinity against African American women and failed Black masculinity, gender segregation and racial segregation in the years immediately following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which deemed racial segregation in schools to be unconstitutional, was organized in a way that evoked a historical trope of black masculinity posing a sexual threat to white femininity (Crenshaw 1991).[7] Although *Brown* mandated that district courts move "with all deliberate speed" to integrate public schools, many courts and school systems resisted. Several states in the south tried to ease into racial desegregation by enacting laws that allowed schools to segregate by sex. Some school districts therefore participated in deliberate gender segregation and masked it as racial desegregation. This arrangement was motivated by the fear that Black boys would pose a sexual threat to white girls in desegregated schools. School boards could therefore abide by the letter of the law requiring racial desegregation while considering various gender segregation arrangements that would keep white girls and Black boys apart. Some districts allowed only Black girls to integrate into white schools,[8] while others forced more complete forms of gender segregation by grouping black boys and white boys, and black girls and white girls, together (Williams 2003).

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[7] *Oliver Brown et al v. Board of Education of Topeka et al,* 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
[8] Williams (2003) implies that as Black girls left for white schools, the result was nearly all-Black boys schools.

The sexualized fear of Black boys coupled with a growing concern over white girls in school had enormous implications for understandings of racial and gender "equality" during the 1960s. In 1967, the National Organization of Women (NOW) drafted a bill of rights which included the demand for "equal and unsegregated education" (Tyack and Hansot 1992). The passage of Title IX in 1972, which prohibits gender discrimination in all federally-funded educational programs and activities, supported liberal feminism's goal of equal rights for women. Both Title IX, premised on gender integration, and racial desegregation engage the discourse of "equality through sameness"—the belief that separate but equal, in fact, can never be equal—and demand integration and equal access to public resources.

"Separate-But-Equal" Returns in the Contemporary Era
In the contemporary era, single-sex education has proven to be a particularly malleable schooling option, receiving support from groups representing a wide range of social and political interests. Each group has cited a girl problem or a boy problem to justify a particular course of action. Here, I focus on three groups and their respective claims and proposals: (1) women's rights advocates, who highlight girls' subordination in coeducational settings and argue that all-female schools can empower girls; (2) a "boy industry" camp that counters claims of a girl problem by citing problems boys confront and making assertions about biological sex differences that warrant separate forms of schooling; and (3) a most recent camp that argues that all-male schools are a possible solution to the academic and social needs of Black boys.

Various women's rights groups have supported all-female public education under the banner of sex equality. These groups made waves in the wake of the Supreme Court's non-decision in *Vorcheimer v. School District of Philadelphia,* which at this point remains the last official judicial word on the subject of single-sex education (Minow 2010). The plaintiff, Susan Vorcheimer, alleged that students at Central High School, an all-male high school in Philadelphia, were being held to a higher standard than students at the nearby Philadelphia High School for Girls (Girls' High). Central's mere name and national reputation as a selective secondary school, and Girls' High's history as training school for public school teachers, supported Vorcheimer's claim (Salomone 2003). The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was a particularly vocal ally for the plaintiff, submitting a brief—penned by future Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg—arguing that sex-separate schools in a male-dominated society could never truly be equal.[9]

After the Supreme Court split on the case in 1977, producing no decision, a state court in 1984 directed that Central become coeducational on the basis of findings of gross inequalities (in teachers, resources, and the range of subjects available for instruction) between the two schools. While Central could not exclude girls, there was no opposition to Girls' High remaining all-female. Girls' High supporters claimed that an all-female institution should remain an option for some girls, since such an institution can empower its students. As Martha Minow (2010: 54) writes, "people seem to have the view that symmetrical treatment of historic boys' and historical girls' schools do not remedy sex-based educational disadvantages." In a fascinating twist, some of the logic of separate as inherently unequal in the *Brown* decision was not applied in the

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[9] The brief quoted *The Academic Revolution* (Jencks and Riesman 1968: 297-298) by sociologists Christopher Jencks and David Riesman: "In the context of the subordinate place so long assigned to women in society, no school 'sister' to Central can supply an educational experience genuinely equal in character, quality and effectiveness."

impassioned defense some made for keeping Girls' High all-female. While the Court had decided that a "feeling of inferiority" had crept into the "the hearts and minds" of Black schoolchildren in race-segregated schools (Simson 2005), Girls' High supporters claimed that an all-female environment instead produced feelings of empowerment.

United States v. Virginia (1996) was the second major court case of consequence for single-sex education.[10] Like the federal appeals decision in *Vorcheimer,* the decision handed by the Supreme Court in *United States v. Virginia* hinged on the issue of sex discrimination in public schools. The Court struck down all-male education at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, meaning that the state had failed to offer opportunities for women equivalent to the school's rigorous academic curriculum and unique mission of preparing its students to be "citizen-soldiers." VMI failed to prevent women from matriculating, hastily creating a women's program that fell far short of VMI's offerings. VMI attorneys later relied on the logic of essential gender differences to argue that the institution offered a program suited for men's distinctive developmental characteristics (Salomone 2003). The Court's support of the principle of separate-but-equal—by "requiring that any educational institution designed separately for women and men be equal in every material respect" (Pillard 2008: 290)—would later determine the updated 2006 Department of Education guidelines on single-sex education.

The girl empowerment camp later received support from various sources that exposed severe gender biases in coeducational schools. These included, most notably, Carol Gilligan's work on the different psychosocial development of boys and girls, the American Association for University Women's 1992 report *How Schools Shortchange Girls,* and the book *Failing at Fairness* (1995) by Education professors David and Myra Sadker. The AAUW report (1992) and *Failing at Fairness* drew on empirical data in classrooms to conclude that girls were at a competitive disadvantage in schools, where teachers tended to favor boys. This resulted in a drop in girls' self-esteem, lowered self-expectations, and ultimately, lower achievement. The AAUW report, in particular, drew on Carol Gilligan's work, which had been instrumental in helping to fuel a continued belief in the "girl problem" in the 1980s. Due to distinctive psychosocial patterns of development, Gilligan argued, girls and women possess a unique form of moral reasoning based on caring and empathy (Gilligan 1982)

Gilligan and her collaborators (1990) argued that girls are profoundly affected when their "different voice" is dismissed or underappreciated. They also argued that teenage girls are often silenced by patriarchal practices during adolescence. Although Gilligan's work inspired a number of bestselling pop-psychology books that amplified assumptions about essential gender differences,[11] multiple empirical studies have refuted her findings of categorical difference

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[10] *United States v. Virginia,* 518 U.S. 515 (1996).

[11] These include *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1997) by Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule, and *The Wonder of Girls* (2003) by Michael Gurian. *Reviving Ophelia* (2005) by Mary Pipher helped to extend the lineage of work showing how confident girls become demoralized when they face sexist cultural expectations during adolescence (Barnett and Rivers 2004). A 1992 AAUW survey reported that young girls had lower less self-esteem than boys, and that schools were largely to blame. Several comprehensive studies have since refuted the AAUW study, finding insignificant differences in self-esteem levels for boys and girls (Kling et al. 1999; Major et al. 1999) and greater academic engagement among girls (Lee, Chen, and Smerdon 1996), while other scholars have since criticized the study for exaggerating its findings (Kling et al. 1999). But the work of Gilligan and associated scholars continued to inspire many popular books that propagated the idea of a "self-esteem swan dive" for girls (Barnett and Rivers 2004) and helped to reinforce the belief in a "girl problem."

(Friedman, Robinson and Friedman 1987; Walker 1984). Further, various social scientific studies have cast doubt on the connection between self-esteem and academic achievement (Riordan 1998), a key claim in the 1992 AAUW report, and in the Sadkers' findings that teachers pay more attention to boys than to girls (Kleinfeld 1998).

The existence of a "girl crisis" has been disputed by some critics who argue that there is, instead, a persistent "boy problem" in schools. These critics point to studies showing that gender differences in achievement in math and science are insignificant, and that girls outperform boys in other subjects such as reading and writing (Sommers 2000). They also point out that boys are far more likely than girls to be diagnosed as having behavioral disorders and learning disabilities (and to be prescribed medicine to treat them), and to be disciplined in school (Gurian and Stevens 2005). Christina Hoff Sommers (2000: 43), an outspoken critic of those who trumpet a "girl problem," wrote that "[a] boy today, through no fault of his own, finds himself implicated in the social crime of 'shortchanging" girls.'" Sommers's critics accused her of assuming that gender is a zero-sum game whereby gains in school for girls come at boys' expense (Corbett, Hill, and St. Rose 2008; Kimmel 1999), or as Barrie Thorne describes it, a "seesaw" logic whereby one gender is presumed to be down if the other is up (Women 2001).

In recent years, a "boy industry" has emerged claiming that boys face more academic and social disadvantages than girls. The major boy industry proponents have tended to be conservative and politically right-wing, stressing essential differences between boys and girls, and in some cases explicitly tying their beliefs to religious agendas (Dobson 2001). Two major spokespersons for the boy industry, Leonard Sax and Michael Gurian, rely more on brain and neurobiological research to advance their claims of essential differences between boys and girls. Leonard Sax, the founder and director of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE), claims that "gender-blind changes" in instructional techniques in the past thirty years have neglected hardwired differences and have put boys at a relative disadvantage to girls (2007).[12] The essential differences camp emphasizes that a commitment must be made to embracing and honoring difference, and to embedding a philosophy of essential difference into daily instruction and learning. Their texts are mostly popular, practice-oriented texts (Weaver-Hightower 2003), and have become *de facto* policy in the absence of much academic research on this area (Lingard 2003). A number of scholars have challenged such empirical claims of biological and cognitive differences between boys and girls (Meehan 2007; Barnett and Rivers 2004) and instead highlight the importance of societal and learning conditions that may differentially impact motivation for boys and girls (Eliot 2009). In spite of strong evidence to the contrary (Eliot 2009; Halpern et al. 2011) beliefs in essential, dichotomous gender differences continue to resonate in the public sphere, and are commonly emphasized in media reports on single-sex schools.[13]

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[12] Gurian and Stevens (2005) offer a similar argument that conventional schooling actually favors girls. Sax (2007) has relied on data from the National Institute of Mental Health. He argues that boys on average develop more slowly than girls, and when they are forced to learn—particularly in reading and writing—at an early age when they are not developmentally ready, they become unmotivated and possibly come to hate learning and schooling. Sax recommends in some cases holding boys back a year in school until they are ready to enter. Meanwhile, theories of brain differences continue to gain steam. One of the leading scholars of brain-difference research, Simon Baron-Cohen, writes in *The Essential Difference* (2003) that evolution caused men to have, on average, a more "systematizing brain," while women have, on average, a more "empathizing brain."

[13] For example, in a September 5, 2011 article in the Rochester, New York-based *Democrat and Chronicle,* an author reporting on a new all-male high school wrote: "For years, research has reinforced that boys and girls have

Aligning themselves with claims about essential biological sex differences, the boy industry has emerged as a force in contemporary debates over single-sex education. Some of these advocates have tried to move beyond the description of gender as a zero-sum game; one gender's gains, they argue, do not come at the other's expense because a gendered crisis exists for *both* boys *and* girls (Gurian and Stevens 2005; Sax 2007). The argument over which gender suffers more is flawed because as long as each suffers differently, then the two genders cannot be compared. While not backing down on her belief in a "girl problem," Carol Gilligan (1996) has also called attention to a crisis of boyhood, asserting that boys undergo psychological and social trauma through early adulthood.

Part of feminist opposition to contemporary same-sex education is motivated by efforts to dislodge dichotomous difference as the focus of gender-related questions, questioning the homogenization of girls' circumstances and experiences (Rhode 1990), an assumption conveyed by gender essentialists. The essential differences camp argues that equality and difference do not necessarily form an antithetical relationship. Yet those who assume fixed and dichotomous gender differences that nonetheless may be compatible with equality must deal with the fact that these categories are routinely made into "normative statements that organize cultural understandings of sexual difference" (Scott 1988: 46). Claims that boys and girls learn differently and have different motivations are problematic because, although they are said to be based on scientific evidence, tend to embed and naturalize social, economic, and historical processes—included in a long history of racial and gender segregation—that have shaped contemporary contours of difference, both real and imagined (Scott 1988). Furthermore, normative statements about differences between boys and girls overlook variation among boys and among girls.

A recent report sponsored by the AAUW (Corbett, Hill, and St. Rose 2008) provides the stiffest challenge yet to categorical assertions that boys are in crisis. Analyzing boys' and girls' performance on a variety of standardized exams,[14] and disaggregating those results by race and class, the report finds that achievement differences between all boys and all girls are insignificant compared to differences between black and Hispanic students on the one hand, and white and Asian students, on the other. Christianne Corbett and her colleagues put it succinctly: "if a crisis exists, it is a crisis for African American and Hispanic students, and students from lower-income families—both boys and girls" (2008: 68). Their findings show enormous diversity among girls and among boys, with extensive overlap between the genders as groups. Achievement differences within girls as a group and those within boys as group are larger than those between "all girls" and "all boys" (Campbell and Sanders 2002; Willingham and Cole 1997). Individual variation more than dichotomous group differences is the most frequent pattern in studies of sex differences.

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different learning styles, largely because of different brain chemistries. Boys have more testosterone, which makes them more active and physical, whereas a predominance of estrogen means many girls tend to work better independently and are more introspective" (Lankes 2011).

[14] This includes the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as "the Nation's Report Card," and the SAT and the ACT college entrance exams

"Equality through Difference" and the Crisis of Black Boys

  The notion of a "boy problem" is perhaps not exaggerated so much as it is misapplied: the most severe boy problem is a *Black boy problem* or *crisis*.[15] Of course, African American girls continue to underachieve relative to whites and Asians, but they perform significantly better than African American boys in reading (Corbett, Hill and St. Rose 2008) and are more likely than African American boys to graduate from high school (Green and Winters 2006).[16] Evidence of a Black boy crisis includes the academic underperformance of African American boys relative to other groups (boys and girls), the disproportionate representation of African American boys in special education programs, and higher rates of disciplining, suspension, and expulsion of African American boys in schools (Davis 2001).

  The "Black boy crisis" in schools is part of a larger discourse about Black men "in crisis." Typically, this discourse focuses on the high rates of African American men—especially disadvantaged, African American men—who are unemployed, incarcerated, and perpetrators and victims of violent crimes (Noguera 1997). Some schools and community organizations recognize the vulnerability of African American boys and provide mentoring and job training programs (Davis 2001), and "rite-of-passage" programs aimed at preparing young African American men for fatherhood and community responsibility (Watson and Smitherman 1996). The perceived importance of finding positive male role models for African American boys in these programs resonates with movements for single-sex education of African American boys (Singh, Vaught, and Mitchell 1998).

  Belief in a Black boy crisis inspired the design of the country's first all-male, all-Black public school in the city of Detroit. Citing a number of disturbing statistics regarding young Black men in the city—low high school graduation rates and poor academic achievement, high rates of homicide, and the overrepresentation of Black men in Michigan prisons—the Detroit school board in 1991 determined that all-male public academies were a necessary intervention. The board planned to offer 560 seats in three all-male academies and 1200 students applied (Minow 2010). Spencer Holland, an educational psychologist, influenced the design of the school, which was to have many male teachers. Holland claimed that Black boys in the early-elementary school years suffered because of a lack of positive male role models in their lives (Salomone 2003). Despite active vocal support from several constituencies, including African American mothers, the academics were met with resistance from the ACLU and the National Organization for Women's Legal Defense Fund (NOWLDF). These groups argued that the schools discriminated on the basis of sex, and they would ultimately win in court.

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[15] Latino students, and particularly Latino boys, also underperform in school in relation to their white and Asian peers (Kao and Thompson 2003, Cammarota 2004). While the California single-gender academies that opened up in the late 1990s were intended, in part, to provide more schooling options for all low-income minority students in that state (Hubbard and Datnow 2005), there is evidence that the various academic and social problems facing African American boys make them the most vulnerable group of schoolchildren in the United States today (McCready 2009; Noguera 2008). There have also been more efforts by various groups and officials to found all-boys schools that were explicitly intended to target African American boys. For these reasons, I focus specifically on all-boys schools with African-American populations. California's inclusion of Latino students in the design of its single-gender program reflected the large Latino population in that state.

[16] According to 2005 and 2007 NAEP data, in grades 4, 8, and 12, girls outperformed boys in reading in all racial and ethnic groups, while differences in math performance were small or insignificant. African American boys were the *only* group in the sample where more than 50% of its members scored below proficient in all three grades.

The stark racial dimension of the Detroit case complicated the issue of single-sex education. The ACLU and NOWLDF challenge had drawn the ire of the schools' supporters, who argued that racial considerations were not fairly accounted for. In the eyes of school proponents, even the make-up of the attorneys was troubling; the ACLU attorneys were women, and neither the lead attorney for the ACLU nor the NOWLDF was African American. As Rosemary Salomone (2003: 136) writes, "if we consider typical class assignment patterns in urban schools nationwide, the notion that it is unconstitutional to segregate African-American males appears absurd at best and disingenuous at worst." Though the ACLU and its allies had appealed to the letter of the law in claiming that the Detroit academies were "discriminating" on the basis of sex, the stubborn focus on gender overlooked the racial and social class-inflected realities of Detroit public schools, which were 90 percent African American at the time.

Indeed, addressing the "Black boy crisis" in single-sex schools means also addressing the crisis in largely *single-race* schools. These schools segregate African American boys from African American girls, *but they also continue to segregate African American boys from white boys and girls.* The essential differences and nature-based theories cast boys and girls as opposites, but that basic frame hides a significant point. For the single-sex schooling of African American boys, many significant lines of difference—both practical, real-life differences, and lines of analytic difference—are found not only between Black boys and Black girls, but also between African American boys and boys (and girls) of other racial and ethnic groups. While popular media accounts of single-sex education largely frame this form of schooling around the issue of gender equity, case studies like the Detroit academies—and the two schools in my study—show that matters of equality go far beyond what is fair or just for a single gender.

The single-sex schooling movement in the U.S. confronts a contemporary moment marked by steadily increasing rates of racial resegregation. While students of color comprise almost half of all children in public schools, most attend schools where the student population is 30% white or less (Orfield and Lee 2007). Furthermore, a "90/90" pattern is found in the most segregated schools: Nearly 90% of the "high-minority" schools, or those with 90% minority student populations, are in high-poverty, class-disadvantaged areas (Orfield and Lee 2005).[17] Recent significant court decisions have halted racial integration and have the potential to maintain segregation in schools. In *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007) the Supreme Court struck down efforts by Seattle schools to assign student placements on the basis of race in order to achieve "racial balancing" that accorded with the proportion of white and non-white students in the school district.[18] Using language that, interestingly, resembles a possible rationale to support *gender* segregation, the majority wrote: "classifying and assigning school-children according to a binary conception of race is an extreme approach" (Greenhouse 2007). Meanwhile, lower courts have for two decades trailed off in the number of racial desegregation orders, even when provided with evidence that the likely result is increased segregation in public schools (Levit 2005).

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[17] The racial and ethnic make-up of these schools can vary significantly by region; for example, Latinos are the largest minority group in public schools in the West, while Blacks are the largest in every other region of the U.S. (Orfield and Lee 2007).
[18] *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* 127 U.S. 2738 (2007).

Single-Sex Education Today

Two major developments have encouraged the expansion of single-sex education nationwide. In 2006, the Department of Education issued new guidelines that did not violate Title IX, allowing for single-gender classes, activities, and schools if certain requirements were met. Districts can now offer a single-sex school for one gender, need not offer a coordinate single-sex school for the other, and need not provide an explicit rationale for a single-sex school. In these ways, guidelines for single-sex schools are less strict than those for single-sex classrooms. The schools must, however, be "substantially equal" in terms of courses, services, and facilities. Finally, all-male and all-female charters are exempt from the need to provide a coeducational or single-gender option for the other gender (Chadwell 2010). With these lax guidelines, the number of single-sex schooling environments has increased substantially in recent years. According to the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education, in 2011 there were approximately 500 schools nationwide offering single-sex opportunities, at least 116 of which were considered single-sex schools, meaning most or all school activities and classes were in a setting that was all-female or all-male. These numbers were significantly up from 2002, when only about a dozen schools offered single-sex arrangements.

Despite the failed efforts of the Detroit academies, advocates for all-male public education for Black boys have made great strides by aligning their efforts with the "equality through difference" principle—an incarnation of the "separate but equal" doctrine—that drives the wider school choice movement. School choice, which gives parents and legal guardians the option of selecting their children's school, has gained much ground in the past two decades, as evidenced by more open enrollment plans, voucher programs, and legislation encouraging the opening of charter schools (Feinberg and Lubienski 2008). School choice supporters argue that in a pluralistic society parents and legal guardians should have the right to control where their children are educated (Reich 2008) and that schools will ultimately improve with the constant threat of losing students (Feinberg and Lubienski 2008). Some advocates claim that school choice will provide more opportunities for disadvantaged children, though some research (Bell 2008) demonstrates that low-income parents may lack the cultural capital and knowledge necessary to make informed school choice decisions, and to be effective advocates for their children.

What is Known about Black Boys in All-Male Schools?

Prior to the creation of California's singer-gender academies (SGAs), which opened in the late 1990s, the majority of research on single-sex schools focused on issues of gender equity for girls and young women (Mael 1998). This was a result of larger concerns over girls' disadvantages in coed schools. Beginning with research on the SGAs, literature on single-sex schools has generally pursued two lines of research. The first has explored whether the schools help students academically. The second related line of research has explored the "theory of change" (Fergus and Noguera 2010) driving each strategy designed by educators who implemented all-male schools and traced how those strategies play out in practice. Research on academic outcomes for Black boys in all-male schools is inconclusive because a majority of these studies use private schools in their samples, though there is some indication that low-income boys of color showed higher rates of achievement in all-male settings (Hudley 1995;

Riordan 2002). In a two-year study of the SGAs, a research team (Hubbard and Datnow 2005; Hubbard and Datnow 2002), found that positive student outcomes in single-sex schools did not depend on the single-sex arrangement per se, but rather on factors not related to the type of school, such as additional resources and caring, proactive teachers. It remains difficult to isolate the precise cause of these outcomes. While school staff members' shared commitment to single-sex education may result in higher academic achievement among their students, some schools, such as charters or others with more resources, may attract better teachers to begin with.

The two most comprehensive studies to date on all-boys public education have yielded intriguing findings about what motivates educators to turn to all-male education in the first place. In addition to Hubbard and her colleagues' SGAs study, a second ongoing study (the Black and Latino Male Schools Intervention Study) is being conducted by a research team at the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University. This study focuses on various aspects of five all-male schools in three cities over a three year period. These two studies have offered two possible explanations for why educators support this form of schooling for Black boys. The first explanation focuses on the ability of single-sex schools to develop curricula targeted to the particular academic needs of these boys. Several school officials in the study conducted by NYU researchers (Fergus and Noguera 2010), for example, sought to remedy low academic skills among male students by raising academic expectations and implementing relevant curriculum and instruction connected to the boys' daily lives. The second explanation for educators' support of these schools focuses on boys' perceived social and emotional needs. All-male schools may assist boys in creating "positive" masculine identities that shun physical aggression and sexual prowess, and resist drug and gang influences (Fergus and Noguera 2010). Single-sex environments may also provide positive role models for boys, particularly for those whose fathers are not a strong presence in the boys' lives (Fergus and Noguera 2010; Riordan 2002; Salomone 2003). These claims echo assumptions about how boys' development is hindered without a strong male presence, and how women-led classrooms and single-mother households may stunt proper male development by feminizing them (Woody 2002). These findings strongly indicate that educators who turn to single-sex education do so as a way of "undoing" (Fergus and Noguera 2010) or addressing problems—academic, social/emotional, and to a lesser degree, health—that afflict Black boys who are "in crisis."

These findings assume that the staff members inside single-sex schools are generally on board with the model. Yet, according to Datnow and her colleagues (2001), the California academies were ultimately unsustainable because there was a lack of a shared "ideological commitment" to the single-sex model. The researchers suggested that single-sex schools are more likely to survive if staff members are committed to the idea that boys and girls have different educational and developmental needs. In fact, the success of single-sex schools may be more the result of organizational characteristics like positive student-teacher relationships and ample resources than about all-male education per se (Hubbard and Datnow 2005). Cornelius Riordan (1998), who has written extensively on single-sex schooling, notes the importance of basic compliance—on the part of both the school staff and the parents—in facilitating school success. Indeed, buy-in from staff members is central to any successful school reform effort (Louis and Marks 1998) and higher levels of buy-in are typically found in charters, which can recruit and hire their own teachers (Buckley and Schneider 2007).

Meanwhile, Leonard Sax, the director for the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education, while under fire from critics, has tempered some of his beliefs about single-sex

education. He now argues that single-sex education is only appropriate for some boys and some girls. He has also acknowledged that single-sex schools are likely to fail and shut down unless four conditions are met: teachers receive proper training, teachers receive adequate support and are not overburdened, there is no change in leadership that would disrupt the single-sex arrangement, and parents are properly involved and informed during the transition to this form of schooling (Sax 2009).[19] David Chadwell (2010), the former statewide facilitator for public single-sex programming in South Carolina, which has more of these programs than any other state, has corroborated Sax's claims, arguing that involving stakeholders (parents, teachers, and administrators) in the design of the schools and clearly articulating a rationale for why these schools are necessary, are critical for implementation. Not incidentally, these conditions are not specific to single-sex schools, meaning that the success of the schools may not have to do with the school type itself, but with other factors that are found in well-functioning, high-achieving schools (Hubbard and Datnow 2005).

The California-based researchers found that teachers relied on traditional gender stereotypes because they lacked a shared commitment to single-sex education. In several of the schools, researchers observed that the boys were disciplined more often and more strictly, and that teachers in all-girls classes were more nurturing (Datnow, Hubbard, and Woody 2001). The boys were perceived as "bad," which supports research showing how African American boys' indiscretions are perceived as intentional, and, thus, more deserving of punishment (Ferguson 2001; Pascoe 2007). In the California academies, boys, aware of their all-male environment, ratcheted up stereotypically masculine behaviors such as physical strength and toughness, and their teachers tolerated these behaviors based on stereotypical expectations of disadvantaged boys (Woody 2002). Gendered assumptions were also central to the shared commitment staff members made at the only surviving academy. There, the principal actively promoted the belief that male teachers can focus on instilling proper discipline to an all-boys classroom, which female teachers ostensibly were less capable of doing (Datnow, Hubbard, and Woody 2001). These findings appear to support Leonard Sax's (2009) claim that in the absence of teacher training, girls tend to do better than they normally would in same-gender schools, and boys, worse, perhaps as a result of different expectations teachers have of them.

An Urban Ecology of All-Male Public Education

This dissertation fills significant voids in knowledge of the dynamics of all-male public high schools. What interventions do single-sex public schools make on behalf of their African American male students? And what impact do those interventions have on the boys' masculinity formation and life chances? By comparing two all-male public high schools in the same city—with different institutional characteristics but mostly similar student demographics—I was able

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[19] I heard Dr. Sax make these claims during a speech at the annual conference of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education in Atlanta, Georgia in October 2009. He has also made the same claims in other public venues. While critics (Eliot 2009; Rivers and Barnett 2011) continue to criticize Sax for exaggerating biological differences between boys and girls, it should be noted that Sax appears to have brought more nuance to his support of single-sex education. In particular, Sax no longer argues that sex separation in schools will benefit all boys and all girls. He now stresses that single-sex schools will not lead to better student outcomes without a commitment to that model from the staff, and without strong school leadership; and that single-sex schools should be an option for parents who believe that their son or daughter would stand to benefit from these schools.

to document different approaches to all-male education and the consequences for their students. I set out to see how each school framed a "crisis" of Black boys and explored their implicit and explicit rationales for an all-male model. Drawing on the work of Malcolm Spector and John Kitsuse (1987), I refer to crises as severe forms of "social problems," or those issues that individuals and groups believe require correction action and the mitigation of social disadvantage. Given beliefs in certain crises, I am also concerned with how various individuals within school communities engage in "claims-making activities," or the process by which they try to mobilize others in improving social conditions.

Comparative case studies of two schools in the same city, during the same period of time, allowed me to explore a local ecology of schooling, revealing not only the two schools' unique relationships with one another, but also how they each formed distinctive relationships with other institutions and groups in the larger community. While other studies (Datnow, Hubbard and Woody 2001; Fergus and Noguera 2010) have been concerned with separating out and comparing particular dimensions of the internal lives of schools—e.g. the curriculum, resources, the theories that drive teaching strategies—my dissertation highlights not only within-school dynamics, but also institutional ecologies and relations across schools.

Why these schools emerged when they did, and the historical context in which they did, was in part due to a belief by school officials that there was a mismatch between their student population—class disadvantaged African American boys—and "normal" coeducational schools (Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack 2001). In both schools, nearly everyone with whom I spoke, from students to staff members and parents, described girls as sexual distractions, but the absence of girls was not central to justifications they offered for the all-male model. Urban Charter and Perry High more often relied on other all-male arenas in justifying their existence. By paying attention to how Urban Charter and Perry were oriented to *one another*, and by paying attention to those schools' relationships with an ecology of varied fall-male sites and trajectories, I was able to track many of the vital intra-institutional and the inter-institutional practices that limit and improve the life chances of Black boys, and care for and control them. Looking at the construction of boyhoods and manhoods within schools, situated in relation to the schools' ties to other important social domains, shows how "the formation of the person and the history of the educational institution are simultaneously at issue" (Connell 1989: 292).

Located in a distinctive urban ecology of all-male public education at the start of the 21st century, Urban Charter and Perry High represent two distinct—but tenuous—locations on a path that leads in opposite directions for Black boys: one that improves their chances for class mobility and points the way to expanded opportunities after graduation, and another that threatens to turn the boys into mere statistics and anonymous Black men (Calmore 2006). The two institutions tend to shape distinctive kinds of manhood related to their locations, resources, and mandates. This analysis and my comparison of processes of masculinity-making in each school brings fresh insights to ethnographies of the making of masculinities in school that have focused on variation within a single school (Ferguson 2001; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Pascoe 2007; Willis 1977).

At Urban Charter, various institutional practices were aimed at cultivating young "gentlemen" (a term often used in the school), or "urban gents." Drawing on the larger rhetoric of choice at the school, staff members stressed a particular kind of self-accountability whereby the boys could express agency: they could choose to participate in an array of school-wide efforts that were meant to save them. This form of manhood cultivates a form of respectability

(Jones 2010; Skeggs 2002) that signals upward class mobility and the honing of middle-class tastes and skills. Urban Charter was guided by an image of what I call *progressive Black manhood.*[20]

Urban Charter administrators modeled the school after a local, private all-male prep school and distanced it from the local public schools attended, in the view of the staff, by "bad boys" (Ferguson 2001), or who were framed as what I refer to as "banished boys." In this way, social class emerged at Urban Charter as a major organizing principle. The school stressed that the disadvantages that had accrued to the boys based on their social class positioning could be overcome by deemphasizing their Blackness and putting them on an educational path toward more privilege. In seeking serious students and recruiting boys at charter middle schools, Urban Charter administrators were bent on saving boys who might otherwise be "collateral damage" in coed public schools. One assumption behind the school's hidden curriculum—which I refer to loosely here as the beliefs, rules, and norms that did not appear on the school's official, "formal" academic charter (Giroux 2001)—was that not all Black boys could be saved. Adopting this "triage mentality" (Oakes, Rogers, and Lipton 2005) required an active construction and defense of symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002) that separated "those" banished boys from "our" urban gents. The boys who posed a threat served as a specter (Butler 1990, Pascoe 2007) that the school needed to invoke in order to buttress its own institutional identity. Finally, the staff at Urban Charter attempted to remove boys from the "school-to-prison pipeline" (Wald and Losen 2003, Vaught 2011) before they were too far down it to be saved.

The Perry community viewed the crisis of their Black boys in much the same way as Urban Charter: the boys lived in an era of punitive social control and rising incarceration that signaled poor life chances and exclusion from mainstream institutions. Largely denied the full rights and privileges of dominant manhood (Ross 1998), these boys were pushed to the margins and were situated on a school-to-prison pipeline. The Urban Charter community viewed the Perry boys as a degraded "other" with a fate the Urban Charter boys were intent on avoiding. But it was precisely those boys for whom the Perry High community struggled to provide care. I call the sum of the negative life options and practices, which was sometimes assumed as a destination, a *regressive Black manhood.* This form of manhood is not regressive in that it is "worse" in any analytic sense, but in invoking this identity, various individuals draw on historical discourses that have cast African American men as savages, as not as civilized as white men, and therefore as not "progressing" (Bederman 1995).

Given its status as a neighborhood public school and not a public charter, Perry lacked a school-wide commitment to why exactly an all-boys model had been accepted. Perry also lacked

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[20] This term differs from the notion of a "progressive Black masculinity" that several scholars (Collins 2006; Mutua 2006) have written about in recent years. Progressive Black masculinity is framed as an attempt to foster a form of Black masculinity that is essentially a political project, as one that is pro-Black, pro-Feminist, and antisexist. My use of "progressive Black manhood," on the other hand, is not political in this regard, is more narrowly construed, and stresses how manhood should be thought of in relation to "childhood." This conception of gender along an axis from boyhood to manhood has been central to dominant depictions and cultural images of African American men since slavery. As I describe in more detail in the methodology section, these scholars' use of "masculinity" is different from my use of "manhood" in an important way. I am conceptualizing "manhood" as a discourse whose meaning changes across time and contexts, a concept that historically preceded "masculinity." Manhood in its basic sense refers to "what it means to be a man," while masculinity, which emerged as a popular term in the early 1900s, was originally one dominant form of boyhood and manhood (which contrasted with the previously dominant form, "manliness") (Bederman 1995).

collective buy-in from staff, compared with Urban Charter. Still, the administrators and some teachers made laudable efforts to provide care for boys, describing the need to create school-family partnerships—a caregiving network—that would support overburdened, largely female-led, families. Parents and school officials both felt that one consequence of their community's weakening political economy was an erosion of trust and caring relationships in the community. Perry was viewed as having the potential to fill a deep void in caregiving.

Research Sites

My dissertation, based on a combination of intensive fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and an analysis of school documents, focuses on two all-male public high schools in a large east coast city that I call Morgan. These are the only all-male public schools in the city and in the state. One school, which I call Perry High School, served approximately 450 boys in grades 7-12, and has been single-sex since the 2005-2006 school year. It was located in the southern region of Morgan. The school had seven administrators: a principal and six assistant principals who focused on different sectors of school life (e.g. instruction, discipline) and employed 30 teachers and 15 secretarial and support staff members.

The other school, Urban Charter, served approximately 370 boys in grades 9-11, and was located in the east section of Morgan. While boys had to apply for admission, the school admitted students on a first-come, first-served basis and did not require an entrance exam. The school opened in 2007 with one grade, and added a grade each year until the 2009-2010 school year, so there was not yet a class of 12th graders when I conducted my research at the school. Approximately 60% of the students attended regular public schools for middle school. Most of the remaining students attended a charter middle school, and a small minority came from private or parochial schools.

Urban Charter had three administrators—the founder/CEO, a principal, and a Dean of students—and 13 secretarial and support staff members. The school also had a Board of Directors, with full fiduciary responsibilities, who made sure that the school complied with state and national laws and that the school abided by the terms of the charter; the Board also oversaw the implementation of general policies. Students at both Urban Charter and Perry High were nearly all-African American (99%) and from low-income families (89% of the students at Perry qualified for free or reduced-priced lunch, and at Urban Charter, 86%). While I was not able to ascertain exact figures, Urban Charter appeared to have a higher percentage of families who qualified as working poor, with household adults who spent at least 27 weeks out of the year working or looking for work, but with incomes still at or below the poverty line (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011). From my interviews I determined which families were poor and working poor, and there was a slightly higher percentage of working poor families in my sample of interview respondents at Urban Charter. (See the table at the end of this section for a summary of school characteristics.)

Morgan is a large city in a major metropolitan area on the east coast. Although non-Hispanic whites comprised the majority of city residents in the period following World War II, a large number of African Americans moved north to Morgan during the Great Migration (Wilkerson 2010). In 2010, African Americans made up the city's largest racial group at 43% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). While the number of Asian Americans and Hispanics has grown considerably since the 1980s, the regions of Morgan outside of the

substantially more affluent downtown area remain overwhelming Black (these regions include south Morgan and east Morgan, home to Perry High and Urban Charter, respectively). With populations over 80% native-born African American, these regions combined make up one of the most heavily concentrated Black urban areas in the United States.

Like other major urban areas, Morgan began to suffer from the effects of deindustrialization in the 1950s, as blue-collar factory jobs disappeared (Wilson 1997). This hurt African Americans in the city in particular. In 2010, Morgan had a poverty rate of nearly 26.7%, which was nearly double the national average of 15.1% in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The south and east sections of Morgan (which housed Perry High and Urban Charter, respectively) were marked by severe *de facto* racial and class segregation, and the student populations at the two schools reflected their surrounding neighborhoods. (Although as a charter school, Urban Charter drew students from outside of east Morgan as well.) In later chapters, I provide a more detailed picture of the neighborhoods in which the schools resided.

As part of a comprehensive school reform effort, in 2001 the Morgan school district ceded nearly all control of its schools to the state. Officials in the state capital were concerned with the generally poor student achievement and increasing financial problems in the school district. State and city officials agreed to create an independent committee, called the School Turnaround Committee (STAC), which would be responsible for managing the city's finances and would assist the superintendent in managing other areas of the school district. STAC would have a major hand in introducing the first ever all-boys public schools to the city. The reform efforts ushered in a privatization model that both encouraged the growth of charter schools, which are "publicly funded schools that are granted significant autonomy in curriculum and governance in return for greater accountability" (Buckley and Schneider 2007: 1). STAC could also contract with for-profit educational management organizations (EMOs) to oversee the city's lowest-achieving schools. The committee hired an EMO called Excel to manage Perry High School, and Excel made the decision to experiment with a single-sex model.

Table: School Characteristics

	Type	Students	Staff	Resources
Perry High School	- Neighborhood Public - Grades 7-12 - Converted to all-boys in 2005	450 Boys 99% African American 89% qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch	7 administrators 30 teachers 15 support staff members	- School district provides additional resources - Department of Labor grant
Urban Charter School	- Public Charter - Grades 9-11 - Founded as all-boys in 2007	370 boys 99% African-American 86% qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch	3 administrators 24 teachers 12 support staff members	- Board of directors - Fundraising - Extensive after-school program

Methodology

Data Collection

      I observed the two schools during the 2009-2010 school year for a total of 11 months, including the approximately nine-and-a-half month regular school year and the six week summer school period. I spent 20 to 25 hours a week at each school, sometimes splitting my days between the two schools and occasionally spending an entire day at one school. Urban Charter also had Saturday school every two weeks that I sometimes attended. I generally floated around the school, while trying to observe certain classrooms and teachers for various periods of time. At Perry, I observed eight different teachers for four to eight consecutive weeks, and one program called Second Chance—for over-aged boys who needed additional supports, many of whom who were returning from "alternative" (disciplinary) settings or juvenile prison—for most of the school year. At Urban Charter, I spent time in 13 teachers' classrooms for four to eight consecutive weeks. I used the time in the classrooms to familiarize myself with the teachers' instructional methods and their ways of interacting with students, and to get to know students before interviewing them. Outside of class, I followed boys wherever they usually went: to the cafeteria, outside, to practices and games, and to assemblies. I attended some faculty meetings and I observed special gatherings like back-to-school nights, teacher recruitment events, family information sessions, and a Freshman Induction Ceremony at Urban Charter.

      Since neither the California single-gender academies (SGAs) study nor the Black and Latino Male Schools Intervention Study (BLMSIS) employed in-depth ethnographic methods, my study is the first, to my knowledge, to explore the day-to-day life of all-male public schools. While the SGAs team interviewed the majority of the students in their study, the BLMSIS researchers only administered student questionnaires. Since the California study contained no schools with charters or special missions, my study also has the advantage of including interviews with students at an all-male charter school.

      I supplemented my observations with interviews with 142 people at the schools. The interviews were semi-standardized, combining a set of predetermined questions tailored to each different group of informants with opportunities for the interviewees to speak on topics of their choosing (Berg 2009).[21] At Perry, this included 25 interviews with students in all five grades, 19 interviews with current and former teachers, 15 administrators (the principal and assistant principal) and school support staff members (hall monitors [called "Noon Time Aides"], counselors, social workers, school volunteers), and nine current and former parents (eight mothers and one step father). At Urban Charter, this included interviews with 39 students in all three grades, 16 current and former teachers, five administrators and staff members (the CEO, the athletic director, the director of academic support, a social worker, and the admissions director), 15 parents (12 mothers, 1 father, 1 grandmother, and 1 grandfather), and 6 principals and CEOs of middle schools some of the Urban Charter boys had previously attended. I had one additional interview with a regional school district superintendent who had been instrumental in helping to get the single-sex model off the ground at Perry.[22] After getting to know boys in class, I approached them to ask if they wanted to be interviewed. I asked staff members if there were any particular students with whom they thought I should speak. The interviews with the

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[21] These interviews are also known as "semi-structured."

[22] While I interviewed 142 different people, the various counts that follow total a higher sum because some people are counted twice, such as parents who were also staff members or school volunteers.

boys typically lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and I occasionally interviewed students in pairs, particularly younger boys who I thought might feel more comfortable with a friend. Most of the interviews with adults lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and I interviewed two married couples in pairs.

As the year went on, I found myself quite integrated into the daily life in each school. This was particularly the case at Perry, whose administrators and staff members, given the particular struggles their school faced, seemed particularly enthusiastic to have my assistance. For example, a newly-formed "Achievement Center," which provided a space for students to receive extra help with their schoolwork and had organized after-school activities for boys, asked me to help tutor boys on the SAT. The senior class sponsor also asked me to lead a resume-building workshop for the seniors. At Urban Charter, I occasionally stayed after school (mandatory for boys who did not play sports), helping boys catch up on missed work, flipping through comic books with the members of the comic book and Anime club, and asking boys in the Robotics club to explain to me how they had built their latest creations.

In the course of this research was influenced by the work of contemporary scholars of childhood and youth studies (Lareau 2003; Perry 2002; Thorne 1993) who treat children as "subjects in their own right" (Best 2007: 11), and as active participants in making the social world around them rather than as passive recipients of culture. Still, I was attentive to the potential challenges in speaking intimately with a vulnerable population of boys. Various scholars (Ferguson 2001; Martin 1996) have noted that power imbalances are built into interview experiences that may cause disadvantaged individuals, especially children, to be guarded with their thoughts and perhaps even distrusting of interviewers. It was very important to build rapport with boys in class before approaching them about a possible interview. I found it useful to share with the boys my own past experiences as a middle-school teacher, and several boys called me "teacher," often asking me for help (though I was the last person they should have come to with a question about Latin). I collected a few names over the course of the school year—"Mr. O.," "researcher," "writer,"—and the boys sometimes introduced me to their friends by saying, "he's writing a book about us" and "he's doing a study about our school."

Boyhood, Manhood, and Levels of Analysis

In later chapters I will discuss in more detail the boys' varied practices and the larger cultural constructions and representations that shaped and constrained their life experiences. Here, I want to say a word about how I conceptualize gender in this study. Ideas about boyhood and manhood, in my favored formulation, are not defined by a series of traits or through an "essence" within male bodies, but rather constituted through specific cultural processes that place individuals into preexisting social categories: as boys and as men (Bederman 1995; Butler 1990). These processes draw on cultural representations and historical stereotypes of Black boyhood and Black manhood. They also affect how individuals and groups approach and interact with one another in everyday life, and how they participate in institutional practices. Thinking about gender as rooted in varied ideologies foregrounds the way in which power is distributed among different groups of men and boys, and women and girls, and therefore highlights inequalities among those groups. A focus on ideologies reaches from the taken-for-granted knowledge (ideas, customs) to the actual material conditions and living circumstances of those various groups (Foucault 1978).

As I will show, Urban Charter drew on ideas about a specific type of Black boyhood (the "banished boys," those perceived to be marginalized and at-risk for involvement in drugs, and particularly violent and criminal) to justify its own existence as an institution, as well as draw on resources available at the school to construct a different model of manhood (the "urban gents") for its own students. In focusing on the active construction of boyhoods and manhoods, this study aligns with interactional theories of gender (Schwalbe 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987) that stress that gender is constituted through the daily practices that create and reinforce differences between men and women, boys and girls, and between different groups of men.

Influenced by the path-breaking work of R.W. Connell (1987; 2005), the field of the sociology of masculinity has come to conceive of masculinity in the plural, not the singular (see also Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). While this study draws insights from the "multiple masculinities" model of documenting differences and inequalities between groups of men (Connell 1987; 2005), it seeks to avoid several limitations in this model. First, this model inadvertently tends to foster a categorical essentialism even as it embraces diversity among men, so that, for example, Black male bodies are sorted into some overarching category of "Black masculinity" (Pascoe 2007; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Second, as Marlon Ross (2005) argues, studies of Black men and boys that adopt the multiple masculinities model tend to view Black manhood as a reactive identity to an overdetermined, all powerful hegemonic masculinity, which is the most dominant and revered form of manhood. This thins out Black manhood to the extremes of hypermasculinity at one pole and complete emasculation at the other.

My study avoids this tendency and a similar tendency to dichotomize different forms of Black manhood (Anderson 1999) by revealing inconsistencies and contradictions as two Black masculinities—the "banished boys" and the "urban gents"—are constructed through one another. Throughout, I also highlight variation within each group of boys. Urban Charter community members frequently drew symbolic boundaries (as well as quite literal physical boundaries around the school in an attempt to protect and insulate their own students) between them and a homogenous group of "banished boys" in order to support its own charter, but variation was found among the boys at both schools. Larger cultural representations of Black men and boys enter into the institutional practices that shape the daily experiences of Black boys inside schools. At Perry High and Urban Charter, these practices coalesced around particular interventions aimed at addressing what the school community members perceived to be the particular needs of their students.

Chapter Snapshots

Chapters 2 and 3 lay out the institutional context of each school, including their histories and respective transitions to an all-male environment, and describe the particular crises that afflicted the students in the eyes of the adults (school officials, staff and teachers, and parents) in their lives. In chapter 2, I demonstrate how a confluence of social factors—primarily the emergence of a drug economy and the subsequent expansion of punitive policies, deindustrialization, and a weakening economy in the urban core—resulted in the declining presence of men as caregivers in the lives of children and the weakening of caregiving networks more generally as families came to distrust one another. The resulting twin crises—of declining care for a vulnerable population of Black boys, and increasing punitive social control in their lives—framed the context in which officials decided to open an all-male school. Moreover, the

administrators and several teachers sought to develop in the boys a "situated knowledge" of their place in larger structures of power.

Beginning in chapter 3, I draw out comparisons between Perry and Urban Charter. This chapter shows how school officials modeled Urban Charter after two elite schools, one an all-boys private school and the other an elite public school renowned for its Latin curriculum. These schools provided the basic template for the Urban Charter's formal, academic curriculum: what was written explicitly on the school's charter that set it apart from other schooling options for parents. The school's unofficial, hidden curriculum was also central to its existence. Through the unstated beliefs, practices, and beliefs that undergird this curriculum, I came to understand that Urban Charter community members sought to protect their students from boys who were believed to be from morally weak families and who were lawless and dangerous. Through these perceptions, and by distancing itself from other boys in need, Urban Charter helped perpetuate the very system of punitive social control that regulated and criminalized the boys at Perry.

While chapters 2 and 3 focused on crises, chapters 4 and 5 turn to the particular schooling interventions taken to address those crises, as well as the kinds of men those schools aimed to cultivate in their boys. In chapter 4, I show how the Black male leadership at Perry struggled to find ways to provide care for their boys while envisioning themselves as "social fathers," and their all-boys school as a paternal institution that would support female-led families. Significant tensions between the administrators and teachers further hampered these efforts. This chapter also describes how the boys largely sought care in the form of academic assistance.
Finally, as the Black male leadership envisioned Perry as supporting (mostly female-headed and single parent) families, various ideas and practices suggested that they hoped boys would become responsible fathers and husbands so that their own sons could one day be saved.

Chapter 5 shows how Urban Charter recruited and developed "non-traditional" boys, a term used to describe those who were believed to have a future, and in this way were set apart from "banished boys." Adults believed that restricted opportunities meant that few boys had a chance to explore different activities and academic pursuits, a problem compounded by Black men's overrepresentation in the media as being naturally skilled at certain activities, such as basketball. Although the staff promoted and took pride in feeling they encouraged a diversity of boyhoods, they still had a vision of all the boys growing up to be, in their own words, "urban gents," or independent, respectable, middle-class men who would be competitive workers in a global economy. While chapter 3 examined the school's hidden curriculum, chapter 5 focuses on the school's official mission, or what I will generally refer to as its formal curriculum: a classical curriculum grounded in Latin, a "dead language" that emerged in stark contrast to the boys' "living language" of Morgan slang, and conferred a kind of status typical of respectable men.

Chapter 6 begins and ends with the students themselves. Having examined in earlier chapters how the boys at both schools felt about being the target of a particular schooling intervention, this chapter uses a common practice among the boys—boasting and "busting" (a slang term that refers to everything from playful teasing to hurtful insulting)—as a lens into understanding the boys' sense of self and their place among their peers, which I refer to as masculine dignity. While earlier chapters were more concerned with the visions of the men that the adults wished, believed, and feared the boys might become, this chapter focuses on a central feature of the boyhood practices they often engaged in, and how those practices were differently shaped by the school they happened to attend.

At Perry, the transition from a coeducational to a single-sex environment led some members of the community to refer to it as "the gay school." These sexualized meanings became heightened fears because the boys feared that their school, which in their eyes resembled a prison, could turn them gay—just, as they believed, happened in prisons to Black men. The sexualized fears combined with the anxieties the boys already experienced over their school being "the hood school," contaminated by poverty. At Urban Charter, the boys also perceived their school as having a reputation as "the gay school," mostly because they felt they were emasculated as "schoolboys." Since Urban Charter was intended, in part, to take boys off the school-to-prison pipeline, the boys there felt a qualitatively different kind of emasculation than the Perry boys. Over time, however, it appeared that these fears receded as the boys took pride in the superior education they felt they received over the "banished boys."

In the conclusion, I will bring together the various facets of my theoretical argument and situate Perry High and Urban Charter along an axis from being banished to being saved. In an era marked by persisting *de facto* racial and class segregation, and the criminalization and mass incarceration of Black men and boys; and state-wide and national school reform efforts that have encouraged the growth of charters and experimenting with schooling models like single-sex education, two schools emerged that likely orient their boys toward different futures. This divergence was not necessarily a function of individual motivations at the two schools—both schools had hard-working, caring staff, and students who recognized their own plight and welcomed care from adults—but different institutional practices and available resources. While the emerging body of research on single-sex schools, as well as debates in the media and popular discourse, focus on the possible differences between boys and girls, my case studies call attention to an urban ecology of all-male public education that involved a complex set relations among schools, families, prisons, and peer groups. It is a story of two schools that aimed, and sometimes succeeded at, saving low-income Black boys from a future of incarceration.

CHAPTER 2:

PERRY HIGH AND THE PUNISHMENT OF BLACK BOYS

The Father-Son Breakfast

One sunny day in late May, Perry was buzzing with excitement. With the annual standardized exams now over and the long Memorial Day weekend just around the corner, staff and students alike were in good spirits. While the boys sometimes violated the school uniform policy, on this day many arrived to school in suits and other formal attire. The boys complimented each other on their "swag," or clothes, and made sure to show off their shoes: shiny brown loafers, black leather boots with fur trim, white alligator skin dress shoes. Those who needed an outfit to match the special occasion were given orange ties and blue blazers (the school colors) by the staff.

Outside the entrance to the library, one student helped another to tie his tie, and both beamed in their formal attire. On the hallway behind them was a quote painted in bold strokes years ago: "YOUR OPTIONS ARE ONLY LIMITED BY YOUR FEARS." Other inspirational quotes hung on the hallway walls around the school: "EVERY JOB IS A SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE PERSON WHO DID IT. AUTOGRAPH YOUR WORK WITH EXCELLENCE." "A GREAT PLEASURE IN LIFE IS DOING WHAT PEOPLE SAY YOU CANNOT DO." The two students eventually ran off to class, making their way down a flight of stairs that showed heavy signs of wear, the effects of hundreds of thousands of people who had traversed them during the building's nearly 100 years of existence. With enrollment down to 450 boys from well over 1,000 just a few years before, the school building often felt big for the student body; even in-between classes, the hallways never filled up, and there seemed to be empty pockets throughout the school where boys were sometimes able to hide and hang out with their friends. The dark hallways also provided some cover for boys who wanted to sneak off, as well as for the school's chronic "hall walkers." But the building's main architectural attractions still managed to shine bright, from the double marble staircase enclosed in walls filled with sparkling blue and green tiles, to the auditorium, with its shiny stage and oddly majestic brown and mustard-colored curtains.

During that late spring morning, the boys stood outside the front and side entrances of the school, waiting to be told they could board the charter busses that would take them downtown to a hotel serving as the venue for the school's first-ever Father-Son Breakfast. The school building behind them took up a small city block, its four stories and corner spires dwarfing everything in this small neighborhood of south Morgan. The building's Gothic-style architecture contrasted starkly with the tightly packed, two-story row homes that lined the surrounding one-way streets. While other neighborhoods in south Morgan had experienced gentrification and the growth of public housing in recent decades (after city officials demolished abandoned buildings to provide better housing options for residents), the immediate area around Perry had largely remained untouched, a casualty of entrenched poverty. This area of south Morgan had a median household income of $22,000, compared to $36,000 for the city.

From the northeast corner of the building, near the main side entrance, one could make out a pint-sized church, an auto shop, a fire station, and a popular corner store. While a major road and a shopping area were located a few blocks to the north, very little car traffic passed by Perry, so the area was usually quiet. Perry felt shut off from the rest of the community. But on this day, the mechanic at the auto shop and several people stepped out of their homes to observe the commotion outside Perry—the boys' collective energy, laughter, and loud chatter.

When the boys arrived at the hotel, they were greeted by men who had agreed to accompany them that day: fathers, uncles, grandfathers, family friends, pastors from church, and a few teachers from school. Everyone from the students to the men told me that the event was *unique*: a grand ballroom full of men and boys enjoying each other's company, in the luxury of a beautiful hotel overlooking a river, away from the troubling circumstances of south Morgan. Several generations of men and boys ate together and listened to speakers describe the troubles facing Black boys in Morgan. Three moments were particular striking. John Peters, a representative from a local congressman's office, greeted the guests with a message that "sons are the seeds that their fathers planted" and that "it's the responsibility of our fathers to water and nurture their seeds." Regina Gann, the state representative from a local district, picked up where Mr. Peters left off and asked the guests to look around and see how few of the men were actually the boys' *biological* fathers: "The fathers: if they're not in this room, then where are they?" Almost in unison, the guests responded loudly, "IN JAIL." Between Mr. Peters and Ms. Gann, the message was that fathers needed to be responsible, but far too many were incarcerated. This fact resonated with the message that the boys had received all year from the staff: that the crisis of Black boys was bound up with the problem of prisons.

Later, the brother of Mr. Bradley, the principal, took the microphone. Mr. Bradley earlier said that his own father had been a responsible care provider, and his brother's appearance was intended, it seemed, to provide visible evidence of two successful Black men from the same family. Mr. Bradley's brother told the guests:

> My father didn't hug and kiss me. Because back in the day that's not what brothers did. But I'm here to tell you boys: 'We love you. We care about you.' You don't need to go to Afghanistan. There's a war being waged in our own community. Parts of our community look like the third world. You can be a homeland defender.

According to Mr. Bradley's brother, while it might not be common for fathers to show their sons affection, he wanted the boys to know that we—speaking on behalf of the men in the room—loved and cared for the boys. The war metaphor implied that the boys were needed to "defend" their community. As I later describe, this appeared to mean that the boys needed to grow up and become responsible fathers themselves, so that they could save their own sons.

Finally, Leroy Downing, a representative from an organization that supports historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) ended the program with a speech with strong religious overtones. He said that his mother had known Martin Luther King, Jr., and been influenced by his religious teachings. Turning the lectern into his own pulpit, Mr. Downing quoted scripture: "For in hope we were saved…" (Romans 8:24).

Taken together, these three moments at the Father-Son Breakfast highlighted the particular crisis which the speakers believed boys at Perry faced, the intervention the school was intended to provide, and the kinds of men the boys were being asked to become. In this chapter,

I focus on that perceived crisis. The school's mission was to address the mutually constitutive problems of mass incarceration and the absence of fathers in the boys' lives. As at-risk African American boys, they were in danger of becoming a "statistic" by participating in activities—hustling drugs, participating in the underground economy, and acts of violence—that would land them in a high-security alternative school, designed to discipline the most at-risk boy; juvenile prison; and eventually in prison. All-male prisons are instruments of *punishment*; in contrast, school leaders believed that their all-male school should provide *care*, helping to meet the needs of boys who cannot meet them on their own. Prisons and Perry High represented different locations along an institutional pathway available to young, Black men: in one direction, leading to punishment; along the other, a pathway of care and more positive futures. If the crisis of Black boys involved too much punishment, then the flip side was a crisis in care, which the school hoped to ameliorate. In chapter 4, I will show how Perry school officials set out to provide care, but ironically, and sadly, fell short of this objective, in some respects coming to resemble the very kind of institution—a punitive regime—that the adults in the building wanted their boys to avoid.

The Transition from Coed to Single-Sex

Creating a Split Academy

Over the course of three years, Perry made a rocky transition from a coed to a "split academy" arrangement with a girls side and a boys side, and then to an all-male arrangement. Ineffective administrative implementation and weak staff buy-in resulted in the lack of a clear, school-wide ideological commitment to all-male education, which was also the case for several all-male public schools in California studied by Datnow and her colleagues (2001). Although they lacked a shared ideological commitment, staff members held onto a vague idea that single-sex education should work in theory, even though some expressed strong doubts over how it operated in practice.

Even before Perry made the transition from a coed to an all-male environment, the school had struggled with academic underachievement, negative student behavioral issues, and problems related to a poor school climate.[23] On the face of it, Perry was an example of "ghetto schooling" (Anyon 1997), providing inferior education to students in racially and class segregated, and socially isolated, urban communities. Perry's student body of approximately 450 students was largely class-disadvantaged, with 89% of its students qualifying for free or reduced-priced lunch. Reflecting the immediate surrounding community, Perry's student population was 99% African American.

In 2001, the Morgan school district experienced sweeping school reform, ceding control of nearly all of its public schools to the state, which was concerned with the school district's chronic student underachievement and mounting financial problems. As part of the reform efforts, the state and city agreed to create an independent committee whose members were appointed by the governor and the mayor. The School Turnaround Committee (STAC) was put

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[23] Between the 2005-2006 school year, the first year that Perry was completely all-male, and 2009-2010, the year I conducted this research, no more than 12% of 11th graders scored at or above grade-level scores in the math and reading sections of a state standardized exam. These percentages were well below the school district averages. Between the 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 school years, Perry averaged approximately 200 suspensions per year, 45 assaults, and seven weapons offenses.

in charge of fiscal oversight and basic management of the district. The reforms also included a new privatization model giving STAC the authority to hire for-profit educational management organizations (EMOs) to manage the city's lowest-achieving schools. Perry High was contracted to Excel, an EMO that had success with improving test scores in schools, and particularly charters, in other big cities.

School district officials gave Excel what they called "thin-line management," or the power to oversee and implement only the academic curriculum, and nothing beyond that like school discipline. Excel introduced a new phonics-based reading program, a more comprehensive writing curriculum, lessons that were aligned with state testing standards, and more after-school tutoring for struggling students. The EMO also added more hours of academic staff training. As part of its contract with the school district, Excel received additional per pupil funding. Teachers were given the option of transferring to other schools, and over 80% of the staff departed, with many citing the change of leadership and the uncertain future of the school's climate as their reasons for leaving.[24] The school district also assisted Excel in recruiting and hiring a new principal, who was intrigued by the opportunity because he had gone to an all-boys private school when he grew up.

During the first year under Excel, the EMO's officials implemented one major change under the banner of improving educational performance: they created a split academy with a girls' side and a boys' side. The new single-sex arrangement was instituted without much consultation with parents, students, teachers, or the community. Realizing that their implementation had been done in haste, in 2005 Excel officials turned to Bill Harris, who had successfully led a small single-sex schooling effort in another large school district. It was Mr. Harris's decision to make Perry an all-male school, with girls in the split arrangement placed into a separate school (Thompson High) down the road. Asked to explain how his implementation strategy differed from the one established by Excel, Mr. Harris replied:

> When I got two teachers to pilot the program [in my previous district], I brought all the parents together and I told them about it in a general assembly, then we brought the kids together and told them what we were doing. We never just *carte blanche* implemented that program. Excel just *carte blanche* implemented. They didn't have any parent meetings. The kids didn't know about it, the kids came to school in September and it was a single-sex school. Boys on one side divided by a wall, girls on the other side. I walked the hallways with [Excel officials] and I was appalled. I never would have done it that way.

In the eyes of Excel and the school district, on one important objective measure, improving standardized test scores, the split academy model could be deemed a failure. But staff members and Mr. Harris largely agreed that the split model could have been successful were it not for major blunders in implementation.[25] As Mr. Harris pointed out, the original split academy model

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[24] This information was gathered from press releases following Excel's takeover of the school. Teachers likely also left Perry because the teacher's union had opposed the privatization model, citing potential infringement on teachers' rights with the involvement of a third-party firm.

[25] Since 2003, Perry has been under "Corrective Action" status under the No Child Left Behind law. This means that Perry has never once reached all of its "Adequate Yearly Targets" (satisfactory progress in measures like

failed in implementation because officials made no attempt to involve other key participants in the planning process. In recent years, major proponents of single-sex schools (Chadwell 2010; Sax 2009) have stressed that without open lines of communication, single-sex schools are likely to fail.

Of the 18 Perry teachers, past and present, whom I interviewed, seven had been around during part or all of Excel's first two years of management when there was a girls' side and a boys' side. Nearly every one of these instructors as well as those who were around when Excel managed Perry as an all-boys school, were critical of how the EMO implemented an all-boys model as well as its day-to-day management of the school. For example, teachers complained that while some general rationales were offered for an all-male model—e.g., it would help to improve the lives of "traumatized Black boys"—there were no action plans. According to Mr. Harris, Excel officials had assumed that separating boys and girls would limit sexual distractions, such as flirting, and allow students to concentrate on their school work. Cornelius Riordan (1990) has written that suppressing this heterosexual "adolescent subculture" has remained one of the more durable rationales for splitting up boys and girls in school. Excel may have been able to increase the level of staff buy-in—or agreement about the single-sex model prior to its implementation (Turnbull 2002)—by bringing in teachers who supported the model.

The Girls Leave

The school ran into trouble over the decision to bring the boys from Thompson, a nearby public high school, to fill the spots left in Perry after the girls left. Thompson then became Perry's sister school.[26] To avoid a possible legal challenge from organizations like the ACLU that the girls were not receiving a "substantially equal" education to one they would otherwise have received in a coed school (Chadwell 2010), the school district decided to let the girls have Thompson, which was a newer school and had better resources (e.g. a bigger gym, a pool, more air-conditioned rooms, and overall better infrastructure). But Mr. Harris believed that school district officials had an ulterior motive, which was "to lock the boys up. I know for a fact that they deliberately did that because they didn't want the boys to tear it up, that there would be fights on the corner, all that kind of crazy stuff." These beliefs fed into the cultural narratives of Black men and boys as savages and "unwanted traffic," as anonymous individuals who travel in packs and take up and destroy public property (Calmore 2006). Mr. Harris's comment that the school district wanted to "lock the boys up" was especially prescient. The school district officials further criminalized the boys and communicated to them that they should be "locked up"—a phrase used widely by staff and students, meaning getting arrested or being put behind bars"—as a *precautionary measure,* as if they boys were destined to ruin Thompson if they were given access to that building. In chapter 6, I examine how Perry's reputation as being "like jail" incited certain fears and anxieties among the boys, affecting their experiences of self.

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standardized test scores, attendance, and graduation rates). After four years as a Corrective Action school, a school attains Corrective Action II status, subjecting it to major restructuring.

[26] Although staff members told me about past attempts to bring the students at both schools together for social and extracurricular events, during my year of fieldwork I only observed two instances of this. Interestingly, they were not even official activities sponsored by both schools. For one meeting of Perry's first-ever Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) student group, the members of Thompson's GSA were invited to attend. The second instance of mixing between the schools was when Perry's GSA members attended a GSA meeting at Thompson.

To the credit of Excel and Mr. Harris, they had learned from their mistakes from the first year as a split academy, and they reached out to the community before making Perry entirely all-boys. Ms. Channing, a former math teacher who first taught at Perry in 2004, confirmed this, saying Excel had mostly "sold it" to the parents, but she criticized Excel for not offering enough guidance during the school year. She recalls one professional development session led by Leonard Sax, the director of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education, where Mr. Sax told the staff about basic differences between boys and girls. But this failed to resonate with the staff. Ms. Channing remembered that at the session, "We talked about how boys learn better in cooler temperatures [but] we had no air conditioning. Really? You're going to sell me on that point?"

Mr. Reagan, who began as an 8th grade math teacher in 2003, also said that the session was largely "unconvincing." As a brand new teacher, brought in by Teach For America, he was open to effective teaching techniques, but he expressed disappointment that the staff never received any data showing that the single-sex model could work with poor, African American boys. As Mr. Reagan recalled:

> I didn't really understand at the time why it was happening. I mean I did, I could tell people why it was happening, but not any legitimate research or anything was put in front of me saying, 'Like here's why with this population of boys. We think that they can show higher academic gains or make better personal decisions, day to day decisions regarding their interactions with classmates or teachers.'

Although Mr. Sax had little influence on his teaching, Mr. Reagan's teacher coach encouraged him to try to run his vocabulary lessons like "boot camp" with "cadence and rhythm." Mr. Reagan modeled one of these lessons for me, where he sounded out a vocabulary word while clapping to a certain beat, then waiting for the boys to repeat the word and then the definition in unison. He said this model seemed to work for him and his students, though he admits that "the teacher has to buy into it." Mr. Reagan's story of an effective teaching technique perceived to be appropriate for boys was the only shared with me. Ms. Channing, meanwhile, was more critical of Excel for not having a long-term plan for implementing teaching strategies:

> Like we could have had Friday sessions on different topics and had the kids come together and get into groups that were facilitated by someone, and we didn't do any of that. We just pretended like it was an ideal school because it was all boys. So for me, shame on Excel for having this initiative and not educating people on what to do with it.

While Excel clearly fell short of implementing an all-boys model—lacking a clear vision for why the school was single-sex, and any plan for implementing that vision day in and day out—it appeared that the teachers I interviewed would have been open to trying out teaching techniques felt to be appropriate for an all-boys setting. Nearly everyone I interviewed, from staff to students and parents, told me that separating boys and girls made sense because boys and girls distract each other, and so without the other sex present each could "focus on their work." However, people at Perry placed little emphasis on social or essential differences between boys

and girls as a justification for the single-sex model.[27] Thus, the rationale of tailoring curricula and pedagogy to the special needs of each gender (Sax 2005) was not the primary motivation for making Perry all-boys, although it was seen viewed as a potential benefit once the separation had taken place.

Many from the early days of Excel's involvement recall being told that the all-boys model was intended to help "traumatized Black boys," but no practical interventions were offered to help with this problem. When girls were invoked, they were not simply "harmless" distractions, with whom the boys could flirt or for whom they could show off; rather, they posed a *sexual* threat. (In chapter 6 I describe how Perry community members believed this was a rumor and that Excel officials did not explicitly acknowledge this as a key reason for separating boys and girls.) Although Excel officials failed to articulate and carry through an ideological commitment to single-sex education for Black boys, the remainder of the chapter examines how dominant beliefs among the staff eventually cohered into a vision of why this particular schooling intervention was needed for the boys.

The Crisis of Black Boys

The Loveless Generation

Mr. Jeffries was officially on the payroll as a hall monitor, but everyone in the building knew him as an unofficial administrator. Few adults in the building were as well respected as Mr. Jeffries, and both students and adults told me how highly regarded he was in the community. He grew up about three miles from Perry, a product, he said, of "the housing projects" and "the Morgan Housing Authority," meaning he had lived in Section 8 housing, or units for low-income households that are partially subsidized by the federal government. While he still struggled financially, people commended him for returning to work in a school after spending his childhood in a juvenile facility and hustling drugs. There was "a lot of heartache, a lot of false starts," Mr. Jeffries told me. Having been on the frontlines of the drug economy, he told me that he had gained a unique perspective on how drugs had crippled the community:

> The evolution of drugs in our society [is] causing what's going on now in this society. Okay. Now my generation dropped the ball. The people before me was strong, in my mother and them generation, they were stronger, less affiliated with drugs. The drugs not only took your ambition and your focus in doing it the legitimate way, it also took your time. And that time brought on a loveless generation. We didn't have time for the kids because we was always out hustling and partying and everything like that.

Schools are situated at the crossroads of many different institutions, a literal meeting place of families, children, paid staff members, the government and courts, and local communities. I will now bring this larger context of community and families into view, in order to situate the trajectory of Perry as an all-male public high school. At age 57, Mr. Jeffries was two generations above the boys at Perry, who were born in early-to-mid-1990s. (I was frequently reminded of this when he told stories about knowing the boys' parents, some of them well, when they

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[27] Of course, the strong belief that boys and girls distract each other reinforces a hegemonic view of gender as an oppositional dualism (Thorne, 1993) that is heteronormative in character (Renold 2005).

themselves were small children.) As he described it, the expansion of drugs such as marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine into Morgan in the early 1970s, when he was released from a juvenile prison, made it difficult for his generation to raise their children, who, in turn, struggled when they became parents raising their own boys. Researchers such as Stephanie Coontz (2000) have noted how the crack epidemic, which victimized inner cities in the 1980s, deprived many parents of their ability to adequately care for their children. Mr. Jeffries's "loveless generation" had sparked a crisis in care[28] that adults at Perry believed was the result of a drug economy that emerged in Morgan in the early 1970s and then grew considerably in the 1980s.

While Mr. Jeffries singled out drug abuse among parents as harmful to childrearing, families were further strained as more and more young men were forced into hustling drugs due to a lack of job opportunities and a growing underground economy. Scholars (Anderson 1999; Wilson 1987) have documented how political and economic changes in major urban areas in the U.S.—including the deterioration of manufacturing industries, an expanding service economy, and the loss of jobs to overseas markets—left Black men with poor economic fortunes. As affirmative action and fair housing policies encouraged more class-privileged African Americans to leave urban ghettos for the suburbs—a process of decentralization (Anderson 2001)—the fate of Black men who remained behind worsened considerably. President Reagan's War on Drugs, introduced in 1982, imposed newer, more stringent federal penalties on the trafficking and possession of drugs, particularly crack and cocaine, backed by enormous budgets for federal law enforcement agencies. The number of incarcerated Black men soared in the 1980s (Alexander 2012). The sharp increase in the prison population between 1980 and 2001 was due almost entirely to changes in sentencing policies and not to an increase in crime (Mauer 2007). Moreover, nearly one-third of prison admissions at the start of the 21st century were probation and parole violations, creating a rotating door of prison admissions that Loic Wacquant (2000) calls the "closed circuit of perpetual marginality."

Michelle Alexander (2012) argues that the mass incarceration of Black men has created a racial caste system that closely parallels the marginalization of African Americans under Jim Crow. While Alexander and other researchers have only started to document the sheer pervasiveness of punishment in the lives of African American men in the 21st century, a long research tradition has considered the causes and consequences of the plight of African American men. As Elijah Anderson (2008: 6) writes:

> In his alienation and use of violence, the contemporary poor young black male is a new social type peculiar to postindustrial urban America. This young man is in profound crisis. His social trajectory leads from the community to prison or the cemetery, or at least to a life of trouble characterized by unemployment, discrimination, and participation in what many are inclined to view as an oppositional culture—which is how he goes about dealing with his alienation from society.

While I observed signs of alienation among the Perry boys, my goal in this chapter and in chapter 4 is to provide a more comprehensive account of relations between the boys and staff

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[28] Scholars such as Barrie Thorne have used the term "crisis in care" to refer to a lack of caretaking that has resulted from significant social changes, including the greater numbers of women who have left the home for the workplace, medical advances that have increased longevity, and persistent inequalities and poor state services that keep the needy from receiving paid care.

members at the school. Anderson's description captures the unique plight of African American boys in impoverished inner cities, but alienation and participation in an oppositional culture imply a dissociation and separation from institutions (in this case, schools and the staff members who work in them) that was not characteristic of the boys at Perry High. Many of them seemed to understand the trouble they faced and were willing to accept and embrace assistance from adults. The adults' efforts often fell short, and the culture of the school itself occasionally presented significant challenges to fostering positive adult-student relations. But I found that these relations were marked by efforts to *care*, and, in part to counter stereotypes about schools like Perry. I highlight cooperation between care providers and care recipients who did not, on the whole, stand in persistent opposition to one another. Instead, adults tried, in multiple ways, to address the boys' needs and vulnerabilities.

Families and Mass Incarceration

The reality of incarceration, impelled by both War on Drugs policies and a political economy of inner cities that had been deteriorating for decades, put an enormous strain on Black families, leaving women with fewer marriageable partners. Mr. Westbrook was in his first year at Perry, but he was no stranger to the school district, having served 38 years as a teacher and administrator. With a chance to bolster his staff, the principal recruited Mr. Westbrook to Perry High, and Mr. Westbrook happily accepted the offer to work in an all-boys setting. When I asked Mr. Westbrook to describe to me what his considerable experience in schools had taught him about how to understand the difficulties that Black boys face in schools, he said:

> You have to look at the *socioeconomics* of the community in which we serve and the young men that we have in the building. The most important thing here is that you have a lot of kids who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Many of them come from single-parented homes.

He went on to describe the undue burdens placed on single moms. While I noticed that younger teachers, those new to teaching and those new to the neighborhood, were more likely to blame parents and home life for the boys' failings, Mr. Westbrook's comments reflect the views of most of the administrators and some older adults in the building.[29] These individuals tried to situate the boys' lives in particular socioeconomic circumstances—the term they sometimes used—thereby refraining from placing blame on individuals. They frequently linked "socioeconomics" with single moms and absent fathers, a consequence of the "drying up of work," as Mr. Westbrook described it, and the "evolution of drugs," as Mr. Jeffries called it.[30]

Facing a "marriage squeeze," contemporary Black women are at an enormous disadvantage in the marriage market (Taylor 2000); indeed, the percentage of married Black couples has been declining since 1970 (Coles and Green 2010). According to many adults at Perry, the relative absence of men and fathers had the dual effect of straining families, as women

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[29] In chapter 6, I show how the boys teased and insulted each other's home life (often invoking the term "home training") and what that meant for the boys' sense of self.

[30] In heated moments, however, I observed a tendency among all of the teachers to blame parents. Blaming also happened from the other side; parents, during particularly emotional parts of my interviews, placed blame on the shoulders of individual administrators, shifting attention away from the hardships and obstacles facing public schools in low-income neighborhoods.

shouldered the responsibility of raising children, and of weakening fictive kinship ties in the community. Ms. Henderson worked as a teacher and a social worker at an elementary school before being hired to direct Second Chance, a special program at Perry for over-aged boys, some of them returning from juvenile prison or alternative placement (higher-security schools for boys with disciplinary problems). According to Ms. Henderson, "the biggest social problems would be like support at home, parents who are already overwhelmed." Teachers at Perry bemoaned the lack of parental involvement at school, but it was generally the younger or less experienced teachers who attributed this to a lack of caring on the part of parents. One strain of comments reflected the belief that "I could do my job if only parents would do theirs." Framed occasionally as dysfunctional, families and parents entered a "classificatory system… as a debit to the child" (Ferguson, 2001: 41). Here, Mr. Gaines participated in what I call "the institutional blame game," attributing Black boys' dim life prospects and poor achievement in school to various institutions in the boys' lives:

> [The boys] have to try to come to school and learn. If the parents value education, they wouldn't put their child in a situation where they couldn't sleep. Some parents party all night. How can you as a 13 or 14 year-old kid be focused and learn something? It's rough.

Mr. Gaines, an African American teacher, was critical of parents for not valuing their sons' education. Yet he assumed in this case that parents "party all night" and must therefore not care enough to become involved in their sons' schooling, an assumption that researchers have found that educators make (Lightfoot 1978). Low-income parents, in fact, likely lack the cultural capital and proficiency technical language used in schools to participate meaningfully in that domain (Lareau 2003). Indeed, in my interviews I found no major differences between African American and white teachers in the level of blame they placed on families. As I noted earlier, differences turned more on the amount of teaching experience, with veteran teachers less likely to blame parents or to evoke a cultural deficit model framing parents as less likely to "value" education. Research has countered the culture of poverty thesis that gained popularity in the 1960s (Nightingale 1993).

Other staff members noted that mothers of their students were overburdened, and often needed help from extended kin to help look after their children. As Mr. Bradley told me:

> You know, you have a lot of grandmothers raising our young men. I've got to get my plaque fixed *(turns and points to a plaque on his desk).* I dedicated that to the grandparents that are raising all these boys because the grandmothers in the neighborhood, that's who's mostly raising these young men. The mothers: they're working.

Traditionally, African American families have relied on grandmothers and fictive kin networks to help care for children (Collins 2000; Stack 1974). While nearly all the staff members I interviewed wished that parents would be more involved in school, some, like Mr. Bradley, emphasized that families, already stretched thin, were working hard to raise children. He had, in fact, had a special plaque prepared to honor grandmothers, which normally hung on his office wall.

Mr. Bradley also pointed out that while grandmothers were looking after the house and the children, the mothers were working. It is interesting that these rebuttals to claims that parents did not value education usually focused on how hard parents actually *worked,* when criticisms of families tended to describe parents as *idle*, as not working (and perhaps even partying, as Mr. Gaines described it), a vision of families and particularly single moms of color that has typically undergirded conservative perspectives on welfare policy in the United States (Hays 2003). As Officer Sherman, a long-time south Morgan resident and a school police officer who had worked in the city's police force prior to joining the Perry staff in 2005, said, "the structure that these young men have is so lacking because they're either living with aunts or uncles or they're in foster homes or grandparents, and I guess, you know, the people that they're with are probably doing the best that they can." Families in low-income neighborhoods can suffer from a shortage of people able to help care for a child, straining caregiving networks already harmed by poor rates of health and job insecurities (Hansen 2005). (In chapter 4 I turn to how the administration appeared to fashion itself as additional care providers for the boys and their mothers.)

My interviews with mothers confirmed the stress they felt about having to care for their sons. While moms variously described their general disappointment with the public schools and the importance of graduating so that their sons would be employable, they also tended to situate schools (including Perry) in their larger networks of care. The parents did not view schools as providing "child care" per se, but rather as a key institution that assumed more responsibility for helping to raise boys because of the burdens mothers experienced living in a socioeconomically depressed community. Several of the mothers I interviewed believed that men, in particular, were needed to help raise boys. Ms. Booker was the single mother of a former Perry student and for a number of years had been a volunteer for the Parent-Teacher Connection, a program that provided services to Perry parents and served as a liaison between homes and the school. Since she was actively involved with the school as a parent, Ms. Booker came to believe that raising children at home and teaching students in school had the same goal: to create responsible, self-sufficient adults who could hold steady jobs that provided economic security.[31] She told me that, "when it comes to all boys, it takes a man to teach a boy. We females, we can't do it." When I asked her why not, she responded:

> Well, we can. We just need help. It's easier with girls, with my daughters. They see how hard I work. They know how strong they'll need to be one day. So I focus on them, really bringing them up right. This message is for the men up at Perry: 'our boys are depending on you.'

Ms. Booker felt that she *could* raise boys, but also that she was focusing on raising her daughters to prepare them to be responsible, possibly single mothers one day ("They know how strong they'll need to be one day").

This gender difference in childrearing practices reflected the reality of the predominance of single-mother households in the community, projected forward to the kinds of women their daughters would likely need to become one day. Ms. Booker later told me that she has come to understand that her own mother, who raised seven children, had done the same thing: she had

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[31] She also suggested that being a productive worker was a requirement for being a good father and husband, or a good family man, a point to which I return in chapter 4.

held her more accountable than her brothers, and had taught her to be responsible so that she might one day be able to handle being a single mom herself. This is an especially important point as it underscores the asymmetric division of role models in the community. Ms. Booker focuses on her daughters and "really bring them up right," but at a potential cost to providing for her own sons. Therefore, Ms. Booker had the message to pass along to the "men up at Perry" that they should assumes a share of the parenting—or caregiving, as I prefer to describe it—duties between schools and families.

The principal, Mr. Bradley, agreed with Ms. Booker, saying that young women in south Morgan "see a lot of mothers running the households, grandmothers, and it's more of a sense of urgency for them than the boys." Like Ms. Booker, Mr. Bradley believed that the need to train girls from an early age to be responsible mothers and caregivers had a particular impact on young men and sons. He continued: "Something that I really think is true: mothers raise their girls but spoil their boys." This resonates with findings that Black mothers tend to provide more emotional support and love for their sons in the short term, but expect their daughters to have more successful and safe lives in the long term (Collins 2000). While recent studies (Jones, 2010) have shed light on how African American girls in inner cities face many of the same pressures as young Black men, and also abide by a similar "code of the street" (Anderson 1999), many of the mothers and teachers I interviewed believed that the "pressures" facing young Black men were particularly acute. The act of routinely punishing boys for enacting a perceived threatening form of Black boyhood may actually benefit girls, who can more easily enact a Black middle-class femininity of docility and respectability, which earns them more preferential treatment from school officials (Jones 2010).

The erosion of economic prospects in Morgan, particularly for men, contributed strongly to Black men's estrangement from family life (Taylor, 2000). And the overburdening of mothers had wider implications which, as Officer Sherman pointed out, were felt throughout the community. Explaining what happened when he did something wrong as a child, he said:

> I guarantee you, by the time I got home, even if somebody had to come and physically, you know, verbally tell my mother or my father what happened, they would know by the time I got home. And also when growing up, if an adult said you did something, you did it, there was no question. If you did something wrong, they were going to tell because we didn't want that kind of a neighborhood. We wanted everybody to feel safe. We looked out for each other. But these days, everyone looks out for themselves.

In Officer Sherman's eyes, the community he grew up was built on trust among neighbors, who helped to look after each other's children. Yet time and time again adults told me that these social ties, historically central to the extensive kin and fictive kin support networks among low-income African Americans (Stack 1974), had eroded over time, a consequence of a growing drug economy that harmed care providers (parents) as well as the care recipients (the boys) who were lured into it.

With an increased police presence in areas of concentrated poverty and high rates of drug activity and violence, African Americans are more likely to distrust police and the law (Anderson 1999). Weakening levels of "particularized trust" (Smith 2010) among neighbors and community members results in what Officer Sherman and others observed: an erosion of caregiving networks. An all-boys environment at Perry emerged within a particular historical

context: a damaged inner-city economy that provides few job opportunities for low-income African Americans, and for men in particular; mothers being forced to shoulder the burden as men become involved in the city's underground economy; men who suffer in the hands of a policing state that surveils and punishes them at disproportionately high rates; and struggles to provide care for vulnerable Black boys in the face of corroding family ties.

Incarceration and "Money, Drugs, and Guns"

Officer Sherman's comments above are reminiscent of the adage that "it takes a village to raise a child," a sentiment expressed by almost every one of the parents I interviewed. Without strong families and a strong village—made up of both families and schools—the adults believed that other institutions—namely, the drug underground economy, and to a lesser degree, street-level gangs—would take control of their boys. It was common for boys in the school building to talk about hustling drugs, and various adults spoke seriously with the boys about the topic. Mr. Youseff taught eighth-grade math as well math for Second Chance. He grew up in Harlem, during the Civil Rights era, a time of "moral awakening" as he calls it. After spending time overseas, he returned to the United States a devout Muslim, and soon became a respected religious leader in the Muslim community in Morgan. He eventually turned to teaching as a way of becoming more involved in the lives of young Black men.

Mr. Youseff occasionally used instructional time at Second Chance to speak with the boys about major issues in their lives. He described a particularly difficult conversation with the boys about their dim economic prospects after high school. While many of the boys sought jobs, they recognized that hustling drugs was a possibility if they could not locate work. "We're going to sell drugs," the boys painfully conceded to Mr. Youseff, who responded:

> I said, 'Good, then you'll become a part of our human warehouse system where you're going to sell drugs, get caught, and go to jail, and you'll be in a jail or prison someplace far away from the city, making jobs for people in other parts of this big state.' I said, 'So you will serve somebody's interest.' So these young men, a lot of them know this. To a man, they acknowledge the part about being on the street.

Mr. Youseff communicated to the boys at Second Chance that hustling drugs helped to sustain a prison industry, which profited off a "human warehouse system." He felt that "a lot" of the boys acknowledged this, a perception that appeared to be supported in my own interviews with students. While the boys and adults offered street-level descriptions of the drug economy in south Morgan—about how they were recruited to sell drugs and the hierarchy in the drug trade that scholars have described elsewhere (Anderson 1999; Venkatesh 2006)—I observed a tendency to situate the drug trade and criminal justice system within larger structures of power. I want to suggest that this was an articulation of a "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988)—a distinctive insight into a system of racial domination that was possible precisely because of the boys' marginalized position within it—that enabled those at Perry to justify an all-boys model as an intervention.

One day early in the school year, a group of 11th and 12th graders arrived at the library to listen to a guest speaker, Stanley Harrison, an assistant admissions director at an HBCU. Mr. Bradley and Mr. Jones, an assistant principal (and an alumnus of the HBCU) also attended; Mr. Harrison's visit clearly was an important event. While he spoke some about his university and

about applying to college, he was losing the boys' interest. He then attempted to connect with the boys and said, "You're no different than I am. Only one big mistake is separating you and spending the rest of your life in prison. Don't let the suit fool you, we're all the same." Mr. Bradley then jumped in and said, "prisons are now commercialized. Recently my financial advisor asked me if I wanted to invest in prisons and I said, 'how, as an African American man, can I do that, when I'm trying to educate and not incarcerate young black men?'"

These comments show how quickly many conversations turned to incarceration during the course of a school day. Like Mr. Youseff had done earlier ("you will serve somebody's interest"), Mr. Bradley here ("prisons are commercialized") and throughout the school year demonstrated a concern for helping his students to situate their lives in larger structures of power. While staff members also called on the boys to be more responsible and, falling short of this, blamed the boys for their own shortcomings, I also observed a strong tendency to encourage the boys to develop knowledge about how a criminal justice system had conspired against them.

I draw on two areas of research to further develop this point about the development of boys as agents of knowledge: Feminist standpoint theory grounded in a Marxist epistemology (Collins 1986; Hartsock 1983) and Victor Rios's (2011) analysis of the conditions under which boys of color are criminalized, the sum of the effects of which he terms the "youth control complex." Hartsock's (1983) "standpoint theory" resonates with Rios's description of "material criminalization." While, for Rios, "symbolic criminalization" concerns the shame, stigma, and surveillance that Black boys experience in their day-to-day interactions, material criminalization deals with actual negative material consequences as those boys for example, are suspended and therefore excluded from meaningful participation in classrooms, and later discriminated against in hiring practices and therefore prevented from meaningful participation in the workforce. Hartsock (1983) criticized Marx's theory about social position helps shape forms of knowing because he assumed a male worker (proletariat) exploited in relations of production. Hartsock observed that Marx's focus on men's labor outside the home disguised women's life activity in a sexual division of labor which forces them to labor for men inside the home. Therefore, "like the lives of proletarians according to Marxian theory, women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy" (Hartsock 1983: 284).

In a similar way, I suggest that the Black boys at Perry High were developing a "privileged vantage point"—a distinctive form of situated knowledge—on the youth control complex. The material and historical conditions of the boys lives formed the "structure and thematic content" of their standpoint (Collins 1986: S16). As I describe in chapter 3, Urban Charter parents lumped these most vulnerable Black boys into a degraded and marginalized group, which one of them called "banished boys," and characterized them as unsalvageable because of their individual moral failings and the failings of their parents. But staff and boys in the Perry High community more often discussed and sought insight into ways in which the structural cards were stacked against them. The standpoint they developed enabled the Perry staff and students to identify mass incarceration and the criminalization of Black boys as "perverse inversions of more humane social relations" (Hartsock 1983: 284). More humane social relations, in this case, would involve not only the implementation of fair practices that would reduce the number of Black men who end up in prison, but also target the various practices that continue to stigmatize and condemn them when ex-offenders reenter their communities (Alexander 2012; Braman 2004). As I demonstrate in chapter 4, Zero Tolerance

policies in schools served to systematically discriminate against Black boys even though many individual staff members had good intentions of helping their young men.

I had a chance to observe as Perry students developed and honed these forms of situated knowledge throughout the year, especially during their conversations with adult men who shared their backgrounds. The administrators recruited most of these men personally to come speak at the school as part of a "Black Male Speaker Series." This included a few assemblies with several men addressing the boys in the auditorium, and other events where a single guest would speak to a small group of students. At one assembly just before Thanksgiving break, a group of three men took the stage to give the boys what they were told would be an inspirational speech. After introducing themselves, one of the men wanted to make clear that the three of them were just like the boys sitting in front of them: "We look like you. We come from underrepresented neighborhoods. We understand your situation. We come from homes without a father around." But they had made it out and had gone on to good colleges. While they advised the boys to do what school children each day are told to do in one form or another—"work hard," "study," "your personal drive will take you places"—one of the more concrete messages they passed on was how racial discrimination in job hiring was coupled with diminishing job opportunities.

A central message was the need to avoid prison. While all adults at Perry identified prisons as an actual destination that the boys needed avoid, just as important was a tendency to frame punishment as a form of social control that existed outside prison walls, and was central to how institutions treated young Black men. While staff members who work with low-income students often project prison cells into Black boys' futures (Ferguson 2001; Noguera 2008), just as important is how students and adults alike at Perry seemed to have an acute understanding of the mechanisms of social control that were funneling Black boys into prison cells.

Several of the older boys I met articulated their situated knowledge of the role that drugs had played in establishing a youth control complex. Lamont, an 18 year-old 12th grader, had arrived at Perry after stints in several alternative education schools, or privately managed high-security schools for boys who had committed serious violations in their neighborhood schools. These "soft jails" are typically one step away from juvenile facilities (Fuentes 2005; Gunn 2008). I sat down with Lamont one day early in the school year as he was brainstorming ideas for a research paper that all seniors were required to complete for graduation. He told me he wanted to write about violence in south Morgan. He traced back the escalation of violence to the 1980s and the rise of the crack epidemic, a fact, he said, that "people have been telling me since I was born." He took a few minutes to write a draft of the introduction and when he was done, he read it aloud to me:

> For the past three decades money, drugs and guns have destroyed our communities. Crack babies grew and started killing and young black women lost themselves and made babies. Violence destroyed our neighborhood. Drugs destroyed our neighborhood.

When I asked Lamont what he meant by money, he described a drug trade that had pulled in many young men who had few other options in the neighborhood, echoing research on how deindustrialization had crippled urban economies in the period before the War on Drugs and the crack epidemic of the 1980s (Anderson 2008). The use of guns, or firearms (and especially handguns), in homicides rose in the late 1980s and peaked in the early-to-mid 1990s (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2012) at about the time when many of the upperclassmen at Perry were born.

It is often believed that gangs are responsible for much of the violence in inner cities. I occasionally heard of boys who participated in organized street gangs, but nothing that matched the large corporate gangs that emerged in the 1970s in many cities and continue to have a strong presence in some urban areas. While the origin of large-scale corporate gang activity is difficult to pin point, it became a force in the late 1970s, the likely result of an increasing number of men being recruited for drug distribution in the context of their acute social isolation in cities following the Civil Rights era (Venkatesh 2006; Wilson 1987). These gangs, however, have not historically had as strong a presence in Morgan as in other cities. I heard of sets of the Bloods and Crips, the two infamous rival gangs that originated in Los Angeles, having a growing but still minor presence in some parts of Morgan, and some boys asked me if I was familiar with those gangs, given that I was in graduate school in California.

Some of the boys were involved in street-level gangs, which were organized by "blocks" (the streets they lived on). When I asked Ty, an 18 year-old 12th grader, about gang activity in the city, he said:

> Ty: It's not gangs, it's blocks. Like, everybody go by their block. I'm part of a block. I wouldn't necessarily say I'm part of the gang. I'm part of the block though, a block I was raised up on. Like this *(pointing to a tattoo his forearm)*, I have, like, a tattoo. It's, like, you will see this marked on the walls or spray-painted places.
>
> Oeur: What does it say there on your forearm?
>
> Ty: 'Irving Street Ballerz.'

As Ty explained, boys organized themselves into social units around their "blocks," or streets where they lived and grew up. For Ty, this was Irving Street, or his "block," and the nickname they had given themselves was "Ballerz." The boys also referred to these units as "squads."

I met Ty in a Spanish classroom taught by Ms. Wheeler, who struggled with classroom management and had many difficult days at school (in part due to the fact that she taught an elective subject that was not tested by the city or state, so many boys knew they did not have to take it seriously). At the same time, I was struck by Ms. Wheeler's attempts to understand her students' personal lives. When I broached the subject of gangs with her, she shared a document she had written for a graduate class she had taken. Titled "Street Gangs and Youth Violence in Our Schools," it was intended as a guide for teachers in the building who wished to understand how many of the boys' social lives were organized outside of school.[32] Ms. Wheeler and other boys I spoke with described blocks as "social groups" that threw parties and provided the boys protection if needed. As 18 year-old Darrelle told me, blocks or squads "fight from time to time but they don't fight like with guns or nothing. If somebody trip them or put a smudge on their shoe, they ready to fight, but they don't be going around looking for trouble." Thus, "blocks" differed from gangs in the crucial respect that they did not represent organized illicit activity for profit, like the distribution of drugs (Venkatesh 2006).

Blocks, however, could prove to be troubling for introducing boys to drugs and, in some case, encouraging them to enter the street drug trade. At house parties, members of blocks and

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[32] Based on Ms. Wheeler's own interviews with boys at Perry, the guide contained a long, comprehensive list of the gangs or "blocks" in the area and the gang signs they used; the school district's policy regarding and condemning gangs; a description of the "no snitching" policy on the streets; and pictures of MySpace profile pages featuring boys' block affiliations and nicknames.

their guests would sometimes abuse over-the-counter drugs and basic medicine (e.g. cough syrup); "pop" prescription pills such as Xanax ("zanies") and Percoset; get high on marijuana ("weed," "chronic"), including an exotic variant called "purple haze," which could be dipped in embalming fluid; and in more cases, abuse dangerous drugs like cocaine and crystal meth ("monster"). Drugs were not only widely available, but boys I spoke with seemed to agree that drug use picked up when boys were 13 and 14 years-old, or about when they entered the 9th grade. This timing was particularly worrisome for staff members and for students, who believed that 9th grade (the transition year to high school) was a critical year in determining whether a boy would ever graduate from high school. At an assembly to unveil a new mentoring program at the school, Mr. Riles, the program's chief organizer, said that in the program's first year only 9th graders would be matched up with mentors because "statistics say that the majority of dropouts are in the 9th grade." Mr. Bradley, the principal, followed up by telling the boys, "dropping out is the way into nowhere." Then he added with emphasis: "...into becoming a statistic." Nationwide, researchers (Neild, Stoner-Eby, and Furstenberg 2008: 545) have found that "ninth-grade course failure and attendance have a substantial impact on the probability of dropping out within six years of starting high school." The dropout problem is particularly worrisome in the case of Black boys, as high school drop outs among this subgroup are more likely to be incarcerated than employed (Pettit and Western 2004).

Staff members were worried about drug use among the boys and occasionally confided in me that they suspected or knew that some boys came to school high on marijuana. The ubiquity of drugs meant that the teachers could broach the subject in various ways. I even observed several teachers taking advantage of the boys' knowledge of drugs in classroom lessons. When he arrived at Perry as a new teacher, Mr. Riles was asked at first to fill in for a math teacher because they had struggled to find someone to teach that subject. Scrambling to make math "germane to their life," he decided to use drugs as an example:

> So here's the only example I can give you: when we started talking about kilos, when we started talking about drugs and kilos and grams and cutting it up and how would I distribute it *(snaps fingers),* they quickly got it. But if you're talking about two trains running, where they meet, [they couldn't] figure it out.

In a math class one day, I observed Mr. Youseff refer to drugs while teaching a lesson on conversion factors for units of measurement. "In the street there are conversion factors," he told the boys. "God forbid you're on the street and you need to sell one package. That money gotta be right, otherwise you're in trouble. He might burn your crib. He might take your brick." I noticed a few of the boys nodding, having understood what they were told. What Mr. Youseff meant was that boys who hustled drugs needed to know their math: they had to know how much to charge for the amount of drugs ("package") the buyer asked for. Buyers were looking for ways to trick sellers into giving the buyers drugs for a lower price. If the sellers were swindled, then "he"—and "old head,"[33] a boss and older man who did not deal drugs directly—according to Mr. Youseff, would get angry and could "burn your crib [house]" or "take your brick [money]," the boys' earnings for selling drugs.

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[33] An "old head" refers to anyone older than you, but the meaning varied by context. It often was used as a term of respect, and in the context of the local drug trade in Morgan.

Exposure to drugs on blocks, combined with promises of quick money and the absence of mainstream job opportunities (Wilson 1987), was enough to lure some boys into hustling drugs. On a frigid Tuesday in December, I left Perry around midday and headed for the family court downtown. I had agreed to accompany Ty there; he was scheduled to appear before a judge, who would determine if Ty could go off house arrest. Back in March, Ty had been caught with 10 grams of crack on him at school. After having been a "dope boy"—or someone who sold or "trapped" and "hustled" drugs—for several years, Ty finally slipped and was arrested. When he appeared in court, he made the mistake of lying to the judge, telling her that he had accidentally grabbed his brother's coat on the way to school that morning. She gave him one of the stiffest punishments available for a first-time offender under the age of 18, sentencing him to three months at a youth discipline center in a remote part of the state, commonly referred to as "boot camp." When Ty returned to Morgan in late summer, his parole officer caught him high on weed and so he was placed on house arrest, meaning that he was required to wear an "electronic monitor," an ankle bracelet that the court used to track his whereabouts around-the-clock.

When Ty and I sat down for his interview that day, he was in good spirits; the judge had praised him for his good behavior and attendance at school and had terminated Ty's house arrest. Ty, who was soft-spoken but very articulate, told me how he had been sucked into hustling drugs when he was 13, when older men recruited him with the promise of making money. By that age he was already familiar with drugs, which were used by older boys in his block. He told me that his family was not well off financially, and that he realized he had to rely on himself for money to buys things like food and clothes. There is "a slogan around my neighborhood," he said, "You get it how *you* live," meaning that if he wanted money, he could not depend on others.

While he enjoyed using the money he earned from selling drugs to purchase "high fashion" designer clothes, Ty soon learned that he was a mere pawn in an elaborate drug economy where he was on the front lines putting himself at risk of danger, such as being attacked and having drugs stolen and being under cop surveillance and chased by them. He described a three-tiered hierarchy where other young boys would do all the "hand-to-hand" selling and would report directly to "old heads," older men from the community. The old heads, in turn, reported directly to the "OGs," (old gangsters), a group of men who only occasionally appeared in their "$100,000, $200,000 foreign cars," and oversaw and profited the most from the distribution of drugs. Most troubling to Ty, however, was how he and other boys had to witness how the crack they sold was harming people they knew:

> I regret just who the drugs that I sold to. Who did I serve? Like, who did I give the drugs to? And that's [who] my mom grew up with, my grandma grew up with. I sold drugs to my homies' moms. Like, throughout the years, what I was seeing, I could see how crack could really destroy a person. It really kills a person once they start smoking drugs or crack. Like, they go downhill, like, their whole life. So I regret serving people that I served the drugs to because, like, a lot of the people, I was killing, like, my homies' moms.

Ty was in an unusual position as both one of the older boys in the school—and therefore looked up to by the younger boys, especially those in 7th and 8th grade—and one of the newest boys in school, since, after leaving boot camp, he was not permitted to return to his old high school. He believed that the younger boys in the community were aching for older boys and men to look up

to. Although he believed that his own life prospects were dim, he said he felt a responsibility after returning to the community to try to divert younger boys from corner life and the underground economy. When I asked Ty what he would do if he were in charge of Perry, he told me he would tell younger boys "a little bit of my life and my story, let them know who I was" in the hopes that they would not take after him and other older boys they saw hustling drugs. "A lot of the kids," he continued, "are, like, brainwashed to think that, like, the streets is everything. So I would try to be a mentor throughout the whole school."

Getting sucked into south Morgan's drug trade had severe repercussions for Ty's life and limited his life chances. He returned to the school district determined to stay clean and had made enough progress in his and the court's eyes to have the electronic monitor removed. But he recognized that being out of school for so long had set him back, and the time spent at a juvenile facility had not prepared him to re-enter his old neighborhood in Morgan. The facility was located in the woods far outside the city, and Ty recalled entire days of doing physical labor, push-ups, and walking "around the whole baseball field for two hours with our hands behind our back, and it'd be blazing hot in the sun." Ty largely maintained a low profile, he said, and like most of the other young men he observed, just did as he was told with the hopes of expediting his release.[34] At these facilities, which are intentionally constructed to appear as different from city as life as possible, young offenders are required to "conceal the behavioral repertoire associated with street culture" (Fader 2008: 206).

Upon returning to Morgan, Ty discovered that the deterrent effect of his time spent at the facility was not as powerful as the pull to re-enter street life in Morgan. While he had stopped hustling drugs, he returned to smoking weed and hanging out with the boys in his block, the Irving Street Ballerz. Returning to his old life was not at all surprising given that offenders are rarely given the tools, while in a juvenile facility, to participate meaningfully in mainstream institutions when they reenter their communities (Fader 2008; Vaught 2011). Confined to these facilities, Ty and other boys like him moved from the "social prison," where they are under heavy surveillance from police and other social institutions that punish them, to a "judicial ghetto," which functions to completely exclude a stigmatized population from mainstream society (Wacquant, 2000). Men with a criminal record, and particularly those who are African American, run up against other obstacles, such as discrimination in job hiring (Pager 2003).

The threat remains that the boys can be arrested again, entering a "closed circuit" between their neighborhoods and prisons (Wacquant, 2000). An increasing number of Black men, in fact, are sent back to prison not for committing new offenses, but for technical violations such as failing to stay employed or failing a drug test (Alexander 2012). But in the eyes of mainstream society, those who are repeat offenders and those who simply commit technical violations are lumped into the same pile of statistics.

Participating in the local drug economy also had significant repercussions for the boys' development as men. Already denied, as African American boys, many of the privileges of boyhood, and treated in schools as men worthy of punishment (Ferguson 2001), incarceration

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[34] Ty also believed the staff at the facility, which was mostly white, discriminated against the young men from Morgan, nearly all of whom were Black: "Sometimes the staff can get racist a little bit. Like, probably 70% of the kids up there are from Morgan, so if a kid from Morgan do something and a kid from just, say, maybe [from another city] do something, the kid from Morgan will get punished more than a different kid." This was an example of the racist disciplinary control that young Black men are under after they have been forced out of their communities and are incarcerated (Vaught 2011).

threatened to banish young men like Ty from boyhood for good. While involvement in hustling drugs boosted a boy's masculine status, especially if he was able to leverage this into becoming popular in his block, it also reflected a stark reality. Getting drawn into the local drug economy forced the boys to become adults sooner than they would have liked. "It's sad," Ms. Fruit, the director of Parent-Teacher Connection, observed:

> …that their family tells them that they got to do this, or they got to be on the corner just to survive because their parents are on drugs or their father ain't there, or they got to feed their brother or sister. Or they gotta grow up too fast.

Ty had this sort of experience, learning early on that his family was money-strapped and that hustling drugs was a viable option for making money while also gaining a sense of independence that was important to young, Black men (Anderson 1999; Young 2004). Difficult financial situations at home forced many boys at Perry to assume adult responsibilities. As Ms. Fruit observed, "they gotta grow up too fast." Several of the boys made it a point to tell me that they had learned to "man up" earlier in life by looking after their siblings when their mothers were at work. During an activity one day with a group of 10th and 11th graders, Mr. Gardner, the social worker, asked the boys to respond to a set of statements as a way of generating discussion about what it means to be a man. The statements included "a man who cries easily is weak" and "it's more important for women to take control of birth control." After Mr. Gardner said to the boys, "you become a man once you father a child," several boys shouted out in disagreement. Many felt they were already men because they had long taken on adult responsibilities.

Absent Fathers

At a day-long event called "Education over Incarceration," the boys sat in the auditorium and listened to various guests speak, including prisoners from the state's largest penitentiary and the city's District Attorney, Donald Carter. The assembly was hosted by a local radio station, which broadcasted the program live over the air. When the boys entered the auditorium, they were given t-shirts that read "Use your brain to break the chains" on the front, and with a drawing of two young boys in prison uniforms pushing over a prison watchtower, on the back. As nearly 400 boys looked on, various guests including a state representative and hip-hop artists, grabbed the mike and stressed that "education is the passport to the future." The District Attorney, himself a product of Morgan public schools, had this to say:

> What I think is more important than crime prosecution is crime prevention. And the most important thing for young folks there to hear is that they have to stay in school. The number one thing that people in Morgan have in common who get arrested is that they didn't finish high school. Morgan leads the nation in the number of homicides caused by handguns. The number one cause of death for Black men under 35 is homicide.

DA Carter wanted the boys to know that dropping out of school would likely lead to getting arrested. Sharing statistics of crisis indicators was a common practice throughout the Perry, and noticeably less present at Urban Charter. While the Perry community was concerned about the boys taking part in at-risk behaviors, it was the punishment itself that was considered a point of no return, the destination at which the boys were likely no longer salvageable. Even if the boys

returned to their communities after serving time, they would likely be shut out of mainstream society, subject to a system of punishment and social control that "will continue to create and maintain an enormous undercaste" of Black men (Alexander 2012: 96). Later in the Education over Incarceration program, an inmate called in from the state penitentiary. He made a point that reinforced the idea that incarcerated young Black men would likely not be saved:

> Just because you young, and you do commit a crime, they will charge you as an adult. Me, I was 15, they locked me up for murder. I thought I was going to youth study center. I thought it really was a game. Then they sent me to the penitentiary. So that means from 15 to 23 I've been in the state penitentiary. If you do shoot somebody, they gonna try you as an adult. 'He's not a kid anymore': that's what the law means.

The inmate referenced a state law that stipulated that under certain circumstances and for certain serious offenses (including grand theft auto, rape, and murder), juveniles can be prosecuted as adults. As such, the law did not distinguish between a juvenile and an adult. This fact had particularly dire consequences for poor, young Black men. Suffering from normalizing judgments that cast them as criminals and intentionally harmful individuals, young Black men already lack many of the privileges that their non-Black peers possess *as children* (Ferguson 2001). Historically, various racist discourses have tagged Black children and Black boys with images of having stunted possibilities for development. For example, in the early 1900s the psychologist G. Stanley Hall put forward a "recapitulation theory" that held that white boys were developmentally on par with mature Black men, who as a race had not moved beyond a stage of savage and barbaric behavior (Bederman 1995). A similar discourse of scientific racism was prominent in the Progressive era, maintaining that a rigorous intellectual curriculum was not necessary for Black boys, who instead mostly received an education in mechanical and agricultural training (Tyack and Hansot 1992; Williams 2003). As the inmate's comments suggests, punishment compressed an already narrow window of childhood for Black boys—if there was a window at all—making them into the men who are not only on the margins of mainstream society *as Black men,* but who may be banished altogether as *incarcerated Black men.*

While intentional exclusion from the rest of the school may have stigmatized the boys in the Second Chance program at Perry, they felt fortunate to have the opportunity to complete school, given that the odds had been stacked against them. These programs were not school "jailhouses" where Black boys were sent to be punished and banished from the rest of the school population (Ferguson, 2001). Rather, Second Chance was a unique program—there were only a few others in the school district—where boys who had been marked as criminals and potentially defined as unsalvageable interacted with adults who cared for them. This observation can be used as a lens through which to understand the precise intervention the administration at Perry made on behalf of boys they perceived to be in crisis.

Here, I would like to describe how the theme of absent fatherhood resonated in the Second Chance program. One day in April, the boys in the Second Chance program assembled for an activity led by Mr. Buckley, a school district aide who came through several days a week to provide additional mentoring for the young men. Mr. Buckley passed out sheets that read "WHO IS YOUR DADDY?" and "SO HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE?" across the top, and told the boys, "it may hurt to have to fill this out." The sheet contained a series of

questions that the boys were asked to think about, including "What is your birth father's name?," "When was the last time you spoke to your father?," and "Has your father ever told you he LOVES YOU?" There were mixed reactions to the activity. A few students jotted down answers to the questions while others were annoyed and upset. Xavier, one of the oldest students in the program, and a father himself, got up and as he left the room, said, "I don't want to do this shit." Then boys shouted out: "We already know this." "My mom is my pop." "Where's my pop? He where he at." These and other comments during the activity, as well as my interviews with the boys, strongly suggested that the topic evoked powerful emotions. The boys also appeared tired from having to talk about absent and uninvolved dads since they were constantly reminded of the topic.

My interviews with the boys revealed two patterns in their feelings about their fathers. Of the 25 boys I interviewed at Perry, only one lived with his biological father, another lived with a stepfather, and two others said that their fathers maintained an active presence in their lives. Nationwide, in 2004 over 50 percent of African American children lived in female-headed households, the highest percentage in all racial groups (Coles and Green, 2010). (Only 3 percent of African American children lived in father-only households.) Some Perry boys were very resentful of and hostile toward men who were uninvolved or who had abandoned them completely. When I followed up with Ms. Okoye about Mr. Buckley's lesson, she told me: "The sense that I got out of that is that the kids are frightened every time we talk about fathers because many of them either don't have a father that they know or hate the father that they have for whatever reason." These boys also tended to say that they did not need their fathers, identifying other men, like their brothers, as well as their mothers and grandmothers, as their dads. One exchange with Jared and Leon, cousins and good friends who were both in the Second Chance program, underscored this point. I asked them about the last time they had seen their fathers:

> Leon: Fuck him. He's never been there for me. I don't actually know where he lives. Like he lives around but I don't know where the house is.
> Jared: My dad here still, but my mom my dad, my grandma was my dad.
> Leon: My grandma my mom and my dad.
> Jared: I talk to him, keep it real with you, probably twice a year. When it was time to pay child support, when income tax comes, shit like that, for real. And I know my dad, I know where he lives, he know where I live. That's how it is. My brother help me, that's my role model, my brother.

Both Jared and Leon expressed deep contempt toward their biological fathers. Leon was particularly bothered by how his father only got in touch with him when he needed to take care of his finances. And their comments about how others, especially their own mothers and grandmothers, had stepped in to raise them, reflected the way in which various members of the Perry community, from the boys to staff members, respected women in the community and held them in high esteem.

A few boys had previously had closer relationships with their fathers, but they withdrew from the boys' lives over time. An 18 year-old 12th grader named Keith had a father who was murdered when he was seven. Keith told me that he realized after his father's death that the close relationship he had with him—they did not live together, but the father saw Keith several

days a week, dropping him off and picking him up after school—was rare among his friends. To honor his father, he got a tattoo on his left forearm, written in a fancy script, that read "Lost a dad. Gained an angel." The administrators drew on *both* themes: that mothers and grandmothers were hard-working, and had been pulling double duty in order to raise their sons, but that fathers were still needed.

Mr. Buckley's "WHO IS YOUR DADDY?" activity provided a snapshot of how the reality of absent fathers was perceived as constitutive of and impelling the crisis of Black boys. In particular, the staff linked absent fatherhood to incarceration in two ways. First, men who are incarcerated are less likely than other men to not have a relationship with their fathers. Mr. Buckley put this rather starkly when he wrote on the board, "80% of inmates do not have a relationship with their fathers" before launching into a discussion about how fathers are needed for guidance, and that "sons without them can go astray," by ending up hustling drugs or getting into trouble with the law. Relatedly, administrators often pointed out how many particularly troubled boys had fathers who were incarcerated. Mr. Westbrook, an assistant principal and former principal at a local high school, told me:

> I see a lot of kids, especially the younger kids, who really cling on to certain adults for attention and you become that surrogate father that so many of them are looking for and need. And one of the travesties that I find is, just like this morning when I was dealing with a young man, first thing comes out of his mouth is, 'Shit, my father's locked up.' You understand? So you have a lot of kids who are missing a positive male image in their home, and they have a lot of kids who are angry because of their individual circumstances and the environment that they live every day, and they don't know how to come to someone and ask for help. They know how to strike out, and this is what happens a lot of times.

Mr. Westbrook's comments reflect those made by other staff members at Perry. The younger boys in particular sought caring relationships with male staff members in the building; they seemed to have "father hunger," as bell hooks (2004) has described it. Lacking those relationships, boys tended to act out, and as I later describe, some staff members appeared to mistake their frustration for aggression.

Another concern was that men who were incarcerated could not be fathers for their *own* sons. Mr. Youseff told me he identified as a "prison messenger," going to talk to prisoners as part of his work as a Muslim leader, and then passing on the prisoners' messages to the boys at school:

> I used to go up to the prison to talk to the prisoners—the inmates—and a lot of them are the fathers of the young men from this neighborhood. And almost to a man, they always request of me in my other role as the Muslim leader, say, Brother Imam.[35] [They tell me:] 'Make sure my seed'—meaning their sons—'don't end up in the same place.'

Mr. Youseff went on to tell me how the prisoners would tell him similar stories: they almost invariably "lost their sense of being a productive citizen" in high school and "ended up getting

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[35] "Imam" is the Islamic term for a Muslim leader.

caught in somebody else's scheme, whether it was drugs or armed robbery." A few other adult men in the building shared the communication they had with prisoners, who asked for the men to help steer their sons—their "seed"—from heading down the same path they took. While the Education over Incarceration event I described earlier could be classified in some respects as a "scared straight" program—where inmates depict the brutal "everyday" life of prisons as a way of deterring juveniles from entering into a life of crime (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, and Buehler 2003)—the communication the staff at Perry had with prisoners suggests something different. Donald Braman (2004), in a study of how incarceration impacts African American families in Washington, DC, also found that inmates expressed shame and regret at being incarcerated, which contradicts observations that a dominant urban masculinity perceives doing time as a badge of pride. Mr. Youseff's comments suggested that the inmates he spoke with were not trying to scare juveniles from a life of crime, but that they were *ashamed* of both their own predicament and that they had likely oriented their own sons into heading down the same path. Helpless and unable to assist their own sons, prisoners like the man Mr. Youseff mentioned asked for the assistance of other men. In chapter 4, I discuss the responsibility these men felt they had to shoulder.

CHAPTER 3:

PROTECTING OUR BOYS AT URBAN CHARTER

A New School in East Morgan

Early Days: "A Beacon of Light"

 Before helping to open Urban Charter and serving as its first CEO, Mr. Pierce had been the head administrator at several coed charter schools in the city. This allowed him to gain experience working with various constituencies and student populations, including, in his words, "at-risk kids, kids who'd been truant, dropped out, permanently expelled from the public schools, or kids who were looking for an alternative to those large, impersonal public high schools." Over the years, Mr. Pierce gained a reputation in the city as an expert on charter schools. The era of contemporary school reform in the city, which began around when No Child Left Behind was implemented in 2001, laid the groundwork for a school like Perry High to open up in south Morgan, and also for the founding of Urban Charter, the city's first single-sex charter school.

 The state takeover of the school district in 2001 ushered in new policies that encouraged school reformers to open charter schools in the city. Charter schools receive public funds and are held to the same standards as regular public schools, but they are granted the freedom to adopt their own mission (or charter) for governance and curriculum (Buckley and Schneider, 2007). In the Morgan school district, the School Turnaround Committee (STAC) of five individuals, appointed by the city mayor and the state governor, reviews and authorizes charter proposals, and successful proposals are typically given a three-year contract.

 Three institutions helped to shape the kind of school Mr. Pierce envisioned opening. The first was Perry High School. Mr. Pierce had grown up near Perry and was well aware that it was a chronically underperforming school. He began drafting the charter proposal when Perry was a split academy, and he sensed that an all-boys model was doomed at Perry without a clear understanding of why an all-boys model would work (Datnow, Hubbard, and Woody 2001). As Mr. Pierce said:

> My sense was that just to have an all boys' school was no big whoop. You just took out the girls but everything went the same, and the boys still failed and low expectations and all that. So what I wanted to do was to put in an academic component, which will force the boys to really have to work.

 Having identified what he saw as a failed model, Mr. Pierce turned to Crane Academy, an elite private, all-boys school located outside the city, for further inspiration. Mr. Pierce, who had served on the Board of Trustees at Crane for several years, recalled a car ride during which he tried to sell the school district superintendent on the all-boys model:

> The whole point was: you can make it all boys, you can separate the boys. That does nothing. Separation gives you an opportunity to work the boys. You have to make this

school based on academic merit, not just gender or athletic ability or things like that. You've got to shun the whole special ed, bootcamp mentality, disciplinary school mentality. Everybody when they start thinking about what to do with boys, they approach it from a, 'This is where they screw up. Let's get them from here.' No. Let's get them before they screw up and let's send them in a different direction.

Mr. Pierce's comments provide a basic blueprint for the vision he had for Urban Charter. He was trying to convince the superintendent that he understood that the school had to be "based on academic merit, not just gender." From his past experience in charter schools and as an entrepreneurial school leader in the city, Mr. Pierce knew that the school needed to convince parents that his new charter school would provide a better education than the average public school in Morgan. His comment that the school would send boys "in a different direction" highlights an understanding of manhoods as more than a set of practices, and as life trajectories.

Like other private all-boys schools in the United States, Mr. Pierce felt that Crane Academy emulated British-style boarding schools in that it was intended to educate boys from mostly privileged backgrounds, and to help them refine an "elite habitus," that is, a taken-for-granted assuption that they were being trained to join and dominate the upper-ranks of society (Kuriloff and Reichert 2003). Students from Morgan lacked this social class privilege, but Mr. Pierce believed he could open a school that signaled a uniquely privileged status relative to public schools. The conservative uniform of blazer and tie was the obvious visible evidence of this (itself not a trivial point, an issue I examine in detail later), but Mr. Pierce decided to distinguish the school's academic curriculum with mandatory Latin. Here, the last reference point for Urban Charter was the Boston Latin School. A TV segment featuring Cotton Mather mentioned that he attended Boston Latin for high school, which intrigued Mr. Pierce. When he later discovered that Boston Latin has a mandatory Latin curriculum, he had a "Eureka moment": he had been searching for a way to make his new school's academic curriculum distinctive, and Latin would be it. Urban Charter would be the only school in the city to require four years of Latin. As the first two lines of the school's future mission statement asserted, Urban Charter offered a classical curriculum to prepare boys for college.

The second half of Mr. Pierce's comment on the last page is no less significant. He and his staff wanted to get boys "before they screw up," which entailed clumping "bad" public schools and Perry together. To show their students that they cared for them required identifying those schools which did not. As Mr. Pierce implied, a "special ed" mentality banishes boys to the margins of school into detention or suspension rooms; "punishing" rooms, as Ferguson (2001) calls them, which disproportionately brand Black boys with disorders (Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Kohler, Henderson, and Wu 2006); while his comments about "bootcamp" and "disciplinary school" indicts Perry for being a punitive institution.

As I show in the next chapter, Mr. Pierce's comments were prescient; Perry administrators found themselves falling short of providing the kind of caregiving institution they sought because Perry continued in some ways resembled the very "disciplinary school" that ran counter to providing genuine care. As I will argue, the classical Latin curriculum became the cornerstone of Urban Charter's official mission (or, based on a revised notion of this concept, what I will refer to as Urban Charter's "formal curriculum"), while the drawing of moral boundaries between the charter and regular urban public high schools like Perry would form of

the basis of the school's unofficial mission (or what I will refer to as the school's "hidden curriculum").

In 2005, the proposal for Urban Charter was rejected after the School Turnaround Committee (STAC) succumbed to protests from the Women's Law Project and the ACLU. But while they raised a fuss, presumably over the school's single-sex format,[36] Mr. Pierce knew that the proposal was well within the guidelines (however vague) for single-sex schools set by No Child Left Behind and the Department of Education (Chadwell 2010). Mr. Pierce refused to believe that, as STAC officials told him, the charter itself was of low quality; instead he reasoned that STAC was trying to avoid a potential legal battle and had made no attempt to find out for itself if the proposed Urban Charter school met federal guidelines. Determined to get his charter accepted the following year, Mr. Pierce got nearly 1000 community members to sign a petition in support of the school. He also drummed up "support of a lot of elected officials, community activists, religious leaders. People who didn't know me, they looked at the idea and went, 'This is a good idea and [the school has] got people supporting this idea with financial support and that's going to make this idea work.'" STAC approved the charter this time without any hassle, and reportedly was impressed by the amount of community support the charter proposal had received. Mr. Pierce had his school.

The Value of an Urban Charter Education

After spending the first year in trailers, the students and staff moved into a renovated building which once housed a Catholic grade school built in the early part of the 20th century. Adjacent to the former grade school was a towering church that had sat abandoned on that plot of land for almost a decade, before Mr. Pierce and the Board were given the green light to demolish it. But the former religious site was not lost on several of the parents I interviewed, particularly those who lived near the school. As the mother of one of the first boys to enroll at Urban Charter told me, the school was "a beacon of light, promising a change for our young men," and she also described the school as signaling "an awakening." As members of the Perry High community had done at their Father-Son breakfast, individuals I spoke with at Urban Charter occasionally used religious and spiritual imagery to capture the respective schools' missions of saving their Black boys, a sign of the continuing influence of the Black Church in the community.

The once grade school and now charter school building was gray and worn on the outside, an appearance belied by an interior of bright walls and good lighting (in contrast with Perry's darker hallways), wall-to-wall carpeting, and modern finishes. Mr. Pierce and the Board of Directors wanted the climate to feel different from regular public schools; students and parents immediately noticed this when they entered the school for the first time. Asked to describe how it felt when he first visited Urban Charter, Mr. Anderson, the father of a 10th grader, said:

> When you walk in, you see that new atmosphere. You just feel the atmosphere, you just feel it. When you walked in some of these [regular public] high schools, it's like you're walking into a discipline center, because the further you walk in to East Morgan High (a local high school), you got to walk up the steps, and there's the [metal] detector. You

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[36] In recent years, the ACLU has threatened dozens of school districts with lawsuits over the legality of their proposed and already active single-sex classrooms and schools, forcing many of the districts to back down (Minow 2010).

know, you got to take yourself out of the parka and go through the detector. Like you're walking into a military place that's secured.

Instead of entering through a metal detector, Urban Charter students were greeted by a small lobby area. To the right was the main office and several Latin classrooms and a computer lab were down the hall. With only three floors and in a building approximately one-third as small as Perry, Urban Charter occasionally felt cramped inside, with throngs of students moving through the hallways and up and down the only two stairwells they were allowed to use. But it also gave the school a daily jolt of energy, and many staff members and students said they liked crossing paths with most teachers and their classmates each day, as it contributed to a small-school, family-like feel.[37]

The room on the northwest corner of the building held a large science classroom. Multiple large windows offered a spectacular view of the city: thousands of tightly-packed two-story row homes with colorful awnings in east Morgan, and in the distance, the taller buildings of downtown Morgan. Unlike the neighborhood that Perry called home, Urban Charter was located on a busy road, with constant traffic coming to and from a local hospital and police station. Cole Street, a major north-south thoroughfare just a few blocks west of Urban Charter, was the area's designated "main street," and was packed with small businesses and street vendors. After school, the street was crowded with students from local high schools, the schools they attended easily identifiable by the uniforms they wore (usually a different color polo shirt combined with brown or black pants and skirts).

While Urban Charter drew students from a mostly similar class background as those at Perry High, the neighborhood in which Urban Charter was located was not as impoverished. The median household income for the area was $30,000, compared to $22,000 for south Morgan and $36,000 for the city. The rise in median income in the area over the past few years was largely the result of increased gentrification.

With approximately half of the boys living outside of the surrounding neighborhood, many boys, using bus passes subsidized by the school district, took public transportation to school, getting off at Cole Street before walking the few blocks down to the school. But why had they chosen to attend Urban Charter? In the previous section, I noted that Mr. Pierce, the school's co-founder, sought to model Urban Charter after Crane Academy, an elite all-boys boarding school. The academy's elite status was certainly attractive, and Mr. Pierce and his staff hoped that their own school would achieve a similar status among parents, their sons, and the community. Mr. Pierce also wanted his new school to be "based on academic merit."

This section will focus what the parents and believed was the *value* of an Urban Charter education *prior* to matriculating at the school. I take "value" to mean two things in this context: what in particular the consumers (parents and their sons) valued about the school as a unique charter (and therefore what they perceived the school's advantages to be), and the degree to which they were committed to the school, or had demonstrated "buy-in." I show how the value of the school was derived in large part from particular beliefs about the crisis facing their own students. Given these shared beliefs and strong levels of buy-in, Mr. Pierce and his staff were

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[37] A few staff members who were with the school the first year said that that while everyone was cramped in the trailers, the closeness enabled most everyone to get to know each other well, and they were grateful for the feelings of school solidarity.

better able to mobilize the Urban Charter community in their claims-making activities (Spector and Kitsuse 1987).

While the student population at Urban Charter was similar demographically to that at Perry—African American and class-disadvantaged, with the vast majority of families falling below the poverty line and the remaining families working-class—the admissions process ensured that the student body would be more academically prepared, and that there would be more buy-in from the parents, than at Perry. This admissions process made Urban Charter more selective than Perry High, but it was less selective than other charters in the city because it lacked a lottery and a waiting list. After three years of admitting students, the school found that boys with wide-ranging ability levels had donned the Urban Charter blazer. As Dr. Green told a room of prospective teachers, "Many boys arrive several reading grade levels behind and some are 10th graders who are at college level."

The typical admissions process worked as follows: a student and a parent or guardian attended an evening informational session; shadowed a current 9th grader in several classes; sat for an interview; and was admitted on a first come, first served basis. A student's prior academic record did not matter. As Ms. Martinez, the Admissions Director, said, "we don't ask for grades because we don't want to make it seem like we're being selective." So while Urban Charter administrators planned for the school becoming more selective as it became more popular, in its third year it remained less selective than other special admissions public and charter schools in the city.[38]

Ms. Martinez remarked that in most cases parents decided if their boys would attend the school, and in some cases they forced their sons to attend. As Ms. Hassel, the mother of a 10th grader, explained: "I think for most of the kids it's usually their parents' choice. Yes, your child goes in [to the interview] and they say everything that you want them to say but it's really the parents who are putting their children there." Ms. Martinez told me that she was grateful that the parents usually made the decision for their sons because "they really don't know what they want when they're 13, 14. Sometimes I'm glad the parents are like the way they are." By that, Ms. Martinez meant that parents had forced their sons to attend an interview and to eventually enroll.

I had a chance to observe this. Lamar, an 8th grader at a local public school, was clearly not excited about the prospect of attending an all-boys school. The interview went so poorly that Ms. Martinez asked Lamar and his mother to re-assess and to return for a second interview if they wished. After they agreed to a second interview, Ms. Martinez confided in me that she hoped it would go well; otherwise she would ask Mr. Pierce to sit in and "convince" Lamar that Urban Charter was the best place for him. As long as Lamar said he was interested in coming, he would be added to the roster for the coming school year. Ms. Martinez opened the interview by asking Lamar why he had returned:

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[38] By its third year, Urban Charter was beginning to receive positive recognition in the press and across the city. A local paper, for example, lauded the school for having the city's best extracurricular programs (the article included a photo of members of the crew team, one of a handful of non-private schools in the city to field one). A handful of the students I interviewed had applied to the city's elite public schools, but were not accepted. Until Urban Charter is viewed as offering the same quality of academics, the school is unlikely to keep most of those academically gifted middle school applicants from choosing those other schools. Of course, Urban Charter officials hoped that their extracurricular programs and their location—a distinctive charter option in an area of Morgan mostly devoid of them—might lure some of those gifted students to their school.

Lamar:	My uncles told me this would be a great opportunity and it will help me to prepare for college.
Ms. Martinez:	I like that you changed your mind! How do you feel about having to come to school over the summer?
Lamar:	I'll do it if it's something I'll have to do to better my education.
Ms. Martinez:	Great. Do you have any questions?
Lamar:	Does the school have a basketball camp?
Lamar's mom:	Do you have any *academic* questions, Lamar?

Ms. Martinez laughed and Lamar's mom shook her head playfully as if to say, "don't mind Lamar, he just doesn't know any better." Although it took a second trip to Urban Charter, Lamar had said the right things, even if his mother had forced the words on her son and had rehearsed the interview with him. That was standard practice, Ms. Martinez thought, and she had become accustomed to hearing boys tell her that Urban Charter would help them get into college. Chapter 5 examines the boys' feelings of being forced to attend Urban Charter, and how those feelings changed over time.

Parents perceived that Urban Charter had certain advantages *as a charter school.* While still a public school in that it received some public funds and could not charge students for admission, Urban Charter had certain distinctive advantages—real and perceived—that Perry High lacked. The first was money. A Board of Directors helped with fundraising—during the 2009-2010 academic year, the school raised over $1 million in the middle of an economic downturn—and managed the school's finances. The additional funding allowed the school to provide resources that most public schools lacked, such as a used laptop that each student received when he reached the 10th grade and would be allowed to keep when he graduated.

Staff members and students spoke frequently about the school's "buzz," or the notoriety it was gaining for being unique among the city's schools. Educational researchers have consistently found that parents primarily choose charters because they believe they offer a better academic experience for their children (Buckley and Schneider 2007). There is also modest evidence that charter schools on average exceed traditional schools in achievement, and that poor children, in particular, stand to benefit the most in these learning environments (Walberg 2007).[39] While research has found that the quality of teachers in charters matters more than the quality or particularities of the academic curriculum itself (Walberg 2007), I found mixed support for this claim in my interviews with parents. In any case, while the teachers were better suited for working in the particular environment at Urban Charter—mainly because they had bought in to the school by choosing to teach there over another school (Turnbull 2002)—they were not necessarily more effective teachers as a whole than their Perry counterparts.[40]

A third advantage parents perceived in charter schools was the possibility for greater parental involvement. Because parents were stakeholders from the beginning, having agreed to let their sons attend the school, and because the administration appeared determine to give

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[39] Although it is important to note that there is wide variation in the quality of charter schools, as there is for regular public schools.

[40] Fifteen of the 24 faculty members had three or less years of teaching experience. Mr. Pierce did, however, like to point that nearly 20 of the teachers at Urban Charter held advanced degrees, including four with a Ph.D. (including one new Latin instructor who had recently been a Classics instructor at a local college). At Perry, half of the 30 teachers had three or less years of teaching experience.

parents a more central role in school governance (Buckley and Schneider 2007), I did observe Urban Charter parents as more involved in the day-to-day life of the school than those at Perry.[41] Finally, the pro-market orientation of the current school reform movement has encouraged parents and their children to "consume" a particular kind of "product" in charter schools. The school's flexibility as a charter school allowed Mr. Pierce and his staff to fashion a curriculum that was unique among schools in the city. In addition to the Latin curriculum, the boys were required to participate in after-school activities several days a week, and to attend a longer school day and bi-monthly Saturday school if they were behind on their work.

By and large, as parents considered Urban Charter in comparison with other options outside of regular public schools, they concluded that Urban Charter would provide a better education, with higher quality teachers, than was available at traditional public schools, and that the school provided a curriculum that would put their sons on the track to college. In this way, the perceived value of Urban Charter was consistent with the school's official mission statement, which began by stating that the school was intended to provide a college-preparatory, classical curriculum grounded in Latin. While prior research has argued that families from lower-class backgrounds do not have as much knowledge about their choices as white and Asian-American families when "shopping" for schools (Fiske and Ladd 2000; Smith and Meier 1995), my overall sense was that Urban Charter parents had a good understanding of what Urban Charter was selling, particularly because Urban Charter was such a unique option, even among charter schools in Morgan that seek to be distinctive and innovative in the school choice market (Ellison 2012; Walberg 2007).

However, Urban Charter's mission statement—what the School Turnaround Committee required as part of the school's charter application, and what appeared on school brochures and the school's website—provided an incomplete picture of what the school offered and the assumptions behind the core belief that Urban Charter would provide a better overall academic experience for boys. In chapter 5, I examine in greater detail the school's formal curriculum, which refers to a school's set of explicit, officially recognized objectives (Portelli 1993), and in particular the significant role of Latin in that curriculum. For the remainder of this chapter, I will argue that Urban Charter had the advantage of a "hidden curriculum," which is made up of "those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life" (Giroux 2001: 47). Making explicit what is hidden is necessary because *this* particular curriculum addressed directly what Urban Charter community members perceived as the crisis of *their* boys.

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[41] Urban Charter had an active organization, the Family-School Alliance, which was intended to integrate families into the school. The organization was led by Mr. Holmes, the Dean of Climate, whose role in the school was to support the principal in managing school discipline. The Family-School Alliance reached out into the community for additional support, creating partnerships that brought in law students from a local university to provide free legal support and advice for parents. (These law students also volunteered with the school's debate team and mock trial team, both of which had much success during the 2009-2010 school year. The administration was proud to publicize these achievements.)

The Hidden Curriculum

Protecting Our Boys from "Fighting and Failure"

While not all scholars have explicitly invoked the concept of a hidden curriculum, a large body of research has exposed how schools—through rules and institutional practices—reproduce, often multiple, race (Ferguson, 2001), class (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Willis 1977), gender (Pascoe 2007), and sexual inequalities (Epstein 1997; Renold 2005), even as schools purport to provide an equal education for all of their students. For my study, I extend the concept of a hidden curriculum beyond a focus on the stratification of individuals to consider how schools might reproduce and reinforce inequalities *between schools*, and between students at different schools.

To support its official mission, the staff and parents at Urban Charter set about creating "symbolic boundaries" (Lamont and Molnar 2002) between their students and "banished boys," that is, Black boys who likely could not be saved, and who came from morally weak families and threatened to drag the Urban Charter boys down with them. While parents at Urban Charter largely chose the school because of its (real and perceived) higher levels of academic quality (Tedin and Weiher, 2004), support for all-boys education in the city of Morgan hinged just as much on certain tenets that never appeared in the school's official mission statement and formal curriculum. The Urban Charter community did not point to any particular boys; instead, drawing on widespread stereotypes, they distinguished "their" boys, with more promising futures, from "other" young Black men, seen as dangerous and lawless. Urban Charter not only separated boys from girls, but also (far more salient in the eyes of the school community), it separated, *different kinds of boys from one another.*

The flip side of Urban Charter's formal, academic curriculum was an emphasis on deficits in traditional neighborhood public schools. Judy Jackson May (2006) has shown that parents who seek out charter schools are dissatisfied with their local public schools. What exactly were Urban Charter parents and staff members dissatisfied with and angry about? As I noted earlier, when they sought a charter school for their sons, the parents I studied did not, by and large, believe that the teachers would be better than those at traditional public schools. Instead, they believed that the major difference had to do with the types of *students* in charter v. regular public schools. Charter school parents and students thought that the type of students found in regular public schools ruined these institutions.

In chapter 2, I showed how members of the Perry community framed the crisis facing their boys as one of punishment. Urban Charter parents largely believed that the same sorts of problems afflicted their young men. Ms. Anderson, the mother of a 10th grader at Urban Charter, commented that:

> A lot of them have lost hope and you see it from the younger generation looking at the older guys that stand on the corner, sell drugs, who might just stand on the corner and do nothing all day. If we can reach our babies at a young, young age, and instill in them, because so many of them, like I said, they're in single parent homes, or they don't have parents at all, or their grandmother is raising them. You know, it's hard, it's hard for everybody, but if we can reach them at a really early age, and instill in them the basics of life, you know, getting a good education, go to school.

It was notable how infrequently parents emphasized *sex separation* as distinctive to these schools. Rather, they understood that separating out girls was part of the school's plan to target and assist a certain group: African American boys. As part of the design of a charter school, it was important for Mr. Pierce that he find families who wanted the "product" the school could offer. I asked Jerome, a 10th grader, why he thought Mr. Pierce had founded Urban Charter. He responded:

> He wanted to, well, empower the inner city children, like the inner city boys. Because you look around and all you see is African American youth on the corner or something like on the corner doing drugs, selling them or just pretty much on the streets wasting all of their lives. And he wanted to change that. I guess he doesn't feel that's a future to look up to and prepare us for college.

Jerome's comments echo those made by other boys I interviewed. They nearly all had a sense that Mr. Pierce's main objective was to "empower" Black boys (in chapter 5 I examine in greater detail the boys' reactions to being a target of the school's intervention). *Empowering the boys meant providing them with an education that was likely not possible in public schools that were overrun by "bad" Black boys.* Of course, the boys at Urban Charter had not been chosen for being "good," but the admissions process likely served as a filtering mechanism, so that the students who applied were from families with active parents, and had been more likely themselves to avoid trouble in their middle schools. Nearly everyone recognized that their own boys could have "gone bad" were it not for the interventions the school provided.

Dr. Green made the above point clear at in informational session one evening at the school. Parents were required to attend before they and their sons could come in for their interview. For most parents, it would be the first time they would be hearing the school's pitch. About 25 parents and guardians were in attendance that night, and they heard the staff continuously emphasize the school's "rigorous academic curriculum." Dr. Green strongly hinted that many more boys from public middle schools did poorly in their first year at Urban Charter than those from charters and private schools. "We have students here from public school," he said, "who haven't learned what they were *supposed to have learned*." A number of parents clearly agreed, clapping and letting out a loud "mmmm-huh!"

Late one afternoon near the end of the school year, the Urban Charter staff prepared for an Induction Ceremony to welcome the incoming class of 9th graders who would begin that fall. It was held at a symphony hall downtown, and the families were well represented, taking up nearly all of the seats. When the curtains rose to begin the ceremony, the new 9th graders were standing dutifully, dressed in white collared shirts and black pants. They looked *small,* especially at the end of the ceremony when they lined up to shake each staff member's hand before leaving the stage. The incoming 9th graders also occasionally looked nervous and confused, like when one current student recited the student pledge in Latin, a "dead language" that seemed alien and intimidating to the students, but from the vantage point of the parents (who uttered "oohs" and "aahs"), signaled prestige.

Urban Charter was unusual among city high schools in hosting an event like this. The ceremony had a pep rally atmosphere—with lots of clapping and enthusiastic cheering—and resembled a ritual that marked the students' transition from childhood to adolescence (Modell 1989). They boys were becoming adults and becoming men. One of the event's main themes

was that raising the boys was a dual responsibility between families and the school. Staff members thanked the parents for "trusting us with your sons," and near the end, teachers came up one at a time to make a different promise, such as "we will never stop trying to be successful with your son" and "we will always make ourselves available to students, parents, and any concerns they might have." The parents were asked to make a similar commitment. Mr. Holmes, the principal's top assistant who was in charge of non-academic affairs in the building, asked all the parents to stand up while parents of current students articulated the collective promises of the families. One mother told the audience: "We must take an active part in the education of our sons by attending all school meetings, teachers' conferences, and school activities throughout the school year. Even when we have worked, even when we have gotten out and it's late and we're tired, we understand that we have responsibilities to our sons' education."

Two speeches captured well the particular mission of the school. The mayor's press secretary, who gave the plenary address, opened by describing how he had grown up poor like many in the audience: "I'm reflecting on growing up and coming from one of the lowest income families you'll ever meet. All the social services programs that were available: I think I experienced them all." He later emphasized an idea that was central to how manhood was manufactured at the school: "Growth," he said, "was exponential," and something that happened in small steps in the short-term, but had long-term effects; patience was needed because the boys needed time to grow.

In a video, a member of the Board of Directors lauded Dr. Green for having a "laser-like focus on results." This comment hinted at an intensity that was evident when Dr. Green finally addressed the audience, and a general demeanor that contrasted with that of Mr. Pierce, the CEO, who joked and spoke more casually. "You are all here right now because either you or your parents want better for you or your life," Dr. Green said. "Whether 'better' means not having to pay for a private school tuition—for a good education—or whether 'better' means avoiding your neighborhood school, where fighting and failure is more prevalent than love and learning."

Dr. Green's comments underscore how the school sought to distance itself from the threat of public schools in the city, and especially the types of boys assumed to inhabit them. These boys were described as having no future, as lawless and dangerous, and as jealous of the Urban Charter boys and the opportunities they had. The assumption behind these practices was that not all Black boys could be saved. Rather, Urban Charter aimed to save boys who were viewed as a kind of "collateral damage": those boys who would otherwise be pulled down by the "banished boys," as I will refer to them, if they remained in public schools. To affirm its own identity and to justify its existence to its consumers—the boys and their parents—the Urban Charter staff needed to create certain "symbolic boundaries" between their school and the specter of the "banished boys" who inhabited public schools. Urban Charter administrators and teachers were, by and large, hard-working and dedicated educators, and had by the school's third year put the school on track to achieving significant academic gains comparable to the best charter schools in the city.[42] In this chapter I emphasize the school's "unofficial" charter, which was based on a "triage" of poor, Black boys (Oakes et al. 2005): some could be saved but most could not.

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[42] In addition to standardized test scores, staff members viewed graduation rates as extremely important. The school that year had hired a full-time college counselor; the following year, when the first cohort of boys were set to graduate from Urban Charter, the school would prioritize in its publicity materials its college acceptance rate.

Each Wednesday, the entire school met for a "Student Convention." The convention was intended to create school solidarity; to recognize students for individual, group, and team achievements; and to go over important announcements. While the tone was usually collegial, it occasionally was serious, and the administration demanded obedience from the boys. After making an important point, Dr. Green would sometimes ask "is that understood?" several times until the students responded with an emphatic "YES!" At a convention in early October, Dr. Green announced:

> We started school with 382 students, and 16 young Black men are no longer wearing the Urban Charter logo. And that breaks my heart because I know the kinds of schools where they're at now. And some are going to ask to come back, and I have to say 'no.' And I'm afraid to see where they'll be in six months or two years or five years.

In his message, Dr. Green notified the students that the school had lost "16 young Black men" (for various reasons, including boys who felt they could not keep up with the academic rigor of the school, and those who had already committed major disciplinary infractions).[43] He suggested that some of these boys would eventually realize that their public schools—"the kinds of schools where they're at now"—were inferior and would "ask to come back." He concluded by forecasting a dire future for those boys, who perhaps would drop out or get caught up in the violence and drug economy that had harmed the boys at Perry over in south Morgan. Ms. Hassel, the mother of a 10th grader, reinforced this idea when she asserted:

> Some boys, they have no future. They'll get shot, locked up, stuck on a corner selling drugs. You might see them, *but then they're banished*, maybe their name show up in the obituaries. I just don't want them to take [my son] down with them.

These "banished boys," as I call them, and picking up on Ms. Hassel's description, were those whom the Perry High staff sought to lift up, and those whom Urban Charter wanted *their* boys to avoid.

The administrators had other opportunities at Student Conventions to cast regular public schools as places to which boys are banished. One day, a group of Urban Charter students had been "jumped," or attacked, by boys from a nearby high school. At the following Student Convention, the administrators, like Mr. Green had done during the Induction Ceremony above, described public school boys as unsalvageable. "Stop messing with each other," Mr. Holmes instructed the boys. "Let's put our energy into stopping the morons who aren't our Urban Charter brothers." Mr. Holmes then told the boys, "you have everything to lose and they have nothing to lose"; and later, he said that those boys "see you as having opportunities." These messages characterized public school boys as lacking the privileges of Urban Charter students. Moreover, public school boys were intentionally trying to bring down the Urban Charter boys, who were potentially collateral damage. This moment was quite striking in the way that the boys, clad in their uniforms, sat straight up in their chairs, listening intently to the school's male leaders demand that they choose their "Urban Charter brothers" over getting pulled into the

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[43] While the retention rates were higher for the 9th and 10th grade classes, the 11th grade class that made up the first cohort shrunk significantly. Only 55% of the 140 boys who entered Urban Charter's doors in the fall of 2007 stayed there all four years and graduated in 2011.

fighting that is "rampant," the leaders believed, in public schools and throughout their community.

Embodying a marginalized masculinity, Black men are denied many of the privileges of dominant manhood (Connell 2005). As men who are excluded from participation from mainstream institutions, their masculinity, within a hierarchy of masculinities, is constructed "on the margins." Therefore, Black men who enter public spaces are often perceived as threatening, as invading and taking over these spaces in groups; they are "the paradigmatic example of unwanted traffic" (Calmore 2006: 138). My formulation of "banished boys" builds on this idea of unwanted traffic and observes that the Urban Charter community viewed these boys as invading a particular public space: public schools.[44] As a "marked identity" (Brekhaus 1998), the "banished boys" were not necessarily a specific group of boys (those that the Urban Charter community identified by name) but a "threatening specter" (Butler 1993: 3), an "abject identity" that "must constantly be named to remind individuals of its power" (Pascoe 2007: 14).

While charters still qualify as public schools in that they are held to the same (and in some cases, higher) expectations as regular public schools (Buckley and Schneider 2007), a desire to distance themselves and their students and sons from regular public schools allowed adults at Urban Charter to envision their school as standing outside of the public school system. The concept of "banished boys," then, underscores an important relational standpoint: the Urban Charter community was actively making and remaking its institutional identity through the conscious, explicit, and constant exclusion of this specter. Supporters of single-sex education claim that girls require their own classrooms and schools because boys pose a threat to them. But in the urban ecology of single-sex education in Morgan, troubled boys such as those at Perry High threatened, in the eyes of the Urban Charter community, to deny Urban Charter boys their education.

The possibility of fighting was a major concern at Urban Charter. Fighting constitutes a primary form of masculine currency in inner-city neighborhoods, where young men who lack other resources can rely on their bodies and physicality to prove their worth to their peers (Anderson 1999). Researchers have argued that schools in these areas often "give in" to cultures of fighting since boys require additional "staging areas" (Anderson 1999) to gain respect from their peers and defend their honor. In addition, many urban schools are so resource-deprived that fighting is tolerated by staff (Devine 1996). Turning to Perry High for a moment, while fighting was not nearly as "rampant" as the Urban Charter staff perceived—during the school year I observed 15 physical altercations between boys, several of which involved two of the same boys—my sense is that more could have been done to prevent it. I at times observed school police officers tolerating a bit of fighting like shoving and light wrestling. They only intervened if a large crowd gathered (which increased the chances that the fight would escalate as peer pressure intensified) or if it looked like a boy might get seriously hurt. Pulling two 7th graders apart one day, one school police officer, a set of handcuffs hanging from his belt loop, told the boys to go on to class. He then turned to me and said, "it's just how *these* boys do." As someone who had grown up in the neighborhood himself, the officer was resigned to the fighting because he felt that it was part of the cultural practices that made up Black boyhood in Morgan.

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[44] John Calmore (2006) further argues that poor Black men's identities are constructed through the interaction of race and space, as they are over-policed and monitored. Not only are they seen as taking up too much public space, but they are denied access to certain spaces (for example, when an empty taxi passes them by). One consequence of this characterization of Black men is restricted social distance, or mobility.

In her study of a coed, racially- and class-mixed elementary school, Ann Ferguson (2001) found that staff were more likely to discipline Black boys than white boys for fighting. Black boys, she argues, were less likely to be framed as having engaged in "naughty," harmless behavior, so teachers at the school clamped down on aggressive behavior out of fear that it could escalate into something truly vicious. At Perry, the particular gender and race composition made the school—more than any other in the city—resemble the all-male arenas (their blocks, or street-level gangs; the corners where drugs were hustled) that dominated the inner-city area outside of the school. Thus, the particular code of violence that regulated interpersonal behavior among boys was more likely to remain intact inside the school. Staff members at the school Ferguson studied disciplined some boys and not others based on racial and class distinctions. Perry lacked similar demarcations, and, thus, boys could fight because "it's just how *these* boys do." While Ferguson argues that Black boys lacked the privilege of being "naughty by nature," and not seriously threatening, one might say at Perry that some staff members saw the boys as "aggressive by nature." Instead of punishing the boys at the first sign of trouble, they allowed the code itself to regulate behavior: there were rules for fighting, and the winners and those who at least fought admirably gained respect from their peers. Those who did not would lose respect, and that would be punishment enough.

The boys who came from public schools like Perry were all too aware of the fighting culture at schools, which put fighting front and center in the general chaotic environment at these schools. In fact, "fighting" was the most common response I received when I asked boys to describe public schools (their middle schools or other high schools they could have ended up at). Tenth grader Tyson, for example, shook his head when I asked him what he knew about a nearby high school: "It's like a juvenile school mostly. I wouldn't think they as bad now as they was but people used to… I heard they set it on fire. It was fights every day, people bringing weapons."

Parents also perceived public schools to be spaces that were consumed by fighting. Ms. Harper lived with her son Tyson, a 10th grader at Urban Charter, in south Morgan about a half hour drive from the school. She told me:

> The high schools in this area, it's the worst. All they do is fight. Cops are called every day. It's just too much drama, too much tension. Tyson wouldn't last over there because he has a temper. He would fight every day. He wouldn't get anything done, and I know he's a very bright child, and I know that he would just goof off and fall in with the crowd. He can be a follower.

The "worst" regular public high schools in the area were to be avoided at all costs because Ms. Harper's son "wouldn't last over there." The boys who passed through Urban Charter's doors were not inherently more "good" than "the crowd" ("the wrong crowd" is also a common term used to refer to a homogenous other), and could quite easily give in to the fighting and other pressures. In particular, Ms. Harper's comment that her son is a "follower" echoed in other comments by Urban Charter parents, and implied that they, too, could join the group of "banished boys" who were likely to remain in public school until they graduated, if they graduated at all, and would be pushed onto the school-to-prison pipeline. The flip side of this assumption also appeared to be true: that any boy who was negotiating these pressures could

find his way out of regular public schools and into Urban Charter greatly increased his chances of avoiding prison.

The Urban Charter staff went to great lengths to try to protect the boys from the surrounding community. While (as I describe later) the uniforms garnered respect among community members because the clothes broke with stereotypes,[45] the Urban Charter staff expressed worry that the uniforms also made the boys easy targets for getting "jumped," or assaulted, in the neighborhood. After numerous confrontations between Urban Charter boys and boys from nearby high schools the first year, the school set up what they called a Safety Zone before and after school. Staff members stood at several street intersections around the school so the boys could be escorted to and from their busses. Given that the boys spent so much time at the school—taking into account bi-monthly Saturday school, several hours more per week than students in public schools—there was a sense that the staff was trying to insulate the boys from the dangers that, as one teacher told me, "leaked out of public schools."

As I briefly described in the last chapter, at Perry, mothers described to me the responsibility that the Black male leadership at their school had to be caregivers. Several mothers said that these men should provide this assistance because the mothers prioritized raising their own daughters, who they felt would need to grow to become particularly strong women who might should similar burdens as single mothers. At Urban Charter, family was invoked in a different way: the staff asked the boys to look out for their Urban Charter "brothers" because they were a family. Mr. Davidson, a math teacher, described to me the importance of developing relationships as brothers:

> I think the kids that come here have a lot of difficulties with family. They don't have fathers sometimes, sometimes they don't even have mothers, they're living with their grandparents or something. So I think the idea of instead of a gang being a family, a school being a family is a very interesting idea.

At Perry High, I observed few attempts by staff to create solidarity among the boys. At Urban Charter, however, staff and students alike stressed the need to create bonds in opposition to the looming specter of the "banished boys." Mr. Davidson's comments hints at a larger idea that I will develop further later in the dissertation. The Urban Charter boys grew close but would be groomed to become independent citizens and workers; therefore they took care of *each other* so that they could one day take care of *themselves*. At Perry High, however, there appeared to be more of an emphasis on the boys looking out for *themselves* so that they could one day look out for *their own* (wives and children).

Invoking gangs allowed Mr. Davidson to make a distinction between Urban Charter boys and boys oriented to the *wrong* kinds of family. As seen in this quote and other comments above, the members of the Urban Charter community drew a symbolic boundary between itself and those assumed to be a continual threat and banished to regular public schools. These boys were imagined to not possess the characteristics of those (at Urban Charter) who were participants in the moral order (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006). Gangs (or blocks, as the smaller street-level gangs were called) could certainly be tight-knit groups, as research

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[45] Many boys still wore Black urban fashions and a standard look of baggy jeans and oversized shirts (Majors and Billson 1992, E. Morris 2006), but as I describe in chapter 6, an increasing number at Perry High had started to adopt "high fashion," "white" labels because those clothes signaled mobility.

(Venkatesh 2006) and chapter 2 showed, and therefore constituted one kind of family, as Mr. Davidson noted. But the Urban Charter brothers were asked to come together in order to fight off the threat posed by gangs and those who participated in them.

The issue of "protecting your brothers" emerged in interesting ways. At the last Student Convention before the winter break, Dr. Green and Mr. Holmes presented an award to Lenny, an 11th grader who helped "to present something potentially tragic from happening." Earlier in the week, Lenny had overheard a boy from another school threaten two Urban Charter students on the bus. He reported the incident to the administrators, who promptly went to the boy's school. There, they found a weapon on him.[46] While the Lenny and the administrators should be admired for helping to keep the students safe, the award clearly made many boys uneasy. There was usually abundant applause for award winners each week, but this one drew obvious suspicion, with many boys refraining from clapping. As 10th grader Stephan, who was sitting near me at the back of the cafeteria, said incredulously to the boys around him, "they really just gave the boy a certificate for being *a rat*." Being a "rat"—or a snitch, someone who cooperates with the police or other authorities (Morris, 2010)—has a long history as an object of scorn in marginalized communities with antagonistic relationships to law enforcement (Anderson 1999; Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright 2003). Historically, anti-snitching has been viewed as part of a criminal code that operates outside of formal authorities; highly stigmatized for being "above" the code, snitches sometimes face retaliation (Topalli 2005). In his study of a Texas middle school, Edward Morris (2010) found that the anti-snitching code was so pervasive among adolescent youth, and created such strong pressure to remain silent, that even generally rule-abiding, school-oriented students abided by the code.

I found this to be equally true for the boys I interviewed at Perry and at Urban Charter.[47] Douglas, a 9th grader at Perry, commented that the anti-snitching code was so strong that even boys would not even joke about it. He told me about a friend who was called a rat by another boy, and felt disrespected because that label is only reserved for serious, potentially life-threatening situations:

> If you call somebody a rat that means they supposed to be dead right now or not supposed to be in the school right now. Like you a rat, like that mean you snitching on somebody and somebody gonna kill you. So that's why he got mad, was like, 'You being disrespectful,' because out here, if you rat on somebody they gonna kill you.

Staff members were also aware of how they were up against the anti-snitching code. During her first year, Ms. Henderson, the first on-site director of the Second Chance program at Perry,

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[46] I do not believe the administration ever revealed what the weapon was, but it was rumored to be a knife.

[47] Several times boys at Perry called me a rat when (rightly in some cases) they claimed that I had helped to get boys in trouble. This was particularly true of the boys in the Second Chance program, the majority of whom had had run-ins with the law and seemed particularly sensitive to abiding by the anti-snitching code. (Douglas, whom I quoted at the top of the page, was a student in Second Chance.) One time, I was asked to proctor an exam for one period when the school was unable to get a substitute. Several of the boys proceeded to cheat and others played cards, and I had to decide whether to turn a blind eye or to "rat" on them to Ms. Reese, the liaison between the School District and Second Chance. I tried at first to get the boys to take the test, but as one said to me, "stay out of this, you're not our teacher." I did not name names but did tell Ms. Reese that many of the boys did not focus on the exam. While some of the boys forgave me, I definitely lost the trust—if I ever had it—of others. This, of course, was a tricky situation because if I had not told Ms. Reese, then I may have lost her trust.

recalled having to look out for boys who were not forthcoming about problems outside of school because they did not want to be seen as a snitch. She remembered "a student or two from Perry who were killed that very year because of gang-related activities. And they were thought to be snitches." She later described a rather cruel dilemma she had faced. She tried to find ways to help and protect boys who wanted to rat out other boys. But in a few cases she felt pressured to get the police involved, even though she knew that this could lead to extra profiling of the boys (and their friends or members of their blocks). This would further suck the boys into the "ubiquitous system of criminalization" of urban male youth that Victor Rios (2011: 11) calls the "youth control complex."

The snitching incident at Urban Charter underscores a more important issue. The reluctance—or perhaps outright resistance—to "honor" their Urban Charter brother with an award for snitching, suggests that the boys were also uneasy with how their own administration was colluding with law enforcement. Since the administration represented the school and the Urban Charter boys were told constantly to choose school solidarity over a manhood that demanded other ways of resolving conflicts, then the boys may have also felt that they, to some degree, were aligned with the law. This incident demonstrates how aware the boys were of their place within the purview the youth control complex.

While Ms. Henderson at Perry was aware of the significance of the anti-snitching code, no Urban Charter staff members brought the issue up with me. The Urban Charter administration, of course, saw it as their responsibility to keep their students safe, and honored the student who came forward with what he had heard on the bus. While they may have been aware that students would perceive of their classmate as a "rat," they prioritized the safety of their students. Urban Charter staff members did, however, understand that the boys had been shaped in significant ways by their communities long before they arrived at the school, and they returned to their communities and those influences each night. To reinforce larger attempts to exclude the specter of the "banished boys," Urban Charter staff resigned themselves to the idea that they could lose some of their own students to the street. Recall how in the example of the Student Convention earlier, Dr. Green told the students that the school had lost a several boys and that he was "afraid to see where they'll be" down the road. Matriculating to Urban Charter did not mean that a boy would be saved; rather, the school had to actively resist the threat of the specter of the "banished boys" in order to *minimize* the number of Urban Charter boys who would be lost. As Ms. Rodriguez, the school's social worker, told me:

> They want to move on and be successful. But then they go back to their neighborhoods and they have their friends who are not in school, they're drop outs or they're skipping school, you know, they're not always doing the right thing, and they kind of feel, like, 'Okay, you know, should I go back to the streets or should I join my friends who are hanging out and who may not be doing the right thing? Or should I still come to school?' And there's that struggle between coming to school every day, doing the right thing, or, you know, hanging out with my friends and making poor decisions. So I see a lot of kids struggle with that. And sometimes we're able to win them, you know. We win, this guy wins, and unfortunately, a small amount of kids, you know, the street won, you know, and a lot of those students are no longer here because they chose the street over their school.

As Ms. Rodriguez noted, Urban Charter was not only in a struggle against regular public schools, but also with students who attended them and posed a threat to Urban Charter students during after-school hours.[48] Like Ms. Harper, the parent of a 10th grader, had said earlier, her son "could be a follower," and she feared that her son would succumb to bad influences in public schools. And while Ms. Rodriguez acknowledged that the school sometimes would not "win" in a struggle against community pressures—the influence of block membership, the drug economy, street violence—her final comment points to the school's framing of individual failure as a matter of individual choice.

The Failures of Parents
Parents and guardians at Urban Charter and Perry High identified similar problems facing families. When asked to describe why young Black men generally did so poorly, however, Urban Charter parents vilified regular public schools, but in a slightly different way than the Urban Charter administrators. They scorned the parents of those public schools boys who they perceived posed a threat to their own sons.

As I described earlier, the Urban Charter boys had certain important advantages over their Perry High peers, but the two student populations were, by and large, from a similar socioeconomic background: 89% of the Perry boys qualified for free or reduced-priced lunch, a figure that was 86% at Urban Charter. While Urban Charter did not keep a record of family profiles, there seemed to be two small but important differences between the two populations. There was a slightly higher percentage of "working poor" families at Urban Charter than at Perry, which was reflected in my interview sample.[49] According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), the working poor are those people who spent at least 27 weeks out of the year working or looking for work, but whose incomes still fell at or below the poverty line. In 2009,

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[48] Many Urban Charter staff members believed schools themselves had given in to the "street" codes, and that the staff members at those schools were ill-equipped or possibly unwilling to provide a sense of order. But Ms. Rodriguez commented on the pressures Urban Charter students faced when they and their public school counterparts were out of school—at night, during holidays, and on the weekends. Several of the boys whom "the street won" appeared in old school publicity materials and in blown-up pictures hanging in the hallways. At an open house for prospective teachers, Mr. Pierce and Mr. Holmes joked that students feared appearing in school videos and pictures because that meant that they were marked for expulsion. A few teachers remarked that the pictures of these lost boys were eerie, and served as a reminder that the students should not take their own enrollment at the school for granted.

[49] The school district described students who qualify for free or reduced-priced lunch as coming from "economically disadvantaged families," or those living at or below the federal poverty line. From my interviews with parents and guardians, I was able to roughly determine how many of my respondents were working poor. Five of the nine parents, 56%, I interviewed at Perry High held low-wage jobs at the time I interviewed them; I am classifying them as working poor. Three of the four remaining parents who had each been unemployed for at least nine months told me that they were receiving government assistance. I am not sure of the class position of the last mother. At Urban Charter, I interviewed 13 parents (two additional respondents were grandparents and were retired). Of the 13, eight (62%) were employed in low-wage jobs and I am classifying them as working poor. Of the remaining five, three parents self-identified as working-class (one of these three was the only parent I interviewed at Urban Charter who had earned a college degree; I also only interviewed one mother at Perry who had earned a college degree). The last two had each been unemployed for over six months. Therefore, while the samples are small, I had a slightly higher percentage of working poor among the families I interviewed at Urban Charter, as well as the only working-class families. I was not able to determine the precise class position of each of the students I interviewed, but I since I interviewed the sons of both of the working-class mothers, there were at least two working-class boys in my sample of young men.

the year I began my research at the two schools, 14.3% of all Americans were poor. A small percentage of this group (and 2.9% of all Americans) made up the working poor, and Blacks were approximately twice as likely as whites to be counted as working poor in this group. Ms. Rodriguez, the school's social worker, also estimated that about 15% of the students were from families that were solidly working-class, which roughly accords with the 86% of students who qualified for free or reduced-priced lunch. Two of the fifteen parents I interviewed self-identified as working-class (one of these two mothers was the only parent I interviewed at either school who had graduated from college).

While there were only modest differences in the class backgrounds of the families and students I interviewed at the two schools, I believe that they might help to explain the specific viewpoints of several Urban Charter parents. Mr. and Mrs. Bly were the grandparents of Kahlil, a 10th grader at Urban Charter. They had been living in east Morgan for nearly 40 years, but had grown up in the southern section of the city. Mr. Bly, as it turned out, attended Perry for middle school. The Blys agreed to take in Kahlil after his mother was unable to raise him due to a long struggle with drugs. When I asked Mr. and Mrs. Bly why so many young Black men were struggling in the city, they answered that schools and families needed to work together to raise the boys:

> See, the parents *just don't care*. These parents, they don't care like the parents of old kids, because you can't say nothing to the kids. The kids know that so they take advantage. They curse you out. See, that's why the whole neighborhood has changed because it's an old saying, what it's saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' Because the other parent who look out for your kid when you ain't around: 'Hey, boy, you know, I'm going to tell your mother on you,' or something like that there. And now they tell you, 'Mind your own business.' And then the mothers be coming, 'Don't you say that to my child.' That's why it got out of hand and the neighborhood is terrible, *because of the parents really*. No guidance.

According to Mrs. Bly, parents were to blame for why "the neighborhood is terrible." Recall Officer Sherman's comments from Chapter 1. He, like Mrs. Bly described above, observed a weakening of social ties and trust in the neighborhood, saying that "We looked out for each other. But these days, everyone looks out for themselves." He and other Perry community members seemed to possess a socially situated knowledge of how a combination of social and structural factors—from violence (Bourgois 1989) to increased levels of incarceration and social control (Braman 2004)—had resulted in the deterioration of fictive ties and weakening trust in the community. However, members of the Urban Charter community—like the Blys—were more likely than the adults I spoke with at Perry High to assign personal blame to the parents.

The three working-class parents I interviewed seemed to use even stronger language to condemn other families. The Andersons were a working-class couple who lived a few blocks from the school. Mr. Anderson echoed Mrs. Bly's remarks:

> I think a lot of the parents are pushing [their kids] out the house and don't want to be bothered with a lot of the kids, and I think that's also what's hurting because they don't want to be involved into it. They're not fit to be raising kids. *Some of these worst adults, they don't have parenting in them.*

Mr. Andersons also describes a lack of parental responsibility, describing how parents who "don't want to be bothered" with their children eventually lose their children to the drug economy, which gives them the "wrong attention." His remarks resembled in part those made by staff and parents I interviewed at Perry—particularly the prevalence of drug addiction and hustling—but they differed in the levels of blame assigned to parents. He was highly critical of "these worst adults" who have children when they are "not fit" to raise them, and in fact, "don't have parenting in them."

Scholars (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Vasquez and Wetzel 2009) have shown how groups create symbolic boundaries as a way of separating themselves from others. Working-class individuals may have drawn moral boundaries between themselves and who they saw as morally inept families who produced the same kinds of children. These parents drew these lines when their sons had previously been in public schools, and their negative experiences in those schools motivated them to sign their sons up for Urban Charter. While holding more steady and, from what I am able to estimate, better-paying jobs than other parents I interviewed at both schools, both families shared stories of financial hardship, and appeared to be fighting downward social mobility. But they used the small advantages they had over other parents, and particularly their work status, to demonize other parents for being irresponsible.

Policing Moral Boundaries

Keeping out the Specter of the "Banished Boys"

In chapter 2, I showed how the neighborhood around Perry had been hit hard by a confluence of social forces. Widespread drug abuse and the emergence of a drug economy, the accompanying sharp rise of incarceration as a means of controlling large segments of the Black male population, and a deteriorating economy had resulted in perceived corroding of social ties, trust, and provisions of care for young people. While interrelated, landing in prison was the most acute of these problems since it signaled banishment and a social death. Incarceration, in this case, was viewed as strongly correlated in the relative absence of men who could be fathers for children. The task of caring for children was left largely to single mothers and female-headed households.

Many of the boys at Perry and their families shared living circumstances and an understanding of the conditions surrounding the crisis of African American boys. In this chapter I have shown that Urban Charter members viewed the crisis through a somewhat different lens. They were aware of the difficult conditions in the Morgan area of the city, but they saw "their" boys as on pathways leading toward middle-class futures. The school helped them create symbolic boundaries between *their boys* and the *"banished boys"* who were either in regular public schools like Perry, on the streets, or in prison. This is not to say that everyone I spoke with, interviewed, and observed engaged in these acts of boundary-making and exclusion; rather, they were dominant ideas that tended to emerge in large gatherings and ritualistic events like Student Conventions, evening informational sessions for prospective students and their families, and the Induction Ceremony for incoming 9th graders. The ideas, therefore, carried special weight.

A single-sex school enabled Mr. Pierce and his staff to separate male students from girls, but, more important, it turned out, from another population of boys. As at Perry, people at urban Charter told me that it made sense that splitting up boys and girls would "minimize

distractions,"[50] but this was generally a minor consideration. I take the term "banished" from one mother's (Ms. Hassel) description of the boys she believed threatened to take her son "down with them." According to Ms. Hassel, these boys had "no future." This description accords with the exclusion of Black men from participation in mainstream institutions and the formal economy, particularly for men who are incarcerated or have been released from prison, but are stigmatized as ex-cons and become pariahs in their communities (Alexander 2012; Wacquant 2000). It is important to point out that "banished boys" is an analytic term used to capture the excluded group that the Urban Charter community frequently repudiated, and not a phrase or label I heard often.

Groups often create symbolic boundaries to separate themselves from others and to create in-group solidarity (Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Vasquez & Wetzel, 2009). As the comments from staff and parents show, there was a strong feeling that their boys were likely to share the fate of "banished boys" if they had not made it out of public schools and found, as one mother called it, "the beacon of light" that was Urban Charter. Although the dualism Urban Charter promoted suggested otherwise, "banished boys" were not at all a homogenous group. At Perry High, Urban Charter's chronically struggling counterpart, boys were not always framed as bad; as I will argue in the next chapter, the Perry High administration by and large recognized that most of their students were felled by cultural pressures and structural constraints. Urban Charter community members, however, worked to clearly mark and identify an excluded group to remind the boys that they, too, could be banished from Urban Charter and into the public schools (and therefore be positioned like the Perry High boys, who were more vulnerable to ending up under the strict purview of the criminal justice system). The Urban Charter community "collectively battled a terrifying, destructive, and simultaneously powerless Other, while each of the boys was, at the same time, potentially vulnerable to being positioned as this Other" (Pascoe, 2007: 157). Thus, in the view of Urban Charter parents and the school's staff, one main difference "their" boys, who were destined to be saved, and the derogated "banished boys" was not innate. It had to do with the efforts of Urban Charter as an institution that could insulate its students from the threats posed by the specter of the "banished boys."

Michelle Lamont (2000) has shown how various groups of working class men define collective identities in an "us" v. "them" relational logic. She found that white working class men engaged in a particular form of racism when they elevated themselves above Blacks by believing they were more self-disciplined. Urban Charter engaged not in racism, but in a particular kind of *moral sanctioning*. The findings in this chapter, like Lamont's, "puts flesh" on this practice of moral sanctioning "by documenting inductively the building blocks of boundaries" (2000: 57). It is useful to take a typical way of thinking about how children are socialized in schools—through formal and hidden curricula—and to show how "the building blocks of boundaries" may emerge not from the school's formal (or academic) curriculum, or the school's charter, but as part of the school's hidden curriculum, that is, the tacit beliefs and

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[50] There was not a consensus, at either school, if this was actually true, and I had no way of assessing this given the absence of a co-ed school in my study. But I should note that at Perry, many believed that the boys misbehaved just as much around other boys as they misbehaved around girls because of weak classroom and school management. At Urban Charter, on the other hand, people seemed to believe that if the boys did behave any better, it was not necessarily due to the absence of girls (as distractions), but because of the school's strict (much stricter than that at Perry) disciplinary system coupled with opportunities and incentives that encouraged the boys to focus on their schoolwork.

practices that organize relationships and routines in school (Giroux, 2001). While people at Urban Charter often spoke quite explicitly about keeping "banished boys" at a distance, the hidden curriculum was not made explicit as a public rationale for why students needed to be educated.

The collective—and quite laudable—efforts by Urban Charter officials to protect their students from the dangers of drugs and gangs, combined with the boundary work they performed, also had the effect of allying Urban Charter with other institutions that punished boys who lived in the shadow of the "youth control complex." According to Victor Rios (2011), the criminalization of boys of color takes two forms: material and symbolic. Material criminalization involves actual forms of exclusion from institutions as well as incarceration. Symbolic criminalization involves the acts that surveil, profile, and stigmatize boys, increasing the possibility that they will suffer from incarceration. School officials had not only been proactive in securing support from the local police, but had chosen to honor a student who came to them with information about a boy who had threatened Urban Charter students on the bus. But many boys were visibly disturbed by this act of honoring a "snitch" or "rat" at the Student Convention, creating a tension between a desire to bond with their Urban Charter brothers and to abide by an anti-snitching code (Anderson 1999; Morris 2010). Furthermore, several people I interviewed (as I will later discuss in more depth) believed that Urban Charter students would be criminalized and stigmatized less by particular institutions, such as the police because, clad in blazers and ties, they commanded respect and were *not* seen as the threatening kind. As I will demonstrate, students had much to gain in becoming an "urban gent," as I call it, but the transformation did not come without some costs, especially in the way it indicted urban boyhood practices that many were committed to long before they attended Urban Charter, and which they still tried to balance when they left Urban Charter at the end of the school day.

Urban Charter parents, like those at Perry, acknowledged the daily threats posed to young Black men in inner city Morgan, but they were far more likely, in my observation, to blame parents for not caring enough than to emphasize structural circumstances. In the next chapter, I show how Perry High administrators tried encourage certain provisions of care as a way of countering the crisis of punishment that afflicted Black boys. In contrast, Urban Charter parents blamed other parents if their sons got caught up in gangs, drugs, and/or violence. Mr. Anderson, a working-class parent, said that, "Some of these worst adults, they don't have parenting in them," condemning those who had children when they were not fit to raise them. Parenting took work, and Urban Charter parents blamed many parents for lacking the responsibility required to rear children. Indicting parents of "banished boys" enabled Urban Charter parents to exert their own superiority as well as the superiority of their sons.

On the other side of the boundary line—the world of boys who were ostensibly "banished"—there was less of a tendency to blame parents. Recall how assistant principal Mr. Westbrook, who had served an administrative capacity in the school district for more years than many teachers at either school had been alive, told me that "You have to look at the *socioeconomics* of the community" rather than displacing blame for the plight of Black boys on single mothers. "This structural understanding of the causes of poverty," Michele Lamont (2000: 144) writes, "disassociates moral worth and income and avoids stigmatizing the poor."

Elijah Anderson (1999) has written about how two "value orientations"—"street" and "decent"—are central to the life of inner city Black communities. Anderson portrays "street," a particular cultural adaptation by communities crippled by deindustrialization and poverty, quite

negatively. He describes the people and families who embody it as disorganized, inconsiderate, and caring little about family and community. Street families abide by a "code of the street," a set of informal rules that regulate violence and are organized around individuals "campaigning" for respect. Decent families, on the other hand, teach mainstream values to their children and try to avoid street behaviors like drug use and violence.

While Urban Charter community members might appear to draw a line between street boys and their families, bifurcating value orientations into "street" and "decent" seems an inadequate interpretation of complex forms of boundary work. Critiques of this binary characterization of inner city life have pointed to a more nuanced understanding of the moral sanctioning performed by members of the Urban Charter community. Instead of two value orientations, there appeared to be "two fractions of the black urban proletariat" (Wacquant 2002: 500). While there was considerable overlap between families at the two schools, families at Urban Charter appeared closer to the formal wage economy (reflected in the slightly higher percentage of working poor families I interviewed at Urban Charter) and participated more in mainstream institutions (like schools), compared with those at Perry. The school district website and government surveys lump both schools into the same category: public schools populated by "poor" families.

The boundary work performed by staff and parents at Urban Charter has interesting parallels with other forms of racial and gender divisions (and segregation) in schools. First, casting off "banished boys" to regular public schools mirrors certain *within-school* practices, such as segregating Black boys who are "troublemakers" in-school suspension rooms (Ferguson 2001) and in special education classrooms (Skiba et al. 2006), where Black boys are overrepresented. These practices, functioning as a "mechanisms of domination" (Giroux 2001), lie at the heart of a hidden curriculum that largely prevents Black boys from receiving an adequate education reserved for other populations. While the hidden curriculum is typically regarded as reproducing inequality within institutions, a more flexible application shows how individuals at a school like Urban Charter use tactics of exclusion and repudiation to elevate one group of boys above others.

My fieldwork yielded another insight into the boundary work performed at Urban Charter. I had a chance to attend the annual conference of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Schooling in October 2009, where I heard Dr. Leonard Sax, the organization's founder, speak. At the opening ceremony, he shared with the conference participants the major reasons why single-sex public schools, in his eyes, succeeded or failed. At one point, he commented that single-sex *classrooms* might actually prove to be unfair for boys. He said: "I can tell you about a number of public schools in this country where the parents have gotten the notion that the school has created the single sex format as a way to sequester the troublemaking boys in one classroom." This outcome, cutting off some boys from the rest of the school, is similar to the examples above, but the sex division in this case is seen as benefitting girls. Researchers such as Woody (2002) have warned that sex separation within schools might play on gender stereotypes, as teachers would expect boys to misbehave and thereby help to produce that behavior through that very expectation. My study demonstrates a similar process of division and segregation at work, but looks *between schools* rather than *within,* thereby revealing a complex, inter-institutional process.

Finally, the act of policing moral boundaries sheds additional light on how school choice operates with single-sex education. My findings align with those of other researchers (e.g.

Walberg 2007), showing that Urban Charter parents believed that their school, as a charter, provided better academic opportunities than traditional public schools. However, these findings extend previous research in documenting the process by which parents justify the quality and the necessity of *their* "better charter" by excluding certain populations of children and parents. While Urban Charter, in the academic year during which I conducted research, was not as selective as other charters in the Morgan school district (some of them quite successful), parents perceived a spot in the school as an opportunity not available to most children, who were deemed unworthy of membership (Taylor 1989). Parents and students felt that they were fighting for a scarce resource: a quality education not available to most boys in the city. Drawing boundaries had very real material consequences. Therefore, the creation of symbolic boundaries between Urban Charter boys and other inner-city boys also solidified *social* boundaries, that is, social differences manifested in differential access to special assets and resources (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

Group Solidarity and Care

In addition to morally condemning "banished boys," their parents, and the public schools that housed these families, boundary work served to increase solidarity within the Urban Charter community. This was a particularly important process since Urban Charter was situated in a context of weakening cohesion, trust, and care in the larger community, a trend recognized by parents at both schools. Several Perry High and Urban Charter parents noted that, in prior generations, families depended on one another to look after their children, providing the kind of collective care practices integral to the belief that "it takes a village to raise a child." Yet since increasing poverty (Aguilar 1984; Smith 2007) and social control practices (including mass incarceration) (Braman 2004) correlate with weakening trust relationships in urban communities, and families come to depend less and less on neighbors and other fictive kin to help look after children. One outcome, I argue, was the erosion of caregiving networks and the subsequent weakening of ties among members of the community. These developments led Mr. Jeffries, the unofficial administrator at Perry, to describe his own generation of parents and guardians as being part of "the loveless generation."

The Urban Charter parents I interviewed appeared, like those at Perry, to believe that schools should be part of the larger project of raising and helping to care for their sons. In this way, *all-male schools and majority female-headed households* formed a particular kind of caregiving network. The internal cohesion that Urban Charter created—strengthening ties among boys, between boys and staff, and between the staff and parents—did more than simply instill pride in their school; it was aimed at addressing the larger "crisis of care" (Thorne 2011) that the parents felt in their community. Fostering these bonds and encouraging boys to look after their "brothers," helped to rebuild the village that many parents believed was needed to raise sons in a poverty-stricken neighborhood that housed a youth control complex, "a ubiquitous system of criminalization molded by the synchronized, systematic punishment meted out by socializing and social control institutions" (Rios, 2011: 40).

The manner in which Urban Charter parents demonized other inner-city boys and their parents challenges findings of an "imagined community" among African Americans characterized by strong within-race ties. This line of research, for examples, claims that African Americans, more so than whites, feel deeper connections with other Blacks because of their historical experiences and the effects of their collective racial identity on their life chances

(Jaynes and Williams 1989; Lamont 2000). To borrow a phrase that is popular in current educational reform, the Urban Charter community members appeared to be taking part in a "race to the top," where they acknowledged that resources were scant for protecting—and ultimately saving—Black boys in a socioeconomically deprived community.

CHAPTER 4:

STRUGGLING TO PROVIDE CARE AT PERRY HIGH

The Responsibility of Black Men

Creating a Caregiving Institution

In chapter 2, I described how the staff and parents at Perry High perceived of two, interrelated crises, one rooted in the long reach of the criminal justice system into the lives of young Black men, and the other grounded in declining sources of care for them. This chapter examines the ways Perry High sought to remedy these crises, how the school fell short of providing an effective intervention, and the consequences of falling short. Administrators and other staff members at the school wanted Perry to be a *caregiving institution* that would meet the needs of an at-risk population who were vulnerable to being sent down the school-to-prison pipeline. The administrators at Perry believed that the problem of absent fathers was linked to their students being at risk for punishment and incarceration, and so the school's collective beliefs and practices appeared to cohere into a larger vision of forming a caregiving network that would assist largely female-headed households.

As part of their caregiving efforts, the administration was concerned with limiting the rates of student punishment inside the school, which contributed to larger practices of criminalization of Black boys. The administrators failed, however, to mobilize support from teachers in their "claims-making activities" (Spector and Kitsuse 1987), or the calls for assistance in ameliorating problems facing their students, in part because teachers appeared to have a different idea of the primary type of care the boys needed. The divisions between the administrators and a small but influential cadre of teachers underscored complex issues of race, class, and gender. I close the chapter with a discussion of how built into these provisions of care were visions of particular kinds of men—responsible husbands and fathers—that the adults at Perry wished for their boys to become.

Mr. Jeffries, Perry's "unofficial" administrator, firmly believed that it was the responsibility of Black men to steer boys away from the school-to-prison pipeline: "Right now," he told me, "the principal has been trying to find the right way to reach them because as a Black man, as a person, as a man, you know, it's my job to reach my child. And they are our children, they're not Oriental, they're not Caucasian, they're not Italian, they're ours." Mr. Jeffries echoed a sentiment shared by the administrators of the school: that it was not the responsibility of all men, but the responsibility of *Black men,* to reach Black boys. While Mr. Jeffries himself never graduated from high school, the administrators at the school had extensive years of formal education, having earned the administrative degrees required for their positions. In their leadership capacity, it appeared that they saw themselves as "race men," as successful leaders who were encouraged and felt a responsibility to lead less advantaged segments of the Black population (Drake and Cayton 1962).

This depiction of African American men looking after boys brings to mind popular notions of "role models" and "surrogate parents." Researchers who study families have

identified men who parent or raise other men's biological children as "father surrogates" (Biller 1981), "nonpaternal males" (Coley 2000) and "social fathers" (Jayakody and Kalil 2002; Letiecq 2010). These fictive kin roles can be situated in the tradition of extended care networks that include "othermothers" and other non-biological caretakers in African American communities (Collins 2000; Stack 1974). I prefer the term "social fathering" because *social* provides a way of thinking about how men collectively parent, or try to parent, Black boys. The Black male leadership of the school wanted Perry High *as an institution* to function as a social father. Practices of social fathering can be understood as a form of "caring work" or caregiving. Drawing on the work of Sara Ruddick (1998) and Diemut Bubeck (1995), I take "caring" to refer to taking responsibility for meeting the needs of others and helping them flourish, especially when those others cannot adequately meet their own needs on their own. This definition is part of a larger "ethics of care" that feminist philosophers have developed as a moral theory intended to challenge the tenets of liberal individualism (Held 2006, Kittay 1999). In particular, an ethics of care refutes liberal individualism's assumption of self-sufficient, independent actors, instead acknowledging and valuing human interdependence.

Schools serve as important contexts for caregiving. Nel Noddings (1984) has explored the implications of an ethics of care for schooling practices. For Noddings, caregivers (e.g. the school staff) or what she calls the "one-caring," become engrossed in the lives of the "cared-for" (e.g. students) particularly those with special needs. Angela Valenzuela (1999), in a study of Mexican-American high school students, builds on this line of research. She found that staff members in the school she studied mostly acted *irresponsibly* with their students by expecting them to care *about* school without teachers first caring *for* the students. For an ethic of care to be present in schools with vulnerable populations, staff members must perceive an unjust situation as requiring corrective action and must have empathy for students, identifying with their experiences of disadvantage and oppression (Bass 2012).

The caregiving literature helps to explain why Perry staff members intervened on behalf of their young Black men. If, in the eyes of the staff, the primary danger facing young Black men was the threat and realization of punishment, then providing care meant engaging in actions that might reduce the risk of incarceration. Staff saw incarceration and punitive social control as both a *consequence* of participation in the drug economy and its accompanying violence, and of the absence or lack of involvement of fathers; and as a *cause* of further problems, since boys who were incarcerated or caught up in the youth control complex would be further marginalized and pushed out of mainstream society.

Role Models

Mr. Jeffries and Mr. Riles, an 8th grade math teacher at Perry, had been asked to organize and lead a mentoring program using funding the school had received from a Department of Labor grant. In January, shortly after the students and staff returned from the winter break, the two staff members an organizational meeting. Nearly all of the administrators were present, as well as a few of the school's teachers. Two topics dominated the meeting: who these mentors should be and what it meant to be a mentor. The meeting provided a window into the kinds of caring practices the school aimed to provide for its students.

The men seemed to agree that both men who shared the boys' background—Black men who were from their neighborhood or who had grown up in poverty—as well as men who were from different, more class-privileged backgrounds could serve as mentors for the boys. As Mr.

Westbrook, an assistant principal, told the other participants, the program did not necessarily need men who "are good at basketball, cook chitlins, and drink red Kool-Aid," a somewhat crude statement that listed stereotypes of Black men. A few of the men tapped the table in agreement, and Mr. Sharp, another assistant principal, said, "we eventually want our boys to take [the bus] south of Buchanan," referring to a street that marked the border of the community in South Morgan.

Mr. Youseff chipped in to say why recruiting these men was a good idea: "one advantage is, you get to see the psychology of those in power. Having a white mentor, you might see how white people operate and what they believe." In Chapter 2, I suggested that Mr. Youseff and others in the building wanted the boys to develop and form "situated knowledge" about how power is distributed in society. The boys' disadvantaged position within social hierarchies would facilitate such insight (Haraway 1988). The desire to find men—not just any white men, but class-privileged white men—"in power" and to "see how they operate" also connects with Black feminist standpoint theory. Mr. Youseff wanted the boys to become "outsiders within" (Collins 1986) who, as a result of the interlocking nature of their social class, racial, and gender identity—as poor, Black boys—would become aware of their marginalization and how their subjugation resulted from racism and discrimination. While the program organizers were unable to recruit many men from these backgrounds in the program's first year—only two men, both teachers at the school, fit the description—the message does shed light on larger efforts throughout the school to situate the boys' lives in both local and wider contexts, and to help boys understand the larger structures of power that relegated them to second-class status (Haraway 1988).

Several of the boys I interviewed confirmed the men's belief that someone from a different class and race background could be an effective mentor. Eighteen year-old Frank was the student government president and senior class valedictorian. While he had struggled in school as he grew up in Morgan, his family moved for a short time to another state, where he met men who, Frank happily acknowledged, "dropped knowledge" on him that gave him a considerable advantage compared with other boys when he returned to Morgan. He said that Black boys would likely have "no future" (when pressed to explain what this meant, he said "selling and doing drugs, no job, behind bars") if they did not have a father who was involved in their lives. Then he backtracked a bit, recollecting his own personal experiences:

> Not so much as not growing up with a father, [but] not growing up with positive male leadership. Because most of the positive male role models in my life were teachers. Guys that I've seen as leaders. Intelligent men. Not always African American in my school. In [the state he used to live in], it was two Caucasian guys. And my friends from this area would be like, 'Your mentors were two Caucasian guys? What's going on?' They're intelligent, they speak well and they taught me a lot.

I followed up by asking Frank what his mentors had taught him. He said that they exposed him to experiences not available in Morgan and helped him with his schoolwork; in addition, he said they taught him:

> Frank: Small things, like not to slouch in my chair. In class, it was like, 'look teachers in

the eye and show them you're listening' *(locks his eyes with mine and nods slowly, to make it appear that he's paying attention).* Basically, give teachers a reason to trust and respect me. Give me the benefit of the doubt.

Oeur: And has it worked?

Frank: I think so. I learned that society is suspicious of African American young men, that people think we're only out to pick a fight.

These mentors had provided a set of skills or forms of "cultural competence" that are privileged in educational institutions (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Frank learned that (mainstream) society "is suspicious" of Black boys and fears their mannerisms. As Frank and other boys came of age, they began to understand that small acts of suspicion were part of larger patterns of punitive governance and social control (Rios 2011). Mr. Youseff suggested that students could learn about the "psychology of those in power" by spending time with a white, privileged mentor, but the boys' own experiences of criminalization made them most cognizant of how they were structurally embedded in a youth control complex. The acquisition of dominant cultural capital, and time to and opportunities to hone those skills, may have limited Frank's use of a cool pose (Majors and Billson 1992) and other forms of nondominant cultural capital, or tastes, bodily dispositions, and preferences used by young Black men in their own communities (Carter 2005). Instead, he cultivated types of cultural competence favored by schools, which led to social and economic returns. Frank suggested that teachers would not normally suspect him of wrongdoing or perhaps of not caring about school (his teachers "give [him] the benefit of the doubt"). By stepping outside of the city and into a new environment, Frank had developed an awareness of how those outside of him viewed him—a "looking glass self" (Cooley 1902)—and was shaping his dispositions to fit peoples' positive assessments. As I show in the next chapter, there were more systematic efforts and opportunities to provide these forms of cultural capital, and to develop these looking-glass selves, at Urban Charter than at Perry.

It seemed that the investment by older, caring men in his life helped Frank to improve his performance in school when he returned to Morgan.[51] Frank had a more difficult time explaining why it had to be *men* who could teach him these things. While it did not necessarily have to be men, he conceded, he said that he gravitated toward the two teachers he had in Maryland because he sensed that his own mother had different expectations for him and his sisters.

My mom, she gives me whatever I want. But I can't go to her for help, like my sisters can. Like they have a connection. She real tough on [my sisters], but they learning from her. I always felt like I had to find my own way.

Frank was the only student who said this to me, but it is consistent with my earlier discussion in chapter 2 about how mothers in the neighborhood "raise their daughters and love their sons." Perhaps due to holding different life expectations for their sons and daughters, single mothers may focus on raising their daughters and preparing them for a challenging future life— shouldering the responsibilities of raising families without men who are active in childrearing—

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[51] Roberta Espinoza (2011) outlines the criteria necessary for a positive intervention that leads to college for working-class and students of color. She calls these interventions "pivotal moments." While Frank's experiences with these men did not fully constitute a pivotal moment, they likely made possible such moments when he returned to Morgan.

while showering love on their sons, but not investing in their lives in a similar fashion. As Mr. Bradley, the principal, put it, too many moms "spoil their boys because they know their sons have a harder go of it, with violence and other pressures in the community." His comment seems to imply that some mothers may resign themselves to losing their sons to violence or incarceration. Nikki Jones (2010: 32) has shown how Black mothers and grandmothers in the inner city recognize that young women must deal with racial and sexual discrimination from the outer world, as well doing the intensive labor of raising children while holding down a job, and "work to instill a strong sense of independence in their daughters and encourage them to recognize their own essential role in maintaining their own strength." Perhaps boys like Frank recognized that their own mothers (and grandmothers) were hard at working cultivating strong womanhood in their sisters, but may not have been able to help their boys cultivate a positive sense of manhood.[52]

The mentoring group's hope of recruiting men from different backgrounds appeared to challenge the notion that caring for the boys and saving them from punishment was the sole responsibility of *Black m*en. I raised this issue with Mr. Riles, an English teacher who helped to run the program. He told me:

> These boys need to see the Black men in their lives *trying* to help them, to see men who give a damn about their futures. I think the expectations they have for men are so low to begin with, they respond if we show we care. Black men—myself included—need to follow through on what we say we're going to do. And sometimes giving that care means saying you can't be the savior, you don't have all the answers, you show our boys that they can learn from other men, too.

According to Mr. Riles, Black men could lead the way by humbling themselves and recognizing that boys could also stand to learn from "other" (presumably class-privileged, white) men. As he said this, he was visibly upset, as if he was trying to justify his own comments to himself, simply by having to say them out loud. He concluded this part of our interview with a message that resonates with a theme from chapter 2:

> This whole community has to be in it together. I'd like for our students to look up to the men at Perry in a positive light, but that's only a slice of the picture. The African American community has ridden on the backs of our women for our entire history, and now us men need to do our part. The mothers know this school has a chance to make a difference.

Mr. Riles invoked a need to establish caregiving networks comprised of school and family; his comments suggest that efforts where Black men lead the way should be supported and recognized as long as they serve the larger goal of supporting overburdened mothers.

Whether or not the older mentors were from backgrounds similar to those of the boys, there was an emphasis on getting to know the boys' life circumstances. The men were

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[52] While their own experiences did not have the same transformative effect as Frank's, two other boys shared similar stories of leaving Morgan and then realizing how their dispositions and orientation to the social world was, as one boy, said, "a Morgan thing, I guess."

encouraged to reach out to the boys in ways that went beyond serving as mere role models. As Mr. Jeffries told ten male volunteers at a later meeting:

> You can't just be a role model. Yeah, our students need to see positive men and what positive men do. They need to try to see what it's like to walk in a successful man's shoes. But the hardest thing is for a man to walk a mile in their shoes. That's the thing: as a man, *you can act your age* by imagining what it's like to live the hard life of a Black child.

"Acting your age" also meant that the men needed to recognize that they could not be the boys' friends, but had to assume responsibility for being men who support boys. According to Mr. Jeffries, the mentors should try to be more than someone the boys could emulate or look up to—a typical understanding of a role model—because that, in part, placed the responsibility squarely on the mentee to "model" his behavior after his mentor's. A mature man, someone who acted his age, demonstrated his maturity by participating in the "hardest thing," which was for the mentor to actually imagine himself doing what is typically asked of the mentee: to "walk a mile in their shoes." While various institutional practices, a relatively weak school-wide commitment to single-sex education, and a lack of resources collectively hampered the school's ability to provide sufficient care for their students, the development of dual consciousness would, Mr. Jeffries argued, make a difference. Staff members helped the boys to understand their position in larger structures of power that systematically discriminated against them. In a similar way, Mr. Youseff asked the mentors to understand the boys' place in the youth control complex and in a realm of capitalist production that profited from the boys' incarcerated status.

"Acting your age" meant more than simply being more mature. In chapter 2, I referred to Mr. Jeffries' observation that widespread drug activity in Morgan had resulted in a "loveless generation," or parents who were not all able to provide adequate care for their children. (He alluded to an important historical fact: the introduction of crack cocaine into urban communities and the 1980s War on Drugs policies were primarily responsible for the astronomical rise in incarceration rates of African American men and boys [Alexander 2011].) Mr. Jeffries and other administrators told me that they felt an obligation to help and care for boys because previous generations had "dropped the ball." In one respect, this feeds into popular discourses that characterize Black men as failed fathers and husbands, and thus as falling short of a standard of dominant manhood (Connell 2005; Ross 1998). Yet Mr. Jeffries and other Perry staff did not blame parents to the degree that members of the Urban Charter parents did; some of the Perry staff occasionally identified major structural constraints that harmed the boys' educational experiences.

Caring for Black Boys

"Give Us Some Time to Bloom"

Scholars (Cose 2002; hooks 2004) have described the emotional and psychological pain Black boys experience as a result of abandonment by their fathers. As discussed earlier, many older students deeply resented their fathers who were uninvolved or absent from their lives. They may have also hid their "father hunger" (hooks 2004) more so than younger boys, who I

observed seeking attention from male staff in a way that older boys did not. What kinds of relationships did Perry High students have with male staff members?

At a mentoring meeting, Mr. Morris, an African American English teacher, played out hypothetical situations for the boys to think through. He said, "When the police apprehend you for something, will they think, 'hey this guy isn't quite yet a man because he's not 18, so let's cut him some slack?' No." The boys nodded their heads in agreement. Ninth grader Jamie uttered, "yeah, and when you're 18, and you're Black, no one gives a fuck about you." But when Mr. Morris asked the boys what they would need from the mentors and other men in the building to help them graduate, secure a job, and live a decent life, the conversation turned to how the boys wanted to be seen as children. Maurice, a 9th grader, was well respected by his classmates; the other boys seemed to appreciate that he was able to voice their collective opinion in a way that did not come across as antagonistic. Maurice firmly said:

> We're still learning how to be men and we need your help. We learn lessons every day and after a few years we'll be more mature because of all the lessons we've learned. Eighth grade was only last year. *Give us some time to bloom*.

A large literature has argued that Black boys cultivate a set of gendered practices—aggression, toughness, a preparedness to defend one's body—in response to the aggressive policing tactics employed by various institutions of social control in their neighborhoods, such as police officers in schools, security guards in grocery stores, and cops on the street (Anderson 2008; Brown 2006; Ferguson 2001; Majors and Billson 1992; Rios 2011). Yet as Maurice's comment implies, Black boys sought attention from and caring relationships with adults, which contradicts portrayals of young Black men as "cool" and distant (Majors and Billson 1992), and hypermasculine (Rios 2011).

These findings also challenge popular portrayals of differences between boys and girls. Leonard Sax, the director of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education, had this to say to the audience at the organization's 2009 annual meeting:

> One thing we have really learned is that if girls know that you truly care about them as people and you want to know what's going on in their personal life, they will work harder for you in your classroom because they don't want to disappoint you. That's not true for boys.

Sax believes that girls (and women) have a "different voice" (Gilligan 1982) and are more likely than boys (and men) to seek out mutually empathetic relationships, and are more likely than boys to seek recognition from adults in order to secure a sense of self-worth. My interviews with *older* boys and some scholarship on young Black men support this claim, finding that Black boys resist—rather than actively seek out—male authority because of feelings of resentment, betrayal, and suspicion (hooks 2004). But as assistant principal Mr. Westbrook said, which I first quoted this in chapter 2: "I see a lot of kids, especially the younger kids, who really cling on to certain adults for attention and you become that surrogate father that so many of them are looking for and need." And, as I will later detail, older boys noticed how younger boys also craved their attention, a consequence, perhaps, of seeking male attention that they may otherwise not receive.

Of course, even as they were children, the boys were often called on to behave like adults. Recall how Ms. Fruit, the liaison for the Parent-School Connection, remarked that stereotypes gloss over the fact that many boys at Perry actually "gotta grow up too fast," being forced to find odd jobs to support their families and to help their mothers look after their siblings. This is a different way of thinking about the boys' "social age," a concept that calls attention to the ways people of the same chronological age may be pressed to act and feel older or younger (Solberg 1990). The boys were sometimes forced to be "big" by taking on what are commonly perceived to be "adult" obligations. The boys, in fact, may have been particularly attuned to adults who did *not* act their age because the boys themselves were constantly aware that they rarely were able to *just* act their age. In their families, they were expected to behave older than they really were, and in some contexts they were monitored and disciplined as adults. Through it all, they may have just wanted to be kids. As Mr. Harrison, the assistant admissions director at an historically Black university, told the group of boys that one day in the school library: "Soon you'll be legal men. The police already see you as men. They see you walking down the street and they think, 'this man can do me harm.'" Or as an inmate told the boys during the Education over Incarceration assembly, the legal system thinks of Black boys, "he's not a kid anymore."

"We Need You, You Don't Need Us"

What were the boys' relationships more generally with teachers in the building? I observed that these relationships did not vary significantly by the race and gender of the teacher. The quality of these relationships did, however, vary depending on how much the students believed their teachers *cared for* them. By and large boys connected most strongly with the teachers and administrators who acted their age, that is, who, at a minimum, were responsible adults, prepared to teach and to lead, and behaving like professionals, *regardless* of a given teacher's race and gender.[53] *The boys did not believe a mature adult was someone who behaved like the boys did in school and in their peer circles:* who joked around, tried to "connect" with them by using slang, tried too hard to be their friend, and did not primarily focus on their job. In short, the boys' understandings of which teachers helped them grow in positive directions challenged the administration's assertion that the school needed more male, and preferably African American, teachers. While the administrators appeared to be correct in believing that many boys craved attention from older men, they may have incorrectly assumed that the boys therefore craved less attention from female staff members, or viewed female teachers as *deficits*.

While the boys appreciated the situated knowledge that Black men in the building were helping them to develop and sharpen, and while they stood to gain from the new but promising mentoring program, my interviews with the boys revealed that what they wanted most from the staff were those who just did their jobs as effective teachers and administrators. Less common, though still important, was a wish for teachers to acknowledge their students' difficult life circumstances, and male teachers who whom they could bond. Like the administrators, boys acknowledged that mothers in the community had shouldered much of the burden of raising children and that their hard work demonstrated that the family had acted responsibly as an institution. However, their school had acted less responsibly because there were teachers who did not teach effectively and administrators who did not lead the school effectively. While some

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[53] I determined this from responses to the questions "who is your favorite teacher and why?" and "who is your least favorite teacher and why?"

Perry High boys did display "father hunger," they primarily sought what their Urban Charter counterparts sought: teachers who created classrooms that maximized learning. The difference was that Urban Charter was better equipped to provide what boys at both schools wanted.

Ms. Rivers was a first-year History teacher at Perry High. During the few months I spent with the Second Chance program, I observed her teach a mixed 9th-12th grade classroom Several boys I interviewed told me she was their least favorite teacher. As Dante, a 12th grader, described Ms. Rivers:

> All of us [boys], everybody be a class clown but you never let it get to the best of you. You never let nobody get to the best of you. Like you know how people like say something to you and you don't pay them no mind? You just mind your business, don't worry about them. Ms. Rivers, she a little kid. I remember last week, we was acting up, and she [said], 'I'm not teaching you all no more. Asad [a classmate]: shut up,' And like she would just sit down, won't teach us no more, say she don't want to teach us. I remember Asad did something and she was trying to mock him like a little kid. She just come [to school] to get her check and that's it. Like if she cared about us and what not, she would be stricter. She'd understand that she got to be harder on us [to earn our respect]. But she should already be getting respect from us. Like when we first meet you, you got to stand strong in front of us. Like you can't just let nobody break you. *We need you, you don't need us.*

Dante believed that Ms. Rivers had acted unprofessionally for two related reasons: she did not make more of an attempt to teach and she did not appropriately discipline Asad. In both cases, she let students "get the best" of her; Dante implied that while the boys could be expected to goof off, teachers should not "pay them no mind," or be bothered enough by the boys' behavior to let it affect their teaching. By stooping down to the boy's level, Ms. Rivers was "a little kid" in Dante's eyes. Eddie, a 10th grader, once described this as "acting like Mickey Mouse, doing kiddie stuff."[54]

The boys' desire for adults to discipline appropriately therefore had ramifications for both their learning and also for how punishment should be understood. When I asked Brandon, a 12th grader, what he felt was Perry High's biggest problem, he said, "Certain people are, like, too playful with the kids instead of, you know, telling them, 'Oh, you need to go to class,' or, 'You shouldn't be out here,' or, 'You need to be where you supposed to be." Some are just too playful and some let certain students slide." The boys did not respect teachers who acted like kids, who were immature, who did not care enough about the students' learning to provide the discipline necessary for a productive learning environment. The boys' passionate pleas for teachers to do their jobs highlights the fact that many boys at Perry valued their education, and joins other recent research (Carter 2005; Harris 2011; Tyson 2011) that has undercut the theory that African American students oppose schooling.

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[54] Relatedly, 12th grader Leon said he hated it when teachers gave up trying in class and told the students, "you're wasting *your* education. I got *my* education." This communicated to the students that the teacher had failed to take responsibility for their students' education , while also stressing the teacher's sense of superiority for already having an education that the students were themselves wasting. Boys hated the idea that some teachers and administrators were being paid despite being ineffective employees. This sheds light on the importance boys placed on earning legal, gainful employment.

The boys' desire to learn also challenge the characterizations Urban Charter community members made of them, as boys who were ruining their schools. The comments above suggest that classroom disorder might result not from "bad boys" but from teachers with poor classroom management, who not only failed to discipline students appropriately but allowed that to negatively impact student learning. Finally, to build on the work of Valenzuela (1999), who argues that Mexican American schoolchildren will care about school if they know that school officials first care for them, *I suggest that the boys at Perry would show they cared about school if the staff members first cared enough to do their own jobs.*

Earlier I provided a poignant quote from 9th grader Maurice, who said, "Give us some time to bloom." His comment suggested that he and other boys like him wanted a chance to grow and to be allowed to make mistakes. This idea is especially powerful given historical discourses that assume that white and Black boys follow different developmental paths. G. Stanley Hall, the psychologist who invented the concept of adolescence, also touted the idea that Black boys possessed certain barbaric impulses that they would never overcome, thereby reinforcing larger negative images of Black men as savages (Bederman 1995). This idea resonates with how school officials "adultify" Black boys, treating their misbehavior as premeditated and more worthy of adult-appropriate punishment than that of white boys (Ferguson 2001). What Maurice and other boys wanted was a childhood, or perhaps adolescence, and therefore the opportunity to make the transition to adulthood instead of constantly being judged already as adults, or having others assume that they have a bleak future, and therefore no real future. The desire for "time to bloom" also implies that the boys needed assistance if they are to mature and lead productive lives.

For the remainder of this section, I want to focus on the students in the Second Chance program, who by virtue of their older average age and their greater involvement in the criminal justice system, had the least amount of time to bloom. The program had its own curriculum targeted to the boys' needs and offered different sources of support. As Tre, a 12th grader, said, "nine out of ten of everybody in Second Chance either been locked up, dropped out and came back, got kicked out." Lamont, another 12th grader in the program, added that "some people probably couldn't go to school because they had to take care of their families, so that's where either the job or hustling coming in at." Lamont noted correctly that many Second Chance boys had previously left school. Some boys had gotten caught up with hustling drugs because they needed money (Anderson 2008) and a few were helping their mothers look after younger siblings.

Nationwide, being a high school dropout is the strongest predictor of a slew of troubling outcomes, including low employment rates and involvement in crime (Pettit and Western 2004). For that reason scholars have called for young Black boys who are at risk of dropping out of school to be a main focus of crisis intervention (Mincy 1994). Second Chance, the "school within a school" as program director Ms. Okoye called it, recognized how uncommon it was that their participants had left and reentered school, and so the program had a simple objective. As the boys often said, "I need my credits to graduate."

While the physical separation (the program was housed in one hallway on the ground floor, and no non-Second Chance students were allowed to pass through it) and the differentiation from the "general population" and "regular students" (as some people described them) threatened to stigmatize the young men, they largely embraced the program. They proudly wore orange collared shirts that were different from the school uniform, and they made a banner

that read "SUCCESS IS THE NEW REVENGE" that they hung near their corner of their building.   The boys came up with the slogan as a way of getting back at people who dismissed them as future drop-outs. If many of their friends and peers were banished to the margins of society, likely to succumb to the drug economy and harmed by violence, then the young men of Second Chance recognized that they had a rare opportunity. Many thought they were fortunate to be able to get their "revenge." Lamont, a 12th grader, said, "some people might look at this like they're just giving us a shortcut, this, that and the other thing, but it's not. They're really giving us a chance."

Knowing that they were unlikely to get a "third chance," the students with Second Chance, as a whole, were more engaged with their schoolwork than most of the students I observed in other classrooms, in spite of the extra demands on the program staff to coordinate with social workers, parole officers, and school district officials. The young men also appeared more engaged because they appeared to recognize the great lengths adults had gone to assist them, and so were therefore more willing to invest in their work (Bass 2012; Noddings 1984; Valenzuela 1999). That was never more evident than with how they embraced Ms. Okoye. Indeed, Second Chance in some ways best approximated the kinds of interventions the staff and boys felt the boys needed. The boys were not banished or tossed aside as unsalvageable, but were regularly (if not always) taught academic skills, given multiple opportunities to develop knowledge of their social position and the challenges they faced, and they were disciplined in a mostly consistent manner. While they may not have known how staff, parents, and students at Urban Charter perceived of them, the boys' insights into the youth control complex dented the moral boundaries that the Urban Charter community drew between their boys and "banished boys." The Second Chance boys acknowledged and resisted the ways in which others labeled them. As the banner that hung in their corner of the building indicated, success would be their revenge. Although the 12th graders in the program represented less than 10% of all seniors in the building, they made up close to one-fifth of all the Perry High students who graduated that year. There was more success than anticipated, and a large part of that was because the Second Chance boys responded well to teachers who acted their age and did their jobs.

Care, Justice, and Teacher-Administrator Relations

While the Black male leadership claimed that it was their responsibility as Black men to care for boys, they were unable to provide the care they sought for the boys without the assistance of the teachers in the building. So far, I have described how many boys sought adult attention and assistance, and responded well to teachers who "acted their age" and performed their professional duties to teach academic skills. In the eyes of many boys, this was a suitable provision of care. Below, I further draw out how teachers and administrators envisioned providing care for their students. There was some convergence in thinking about why care was needed, which was to address the problem of unjust punishment.

I begin by discussing those instructors who, like the administrators, made it a point to avoid punishing boys severely. Indeed, when I asked staff members to identify caring instructors in the school, they frequently identified those who had reputations for being "nurturing" and "motherly." Several teachers and students told me that Ms. Wells, and African American teacher who had formerly taught at Perry, particularly fit the bill of an empathetic teacher. When I had a chance to catch up with her and ask if she missed working in an all-boys setting, she responded:

> I like the idea of all boys, so let me be very, very honest. I'm very partial to boys, especially young black boys because I think they are at such at a disadvantage right now. And do you know, like, a lot of them are so, so bright, but they have never been told, especially if they had been labeled for so many years that they are bad. I can't stand that: 'they're bad.' A lot of times they just need someone to care that extra mile, just take time, like, to find out, you know, why is this boy acting like this? Like, you know, what's going on here, and they will open up.

Ms. Wells noted that Black boys have "been labeled for so many years" as "bad," a "modal category" (Ferguson 2001) for Black boys who are perceived by school stuff as likely drop-outs and criminals. Ms. Wells did seem to "care that extra mile," as she described herself. Lisa Bass (2012) has documented how some Black female school administrators adopt a particular ethic of care when assisting young Black boys. These administrators demonstrated an "ethic of risk" by breaking rules, such as Zero Tolerance policies, because they believed they were unjust and therefore unfairly punished Black students.[55] Other teachers clued me into how Ms. Wells had adopted a similar ethic of care and nurturing style by refraining from "putting them out," a catch-all phrase that referred to everything from kicking the boys out of class and letting them roam the hallways to "writing them up" for a suspension. Putting boys out was a common practice in the school, as it essentially allowed teachers to temporarily remove a student to "save" the rest of the class.[56] There is, however, little conclusive evidence that removing misbehaving students either improves individual student behavior or school safety (Losen and Skiba 2006). Instead, boys were continually put out and became known as "repeat offenders," being branded as particularly "bad."

     While early theorizing of care conceptualized care and justice as competing forms of morality (Gilligan 1982), more recently scholars have shown that justice is embedded into notions of care. Some scholars have stressed that an ethics of care borrows from an ethics of justice the idea of normativity. Since all must be cared for in order to flourish as individuals, people develop a sense of obligation to care for others (Held 2006; Noddings 1984; Ruddick 1998). Building on this insight, I argue that staff members at Perry felt an obligation to provide care to their vulnerable population of boys because cumulative *punishment represented a gross injustice in the boys' lives.* The shared belief in offering care as an intervention in the crisis of school punishment was a first step toward blocking the school-to-prison pipeline.

     My interviews with teachers indicated that this particular vision of caregiving institution began to take shape under Mr. Bradley's leadership. Before Mr. Bradley had become the principal, the administration under Mr. Mincy's leadership had been particularly punitive, and had suspended boys at the school at a rate much higher than the school district average. Most troubling, teachers shared, was how that former administration had routinely labeled the boys as criminals. As Ms. Wells said:

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[55] For example, instead of suspending a child who was habitually late—which official school district policies mandated—one administrator made sure a child got something to eat at school before walking the student home to his mother.

[56] A cynical view is that suspending boys also allows schools to continue to receive public funds for students who are enrolled, but have been forced out of the building (Noguera 2003).

My 7th grade boys, we were writing a book report and I had them read several novels. So we went to the [library] and got a lot of different types of novels out. And do you know, Mr. Mincy saw us and he said, 'Make sure that they don't tear up the books.' You're treating them like animals. Why? *They look just like you.* Why are you treating them like animals? Those boys did not tear up the books at all. Black boys already have to worry about police, people out in society, seeing them, treating them like monsters. Why does their own principal have to treat them the same way?

According to Ms. Wells, Mr. Mincy had fed off cultural image of Black men as savages (Bederman 1995). She implied that the principal was particularly guilty because he was a Black man ("they look just like you"). Various people also singled out Ms. Channing, another former teacher at Perry, as also being a particularly caring and effective instructor. She supported Ms. Wells's claims:

When I watched people who were around me who I was supposed to be able to look up to as leaders in my building, who were also Black males, which just really, after a while, started to irk me. How can you, as Black males, not care enough not to step up? And I don't think it was necessarily a matter of not caring, it was like this problem is so enormous, where do I attack? And just it was a lack of organization and I think that on the outside, which is kind of where I would consider myself my first few months, that's the initial assumption. You must not care to let that go on.

Ms. Channing implied that the Black men who ran the school were particularly blameworthy for failing to "step up" as Black men. Despite her frustrations, she came to understand that the administrators also likely lacked the resources to affect positive change (while she observed a "lack of organization," she recognized that "this problem is so enormous"). As a form of labor, caregivers require the means to provide effective care, particularly necessary when working with a vulnerable population like the boys at Perry. Ms. Channing went on describe how the administration was disorganized—not consistently enforcing school policies such as the uniform policy, being slow to return important paper to teachers—and one damaging consequence: with all the added stress, teachers found it hard to focus on their primary responsibility, which was to teach the boys academic skills. This further impaired the learning that many boys sought from their teachers. Ms. Channing's belief forecasted tensions that I observed between teachers and administrators, the topic to which I now turn.

Administrators and the Problem of Punishment
　　　　I argue in this section that the administration and the teachers disagreed with what constituted proper care. The teachers' and administrators' different structural positions within the school helped in part to explain this divergence. While there was variation among the teachers, in this section I focus on the divisions between the administrators and a small but particularly influential group of teachers, and the specific gendered, racialized, and class-inscribed assumptions that reinforced those divisions and, I argue, ultimately limited positive change for the students.
　　　　The administrators generally believed that to get boys off the school-to-prison pipeline, priority should be given to finding alternatives to suspension. Positioned "atop" the school, the

administrators normally did not develop the same kinds of close relationships with the students. Yet they were aware of the boys' structural positions within the entire school. They therefore had a stronger sense of overall, cumulative patterns of punishment and criminalization in the boys' lives. Having come from similar backgrounds and thus sharing particular forms situated knowledge with the boys, likely also kept the administrators attuned to larger patterns of punishment in the lives of their students.

While this goal did not necessarily have to conflict with the teachers' foremost concern, which was to maximize learning opportunities for their students, the two groups were unable to reconcile their conflicting goals. The students suffered for it. Furthermore, since the administrators were unable to mobilize teachers (examples of teachers like Ms. Wells notwithstanding) to agree to this "claim" (Spector and Kitsuse 1987) for ameliorating the issue of school punishment, their vision of the school as a social father never fully materialized.

The administrators shared with me that they were trying to balance the need to appease their teachers (although critical of the teachers, the administrators acknowledged how challenging it was to teach in that environment) and to somehow intervene to limit some of the teachers' punitive tactics. A growing number of younger teachers wished that the administration would punish "the worst" of the boys even more, while the administration—acknowledging that Perry's discipline rates hurt the school's reputation—attempted to find alternative ways of assisting boys they saw as particularly at-risk.

Indeed, the data bore out that student discipline was a major issue at the school. This reflected patterns nationwide, as the number of the students disciplined in schools spiked considerably with the introduction of Zero Tolerance policies in the early 1990s (Wald and Losen 2003). These policies were derived from larger policing strategies intended to punish small crimes before they led to more serious ones (Rios 2011).[57] Zero Tolerance policies have not resulted in safer schools, and schools, particularly those in poor urban neighborhoods, dole out severe punishments for minor offenses (Youth United for Change and Advancement Project 2011). This "tough on discipline" approach in schools has mirrored racial disparities in incarceration rates in the general population (Noguera 2003). In 2000, Black students made up just 17% of the student population, but over one-third of all students who were suspended (U.S. Department of Education 2000).

In Morgan, the disparities in discipline between Perry students and their more class-advantaged peers in the same school district was even more striking. Table 1 compares the number of minor safety violations during the 2008-2009 school year at Perry and at Lindale High School, the city's most selective magnet public school with an approximately equal number of African American, Asian, and white students, which was located in a more-class advantaged neighborhood. With 2,200 students, Lindale had an enrollment nearly six times that of Perry, but Perry had three times more minor safety violations (e.g. simple assaults, disorderly conduct, and theft) than Lindale. And over 84% of the violations at Perry that year resulted in either a suspension or an arrest, while only 14% of similar violations at Lindale resulted in a suspension or arrest. Perry students were therefore approximately six times as likely to be punished for safety violations compared with their Lindale peers.

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[57] Zero Tolerance policies further spread across school districts after the Columbine tragedy of 1999.

Safety Violations at Perry High School and Lindale High School[58]

	Minor Safety Violations	Suspensions [Average Length in Days]	Arrests	Percentage of Violations Resulting in Punishment
Perry High	103	36 [6]	51	84.4%
Lindale High	36	4 [2]	1	13.8%

Several factors probably accounted for the higher rates of punishment at Perry. It was located in a neighborhood with a significantly higher crime rate and with a stronger city police presence. Although Perry was much smaller than Lindale, the schools employed the same number of unarmed school police officers (four). Some research (Ferguson 2001; Rios 2011) suggests that if a school like Perry was especially punitive, then a school like Lindale, which was ethnically diverse and had a stronger academic culture, may have under-reported offenses, dismissed transgressions as harmless behavior, and may have been more willing to give students the benefit of the doubt.

A mainstay of the contemporary school reform movement may have also helped to create a punitive regime at Perry. Perry had struggled to shed its reputation as a "failing" public school, meaning it annually fell short on official academic benchmarks, mostly related to student performance on standardized exams). While some teachers were extremely dedicated practitioners and had cultivated rigorous academic cultures in their classrooms, as a whole Perry faced significant challenges and a shortage of resources, which prevented it from establishing the academic culture present at Urban Charter. As I described in chapter 2, shortly before Perry converted to an all-boys model, a major reform effort led by officials in the state capital had resulted in more frequent student testing as a means of measuring school performance. This coincided with the larger accountability movement ushered in by President Bush's No Child Left Behind Law (Theoharris 2009).

The figures of punishment rates at Perry would have been much higher if administrators reported every violation, but occasionally administrators intervened to work out a different solution with teachers. On five occasions, I tracked the "blue slips" that teachers had filled out for boys whom I had observed clearly break a major school rule.[59] These slips were official school district forms that created a record of student transgressions, and teachers were required to turn them into an administrator shortly after filling one out. Only two led to the commensurate punishment mandated by school regulations. In three instances, the administrators intervened because the boys in question were "repeat offenders"—having been written up and suspended several times before—and used a variety of tactics to resolve the issues in a way that would avoid straightforward punishment.

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[58] I collected this data from a brochure prepared by an activist organization calling for the end to Zero Tolerance policies in the school district. The brochure happened to include data on safety violations at Perry High and Lindale High.

[59] I got the feeling early on, when I asked two administrators if they could share the outcome of a blue slip with me, that I was making the administration uncomfortable, so I just asked teachers, the student in question, and other students to help me piece together the outcome and punishment, if any, a student received.

In one instance, assistant principal Mr. Westbrook convinced the principal not to "twenty" a student for fighting between classes. "Twenty" was the number that referred to a punishment where a student could only return to school if he was accompanied by an adult to the main office. Some believed this was more effective than a suspension because it held parents more accountable, requiring them to come in when they might otherwise be at work (and as a few teachers openly admitted, they hoped this would anger parents and force them to discipline their children at home). Mr. Westbrook, however, told me that the fear was that students would not return for days. While some staff members mused that parents would be ashamed to have to appear in school with their "problem" child, Mr. Westbrook told me that it could punish parents in a more significant way. Positioned so precariously in the labor market as a member of the working poor, parents could quite literally not afford to miss any work, since they might not get paid or could lose their jobs altogether. So in this one instance Mr. Westbrook sat down with the child, the teacher of the class the student missed for fighting, and they determined that the student would complete extra schoolwork, to which the student happily agreed. In doing so, Mr. Westbrook broke the rules by not following the "letter" of the law. Instead he demonstrated care for both a child and his parents, who both could have been punished more than the offense required (Bass 2012). The hope was that the child would recognize the care he received and perhaps feel obligated to care for the administrators in his own way (Glenn 2000), by avoiding trouble in the hallways in the future and heading straight for class.

Yet Mr. Westbrook and the other administrators were faced with a difficult task, as teachers frequently wanted to "write him up" on blue slips. These held a symbolically criminal meaning, as is not too much of a stretch to say that they were "rap sheets" for students. While teachers were asked to use their own classroom rules to handle small problems (e.g. students talking during an exam, refusing to stay in their seats) that could be disciplined with a minor punishment (e.g. after-school detention, a phone call home), teachers varied widely in how consistent they were in sticking to their own classroom rules and consequences. As Mr. Bradley feared, too many teachers, and particularly younger and less-experienced teachers "jumped the gun" and filled out a blue slip before one was required.

When I asked, Mr. Gardner, a social worker, what prompted the punishment of boys in school, he told me that a large percentage of the staff, and particularly the younger teachers, feared the boys:

> I think that there is an intense fear for a lot of our young men here. And so any time that a student shows any level of frustration, that we automatically you know, either just suspend them or write them up. And I think that there is a great deal of fear, you know, that the staff have. And the kids, they sense that.

Mr. Gardner had good insight into the disciplinary culture at the school because he stepped in to assist many boys who suffered from mental and health issues, several of whom found themselves in trouble more often than not. He suggested that teachers mistook frustration for aggression. Although rates of misbehavior among Black students is not higher compared to white students (McCarthy and Hoge 1987; McFadden et al. 1992), Black students are more likely to be referred for more behaviors that require a subjective judgment on the part of the adult, such as disrespect and excessive noise, while white students are more likely to be referred for objective violations like smoking and vandalism (Skiba et al. 2002). In this case, teachers could use their subjective

judgment to conclude that a boy's emotional response was a personal threat (Ferguson 2001; Pascoe 2007). This is likely why boys of color feel that their teachers are afraid of them (Rios 2011).

Mr. Sharp, an assistant principal, levied an even sharper criticism of the teachers, and singled out a group of young female teachers in particular:

> I think some of the teachers are really afraid of the boys. Even the school police are afraid of the boys because their mannerisms and being on the street, they have a tendency to be tough to people until they find out you're cool, or you are willing to teach them. See, to me, school should be a place where they can make mistakes, and a lot of the new teachers come with their middle class values into school and they want to stick it on them. Well, they've not necessarily been trained to pick up a fork or pick up a knife or walk *(holds up fingers to create quotations)* 'properly' or dress 'properly' or whatever. If we're conforming them to the American society, the teachers here do not want to give them the time to do it. They expect them to do it when they get here. And when they don't, the teachers just write them up. And usually they get what they want. Mr. Bradley struggles to staff this school, and so we need to keep all the teachers we have, even when they make those mistakes. The teachers hold more power than they think.

Mr. Sharp thought that "even the school police are afraid of the boys," which if one uses Mr. Gardner's line of reasoning, might mean that that the school police would also be likely to mistake the boys' frustration for aggression, leading to punishment. This also might also imply that city police may act similarly, perhaps over-stepping their authority and coming down hard on boys at any sign of aggression or resistance, out of fear that their behavior could escalate quickly (Rios 2011).

On top of racialized practices of criminalization, Mr. Sharp also highlighted ways in which social class may enter into teacher-student relationships; "middle-class" values demand a kind of obedience from students, who should follow rules, act "properly" and respect authority. In his eyes, teachers criticized the boys—and by their extension, their families—for not having the right kinds of "values." But boys, he said, should be allowed to make mistakes, a comment that underscores the idea that they deserve the right *as children* not always to be punished for their transgressions, or at least to be punished in a manner that is fair. As a chronically struggling public school, school officials could not ensure buy-in from teachers in a way that officials at Urban Charter were able. Therefore, the administrators knew that they would have to make occasional concessions to their teachers (e.g. following through on a blue slip in order to placate a frustrated teacher) because it was difficult to retain staff. Teachers, Mr. Sharp noted, "hold more power than they think."

The majority of the teachers Mr. Sharp referred to were young women, and nearly all of them were white. While Mr. Sharp may have intentionally identified their middle-class backgrounds as one mechanism in the over-punishment of Black boys, the two groups contesting one another appeared to be young, white women (teachers) and older Black men (administrators). While I was not able to fully ascertain the class backgrounds of all the teachers

and administrators at the school,[60] a particular kind of class conflict recurred, pitting middle class female teachers against Black male administrators who represented the lower and working-class interests of the boys. It is ironic that while the Black men who led the school supported efforts to find class-privileged (white) men to serve as mentors for the boys, they faulted middle-class women who ostensibly punished the boys for lacking the cultural competence that these administrators favored.

Mr. Richards was an assistant principal who was in charge of non-instructional school services. He told me that "our biggest issue are the teachers. We as an administration have to do a better job with site selection and getting the right people to want to come here." When I asked him what kinds of teachers the school needed, he responded:

> Many of these female teachers are too young and don't have children of their own. And so their point of view and their lack of knowledge is sometimes damaging. So you're going to have an all-boys school, but they don't have male teachers. How can [these female teachers] relate? Especially if they don't have sons and they don't have children of their own. They can't relate in a maternal way.

Mr. Jeffries infantilized the teachers, implying that they lacked an important kind of life experience as mothers and therefore a "maternal" relation to their students. So while Mr. Sharp had earlier indicted the teachers for trying to "stick" their (better) middle-values on the boys, Mr. Richards faults the teachers for their "lack of knowledge." Whether the teachers held too much of certain values or not enough of certain knowledge, they were viewed *as unable to understand the particular needs of Black boys.* This interpretation implies that if they did, then they would understand—as perhaps a mother would understand—that Black boys needed to be punished less.

The Teachers Respond

How did the teachers respond to the administrators' criticisms? Several white teachers felt that they had been discriminated against. Ms. Channing said:

> Black male teachers got away with not doing stuff that white females would be called out for. So there was a lot of tension around that. And we sort of brought that up at the end of last year, like, 'There is some serious racial tensions happening in this building that need to be addressed.' But I would say the first two or three years there was that age tension and it slowly became more of a race tension.

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[60] My young white women informants (5 of the 19 current and former teachers I interviewed at Perry) as well as one young Asian woman formed the cadre of young teachers who appeared to be the most respected at the school. All were from middle-class backgrounds, while the remaining interview respondents were from a mix of class-backgrounds. Of the six Black administrators I interviewed, I was able to determine that two came from solidly middle-class backgrounds; two identified as growing up poor in Morgan in the same living circumstances as the boys; and two others appeared to come from working-class backgrounds (this does not include Mr. Jeffries, the "unofficial" administrator I describe in this chapter and in chapter 1, who grew up very class-disadvantaged). All the administrators held relatively well-paying positions that paid quite well relative to similar positions in other large urban school districts across the country) were middle-class, having grown up in less class-advantaged backgrounds, together with being Black and male like the boys, likely would have made them more sensitive to the needs of the students.

While I myself did not observe this directly, Ms. Channing felt that during her time at Perry, the administrators were more critical of a group of young white women than on Black male teachers. She may have, in fact, felt the effects of the negative feelings administrators had of certain teachers. Much in the same way that Mr. Richards had broached the subject of the teachers' age, Ms. Channing seemed to feel that the administrators had taken advantage of the teachers' young age and inexperience. Other teachers corroborated Ms. Channing's claims. Ms. Allison, a young white woman who considered Ms. Channing a mentor, speculated that the administrators were easier on Black male teachers (four of the 30 teachers at Perry were Black men) because the administrators needed a unified coalition of Black men in the building, perhaps to limit the influence of the young white women. Yet, according to some administrators, these white women may have also been more likely than other teachers to seek out severe punishments for their students.

While this was difficult to know for certain, there appeared to be an effort to recruit and give preference to Black men in leadership positions in the school. Several teachers I interviewed strongly believed that Ms. Hudson, the principal at Thompson, the all-girls school and Perry's "sister" school, should have been appointed principal when Perry became all-boys. They called her a "goddess," and said she was deserving of the "Nobel Peace Prize" for her leadership. These teachers had a chance to see Ms. Hudson in action when Perry was still a split academy and Ms. Hudson was the leader on the girls' side, and their support for her only increased when Thompson excelled compared to other public schools.[61] Mr. Donaldson, a former teacher, said, "she wasn't just hard on the students, like she was tough on the teachers. You have to have your lesson plans. She walked in the classrooms and she was around and she was visible." Teachers told me that Ms. Hudson was particularly needed because the task of running an all-boys school would be more challenging than running an all-girls school, an assumption other researchers have found in studies of single-sex schools (Datnow, Hubbard and Woody 2001; Woody 2002).

Although there were a few grumblings among Black teachers—men and women—about the influence the group of white teachers had in the building, the relations between them seemed collegial compared to the overall feelings those teachers had of the administrators.[62] Their position *as teachers* meant that their particular goals differed from those of administrators, even as the administrators aimed to create coalitions with Black male teacher in the building. While the administrators were positioned in the school in a way that enabled them to see large-scale patterns of punishment, the teachers worked closely with many boys each day, and were aware of the immediacy of the boys' needs. They appeared to understand better than the administrators that what the boys wanted most were teachers who cared about each of them personally, and who were intent on teaching them academic skills. This gap between the teachers and administrators, I contend, effectively stalled the school's overall ability to produce positive student outcomes.

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[61] In addition to strong standardized test scores, Thompson had some of the lowest rates of disciplinary infractions in the school district. In fact, the school district credited her as performing so well in her duties as principal of Perry's sister school that she was eventually promoted to be a regional superintendent in charge of overseeing dozens of high schools in the city.

[62] An exception to this was someone like Mr. Youseff, the Muslim community leader and one of the longest-tenured teachers in the building. He aligned himself with the administrators and had more power than other teachers to influence school-wide changes.

As I mentioned earlier, the Perry students by and large appeared to show that they would care about school if the staff members first cared enough to do their own jobs. While I observed closer connections with many white female teachers, this was likely because female teachers were among the strongest instructors in the building. The administrators had drawn lines of race, gender, class, and age divisions where the boys largely had not. The Black male administrators felt it was their obligation to lead a unique school with only Black boys as students, and felt strongly that the boys required more Black men in the building as role models. Despite their good intentions, they fell short of creating true interdependent caring relations with their own students (Glenn 2000) by not asking them what kinds of care the boys themselves needed from adults. If they had, the administrators would have found that the boys developed stronger connections with adults not on the basis of background characteristics, but on the professionalism they showed as teachers who did their jobs, providing them with the academic skills and success they desired.

Indeed, mothers were so respected in community that several boys seemed to take pride in having two mothers: one at home and a surrogate mother at school. Boys, in fact, appreciated the female teachers—their "school moms"—who dutifully performed their jobs as schoolteachers to complement the hard work being done by their own mothers away from school. Recall Frank, the student body president who had gained certain forms of cultural capital when he left Morgan and developed close relationships with two white men. At Perry, he found a female teacher—someone with whom he never took a class—to step in and fill the mentoring void in his life. According to Frank, she had told him, "'we can also have a dialogue outside of what's going on here in school.' And I feel like she's someone that I can go to if I need advice about certain things. She's sort of like my second mom in school." The male administrators may have felt it was "natural" or "right" to find male mentors and teachers for the boys, and for the school, in a collective sort of way, to act as a "social father" supporting hard working but struggling families. Yet by doing so they may have missed an opportunity to use the strength of the female staff members at Perry to build on and strengthen the tradition of extended kin networks in the African American community (Collins 2000; Stack 1974).

The Responsibility of Black Boys

Future Aspirations

Having identified the various provisions of care that administrators and teachers attempt to provide the boys, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the kinds of men school staff, and the administrators in particular, envisioned their boys becoming. I also describe the men the boys themselves wished to become. While staff conflicts limited the school in its ability to produce positive student outcomes, the staff's good intentions still reflected their desire for the students to mature and to lead better lives. Caring practices inside schools can have significant consequences for the long-term welfare of their students (Valenzuela 1999).

Previous research (Anderson 1999; Macleod 1995) has found that poor men perceive their own lives in existential terms, taking life one day at a time and acknowledging that tomorrow is not guaranteed. Jared, a 12th grader, made this point clear, telling me that: "everybody got an expiration date. That's why you live every day like it's your last." The staff seemed to sense this most in the boys who were close to graduating. As Mr. Gardner, the social worker, said, "it almost feels like they're suffering from a Peter Pan Syndrome. And what I

mean by that is a lot of our kids are about to embark on the work world but I think that there is this overall sense of fear that underlies a lot of their actions." He went on to describe how it was beginning to dawn on the 12th graders that they would soon leave an institution—schools—that had provided them with structure and had organized their lives for so long. They were now scared of threats posed by the neighborhoods and streets they would now be spending more much time in.[63]

Despite this, many boys described dreams of living peaceful married lives with a wife, children, a stable job, and material comfort. Alford Young, Jr. (2004) found that the low-income Black men in his study also desired this sort of future, or what he terms "the good life." Being a man meant being able to financially support yourself and your family. Tre, a 12th grader, put it succinctly: "Got to get my own job. Got to be able to provide for myself and my people. Got to get my own crib, pay my own bills." Another senior, Brandon, echoed Tre's wishes: "I want to have a family, I want to have like two kids and a nice house. I don't want to look like I'm rich but I want to live, you know, how I want to live." Even younger boys had similar aspirations. When I asked 8th grader Gerald what it means to be a man, he responded, "to have a job and to be able to do important stuff like taking care of a family. Maybe one or two cars." The boys articulated the same ideal lives as working-class men who "find self-worth in their ability to discipline themselves and conduct responsible yet caring lives to ensure order for themselves and others" (Lamont 2000).

In chapter 2, I observed that boys in the Second Chance program resented the absent fathers in their lives. Despite the strong feelings of pain evoked by having to talk about their fathers in interviews, or dismissing their fathers outright, the boys themselves did not reject the possibility of fatherhood. This was perhaps because they believed fatherhood to be a logical consequence of having financial security, which the boys wanted in their adult lives. (In chapter 6, I further demonstrate how the boys' everyday interactions with one another, with a focus on their joking and insulting, reflect this deeper desire for financial security.)

While historical discourses have cast Black men as failed breadwinners and fathers (Ross 1998), their aspirations reveal that they seek the economic security and independence of higher classes (Young 2004). While others, including members of the Urban Charter community, saw them as "banished boys," the boys themselves expressed to me the desire to transcend the straitjacket nature of masculinity practices inside Perry. Adam Reich (2010) calls this "critical practice": the ability to see oneself outside of a social structure that fosters certain masculinity practices that conflate personal strength with domination over others. Patricia Hill Collins (2006) has recently encouraged a new form of manhood where boys would grow up to be men who were committed to relinquishing sexism and heterosexism, and to taking responsibility for caring for partners and wives, children, and other family members.

Of course, their aspirations for becoming these kinds of men did not necessarily mean they possessed a concrete roadmap for achieving them. Young (2002) has found that older African American men have similar aspirations—hoping, for example, that they could become positive models for them even if they have become estranged from their children—but that they

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[63] A few teachers believed that boys misbehaved in the days leading up to a long holiday because they were stressed out about having to be away from school for so long; school was a relatively safe and structured place in a community that otherwise provided fewer certainties and safety nets. One teacher was even sure some boys pretended to act out so that they could be reprimanded, receiving attention (albeit negative) from adults and perhaps even seeking a detention to delay the start of the long holiday break.

lack the material and social resources necessary to develop those strategies for childrearing outside of marriage (Sullivan 1989). Why, then, should young boys be expected to raise children? Even as they had a sense of what their "good life" entailed, the boys continued to hold on to this vision of future manhood because the adults in these boys' lives had the same vision for their boys.

Earlier, I described how the speakers at the Education over Incarceration event were attempting to link poor academic achievement in school and being placed behind bars later in life. A second theme emerged that had implications for how the Black men envisioned the boys' manhood. Mr. Oakley, the state congressman for the district in which Perry resided, said this to the boys at the event:

> But the females are looking for a man, right? The females are looking for a man. They say now it's harder and harder to find a man. They say a lot of the guys, rather, are in jail, they're not about nothing, or they're dead. We're going to stop that. We're going to see if we can help them find some men. Because I see a lot of men (*points to the boys in the audience*) inside of here.

Several staff members applauded Mr. Oakley's comments. Mr. Bradley, the principal, then contributed:

> Our women are counting on you all! We need you to one day be mature family men, to help raise our boys and support our mothers. I can picture these men *(points to the boys in the audience)* leading our community. It's *the men you will become.* But we need you to get your education and to get a job.

According to Mr. Oakley and Mr. Bradley, it was the responsibility of the Black boys sitting in front of him to grow up to be men who would be providers for women in the community. The implication was that the boys would also become responsible fathers who were an active presence in their sons' lives. In doing so, as fathers, those men could save their own sons, helping to divert their sons off a path to incarceration. A form of progressive Black manhood was therefore an objective, even if the school fell short of cultivating it in their boys.

Mr. Bradley's comments, sadly, also revealed Perry High's limitations when it came to providing the boys with skills necessary to find stable work, a precondition for becoming husbands and fathers. I initially suspected that the school was hoping that the majority of their boys would graduate and pursue a trade, while a small minority would pursue higher education. Feeling shut out of and lacking the capital and particular skills required of white-collar jobs (Bourgois 1995), class-marginalized men often see their bodies as an important resource, and seek out and take pride in jobs involving manual labor (Young 2004).

The evidence suggested that there was not much hope for the administration's desire for their boys to hold down jobs and support families. Indeed, only 49% of Perry 9th graders in the fall of 2006 would graduate on-time (within four years) by the end of the 2009-2010 school year, the year I completed my fieldwork. The school district on-time graduation rate for those students who began 9th grade in the fall of 2007 was 58%. Only 8% of those graduating Perry High seniors would go on to college, which was slightly lower than district average of 10% for Black male students. The consequences for this were significant, as Perry High had not only, as I

described earlier in the chapter, come to resemble a punitive regime itself, but had likely failed to remove boys from the school-to-prison pipeline. Today, nearly two-thirds of Black men without a high school diploma have prison records by their mid-30s (Pettit and Western 2004).

I refer to the sum of the negative life options, practices, representations, and outcomes for these boys as *regressive Black manhood.* The boys did not "possess" this form of manhood, nor was it a set of traits; I characterize manhood as a set of cultural processes that locks individuals into a structural position (Bederman 1995; Butler 1990). As a discourse this form of manhood dealt with more than just gender, and comprised ideas and practices that were racialized, gendered, class-inscribed, and sexualized, and connected with patterns of organized power among groups. I call this form of manhood "regressive" to emphasize the way the centrality of ideas about age and development. Although boys may have desired "time to bloom," and therefore grow, and although some staff members like Mr. Sharp wished that teachers would allow and accept that students would make mistakes, criminalization severely limits opportunities for meaningful participation in mainstream institutions, and just as important, limits opportunities for the *personal development* of these young men as fathers, husbands, workers, and community citizens. As one inmate told the boys during the Education over Incarceration assembly, "'He's not a kid anymore': that's what the law means." Moreover, the notion of a regressive Black manhood squares with historical discourses of Black men as savages, and therefore as having not "progressed" as much as white men (Bederman 1995).

Becoming Fathers

Expressing some desire to be fathers, and receiving messages that they should grow up to become responsible ones, did not mean that they were ready to take on that role. After mentions of girls as distractions in the classroom, staff members brought up young women when speaking of the issue of sex and the boys as fathers. In chapter 6, I describe how it was rumored that officials at Excel, the educational management organization that ran Perry, had decided to convert Perry into an all-boys school in order to cut down on sexual relations between boys and girls. I was struck by how adults in the building told me and their students that the girls were not necessarily sexual threats who lured the boys into sexual relations; rather, the onus was on the boys to practice safe sex and to refrain, if possible, from having sex with girls. The issue of absent fatherhood was considered quite pressing, and therefore the emphasis on educating boys to be future fathers who were truly responsible. This may be why staff tended to emasculate the young fathers they found to be irresponsible. As Mr. Riles, an English teacher and one of the directors of the mentoring program, said:

> Last year when I taught seniors, some of my seniors broke my heart because they were having children. Why are you having a baby? And then you go to more of a conversation about what it is to be a man and what it is to be a father. To know that this person that you're bringing into the world is really going to depend on you. What's your plan? 'Well, Mr. Riles, we're…' If they don't have any answers, I'm like, 'So you're not prepared to take care of a child or a small baby. *You're* still a baby.

Mr. Riles and other teachers made the boys feel "small" (Solberg 1990) when they wanted to stress how irresponsible it would be of them to father children without being able to support them. This was difficult terrain to navigate because staff members at Perry recognized the

structural limitations and discriminatory tactics that had diminished the pool of marriageable men. They had to balance this awareness with educating the boys about having safe sex and providing them with appropriate resources.

Still, some teachers regularly drew on the trope of irresponsible fatherhood to emasculate the young men. While Mr. Youseff, for example, spoke frequently with the boys about the issue of criminalization in their lives, he also appeared to use the close relationships he had developed with the young men to be especially hard on them. He was quick to say that not doing the little things, like completing their work, would have major repercussions for the men they would become. One time he chided the boys for not being responsible students, then followed up by saying: "You talk shit, have babies, and you can't support them. For real, man to man. If you bust a nut, have a baby come out, and can pay child support without having the court tell you to, then you a man."

In her study of inner-city violence Nikki Jones (2010) found that poor, African American girls sometimes navigated difficult relationships with the fathers of their children. Jones describes how young men can exploit these relationships because their partners would tolerate a lot from them, not wanting to appear less-than-respectable for being young, unattached mothers.[64] But she also found that some young men were caught between their involvement with the drug economy and being more active in their son's lives. Even if some of the young fathers at Perry High wished to help raise their children, the pressure to hustle drugs remained.

While the Black male administrators and teachers at Perry appeared more critical of the boys in this regard than did the female teachers, female staff members seemed more willing and able to talk with the boys about practicing safe sex, rather than simply scolding them. Once in Ms. Wheeler's Spanish class, I overheard one 10th grader, Marquise, tell a few others that "I heard that if you smoke weed, your sperm count goes down." Marquise was not joking with them; while the other boys were clearly skeptical, they chatted for a minute about whether smoking marijuana was suitable contraception. Ms. Wheeler jumped in and used Marquise's claim as a "teachable moment," telling them that they should use condoms while also explaining the various sexually-transmitted diseases they could contract. The boys were receptive to her recommendations; again, they appeared to be open to listening to an adult who spoke with them honestly and was trying to provide them with useful, practical knowledge. When I asked her later about this, she told me:

> I mean, I know their hormones are raging, but it's just one of these things where it's not like the early '80s. There are too many diseases. There are too many things out there and I don't think they care about them at all. At this age, they think they are immortal when it comes to sex. But then, with the gunshots, with the fighting, know they can die at any time.

In Ms. Wheeler's eyes, the boys believed that the threat of contracting STDs and perhaps impregnating young women was less severe than the threat of violence. The men in the building, who were highly sensitive to the issue of the boys' criminalization, may have, in fact, missed opportunities to engage the boys in practical, useful discussions about sex. I only observed one

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[64] In one passage, Jones describes a young woman who tolerated abuse from her boyfriend because she did not want to contact the authorities, and thereby "participate in a process that results in the incarceration of yet another young Black man" (2010: 148). The young woman also depended on the father of the child for financial support.

instance of a male staff member providing the boys with practical advice about how to practice safe sex, and that was when Mr. Gardner, one of the school's social workers, took time out to speak with the Second Chance students about sexually-transmitted diseases and contraceptive use.

Yet there were also signs that Perry HS boys understood the need to be responsible fathers, which challenges claims that inner-city boys are different from girls because they primarily desire sex while girls seek out a new family and stability (Anderson 1999). Some boys, indeed, seemed to have given thought to what Mr. Oakley and Mr. Bradley had said above at the Education over Incarceration event. Tre, a 12th grader, had been dating a young woman for a little while, and the two of them had recently spoken about the possibility of having children together. But he had concluded, that "I can't take in nobody child." I asked Tre if he wanted to eventually, and he responded:

> Yeah, I do want my own children eventually, but no time soon. I probably have my first child when I hit like 25, 26 if my plans go right. I can't predict the future though, but hopefully it happen around that time. I'd be settled in, I got my money right, a crib [home], everything be settled because I can't bring my child in here and I can't clothe him. I ain't going to do that.

Tre, whose own father was involved at the beginning of his life but became distant as Tre grew older, knew he could not raise a child without first being financially stable; he had a vision of "the good life" (Young 2002). Keith, a soft-spoken 11th grader in the Second Chance program, also wanted to have a child eventually, but preferred a daughter:

> Keith: I like females. Because I can protect her. If you have a boy and you push too hard, they could go the other way, but a girl you can take care of. Girls need that protection. They're closer with their dad then with their mom. I'm gonna have daddy's little girl.
> Oeur: Why are girls closer with their dads?
> Keith: They want their dad's love because moms, they can be real tough on them.

Keith's comment echoes those made by others at Perry: that mothers raise their daughters ("they can be real tough on them") and spoil their sons. Keith's own father had died when he was young (he had a tattoo on his arm to honor his father that read, "Lost a dad, gained an angel") but he seemed to believe that it would be more difficult for men to raise sons than to raise daughters.

Other young men may have had children before they were able to fully support them, but for reasons that labels of "irresponsible young men" fail to capture. Ms. Okoye recalled a conversation she had with Robert, a 12th grader and the father of a two year-old girl:

> He said he had a child and he was being challenged about this because you have to be responsible for this child, and he was having some hardships and sleepless nights and all that, and I said, 'Why in God's name did you get this baby?' and he said, 'Ms. Okoye, by now don't you know?' And I said, 'No, what?' He said, 'Many of my friends have died. Many of us do not live until age 25. By 25 many of us are dead, so I'm trying to leave a legacy here, I need to leave my children [behind].'

Elijah Anderson (1999: 149) argues that inner-city teenagers somewhat wantonly engage in sexual relations because they "see no future that can be derailed" and therefore "see little to lose by having a child out of wedlock." Robert's line of reasoning is similarly based on the idea that he cannot see much of a future for himself, but he chose to have the child not so much because he has "little to lose," as Anderson writes, but because he has something to gain: "a legacy." Robert implies that he is desperate to maintain a presence in the world, through his child, after his own life could end soon after high school.

I opened this section by mentioning how many poor, Black boys perceive of their lives in existential terms. The boys shared numerous stories of deaths of close male friends, brothers, fathers, and other family members. The boys' used their bodies to honor those they had lost to violence. There were tattoos, some done hastily and others elaborately conceived, with "R.I.P.", the names of the dead, and occasionally a date; and short phrases ("Got killed on these streets"; "Laugh now, cry later"; "In loving memory"). Between their skin and their school uniforms were undershirts that also honored their fallen brothers: screen-printed pictures of the dead, sometimes with wings to signal that they had ascended to heaven, occasionally with the words "sunrise" and their birthdate, and "sunset" and the day they died. "R.I.P", in fact, was written all over the school (on desks, on notebooks, on the back of exams before they were turned in to be graded, on walls and bathroom stalls), on technology (the background picture on a phone), and on social media (MySpace and, increasingly that school year, Twitter profiles).

While a few tattoos honored mothers and grandmothers, the boys' bodies were devoted primarily to other boys and men. And girls and girlfriends appeared nowhere; as Jared told me, "you might not be with girls forever. Honoring family and dead friends is forever." While staff members projected futures for their students, of a good life with a stable home and a well-paying job for which the boys themselves sometimes yearned, their immediate lives were most on their minds. And in these lives they were surrounded mainly by other boys, at school, in their blocks, on the streets where drugs were purchased and dealt, away from their homes where single mothers appeared to give most of their (needed) tough love to their daughters. Older boys sometimes resisted male mentors, and resented and dismissed their fathers; instead, they had one another in peer, homosocial groups they travelled with during the day. And younger boys, who at times clung (literally) onto male staff members, also turned to older boys at school for attention and care. While girls and sex were on their minds (as I discuss in chapter 6), these young men of south Morgan had developed a situated knowledge—a shared knowledge—of the marginalized position of poor Black boys place in their communities and the larger society.

Administrators and teachers at Perry were aware of the problems their boys faced, but conflicts between them dampened efforts for positive student change in the building. The administrators, positioned in such a way that enabled them to observe patterns of punishment in the school and how those fit with patterns in larger society, directed their collective energy toward this problem. Teachers and students, on the other hand, appeared more concerned with creating a stronger academic culture in the building. Both forms of intervention, in their own way, were aimed at the larger goal of taking boys off the school-to-prison pipeline. In the next chapter, I describe how and why a stronger academic culture was possible at Urban Charter.

CHAPTER 5:

FROM NON-TRADITIONAL BOYS TO URBAN GENTS

The Mother-Son Luncheon

Just weeks before Perry High's Father-Son Breakfast, which I described at the start of chapter 2, Urban Charter held its own event to honor parents. The luncheon was held on a Saturday in order to minimize work conflicts for parents. While the Perry boys were given blazers and ties to wear for the day, the students at Urban Charter were accustomed to wearing the school uniform of blue blazers and khakis. And the 9th grade boys at Urban Charter came with very different guests: mothers, grandmothers, and aunts. The occasion was the school's third annual Mother-Son luncheon. Inside the hotel ballroom, the event resembled a fancy evening gala, with many of the moms dressed in evening wear and a level of professionalism evident in the care the staff had taken in preparing for and setting up the luncheon.

Imani Coleman, the president of a local organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in urban areas, welcomed everyone to the luncheon. She spoke glowingly about Mr. Pierce, the school's co-founder and CEO; the boys and their mothers were in good hands, Ms. Coleman said, because Mr. Pierce was an expert on charter schools and the school choice movement. She added, "there's a special bond between mothers and sons. You can hear something different in mom's voices when they talk about their sons." Mr. Pierce then thanked all the women in attendance for their hard work in raising their boys, and wished them a Happy Mothers' Day. After being serenaded to a rendition of Boyz II Men's "Song For Mama" by the student choir, the 9th graders emerged from behind a sliding door with roses in their hands. Each boy walked over to his mother and handed her a flower; the flowers were gifts, as I overheard one boy say, for "moms, the most important people in our lives."

Two all-male, nearly all-Black public schools separated by just a few miles; two events to honor parents held just a few weeks from one another. This chapter begins by asking: why did Urban Charter officials choose to honor mothers instead of fathers at one of the school's most important annual functions? Answering that question reveals important differences in both the perceived crises facing their students, as well as the particular interventions around which the school was organized. An event to honor Black men at Perry cast light on the belief that the relative absence of fathers had overburdened hardworking single mothers. In chapter 4, I extended this argument to show that the Perry High staff wanted their boys to envision themselves as the men who accompanied them to that event, and as the administrators who organized the event: responsible men who led households, raised families, and supported their wives and children.

Urban Charter staff members, however, aimed to develop academically-oriented boys who would go to college and become independent, financially secure workers. The students were groomed to becoming independent, middle-class men; supporting and raising a family were not as important ideals as they were at Perry. And while Perry High students were reminded daily what it meant to be a *Black* boy—a boy who was perceived by the larger society as being

"banished," experiencing the punishing effects of structural and cultural discrimination—at Urban Charter I observed a tendency to deemphasize the boys' Blackness in favor of the middle-class gentlemen they could become. The boys were being groomed into becoming "urban gents," a term I occasionally heard the boys use as a shortened, slang version of "gentlemen." This term is meant to be distinct analytically from "banished boys," and, as with "banished boys," I am not necessarily referring to homogenous group of individuals. The imagery of banished—or marginalized and punished—boys and of "urban gents" on successful pathways into the future were defined in relation to one another. This was especially true in the culture of Urban Charter, where "banished boys" were seen as threats, excluded from meaningful participation in mainstream institutions, and as therefore denied the potential to grow into becoming full-fledged fathers, husbands, workers, and citizens. I call the set of negative outcomes and practices that orient the boys to this future a *regressive Black manhood.* The resources available to Urban Charter enabled that institution to create an academic culture and curriculum that prepared the boys to find meaningful work, and therefore embody a *progressive Black manhood.* "Regressive" and "progressive" are not meant to signal "worse" or "better," but instead they acknowledge the centrality of age and development as vectors of identity when boys grow, or find themselves unable to grow, into becoming certain men.

When I asked Mr. Pierce why he decided to organize the Mother-Son Luncheon, his response captured how his students were being groomed to becoming respectful and respectable men:

> Look, what we'll do is, we'll have a social event that will be coed, but somebody I know they're going to behave [around], a date that they're going to behave themselves with, and that's mom. You know, moms always get mad when I say this, but they're kind of like our guinea pigs, to kind of see how these guys are going to behave around women, and [the boys] actually do a very good job.

Mr. Pierce went on to describe how the boys had been taught the finer points of fine dining and table etiquette, and how to treat and impress their female guests. This happened in Ms. Spring's Latin class. She told one class of 9th graders, "You need to stand up whenever a woman comes to the table" and "these manners will come in handy when you meet important people during your time at Urban Charter," beginning the process of inculcating the boys with the cultural capital, or mannerisms, skills, and styles, that are favored in middle-class settings (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Lareau 2003; Morris 2006). Ms. Spring showed the boys scenes from TV shows and movies that included examples of egregiously bad table manners, and she asked a few boys to demonstrate for the class how they should open the car door for their mothers. One student found the particular rules for table etiquette so unusual that he worried that his own mother was probably unfamiliar with the kinds of manners expected at the luncheon.

Over the course of the year the school's collective practices—those that made up both the formal and the hidden curriculum—appeared to orient the boys toward a future where they would become independent, respectable, middle-class men. After identifying the boys they wanted *their* boys to avoid, the school, only in its third year of existence, was able to begin the task of cultivating certain practices and dispositions in their own boys. As Mr. Green told the parents of incoming 9th graders at an induction ceremony held at a symphony hall downtown: "The mission of Urban Charter is to provide a disciplined learning environment that educates and

empowers young men of diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and academic backgrounds to meet high expectations, achieve a deep understanding of complex subjects, and develop intellectual habits of mind, while developing a strong sense of community and character."

In chapter 3, I analyzed Urban Charter's hidden curriculum, a set of assumptions and beliefs that helped to justify the school's existence to its consumers and stakeholders, but which did not appear in the school's official charter. That involved turning outward to the community and drawing symbolic boundaries between the school and the perceived moral failings of public schools and the "banished boys" who attended them. In this section, I turn to inside the school to examine its formal, academic curriculum.

The Formal Curriculum

A School for Non-Traditional Boys

A section of a school brochure titled "Why all boys?" notes that "boys participate more often in musical, artistic, and foreign language programs in single-gender settings." Mr. Pierce took this to heart and from the very beginning recruited staff who would be willing to host, coach, conduct, and preside over an array of activities and extracurricular programs. Supporters of all-male schools frequently promote this rationale, believing that all-male settings free boys to pursue activities and subjects that they might otherwise perceive as feminine (Sax 2007). But in this case, encouraging their students to pursue an array of activities was not simply a matter of "de-feminizing" activities. Instead, school officials aimed to expand the very meanings of Black boyhood, which were constrained by the community circumstances in which the boys lived.

It is instructive here to think about two common portrayals of Black boyhood, both of which have been framed as stereotypes or have resulted in destructive portrayals of Black boys. The first concerns cultural adaptations to special social conditions. Researchers have argued that low-income Black boys learn to use violence to defend themselves (Anderson 1999), and that they develop and hone a particular set of dispositions and strategies, which some call a "cool pose," to deal with a sense of disenfranchisement and feelings of economic, political, and social impotence (Majors and Billson 1992). Falling short of the standards of white, monied hegemonic masculinity (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009, Connell 2005) poor Black men and boys are positioned in a marginalized position in the gender hierarchy. The second portrayal of Black boys operates at the level of the media and representation. Black men and boys are found wanting in positive, hegemonic dimensions of masculinity,, but they are also stereotyped as excessively masculine when it comes to "reigning symbol of aggressive American manliness" (Ross 1998: 599), as symbolized by the overrepresentation of Black men in professional sports and music.

I was startled by how often how often, in my interviews and fieldwork, basketball emerged as a "thing that Black boys simply do," a connection embedded in portrayals of Black boys in popular discourse. Some researchers (Brooks 2009; May 2008) have suggested that boys' "hoop dreams" result from a media that trumpets glamorous life styles of professional basketball players, and also because of the real fact that it is possible to play few other sports in communities filled with pavement, with little grass to be found. In the first instance, basketball is seen as the basic script that anonymous Black boys use to become superstars who profit off their natural athletic gifts, and to leave their communities. In the second instance, basketball is a ubiquitous activity played on the endless pavement of the inner city, distracting the boys from

their schoolwork and perhaps exposing them to the shady elements of the surrounding streets. In either case, basketball remains popular for inner-city boys because it confers status in their peer groups (Brooks 2009).

Time and time again, Urban Charter school officials told me that they wanted their students to explore activities other than basketball. Indeed, there was a sense that if the boys would just consider an activity besides basketball, then they would reach a kind of tipping point, and would find that they enjoyed a multitude of hobbies. The eventual hope was that the boys would envision practical and attainable careers for themselves. As Ms. Martinez, the Admissions Director, told me, "a lot of kids come here [for their interview] and I say, 'what do you want to do when you go to college? What do you want to be?' And they say, 'an NBA player.' And I'm like, 'no, sweetie, you need a Plan B.'"[65] Telling the boys that they had to look outside of basketball was a reflex, and it might seem trivial if not for the large implications for how Black boyhood is framed and the opportunities that Black boys feel are available in their lives.

The school focused on the boys' gender, stressing positive ways in which they could move toward standards of dominant manhood. The school staff did this primarily by offering a unique education (relative to most of the schooling options available in the school district) that sharpened the boys' academic skills, which was precisely the kind of education the Perry High boys desired but felt that their school too often fell short of providing. The school's official mission statement was (perhaps necessarily) vague about the kinds of people the school aimed to cultivate: "world leaders" and "citizens." In the next section, I discuss how the school sought to teach the boys forms of respectability appropriate for the middle-class status to which they aspired.

Mr. Chambers was the CEO of Bassett Charter Middle School, which had sent a number of students to Urban Charter. He supported Urban Charter because it was, as he put it, "the next logical step" for many boys at Bassett. Like others, while he admired the reported advantages of a Latin curriculum, he was excited that the school might provide opportunities outside of those stereotypically associated with Black boys:

> When they get to high school, they could take it to the next level, and [Mr. Pierce] does that with the Latin. He does that with the rowing team. I mean, like I said, most urban settings, it's basketball or hang out on the corner. For girls, it's jump rope. *But we need more boys to be non-traditional*. So just an opportunity to have a jazz ensemble, to have a rowing team, and they're good at it. It just helps them see the world in a lot of different ways because there are other people that do those things as well, and they're into different things, and that's going to expose you to a lot of different things as well.

Mr. Chamber's characterization of Black boys who play "basketball or hang out on the corner" is interesting. By saying that he wanted Black boys to be "non-traditional," he implied that stereotypical depictions of young Black men mark a "traditional" Black boyhood. Meanwhile, Mr. Farhad, a young 10th grade math teacher, told me:

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[65] Some of the boys were aware of how common a dream this was. But as a student once joked, "some of these boys want to be play in the NBA, and they can't even make the *Urban Charter* team."

I've been so used to African-American students kind of generally or being in the minority wherever I've been. And so I never had a large enough exposure to the community to see the real stark variations and how young people might carry themselves or dress or being aware of where their interests might lie. I love the fact that there are students interested in so many different things. I love the fact that there are students who are, you know, fascinated by theater and music and hip hop and country and pop and jazz.

While Urban Charter managed to field competitive sports teams, the school encouraged the boys to participate in a variety of activities after school, which included robotics, an anime and comic book club, and debate and mock trial teams that had performed well in city-wide competitions. Indeed, the year before I arrived, a city paper recognized the school as having the best after-school programs in the entire school district.

Learning Latin

The success of the Latin curriculum was rooted, ironically, in the non-traditional character it took on. To borrow Mr. Chambers's language from above, the school turned to an old and antiquated language to mold their non-traditional boys. And the boys from the very start seemed to mostly agree that, even if they initially struggled with the subject, it would help them get into college. Charles, a 10th grader, remarked that "lots of people don't know a language like that. That's, like, a great thing to know. And then a lot of colleges might accept you in there because you took up to four years of Latin." Raymond, another 10th grader, echoed Charles when he said, "giving us a second language like Latin, which is, you know, pretty dead to people now, it looks pretty good on a college application because people think, 'He can speak a dead language. That's real good.'" Speaking "a dead language"—a phrase I frequently heard—conferred status, taking the boys off the margins and placing them on the mainstream, college track.

The first teacher Ms. Pierce hired at Urban Charter, Ms. Spring was adored by the boys, many of whom called her their favorite teacher. Students and staff variously described her as "mom," "a rock," "tough but caring," someone who always made time for her students. And quite tellingly, the boys told me that she *must* have cared for them if she could take something as difficult as Latin and help them find success with it. Ms. Spring developed a passion for Latin as a student in her Catholic high school. She later went on to double major in Latin and Religious Studies, and jumped at the opportunity to teach Latin at Urban Charter, knowing how unusual the opportunity was for inner-city students. She said that her decision to come to Urban Charter was predicated on "turning the status quo on its head in terms of Latin, but also just giving these kids a chance to learn something that nobody else was going to get to learn, and the hope to get into college." Partly under her leadership, Latin became absolutely central to the school's identity, and staff all over school made sure to show their commitment to the "dead language," from honoring boys who performed well on the National Latin Exam to decorating classroom walls with items related to the Roman Empire. Early in the school year, a student pointed out a poster that hung in Mr. Stratton's English classroom. It borrowed a famous line from the movie "The Gladiator"—"What we do in life echoes in eternity"—before asking, "What will your echo be?" On the dry erase board inside another room, in bold red ink, was written: "HONOR THE GODS. LOVE YOUR WOMAN. DEFEND YOUR COUNTRY."

Nearly everyone I spoke with at the school, even if they were not sure about how exactly it helped, believed that Latin curriculum conferred on the school a kind of elite status.[66] This was part of the school's mission of helping young men develop dominant forms of cultural capital. Urban Charter shared the goals of elite private all-male prep schools: fostering a "hegemonic masculinity" that privileges teamwork, developing a strong intellect, and appreciation for the life of the mind (Kuriloff and Reichert 2003).

But acquiring this elite capital did not come easy. Since only a fraction of the students had much practice with a foreign language prior to enrolling at Urban Charter, and since Latin was a great challenge in and of itself, many boys struggled with it, particularly at the start of 9th grade. Various boys told me that Latin was "impossible," "so different," "ancient," and "full of rules." Since mastery seemed so out of reach, the language retained an exclusive quality that reinforced its high status as a language only reserved for the elite few. In this way, Latin was more than just the centerpiece of the school's academic curriculum. It was integral to its identity, marking Urban Charter as exclusive and, like the language, reinforcing outside perceptions that the school was out-of-reach and unattainable for most boys.

Mr. Davidson, a math teacher, had taken Latin himself in high school, and was intrigued by the exclusive quality that Latin imparted on the school. When I asked him what he thought were the advantages of learning Latin, he replied:

> Well, I think communication is very important and I think vocabulary is a very important part of communication. I think my vocabulary is as high as it is, one of the reasons is because of my background in Latin. I also think that it does teach *exactness*. You know, [the various endings in the words], the five declensions and everything else. So that I think it teaches you to be more particular.

Mr. Davidson and other teachers told me that the "exactness" of Latin was advantageous because it forced students to concentrate and to be "particular." It struck me that many people, from teachers who had studied Latin themselves when they were younger to students learning the language for the first time, described Latin the way *math* is often described: as the sum of precise calculations. It supported the idea that Latin was not intended as a conversational language, but as something intentionally foundational, challenging, and even difficult; with intense study, the language could slowly be unlocked to help the students master *proper English*. Indeed, it was possible to achieve some degree of racelessness because there was a sense among the boys that Latin was, as one student described it, "as white as it comes." The racial imagery was undeniable—peculiar and unpronounceable names; gods and humans who were all white— and some of the more perceptive boys compared Roman conquerors to examples of European conquest, from Spanish conquistadors in present-day Latin America to the first British colonists in the United States.

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[66] The Urban Charter website claims that studying Latin is correlated with higher scores on the verbal portion of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). There is evidence to support this claim. Some research has shown that foreign language-taking, particularly Latin and German and less so with a language like Spanish, is positively correlated with higher verbal SAT verbal performance, especially if students take at least three years of that language. Taking a foreign language is especially helpful for students who did poorly on the Preliminary SAT (PSAT), and average test score differences between African American and white students are less among those who take a foreign language (Cooper, Yanoksy, and Wisenbaker 2008).

But learning that the Roman Empire was the "height" of civilization with all its scientific advancements, underscored a great irony. Gail Bederman (1995) has argued that powerful figures throughout U.S. history, from presidents to leading scientists, have drawn on a discourse of "civilization" to defend white supremacy. Civilization has been invoked as an advanced stage in human racial evolution, marked by the scientific and artistic "sophistication" of whites that dwarfs the achievements of more "barbaric," "less civilized" races. As a discourse that is inherently contradictory, "civilization" has also been adapted by those in power to signify the ability of a nation to demonstrate control over its own destiny by conquering other nations and peoples, particularly through war.

A linguistic lesson was just as important as these historical and cultural ones. Latin, the "dead language" stood in stark contrast to the "living language" that the boys spoke among themselves: the urban slang unique to the city of Morgan. Although it was subtle, requiring boys to be immersed in Latin created tension with a cornerstone of the boys' non-dominant cultural capital—Morgan slang, a particular manner of speech—which the boys possessed as members of a lower status group and which enabled them to navigate their lives in the community outside of school (Carter 2005). While I observed few instances where staff members criticized the boys' use of slang, learning Latin, the "dead language," was emblematic of the school's larger project of developing the boys into respectable young men, the "urban gents." I am not necessarily arguing that the school forced the boys to choose between the school's formal language and their own. Rather, the curriculum forced the boys to understand that a total commitment of four years to a "dead language" moved far beyond *casual* conversation. Latin, of course, was not to be spoken for its own sake, but because it constituted a precise set of strange calculations that inched the boys closer to college.

This reflects a second irony. Describing these respective languages as "dead" and "living," frames Latin as emboldening the boys and providing them with a promising *future*, while everyday slang was perceived as a detriment in mainstream institutions. Language is a major organizing principle that reproduces inequality in schools. Schools privilege *certain* languages over others; they may demand that students of color learn Received Standard English at the expense of Black English (Ferguson 2001) or their native language, such as Spanish (Valenzuela 1999). I am not arguing that the school forcefully pushed its students to do either. Rather, the reified status that Latin held in the building—difficult to engage, near-impossible to conquer, associated with ancient myths and a foreign land, but somehow pointing the way to college—required total commitment on the part of the boys. Through interviews with some of the boys, I learned that Latin more than any other class took up the bulk of their study time at home, after school, during Saturday school; and that it produced the most anxiety.

In this instance, the choice of Latin as the school's academic bedrock reveals a hidden "gender" curriculum. While the school community was proud of and quick to celebrate the distinctiveness of its formal curriculum—one that appeared on its official charter and which clearly separated it from its peer institutions—the path to college required that the boys make some sacrifices. In chapter 3, I loosely characterized Urban Charter's hidden curriculum as "unofficially"—meaning it never appeared on its official charter—drawing symbolic boundaries between its boys and those doomed to failure, whom I have called "banished boys." Here I return to a more narrow definition of "hidden curriculum," as referring to the unspoken lessons

that schools teach about race, class, and gender (Anyon 1980; Morris 2006).[67] The school rarely attempted to explicitly recognize and honor the boys' African American culture, which made Latin all the more visible throughout the school. Coded as white and elite, or at least as a middle-class achievement, Latin became more than just a subject the boys studied. Long "dead," it had been resurrected from a foreign past and held promise that if the boys worked hard enough to learn it, then they would advance academically like no one in their family had previously done. To bring in Bederman (1995) once more, the Urban Charter staff members were assisting the boys in engaging the discourse of civilization, which signaled human advancement and personal empowerment, but that required adopting white middle-class cultural standards.

The Academic Curriculum and Becoming College-Prep

Even if they struggled with Latin, the boys consistently told me that the language was intended to improve their language skills and performance on the SAT. A majority of the 9th graders I interviewed acknowledged how important the exam was, with consequences for their futures. They marked off their Urban Charter career by the dates of the exam: taking the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) in the 10th grade, the SAT toward the end of the 11th grade, and again in the 12th grade if needed. The school treated the exam seriously. In homeroom each morning the students were required to tackle an SAT problem, and the administration hired a professional tutor to teach prep classes to the 11th graders. As Mr. Pierce told me, the impetus for the SAT program came from Ms. Kehler, the woman with whom he co-founded Urban Charter. Explaining why Ms. Kehler had been so emphatic about providing students with additional (and costly) SAT help, Mr. Pierce remarked that she was like many of the members of the school's class-privileged Board of Directors:

> What do we have here? We have a bunch of people who spent significant money putting their children through some of the top schools, you know, in the area, and so what they do is, they kind of, 'Look, what did I need to get my kid through?' Their kids, these are well-off kids. It's not like these are inner-city kids, you know, scratching for everything, but they also know that any child has certain needs over the course of their lives.

Ms. Kehler and other members of the Board knew that their own children had benefited from important resources like additional help on the SAT, which was considered especially valuable given how competitive college admissions are today. In the same way in which Mr. Pierce had imagined Urban Charter as resembling Crane Academy, an elite all-boys school in the Morgan suburbs, Ms. Kehler drew on her knowledge that certain forms of cultural capital, or resources, had given her own children a leg-up, and not any innate attributes like intelligence or effort (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Lareau 2003).

Standardized exams were a regular occurrence in the school. In addition to the SAT and PSAT, the boys took a state standardized exam and the national TerraNova exam each spring as well as monthly multiple-hour benchmark exams in several subjects. A majority of the Student Conventions set aside time for Dr. Green to break down the results of the exams—including the

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[67] This more narrow definition could, in fact, be relevant to how the school drew its moral boundaries. For example, at Urban Charter, community members felt that their own boys should be protected from threats posted by other boys who lived in the area, which elevated the Urban Charter students and implied that they were worth saving.

percentage of each grade who scored above, at, and below grade level—and how much each grade had improved since the last benchmark exam.

An SAT score, of course, was needed to apply for most colleges, and college was the intended post-high school destination. As Dr. Green told the audience at the 9th Grade Induction Ceremony, "I don't want 2014 to be the year [the students] associate with graduating from high school. I want 2014 to be the year they enroll in college." This comment was met with much applause and cheering. The "college message" was hard to miss at the school. On the hallway walls on the second floor, beginning near Dr. Green's office, were pennants of the country's historically Black colleges and universities. Each homeroom was named after the teacher's alma mater, and the students sat with their homerooms at the Student Conventions. The homerooms occasionally took turns to show off their "homeroom pride" by doing a college cheer, though some of the students, and particularly the younger ones, were embarrassed by having to stand up and do this. Different homerooms were invited to help Dr. Green organize and lead the Conventions.

Most of the boys, and even the 9th graders who had just started at the school, felt that they were headed to college. Some even told me that college was *guaranteed.* This was striking because a majority of the boys I interviewed (28 of the 39, or 71%) would be the first in their families to attend college. (For those who would not be, it was primarily because older siblings had attended or were in college. Only one of the 13 parents and guardians I interviewed at Urban Charter had earned a college degree.) While college messages—the pennants on the walls, the homeroom pride, the frequent mention of college at the Conventions, the hiring of a new college advisor—swirled around the school, I was still struck by how often students and parents associated Urban Charter "as" or "feeling like" college. (As I will describe in the next chapter, this contrasted starkly with the way in which Perry High students occasionally described their school as "like jail.") The school was perceived as more than just a stepping-stone to college, or as on the college trajectory. Urban Charter community members seemed to imagine their school as standing outside both the regular public system *and* the streets; the school seemed closer to college and its promise of a brighter future than the perceived degradation of public schools and the moral failings of the "banished boys" who attended them. Over time, the boys developed a strong connection with the school and imagined it as a second home because they spent so much of their waking time there. It was not uncommon for students to be at school or taking part in school activities for 10-12 hours a day, particularly if they had to attend the before-school one hour homework detention, which Dr. Green implemented that year. The long days, particularly in the winter, when the boys arrived to school in the dark and left in the dark, added to the sheltered feeling of the school.

Tyson's mother had told me about her son's awful prior experiences in public schools. The logistics of getting Tyson to school were difficult; she and her son lived in north Morgan, and she worked as a crossing guard in another part of town. But Tyson had been captivated by the school. Though short and wiry, he was a leader on the football team, and he used a football analogy to describe how stepping into Urban Charter felt to him:

> When you walked into the school, you just get that *school* feeling. It felt like a college. I felt like you was on campus, and just, like, it feels like the static in the air just before a football game. It was exciting, but it was also like, you got to step into *a different place, off the streets*.

Tyson had never visited a college campus, but he imagined that Urban Charter must have felt like one because it represented the act of "step[ping] into a different place," and being invited into and included in an important institution like college. His football analogy is compelling in this context because football resonated in the same way for boys as basketball, although far fewer boys played football. Basketball was its own arena with its own rules, set apart from the unpredictability and danger that characterized the streets. And boys believed that an ethic of individualism defined sports; it was the great equalizer in a community context that otherwise provided few models for success. In basketball (and in football), success and upward mobility were a function of hard work and personal drive (May 2008). Urban Charter represented just that: now that they had their foot in their door, the boys would get to college by virtue of the effort they promised to give. Like the boys at Perry, many I spoke with at Urban Charter said that being a Black boy in Morgan meant that tomorrow was not guaranteed. But the promise of leaving the city for college, getting away from their communities and from East Morgan, attenuated some of these feelings of being trapped in Morgan. For Tyson and for his classmates, Urban Charter was a protected space in a literal Safe Zone, reserved for only a select few, with a student pledge composed in the ancient and obscure language of Latin. It represented more than a pathway to college; admission to the school, itself so unlike at other regular public school, meant that the boys were so close to college that they were already there.

While I observed many excellent lessons and teachers at Perry, the academic curriculum at Urban Charter provided more consistently strong teaching. The core classes were divided into three tracks: Honors, Regular, and Progressing. (The bottom group was called "Progressing" because the staff did not want to label them as the lowest track.) Students could be moved up to the Honors track for strong performance in their Regular classes, if their teachers recommended them for Honors, or even if they petitioned the administration and demonstrated a strong desire to be in Honors. But since the school was just in its third year, staff members were still struggling to determine how effective the tracking system was and whether all three tracks were preparing students for college. As Ms. Pine, the Dean of Instruction, told me: "The question we debate a lot is, 'are we really college prep?' And 'do we really offer honors'?"

By my observation, there were not many significant differences between the Honors and Regular tracks. The two most significant were that the Honors classes moved at a quicker pace, and there were more behavior issues in Regular classes. Yet based on talking with students, learning their scores on exams, and observing how they answered questions in class and engaged with their classmates and their teachers, there was a good deal of overlap between the academic performance of the students in different tracks. At each Student Convention, Dr. Green honored a few boys as the "Mighty Generals" for that week. Teachers nominated boys for the honor based on exceptional academic performance, effort, and contributions to the school, and they were given a gold tie to wear for one week. While the boys who were honored tended to have high G.P.A.s, there was usually a mix of boys from across the tracks. Yet there were subtle reminders the track to which each boy belonged. One day in her 10th grade History class, Ms. Holden grew impatient with the students in her Honors class, who struggled to answer a question. Referring to Regular-track students, she finally said, "if my second and third period classes were able to answer this, then this should be a piece of cake for *you* all." In Mr. Farhad's geometry class, the section of the board reserved for the night's homework assignment was split into an "Honors" and "Other" sections, which allowed all the students to see that the Honors classes were further along in their work. While the school staff generally did a consistent job of

honoring an array of students in more formal settings like the Student Conventions, the subtle moments of track identification may have created a self-fulfilling prophecy where students performed at levels appropriate for their track.

As at Perry High, staff and parents sometimes justified an all-boys model by saying it eliminated sexual distractions. They described girls as "devious" and "sexually luring" boys into staying off-task, and some boys conceded that "girls throw me off my focus." But these comments were far less central to justifications for the all-male model than the crises of Black boys that I described in chapters 2 and 3. At Urban Charter more people expressed skepticism that removing girls was the reason that boys could work. Indeed, the school's more rigorous and comprehensive academic curriculum, coupled with its strict disciplinary system (which I describe later in the chapter) seemed to largely account for the boys' academic focus and engagement. In fact, several people told me that the boys would have focused even *more* with girls around. Burton and Terrell, two 9th graders and good friends, had this to say when I interviewed them as a pair:

Terrell:	I truly need, to sit in class to pay attention sometimes, girls around.
Oeur:	You need girls to pay attention?
Terrell:	Yes, because at my other school I used to have competitions with girls, like because you know how they say girls are smarter than guys? I used to test them, like, 'I want to see [how you did] on this test,' and all that. Here, you can't really do that because you would just see how smart a guy is.
Burton:	To add on what he says, he might be right about being focused more because, you know, when our teachers brought two girls into the class and as soon as they came in and sat there, the whole class, everybody had their hand raised, trying to answer questions.
Terrell:	Yeah, trying to look smart in front…
Burton:	Trying to impress the girls, wanting to look smart.

In a school where academic rigor was constantly stressed and where academic success was honored and celebrated, the presence of girls may have actually improved academic performance because the boys would have liked to impress the girls. Moreover, as Terrell pointed out, boys and girls may engage in friendly competition that would help both to perform better in class.[68] These findings challenge the rationale that a heterosexual "adolescent subculture" will dominate in coed settings where boys and girls both undervalue academic identities because they interfere with one's popularity (Riordan 1990). Burton and Terrell's comments also challenge long-

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[68] Mr. Pierce occasionally said that boys thrive better in competition, but I generally did not find that Urban Charter teachers, any more than those at Perry High, created ultra-competitive environments in their classrooms. The Student Conventions may have actually softened competitive drives by providing many opportunities for students and staff to show their support for one another, and by encouraging student cooperation. When competitive drives did emerge, they were usually at the level of the school; the staff, for example, lauded the accomplishments of groups like the mock trial and debate teams in city-wide competitions. At one of the more energetic Student Conventions of the year, Mr. Pierce recognized the mock trial team's recent success at a tournament by saying, "we kicked their butts! We slaughtered them! Who's the new big dog in east Morgan?" The boys sitting in front of him roared. A moment like this created school solidarity in opposition to other schools and promoted the school's "life of the mind" mission through academic, non-sports pursuits.

standing theories that these students oppose academic identities in school (Fordham 1988; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1987). People frequently told me, however, that the all-boys model did have one mitigating effect on the "adolescent subculture." With only other boys around, and with only one outfit, the school uniform, available to them, boys did not have to focus on "primping" themselves to impress girls. As Ms. Rollins, the mother of two sons at the school, said, her boys are "not worried about, 'Oh, I want Susie to look at me,' you know, and it makes it a lot easier for them because they don't have to worry about, 'Oh, my God, I ain't brushed my hair today,' or whatever. You know, they could just roll out the bed, put their clothes on, come in and learn."

Becoming Urban Gents

Looking Respectable

Members of the Urban Charter school community didn't emphasize biological sex differences or distinctively male-oriented teaching strategies, but they did make gender salient by de-emphasizing the boys' racial identities in favor of a middle-class position. This contrasts with the Perry community, where issues of race were much more central to conversations about pedagogy and the needs of students. After Urban Charter school members had performed the boundary work of separating their boys from those presumably destined for negative futures, and of identifying a crisis and justifying why a school like Urban Charter was needed, they went about teaching the boys to be "urban gents." However subtly, the school was teaching the boys that despite their racial and socioeconomic background, what they still possessed was a "patriarchal dividend" (Connell 2005), an advantage they had, as boys (and men) relative to girls (and women). They could move toward responsible manhood, and reap the rewards that went with it. I use "gents" instead of "gentlemen" because I occasionally heard some of the boys use the term (although staff more frequently used the full term "gentlemen"), which I realized was their way of taking the proper word and making it part of their Morgan street vernacular.

An identity as an urban gent implies that Urban Charter boys could *grow to become* gentlemen while boys in regular public schools were largely denied that privilege of manhood (Ferguson 2001). The distinction acknowledges age as an integral coordinate of identity; too often studies of gender do not attend to processes of human development (Gardiner 2002). In particular, the act of taking boys and grooming them into becoming "urban gents" marked out a phase of adolescence for the boys. This contrasts with ways in which racist discourses have long characterized Black men as being stunted developmentally. In the beginning of the 20th century, G. Stanley Hall promoted the idea that for white boys adolescence was a period for "working out" their savage instincts before maturing into civilized men, while this stage was unnecessary for Black boys as they were born the savages they would always be (Bederman 1995). Urban Charter parents described boys in regular public schools in a similar way, as boys who terrorized and were the "unwanted traffic" (Calmore 2006) in a particular public space.

I introduced Frank, the president of the student government at Perry, in chapter 4. Frank told me that he had met certain men, when he and his family had moved away briefly from Morgan, who taught him certain skills that would be respected by adults in school. They were seemingly small things—sitting up in his chair, looking adults in the eye—but they signaled to adults that Frank was engaged in school. I noticed very few of these teaching moments at Perry High. I also did not observe many instances of Urban Charter staff inculcating these practical

forms of "cultural competence" that are privileged in educational institutions (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). As I described at the start of the chapter, the 9th graders did receive etiquette lessons prior to the Mother-Son Luncheon, but this was the extent of these formal lessons I observed.

Instead, Urban Charter community members imagined that their students would emulate or approximate some vision of respectable gentlemen. A majority of the people I spoke with stressed matters of appearance. Ms. Anderson, whose son Charles was a 10th grader at Urban Charter, told me:

> He's grown tremendously over the last couple of years. I said, 'Are you out here trying to catch some of those young girls?' He's, like, 'No, I just like wearing [my uniform],' and truthfully, it's because when people see young men in the street like that, they look up to them. They look like gentlemen. You know, even older women you find complimenting all the boys and how well-dressed they look and all that, and that makes a person feel good. It makes anybody feel good. So they have helped him a lot, even in being responsible.

Ms. Anderson watched as her son had, literally and metaphorically, grown into his Urban Charter uniform. She—like Charles himself, Ms. Anderson felt—understood how others viewed the Urban Charter boys in a more positive light, as people who command respect with others "looking up to them."

Stephan, a 10th grader, had a similar experience. In his first year, he was eager to take off his uniform the second he left school. This was in part because he wanted to show off his R.I.P. t-shirts, which I described the Perry High boys wearing in the last chapter, and fashionable shirts, an issue I examine as it relates to the boys' sense of self in the next chapter. Taking off the uniform was also a way to avoid being seen as a target by boys from local high schools (an issue I discussed in chapter two). But over time Stephan said that he did not mind keeping his blazer on as he rode the bus back home after school, because adults frequently commented on how "respectful" he looked. They frequently asked him where he went to school, which was probably as valuable an advertisement as any for the school. Stephan found that many complimented him for looking like a gentleman, and so he came to view himself more that way. "'You're quite the gentleman!'" Stephan said in a high-pitched voice, impersonating an older woman who had said that to him one day on the bus. Performing the boundary work in which Urban Charter parents engage, he told me that "adults, strangers, don't see me as one of them boys, them thugs. Me and my brothers here [at Urban Charter], we're *gents.*"

Stephan's 10th grade classmate Charles had similarly come to embrace the uniform after complaining about it when he started out at the school:

> The uniforms make you feel like you're a professional, like you're going to an everyday job. Makes you feel kind of good about yourself. Like, it makes you feel like a person like Barack Obama, makes you feel like you're up there and that you're somebody.

Tenth grader Ricky also felt more like a professional in this uniform: "I like wearing it because I mean I like to be a lawyer so that's what you've got to wear most of the time." Earlier in the chapter, I described how school community members imagined the school not just as a stepping-

stone to college, but as a space that itself resembled college. For many of the boys, the school uniforms did not signal a college identity, but one they would achieve after college.[69] While some staff members might have believed that Urban Charter was modeled after Crane Academy and other elite all-boys private schools, the students never mentioned these schools to me. They seemed unaware that the outfit of a blazer and tie was modeled after British boarding schools and was common among elite all-boys private schools in the U.S. (Kuriloff and Reichert 2003). Instead, the boys more often mentioned the uniforms as resembling those worn my professionals and businessmen, solidly middle-class and therefore financially secure. They also used the uniform to mark out their identities in other ways in their communities. Charles, for example, later told me that his father, who worked for a mail carrier service, constantly complimented him, saying that he would soon be the first man in his family to wear a suit to work.

During a fire drill in early February, the boys and their teachers stood in near-perfect lines along the perimeter of the school. It was bitterly cold, and the students looked miserable. A woman driving by rolled down the window of her car and asked loudly, "my, what school is *this*?" She was obviously impressed. The boys looked around at each other—they had been told strictly not to talk during the drill, but were eager to answer the woman—and Ms. Holden finally told the passer-by the name of the school. I noticed several boys then stood taller, fixing their blazers and ties.

Over in south Morgan, Perry High staff members engaged their students' situated knowledge of how institutions had collectively criminalized them. This vantage point enabled them to see that they were not inherently any less gifted than other students, but were disadvantaged in a discriminatory power structure. Urban Charter boys also were developing a particular viewpoint, but one that could be more appropriately characterized as a "looking-glass self" (Cooley 1902), through which they began to shape their own attitudes to fit the expectations of proper, middle-class behavior (Skeggs 2002). A seemingly minor moment like this carried another type of significance. The sea of nearly 400 Black boys in blue blazers appeared to form a protective wall around their school, a symbolic act that protected the better education they believed they were receiving, just as school staff and many of their parents had tried to protect them from the degradation of public schools.

The uniforms clearly had made an impression on the students. In the spring, several boys told me that they wanted to approach Dr. Green about adding a third uniform, in addition to the regular blazer and dress pants and the summer uniform of a golf shirt that the students wore at the beginning and at the end of the school year when it was hot. They recommended a cardigan, which "looked like" a blazer and they believed would command the respect their blazers received. For the staff, a possible addition of a third uniform enabled the boys to be more involved with "building" the culture of the school—a priority of the school given how young Urban Charter was—and the staff also understood the student lobbying for cardigans as literal evidence (several boys brought in cardigans to show the staff) that the boys understood the importance of looking the part of a professional and an "urban gent." Mr. Farhad told me that several of his students were:

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[69] As proud as they were to wear the uniform, they still looked forward to college when they could wear whatever they wanted.

> …obsessed with this idea of cardigans. I was really just interested to see how they didn't want to get rid of the uniforms. They didn't want to say, 'Look, we should be able to wear whatever we want.' They didn't even say that. They've bought into uniforms. They just wanted to have a different style.

That "different style" was in hip-hop. Tenth graders Ricky and John eagerly described the cardigans that the multi-millionaire hip-hop artist Kanye West wore, part of a preppy style that contrasted with typical mainstream hip-hop fashion styles (Majors and Billson 1992; Morris 2006; Nightingale 1993). Along with Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, West represented the pinnacle of the Black entertainment industry, where "play with costume with and couture has always been de rigueur" and adopting a high style signified success as a businessman and membership in an exclusive segment of society (Miller 2009).

Imagining themselves as professionals or businessmen did not mean that Urban Charter boys were expected to or even desired to wear suits each day to an office job. Rather, school officials were pushing for the boys to be competitive workers. The school adopted a *social mobility* model of schooling, "the purpose of which is to provide individual students with a competitive advantage in the struggle for desirable social positions" (Labaree 1997: 42). This model is applicable to Urban Charter because it assumes a struggle for a limited number of middle-class jobs. Social mobility differs from two other primary goals of education in the United States (Labaree 1997). A *democratic equality* model maintains that schools should prepare students to assume responsibilities of citizenship, and to become active and competent participants in the political process. A *social efficiency* model holds that schools should adapt students to a hierarchical social structure, promoting varied talents and capabilities for the overall health of the economy.[70] The distinction between the social efficiency and social mobility models matters most for this study. While the social efficiency model sees education as a public good, the social mobility model views education as a zero-sum game, where "self-interested actors [seek] opportunities for gaining educational distinctions at the expense of each other" (Labaree 1997: 56). It is appropriate to think of Urban Charter as adopting this model relative to other public schools. In drawing symbolic boundaries between their school and regular public schools, Urban Charter community members treated and protected their classical curriculum as a valuable resource.[71]

Achieving upward mobility entailed *outward* mobility. Recall how the men who attended the organizational meeting for the mentoring program at Perry wanted their boys to see and hear about the world outside of their isolated community. Urban Charter officials wanted the same for their students, and they were able to provide boys with certain opportunities through

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[70] The social efficiency model is ascendant currently given that vocationalism remains central to the U.S. schooling system (e.g. a graded higher education system with many community colleges, schools and programs that train people for blue-collar, working-class jobs). This model assumes economic interdependence and squares with Emile Durkheim's (1984) claim that social solidarity results from a division of labor. Three main criticisms of this model are that it devalues many forms of labor; reflects rather than challenges racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities; and does not encourage opportunities for upward social mobility.

[71] Over at Perry High, staff members were also aware of the challenges their boys faced given the dearth of jobs and the growing sense that U.S. children were losing ground to their peers around the world. As Mr. Youseff said, "you've got to look way behind just Perry, way beyond south Morgan and see that you're truly in the global marketplace. That's why I say all they learn academically, that's small. How they learn to think of themselves and what role they have in the world is going to be bigger."

private fundraising money; for example, various groups of boys had gone on trips to Rome and Africa.

Respecting Women

In the eyes of school community members, "urban gents" would go on to college and become professionals. But being a gentleman also meant treating women respectfully. In early January, Dr. Green opened a Weekly Conference by putting up a slide on a large screen; the sign read "Theory into Practice." After welcoming the students to the conference, Dr. Green said:

> So here we have an all-boys school. And there a couple of theories about why all boys schools work, and why co-ed schools sometimes have issues that we don't have. And one of those theories is this *(a stick figure of a boy appears on the large screen)*. You have a male student who by himself is typically strong, confident, and well-behaved and well-mannered, and he's focused on the task in front of him. But then you interrupt his life with one of these *(a stick figure girl appears on the screen next to the stick figure boy)*. And what happens when females sometimes are around young, adolescent men? This happens *(the stick figure guy twirls around)*. Sometimes they go a little crazy.

The boys laughed, but Dr. Green quickly turned serious. He went on to describe how the boys, in his opinion, were so accustomed to only being around boys all day, that when female visitors stopped by, the students overreacted and could be especially disrespectful toward the female guests.

> For a second I'm not going to blame you for laughing, and now that that second's passed, we need to address what that means. For the young lady or woman coming to our school, and walks past your classroom, and walks into your classroom while Mr. Calder or Ms. Larkin is teaching, and you take your eyes off the board, and looking at who comes in is a natural reaction. But then you say something, and then it goes from a little funny to very disrespectful. It disrupts your teacher who's teaching you, it disrupts your neighbor next to you, and it's very disrespectful to the female. And I know for a fact that things have been said. When people come in here, always show the ultimate respect. And if you're going to show more respect for people, *it is for ladies*. All the time. Guys, we have to show respect at all times. Do we understand that? *(The boys respond with "yes.")* Do we understand that? *(The boys respond with a more emphatic "YES.")* You will very rarely hear the word "boy" in this school. You won't hear it from my mouth. How do we call you? Young men. *Gentlemen*. Because that's how I know you're capable of acting. The bottom line is, we must always act like gentlemen, all the time.

One of Dr. Green's "theories" for why all-boys schools "work"—that they eliminate sexual distractions caused by the presence of girls—is a key assumption behind popular support for single-sex education (Campbell and Sanders 2002). As I have suggested elsewhere, I occasionally heard students and staff members at both Perry and Urban Charter say that "eliminating distractions" was one benefit of the all-boys model. Dr. Green suggested that since the boys were not around female peers at school, the rare presence of female guests seemed to

amplify unsavory masculine behaviors such as objectifying women (Bird 1996; Pascoe 2007).[72] Unbeknownst to Dr. Green, several students, as I described earlier, believed that girls may have had a positive impact on the boys' learning under the assumption that girls actually prefer boys who are academically-inclined.

According to Dr. Green, a gentleman is someone who shows "ultimate respect" to women. While it there was not an overwhelming difference, I did observe more moments of teaching respect for women and girls at Urban Charter than at Perry. As Mr. Calder, a second year English and Writing instructor, said:

> I think this school is doing the best it can to teach respect for girls and for women. Boys, when they're around only other boys, will be boys. There's certainly no program in place, or official policies in place, but I think the teachers are conscious on an individual level.

A common argument against single-sex schools is that they reduce opportunities for boys and girls to socialize and develop positive relationships with one another (Riordan 1990). A few staff members and parents seemed genuinely worried about this, though they tended to think that the potential academic benefits outweighed any trouble the boys might later experience when they more regularly interacted with young women.[73]

These examples shed light on the significance of the Mother-Son Luncheon. At Perry High, administrators organized the school's first-ever Father-Son Luncheon because they perceived absent fatherhood as partly responsible for the crisis of Black boys, and they wanted the students to imagine themselves as becoming the men who accompanied them to the event that day: responsible fathers and male mentors to young men. At Urban Charter, parents and staff members also identified the challenges that single mothers faced, but addressing and overcoming absent fatherhood was not central to the school's mission. The school's classical curriculum, its formal curriculum, was developed in response to the belief that their students could not receive a similarly rigorous education in regular public schools. The school therefore concentrated on providing this education, working under the assumption that this would help the boys obtain socially desirable, middle-class positions (to use the language of the social mobility model [Labaree 2003]).

I argue that in encouraging the boys to become "urban gents," school officials engaged in a project similar to promoting racelessness (Ferguson 2001). The boys' identity as young *Black* men was less often explicitly mentioned at Urban Charter than at Perry, but I do not use the term 'racelessness' to imply that racial awareness was absent. Urban Charter actively pursued a progressive Black manhood, set of positive ideals, practices, and outcomes that acknowledged the potential of Black boys to *grow* and become mature men who could participate meaningfully

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[72] While I never observed this myself at Urban Charter (though several students and staff members corroborated Dr. Green's observations), at Perry, I occasionally saw boys crowd classroom windows and call out to women walking by.

[73] Some proponents of single-sex education argue that coeducation is generally fine until secondary school, when worries over sexual distractions increases (Riordan 1990). None of the boys I interviewed at Perry High or at Urban Charter had been in an all-male setting prior to matriculating at those schools. The aforementioned proponents might claim that this is acceptable because at least the boys would have had some experience interacting with girls before matriculating at an all-boys secondary school.

in mainstream institutions as workers, fathers, husbands, and citizens. Being Black was not made central to this trajectory.   In contrast, at Perry High there were efforts to make successful Black men visible to the boys, through the Black Male Speaker Series, in which Black male leaders from the community spoke at the Education over Incarceration assembly, and through other ways. Outside of Career Day, where a number of Black male professionals from the community were invited to speak to the boys, school officials made few efforts to make these role models visible to the boys. But, *just as the Perry High students had told me,* what was critical was that adults, if they truly were "acting their age," work effectively to provide the boys with academic skills. The boys could stand to learn from anyone, regardless of their background.

Being Saved

A few days before the start of the holiday break, the staff surprised the boys with a trip to a movie theater downtown to watch the movie "The Blind Side." Based on the best-selling book by Michael Lewis, the movie chronicles the life of a homeless African American teenager, Michael Oher, who is adopted by a well-to-do white family. Though Michael is chronically shy and suffers from the trauma of past difficult family circumstances, his adoptive family, and particularly the mother, encourages Michael to pursue football, where he quickly proves to be an elite player. He would eventually go on to be a star at the University of Mississippi and in the National Football League. While the movie glosses over many of the complexities of Lewis's book, the movie does convey that Michael's rise to fame was unique. The movie was generally well-received by critics.[74]

In some respects, the decision to watch the movie made sense given that so many boys did like sports, and professional football, in particular. At least one school official, I am sure, thought that showing Oher's successful football exploits might inspire members of the Urban Charter football team, which had taken its lumps in its first year. I heard several students and teachers call "The Blind Side" a "feel-good movie," one that recycled a "nothing to something" plotline long popular with movie viewers.

While it may not have been the administration's intention—they did, after all, pick a popular sports-based movie as a reward just days before the school shut down for the winter break—"The Blind Side" generated discussions among the staff and students on the topic of youth, race, and the issue of "being saved." Most of the students appeared to have enjoyed the movie tremendously. During our interview near the end of the school year, I asked Raymond, a 10th grader, to identify one of his best memories from the year. His response was watching "The Blind Side." Raymond had struggled academically, and I observed him getting punished for various behavioral infractions throughout the year. Still, he had a favorable impression of the school. "The Blind Side" helped to capture why this was the case:

> It got to me and I thought maybe, seeing 'The Blind Side' movie taught us about how you leave from one place, like, you left, but you always got a place in your heart sort of. Because the guy, Michael Oher, he left out of, like, the urban community, like, the city or whatever, the bad part, where all his friends and his family was, and moved into a suburban home, or a suburban family home, and he never forgot about his friends. He

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[74] I looked at a number of reviews of the movie collected at Rotten Tomatoes (available online at http://www.rottentomatoes.com), which collects reviews and gives each movie a score. Approximately two thirds of the reviews of "The Blind Side" had a favorable impression of the movie.

never forgot about, you know, his mom, his family, his brother. But, on the other hand, there was some bad things there that he tried to let go of, so I sort of took it as, you know, that's me leaving this community.

At Perry, the belief that the boys should become good family men was conveyed in ways that encouraged them to stay in Morgan and to take care of their own (families, wives, and children) later. Urban Charter conveyed a different ethic: the collective beliefs and practices at the school encouraged the boys take to take care of their own (by protecting their Urban Charter classmates, their "brothers," and strengthen the school's resistance to the deleterious effects of the surrounding community and regular public schools) now so that they could take care of themselves later in life. "The Blind Side" enabled the boys to see themselves "leaving this community" (as Raymond said), which they felt was a distinct possibility, even though, at the time of my fieldwork, Urban Charter did not yet have a class of seniors who had graduated and gone on to college.

While the majority of the boys were enthusiastic about the film, I did speak with one student, Ja'quan, a 10th grader, who was a little disturbed by the message that Black "boys are fine if [they're] saved by a rich, white lady." Ja'quan said that the movie might mislead people into thinking that African American adults could not "save" boys in the same way. His English teacher had passed out a review that was critical of how passive Michael Oher was made to appear in the movie. The review suggested that Michael's success could be attributed mostly to the affluent white Touhy family that had taken him in, and that Michael, who the state separated from his mother, a drug addict, was essentially mute and expressionless until the Touhy's intervention.[75] Ja'quan appeared to be perturbed by the take-away message that Michael Oher, the struggling Black boy, was incredibly lucky to have been embraced by Ms. Touhy and her family.

The majority of the boys I interviewed became more enthusiastic about the school as time went on, and had come to appreciate the opportunities at Urban Charter that they felt were unique and unavailable at other schools in the city.[76] They frequently spoke of the "buzz," or positive attention, that the school was receiving in the community, from women driving by during fire drills to adults on the bus who complimented them on how dignified they looked; and in the press, such as a local paper that had recognized the school as having the best after-school program in the city. While many students did not choose Urban Charter because they felt that it would protect them from boys on a negative trajectory, a hidden curriculum designed by staff members and parents, over time they began to draw the same symbolic boundaries between themselves and the perceived degradation of public schools. Put another way, while the boys who remained at the school appeared to buy into the formal curriculum and the promise that its cornerstone, a "dead language," would help pave the way to college, they also came to terms with the school's hidden curriculum.

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[75] Wesley Morris's review of "The Blind Side" appeared in the November 20, 2009 print edition of *The Boston Globe*.

[76] Thirty of 34 students told me that they would not leave Urban Charter for another school if they had the chance. (I interviewed 39 students but omitted five 9th graders in the above count because I interviewed them early on in the school year before they had had a chance to adjust to the school. Not surprisingly, these students were frustrated with the academic demands, the school's strict disciplinary system, the long hours, and the absence of girls. But if they were like most of their classmates, they, too, would eventually embrace more of the school as time went on.)

Jack, an 11th grader, was one of the first boys admitted to Urban Charter. He remembered attending a high school fair downtown with a few of his middle school friends and listening to the pitch given by Urban Charter officials. He reluctantly enrolled at the school, but by the end of his third year at the school (he was the final student I interviewed), he was "glad" he had stuck it out:

> When I was young, I was like, 'all boys?,' but now I see the good in coming here, I see the whole point. I get it. I can tell you, this school saved my life. If I had gone to East [Morgan High], I'd either be locked up, or probably dead by now. Because the people I was hangin' out with, they locked up. I know there ain't too much learnin' in [East]. You can pretty much do what you want. It's like a mini placement camp. Here, you're on restriction, but you're free. You don't have to worry too much about nothin'. You don't have to worry about fightin' everyday, you don't have to worry about people jumpin' you or stuff like that. So this school saved a lot of people. It put people on the right path.

While the staff was worried that many students in Jack's class, the school's first-ever cohort, were unprepared for college, nearly every member of the Class of 2011—96% of the graduating seniors—was accepted to a two- or four-year college.[77] The majority of the 11th graders I interviewed, including Jack, described how the school had consumed their lives: there was more time devoted to instruction than at public schools, they stayed after school several days a week for mandatory extracurricular activities, and many came in on Saturday mornings to complete make-up work. School staff members stood outside and watched over them before and after school to make sure that were safe while travelling between the bus stops and the school. By occupying so much of the boys' teenage time and space, the school drew on a set of practices, outcomes, and representations that together constitute what I call a *progressive Black manhood.* This form of manhood is distinct from a *regressive Black manhood*, which, as I described in the last chapter, criminalizes boys. Perry, of course, in significant ways was oriented in positive ways, but structural factors and administrator-teacher conflicts mostly swamped those efforts. Finally, age categories matter here, as they interact with other dimensions of difference (such as race, class, gender, and sexuality) with consequences for how power, social status, and resources are distributed among the boys (Gardiner 2002).

The path to college, however, did not come without sacrifices and struggles. For many boys, Urban Charter may have felt in some ways cut off from the community and the public school system, but the boys themselves still returned to their homes and communities each night. In chapter 3, I described how the boys openly expressed their discomfort over how the administration had recognized a snitch. The anti-snitching code was central to their way of life as young men in the community, and they had trouble squaring that with their school's compliance with the law. To bring in the Perry boys in for a moment, while they had used their situated knowledge to make sense of the racially discriminatory character of the criminal justice system, the Urban Charter students were being asked to join the staff in *celebrating* that the

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[77] This far exceeded the school district average. In the class of 2011, only 10% of Black male students in Morgan applied and were accepted to college.

criminal justice system had, in this instance, helped to protect Urban Charter students from a real threat posed by a regular public high school student.

In the view of Jack and some of his classmates, however, Urban Charter officials could only do so much to protect the students. He and I spoke for a few minutes about the administration's persistent reminders that the students should avoid and not physically engage with boys from other public schools.

> See, this school, they don't know what goes on outside of here *(points out the window).* They may put that mentality on you that there's some stuff you don't gotta do, but there's some stuff you *gotta* do. Like you can come here, like I'm a whole different person when I'm in this building. I let my guard down, I ain't worried about nothin' in here. But once I leave I'm back on point.

The administrators did not want the boys to fight—"there's some stuff you don't gotta do"—but in Jack's eyes school officials themselves were fighting a losing battle with their students. Even as parents believed that their sons needed to be protected from disreputable or "bad" boys, Urban Charter boys could not freely choose the styles of masculinity dominant on the streets. As Jack implied, the "code of the street" demanded that the boys defend their bodies as a way of maintaining respect (Anderson 1999). He could let his "guard down" in Urban Charter because the school's own set of rules mostly superseded the cultural scripts that governed their lives outside of school.

During my year of fieldwork at Urban Charter I did not observe a single physical altercation between students, due to the school's strict disciplinary culture and a rigorous academic program which pressed students to devote themselves to their studies. The school used a demerit system to enforce its official "Rules of Conduct." Students earned a certain number of demerits determined by the severity of the infraction, which ranged from coming to school without their student ID (a minor offense) to using alcohol or drugs in school (a major offense).[78] Fighting was considered a major offense and was met with an automatic suspension. The vast majority of the offenses I observed were minor ones, like being late to class, chewing gum, or using vulgar language.

Mr. Holmes, the Dean of Climate who was in charge of school discipline, had established, as English teacher Mr. Stratton put it, a "militaristic tone." Ms. Spring, the Latin Department chair and the school's longest-tenured teacher, told me that from day one Mr. Holmes and "the disciplinary staff had operated on fear." The 9th graders often grumbled that Mr. Holmes stayed on top of them, but they seemed to adapt as time moved on. Indeed, just as the consensus was that school discipline was strict, most agreed that the relative absence of disturbances in the building could be credited to a system that operated on a notion of justice, which stresses a consistent application of abstract rules (Held 2006). As I often heard, "the rules are the rules," meaning that the system would rarely, if ever, toss aside those abstract rules and bend to consider personal, individual circumstances (Bass 2012), although as a charter, the school had this privilege. Fearing that they could be suspended or even forced out of the school,

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[78] The most severe, "Level 3" offenses (e.g. sexual assault and indecent exposure, possessing a weapon) were grounds for automatic expulsion and notification of the Morgan Police Department.

boys were quite cognizant of the rules and what was expected of them. This limited disorderly conduct.

In the last chapter, I described Perry administrators who were worried that teachers were *too* punitive and too quick to "write students up," filling out the blue slips after a student infraction and demanding that the administration punish the student appropriately. The administrators, aware of the school's historical patterns of student punishment, expressed hope that more teachers would be willing to "work with the boys." At Perry High, unfair Zero Tolerance policies combined with the making of students into bad boys—e.g. with the constant presence of school police officers and over-reliance on blue slips—to create a punitive regime that represented a gross miscarriage of justice. As a somewhat punitive institution, Perry reinforced the larger youth control complex that operated in the boys' lives. The disciplinary system at Urban Charter was more effective in limiting student misbehavior because, in contrast with Perry High, there was no conflict between staff and administrators over student discipline. The Urban Charter staff, even if some disagreed with the system, still largely abided by the demerit system that Mr. Holmes oversaw.

The school was unable to protect all the boys in Jack's entering class. Only a little over half of the 140 boys who walked through the school doors in the fall of 2007 as Urban Charter's inaugural class made it to graduation four years later. A substantial number of these boys no doubt left or were asked to leave for disciplinary infractions, again highlighting the school's strict Rules of Conduct. The low retention rates also suggest that many boys in Urban Charter— who had attended public middle schools—had a difficult time assimilating to their new school. They were unable to "code switch" (Anderson 1999; Jones 2010) between a more street orientation and the respectable boyhood that "urban gents" were supposed to embody. Perhaps these students who were not able to be, as Jack had described himself, a "whole different person" in school.

Outside of Urban Charter and its Safe Zone, boys felt pressured to defend themselves, their families, and their blocks (street level gangs). The school asked and encouraged students to stick up for one another, to unite against the perceived threats outside of the Safe Zone, and to recognize the unique opportunities they had as members of a school that had made great academic strides in a very short period of time. Indeed, fighting and disputes among the boys were perhaps minimized because the administration pushed on the students the idea that messing with their own classmates overlooked the bigger task at hand: to deal with those boys beyond the Safe Zone. As Mr. Holmes said to the boys at a Student Convention, "stop messing with each other. Let's put our energy into stopping the morons who aren't our BL brothers. We need to stop the ruckus within the school and take care of the ruckus outside of school."

As I discussed earlier, over time a majority of the boys embraced Urban Charter. The school provided numerous opportunities for students and staff member to recognize one another. At Student Conventions, which Dr. Green occasionally co-hosted with a homeroom, students gave each other shout-outs as well as shout-outs to the teachers. Some weeks, students were given the chance to recognize their teachers, who were also given gold ties for a week, just like the "Mighty General" student awardees. Taken together, the boys expressed pride in their school. (This differed from how Perry High students were sometimes ashamed of their school, an issue I take up in the next chapter.) Students described how they had surprised themselves by their willingness to help their Urban Charter brothers in need. Terrell described how a friend had

lost his bus pass and house keys and had no way to get home. Another classmate walking by offered the boy his own bus pass, which left a strong impression on Terrell:

> So I was like, 'You know what, you a straight up general. Like you willing to give up your bus pass that you don't need to let him borrow it because he lost his." And he goes, like, 'I know I'm a general because I represent a school that's all about brotherhood." And like to me, a general is just somebody in the school. It's like somebody who can help you out, who's there. Who's, like, if you fall, he's right there to help you get back on your feet. Like he's not gonna just let you fail class and all this.

By looking after one another, the boys at Urban Charter had begun to do their part in strengthening the institution itself, and protecting an educational commodity that increased in value as the school district encouraged the growth of charters and the expansion of schooling options for parents and their children. Mr. Pierce, Dr. Green, and their staff had oriented their boys to college and away from prisons (recall how 11th grader Jack, who witnessed his own close friends floundering at a nearby high school, knew that it could easily have been him "locked up, or probably dead by now"). In this case, the all-boys model maximized the number of Black boys, the city's most vulnerable population of children, who were taken off the school-to-prison pipeline.

CHAPTER 6:

BLACK BOYS AND MASCULINE DIGNITY

Discourses and Institutional Reputations

Up until this point, this comparative study of two all-male public high schools has focused on how stakeholders, school officials, and parents view their Black boys, their ways of understanding the crises the boys confront, and the institutional interventions designed to address those crises. This chapter focuses on the boys. At Perry High, the boys' subjectivities—their unconscious and conscious thoughts, emotions, and how they understood themselves in relation to the world (Weedon 1997)—were created through two historically-specific discourses, or socially organized frameworks of meaning and knowledge (Renold 2005). One discourse centered on the all-male school's reputation as the "gay school," which prompted particular sexual fears. A second discourse centered on the school's reputation as the poor "hood school," which provoked class-based insecurities. These discourses circulated among the boys through constant *boasting* (or bragging) and *busting* (a slang term meaning the use of derisive remarks ranging from playful teasing to harmful insulting).

Empirical research that has highlighted the importance of dignity to those disadvantaged by social class (Lamont 2000; Sennett and Cobb [1972] 1993) helped me understand that boasting and busting were primary vehicles for the achievement of masculine dignity among the boys I studied. At its core, masculine dignity means, to slightly amend a phrase by Allison Pugh (2009), recognition from one's peers that one is a full-fledged man. Struggling for and protecting dignity at Perry High was an exclusionary practice: the boys strived to be "one of the boys" who was heterosexual and thereby resisted the contamination of gays; and who had a clean, neat, and fashionable appearance and thereby resisted the contamination of poverty. Students worked hard to avoid being one of *those* boys who was less than a man and lacked dignity.

This chapter focuses primarily on my fieldwork in and interviews with boys at Perry, although, as a counterpoint, it also includes some data I gathered at Urban Charter. As a result of the much stricter disciplinary culture at Urban Charter, I simply observed far fewer instances of horseplay and fooling around among the boys there. In addition, the different institutional character and history of Urban Charter largely protected its students from some threats to their masculine dignity. Students who at first felt uncomfortable about attending "the gay school" (a label used to describe Perry as well as Urban Charter) nonetheless gained a sense of pride through the school's academic advantages, an issue I took up in the previous chapter.

These observations open up possibilities for considering how emotions impact experiences of self and the boys' relationships with others (Sennett and Cobb [1972] 1993). An analysis of Black boys' emotions is particularly needed to combat historical, pernicious depictions of Black men as being controlled by their bodies, and as having uncontrollable

impulses.[79] Detailing the daily vulnerabilities, struggles, and anxieties of Black boys also engages with issues of representation. In the media Black men are typically either represented as "supermen" (for example, as professional athletes or musicians) (Ross 1998) or as anonymous, faceless, and on the margins of society (Anderson 2008; Calmore 2006). Both representations fail to capture the daily lives and struggles of Black men and boys.

Perry High as "the Gay School"

        The salience and meanings of masculinity are historically situated and vary by context (Connell 2005). I observed Perry at a unique moment in its history when *de jure* sex separation—federal guidelines changed to permit public schools to adopt a single-sex model—intersected with persistent *de facto* racial and class segregation in the school's community. The transition from a coed to an all-male environment at this moment in Perry's history helped produce a distinctive racialized and sexualized discourse through which the boys understood themselves and their relations to others.

        As I described in chapter 2, many of the current staff members remembered being told that the transition to an all-boys environment for the 2005-2006 school year was needed in order to focus on Black boys' unique academic and social troubles. But rumors suggested something else. Some speculated that officials were concerned with boys and girls engaging in sexual activities in school, or sneaking out during the school day to have sex. As Mr. Moretti, a guidance counselor, commented, "While the hormones are flying, at least they can't have the instant gratification of screwing someone." Many of the boys I spoke with also believed that the separation was intended to relieve sexual tensions in the school, and to allow the boys to focus more on their schoolwork. Thus, conversations about the transition to an all-boys school were sexually charged from the beginning.

        For the boys, the shift to an all-male school environment provoked certain sexual anxieties. These fears were attached to the school's long-held reputation as being "like jail." There was the building itself, made of massive stone, with bars and steel fencing secured to the windows with padlocks, and metal detectors greeting visitors at the side entrance. Although the policy was not always enforced, boys were also required to wear uniforms of white button-down shirts and black pants. They perceived Perry as "like jail" because of their familiarity with prisons as "facilities"—terms the boys themselves used, primarily occupied by Black men (Miller, 2006). Some boys who returned to Perry after being "locked up" in juvenile prison even remarked on the two institutions' similar physical characteristics and all-male composition. As Lamont, a 12th grader, described Perry:

> It looks like an institution. I've been locked up, I know what it looks like when you get locked up. This looks like I'm locked up: there's gates on the windows, all boys in the classes. You feel like you're locked up and there's nothing to keep our mind off… violence. That's why there were so many fights this last year. Like you've got all these boys in one area, there's no girls. The most they can do is feud with another boy.

During the first year, turf wars between the former Thompson students and the boys who were not new to Perry further added to the perception of the school as a prison, an indoor meeting

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[79] This has fed into perceptions of Black men as possessing uncontrollable criminality (Ross 1998).

place for aggressive, territorial Black men who formed alliances and made self-protection a priority (Miller 2006). In addition, the boys were wary of the city's higher security disciplinary schools for young men (referred to as "placement schools"), the likely destination for boys who committed major infractions in school. The boys were also accustomed to hearing prison rhetoric in school; the staff, for example, frequently warned the boys not to become a "statistic" like Black men in jail, and the staff encouraged the students to choose "education over incarceration" at an all-day assembly devoted for that purpose.

Several seniors, members of the first all-male cohort, recalled their fear over possibly being identified as a gay student at "the gay school." Indeed, for many of the boys, an abject fag identity seemed to be embodied in the school itself. Their insecurities were compounded by an enduring belief that prisons were where men engaged in gay sexual activity. Sexual anxiety, then, was both one perceived *cause* of separating boys and girls in school—boys and girls are sexual distractions for one another—and a perceived *consequence*—they found themselves in an all-male institution that could, as Vince, an 11th grader told me, "turn boys into faggots." The boys were aware of a sexual hierarchy inside prisons where certain prisoners prey on, rape, and prostitute weaker men, while some others engage in consensual sexual relations (Miller 2006). Asad, a 12th grader, remarked:

> Some boys do that faggot shit in the bathrooms. They try to hide it, but sometimes you walk in and it's nasty. You won't even believe me if I told you their names. You go to school all day with boys, all you see is boys, and some can't control it, and they have their way with other boys.

In the switch to an all-male environment, the school's long-standing reputation as "like jail" took on particularly sexualized meanings. It is likely not coincidental, then, that the boys often described gay sex acts in their jokes. As 12th grader Jared told me, "I think it's gay having all these boys here. We in 'the gay school.' We need some girls, not sword fights" (referring to sex between men). It is interesting that while adults at Perry and at Urban Charter drew on cultural images of Black men as predators, these invocations rarely took on sexual meanings. "Banished boys" were under the watchful gaze of institutions of social control, perceived to be squarely situated on the school-to-prison pipeline. The boys, on the other hand, seemed to understand that punishment was deeply inflected with sexual meanings and anxieties, since the boys feared that their school, which was "like jail," could "turn boys into faggots," a fear that derived from their own understandings of how carceral institutions functioned more broadly in the lives of Black boys and men. While the adults in their lives understood that punishment signals social banishment and exclusion from mainstream institutions, the fears the boys shared clearly highlight how punishment *emasculates.*

Urban Charter as "the Gay School"

Wearing blue blazers, khaki pants, and red-and-blue striped ties, the boys at Urban Charter stuck out like sore thumbs in east Morgan. They knew this, and many of the students I interviewed were highly sensitive to how others in the community, particularly young people who attended other local high schools, perceived them. According to the students, a popular perception in the community was that a boy who *chose* to matriculate at an all-boys school must

be sexually attracted to boys.[80] For this and other reasons, the students felt that Urban Charter also had a reputation as "the gay school." An important perceived social class distinction made the Urban Charter boys, and particularly its newest students, anxious about being a student in the school. As Terrell, a 9th grader, told me:

> Like a couple of weeks ago I was in Lansdale [a nearby town] and some boy, he was like, 'What school you go to?' I was like, 'Urban Charter.' He was like, 'Oh, the new gay school?' I'm like, 'What?' I was like, 'Yo, you can look at my phone in there, I've got all these girls' numbers in there.'

Terrell was offended enough that he felt the need to show the other boy that his phone was full of "girls' numbers," using this available resource in order to show that he could "do sexuality" appropriately (West and Fenstermaker 1995). Meanwhile, Marlon, though already a 10th grader, still felt a little "embarrassed" whenever Urban Charter came up in conversation with friends who did not attend the school. He expected to be teased for "not getting on girls" and for being "with boys all day." Terrell's friend Burton, also a 9th grader, said that "if I see a group of people, I go the other direction because I know they're going to try to say something because I go to an all-boys school and they think I'm not going to do nothing."

Burton felt emasculated by being at an all-boys school; part of the emasculation was believing that other boys thought he would "do nothing" or would not defend himself if attacked. While the administration encouraged them to ignore boys from other schools, the boys felt compelled to retaliate. As I described in the last chapter, this created a tension between the respectable manhood that the school encouraged and masculine ways of being that dominated the boys' communities. At Urban Charter, the antagonism between its students and boys from other schools highlighted perceived *class* distinctions between the boys. Urban Charter students believed that their perceived elevated class status had instilled jealous in other boys, who teased and sometimes "jumped" them. Thus, the peculiar boys in their coats and ties felt they were emasculated twice over: once, for attending an all-male school, and a second time for identifying as academically-inclined, like the "swots" in R.W. Connell's (1989) study of high school boys in Australia or the "ear-oles" in Paul Willis's (1977) study of a vocational school in England. While these fears receded over time, for boys entering the school, the advantages they gained for an aspired middle-class status were outweighed by their severely dented manhood, one which privileged toughness, being aggressive if necessary, and not backing down from a fight (Anderson 1999). Urban Charter, which was intended, in part, to reorient boys away from the school-to-prison pipeline, did not look like a jail and, more important, represented a turn away from jail. For those reasons, Urban Charter boys' fears of emasculation differed substantially from the feelings of emasculation experienced by Perry boys.

The level of explicit homophobia was lower at Urban Charter, in large part due to a disciplinary system that was stronger than that at Perry, as described in the last chapter. The boys at Urban Charter reserved explicitly sexual jokes for times when they were not under direct adult supervision, like in the hallways between classes and especially during lunch, the one time

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[80] This is likely one reason why so many boys were quick to point out that their parents forced them to go to Urban Charter. While, by federal law, parents of students at Perry had the option of transferring their sons out of the all-boys school into another neighborhood school, few did. Parents did not want their boys, for example, to travel a farther distance to a new school, and to potentially have to deal with a new group of boys.

when the boys' collective behavior resembled the students' everyday behavior at Perry. Urban Charter boys seemed aware that using the fag epithet (Pascoe 2007) could get them in trouble if adults heard them use it, and, indeed, the only two instances where I observed a student being severely reprimanded was at Urban Charter. In one instance, Mr. Holmes, the Dean of Climate, overheard 10th grader Raymond call another boy a "faggot" and immediately arranged for Raymond's parents to come in for a conference.

Perry High as "the Hood School"

"I could imagine a student walking up to the school," Mr. Gardner, a social worker at Perry, remarked. "You just kind of look around and you see abandoned homes. And it just made me think, what would the psyche be of a student coming into this building?" The boys I interviewed spoke openly about how the neighborhood they lived and went to school in was poor. Their comments were generally split between descriptions of the "street level" symptoms of economic deprivation (drugs, violence, abandoned homes, and occasionally, gangs), which made the community "rough," and referring to their neighborhood as dirty. When I asked Brandon, a 12th grader, and one of the school's student leaders, about what it would feel like to graduate and move on to college, he answered, "I'm leaving behind a rough part of the city. I don't know if it's trying to progress to be a more positive community or if it's still going to be rough and you know, the same old, same old." Tre, another 12th grader, said, "Everything is a challenge. Coming into school, getting here safe is a challenge. It ain't safe for nobody. It's real crazy out here."

While the boys expressed pride in being from south Morgan, and anchored their own reputations in toughing out the day-to-day obstacles that were a reality in their community (Anderson 1999) they were cognizant of the forms that economic deprivation took in their lives. "My community ghetto as ever," Malik, a 10th grader, told me. "People peeing outside, it's just nasty. I just want to live in a clean, peaceful neighborhood." This was a common refrain among the boys, who told me that "people just don't care" about the community. Of course, they were clean and their "blocks"—the streets they lived on—were clean. "Yeah, it real nasty… except around *my* way," said 10th grader Chris, meaning everywhere except on his street. *Other* people were "ghetto," "nasty," and "dirty." By drawing symbolic boundaries between their "blocks" and the surrounding community, the boys stressed that caring and cleanliness were morally superior (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

In the boys' eyes, the school was an extension of the poverty in the community. Leon, a 12th grader, echoed his classmates: "most classes don't have no books. This is 'the hood school.'" "Books" (or textbooks) became a catch-all term for all resources; the boys generally felt that basic necessities were lacking in the school. Much in the same way (as I discuss later) that boys can be condemned for not caring about their bodies, the boys believed that Perry was a "hood school"; it was not cared for. In making this claim, some boys would draw a distinction between Perry and schools in the wealthier suburbs. Although none of the boys had been to suburban schools, they assumed that that these schools, which they coded as white, had ample material advantages. As in other studies of low-income young people, I found that students at Perry conflated race and class meanings.[81] Leon told me, "if you go to a white person's school,

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[81] In Bettie's (2003) study of Mexican-American and white girls, "brown" commonly signified poor and "white" signified middle-class.

everything's clean. *When your school got the things you supposed to have, you don't have to worry about it being dirty.*" Suburban schools had books and resources, which schools, Leon said, are "supposed to have," a sign of a "cared for" school (Skeggs 2002).

Finally, the boys also believed that the single-sex environment contributed to a sense of being pathologized. Much in the same way that the fag identity seemed to be embodied in the school itself, because it was occupied only by male bodies, the boys believed that Perry was "dirty" because boys are dirty. "You walk down the hall smelling underarms," Jared, a 12th grader, told me. "When girls [were] here at least they care, take a stick of deodorant or some shit, right? Niggas come down here smelling like cheese sticks." Several boys were very clear about what they believed the problem was: hygiene. Perry had been contaminated *twice* over, by both the lack of girls and by the community. These discourses—meaning systems about the particular sexualized and class-inscribed nature of their school—would become the material for the boys' subjectivity formation (Bettie 2003)

Sexual Domination at Perry High

Confirming Heterosexuality

Being a young man at Perry meant having to demonstrate symbolic mastery over girls (Pascoe 2007). Without girls present in the building, the Perry boys relied on storytelling as a way of conveying to others that they "got" girls or "females." The boys typically shared and laughed about sexual exploits and about meeting up with girls after school and on the weekends. At other times, the boys described fantasies about "snow bunnies," or white girls, and older women. One day in Spanish class, Frank, a 12th grader and the student body president, pointed to a group of boys who were "acting a fool" by referring to girls as bitches. Frank told the boys, "you know, college girls won't put up with being called bitches. They're smarter than that." Kenny quipped, "You mean, smuttier?", meaning more indecent.

One morning, a group of 12th graders saw two young women walking by the school. They rushed to the window, and one yelled, "let me holla at you!", expressing their interest in the young women. The two boys then ran out into the hallway to make it appear like they were chasing after the girls, and the other boys in class chuckled. Predictably, female guests in the building received a lot of attention. One afternoon, a group of boys stood outside the door to the main office and remarked how attractive a Latina woman was. They jockeyed for her attention near the door, saying "I'm 'a bag her first!", or take control of and have sex with her. Masculinity was not merely the sexual objectification of women, but doing so in competition with other men (Bird 1996; Connell 2005). Among the boys, "friendly" competition was important for creating solidarity or shared pride, or a sense of being recognized and accepted by others (Scheff 1994). As I described in the last chapter, at a Student Convention the Urban Charter administration explicitly broached the subject of the boys oggling female guests in the building. This never happened at Perry, and so the administration remained complicit in the "confirmation rituals" of masculine domination (Pascoe 2007).

Interestingly, sometimes boys were able to use the absence of girls to their advantage. Without girls present to show that you have "game," the boys could not suffer from potentially being publicly rebuked by girls in school. While some boys clearly fabricated or exaggerated stories, conversations were littered with phrases boys used to show they were *interested* in girls and sex. Some boys relied on cell phones to stay in touch with girls during the day (cell phones

were prohibited inside the school, but the boys were adept at sneaking them inside.). One day, Asad grabbed my cell phone out of my hand and said, "lemme grab a couple hos with this. Is that cool?" He then pretended to dial some numbers and teased me for only having "dudes'" numbers in my cell phone. Sometimes boys would flirt with girls via text messages, and when a noteworthy message was sent back, a boy would proudly pass the phone around for his friends to read.

While boys freely shared stories about "getting," "bagging" and "fucking" girls, these claims were used just as frequently as responses to being teased, or as the boys called it, "getting busted on." One day in math class, a group of boys began busting on Doug's skinny neck, calling him a praying mantis. Sitting in the corner, Doug responded, "I get more bitches than ya'll!" The other boys laughed at Doug's expense. Since bodies are an important form of symbolic capital for class-disadvantaged young men (Reich 2010), Doug's unusually skinny neck made him *ugly*, a deformity that the boys pathologized alongside uncleanliness. Doug was not that angry, however. Among friends, the boys knew to take a joke without letting it "irk," or annoy, them (Majors and Billson 1992).

The sum of these sexualized practices constitutes what Pascoe (2007) calls "compulsive heterosexuality." Heterosexuality was about more than just desire: it was about "eroticized dominance," done for its own sake. The compulsive character of this way of "doing" of heterosexual masculinity (West and Zimmerman 1987) meant that the sustained work it took to talk about girls was never taken-for-granted. Compulsive heterosexuality had become the "means of maintaining order, the order of patriarchy, via the subordination of women and the exaltation of one's maleness" (Connell 1989: 294).

Repudiating Fags

In the lunchroom one day, two 8th graders, Zaire and Lamont, were arguing about who would get to play a video game first. (Some days, a large TV was brought in during lunch and the boys were allowed to play video games.) Zaire offered to flip a coin. When the coin was in the air, Zaire said quickly, "Heads, I'm straight; tails, you're gay." Lamont immediately replied, "what?" and grabbed at the coin. They both laughed. Zaire's statement was a variation on "Heads I win, tails you lose"; a "trick" so that either way, Zaire *wins*. This incident provides a useful way of thinking about how masculinity forms two sides of the same coin of sexual dominance. One side of the coin requires the boys to show that they can control girls (through jokes and teasing about using girls' bodies), and on the other, that they can control fags (by repudiating them and constantly calling other boys fags). In this way, misogyny and homophobia are inseparable (Epstein 1997). The coin metaphor is helpful because it demonstrates not only that there are always two opposite sides to a single coin, but that the fag side serves as the coin's "constitutive outside": the repeated acts of denouncing an abject identity may be a fundamental process in the making of normative gender identities (Butler 1993).

As an effective tool for emasculating others, the "fag" epithet was thrown around constantly, having become a part of the everyday grammar of school life. Since most staff members, from teachers to hall monitors, rarely disciplined this sort of behavior, it largely went unabated. While Pascoe (2007) found the high school boys in her study delineated between "gay"—meaning "stupid," which anything could be called—and "fag," which referred to effeminacy and lacking masculinity—the boys at Perry largely did not. Instead, they frequently

referred to each other as gay, with the line, "you gay as shit!" being the most popular.[82] Imitating a fag was also an effective way to show that one was heterosexual. During a sexual education class one day, Reese screamed out "female secretions" in a high-pitched lisp, which the other boys interpreted as effeminate. Xavier, a classmate, laughed and called him a "faggot," and Reese joined in the laughter. *Of course* Reese wasn't gay; having dropped his imitation of a fag (Pascoe 2007), Reese confirmed that he was straight.

Many of the boys expressed various degrees of homophobia. For example, Ty, a 12th grader, expressed discomfort at the idea of being near gays, but he claimed not to be homophobic: "I'm not gay so you stay where you're at and not where I'm at. So I don't know you, you don't know me, but don't come near me." Other boys professed a strong hatred of gays. Two 12th graders, Leon and Jared, mentioned to me several times that "all faggots should die slow." They and other boys expressed disgust over several of the boys in the building who were overtly effeminate and were "out" as gay. Boys repudiated effeminate behavior and not necessarily homosexual orientation (Pascoe 2007).

Openly gay students were called "cunts" by the other boys, marking them as both effeminate and sexualized. Ms. Channing, a former teacher at Perry, recalled a former student named Laron:

> The kids were petrified of him. Very effeminate, and they were just convinced that if they breathed the same air that Laron was breathing, they were going to be gay. And I literally had to just explain to them that it's not airborne. They're not going to pick it up.

While Ms. Channing tried to quell fears that a gay identity was "not airborne," other staff members told me that they would be willing to help gay students in any way they could, and that they supported the school's new Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) group. There was a consensus, however, that any formal pronouncements supporting gay students would lead to a backlash from students that the staff would not be capable of handling. Even some of the GSA boys, who wished that the principal would address the issue of anti-gay behavior and harassment at Perry, felt that the staff would be ill-equipped to deal with the reaction from the boys.

Mr. Gardner, the staff leader of the GSA, explained that the problem was not merely homophobia, but "heterosexism," and thus linked sexism and homophobia in the same masculinity-formation process. He added that that some staff members expressed anti-gay sentiments in school. I also observed some teachers participating in the fag discourse. One day, in Mr. Youseff's 8th grade science class, Reggie complained about how several boys in class had been picking on him. Mr. Youseff asked Reggie to look around and see that he was in an all-boys classroom, and said, "when you're with men, you pick up manly habits. When you're with women you pick up womanly habits." He then told Reggie to "man up" instead of "just rollin' your eyes. None of this bitch-slappin.'" He then mocked Reggie by rolling his eyes in an exaggerated way, and the other boys erupted in laughter. In Mr. Youseff's eyes, Reggie had failed at masculinity by choosing to complain and being passively aggressive (rolling his eyes) rather than "manning up" to the other boys. This was one example of how some school "authorities encouraged, engaged in, and reproduced the centrality of repudiation processes to

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[82] One reason why the boys may have more or less conflated "gay" and "fag" is because they used another term ("corny") for stupid.

adolescent masculinity" (Pascoe 2007: 157). And Mr. Youseff had shamed Reggie (normally a talkative kid), who stared blankly at the wall in silence.

Boasting and busting about girls and fags varied by age. The older boys appeared to engage in more sex talk than fag talk. (I am thinking of 11th and 12th grade boys in the school, compared to the seventh and 8th graders). I suggest that the older boys had a wider repertoire of stories to tell about girls, so they were able to rely less on the fag discourse. While the older boys mixed larger-than-life stories, some were believable enough that boys could carry on the conversation. For example, Lamont, a 12th grader, frequently spoke with other girls about his "campaigning," or how he would approach a group of girls and try to impress as many of them as possible. These boys frequently talked about getting girls' "digits," or cell phone numbers, a resource most of the younger boys lacked. Older boys had two additional resources not available to the younger boys; they could talk about their status as varsity athletes and they could talk about *actual* relationships with girls. Researchers (Lesko 2001; Messner 1992) have documented how teenage boys garner respect for participation in sports, and the sexism common among male sports teams. Garrett, a 12th grader, frequently used his status as a football player to his advantage, telling his friends how girls would "suck him off" each time he scored a touchdown in a game.

Younger boys, meanwhile, relied more on larger-than-life stories and busts. Nearly all of the "mom jokes" (sometimes lewd jokes about what boys did with other boys' mothers) I heard were said by younger boys. I also noticed that the young were more sensitive to being called a fag and overcompensated by freely tossing fag epithets around themselves; they also concocted lewd and outrageous stories about their sexual relations with girls. Another difference in the deployment of the fag discourse was that the younger boys rarely engaged in the fag act, or pretending to be a fag for a few seconds. This may have been because the younger boys were so insecure about their masculinity and so obsessed about avoiding looking like a fag that they were unwilling to imitate one, even for a brief moment.

The older boys seemed more willing to take part in a fag act, even though they were less likely to toss around the fag epithet (Pascoe 2007). One day, several eleventh and 12th graders were making fun of the design of Keith's MySpace page, which they said looked "like some girly shit." Xavier, a senior, raised his arm with a limp wrist and said, "My name's Keith and I like to get on MySpace" in a lisp. Fag imitation sometimes took the form of "dry humping" another boy while moaning. Occasionally some older boys would kiss younger boys on the cheek and talk in a lisp to sound effeminate. The younger boys found this both uncomfortable and disturbing. One victim of this attack, an 8th grader named Thomas, expressed how furious he felt when a 10th grader kissed him on the cheek, saying emphatically that "it didn't feel right. I didn't like it *at all*." He then explained that he felt powerless to do anything to stop it because he was just an 8th grader. These examples of fag imitation show how older boys can use younger *male* bodies as resources for sexual domination.

Class Dis-identification at Perry High

Clean Bodies, Crisp Clothes

One afternoon, Dante and Malik were waiting impatiently in the auditorium for an assembly to start. They started to goof off, and soon were bragging about who was wearing more Polo Ralph Lauren attire, which was popular among the boys in school. While the school

had a uniform policy, the staff rarely enforced it. Dante pointed proudly at the Polo logo on his jacket, and Malik responded by sticking out his chest and pointing to the Polo logo on his collared shirt (which was "*of course*," he later told me, clean and iron-pressed). Dante then stripped down to his undershirt and pulled at the Polo tag from behind his neck, waving it at Malik. Not to be outdone, Malik turned over the elastic band on his boxers to show that they, too, were Polo. Having run out of Polo garments, Dante jabbed at his stomach and yelled, "My belly button's Polo!" and they both chuckled.

For Dante, Malik, and many of the Perry boys, sexual dominance was not enough for the achievement of masculine dignity. In the high school Pascoe studied, she found that for white boys, "masculinity became the carefully crafted appearance of not caring about appearance" (Pascoe 2007: 63). In contrast, I found that for class disadvantaged, Black boys at Perry, masculinity required you to show *that you cared enough to carefully craft your appearance.* Wearing the right clothes was often not sufficient; boys had to show that they cared so much about their self-presentation that work had gone into crafting every inch of their bodily ensembles, from hair and skin to clothes and shoes. The body and the clothes worn on it were preeminent "symbolic tokens" the boys used to struggle for and assert dignity among their peers (Pugh 2009). The boys, for example, kept brushes in their pockets and combed their hair throughout the day to keep it from getting "nappy," or coiled and untidy. Perhaps the most common accessory was a small round canister of Blistex lip balm, which they boys used liberally to avoid being seen with "ashy lips." These small but important rituals, or "techniques of the self" (Foucault 1974), are used to "regulate their bodies to make sure that they cannot be seen to be one who does not or cannot care" (Skeggs 2002: 83).

In the past few years, there has been a shift among the boys at Perry from wearing Black urban fashions (labels such as Rocawear and Fubu) to more preppy middle-class fashions, with an ensemble of Ralph Lauren polo shirt, khaki shorts, and Sperry Top-Sider boat shoes more common, as well as a hipster look of skinny leg jeans, tight-fitting t-shirts (especially with V-necks), and tight-fitting jean jackets and leather jackets. The boys fawned over "high fashion" clothing stores such as H&M, American Eagle, Hollister, and Abercrombie & Fitch. In the absence of girls in the building, the boys felt compelled to *talk* about getting girls. In a similar way, since they were required to wear school uniforms, they resorted to telling stories about shopping and purchasing clothes. The boys could still show off their high fashion, however; some would violate the uniform policy and others brought different clothes to change into once they left the building.

While many of the boys told me they adopted these styles simply because they had become popular, others stated explicitly that they were modeling themselves after "college boys." And the same way that the boys coded suburban schools as white and middle-class, the colleges the boys had in mind were white and middle-class. As Antoine explained, "I dress like I'm in college, like white boyish. Like leather jackets, straight laced [tight] shirts, stuff like that." When I asked why the college look, he said:

> Because I think I look *right* when I wear it. Like I don't look right wearing baggy stuff because baggy stuff makes a person look dirty. Like having your jeans hanging off your behind, walking on your jeans. That really will show you how you are. Like that's not me. If you go to Glenn, you see a lot of white boys dressed like me, in skinny legs, tight legs, little shirts, jackets. Tight-fitting clothes.

Glenn was a large university in Morgan, located just a short drive from Perry.[83] When I inquired further, Antoine explained that Black boys, too, could dress "white boyish." While it was coded as white, Antoine also meant that college students have higher class status. Antoine's good friend Darrelle explained that he also dressed like male students he had seen at Glenn. "You dress for the life you want, not the life you got," he said.[84] I perked up at his response, and Darrelle, who sensed that I had misinterpreted him, continued: "I want the *life*, not the education." Darrelle had no intentions of going to college. Instead, he implied that he wanted a lifestyle he perceived as upwardly mobile. College students, Darrelle said, "are going places." These students were visible young people who lived not too far from the Perry boys, and were close to them in age (Darrelle was 18 years-old and Antoine, 17), but were not in the "hood." If, as Antoine noted, "baggy clothes"—which represented Black urban fashion and, therefore, Black boys—were "dirty," then "white boyish" clothes were clean and uncontaminated, and signaled that the boys had dis-identified with being lower class. The "pathologizing representations" of the hood had generated "a longing for a different place" (Skeggs 1997: 77): a perceived safe and upwardly mobile place beyond the hood.

In adopting "white boyish" clothes, Antoine and Darrelle participated in class "passing," or performing class identities that were not their own (Bettie 2003; Skeggs 2002). A performative class act does not mean that the boys were trying to appear what they were not; rather, peformativity suggests that cultural identities are "an *effect* of social structure" (Bettie 2003: 51).[85] In other words, how the boys came to understand who they are and who they desired to be was framed by their own social class positioning. Their bodies were the material scripts on which they dis-identified with their class origins and enacted a yearning to be in a higher class (Skeggs 2004).

Repudiating the Poor

Over time I came to realize that the boys' repudiation of dirt, filth, and uncleanliness reflected a deeper fear of being seen as poor. While a neat and clean self-presentation was meant to indicate a "cared for body" (Skeggs 2002), dirt and filth were abject qualities to be avoided. In addition to being called gay or a fag, the worst thing a boy could be called was poor. I asked each boy I interviewed: "What are the worst things others can say about you?" The common response was telling: that he was "not a man" or "just a boy." When I asked the boys to be more specific, all but two of the 25 students I interviewed identified some variation of "fag" *and* "poor" as the worst insults that could be lobbed against them; the two insults shared the connotation of emasculated, or powerless and therefore *worthless.*

Boys often busted on other boys' bodies. They associated any irregularities in body or self-presentation as reflecting a boy's lower class standing. This particular boy, in other words, was so poor that he could not even take care of his own body. The boys cared a great deal about their hair, and a "crooked" hair line would get a boy teased to no end. It also reflected poorly on the boy's barber; boys took offense to this because, as in many Black urban communities, barber shops were valued cultural places and important sites for male bonding and masculinity

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[83] The student body was 57% white and 16% Black, so the campus may have appeared more white to the boys. Antoine and other boys, however, likely assumed that middle-class meant white.

[84] This is a variation on the saying "dress for the job you want, not for the job you have," though I am not sure if Darrelle purposely changed the words.

[85] Emphasis in the original text.

construction (Alexander 2003). One day, Percy, an 8th grader, decided to tease Ray about his crooked hairline. "It must've been c-c-c-cold in that [barber] shop," Percy said, while pretending to be a barber who was trying in vain to keep his hand, which clutched an imaginary razor, from shivering. A few boys around them howled at this scene of Percy-the-barber giving his imaginary customer a bad haircut.

Dirt was a common target. Any small irregularity or dirt on the uniform, however, and particularly on shoes, was ammunition for busting. A popular line was, "you dirty!" One day in early fall, Doug, a ninth-grader, walked out of class without his uniform shirt on. When a teacher told him to put his uniform shirt back on, he shook his head and said that boys were busting on him because his collar was smudged. In his eyes, he had two options: wear his undershirt or go home.

Clothes were an easy target. The boys took great care to keep their shoes—low top Chuck Taylor All Stars, Adidas track shoes, Uggs boots, and Timberland boots ("Tims")—looking clean and "fresh." The boys enjoyed busting on each other for having "raggedy wheels," or old-looking shoes. One day I overheard one student tell another that he had gotten his shoes "from off the wire," referring to a practice throughout the city of tying a pair of old shoes by their laces and tossing them onto power lines and telephone wires. This boy was so poor that he had to wear second-hand shoes.

Pointing out some irregularity or a sign of dirtiness on another boy's body was an implicit attack on the boy's attractiveness. The message was "why would a girl want you? A girl doesn't want a guy who looks poor." A simple phrase, one of the most common teasing remarks made by the boys, sums this up perfectly: "you ugly!" This denouncement exerted such force that a boy could remark about another boy's appearance and *attractiveness* without fear of being seen as a fag himself. For the boys, good self-presentation relayed the message that one had money or that one had a family that could afford to buy nice clothes for their son. Ty, a 12th grader, recalled what girls must have been thinking when they were suddenly attracted to him: "They knew that Ty was coming to school with new clothes and stuff on. Like, Ty was *doing* something with his life."

I occasionally observed some boys taking part in imitative performances that functioned much like parodies of the fag (Pascoe 2007): it allowed the boys who used these performances to mock signs of poverty while also reminding others that the threat of appearing poor was always there. But it seemed as if you had to be wearing nice clothes to earn the right to imitate the poor, just as one has to appear heterosexual in order to be able to imitate a fag. For example, 10th grader Eddie, a class clown, regularly wore nice jeans and shoes to school. He occasionally mocked the school's free lunch. The boys had a difficult time talking about the free lunch because there was a stigma attached to receiving a handout, or as the boys mockingly called it, "a freebie." Acknowledging that one accepted a "freebie" meant identifying with the lower class. Eddie, however, openly teased, "Thank God for these freebies because we in a recession!", and a few boys around him laughed.

There was one major difference between sexual busting and class busting. While sexual busting was a bust *on you*, class busting was often a bust *on you and yours*. In other words, the boys interpreted being called a fag or failing to get girls as an individual failure, while being called poor reflected poorly on both the boy and his family. One afternoon, in the middle of an 8th grade math class, Reggie and Malcolm began their verbal sparring. It escalated quickly because Reggie opened with a particularly offensive jab: "your mouth smells like dried-out

pussy." While sexualized, the bust also meant that Malcolm had bad breath, was dirty, and could not afford to wash out his mouth. The two went back and forth quickly, and the other boys stopped their work to watch:

Malcolm	You don't have no brand-name clothes.
Reggie:	At least I wash my boxers everyday.
Malcolm:	You don't have no water in your house.
Reggie:	You got a hole in your shirt."
Malcolm:	I go shopping like every week."
Reggie:	We ain't talking about Walmart, Kmart, or Payless."
Malcolm:	I shop at Collins Park." *(Collins Park is a large mall outside the city. Malcolm senses he's losing and is visibly hurt. Some boys snicker and roll their eyes because they interpret Malcolm's retort as weak and lacking in creativity.)*
Reggie:	Your mom runs out of gas before you get there." *(He says this casually like it's a statement of fact, and the boys laugh, knowing that Reggie has the upper hand.)*

The teacher finally intervened, sparing Malcolm further embarrassment. Malcolm lowered his head, gritted his teeth, and breathed deeply and slowly—and loudly. Ashamed and momentarily alienated in the classroom, he appeared to be doing his best not to erupt in anger (Scheff 1994). Reggie, meanwhile, went back to joking with his friends; he had won the admiration of his classmates and was clearly proud of himself.

Malcolm and Reggie had tried to single out how poor the other boy's family was: Malcolm accused Reggie's family of not being to afford water in their home, while Reggie teased that Malcolm's mother could not afford gas to drive out to the mall. This exchange resembles the African American tradition of "playing the dozens," which also involves ritualized back-and-forth insults. Early historical work on "snapping" (Abrahams 1973; Dollard 1973) found that younger boys regularly took part in this ritualized insulting during their transition to manhood. Thomas Kochman (1969) argues that Black boys participate in snapping as a way of gaining respect without having to resort to physical violence. Insulting moms was a deliberate act; since so many boys were raised in single-mother households, the boys went to great lengths to defend their mothers, while knowing that a jab at another boy's mom was one way of packing plenty of punch into an insult. And the busting I observed at Perry revealed that the *poorest* boy was the one who came from the worst kind of family: he was so poor that on top of being unable to care for himself, he did not have parents who took care of him.[86] *A boy was so worthless that even his own parents did not care enough about him to raise him properly.* Saying that another boy had "no home training" or was not "raised right" was a particularly vicious insult for the younger boys since they were still heavily dependent on their parents and guardians.[87]

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[86] Some of the boys I interviewed lived with or were taken care of by extended family, but the "no home training" insult was directed at a boy's mother.

[87] Pugh (2009) has shown that low-income parents purchase clothes, toys, and other items for their children so that their children can participate in the "economy of dignity" at school, but also to show that their children are taken care of at home.

The Dignity of Black Boys

Interconnected Discourses

Two primary discourses at the school had crystallized into Perry's reputation as "the gay school" and "the hood school." These discourses, or "constellations of 'knowledge,' together with institutionalized social practices" (Bettie, 2003), resulted in specific subjectivities: the boys struggled to avoid the contamination of fags and to control girls' bodies (in how they talked about female bodies in the absence of girls in the school); they also struggled to avoid the contamination of poverty. These collective practices were aimed at achieving masculine dignity, or recognition as a full-fledged man in front of one's peers. In this section, I describe how the discourses did not act independently in the boys' lives; both were necessary for the achievement of masculine dignity.

Some boys who fell short of achieving masculine dignity felt a need to over-identify—and therefore overcompensate—with markers of appropriate masculinity. For example, Larry, an 8th grader, was picked on constantly for his eye condition, which his classmates called a "crooked eye." Since the boys assigned so much value to having a normal body, they constantly teased those who appeared "irregular," for example, due to an uneven and crooked hairline, a misshapen head, a long neck, or dry skin and lips. Since Larry was unable to leverage his self-presentation—as both someone who had the right body but was also attractive enough to get girls—to bolster his claims to masculinity, he was left with the fag discourse as his only resource. He not only constantly flung fag epithets at those who teased him about his eye, but found other ways to denounce fags, like frequently bringing up and laughing about "fag" references in movies.

Eddie, the class clown from earlier in the chapter, struggled with a limp, the result of growing up with cerebral palsy. While he often talked about getting girls, the other boys laughed it off, thinking that girls would never be attracted to him. He told me that he had to compensate for his disability by honing his "verbal sparring" techniques so he could earn the respect of the other boys. But he and his mother were more concerned that Eddie not stand out in any other way; he was usually meticulously dressed, trying to avoid looking like he was, as he put it, "on crummy status." Eddie and his mother purchased the right kinds of commodities (Ralph Lauren clothes) because they were chiefly concerned with protecting Eli's sense of dignity, or his ability to take part in the social world of his peers (Pugh 2009). Being clean was a top priority for Eddie. He told me that he made sure to "clean up in the waterworks" (take a shower) and to wear cologne before heading out in public.

These *compensatory mechanisms* reveal something about all the boys who participated in masculinity practices at Perry. While boys (and their parents) might lack the resources to purchase a new pair of sneakers, or while other boys may perceive some physical handicap as making them unattractive to girls, one resource the boys could always draw upon was renouncing a fag identity. Lacking access to a "patriarchal dividend" (Connell 1987)—that is, an advantage that most men, regardless of class and ethnic background, have relative to women and girls—these boys, in essence, sought to claim a *heterosexual dividend* relative to other boys. Some boys might always appear poorer than their peers, or too unattractive to get girls, but one resource all boys could draw upon was to call each other fags. Young boys, many of whom lacked credible stories about getting girls, turned to the fag discourse as a way of appearing straight in front of their peers. Many of the 7th and 8th graders I observed were still short and

meek, baby-faced, and scared of their parents.[88] They were still just kids, but they were old enough to know that fags were objects of disgust.

Black Boys and Masculine Dignity

  At Perry High, boys' experiences of self were shaped by two dominant discourses. The first, the framing of Perry, an all-male institution, as a "gay school" modeled on a prison where men preyed on other men, stirred the boys' sexual anxieties. The second discourse, which stirred the boys' anxieties about social class, framed Perry as a "hood school" offering few opportunities to boys from the surrounding impoverished community. Both discourses were racialized. Often reminded by staff to avoid becoming a "statistic," the boys drew comparisons between their schools and prisons, both of which were institutions that housed Black male bodies. They further coded their "hood school" as Black and lower-class, and as a foil to the schools in the suburbs and nearby Glenn University, which they perceived as white and middle-class. These sexualized and classed-inscribed ways of performing masculinity were fundamentally about domination, intertwined so that being called a fag or being called dirty was enough to pose a threat to all facets of the boys' masculinity. Fags and poverty are not only contaminating, but also contagious. Threats to moral order are inscribed by social class, racialization, and sexualized gender (McClintock 1995).

  The obsessive sexualized and class-inscribed boasting and busting were necessary for the achievement of masculine dignity, or recognition in front of one's peers that one is a full-fledged man, capable of resisting the contamination of fags and of poverty. It meant striving to show that one was "worthy of belonging" (Pugh, 2009) with other men of dignity. The constant need to boast about girls, fashion, and bodily comportment; and the need to bust on fags and the "dirty" poor suggest the strong presence of both discourses in the boys' lives. Ranging from playful teasing between friends to intentionally hurtful comments, the busting revealed deep-seated anxieties that arose from the boys' marginalized social positioning, and can be interpreted as acts of resistance to or defense against feelings of shame (Hodson 2001). By affirming their heterosexuality and by dis-identifying with the lower class, the boys defined who they were in relation to what they wanted to avoid. Sexuality and class "operated in a dialogic manner: in every judgment of themselves a measurement was made against others" (Skeggs 2002: 74)

  The boys, who lacked institutional power, relied on their bodies as a source of symbolic capital (Skeggs 2002). Masculinity in this context became a terrain in which the boys could exert agency (Pascoe 2007). The boys could control girls by manipulating their bodies *as objects,* and they labored in their "cared for" bodies, down to the smallest detail from their hair to their shoes, to demonstrate that they controlled themselves. In doing so, the boys took part in self-surveilling "techniques of the self" (Foucault 1974) where they learned to discipline their bodies because their class relations had positioned them as deficient and possibly pathological (Skeggs 2004).

  These findings make several contributions to existing literature. First, they move beyond popular constructions of Black male identity as oppositional. Majors and Billson (1992) describe how Black boys adopt a "cool pose," a particular cultural identity—seen in language, dress, and disposition—in the face of social oppression and racial discrimination. The "cool pose,"

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[88] The younger boys often talked about "on punishment," or being grounded and having privileges like video game playing taken away from them.

however, frames Black male identity as rebellious, and standing outside of mainstream practices. This formulation has tended to categorize Black boys' "street styles" as a youth subculture (Crane 2000), and as an expression of resistance to dominant culture (Hebdige 1979). In this vein, Black boys are described as preferring urban clothing styles, sometimes influenced by gang styles (Crane 2000; Majors and Billson 1992).

I found, however, that the concern for dis-identifying with class was so strong that the boys modeled their clothing styles after those adopted by the perceived upwardly-mobile boys at a nearby university. While the fag is a "specter" that is an "absent presence" (Butler 1993), strongly felt but unseen, poverty is both strongly felt and highly visible in the boys' lives, and self-presentation provides a way of standing apart from their life circumstances and neighborhood conditions. All Urban Charter students dressed the same way as part of a school-promoted mobility. Lacking a uniform of blue blazers, Perry boys still found a way to use their clothes to demonstrate aspirations for a future, like their Urban Charter peers, outside of and above poverty.

Their experiences were different incarnations of the situated knowledge they had developed (Haraway 1990; Hartsock 1983) of their own positioning in larger structures of power, and, in particular relative, to their male age peers at nearby Glenn University. This was consistent with other efforts in the school to help the boys develop a vision of how structural and cultural discrimination operates in their lives. It is, perhaps, a first step toward developing a "critical practice" (Reich 2010) for overcoming, if just in small way, the objective conditions of their lives.

While persistent *de facto* racial and class segregation (Orfield and Lee 2007) had physically isolated the boys in school, they were not completely isolated in the city of Morgan. They shared busses and walked on the same streets as young college students, and just as important, shopped at some of the same stores as those college students. As Antoine said, many boys did not want to be seen with "your jeans hanging off your behind," in reference to large, baggy clothes commonly associated with Black urban fashion (Crane 2000).

These findings move beyond depictions of a socially isolated underclass (Wilson 1987) and demonstrate that the young men of Perry lived in a cultural environment that was a mix of local elements and elements from wider society (Harding 2007). They perceived that their "hood school" provided an inadequate education, and they carried the stigma of attending "the gay school" that resembled a prison, cut off from mainstream society. In this way, the boys expressed shame over their affiliation with Perry, which contrasted with the pride the Urban Charter boys felt (as I described in the last chapter) because they believed they were receiving an education unavailable at most regular public schools. Yet like low-income Black men, the Perry students sought "the good life" where they could have a sense of autonomy and material comfort (Young 2002). Given that money was scarce, the boys saved up whatever money they had; a few worked odd jobs, and hoped their mothers would help to pay for their clothes, so that they could, as Darrelle had put it, "dress for the life you want, not the life you got." These various boasts and busts were "cultural proxies for belonging" (Pugh 2009: 57), so that they could be one of the boys, and not one of *those* boys.

CHAPTER 7:

Single-Sex Public Education and the Crisis of Black Boys

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As we approach the 60th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the existence of entrenched *de facto* racial segregation in public schools means that the quality of education for U.S. schoolchildren still remains highly unequal. In recent years, spurred in part by the No Child Left Behind law, vocal and influential reformers have pushed a neo-liberal, market-based model of education that encourages school choice and the expansion of charter schools. These reformers have targeted urban school districts, experimenting with and implementing various changes in school culture and academic curricula in schools disadvantaged by racial and social class-based segregation.

Across this landscape of school reform, separating boys and girls in public school has become an increasingly popular but controversial option. Single-sex school advocates represent a range of political interests and have offered a number of rationales for the possible efficacy of all-boys and all-girls schools. My findings, based on a year of fieldwork in two all-male public high schools on the east coast, challenge popular discourses that foreground the *sex* and *gender* component of these schools. Instead I have redirected the spotlight onto the uniquely racialized and social class-based character of single-"sex" schools. While other researchers (Datnow et al. 2001; Fergus and Noguera 2010; Fergus et al. 2009; Hubbard and Datnow 2002) have taken a longitudinal approach to examining single-sex schools, to my knowledge this is the first in-depth qualitative case study of all-male public schools, developed from data gathered through intensive participant observation and in-depth interviewing. It is also distinctive in including interviews with students, as well as school administrators and staff, and in including a charter as well as a regular public school.[89]

The state of U.S. single-sex public education today is the latest twist in a long-term, historically-situated trajectory of gender- and race-separated schooling. Like other groups of single-sex education advocates that have received more attention—those that claim that boys and girls face unique limitations in coed environments, and more controversially, a segment that asserts biological and brain-based differences between boys and girls—supporters of all-boys education for poor Black boys have adopted a doctrine of "different-but-equal." Urban Charter, in particular, benefited from this doctrine, as a market-based school reform aimed at providing parents with more schooling options under the assumption that as consumers, they will select schools that fit their children's needs (Buckley and Schneider 2007; Lubienski 2003)

In this dissertation, I have compared the ways in which two public high schools in an east coast city used all-boys education as an intervention for a perceived crisis facing their Black male students. My understanding of "crisis" includes taking action to improve the conditions that sustain that crisis through philosophies and practices of intervention. I have defined a crisis as an acute form of a social problem, constituted through the activities of individuals or groups

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[89] To my knowledge, the Black and Latino Male Schools Intervention Study is the only other study that has included a charter school (one of the five schools in that sample was a charter).

who make "assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions" (Spector and Kitsuse 1987: 75). In keeping with this formulation of social problems, I have described the alleged conditions that educational advocates believed needed to change or improve, as well as the "claims," or demands, these groups made on others in seeking their assistance. I have also examined the impact of institutional practices, rules, and interactions on the development of the students' masculine selves and their projected life trajectories.

In this concluding chapter, I will situate my major findings about Perry High and Urban Charter in a way that enables a rethinking of the school-to-prison pipeline. This approach will demonstrate connections between the two institutions, even as they differed enormously in their institutional capacities, histories, and the relationships found within them. I make visible these links by engaging with and extending research on punishment and caregiving. I conclude by describing several major themes concerning and points of debate around single-sex education moving forward, and offer several recommendations for educators and policy makers in light of my dissertation findings.

Rethinking the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Punishment and Criminalization of Black Boys

Major institutional differences between Perry High and Urban Charter encompass the groups of boys they served, the divergent paths that they took in implementing an all-boys model, and the likely impact each intervention had on the manhood formation and life chances of their students. In the early 2000s, the Morgan School District was subjected to school reforms that mirrored efforts on a national scale to marketize public schools. This had a big impact on Perry, which was a regular, neighborhood public high school and one of the oldest in south Morgan. Excel, the for-profit educational management organization that the school district hired to restructure Perry's academic curriculum, made the decision in 2002 to create a split academy with a boys' side and a girls' side, and the school remained a split academy for three years. The increased marketization of public schools, with an emphasis on "consumer choice," also made possible the founding of Urban Charter, which opened as a charter school in 2007.

Despite the additional resources that the school district provided Perry after it came under Excel's control, significant failures in implementation prevented the school from creating a successful academic curriculum that would both raise test scores and increase graduation rates. Staff members who worked at the school during its years as a split academy told me that Excel failed to involve key stakeholders—particularly parents and other community members, teachers, and administrators—in designing the split academy, and failed to develop a clearly-defined rationale for why a gender-separated environment was necessary. Although Mr. Harris, the principal whom Excel hired after the organization, acknowledged the mistakes made in implementation, he made some headway with engaging stakeholders and local constituencies. But staff members shared with me how little was done to train them for working in an all-boys environment. In response to growing opposition to contemporary same-sex public schools, some of their most vocal supporters (Chadwell 2010; Sax 2009) have publicly acknowledged that these schools are doomed to fail unless the abovementioned criteria are fulfilled.

The failed trajectory of all-male schooling at Perry resonates with the most comprehensive studies to date on single-sex schools, which examined the California single-gender academies (GSAs) that opened in the late 1990s. While the racial and social-class

composition of the GSAs and of Perry differed—the six GSAs had smaller student populations, were more ethnically mixed, were not majority African American, and contained some students from middle-class families—both Perry and the GSAs fell short of improving educational outcomes due to a vaguely-defined rationale as well as the relative absence of agreed-upon strategies for addressing their boys' needs (Datnow et al. 2001; Hubbard and Datnow 2005). Finally, administrator turnover—Mr. Bradley was Perry's fourth principal since Excel stepped in, and the school's second principal after it converted to being completely all-boys—weakened reform efforts and made it difficult to provide consistent programming and a stable school culture for the students (Hargreaves and Fink 2000; Hubbard and Datnow 2002). While having a more clear rationale and little turnover in leadership likely facilitated the academic success at Urban Charter, it is difficult to determine if and to what degree the unique sex composition of the school helped the students. In fact, as I described in chapter 5 and as I will discuss further below, some people at Urban Charter doubted that being all-boys in and of itself was much of a factor in the school's success.

At Perry there was consensus that Black boys were in great need of help, but no one could tell me what reason was "on the books" for having an all-male rather than a coed arrangement. In spite of the lack of an explicit, school-wide rationale, I sought to uncover what sorts of beliefs about Black boys and all-boys education emerged at all-boys Perry High. Unlike the findings in the core studies of California's single-gender academies, I did not meet any Perry High staff members who were strongly opposed to the single-sex model. There was widespread support for an all-boys school, even if the school did not articulate and implement many specific strategies for addressing their boys' needs (Fergus and Noguera 2010). At Perry High, administrators and a strong contingent of teachers acknowledged the persistent structural impediments in the lives of African American families in the community. While there was evidence occasionally of staff members engaging in an "institutional blame game," staff members mostly refrained from accusing mothers of bad parenting. Here, I join scholars (Alonso 2009; McCready 2009; Noguera 2008) who have resisted "culturalist" claims that the underachievement of poor students of color is rooted in their families' moral failings. These claims are reminiscent of the "culture of poverty" arguments, ascendant in the 1960s and early 1970s, that the Black community was weakened by pathological families (Moynihan 1965, Rainwater and Yancey 1967).

Involvement in the underground drug economy, rather than violence or gang activity, appeared to be the most significant indicator of crisis in the eyes of Perry staff members. Large-scale corporate gangs that have been a strong presence in other large cities since the Civil Rights era (Venkatesh 2006) never took hold in Morgan; the boys primarily identified their membership in "blocks," which were small, street-level social units. And while violence was still a major concern (evident in the ways that the deaths of male friends affected the young men, many of whom wore R.I.P. t-shirts under their school uniform shirts), the issue was often broached as it related to the danger behind hustling drugs. While there was a strong belief among the boys that "tomorrow isn't guaranteed" (Anderson 1999), the boys did not generally imagine that they would be killed randomly, which is a stereotype of inner-cities perpetuated by the media (Best 1999; Brownstein 1991). Rather, I have showed that the Perry boys had instructors who frequently engaged and helped them to develop a distinctive *standpoint* (Hartsock 1983) on how the ways in which they were disadvantaged in larger structures of power. In particular, the

school helped the boys to develop a critical understanding of the ubiquitous youth control complex of institutions that collectively criminalized them (Rios 2011).

The boys were beginning to understand that their life options were limited, and that getting caught up in the criminal justice system, or what Mr. Youseff called the "human warehouse system," greatly increased their chances of suffering a "social death." Young Black men are not only rendered socially incapacitated and denied the opportunities to engage in mainstream institutions, but they are denied their basic humanity (Patterson 1982; Rodriguez 2006). In chapter 6, I argued that the boys' masculine dignity—their sense of being recognized by their peers as a full-fledged man—was achieved through constant rejection of abject identities associated with effeminacy and poverty. Their joking disguised deep vulnerabilities about not having the opportunity to grow up to become men who would *overcome* the practices of domination that were at the center of their boasts and busts. The boys possessed and articulated modest dreams of a good life (Young 2002).

Mr. Jeffries used the phrase "the loveless generation" to refer to families who were unable to provide adequate care for their children after the widespread dissemination of drugs—such as marijuana and methamphetamine, but especially heroin—into the community of south Morgan in the 1970s. Research has identified similar patterns of eroding caregiving networks during the crack epidemic of the 1980s (Coontz 2000). The Perry High community, and particularly the administrators and parents with whom I spoke, identified a widespread "crisis in care" as part of the crisis faced by Black boys. Drawing on recent theorizing of caregiving (Bubeck 1995; Ruddick 1998), I have taken "caring" to refer to taking responsibility for meeting the needs of others and helping them to flourish, especially when those others cannot adequately meet their own needs on their own. This crisis in care deepened as President Reagan's War on Drugs policies resulted in astronomical rates in arrests and imprisonment beginning in the 1980s, a development that hit inner cities the hardest and Black men in particular (Alexander 2012). These unjust drug policies have signaled a more general punitive turn in the U.S. criminal justice system in the late 20th century, a striking development given that just 50 years ago the U.S. criminal justice system was regarded as one of the most lenient among the world's industrialized societies (Stuntz 2011).

While involvement in the drug economy was considered a major issue in and of itself, my findings suggest that the major problem—indeed, the crux of the crisis—was the likely future that drug involvement forcasted: getting caught in the criminal justice system, or mass incarceration. In one regard, this resonates with findings in other recent research on all-boys public schools that school leaders are more concerned about addressing their students' social needs than their academic needs (Fergus and Noguera 2010). As I describe later, academic concerns were, in fact, important at Perry—but more for teachers than administrators. Here I want to stress how many members of the school community identitfied punishment as the most acute social problem facing the boys. Perry's interventions fell far short, in part, because the administrators did not succeed in making a claim for assistance from the entire community in ameliorating the crisis of punishment (Spector and Kitsuse 1987).

The emergence of all-boys public schools that target Black boys underscores far more than divisions and differences between boys and girls (although these themes were present). In examining how Perry High and Urban Charter went about their business of educating boys, I found that a major difference between the schools was how they positioned themselves on the school-to-prison pipeline and how successful they were in orienting their boys off it. Perry's

limited ability to support many of its students to reach graduation, and to offer a consistently rigorous academic curriculum; and the frequency with which the school suspended its students, meant that it put its young men at a greater chance of being incarcerated than did Urban Charter. Perry High therefore ended up with more of its students on the school-to-prison pipeline, a process by which students are disciplined and punished in school, which increases the likelihood that they will drop out and be arrested and incarcerated as adults (Noguera 2003; Vaught 2011; Wald and Losen 2003). A school, in this instance, effectively prepares boys for prisons.

In comparison with Perry High, Urban Charter oriented more of its boys away from a track leading to incarceration and toward graduation and college. Parents, students, and staff members there also believed that the students had been lifted out of the regular public school system that itself was a kind of prison, a place of social banishment, overrun by threatening boys and offering few opportunities for growth. In the next section, I add more depth to understandings of the school-to-prison pipeline by framing the interventions the two schools made or attempted to make in terms of caregiving.

These divergent forms of tracking were evident in the routine talk and messages that infused daily life in each of the schools. the two institutions. Images of and talk about prison—a school "like jail," getting "locked up," becoming a statistic, "the human warehouse system," and similar words and phrases—were part of the everyday conversation at Perry High. Lacking an explicit mandate as an all-boys school, Perry administrators and staff could at least identify the path they wanted their boys to avoid. Yet that did not make the path any less significant; the current era of mass incarceration has created a racial caste system that closely parallels Jim Crow (Alexander 2012). The school's unofficial mandate was tied to a vision of the boys growing to become responsible caregivers and careproviders themselves, but the school lacked the resources, explicit strategies, and supportive programs that would facilitate the students' growth in this direction. Unlike at Urban Charter, this was less a vision of class-mobility to be achieved by leaving Morgan altogether, owing in part to the tempered expectations staff had of their students given their precarious social positioning.

Located just six miles from Perry High, Urban Charter opened its doors to an all-boys, nearly all-African American population in the fall of 2007, two years after Perry converted to an all-boys model. As *a charter,* the school had a valuable resource that did not appear on its official mission statement. That resource was a kind of privilege, an ability to sell a hidden curriculum that parents desparately wanted: to protect their boys from "banished boys." By stereotyping and monitoring "threatening" Black boys, Urban Charter engaged in practices of criminalization and contributed to the youth control complex, conceptualized and studied by Victor Rios (2011). My findings provide new perspectives on the ways in which institutions discipline Black boys. As John Calmore (2006) has argued, Black boys are perceived as "unwanted traffic" in public spaces, even as they are symbollically and materially excluded from participation in mainstream institutions.

By viewing their own students as collateral damage who could easily be lost to drugs, violence, and to the criminal justice system, Urban Charter community members imagined a particular public space—regular public schools like Perry—as dragged down by the boys who attended. The boys, in this formulation, were raised by families and mothers who were morally weak and not fit for parenting. While research has documented how parents seek to quarantine their children from the "wrong kids" (Ferguson 2001), my findings showed that parents and schools may collaborate in this process of protection and exclusion. This moral boundary work

also strengthened in-group solidarity at Urban Charter (Lamont and Molnar 2002). I argue that a major reason why school officials believed an *all-boys* model was necessary was that it would *maximize* the numbers of an especially vulnerable group of students who could be protected from the perceived threats that the public schools posed and be placed on the road to college.

At school rituals such as the Student Conventions, Urban Charter officials made boys at other inner-city public schools appear to be a specter with tremendous power, with the potential to harm the future prospects of their own "urban gents." A key insight from queer theory is that in defending a somewhat shaky sense of masculine self, individuals may reject abject identities (Butler 1993), and that those identities "must be constantly named to remind individuals of [their] power" (Pascoe 2007: 14). At Urban Charter, administrators and staff continually evoked the abject specter of "banished boys" partly to remind students whom they should avoid on the street. Referring to "banished boys" also reminded students that they could lose the privilege of attending Urban Charter and be reduced to statistics themselves, anonymous and faceless persons, and *denied their humanity.*

Current market-based, standards-based U.S. school reforms have bred intense competition among students, teachers, and schools (Ravitch 2010). What is not discussed often enough in educational debates today is how the expansion of charters and school choice options may not, in fact, force all schools to improve in order to keep their doors open and to retain students (which should occur in theory [Buckley and Schneider 2007]), but instead force producers (school CEOs, school enterpreneurs, and their staff) and their consumers (children and their parents) to adopt a "triage mentality" (Oakes et al. 2005) which assumes that many poor Black students cannot be saved. There was no sense that a school like Urban Charter was raising the standards among regular public schools and its peer institutions. Instead, Urban Charter appeared to depend on a belief that other schools would remain bad options, which in turn would help sustain feelings of exclusivity at Urban Charter.

Caregiving as an Intervention

The prevailing view among Perry administrators and staff was that excess punishment and insufficient care were interrelated crises experienced by the boys in the school. Members of the Perry High community believed that the growth of the drug economy had strained families' ability to provide care for their young men, who were recruited to hustle drugs and were at the mercy of the harsh drug laws and intensive police surveillance that emerged in the 1980s. Punishment represented a gross miscarriage of justice in the lives of young Black men in Morgan, which raises questions about the relationships between justice and care. How can schools provide care in order to address the injustices of punishment?

I observed that Perry administrators sometimes framed *the school* as a "social father" (Jayakody and Kalil 2002; Letiecq 2010) that attempted to assist mostly female-headed, single households as part of an extended caregiving network. By describing the institution as a social father, I do not mean to diminish the contributions of the female staff members—indeed, they were among the school's best teachers and the boys themselves looked up to several of them as "second moms." Instead, the formulation highlights the special responsibility Black male administrators felt in relation to the challenges of saving Black boys. In their eyes, an all-male school represented an opportunity to target the neediest members of South Morgan—young Black men—whose mothers were struggling to care for on their own. And like earlier research (Salomone 2003) on the proposed Detroit all-male academy of the late 1980s—the first major

effort to open a single-sex school for poor, Black boys—I found that mothers were strongly in favor of all-boys schools. Mothers believed that it was the duty of capable Black men to lead the school, and that the assistance of men was especially welcome given that many moms raised their daughters to be strong, independent women like themselves (Jones 2010) and may have "spoiled" their sons because the social dangers in their community meant that their futures were less certain.

As I mentioned earlier, an important difference between the staff at the schools I studied and those at the California single-gender academies was that no one at Perry or Urban Charter seemed opposed to an all-boys model (even if they may have had difficulty saying why it was necessary). I did, however, observe important tensions between the teachers and the administrators which reflected distinct beliefs in what constituted proper care for Perry students. I found that the administrators were foremost concerned with the problem of student punishment. Compared with most of the teachers, Mr. Bradley, the principal, and the other administrators appeared more aware of *structural injustice*, or larger patterns of student punishment in the district and across institutions, and how their own students were being disproportionately punished. The Black male administrators and other influential male staff members, such as Mr. Youseff (a math teacher who felt it was his calling as a Muslim to work closely with young, Black men) and the well-respected Mr. Jeffries (an unofficial administrator who had grown up near Perry and felt it was his life's mission to steer the boys onto a more positive path) frequently engaged the boys in conversations that developed insight into wide-scale criminalization as a "perverse inversion of more humane social relations" (Hartsock 1983: 284). In launching the school's mentoring program, Mr. Jeffries demanded that adult mentors take their mentees' standpoint rather than expecting the boys to simply model their behavior after a male adult leading a positive life.

Administrators frequently complained that teachers were too quick to fill out disciplinary "blue slips" in the hopes that that would lead to a suspension. Aware that harsh punishments do not improve student behavior or ensure safer schools (Losen and Skiba 2006), the administrators occasionally went out of their way to seek alternatives to both in- and out-of-school suspensions, even if those punishments were required under Zero Tolerance-like school district policies. My findings build on Bass's (2012) observation that school officials use tempered abstract notions of justice with a more situated ethic of care, believing that certain rules and regulations were unfair and systematically biased against students of color. In her research, Bass focused on Black female principals, finding that their personal experiences of oppression *as Black women* motivated them to care for disadvantaged students. Men at Perry were similarly motivated to care for their Black male students, in part because of their own experiences of oppression, but also due to a strong sense of their obligation *as Black men* to the boys and their mothers, who lived in communities with few male caregivers. Their structural position *as administrators* within the school also enabled them to observe the school's overall, cumulative patterns of punishment.

More generally, my findings build on recent theories that transcend an opposition between an ethic of care and an ethic of justice; care, instead, should be understood as a *matter* of social justice (Glenn 2000). As justice's "helper," care helps to "diagnose and remedy injustice" (Ruddick 1998: 7). Despite the good intentions of adults in the building, I observed an important conflict over how the injustice of punishment should be addressed, or what the best way was to provide care for young, Black men. The Black male administrators were generally

more aware than teachers of the structural injustice in the lives of the boys. Individual teachers, who were less concerned about the overall dynamics of the school, appeared more willing to "put out" a student for disruptive behavior, probably because they believed that doing so would improve overall classroom behavior and allow other students to focus on their work. This is consistent with a triage mentality that not all can be saved, and so efforts should be directing at sparing those who can be (Oakes et al. 2005).

The administrators—Black, male, several of whom were from backgrounds similar to those of the boys—were particularly critical of a group of young female, nearly all-white teachers. In the eyes of the administrators, these teachers, who appeared *least* like the boys, were threats to the men's vision of building a predominantly male-led, all-boys school. While the administrators seemed to respect the achievements and efforts of these teachers individually (and they had strong reputations and a few had achieved considerable academic success with their students), they were reluctant to concede to the teachers as a group any authority or leadership responsibilities over their unique school. Doing so might have signaled the administration's failure to claim control of the education of "their boys" from the nation's dominant teaching demographic: white, middle-class women (Achinstein et al. 2010). While no administrators told me this outright, I sensed that they would have been embarrassed if they could not lead and shape this particular school according to their shared vision as black men; after all, it was full of boys whose lives were similar to those of the administrators when they were young boys.

These findings help to flesh out the claim that all-boys schools are important for providing male role models (Fergus and Noguera 2010; Riordan 2002; Salomone 2003). I certainly observed many younger 7th and 8th grade boys who were not openly defiant but clung on to their male teachers, seeking their affection and attention. Yet the administrators sought more than just a greater number of male teachers to serve as role models; they wanted to maintain a "public" face of strong, Black male leadership. Some Perry teachers privately speculated that Excel had promoted Black men into leadership positions ahead of more capable school staff, and that the school's conversion to an all-boys model would have been less rocky under the leadership of Ms. Hudson, who was assigned to become principal of Perry's sister school. Indeed, by limiting the influence of women, and particularly white middle-class white women, the administration may have weakened Perry's ability to get their boys off the school-to-prison pipeline. By failing to acknowledge the contributions of these teachers, the administrators may have missed on a valuable opportunity to build on "other-mothering" networks of care that have been a hallmark of African American communities (Collins 2000). Boys themselves told me that they embraced having a "second mom" in the building, perhaps because the boys loved and respected their own mothers so much.

Most significant is how, in trying so often to make the boys' aware of their place in the larger youth control complex, the administrators missed an opportunity to see what provisions of care the boys *themselves* desired inside of Perry. In this way, the administrators' own caregiving efforts were constrained by their unwillingness to see care as a set of interdependent relationships. In particular, the administrators neglected the agency of the cared-for and the influence they can have on improving those relationships (Glenn 2000; Ruddick 1998). I found that the students strongly desired adults who "acted their age"; who acted professionally by completing their assigned duties to teach and to provide the boys with academic skills. While some boys fooled around and were occasionally off-task, they demonstrated a willingness to

engage with their schoolwork. To amend Valenzuela's (1999) claim, I argue that the young men would show they cared about school if the staff members first cared enough to do their own jobs.

My observations of a pro-academic orientation among the boys accord with other recent empirical studies (Carter 2005; Harris 2011; Tyson 2011) that challenge the repeated generalization that most low-income Black male students develop oppositional identities in schools. This finding also builds on earlier research on all-male high schools. An ongoing, longitudinal study by a team of researchers at New York University (see Fergus and Noguera 2010 for the study's preliminary findings) reported that officials at the all-male public schools in their sample developed certain teaching strategies based on their students' needs. Socially and emotionally, the boys in these schools experienced an absence of parental involvement and male role models and were subject to community and peer pressures; academically, they had low expectations and felt the instruction they received lack relevance. As I mentioned earlier, my study is distinctive in showing how such needs, also characteristic of boys at Perry High, reflected a dominant crisis of punishment. I also showed how administrators and teachers tended to be oriented to addressing a different set of needs, which Fergus and Noguera's (2010) study does not similarly find. While establishing a stronger academic culture and limiting punishment could have been complimentary goals, the lack of a shared ideological commitment to all-boys education (Datnow et al. 2001) prevented the creation of effective strategies to reach those goals.

These findings have further implications for research on culturally-sensitive instruction for students of color. Proponents of a "demographic imperative" highlight the mismatch between the demographics of the teaching workforce (majority white and female) and the increasing student population of color, and argue for more teachers of color who are better positioned than their white colleagues to address the needs of students of color (Achinstein et al. 2010; Dilworth 1992; Irvine 1988). A related thread contends that schools can improve their students' academic success—and therefore encourage them to care—if they affirm their students' cultural backgrounds. Researchers have shown, for example, how schools recognize Mexican-American students' knowledge of Spanish and develop strong relationships with families (Valenzuela 1999) or use curricula rooted in African and African American history to engage Black students (Grant 2008).

In my interviews and observations, I noticed no racial or gendered patterns among the teachers whom students identified as acting their age or acting like kids. The boys also did not seem to prefer or to gravitate toward certain groups of teachers according to race or gender. At Perry, the students appeared willing to learn from *any* responsible teacher, regardless of race or gender. It is possible, as a growing line of research suggests, that African American instructors would improve the boys' academic performance (see Achinstein et al. 2010 for a review). Yet the boys likely had mostly white, female teachers during all their years of schooling.

Of course, my finding that students seek a strong academic culture with high expectations (of both students and adults) and support from school staff could be found in any school. Indeed, the presence of a stronger academic culture at Urban Charter casts further doubt that the single-sex composition was central to shaping the school's positive outcomes. I conclude this section by discussing how the creation of a successful academic culture was more possible at Urban Charter than at Perry, and how the Perry students largely sought what Urban Charter provided.

As a charter school, Urban Charter was able to recruit its staff with much more autonomy than regular schools like Perry. In addition, it wasn't a fall-back neighborhood school; parents had to seek it out and "buy-into" the school model that officials sold consumers (Buckley and

Schneider 2007; Lubienski 2003). I have argued that Urban Charter gained benefits from a hidden curriculum that distinguished its students from what were constructed as abject "others," the "banished boys" located in schools like Perry destined for negative futures. This curriculum, therefore, was based on an understanding that not all boys could be saved, which had the effect of reproducing inequality between Urban Charter and regular, public schools. Having, in effect, split off and distanced the "urban gents" from those presumably destined for failure, the school was then able to turn to its formal curriculum within the school.

Many parents and guardians forced their sons to attend the school, and so upon their arrival they did not seem excited to be there. Boys felt and expressed discomfort with the strict disciplinary culture, were worried about their association with a place having a reputation as "the gay school," and many were stressed from a demanding school and after-school schedule. Over time, however, I found that the boys' views of their school changed, and they began to show institutional pride. While the Perry boys were developing critical insight into how institutions collectively criminalized them both symbolically and materially (Rios 2011), many Urban Charter boys had adopted looking-glass selves (Cooley 1902), adjusting their own dispositions and senses of self to fit the positive views others had of them. They grew fonder of how they were viewed as respectable around their community, and beamed when speaking about the "buzz" the school had acquired. Even when they grew tired of their blazers, they petitioned school officials for the right to wear cardigans, a fashion statement that was also a *class statement* signaling a desire for upward mobility. Their uniform became a powerful resource for the boys that their Perry High peers lacked. As I have argued, the boasting and busting that the Perry High students engaged in represented their yearning for a different place as well (Skeggs 2002). Like students at Urban Charter, Perry boys believed that their school had a reputation as "the gay school" (although at Perry, which many thought resembled a prison, this discourse had a more explicitly sexual valence, signaling the possibility of sexual acts between men). With few up-to-date materials and technology (an absence of material resources that was all the more striking compared to what the Urban Charter students received, such as a free laptop and opportunities to travel outside of the country), Perry students believed their school had been contaminated by poverty, had "let itself go," and was uncared for. This reinforced an abject identity the Perry students tried to avoid.

Urban Charter's success centered primarily on its academic curriculum. Urban Charter was more likely than Perry to remove its students from the school-to-prison pipeline through a Latin-based, college-preparatory curriculum. Latin, the bedrock of the academic curriculum, was strange, unfamiliar, and full of complex rules. It enhanced vocabulary and required enormous discipline—evident in the sheer amount of anxiety it provoked among the students and the disproportionate attention that students gave it compared to other subjects—and was not meant for conversation for its own sake. It presented an irony: the boys needed to muffle their own language, their slang, which was very much alive and central to their way of being. As a member of a school that required so much of their time, they needed to show complete devotion to a "dead language," spoken during the "height" of European civilization, which promised a college future. As I have argued, the feeling that the language was always out of reach, and that it was to be used as a means to help a small minority of boys get to college and not to be enjoyed for its own sake, helped Latin retain an exclusive quality and ascribed to the school an elite status.

A school-to-prison pipeline typically refers to the processes through which a school increases a child's chance of being incarcerated later in life (Wald and Losen 2003), and my comparison of these schools made it clear that Urban Charter was taking more of its students off the school-to-prison pipeline and placing them on a college track. The Urban Charter community believed it had rescued boys from the dangers of public schools, spaces to which the very worst boys were banished, and where Urban Charter students could have easily been collateral damage. Once the boys had matriculated to Urban Charter, the staff tried to insulate their boys from negative community influences. They collaborated with parents in acts of exclusion, drawing moral boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002) that were required by the school's hidden curriculum. The boys felt that they were in a safer space, one that was so close to college that, as Tyson told me, "you just get that *school* feeling." Tyson felt that he stepped onto a college campus when he was in Urban Charter.

If Perry was not a "cared for" school, then Urban Charter was. Resources available to Urban Charter *as a charter* had helped to create an institutional structure that the boys did not necessarily take for granted, but they perceived gave them a leg-up on their peers. While Perry High students sought caring relationships with individual teachers, tensions between those teachers and administrators and the absence of agreed-upon strategies for addressing the boys' needs, prevented a strong sense of solidarity from developing. In contrast, the founder and principal of Urban Charter, Mr. Pierce, was an entrepreneur with a vision for his school, and he mostly succeeded in his "claims-making activities" (Spector and Kitsuse 1987). He knew that as a charter he would have a greater chance of recruiting staff and parents whom he could mobilize to address a social problem: that too many boys who might otherwise grow and have positive futures were floundering in inner-city public schools that lacked a strong academic curriculum, located in areas where boys could be lured into the drug economy. Mr. Pierce and his staff knew that the boys' past underachievement in schools was in part due to not being in possession of certain kinds of cultural capital, ranging from SAT prep courses to knowledge of dining etiquette.

In these configurations of schooling and their outcomes, what difference did it make that that all the students were boys? While my research design was not set up to isolate the effect of single-sex composition on student outcomes, my findings do cast strong doubt that the gender composition of the student body had a major effect at either school. I have described how Perry students sought caring teachers who provided them with academic skills, which can certainly be found at any school. While I found schooling elements at Urban Charter that were absent or less present at Perry High—greater levels of student and staff buy-in, a stronger disciplinary system that ensured that more students were on task, constant positive reinforcement from staff, more financial resources and independence from school district red tape, and a strong academic, college-prep curriculum—it seems just as possible that a coed school with these assets, whose students were from low-income black families, could have achieved the same results. As psychologist Diane Halpern, the founder of the American Council for Coeducational Schooling, and a staunch opponent of single-sex education has pointed out, "You can't simply attribute the outcome to the fact that they're single-sex when you're changing lots of other things at the same time" (Novotney 2011). While Halpern and her colleagues rightly point out that any number of institutional variables—despite of, or by interacting with, the single-sex component—can produce positive student outcomes, the self-selection dimension of charter schools seems especially significant (Buckley and Schneider 2007; Lubienski 2003). While Urban Charter's

admissions remained less selective than peer charter institutions during the time of my study (the 2009-2010 school year), a year later, the school become popular enough to generate a wait-list of applicants.

The Men You Will Become

In this study I introduced two versions of manhood to capture the divergent paths that the boys at Perry High and Urban Charter were likely to take. A *regressive Black manhood* refers to the sum of outcomes, practices, and life options that points boys toward negative destinations, and particularly incarceration. This captures the idea that Black boys are potentially denied full adult capacities as parents, husbands, workers, and citizens as well as the privileges of childhood (Ferguson 2001; Rios 2011). A *progressive Black manhood* captures those outcomes, practices, and life options that orient boys away from incarceration and toward college, in the short-term, and a financially secure job and middle-class status, in the long-term. This captures the idea that Black boys are provided with opportunities to become full-fleged men.

These are meant to be ideal types and not categories that boys fall "into" or manhoods that they will ever completely embody. Rather, they are trajectories in that it is possible to talk about boys moving in certain directions and toward certain destinations. This understanding of manhoods, like others, move beyond thinking of mere traits the boys possess. Instead, like others (Bederman 1995; Butler 1990) I define manhood as a set of cultural processes that places individuals into a social category. I want to go even further by stressing that various categories of "male" are best understood as destinations; a direction marked, on the one hand, by growth and the ability to become active and productive fathers, husbands, workers, and citizens; and an opposite direction that denies this ability and denies boys their basic humanity.

This formulation of manhood foregrounds the ways that age and development interact with gender (Gardiner 2002; Thorne 1993), which is not always clear when scholars conceptualize multiple masculinities (Connell 2005; Mac an Ghaill 1994). Scholars have critiqued the multiple masculinities model for producing a seemingly endless list of masculinity types that tend to focus on men's styles and ignores inequalities among men and between men and women (see Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; Pascoe 2007). While this model allows for a comparison of various masculinities at one point in time, this cross-sectional approach, as I call it, may miss the fact that boys are *on the move*. Thinking in this way moves beyond cateloguing the "kinds" of boys I observed to thinking about how their daily life experiences, their boyhood practices, their engagement with institutions that criminalized or protected them from harm, and the expectations that adults had of them, meant that the boys were always being pushed toward and pulled from certain futures.

Another advantage of this conceptualization of manhoods is that it resists simple dichotomization even though individuals, such as members of the Urban Charter community, may constantly define and protect us-them boundaries (Lamont 2000; Perry 2002). Instead, as boys acquire or lose privileges, secure institutional protection or are criminalized by institutions, are honored as "Mighty Generals" and are given a "second chance" when most have cast them off as unsalvageable, it is possible to speak of boys and groups of boys in relation to one another. They gain and lose ground on one another, pass other boys and are passed as they inch closer to gradution, and they are oriented and are re-oriented toward various adult destinations.

This understanding of manhoods is not necessarily meant to capture idealized notions of who they boys should be, or a desired goal (though it can be). Rather, it stresses what actually

happens or is likely to happen to the young men, and the important role that institutions play in pushing boys in certain directions, or along certain institutional trajectories: toward prison or toward college and eventually the paid workforce. I have been most concerned with the influence of school rules and practices, but families, the drug economy, and blocks to a lesser degree, also were influential in situating boys on certain trajectories. At Urban Charter, the notion of "urban gents" as a vision of manhood is progressive in the way that I describe, but that *match* is in large part because of certain institutional privileges: a strong academic curriculum rooted in a language for which there was consensus would aid the students' language development, and the widespread fear of losing that privilege and entering a public school system that was more oriented on the school-to-prison track (a major reason why students consented to the strict discipline system).

At Perry High, both staff members and students also had imagined their boys as embodying a form of progressive Black manhood. Compared to Urban Charter's vision of their boys becoming competitive workers in a global economy, Perry High's was a more modest vision of the boys remaining in their communities, earning a decent wage, and becoming responsible husbands and fathers. However, given the distance some at Perry had travelled (such as the Second Chance students) after having gotten caught up in the criminal justice system, it remained an ambitious goal indeed. The mentoring program, though it faced problems with identifying and recruiting mentors, also aimed to place the boys on a more progressive track. Despite these positive goals, many Perry students *in actuality* likely regressed, meaning that opportunities to become a decent husband, father, and worker were closed off. The same happened for a number of Urban Charter students who were asked to leave, and were therefore symbolically banished to "lesser" public schools as everyone had been warned at Student Conventions.

The Future of Single-Sex Public Education

The debates around single-sex public education have grown increasingly contentious. In 2006 the Department of Education sought to clarify the criteria for opening a single-sex program, but increasingly more districts in the early stages of opening these programs have been met with legal challenges from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Some states like South Carolina, with a large percentage of the nation's single-sex programs, have been able to fend off these challenges by creating independent programs to oversee the expansion of single-sex schools and classrooms (Chadwell 2010). Yet school districts in other states have attempted to open these schools without a full understanding of the legal requirements. In fact, the ACLU has identified so many of these questionable single-sex schooling proposals that it launched a formal campaign against single-sex education, "Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes," in May 2012. The campaign's website includes letters the organization sent to a number of school district superintendents outlining what made their single-sex programs illegal, and demanding under threat of legal action that the districts immediately shut down the single-sex programs.[90] "Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes" has found a strong ally in the American Council for Coeducational

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[90] The American Civil Liberties Union's "Teach Kids, Not Stereotypes" campaign, which launched on May 18, 2012: http://www.aclu.org/womens-rights/teach-kids-not-stereotypes.

Schooling, whose founders posed one of the stiffest challenges to single-sex education to date in the September 2011 issue of *Science* magazine (Halpern et al. 2011).

As this dissertation has shown, single-sex education is shifting terrain, dipping beyond gender into issues of race, class, sexuality, and age. Controversial claims to brain and neurological differences will likely dominate public and scholarly attention to single-sex education in the years to come. But it is notable how little such biological claims entered into initial rationales for, and the histories of, the two all-male schools I studied. As I have shown, many other issues, including those related to race and class, are bound up in the dynamics of single-sex education.

I close by discussing three subtle but equally consequential issues surrounding single-sex education: the viability of single-sex education as a right of choice for parents and children, and what that means for high-stakes testing; possibilities for professional development and training for staff in single-sex schools; and the complex issue of whether sex separation is a desirable means for addressing the distinctive needs of low-income African American boys.

Moving forward, the viability of single-sex education will depend a great deal on the larger school choice movement. Much of this is due to practical reasons. Charter schools stand the best chance of resisting legal challenges due to the wider latitude of federal guidelines for charters (v. regular public schools) seeking to open single-sex institutions. At the local level, school districts with strong support for charters could expedite single-sex school charter proposals under the banner of experimentation and increased options for parents. Only recently, proponents such as Leonard Sax of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education have backed off their earlier claims to essential differences between boys and girls, and now adopt some of the language used by *critics* of these schools. Sax has claimed that since there is a great diversity in the needs, interests, and abilities of schoolchildren, and so they and their parents deserve the right to choose from single-sex programs among other options (Novotney 2011).

If Sax and his supporters are right, and even the strongest critics of these schools would not deny that the diversity among school children means that there should not be "one size fits all schooling," then the range of justifications for these learning environments would appear vast. If a group of parents at an elementary school are concerned that their daughters are afraid to talk in front of boys in a math class, should those parents have the right to petition for their young girls to have their own math class as a way of boosting their self-esteem? If a middle school principal observes constant flirtation between boys and girls, should she be able to separate boys and girls during some parts of the school day? These questions highlight my belief that a greater number of single-sex *classrooms* will open in the future compared to entirely single-sex *schools.* Not only would the logistics be more manageable and costs more reasonable, but school officials could better target specific needs for boys and girls without taking what many would call the more drastic measure of converting to a completely single-sex school model. A balancing of small number of single-sex classrooms in otherwise coed schools might also appease critics who assert that gender-mixing in schools is necessary for a coed world (Halpern et al. 2011).

Of course, the danger in any sex-separate learning environment is that it will slip into or even take advantage of stereotypes and retrograde notions of gender difference. While federal law and current debates are concerned with equality in resources when boys and girls split up, more attention should be paid to how educators could promote gender equity *inside* separate classrooms and schools. While a teacher in an all-male classroom might indeed find that his

students enjoy reading novels that involve battles and wars, justifying that choice of reading because of "student interest," or choosing it out of convenience, should not trump an opportunity to create gender equitable classrooms. If, as single-sex school advocates claim, boys in younger grades would be better off with male teachers, then the implication is that the teacher has the potential to do tremendous good or harm to boys who look up to him. That teacher could set aside the books about cowboys and Indians and teach books that challenge stereotypes, offer history lessons that cover a range of human experience and celebrates the particular cultural experiences of the students, and acknowledges equally the contributions of female and male biologists in science class. As the theory goes, the boys would follow their leader, and the students could very well use what they learned in class to promote equality in their own communities. Perhaps the younger Perry High students in my study, some of whom ached for attention from older men, could have benefited from these progressive teachers.

Since a school reform movement rooted in accountability, experimentation, and choice provides leverage for single-sex programs, the onus is on the leaders of these schools to recognize the potential dangers that that movement poses to both children and staff. Given the structural conditions beneath high stakes testing—like Zero Tolerance policies, all students are assessed the same way, regardless of their background—then it is not too much of a stretch to suggest that the testing, which has not been shown to increase knowledge acquisition and unfairly punishes students of color (Ravitch 2010), is complicit in the youth control complex. These tests serve as a form of discipline in that they force students to sit still and to be quiet (Theoharris 2009). Labeling Black boys as "below grade level" in schools that are poorly equipped to meet their academic needs, high-stakes testing may further support the symbolic criminalization that stigmatizes those boys, funneling them toward negative futures. At Urban Charter, taking practice exams and real standardized exams sometimes appeared like a full-time job for the students. Educators and policymakers should be aware of how testing and reducing students to numbers and scores is particularly harmful to children whose dignity is constantly threatened outside of schools. And just as important is how teachers are also coming under fire for failing to raise their students' test scores. Indeed, teachers may require greater support, or extra provisions of care, in a "testing movement" that punishes more than it rewards (Ravitch 2011).

Greater support for teachers is especially necessary in single-sex programs. My study, as well as the California single-gender academies and the Black and Latino Male Schools Intervention studies, found little evidence of professional development support or training for teachers in single-sex settings. If schools choose to go the route of single-sex programs, they should pass over speakers who encourage creating math lessons based on gendered brain differences, or adjusting room temperatures so that they are warmer for girls and cooler for boys. Instead they should invite knowledgeable guests to speak about how trivial or minute brain differences are amplified in social settings, how certain voices are privileged and others are silenced in history lessons, how teachers may discourage girls by calling less on them, and how boys may respond better to a calm, empathetic adult voice than to demands that they "man up." If Perry or Urban Charter or any other single-sex school puts a call out for these professionals to visit and engage their staff, they might find that there are many professionals who would happily accept their invitation, and that many staff members would welcome the help and instruction.

In closing, the biggest test for single-sex education—for educators, policymakers, and scholars alike—is to determine whether, and under what circumstances, splitting up boys and

girls is permissible in order to address the needs of groups who are especially vulnerable due to the dynamics of social class and race. While the ACLU successfully challenged and forced the closing of the Detroit all-male academy in the 1980s, the organization has since mostly avoided schools with predominantly student-of-color populations. While ultimately the single-sex component at Perry and Urban Charter mattered less than stakeholders at either school originally thought, the persistent and great needs of poor, Black boys means that school leaders should be open to an array of unique schooling options to target the students' needs. Critics of single-sex schools may apply *Brown*'s principle of "separate-but-equal is inherently unequal" to attempts to separate boys and girls, but perhaps that principle should be set aside in the case of vulnerable groups of schoolchildren. Given that U.S. schools are now more racially- and class-segregated than at any time during the desegregation movement of the 1960s (Minow 2010), providing all-boys schools as options—and maximizing the number of families who have knowledge of and access to these schools—may not simply be fair to these boys as a matter of gender equity, but as a matter of civil rights.

With few legal challenges and limited monitoring of inner-city, high-minority schools by organizations like the ACLU, these schools (or just single-sex classrooms within them) are likely to grow in the years to come. School officials may also target girls of color who struggle in public schools, though all-boys schools remain more popular. It may not matter at all that there is still minimal empirical support for the claim that the single-sex component itself has a strong effect on student outcomes. What likely matters is the collective *belief* that these schools could work, that they could be the change their sons needed, that they could make their sons more respectable in the eyes of the community, that they could support overburdened families, and that they could surround Black boys with Black men who care about them and who believe it is their life's mission to help this particular population. These beliefs are likely to keep the doors to these schools open. The ultimate success of the single-sex schooling movement may not rest on whether they improve test scores for boys and girls, but whether these schools, single-sex *and* perhaps single-race, show that they can improve Black boys' life chances, steer more boys to vocational school or college after graduation, minimize the number who are incarcerated, and provide care to boys who need and deserve it.

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