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Under the 'hood':
Poor and Working Class Black and Latino Boys in the Age of Obamerica

By

Angel Rubiel Gonzalez

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Doctor of Philosophy

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel H. Perlstein, Chair
Professor Zeus Leonardo
Professor Evelyn Nakano Glenn

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Abstract

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When educators, administrators and researchers discuss issues like academic underachievement, school discipline or culturally relevant teaching, they often focus on poor and working class "urban" Black and Latino boys. Nonetheless, generalizations regarding "racialized masculinity" writ large may contain essentialist understandings of Black and Latino boys as a population. To do so, the dissertation examines the *lived realities* of race and young manhood by looking at the lives of two groups of "gifted and talented" Black and Latino boys attending a single-sex and a co-educational independent school in the Northeast U.S. This study asks: What do the experiences of poor and working class Black and Latino boys, making their transition into young manhood reveal about the nature of race, class and gender power relations in in the twenty-first century U.S.? The ethnographic data utilized in this study is derived from a year of participant observation and 33 semi-structured face-to-face interviews. These methods revealed patterns of meaning that constantly summoned the language and feelings of contradiction and liminality. In order to understand these results I utilized Black and Latino "theories of existence," which argue for understanding race as a dynamic and ongoing site of contestation over what it means to be human.

As evidenced by a year of field notes and interviews, I found that these young men often experience *existential dissonance*-moments when they experienced a gap between their lived realities of race, class and gender, and the colorblind ideology of twenty-first century U.S. society – that cause feelings of contradiction and confusion. Furthermore, this study finds that along their journeys, Black and Latino boys look to a range of institutions, spaces and relationships, or what I call *existential resources*, to process the often conflicted meanings, feelings and experiences they encounter as they begin their search for manhood. The need for and existence of these resources elucidate the juggling of competing racial, class and gender ideologies that these boys must navigate to take advantage of the educational opportunities that await them in high school and beyond. Ultimately, however, even among "gifted and talented" poor and working class Black and Latino boys, the usefulness, effectiveness and availability of these existential resources are varied and often times are impacted by poverty, mass incarceration, deportations, poor housing and violence.

These results suggest a need to move our understanding of race beyond the racial

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conscious/colorblind dichotomy. Instead this study invites us to engage the simultaneity of the competing meanings and practices of race in the age of what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David Dietrich call "Obamerica;" an era of political and social governance that often settles for narratives of racial harmony. Nonetheless, we cannot lose sight of the larger institutions, laws, policies and structures that continue to produce inequality, injustice and trauma in our students and their communities. Mass incarceration, poor public schooling, unaffordable and segregated housing, health care, poverty wages are all issues that influence these young men and must be struggled over if their conditions are to be truly transformed. More concretely, this dissertation suggests that schools explicitly deal with race, class and gender in their curriculum while also providing students with the cultural, spiritual and emotional infrastructures to heal and renew relationships and friendships that can help youth deal with the trauma and pain cause by the existential dissonance of this era.

Dedication

To

My grandfather Joaquín Villa. Thank you for your company, guidance and light.

To

My parents Dora Alicia Villa and Angel Rubiel Gonzalez Sr., who made possible my journey through their blood, sweat and tears.

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Chapter 1
Back into Early Adolescent Manhood

Miguel[1] and Randy, approach me about going with them to a "wings spot" after school. Before walking over to *Colossal Wings*, Miguel begins to tell me of "the plan." He informs me that we are a team and that we have to come up with a consensus on which level of "spiciness" we want to have with our wings. My heart sinks to my stomach. My threshold for spicy foods is so notoriously low that I sometimes mistake ketchup for hot sauce. As these thoughts float across my mind, I snap out in time to hear Miguel tell me the spicy gradations: "There is abusive, nuclear and suicidal!" I take a deep breath and remember it is spring of 2012 and I am an adult. I do not need to prove anything to these young men. Still, the "young insecure adolescent boy" inside of me wanted to say, "Shoot! I'll do suicidal. I'm game." Instead I politely tell Miguel that they would not need to worry about me. I tell him that I don't do spicy and that he and Randy should get an order for themselves and I could just get myself a smaller order. Miguel says: "Nah we're a team. Here's what we'll do. We'll get the abusive kind and I'll just get a cup of suicidal sauce on the side. Cool?" I respond with a nervous laugh and say: "We'll see."

After they take care of some errands after school, and both Miguel and Randy make calls to their parents, the three of us head down the avenue towards *Colossal Wings*. On our walk, Randy complains that his mother was "OD-ing"[2] since she demanded that he give her a call immediately after he left the "wings spot." Miguel shares with us that he has to go home as soon as we eat, to attend a dance rehearsal for a Quinceañera.[3] He smiles and tells us that he has to hurry back home and change clothes. Miguel's smile reminds me that this event, while targeted for the young women, is also significant for young men since almost by proxy they are also being introduced to the community as young men. Randy chimes in and talks about his clothes and how he has to get back some True Religion jeans that his brother borrowed from him. He alludes to an event coming up that he is going to attend and wants to look his best. Randy is rather tall and looks older than his thirteen years. His brother is a few years older than he is, and Randy can borrow *his* clothes.

As we arrive at the storefront, I notice that the metal cellar doors are slung wide open as a truck unloads deliveries for the business. Next to the cellar doors is a typical winter vestibule that guards establishments and their customers from the cold of the city winters. The three of us search for an opening in the vestibule only to discover that the cellar doors are swung so wide open that they are blocking the door that would allow us to enter. Miguel attempts to open the door regardless and sees that it opens just enough for him to squeeze through by taking off his backpack. He looks at me smiles and squeezes through. I look at Randy and say: "You think you can make it through?" He shakes his head and says: "Yea." I can't help thinking as I squeeze through the space between the cellar doors and the vestibule of times I use to push through openings in a fence to access a baseball field or a basketball court which for some reason or another the park had padlocked without notice. As I complete my movement through the

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[1] Names and places have been changed to protect the identity of the institutions and the students.
[2] A slang term that connotes an unnecessary amount of attention to an issue.
[3] A Quiceañera is a celebration of a young woman's entrance into young womanhood at the age of 15. In many Latino communities it is perhaps the most visible and long-standing rite of passage. Even if one does not have a sister who's "Quince" is being celebrated chances are a cousin, or a friend of the family is. As a young man in the community one is asked to participate as part of the festivities by enacting dances or other performances as a "chambelán."

compressed space and into the store I look back and see Randy first throw his bag into the vestibule and then squeeze through the space.

The establishment is busy so we sit at a counter on bar stools. Miguel informs me that he ordered the 10-piece wing option. As a result, each one of us would have 3 wings and whoever finished first would get the last wing. I declined to be part of the competition and reminded him that I would not be spreading any suicidal sauce on my wings. Miguel is disappointed, but confirms the plan. As we begin to eat I notice that Randy has nothing to drink. I ask if he wanted to get a bottle of water or something else to wash down his food. I offered to spot him a couple of dollars if need be. Randy declines and says: "It's okay Mr. G. I'm just going to drink this ranch dressing." I offer again, stating the ranch dressing is not a drink. He waves me off as he stuffs another spicy wing into his mouth.

I start on my own wings and periodically look over to see Randy and Miguel staring at each other as they devour their abusive flavored wings. They are playing a game of 'chicken' attempting to see who will shed the first bead of sweat or the first teardrop. Again, I cannot help but feel the anxiety of this space and the familiarity of these rituals of early adolescent boyhood. Meanwhile, I ask both of them about music and they tell me about their love for heavy metal. Randy says he likes that music because he can relate. I ask, "How so?" Miguel jumps in and says, "Oh, I can tell you." He begins talking about a group called *We Came as Romans*. He says people think that all metal is about screaming and yelling, but he likes it because of his connection to the lyrics. He mentions a specific song called "A War Inside." He explains that the song is about a guy who hears the voice of an Angel and the Devil. He is trying to figure out what do in life. I ask Miguel how the song connects with him. He says there are times where he feels very conflicted and more especially confused about how to live his life in a way that he can do good. He says: "Choosing the right path is hard." Later in an interview, Miguel elaborates on his connection with the song by saying: "…sometimes, inside, you know, I feel like contradiction" (Interview, May 2, 2012). I could understand a host of adolescent feelings: "confusion," "uncertainty," "doubt," or even "anger"; yet the word *contradiction* stood out as more precise.

As we continue our conversation, both Miguel and Randy bring up difficulties they have with school discipline and grades. I find this conversation telling since they both attend the Langston Hughes Academy (LHA) for academically "gifted and talented" boys, where presumably their resilience and achievement has distinguished them from their public schools counterparts. Nonetheless, here they were talking about the themes of discipline and underachievement. First, they remark that the teachers sometimes "nit pick" about the rules and "get on them" about everything. This seemed consistent with my observations at the school where boys were at times sent to the office for minor infractions related to issues of self-discipline like talking to a classmate or horseplay. Furthermore, they also describe falling behind with their homework in different classes. Indeed, in the fall semester, I observed as Randy met with his advisor one morning, before school, regarding a long list of missing assignments. In one conversation, an administrator explained that these difficulties the boys experience are products of an inability to visualize a "decision tree" where they might be able to see how their current decisions impact their future.

Generally, the Langston Hughes Academy was keen on boys making the "right choices" when it came to dress, behavior, friends, academics and life goals. In fact, the school organized a "Decision Making" workshop where its students participated in exercises and complete worksheets that emphasize topics like "using values in making decisions," "understanding the

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decision making process," and "identifying alternatives." Nonetheless, these abstract and seemingly race and class neutral interventions seem to ignore the lives of Randy and Miguel, who shared experiences of hiding behind cars during shoot-outs, parents working late nights as "bus boys," and family members involved with the criminal justice system. The tensions produced through the contradictions between the lived experiences of race, class and gendered marginality, and the color-blindness of "decision making workshops" characterize an era of race-relations where the first U.S. president of color can simultaneously affirm that there are "no excuses" for educational underachievement at Morehouse College, while echoing again, that there are "no excuses" for the death of an unarmed seventeen year old black boy in Florida. Miguel and Randy live in times where Affirmative Action is widely seen as "reverse racism," while other people speak openly about the racial injustice apparent in an era of mass incarceration. Moreover, Randy and Miguel must find ways of existing in the midst of a Supreme Court that argues that protections of the Voting Rights Act in the South are archaic, while immigrant activists in the Southwest protest to a nation that "no human being is illegal."

Admittedly, I almost did not realize how quickly the tone of play, boundary pushing and competition I felt earlier had changed to a discussion of the pain and strain they felt in attempting to find their way through the world. However, at some point our conversation is interrupted as Miguel begins to poke fun at Randy as his face begins to turn red and sweat begins to pour from his eyebrows. Randy tries to grit through it but can't take it anymore and chugs a cup of ranch dressing. Miguel sits there in laughter as Randy attempts to quickly wipe his tears of pain. He then turns to me with great embarrassment and says: "Mr. G. I think I'll have that Snapple now." My experience of "passing back" into early adolescent manhood with Miguel and Randy would come to symbolize the central question of this dissertation: What does it *mean* and *feel* like for poor and working class Black and Latino Boys to make the their rite of passage into young manhood in the twenty-first century U.S.?

"Boy Problems" in the Twenty-First Century

A recent focus of the 'boy problem' in schools (Tyack and Hansot, 1992; Weaver-Hightower, 2003) has been accompanied by a series of debates and interventions. When educators, administrators and researchers discuss issues like academic underachievement, discipline or culturally relevant teaching, they often focus on poor and working class "urban" Black and Latino boys (Ferguson, 2001; López, 2003). It is important to note that young women of color also deal with challenges resulting from their race, class, gender and sexuality (López, 2002; Lutrell, 2003; Morris, 2007). However, many have argued for the need to account for the *differential outcomes* in educational achievement and attainment between young racialized women and men (López, 2003). This spotlight on Black and Latino boys is also a result of a growing scholarly interest in masculinity studies (Archer, 2003; Dimitriadis, 2001; Ferguson, 2001; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; hooks, 2004a & 2004b; López, 2002; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Noguera, 2008; Pascoe, 2007; Skelton, 2001; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Specifically, scholars have converged on the position that *masculinities*- hierarchical configurations of relational gender subjectivities[4], strategies and practices that produce power asymmetries- are themselves key factors in both the problem and the solution to academic underachievement (Connell, 1995).

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[4] I wish to point out that masculinity describes both the social and biological roles attributed to men and boys by society that are always defined in relation to femininities. Though masculinities are based on a cultural understanding of a sex system as a binary,

While the field of critical masculinity studies (Connell, 1995; Katz, 2006; Kimmel, 1999; Messner, 1995; Sabo, 2001) has helped us understand the distinct structural and historical features of masculine relations through their theoretical framework and social histories, more studies are needed to specify the emotions and meanings in the everyday lives of non-white men and boys, especially when it comes to Black and Latino boys. Even when scholars have recognized the intersection of *race* and *masculinity* (Baca Zinn, 1982; Ferguson, 2001; Gutmann, 1997; Limón, 1994; López, 2003), many works on the subject subsume race and gender within theories of class exploitation by emphasizing structural determinism and/or deficient paradigms (Bourgois, 1996; Duneier, 1992; Liebow, 1967; Marable, 1983; Staples, 1982; Willis, 1977). Moreover, the "educational achievement gap" becomes a site of contestation not only over the "crisis" of Black and Latino boys (real or perceived), but as Foucault (1977) would argue, a contestation over the ways in which truth and power are produced in the manufacturing of this new "boy crisis." This observation invites us to be skeptical of generalizations regarding 'racialized masculinity' writ large, which may contain essentialist and reductive understandings of Black and Latino boys (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988). In turn, relying on these understandings, educators and researchers alike can claim to know what is best for these young people and generate a plethora of interventions, policies and instructional methods justified by "scientific" data and evidence.

In contrast, this dissertation examines the *lived realities* of race and young manhood within the larger age of what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich call "Obamerica—"[5] an era of political and social governance that often settles for narratives of racial harmony—by looking at the lives of two groups of "gifted and talented" Black and Latino boys attending a single-sex and co-ed independent school in the Northeast U.S. I conclude that the attempts of the boys to become and be recognized as "good," respectable, young men are often challenged, despite their best efforts, by a gap between their lived realities of race, class and gender and what some have identified as a "colorblind"[6] ideology in U.S. society (Alexander, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Wise, 2010). Moreover, I find that these moments of *existential dissonance*-moments when the young men experienced a gap between their lived realities of race, class and gender, and the colorblind meritocratic claims of twenty-first century U.S. society- cause feelings of contradiction and confusion. Utilizing what Lewis Gordon calls Black (and Latino) "theories of existence," this dissertation documents the meanings and feelings of young poor and working class Black and Latino boys as they ask the profound existential questions: "What am I?" and "Am I a Man?" Furthermore, as evidenced by a year of field notes and interviews, this study finds that along their journeys, Black and Latino boys look to a range of institutions, spaces and relationships, or what I call *existential resources*, to process the often conflicted meanings, feelings, and experiences they encounter as they begin their search for manhood. The presence of these resources prove critical in the ways boys are able to balance a healthy sense of self-esteem and efficacy, while encountering the contradictions of living in a racist capitalist society that is, despite its profession of transcendental humanity, unforgiving. Ultimately, I find that even among "gifted and talented" poor and working class Black and Latino boys, the usefulness,

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the behaviors and expressions designated as masculine can be adopted and performed by people of all genders (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 1995; Halberstam, 1998; Lorber, 1993; Lugones, 2007; Serrano, 2008).

[5] I do not wish to indicate that Obamerica was purposefully created by President Barack Obama, but rather use the term to signal that his election and presidency represent a fragile synthesis of multiple racial ideologies, histories, struggles and practices that invite dissonance and contradiction.

[6] Color-blindness argues that the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century brought relative equality to U.S. society and as a result, race and racism are no longer salient social forces.

effectiveness and availability of these existential resources are varied and often times are impacted by poverty, mass incarceration, deportations, poor housing and violence. Therefore, this study aims to offer insights into the existential balancing act these young men engage in as they contend with the larger competing ideologies and structures of racism and and color-blindness.

Methods, Sites and Population

The data utilized in the subsequent chapters is derived from a year of participant observation at two urban independent middle schools for " economically disadvantaged gifted and talented students" during the 2011-2012 school year. The institutions are "independent" because they rely on little or no state or federal funds. Most of the operating budget comes from private fundraising efforts that go mostly toward tuition and teacher salaries. I hesitate to use the term "private school" because of the images of privilege and exclusivity that the term "private" conjures up. While the schools are selective (they have an admission process for selecting "gifted and talented" students) they are also need blind which means that most of the students come from low-income working class communities of color and pay only a small family contribution based on their financial circumstances. The schools themselves are not fancy or lavish. They do not have gyms or campuses. The schools are mostly made up of a handful of classrooms, an administrative office and a lunchroom.

The first school, The Langston Hughes Academy (LHA), is an all-boys school serving grades four through eight. The second school, St. Mary's Academy (SMA), is co-educational and offers grades six through eight. These sites were chosen precisely because their populations are "gifted and talented" students attending independent schools outside of their working class neighborhoods. As the evidence contained in this study suggests, these students exhibited with particular vibrancy the tension between racial-consciousness and color-blindness that characterizes the broader social context of the U.S. in the twenty-first century. As poor and working class students, these boys are neither students who are immersed in the milieu of local public schools, nor are they the students who are shielded from the realities of poor and working class people of color in the U.S. Students attending LHA and SMA are in-*between* the worlds and cultures of "the racialized-classed neighborhood" and the "affluent ritzy downtown area." As a result, these students live out the contradictions of both worlds, thus allowing for a more textured and complex portrait of race, class and gender relations in the U.S. to emerge. As I found in this study, while the students were able to be high achieving, race and class issues did not subside as result of their academic environment. Many times these moments of contradiction would key them into a more relational understanding of race and class, that at times, forced them to understand both marginality *and* privilege.

In earlier related studies, Carter (2005) and MacLeod (1987) found that poor and working class students of color had a positive outlook and attitude toward notions of social mobility during their schooling. However, in the case of MacLeod (1987) and Young (2005), these positive attitudes diminished once they encountered the reality of a society that privileged white middle class culture. More recently, there have been increasing calls to identify, examine and understand student resilience or "grit," as a means of tackling academic underachievement. Therefore, engaging with supposedly resilient poor and working class "gifted and talented" students, allowed me to critically examine the complex experiences of student resilience in relation to a purported "color-blind" society.

Therefore, the schools did nit enroll a representative random scientific samples of the Black and Latino boys who attend neighborhood public schools in major U.S cities. The atypicality of both the schools and students is a strength of this dissertation. While many studies addressing the issues of Black and Latino students tend to focus on militarization, underachievement and lack of resources as key issues, the population in this study allows fresh perspectives to emerge by highlighting the contradictions and inconsistencies of living in contemporary U.S. society. In addition, previous studies have called for examining "high achieving" poor and working class students in an effort to see how these students are able to "beat the odds" and access educational opportunities and success (Flores-González, 2002; Oliver, 2006). This dissertation responds to that line of inquiry by providing a multifaceted portrait of poor and working class "high achieving" students of color. In turn, the interviews and observations found in this study complicate a depiction of these "gifted and talented" students as exceptional "models" to be blindly emulated by "underachieving students."

Furthermore, while the two schools are not representative of public schools, they do resemble many emerging pedagogical movements and interventions being proposed to deal with the underachievement of Black and Latino boys. Both schools have a mix of ambiguous and explicit class-race-gender conscious policies and interventions (e.g.: dress codes, single sex environments, criticisms of 'street' versus middle class values) that replicate much of the educational climate and reform being proposed in large urban districts across the country. Furthermore, the schools offer a unique opportunity to compare boys in both single sex and co-educational environments, thereby facilitating investigation into themes around heterosexism, sex, gender, relationships between masculinity/femininity, and the homosocial aspects of masculinity. Finally, the commitment of both schools to educate the children in a holistic fashion by being attentive to the mind, body and spirit in their curriculum and school culture allowed me to access conversations, emotions and meanings hidden in a normal public school. For instance, the schools have classes on social justice, civil rights, ancient civilizations, morality and psychology in which issues surrounding race, class and gender were ample.

In the interest of full disclosure, it is important to note that I am an alumnus of one of the schools. This granted me access to both schools, as well as trust from staff and students, in ways that would have been hard for someone who did not have a previous relationship with the administration. At first, it was admittedly difficult to negotiate this insider/outsider status. Before beginning the study I was clear with the administrators that my objective was neither to glorify nor aggrandize the reputations of the schools; the goal was to center the needs and issues of their Black and Latino male identified population so that schools might better serve those students. It was in that spirit that all parties agreed to allow my research to be conducted. In all instances, my only goal was to make sure the realities of the young men, as best as I was able to understand them from their view, were presented with the utmost respect and care for their lives.

Beyond the schooling context, this study also examined the physical and cultural worlds outside of the schools. While the study centers on schools, my research design was multi-sited, and provided me the opportunity to enter spaces such as the homes and neighborhoods of the students. Specifically, with a core group of 5 students I embarked on "travel alongs" where I traveled with a student or a group of students (often on public trains and buses) from the schools back to their neighborhoods. The families, the schools and the neighborhoods together provided important insights into the existential struggle of adolescent Black and Latino men.

As Hartmann (1981) argues, the family can be understood as a "locus of struggle" where competing interests around "production and redistribution" of work and resources are at play.

Furthermore, as a social institution, the family can be seen as a place where psychological and interpersonal processes (Chodorow, 1978, 1989, 1994; Collins, 1990/2000; Freud, 1923/1960; Rubin, 1975) give meaning and legitimacy to race, class, gender and compulsory heterosexuality. While the family has, and continues to remain, an important domain where the process of becoming human is enacted and negotiated, the rise of modern industrialized society added yet another important institution, compulsory schooling.

While the family and the school are formidable places to sustain an engagement with existential dilemmas, I also found it necessary to explore the neighborhood. As previous scholars have documented (Alves, 1993; Bourgois, 1995; Kimmel, 1999; Willis, 1977) the homosociality of masculinity is dependent not only on the experiences that lend credibility to manhood (i.e.: high risk behaviors; ritual humiliation; physical altercations) but also, as Alves (1993) states, the "public narrativization of these experiences before peers" (p. 894). As a result, I examined the local context where young men and their neighborhood peers perform these exchanges, allowing me to understand how they comply, complicate and/or resist these rites of passage prescribed by standards of modern manhood. Finally, in the realm of culture I viewed and collected materials such as song lyrics, magazines, internet web sites, social media artifacts, homework assignments, video games, popular television programs, YouTube clips and art work.

The methodological approach I deploy is ethnographic. I utilized the texture provided by field notes, documents, artifacts and 33 semi-structured face-to-face interviews to discern patterns of meaning and significance in the everyday lives of adolescent Black and Latino boys. As a *sociological* ethnography, "Under the hood" utilizes these "thick" cultural, experiential and interactional descriptions to elucidate larger social dynamics and structures. I began the data collection as a participant observer by following typical class schedules for boys in each grade at both schools for about three months. This allowed me to become acquainted with classes as well as the students and teachers at both schools. Typically I rotated my time at both schools on a weekly basis. For the second phase, I recruited a group of five young men to shadow and build relationships with over the period of four months. With these young men I was able to not only go through a day of class, but I also obtained permission to travel with them back to their neighborhoods and homes. In the final stage, I interviewed thirty-three students. Twenty-four of the total interview subjects were boys and nine were girls. The eligibility for participation in the study was determined by willingness to participate on the part of the students and their parents' consent. Announcements for participation in the study were made during homeroom. However, my verbal script as well as assent and consent forms indicated that I was looking for young men (and women) who identified as working class Black, African-American, Latino or Hispanic. While the sample was "self-selecting," the interview sample included students from a range of ethnicities and generational statuses.

After collecting the data I utilized a grounded theory approach to ascertain the salient meanings and feelings of the boys. Using the HyperResearch qualitative data analysis software, I coded interviews, field notes and documents to track emerging patterns and relationships. Data analysis revealed four general thematic areas which contributed to the substantive chapters of this project: those themes being: 1) Narratives of class and racial authenticity 2) Transitions into young manhood 3) Race and meanings of manhood 4) The emotional and affective lives of the boys.

Nonetheless, taking heed from a wealth of debate and concerns raised by ethnographers and other social scientists (Collins, 1986; Emihovich, 2005; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991; Osamu, 2006; Smith, 1973; Smith, 1999; Wacquant, 2002), I kept in mind how the social

sciences have a history of complicity with silencing and objectifying experiences outside of normative male western conceptions of humanity. Specifically, the popular and academic accounts of Black and Latino boys as "endangered species," "at-risk," "deviant," and "underachieving," already keyed me into the ways research continues to militate against the humanity of this group by providing essentialist narratives about their cultures, motivations and lives.

It is precisely because of the overabundance of meanings associated with "Black and Latino boys" that I titled this dissertation "Under the Hood." I deploy the image of the 'hood,' as a play on the many meanings it carries regarding Black and Latino boys. For instance, there is the literal hoodie, which is a staple of fashion for many youths, specifically young men of color in the U.S. and around the world. There are *hoods,* a loaded class-race term for individuals who are deemed to be outcasts of this society due to their anti-establishment—what some have labeled oppositional attitudes and behaviors—cool poses and confrontational bravados. 'Hood,' can also be slang for how poor and working class youth refer to their neighborhoods. Of course, when words like man, brother and boy are joined to the suffix—it implies a shared state of being or a set of "roles" to be expressed by a given group.

Perhaps, the most analytically useful notion of the 'hood' is like the access hatch of a car where one can get to the inner workings of American manhood as it is linked to histories and structures of colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, neoliberalism and nationhood. However, as someone who holds himself accountable to the everyday lives of the young men I teach and work with, *Under the Hood* is about getting to a more complex understanding of the young men themselves so that we may devise better interventions and pedagogical materials (Gonzalez, 2011 Therefore, rather than simply ask, "What are the practices and interactions that characterize Black and Latino men as they make the rite of passage towards manhood?" This study seeks to understand: What do the experiences of making the transition into young manhood reveal concerning the relationship young men of color have to ideas of humanity in our times? What are the emotional, affective and spiritual impacts of these experiences upon the young men? How do these experiences, feelings and understandings influence young men of color in our classrooms? Finally, how might we make use of these findings to inform practices of healing and leaning as well as larger educational and public policy?

Organization of this Dissertation

This dissertation highlights and elaborates the existential burdens, contradictions, questions and possibilities as described by the voices of the Black and Latino young men (and women) through in-depth interviews and fieldnotes. Chapter 2 provides the larger social and theoretical context for studying race, class and gender within the confines of a purported colorblind U.S. society. Specifically, I argue that because of the insidious nature of race in the "post-civil rights" era, along with the longstanding ideologies such as the American Dream— which obfuscate the realities of class—studying the lives of poor and working class Black and Latino boys requires theories and concepts which account for the shifts and changes of social formations in the twenty-first century. As a result, I draw from theories from sociologists, historians and philosophers of the global south who are able, with nuance and precision, to define concepts and approaches necessary for this study.

Chapter 3 examines a myriad of ways in which students at SMA and LHA live the inconsistency of color-blindness in their schools and in their communities as they attempt to "act

the part" of high achieving students of color. As my interviews and fieldnotes reveal, attempts by students to "act the part" produce conflict and tension upon their sense of self. Specifically, I will examine the schools and look at how school dress codes, curricular knowledge and patterns of speech become highly contested areas that enact regulatory discourses of race, class and gender. Secondly, I will take us from schools to the neighborhoods to highlight the larger context outside of schools that the students inhabit and contend with along race, class and gender lines. In particular, I focus on the experiences of the students traversing multiple physical spaces and how these different sites contribute to their understandings of race, class and gender.

Chapter 4 elaborates on the nature of *existential dissonance* experienced by the young men in this study and finds that while distinct, these present day moments of contradiction exhibit continuities with Black and Latino male thinkers, who in past and present generations have reflected on the difficulties in asserting their humanity through manhood (Díaz, 2007; Douglass, 1845; DuBois, 1903/1999; Fanon, 1952/1967; Gordon, 2000; Paz, 1985; Wright, 1938/2004). These reflections on the contradictions of Black and Latino masculine identity expressed by these thinkers are utilized to assess the challenges faced by young men in contemporary classroom. I end by proposing a Fanonian framework for studying race and masculinity that attends to the social and psychological dramas experienced by young men in this study.

In Chapter 5, I delve into the complex interpersonal and peer relationships as well as the feelings that arise as these young men attempt to define and shape their young manhood. I discuss the major lenses and frameworks through which previous studies have interpreted the manifestations and postures of Black and Latino men. Specifically I will discuss the baseline claim that blocked opportunity creates in the poor a propensity to be oppositional and self-destructive. In contrast to these studies, I proceed by outlining the major emotions, traumas, disturbances and challenges as articulated by young Black and Latino boys at SMA and LHA as they make their right of passage into young manhood. I conclude with an alternative read of the "cool pose" and other responses as a manifestation of a more deeply rooted existential drama that has historical, structural and intergenerational roots, which plays out in the psyches of the young men of color in our classrooms.

I end the dissertation with proposals for micro level interventions such as young men's workshops and other kinds of curricula that might help Black and Latino boys, their teachers and parents, deal with existential dissonance in their lives. I recognize that these proposals are situated as strategies for *harm reduction* and are no substitute for larger structural and enduring changes which must take place around economic justice, the prison industrial complex, housing, health care and education. Therefore, I also discuss the macro-level institutional and societal changes that must be addressed in order to transform the causes of the pain and suffering we witness in schools.

Chapter 2
Pop the Hood:
Schooling and Living in "Obamerica"

      While many, from Bill Cosby to Charles Barkley, have commented on the state of poor and working class Black and Latino boys and men, speaking of "saggin'" pants and pound cakes[7], perhaps one the defining moments of Black Male Educational thought in the early twenty-first century came on rainy Sunday afternoon at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. The stage was well suited for the occasion; Barack Obama, the first president of color, giving a commencement speech to a field full of Black male college graduates at a historically Black college in the era of "color-blindness."

      Unlike previous prominent Black presidential hopefuls, Obama reflected a politically expedient synthesis of thinking, action and expression that ranged from center right to a "pragmatic liberalism." During the 2004 Democratic National Convention, which catapulted him to national fame, as well as his 2008 victory speech President Obama proclaimed: "…we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states: We are, and always will be, the United States of America" (Obama, 2008). These remarks would anticipate governmental strategies for managing race relations in the U.S. in ways that confirmed for many, especially whites, a purportedly colorblind society. As a result, we find ourselves at the height of a "post-racial[8]" society where the vestiges of previous racial formations (Omi and Winant, 1994) - the processes by which racial categories, shaped by social, political and economic forces, have achieved their meanings- are reconstituted and restructured in ways that while different from past eras, continue to produce differential outcomes for poor and working class Black and Latino communities.

      For instance, in one of his earliest defining moments on the issue of race, Obama commented on the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates who, while locked out of his home and attempting to force his way in, was profiled as a burglar by neighbors who promptly called the local police[9]. Upon arriving, police asked Gates for identification, a request to which Gates, a well-known scholar, took offense. After a heated exchange between Gates and police Sargent James Crowley, the Harvard professor was arrested for disorderly conduct. A week later during a press conference, President Barack Obama was asked by a reporter to comment on the situation involving Gates. However, on this day, his usual, calm, measured and calculated remarks would be betrayed by his existential knowledge of race and criminality. Obama, who considered Gates a friend, said that "The Cambridge police acted stupidly when there was already proof [Gates] was in his own home…What we know separate and apart from this incident is that there's a long history in this country of African-Americans and Latinos being

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[7] Cosby Delivered remarks at the Brown v. Board 50th anniversary commemoration in 2004. He stated: "These are people going around stealing Coca-Cola. People getting shot in the back of the head over a piece of pound cake! Then we all run out and are outraged, the cops shouldn't have shot him. What the hell was he doing with the pound cake in his hand? …And these people are not parenting. They're buying things for the kid. $500 sneakers, for what? They won't buy or spend $250 on Hooked on Phonics."… It's standing on the corner. It can't speak English. It doesn't want to speak English. I can't even talk the way these people talk. Why you ain't where you is go, ra, I don't know who these people are. And I blamed the kid until I heard the mother talk" (Cosby, 2004).

[8] I wish to clarify that when I use the term "post-racial" I am referring to a new era in the thinking and practice of race and racism. This should not be mistaken with understanding post as being "after-race," but rather the latest development of race relations (See Leonardo, 2009).

[9] The caller did not racially profile Gates. The 911 call shows that the neighbor is unsure of the "burglar's" race. It is only in the police report by James Crowley that we see the word black is used as a description given by a witness on the scene.

stopped by law enforcement disproportionately…Race remains a factor in the society" (McPhee & Just, 2009). Within two days, Obama would have to take back his statements and host Gates, Crowley as well as vice president Joe Biden for "a beer summit" to diffuse the social tension caused by the contradictions of race in the era of the post-racialism. Nonetheless, there he was at Morehouse College, touting the mantra through which many educational reformers and critics have been able to channel the backlash against civil rights struggles of the twentieth century: "No Excuses." Obama stated:

> You now hail from a lineage and legacy of immeasurably strong men — men who bore tremendous burdens and still laid the stones for the path on which we now walk. You wear the mantle of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, and Ralph Bunche and Langston Hughes, and George Washington Carver and Ralph Abernathy and Thurgood Marshall, and, yes, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These men were many things to many people. And they knew full well the role that racism played in their lives. But when it came to their own accomplishments and sense of purpose, they had no time for excuses.
> Every one of you have a grandma or an uncle or a parent who's told you that at some point in life, as an African American, you have to work twice as hard as anyone else if you want to get by. I think President Mays put it even better: He said, "Whatever you do, strive to do it so well that no man living and no man dead, and no man yet to be born can do it any better."
> And I promise you, what was needed in Dr. Mays's time, that spirit of excellence, and hard work, and dedication, and no excuses is needed now more than ever. If you think you can just get over in this economy just because you have a Morehouse degree, you're in for a rude awakening. But if you stay hungry, if you keep hustling, if you keep on your grind and get other folks to do the same — nobody can stop you. (Obama, 2013)

Obama reshaped the militant legacy of a host of Black male thinkers and activists like Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King and Dr. Benjamin Mays, all of who would have likely not blamed those impacted by a post-industrial and post-racial U.S reality. In many ways Obama's speeches, comments and remarks on Black men and boys have become a barometer for the existential schizophrenia that is produced by the exigencies of a "post-racial" America. Obama is constantly in a position where the contradictions of the race, class and gender emerge in front of our very eyes. One moment he is speaking about the horrors of racial profiling, while the next he is berating the black family or in this case reminding young black men that there are "no excuses" for their underachievement. It is a delicate dance where he must manage, for better or for worse, the feelings of whites, as well Blacks from an array of class positions. Similar to Cosby, Obama, as the race-man of his time, must confront and speak to the ongoing tensions between middle class and poor Blacks. The frustrations of middle class Blacks which range from superficial concerns over the politics of respectability to a sense of frustration surrounding the seemingly endless "cycles of poverty" have loomed large throughout his presidency.

Nonetheless, it is arguably young poor and working class men and boys, especially in Black communities, who have become a fixation in this post-racial society. When it comes to the education of Black and Latino poor and working class boys, the slogan "No Excuses" deftly leverages the hard earned struggles and advances of past grassroots social movements to relieve neo-liberal educational reformers and politicians of the burden of challenging the status quo in

order to achieve genuine social justice. Instead these young men, their families and communities must shoulder the weight of achieving equity in a society that, while giving verbal affirmation to their humanity, constantly reminds them that their acceptance into the social contract is highly precarious (Mills, 1997).

With this larger context in mind, this chapter reviews the central arguments and studies that are summoned in explaining the educational underachievement of poor and working class Black men and boys. Special attention will be paid to the theme of "oppositional culture" and how it claims to operationalize race and class in the post-civil rights era. Specifically, I reexamine what Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu's (1986) call: "The Burden of Acting White." Instead of leveling the usual criticism that others have, regarding the ways in which such cultural analysis "blames the victim," I assert that Fordham and Ogbu correctly observed a "burden." However, their treatment of this burden as a maladaptive behavior rather than an existential burden impeded their analysis. Specifically, I challenge Ogbu's tripartite theory of racialization in the U.S. and his inattentiveness to the material and historical development of race and racism. As a result, the rest of the chapter draws on "theories of coloniality," produced by sociologists and philosophers from Latin America, to provide definitions of race, class and gender, that are better suited for identifying and understanding the moments of confusion, contradiction and dissonance that the students of LHA and SMA have shared with me. Specifically, theorists of coloniality utilizing historical and sociological tools push us to deal with race as a site of contestation over what it means to be human. Centering race as a struggle over "humanity," leads us to engaging in "Philosophical Anthropology," a potent a framework for analyzing the dynamics of race class and gender.

Pathologies, Burdens, Cultures and Excuses: What or Whom Do We Blame?

In my conversations with both students and adults at SMA and LHA, there was a familiar rationale utilized to explain the need for independent schools aimed at "high-achieving" Black and Latino students: "the street culture thinks learning is not cool, it's white." In response, LHA and SMA were posited as spaces that value learning and do not ostracize students who "want" to learn. In fact, literature from one of the schools states: "In an urban culture where smart is uncool, our students learn to think critically, to engage academically, and to value their intellect as a unique and precious gift."

However, this goal of ousting the regime of "cool" in poor and working class communities is not specific to SMA and LHA. The once maligned "culture of poverty" theory, which had lost some cachet seems to be making a resurgence in recent times (Cohen, 2010; Steinberg, 2011). Specifically, in the world of education, the most popular formulation of a new "culture war" has taken the form of the popular slogan: "No Excuses" (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). According to Paul Thomas (2011) "'No Excuses' reformers insist that the source of success and failure lies in each child and each teacher, requiring only the adequate level of effort to rise out of the circumstances not of her/his making. As well, 'No Excuses' reformers remain committed to addressing poverty solely or primarily through education, viewed as an opportunity offered each child and within which effort will result in success" (para. 11).

For example, days after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, people in the media argued about whether the devastation that followed the earthquake was a "natural disaster." *New York Times* Columnist David Brooks (2010) argued that what happened in Haiti was an "unnatural disaster" produced by "a complex web of progress-resistant cultural influences" (para. 8). As examples,

Brooks cites the "voodoo religion," poor parenting and "high levels" of mistrust as some of the reasons for Haitians' struggles before and after the earthquake. Brooks' pivot to culture as a way to explaining the root causes of inequality in Haiti is but one instance of the recent resurgence of the culture of poverty theory in the twenty-first century. When discussing the Black and Latino male educational "crisis" in recent times, there is perhaps no approach more omnipresent, nor more polarizing, than the "oppositional culture" argument. Among its many iterations and formulations, stemming from Oscar Lewis' landmark works *The Children of Sanchez* (1961) and *La Vida* (1966), many have posited in one way or another that structural conditions alone do not prevent Mexican-American, Puerto Rican and Black low-income families from achieving upward mobility in the U.S. This inability to achieve a middle class lifestyle has led to a self-perpetuating subculture of poverty that negates advantageous and institutionally rewarded behaviors, values and knowledge that would otherwise permit socioeconomic mobility.

This "culture of poverty" produces a "wounded" identity and culture in the people who experience structural and historical exclusion, causing them to act against their long-term interests. Lewis reiterated that while the root causes are beyond individuals, the outcome—a debilitating and deviant culture—takes on a life of its own and acts separately from the structures and histories that created it. Provocative arguments like the ones made by Lewis are routinely made in the academy, but what set the "culture of poverty thesis" apart from many other polarizing theories was its impact on the 1965 report titled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" written by Assistant Secretary of Labor Policy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

While the Moynihan Report is often times seen as a conservative proposal, in its time it was also seen as a seemingly progressive framework that called not only for providing equal opportunity, but moreover for "equal results" in the areas of housing, education and jobs. However, as Moynihan (1965) explains, there is a "principal problem" for Blacks striving for equality. Different from Lewis, the report asserts that while all structures discourage upward mobility, the ongoing principal *cause* of social inequality rests on the "tangle of pathology." This pathological "culture of poverty" led to socially and economically emasculated men who could no longer head their households, the result was a matriarchal family structure that, while a product of colonialism and slavery, was indeed out of line with mainstream American values and culture. In short, the task ahead was to rectify the wounds created by these structures and teach Black people and other non-white poor and working class people in the U.S. the proper middle class values and culture that would increase their chances for economic and social success.

Together, Lewis and Moynihan popularized a powerful classed, racialized and gendered narrative about causes and solutions in dealing with the emerging underclass of poor people of color in the U.S. While their work contains some grounded observations about the precarious existence of people living at the margins of society; this framework lent itself to folk theories about the causes of poverty deriving from a deviant culture that needed to be reformed in order for certain groups to have equal opportunity for upward mobility. This approach, which even by Lewis' standards would mistake the symptoms for the causes of poverty, made its way into perhaps one of the most popular explanations for the educational underachievement for poor and working class Black and Puerto Rican students: oppositional culture and attitudes. Again, Brooks (2010) provides a more contemporary "No Excuses" version of the "culture of poverty":

> …it's time to promote locally led paternalism…programs, like the Harlem Children's Zone and the No Excuses schools, are led by people who figure they don't understand the factors that have contributed to poverty, but they don't care. They are going to replace

parts of the local culture with a highly demanding, highly intensive culture of achievement-involving everything from new child-rearing practices to stricter schools (para. 10-11).

The proposal of Harlem Children's Zone as a global educational reform effort, signals the renewed importance of culture in national and even international politics of education. This kind of perspective made its way into perhaps the most hegemonic way of explaining school failure and underachievement. Reading articles like that of Brooks, as well as monitoring emerging educational models like single sex charter schools for boys of color, it is becoming clear that cultural arguments are discourses where people might explain away educational disparities. Nonetheless, SMA and LHA, while having some continuities with the "No Excuses" reforms, were certainly also distinct in that both the teachers and the students still allowed space to talk about the impacts of race, class and gender on their experiences

One day I witnessed a lively conversation about the "burden of acting white" at LHA. The Social Justice class begins and I take my usual seat behind the seminar tables, which are arranged in a U-shape. It is a small class (about sixteen students) aimed at exploring a host of issues surrounding race, class, gender and sexuality. The teacher asks the students to recap what they discussed last time. Many hands go up. One student remarks: "We talked about how people view us." Other students follow up with terms and phrases such as: "stereotypes," "what other people say about us," "how you define yourself," and "what do people use to describe us." The teacher follows up and says that a constant theme in many of their written and classwork assignments has been how people use "racial slurs" to define them. In this case the teacher means the terms people used to supposedly describe others as being inauthentically black or brown (e.g.: Oreo, banana, Twinkie, coconut, apple). Students nod, some laugh, but no one seems disturbed or anxious about the conversation. It appears that many of them had engaged in some form of this conversation before. The teacher announces that today they will pivot their discussion around a children's story by Frank Tashlin (1946) titled: "The Bear that Wasn't." Here is a summary of the story from my fieldnotes:

> There is a bear who is hibernating out in the woods. While he is hibernating people come and build a factory in the woods next to his cave. When he awakes he stumbles upon a factory and eventually wanders onto the main floor. There, at the factory, a worker approaches him and tells him to get to work. The bear replies but I'm a bear I don't have to work. The worker does not believe him and insists that he is but "a hairy bearded man with a fur coat who is lazy and does not want to work." This exchange of the bear claiming his "bearness" and his "bearness" being denied repeats itself throughout the story as the bear encounters the management hierarchy of the factory. Eventually the bear encounters the CEO of the corporation who then takes him to a zoo to ask other bears whether or not he is in fact a bear. The bears at the zoo deny him and say that he is not a bear because he is not in a cage. He is then taken to a circus where a bear at the circus says that he is not a bear since he does not wear a tiny hat nor rides a bicycle. The bear returns to the factory to work for several months at which point the factory closes and the bear is left alone in the woods where we first meet him. He looks up at the sky and sees geese flying south which indicates to him that winter is coming soon. He thinks about going back into the cave to hibernate but then says to himself that he is not a bear and therefore cannot hibernate for the winter. (Fieldnotes, October 21, 2011)

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After the class finishes reading aloud, the teacher turns to the students and asks: "Is he a bear?" All respond that he is a bear.[10] However, the teacher presses them to think if they even doubt for a second that he was a bear. A couple of students respond: "He begins to doubt himself!" "Believes what others say!" The teacher then asks: Why does it become harder to believe that he is a bear?" Here is a sample of their responses:

> "From a human perspective they don't see him with ways of being a bear."
> "Other bears reject him."
> "He's different from any other bear…"
> "If everyone is telling you are something then you eventually believe it."
> "It relates to the ways humans are [with each other]. Stereotypes. He's not fitting into any of the stereotypes."
> "Some people try to fit you into a particular stereotype. People believe if you are Asian you are this if you are Black you are this." (Fieldnotes, October 21, 2011)

As I sat and witnessed this conversation and read the story along with the boys I could not help but notice the ways in which the conversation quickly turned to race and stereotypes. Even more significantly, I was struck by the ways in which the boys identified with the dilemma of this bear and, how they characterized the central conflict of the story as the bear's "being" and the result of "rejection" and "(mis)recognition." At first, because of the focus on stereotypes I figured that they were referring to ways in which "outsiders" unfairly projected controlling images of race onto them, mainly middle class white people. While they would go on to talk about instances where whites unfairly projected these images onto them, there was also considerable time spent on the ways in which they feel regulated within their own communities:

> TEACHER: "Relate this to your life."
> IRVIN: "Because I drink grape soda I fit into a stereotype. I also like fried chicken."
> RANDY: "I get confused with being white because of the way that I dress and talk and because I go to a private school."
> CHRIS: "When I'm debating people they'll say I'm white."
> EDUARDO: "I kinda look white. Sometimes when I'm in my neighborhood they would just look at me and think I'm white but I say I'm Hispanic. Once I say I'm Hispanic they change the way they talk to me. Their tone changes."
> IRVIN: "When I go to the playground people want to pick me first because I'm black. But I'm not even that good! If you are black they expect you to be fast, not good in school and poor. Sometimes they try to give you money."
> TEACHER: "So does being wealthy and black make you less black?"
> IRVIN: "Yea or people think you are getting it by selling crack."
> CHRIS: "My brother does not speak the same way I do. He looks at me differently…less Spanish and less Black."
> CHRIS: "I feel afraid when I go on interviews. I feel like if the interviewer is white I have less of a chance of getting in. I guess if a white person was interviewed by a non-white person they would feel the same way too."

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[10] It is important to note that the text was accompanied by illustrations that show a bear. I wonder how different the discussion would have been without the pictures.

RANDY: "I do feel less Hispanic because of the way I live my life." [He goes on to explain that he has to make a choice between living his life the way it is or following a "common trend."]

EDUARDO: "Like I live in the ghetto. The good kind of ghetto not the bad kind of ghetto. Kids are poppin' fire, wearing sagging pants…. The kids can look at me and say I'm not Hispanic." (Fieldnotes, October 21, 2011)

The fact that students cite the anxieties of potentially being inauthentically human signals an existential burden. These boys constantly felt the weight of "not belonging" in the many social circles they inhabited. The conversations went quickly from the "Bear that wasn't…" to the "Black and Latino Boys who weren't…" However, as I said that in my head, I tried to find the category that would describe the burden the boys were describing. You see, their comments, stories and discussion revealed a more complex and total picture of the workings of race in the post-civil rights era, even more specifically, the age of the colorblind U.S. Yes, they were talking about the challenges of measuring up to working class blackness and latinidad in their communities. However, as they left their neighborhoods to attend schools that were in areas perceived to be "white and middle class" they were met with the burdens of *acting* white and *being* Black or Latino.

Fordham and Ogbu: The Burden of Acting White Thesis

The popularity of the "Acting white thesis" in education can undoubtedly be attributed to the work of Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu. While they neither mention nor cite Lewis, anthropologists Fordham and Ogbu reinvigorated his "culture of poverty" thesis in the last couple of decades of the twentieth century, this time within the confines of educational research. Their study in a Washington D.C. high school would have a lasting impact on the available explanations of educational achievement amongst poor and working class black students and to some extent Puerto Rican and Mexican-American students as well.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) explain that their study revealed an "inordinate ambivalence and affective dissonance with regard to academic effort and success" among black students (p.177). They argue that this attitude is a product of past experiences of racism and a perception of blocked economic opportunities in U.S society. While Fordham and Ogbu acknowledge in passing that there are concrete structural and institutional patterns of social exclusion, they contend that what has mostly accounted for the lack of success among black poor and working class students is a misplaced over-identification with an oppositional identity and behavior promoted by previous generations of African-Americans, who in their time, encountered more overt forms of racism. This antagonism manifests with relation to white people as a group and specifically, what they deem to be "white" institutions (e.g.: schools).

The most important question is, why do they emphasize the cultural and behavioral at the expense of structural and historical? Similar to their predecessors, Fordham and Ogbu possessed a nuanced understanding of the interplay between structures and individual actors. They not only articulate the ways in which the economic system was exclusionary to Black communities but also how attitudes would not change if these economic opportunities were not broadened to include more people, specifically Black males. However, if one looks carefully at the theories and studies upon which their assumptions of race, racism and racialization are built, it becomes clear that despite their attempts to balance the structural and the individual, the entire

interpretation of their study was limited by their understanding of race as a *form* of caste.

The Pitfalls of Race as "Caste-like"

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) do not explicitly define the category "race." They do, however, elaborate on Ogbu's "cultural-ecology" framework accounting for the "historical, structural, and cultural forces, which affect the schooling of [minority] groups" (p.178). In response to the differences in immigrant groups, Ogbu (1987) offers a three-part theory. This theory is key because it allows him and Fordham to make claims supporting their "oppositional culture" thesis as well as their ideas of fictive kinship (i.e.: non-blood ties that provide a sense of collective identity). In other words, this three-part theory of social classification enables them to discuss why African Americans have not achieved upward mobility in the way their European, Caribbean, Latin American and African counterparts oftentimes have. The three categories of racialization set forth by Ogbu include: "autonomous minorities," "immigrant minorities," and "caste-like" minorities. The category autonomous minorities are groups of mostly European immigrants that are minorities only in number, but have been incorporated into the larger white middle class culture. In the case of immigrant minorities or what he also calls voluntary minorities, these are groups of people who came to the U.S "more or less voluntarily" in search of better social and economic prospects. Finally, with regards to caste-like minorities, Ogbu asserts that this is a group of people who were incorporated into America through slavery and conquest. These groups have little or no success in assimilating into the U.S. socially, culturally and economically.

With respect to intragroup differences among Blacks, Fordham and Ogbu offer up two concepts: "oppositional collective" or "social identity" and "oppositional cultural frame of reference." The former concept indicates that blacks "perceive" and experience "collective and enduring repression" and that regardless of their actual life chances, social location and opportunities (job or educational), they believe that they cannot expect to be treated as normal American citizens because being Black is no different than a "birth-ascribed identity": a caste. The later concept, what they call "oppositional cultural frame of reference," is in simple terms a guard or self defense mechanism that they argue protects this perceived caste-like identity and amplifies its effects further cementing their chances for upward mobility. As a result, this defensive posture translates into a policing mechanism that designates certain forms of being, as authentically Black or White. Specifically, they argue that this frame is powerful because it is emotionally charged. In their account, transgressing these identity boundaries causes "affective dissonance" which in plain terms translates into a feeling of betrayal of a group identity. The authors insist that we should not pathologize the students for these behaviors nor should we forget that these emotions and behaviors are products of a process that "evolved during many generations when white Americans insisted that minorities were incapable of academic success, denied them the opportunity to succeed academically, and did not reward them adequately when they succeeded" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p.183).

While Ogbu does not say it explicitly, through these theories he offers us an account of what Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) call *racialization*. This process of racialization can be defined by the ways in which groups and individuals are incorporated into "racial/ethnic hierarchies" across different regions of the world (Omi & Winant, 1994; Grosfoguel & Georas, 2003). According to Ogbu, the process of racialization in the U.S pivots on the conception of "minorities" as being "caste like" or "non-caste like." He argues that African Americans are the

"example par excellence of 'caste-like minorities'" due to their history of slavery and Jim Crow racism. However, with the end of slavery and Jim Crow, Fordham and Ogbu move to characterize the ensuing failure of upward mobility and educational achievement as a "[mal]adaptive response to the requirements of cultural imperatives within their ecological structure" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 178). In other words, their behaviors and reactions to these past racial injuries are the source of hindrance in the current context and, as a result, are one of the main sources for their current status within U.S society. These scars of racial oppression, which operate separately from "class exploitation," have created a caste of people who are socially incapacitated.

It is precisely this analysis of race as caste-like, which leads Fordham and Ogbu to incorrectly treat culture as the culprit blocking upward mobility. They cite a collection of cross-cultural studies edited by anthropologists George De Vos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma (1966) entitled "Japan's Invisible Race: Caste in Culture and Personality." In brief, the work explored caste segregation and racist ideology through the case study of Japan. Furthermore, the editors of this volume state that their goal is to "draw some generalizations and conclusions which may promote better understanding of the universality of the effects of social exploitation that is based on the false premise of the moral inequality of man" (p. xxiii). To arrive at this universal conceptualization of social exploitation through caste, the researchers survey Korean and "former untouchable" groups in Japan, both of who maintained aspirations for upward mobility, but ultimately were crippled by their oppositional identity. They explain that while these social stigmas may have outlived their original structures and history, the society in which they live suffers from a "psychological lag" where people may not have a rational explanation for their feelings but rather a "gut" feeling of disgust of the "other." As a result Dos Vos and Wagatsuma state: "If we generalize from American studies on the subject, we find that the psychology and social destiny of a member of a disparaged caste unfolds early. Increasing self-knowledge in the context of social pathology wounds and debilitates, stunts and perverts" (p. xxii).

While I agree that we must look at race as a distinct and psychologically scarring form of exploitation, we must not reduce race to its traumatic effects. While race relations did become global through colonial and capitalist forms of exploitation, they have, in a given geographic area, distinct local histories and designs. Therefore, the move by De Vos and Wagatsuma to universalize forms of social exploitation, regardless of space and time, as well as equate race with caste, leads them to an idealistic and shortsighted definition of race than can be reduced to culture.

Sociologist Oliver Cox (1945) offers an alternative conceptualization of the distinction between race and caste. Cox argues that race and caste cannot be conflated. Among the host of reasons are the historical and economic factors shaping their separate development (i.e.: Race as a social formation that becomes global through its articulation with capitalism, has different aims and trajectories that are not captured by the more localized and provincial social formation of caste in Hindu culture). Therefore, race, which is articulated with class, has its own form of materiality and social relations. As Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues, segregated housing, job discrimination, college admissions procedures and mass incarceration are some examples of the material aspects of racial exploitation.

Ogbu's notion of race has severe implications for where we locate the source of "underachievement" for Black and Latino working class students, but for what impacts the interventions we propose. If we agree that race was a form of caste that was at one point utilized to birth an economic system, but has only outlived itself in the trauma and wounds of these

individual groups and not in historical, epistemic, judicial and institutional structures, the definition of race betrays us, especially in the colorblind era of racism. As seen in this study, symbolic and discursive incorporation into society does not always translate into social and economic inclusion. This assumption contains a serious error because the *modern* formations of race are inherently tied to class and cannot be taken apart.

Revisiting the "Burden"

In the opening of their article Fordham and Ogbu build their arguments upon an incident they encounter in a 1982 column of the *Washington Post*. The story concerns a young black man who feels "humiliated" by his fifth grade teacher who thought that he could not have possibly written an "outstanding essay" about the life of squirrels and instead accused him of plagiarism. The column continues to describe how, in the aftermath of the incident, the young Black man was hurt and angered and as a result "his interest in school waned." The columnist asserts that this moment exemplified a turn in the attitude of a new generation of poor and working class Black people who internalized this false sense of inferiority. In short, the incident demonstrated a defiant stance toward the American opportunity structure that laid in front of them in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. This moment was evidence of a general "ambivalence toward success" that Fordham and Ogbu argue is taught by the community by defining academic success as a "prerogative of white persons." Therefore, according to Fordham and Ogbu, this antagonistic response to the post-Civil Rights opportunity structure explains the pervasive academic underachievement within these communities.

However, Fordham and Ogbu misinterpret what it means to be Black and Latino children attending schools. As Fordham and Ogbu (1986) write in their analysis of the incident: "The problem arose partly because white Americans *traditionally* refused to acknowledge that Black Americans are capable of intellectual achievement, and partly because Black Americans subsequently began to doubt their own intellectual ability, began to define academic success as white people's prerogative…" (p.177, my emphasis). The sense here is that racism was something that happened in the past and from time to time might be opened by "insensitive" or "ignorant" white American individuals. As such responses to and attitudes about racism reflect past injustices that should be shrugged off as a "youthful," illogical and outdated form of thinking.

Furthermore, even through both the columnist and the researchers cite the incident as evidence of an oppositional attitude (i.e. the choice to participate in a culture of failure), the description of the incident itself points us to a different narrative that includes a story about the fresh and traumatic wounds of racism in post-civil rights America. The authors and the reporters touch on the fact that the incident is humiliating and hurtful, in short traumatic, yet they do not instead see someone who is pain. Rather they see someone who is unable to correctly process a situation and moves improperly toward a defiant posture.

Incidents of existential trauma like the ones experienced by the young man above were not foreign to my students at LHA and SMA. In the discussion of the "Bear that wasn't" story, many students reported a heightened awareness of "whiteness" when they went on interviews for prep schools they were being prepared to enter. As Chris from LHA stated: "I feel afraid when I go on interviews. I feel like if the interviewer is white I have less of a chance of getting in" (Fieldnotes, October 21, 2011). This fear of the gaze of white people is noteworthy given the fact that these students have been labeled as high achievers who are posited as diametrically opposed to the

students who are underachieving in public schools. In some sense, they should not have doubts about their ability or capacity. Nonetheless, Chris' comment also signals previous anxieties and fears that he may have come across with regards to feeling judged by white people.

For instance, white judgment of black and brown bodies was centered subsequent to the collective emotional "triggering" black families experienced in the wake of the murder of Trayvon Martin. From an array of Black communities, men and boys (including President Barack Obama) shared their stories of being stop and frisked, being racially profiled and being stereotyped. In conjunction with this event, people in these populations publicly disclosed the common occurrence of the "talk" that many parents have especially with their male identified children, regarding their entrance into a racist society.

With this in mind, I highlight that these wounds noted by Fordham and Ogbu are less about the overt biological racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Grosfoguel & Georas, 2003; Quijano, 2007) that characterized "pre" civil rights discourse and practices (e.g. Jim Crow segregation, eugenics and other forms of overt racial discrimination). Still it's neither about antiquated notions of racism produced in isolation by individual racists. Instead the *Washington Post* columnist observes the other face of racism; what Bonilla-Silva (2003) calls "color-blind racism" where biological racism goes underground, while leaving intact long-standing power relations in the areas of knowledge, culture and being. To be clear, the boy was not discriminated against by his teacher because she said, "Blacks are inferior." Rather, the racism emerges more subtly in her *skepticism* that he, a Black male, could produce knowledge. As Gordon (2000 & 2005) argues, it is not that the black subject produces failure but that he in his very existence *is* the source of failure. The boy who at the time of the incident was only a fifth grader, but was at the time of the Washington Post article a 20 year old, was according to his mother only "recently" able to articulate his feelings surrounding the racist encounter. One could make the argument that part of this inability to fully articulate the pain comes from the trauma of that encounter with his teacher and that his inability to heal from that moment is what pushed him away from schooling.

I now turn to an alternative narrative of race, one that understands how the foundational logic of race does not rely exclusively on "defunct" institutions of slavery and the "old Jim Crow" to reproduce relations of power. Rather, the following literature review and theoretical framework proposes that race is based on an ongoing and fluid set of logics and practices that have outlasted the original institutions and conditions under which they were phenomenologically produced. Specifically, race inhabits more than biology; it also can be found in "colorblind" notions of the political economy, law, culture, knowledge and being, that attempt to claim a universality and transcendentalism, but ultimately are based on Eurocentric and exclusionary understandings of humanism. Moreover, race did not achieve its global ascendency separately from other social forces such as gender and class. In concert with these other vectors of difference, race and racism produce an exclusionary humanism, as well as the controlling images, that exacts its existential toll upon children in both their communities and their schools. It is not a burden that is self imposed or outdated, but is instead one that is a product of ongoing societal and institutional patterns. The following is a brief intellectual history of race, class and gender through the perspective of the "Coloniality Group."

Race, Class and the Human

In his work *Capitalist World-Economy*, Immanuel Wallerstein (1979) disturbed long held beliefs and assumptions present in the social sciences. His World-Systems Analysis argues that a

world economy has existed for the past 500 years and what is seen as "stages of the economy" or "modes of production" were not separate entities, but one world-system that has a particular history and objective. Understanding "reciprocity, slavery, serfdom, and independent commodity production" (Quijano, 2000. p.550) as pre-capitalist obscures the direct relationship these have to modernity and capitalism.

Following Wallerstein, a group of intellectuals from the Global South created studies in *coloniality* (Moraña, Dussel & Jáuregui, 2008). These scholars argue that our current knowledge systems often times rely exclusively on European thought to define universal terms such as modernity, humanity, society, knowledge, culture and being. One prominent strand of this theory is Quijano's (2000) idea of the *coloniality of power*. This framework contends that coloniality is a matrix of power that emerges from the history of colonialism and persists even after the end of formal colonial administration. In line with the "Coloniality Group" Quijano makes two important arguments. First, he asserts that modernity begins in the sixteenth century with the opening of the Atlantic commercial circuits. Second, he is critical of neo-liberal capitalism, liberal democratic theory and colonialism (Castro-Gómez, 2008). Quijano maintains that to understand the international division of labor and class, one must examine how the world's economic system and race were co-constituted and were created. Quijano (2000) states:

> One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality. (p. 533)

The modern-colonial capitalist world-system is not an arbitrary sorting of bodies that will indiscreetly position or "class" people in the different parts of the world system. Quijano argues that the idea of race, which "expresses" the struggle to justify the enslavement, coercion and religious conversion of natives in the Americas (and soon after chattel slavery) for economic exploitation, put forth the basic premise that there were those who were human and those who were not (Quijano, 2007; Williams, 1944). This is critical because what Quijano (2007) does in making this argument is to specify the logic of race. In contrast to black white binary narratives of race, especially in the U.S., Quijano argues that the origins of race are not reducible to the biological or phenotypical. The ensuing policies, intellectual debates, institutions and economic exploitation of the Americas allowed for an articulation of race as a question of humanity. To be sure, classificatory ideas of color, slavery, religion and culture had precursors in Europe, but these would not be articulated with the *modern* notion of race until after 1492 (Alcoff, 2003; Quijano, 2007; Williams, 1944). Different theories and strategies of colonialism (Osterhammel, 2005) along with other technologies of race such as "anti-black racism," "nativism," "genealogies of cultural origin" and "language discrimination" (Alcoff, 2003), are all articulated with Eurocentric notions of humanity from that point forward.

Ultimately, situating the global ascension of race as a category of social classification arising out of colonial conquest in the Americas allows us to move away from the naturalization of race and the inevitably of racism. Quijano (2007) writes: "Relegating race to biology or as natural way of organizing the world is a political concession that sustains the myth of modernity

thesis" (p. 51). The myth of modernity, fully articulated during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries by Kant (1781) and Hegel (1807) can be understood as the notion that there is an original state of nature from which the process of historical development departs and thus moves us from the primitive to the modern: from the barbaric to the civilized. As a result, those whom are experiencing inequality and failure within society only have their backwards culture, race and society to blame.

Race permitted Europeans to center themselves politically, economically and *epistemically* by associating races with different stages of human history. As result, "some 'races' are closer to 'nature' than others and are therefore 'inferior' to those which have managed to distance themselves as much as possible from the state of nature" (Quijano, 2007, p.53). This association of race with a particular *time* and *space* is important since it set forth a relationship of particular races with claims to being modern or barbaric. Inevitably those deemed to be outside modernity, are seen as less than human thus justifying their lack of resources, wealth and "failure" within this system as a product of their *natural* stage of "development" (Castro-Gómez, 2008). Effectively, the articulation of race with time and space enhances the capacity of the ensuing power relations to seem inevitable and normal. For instance, notions of First World versus Third World or "development" and "underdevelopment" that figure prominently in Brooks' commentary on Haiti, have shaped our modern sensibilities regarding our explanations for the occurrence of modern inequality.

Race and Gender

Maria Lugones (2007) makes a critique of Anibal Quijano's theory of the coloniality of power by asserting that Quijano theorizes sex as an inherently biological category. According to Lugones, Quijano dismisses race as a fictitiously phenotypical concept but "restricts gender to the organization of sex, its resources, and products" (p.194). Lugones reexamines Quijano's definition and states that sex is also a political category coming from a Eurocentric worldview. Similar to Rubin (1975) and Wittig (1992), Lugones illuminates the social relations of domination present in the very notions of gender and sex. However, pushing the analysis further, Lugones discusses how gender/sex categories are bound by time and space and, as a result, are culturally specific power relations imposed through Euro-expansion. In addition, the Eurocentricity of those categories enables scholars to go into Non-Western cultures and read gender *into* other cosmologies without it necessarily being the mode of organizing people in other societies. Crucial to this understanding is that gender is not just a descriptive category, but is a political and ideological category that is co-articulated with the coloniality of power.

What is central to Lugones, is that the colonial/modern gender system is made colonial, through the category of sex in two ways: first, the modern-colonial gender system reduced infinite human variation into radical separations or dualisms. *Radical separation*, a concept fully articulated through the Cartesian mind/body distinction, posited the world in the form of dualisms, thus introducing a western concept that was not universal (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Grosfoguel, 2007; Hodge, 1990; Lugones, 2007; Oyewumi, 1997). Second, sex works both to regulate individual bodies, but also configures social relations that legitimate heteronormativity. In turn, heterosexuality as a social construct itself, was applied differentially among the colonizer and the colonized. This can be seen, historically, in the ways non-white sexuality is constantly put into question through anti-miscegenation laws, culture of poverty debates and alternative cosmological beliefs (Briggs, 2002; Carvajal, 2003; Estes, 2005; Somerville, 2000).

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Briggs (2002) discusses the ways in which the "discursive and ideological arena of reproduction and sexuality became particularly important" (p. 75) in the understanding of relationships between race, sex, science and empire in Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican Diaspora in the U.S. Ultimately Briggs asserts that understanding the policies and political discourses around sterilization, motherhood, family and prostitution allow one to understand not simply race, gender and sexuality *within* empire but how race, gender, sex and science are *pivotal* to building an empire. Similar to Lugones, Briggs deftly illuminates how race and gender are articulated specifically in the "culture of poverty" debates of the mid twentieth century.

As Briggs points out, to understand the ways in which this articulation of race and sex became prominent during the height of neo-conservative and neo-liberal U.S. society, one must look at the transformation of race during this time. In discussing the genealogy of the "culture of poverty" Briggs provides a compelling case for the ways race and sex are co-constitutive elements. It is worth quoting Briggs at length:

> Ultimately, the literature both reflected and encapsulated the process through which the idiom of race shifted from biology to social science…until the 1930s Puerto Rican difference was marked chiefly in terms of biological race, degeneracy-or in the case of progressive eugenics, positively, in terms of the (never complete) possibility of race improvement…Through the 1940s and '50s, the biologism of experts' knowledge of Puerto Ricans appeared to soften somewhat; overpopulation had social science roots. However, though apparently a product of statistics and economics, overpopulation was also a product of eugenics…its solution was medical and scientific, in "the pill" and sterilization. It is the 1960s, really, that one encounters a fully developed culturally saturating social science of Puerto Rican difference in the culture-of-poverty thesis. The key to it was still reproductive…but "culture" now did they work of "race." (p. 165)

What is telling about the description is the ways in which science, a Eurocentric episteme, works to configure race, sex and gender. It shows not simply how race *interacts* as a *separate* logical system with gender, but rather how racialized-gendered or gendered-racialized *meanings* are produced though scientific discourses. Drawing from Lugones' insights, there are two ways in which Puerto Rican women become the "dark side" of the heterosexualised colonial/modern gender system, the subhuman side. First, the *gender* of Puerto Rican women is put into question because in some ways they are seen as animal-like through racialized discourses which posited racialized peoples as closer to nature, not yet a part of the final stage of human progress. Theories of recapitulation for instance often stated that racialized peoples were on the same level as animals, children and, to some extent, white women (Bederman, 1995; Mills, 1997; Riggs, 1987; Sommerville, 2000). In another sense, these women were seen as possessing a sex but not *femininity,* in the way animals do; they are seen as possessing a biological sex but not a socially constructed gender. A clarifying example can be found with Black women in what Collins (1990/2000) calls the "mule image." Collins writes: "…one core theme in U.S. Black feminist thought consists of analyzing Black women's work, especially Black women's labor market victimization as "mules." As dehumanized objects, mules are living machines and can be treated as scenery. Fully human women are less easily exploited" (p.45).

Returning to Briggs, what permits such parallels to animality are key words such as "overpopulation" and "sterilization." These words, which are normally utilized to discuss the

behavior or actions to be taken upon animals, are deployed openly when discussing the sexual behaviors and "pathologies" of Puerto Rican women and by extension men. Sex—as a western modern-colonial category—organizes and imposes a set of relationships that regulate not only what relations are heterosexual, but also who is heterosexual in ways that move beyond sexual orientation.

Another example of racialized gender, specifically concerning Black and Latino men and boys, can be found in discussing the circumstances surrounding the "Zoot Suit Riots" during World War II. According to Luis Alvarez (2008), the zoot suit was a form of fashion that emerged out of African American and Latino participation in Swing Jazz musical movement. It was a statement of defiance in the face of a war-time society that valorized conservative expressions of masculinity and femininity embodied by marines and other wartime personnel. For example, in Los Angeles, *pachucos* and *pachucas*—terms that expressed the lived realities of a generation of youth who were in-between Mexican and American—wore zoot suits. They were a hybrid generation culturally, politically and socially. Being pachuco was tied to an attitude or swagger that we might relate to the "cool pose." However, being called a "pachuco or a pachuca" was also a derogatory term that was imposed by whites and Mexican and Mexican American parents, who did not want their own children to resemble who the media had labeled as "knuckleheads", "criminals," or "loose women." This cultural, social and political war with respect to the zoot suiters erupted during the Zoot Suit riots of 1943.

Tensions had been rising as a result of segregation and criminalization of Mexican-American youth. Barrios, like ghettos, were used to isolate and control populations that were not regarded as part of the citizenry (i.e. politically, economically and socially). Conflicts between soldiers walking through "pachuco barrios" only fueled these already rising antagonisms. One night an altercation between service men harassing a group of Mexican-American women and pachucos who had witnessed the interaction led to white servicemen going on the hunt for pachucos in zoot suits. Eventually they began to indiscriminately attack anyone who "appeared" to be Mexican-American. Pachucos fought back and also participated in the violence yet they were disproportionately incarcerated and criminalized.

Recall Lugones' claim that European gender arrangements did not simply create two genders for all people. Rather, she argues that race created a hierarchy of gender and sexual expression that was utilized to make inferior other societies and cultures. With regards to the zoot suit we see a similar dynamic play out with the juxtaposition of wartime personnel and zoot suiters. Wartime masculinities and femininities like "Rosie the Riveter" as well as the white serviceman were gaining prominence and were juxtaposed to these purported deviant young Black, Mexican-American and Asian-American youth. Unlike "minority" youth, the servicemen encapsulated "Americaness" through notions of whiteness, manhood and military service. The zoot suiters use of accessories, fabric and highly stylized walks were seen as excessive and deviant in a wartime economy that stressed conservation and frugality.

However, male zoot suiters were also seen as feminine because of their attention to dress. This further marked them as outside of gender. For instance, their coat tails were compared to skirts and were seen as an assault on American values of manhood. Similarly, the pachucas, were also targeted for shaming and divergent genre expression because of both their more androgynous apparel and their more "liberal" usage of skirts and blouses. They were often called prostitutes by the mass media because of their all female outings and their distinct forms of dress. In certain instances, they opened up lesbian clubs and social halls that were thought to be at odds with notions of white femininity (Alvarez, 2008).

These events and practices of racial *and* gender policing provide evidence for the workings of forms of domination, which are historically, materially and epistemically *coarticulated* on a world-scale around Eurocentric notions of the human *after* 1492. Not commenting on the mutual constitution of these systems of oppression erases men and women of color from the conversation (Crenshaw, 1991; Mohanty, 1988; Truth, 1881). In other words, Collins' example of the "mule" allows us to understand not only that Black women by virtue of the "intersections" of race, class and gender are exploited, but rather how the notion of humanity is in concert with a set of distinct but historically and materially co-articulated forms of domination that are not recognized in the conceptualization of race offered earlier by Fordham and Ogbu.

In short, what scholars in coloniality have allowed us to see are the ways in which observing the "humanistic" logic of race expands the areas and practices where we may identify racial relations of power. This is a crucial tool for an analysis in the contemporary context where despite the ideology of "color-blindness" young Black and Latino men continue to contend with practices, feelings and ideologies that produce a sense of exclusion from modern society. While the "coloniality of power" as a larger structural and historical account provides us the "bigger picture' of the sociological drama that has occurred over the past 500 years, it does not always allow for an adequate understanding of the everyday experiences of race, class and gender. For this reason, I will now turn to the "theories of existence" provided by the philosophers Lewis Gordon and Frantz Fanon.

Towards a Philosophical Anthropology of Education

Philosophical anthropology examines what it means to be human. Unlike empirical anthropology, which presupposes the legitimacy of the human sciences, including their methodologies, philosophical anthropology challenges the methods themselves and the presuppositions of the human offered by each society. (Gordon, 2009, para. 10)

ARG: When you walked through the doors of the school in the morning, do you feel like you have to change who you are?
IRVIN :Originally yea, but not as much maybe. Because when I first came here, I feel like oh, people are gonna be watching me and that being my parents always reinforce that people in this world always have their eyes on you, people are waiting for you to make mistakes. So that they could judge you on it. So you have to try harder and harder to prove yourself to people. So I realized that, first when I came here, I feel like I have to be on my game 24/7, so I could be successful and be able to do and accomplish what I need to. But at first I kinda changed who I was, like I'd be one way with the teachers, but I wouldn't be the same person going home on the bus or whatever. But then, I felt that once I realized that this is a really open environment where I don't have to change myself. I could honestly be the person I am and be accepted for it. It kinda opened up who I actually am.

[..]

ARG: When you mention like, your folks, you talked about "all eyes are on me". What

were those conversations about, like in what sense, what was the context of that phrase and that conversation with your folks?

IRVIN: Oh, basically I take the car with my dad every morning. So everyday he tries to influence me like, when you go out into the world you're representing not just yourself but your family and the school you go to. And you have to present, you don't want to present yourself in a negative light. Because people, being that I'm an African American... person, there's gonna always be people in this world. Nothing is ever gonna be handed to me, I know that. So I have to work, work extra hard than most people do, to prove myself and get what I really want in life. So when I come here, or when I go into an interview, or I go into this world where it's predominantly white. There's not a lot of black people who aren't gonna be in the same situation as me. You have to show from the meeting based off the first impression, you have to look sharp or look the part, and then I have to speak like I know what I'm saying and stuff like that. So, they try to influence me with the, cuz my parents don't BS me they tell me what it is. So, they basically have influenced me that, the reality is that nothing's gonna be handed to you. So if you don't work harder than the next person to your left and the person to your right you're never gonna get what you want. (Interview, May 1, 2012)

Irvin's comments reveal that the intergenerational and ongoing trauma of racism requires that many parents, especially in poor and working class Black and Latino communities, have "the talk" with their children concerning a rite of passage that awaits them as young adults. This passage requires students to assert their personhood and humanity, in the face of a society that exerts the pressures of racism on their existence and being. I use the term "the talk" since it resembles other rites of passage into adulthood that parents prepare their children for, namely sexual activity. Through similar talks students of color are prepared to encounter the contours of race and racism in American society. Specifically, parents of poor and working class Black and Latino boys prepare their children to encounter the gaze of *dehumanization*.

In his landmark work *Existentia Africana*, Gordon (2000) reorganizes and reconfigures a philosophical area of inquiry that deals with the questions raised by the experiences of conquest and colonization. In particular, he highlights the ways in which colonized peoples "face the lived, existential reality of the day-to-day situation of their denied humanity and the historical irony of their emergence in a world that denied their historicity." In short Africana philosophy begs us to answer the questions: "Who are Africana peoples? And for what ought such people be striving?" These questions become especially complicated since to engage in a "humanistic" social science that attempts to study the "inner life" of Black and Latino peoples, means dealing with lives that are simultaneously dynamic and diverse while also socially constructed as homogenous.

Moreover, when those who are racialized are faced with the failures of liberal democratic society, they must also deal with the sense that they are *themselves* failures (Gordon, 2005). Frantz Fanon (1952/1967) calls the internalization and lived experiences of structural failure *sociogenic*. It is the phenomenon of living and internalizing social constructions which are not innate but nonetheless work on our subjectivities and perceptions of reality to mystify the real source of dehumanization. For instance, when Irvin states that "Nothing is ever is going to be handed" to him, and as a result he must work harder than others, we are witnessing in some sense a moment where the failures of a society to provide for the basic needs of young Black and Latino men are being internalized by him as a need for *him* to work harder. To be clear, this is

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not just about "trying hard" but rather, Irvin experiencing a general state where "all eyes are watching you" and where there is a heightened likelihood of failure.

Therefore, as Gordon (2000) argues, at the heart of this philosophy is an inherently existential thematic. He states: "Existential philosophy addresses problems of freedom, anguish, dread, responsibility, embodied agency, sociality, and liberation; it addresses these problems through a focus on the human condition" (p.7). The two questions he keys in on are: "What are we?" and "What shall we do?" While Gordon acknowledges that there is a European tradition that calls itself Existentialist that dealt with the stagnation of European society in the twentieth century as well as the anxieties over what was to come in the future, he also argues that the Americas has a tradition of its own. The sources of concern took on a different character; more precisely there was a deep concern over the problems of race (e.g.: Slavery and Emancipation). When Irvin asks me why schools are aimed at Black and Latino populations, in a sense Irvin is expressing his consciousness of himself and his community as "a problem." Perhaps one of the most recognizable manifestations of this existential question comes through the work of W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1999) when he poses the question: "What does it feel to be a problem?" This question is especially relevant in discussing the experiences of poor and working class Black and Latino boys who are frequently regarded as "at-risk" and in more crude terms as an "endangered species."

While philosophers like Jean Paul Sartre and other European existentialists influenced many Africana thinkers on the questions surrounding the nature of their existence, Gordon is careful to state that European existential thought provided the opportunity for Africana philosophers to further extrapolate their reflection on existence and did not *cause* them to become existentialists. Rather Gordon calls the thinking of people like Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, Gloria Anzaldúa and Octavio Paz *philosophies of existence*. These are the theories that I use to frame this dissertation, theories that question blind reliance on universalist notions of human development and behavior as guides to observation and analysis. Specifically, as the boys continued to speak of feeling contradictions, internal turmoil and the lived "inconsistencies" of a "post-racial" U.S. society, it became obvious that both the method and the theoretical framing for this dissertation would have to deploy a philosophical anthropological perspective. Gordon mentions that such a method allows us to better observe and understand behavior, emotions, interactions and ideas that otherwise might not be made legible within the larger contours of western social sciences.

The notion of "socialization" as it is loosely used to mean the *neutral* and *passive* learning of socially sanctioned norms and behaviors, did not capture the more fluid, active and emotionally charged process that was described by the young men in this study (Thorne, 1993). For them, because of their age, race, class and gender positions, the rite of passage into manhood proved to be more high stakes. An inability to be made legible as a "good" or "proper" Black or Latino boy could spell trouble since the stigma of being read a "ghetto" urban youth often meant a foreclosure on future opportunities and resources.

Conclusions

While strict cultural and behavioral explanations of underachievement may help liberal and conservative educational reformers feel more "pragmatic," uncritically taking up these perspectives ultimately hurts poor and working class Black and Latino children. While many may feel powerless to immediately change the structures which produce societal failures leading

to inequality, poverty and racism, there are in fact "No Excuses" for failing to be accountable to our children for the problems they experiences on a daily basis. While arguments like those of Fordham and Ogbu attempt to reconcile cultural and structural arguments, their theorizing of racial experiences as a "vestiges" of oppression which in turn create a caste-like group of incapacitated people, limits their ability to identify the root causes of this pain.

In contrast, I submit that theories of coloniality as well as the philosophical anthropological perspective advocated in this chapter, are well suited to begin the task of owning the complexities of the *ongoing* ideologies, structures and practices of race, class and gender that shape the present feelings of angst and contradiction experienced by Black and Latino boys in this study. Moreover, guided by these theoretical perspectives I was more able to hear, see and feel forms of pain and trauma that many children are grappling with in contemporary U.S. society.

The data comprised of the lives and thinking of academically successful young men and women at LHA and SMA, indicate that despite their past attempts to assert academically successful orientations towards schooling, and often times their having been rewarded institutionally for their behaviors, these students, especially boys, often hit the limits of twenty-first century U.S. society. While many students attempted to perform a culture of power, their enactments of a middle class Eurocentric culture abandoned them when their everyday realities of race, class and gender constantly put them at odds with both school culture and their respective neighborhood communities. Failed performances resulted in moments of confusion and contradiction where students felt a state of liminality that can only be described by what Fanon called "non-being" that barred them, from a meaningful engagement with schools and/or their communities (Fanon, 1952/1967; Gordon, 2005). Despite being in a "gifted and talented" school, many of these students drew the attention of teachers and administrators for exhibiting oppositional behaviors and attitudes that sometimes hampered their academic success. The next chapter contends that the ability for Black and Latino students to fully *exist* in school and society and the issue of academic engagement and achievement are more accurately understood when we center the debilitating impacts of racialized and classed notions of humanness.

Chapter 3
Black and Latino Students and the Burden of Acting Human

To stay true to an existential perspective, I was committed not only to getting a sense what it meant for these young men to be at the border of so many kinds of passages, crossings, developmental stages, identities and communities but also to appreciating how it felt to be going through this time in their lives. In an attempt to do so, I engaged in what Alves (1993) calls "travel alongs." In brief, this methodology calls for traveling with participants through particular spaces they occupy and monitoring both how the students *feel* by asking them questions and checking in with them, while also keeping track of how one, as a researcher, feels walking through these spaces and places. This method allows the researcher to gain further insight into any relevant emotions and experiences that participants may or may not encounter. As an educational researcher, these instances were critical in developing rapport and relationships with my students. At the same time, this also allowed me to understand the other contexts that shaped the students' ways of being and knowing.

For most of the students at SMA and LHA, travel is a formative part of their educational experience. Since SMA and LHA are located in the city center, many students take public transit from the outer neighborhoods of the city. On one travel along, Leon, a seventh grader at SMA, had to take 3 different trains, a bus, and a 12 minute walk home for a total of over 2 hours *each way*. While Leon was regarded as an excellent student he would at times be late for homeroom and periodically had difficulty finishing homework assignments which caused tensions with some teachers who were unaware of his travel plan. Furthermore, for students who in some cases were leaving their neighborhoods for the first time on a consistent basis, their travel, while exciting and novel, also pushed them to confront issues of race and class from a unique liminal position. For them, the "city center" area could be regarded as another world where they would go to receive a better education away from their neighborhoods, only to return to a reality that was qualitatively different from the perceived glamour of the city center. For some students it was not only a "nicer" place but, a *white* place:

> ARG: Can you tell me a little bit more about where the school was at?
> HECTOR: [The outer neighborhoods]. I guess you really wouldn't expect that in a school like in [the city center].
> ARG: Why not?
> HECTOR: Well, I don't know for some reason it's like a class thing. Also in [this city]. I mean most of the schools [the city center] aren't free so I guess that's part of the reason and also transportation issues. And also kids just like going to school near their houses. They don't like going far to school. (Interview, April 24, 2012)

> ARG: what do your friends in your neighborhood think about you being at this school?
> TITO: My friends told me ... they don't want me in this school, they want me to be with them. They're like, oh come over here, that school is for white kids.
> ARG: Why do you think [your friends] talk about this school being for white kids?
> TITO: I think one reason is cuz it's from... it's in [the city center], and if they probably have like a stereotype that any school [in the city center] is... are for... only for white people, so I guess that's why, and also because the way I've been speaking, they say that I speak like a white person, and even like... I do speak... I don't consider I speak like

formally sometimes, but then I... I do have the colloquialism that, uumm... that they do sometimes, but they're like, oh no, when you're just speaking like to another person, like from the street, you speak to them like you would if you were [in the city center], or something like that. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

As noted in the previous chapter the burden is not simply about peer approval to assimilate into a white middle class society, but rather it is about how the lived realities of these attempts are constantly riddled with the limits of those ideals. In Tito's perspective, his peers' usage of the label, the notion of SMA as "white," has little to do with the actual curriculum or content of his coursework (although we will also see how these struggles play out in classes as well); instead what the label "white" alludes to is a complex set of relationships of power that manifest themselves in neighborhoods, language and dress. These relationships of power are created by racial segregation of the city, and the ensuing devaluation of poor and working class communities: their culture, patterns of speech, and forms of dress. For Tito, to understand his school as white is not about associating a good school with white people, but rather it is a more complex understanding of how that valuation is created through space and power.

In this chapter, I will examine multiple ways in which students at SMA and LHA live the inconsistency of color-blindness in their schools and in their communities, as they attempt to "act the part" of high achieving students of color. Attempts to "act the part" entail striving towards (white) middle class cultural norms as a means of achieving upward mobility. Nonetheless, I found that these cultural undertakings produce two-way burdens that are imposed by peers, and by schools and larger society in ways that (re)produce conflict and tension upon their sense of self. I analyze schools and look at how school dress codes, curricular knowledge and patterns of speech become highly contested areas where race, class and gender enact regulatory modes that produce experiences of existential dissonance. Furthermore, I shift from the schools to the neighborhoods to highlight the larger contexts that exist outside of schools and that the students inhabit and contend with along with race, class and gender lines. In particular, I examine the relationship of the students to the multiple physical spaces they inhabit as they traverse different neighborhoods. Moreover, I pay close attention to how these experiences are reflective of race and racialization processes that make them aware of their race and class positions. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion of the students' peer culture and their relationship to their public schools counterparts. More specifically, I reexamine the notion of "acting white" and reinterpret this phenomenon as an informal collective expression of accumulated, but unacknowledged, institutional racism that students do not always have the tools to express, but to which they have an emotional response.

Christian Humanism at LHA and SMA

In the age of No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, Common Core Standards and "no excuses" charter schools characterized by a banking style of education (Freire, 1970/2000) that emphasizes teaching to the test, SMA and LHA are truly exceptional. An examination of the curriculum and course offerings provides evidence of a humanistic liberal arts and science foundation. What I mean by humanistic in this context is broad; the curriculum of both schools closely follows the western intellectual history that is attributed to the Greco-Roman era, becomes prominent in the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and was consolidated in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The basic assumption held by

western education in this genealogy is that through education we can attain further levels of human development, that is, through a study of "human knowledge" in its array of forms we can learn to become "more human" (Bullock, 1985; Haymes, 2001). The Renaissance constituted a shift from a medieval epistemology centered on God and the church, to the ability of understanding the natural world, of which humans were a part, through rationalism (science and mathematics) (Bullock, 1985; Mignolo, 2008; Wynter, 1995). This capacity to produce authoritative knowledge through science and mathematics relied on empiricists throughout Europe. Figures such as David Hume, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and others argued that reason, born out of human experiences, was a way of knowing man and nature (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Eze, 2001; Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

It is with this broad understanding of humanism, and the movements that promoted its global ascendency, that I classify SMA and LHA as possessing a humanistic approach to educating their students. For instance at SMA, reading the titles of the courses required for students, one would think that these early adolescent poor and working class Black and Latino students were attending an expensive private prep school or a small liberal arts college. In addition to the usual math, science and English language arts classes, students are required to take four years of language instruction (e.g.: Spanish, French, Latin). Additionally, students are required to take elective courses in the areas of philosophy, religion, social science and history. Some highlights include American Studies, Adolescent Psychology, Physical Science, Astronomy, Drama, Shakespeare, and Still Life. While structured differently, LHA has a similar commitment to this humanistic education; the boys at LHA take classes in Ancient Civilizations, Art, and Languages. Unlike their co-ed counterparts, the boys also have physical education, library science, and advisory groups.

Perhaps what makes these schools even more unusual is their combination of a liberal humanistic foundation with a decidedly Catholic sensibility that guides the overall mission of the schools. Both schools are influenced by the spiritual, pedagogical and intellectual tradition of Christian Brothers[11] that dates back to the founder of this tradition who lived in seventeenth century Europe. The mission of both schools, to target economically disadvantaged students, comes from the Christian Brothers' founder's initial controversial move to develop schools, teachers and curricula that addressed the intellectual, spiritual and social *needs* of poor and working class boys in Europe, who were at the time not considered to be worthy of an education. One significant example of this move to address the needs of students was the founder's decision to teach in vernacular first, instead of Latin. Unlike most other schools at the time which taught students in Latin first, the Brothers felt that students needed to learn in the language that they regularly heard and lived with. Moreover, this tradition also encouraged students, teachers and parents to be aware of the socio-economic circumstances around them, so that they could be agents for respecting the dignity of the poor and act as stewards of social justice. That being said, the European schools informed by this tradition sought to expose students, at whatever level of worship and spiritual development, to the life and teaching of the Gospel and to offer up a uniquely Christian perspective of the world without imposing this view upon its students.

SMA is particularly aligned with the original mission of this pedagogical tradition. Students at SMA are required to take some form of what the school calls "Faith and Values" courses at different points throughout their careers, as well as attend periodic retreats. Elective courses include: Faith in the Face of God; Old and New Testament; as well as a Moral course. All of these faith electives play a delicate balance between the strong Catholic tradition that

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[11] In order to protect the identity of the school I can only speak about this tradition in broad terms.

informs the school philosophy and the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the study body. While the rest of this chapter will focus more on the liberal humanistic element of the schools, I will argue in chapter 5 that these faith and values courses work to create a unique language and culture at SMA. The cultural and spiritual ethos of the school allows different students to access conversations through spirituality, that enable them to process emotions, pains, and challenges in ways that provide healing.

To reiterate, while the structures and emphases of SMA and LHA are distinct, both schools maintain a commitment to the core mission of the Christian Brothers which is "the development of the whole person: body, mind, heart and spirit" (Field Documents, 2011). This is manifested in LHA, for instance, in their work to provide the young men with advisory groups, retreats, workshops and weekly community forums that touch on issues that range from health and wellness, race and class to the politics of microcredits in India. Like their counterparts at SMA each class and major event at LHA begins with a simple prayer, which was introduced by the Christian Brothers and later modified by the faculty of SMA: "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of our God and in the holy presence of one another," as a reminder of this shared spiritual tradition.

Overall, students greatly enjoyed the breadth and nature of this humanistic and liberal arts curriculum as compared to their previous schools, which many times were public. For instance, Iman, a seventh grader, and Chris, an eighth grader, both from LHA, describe the contrast between attending his previous public schools and then coming to LHA:

> IMAN: I learned about LHA because I was doing well. I was getting all fours in all my classes, and I wasn't learning anything in my classes, so my teachers told my mom about the school, and that the kids were pushed there. Then I wanted to go to a school where I was learning stuff, cuz I started tutoring other kids that were my age and younger and I didn't wanna do that because I wasn't learning anything myself. So then I was going to go here… It was usually a worksheet. Kinda 10 minutes, 5 minutes, and I would start talking. Sometimes I would get in trouble cuz I was talking and I didn't have anything to do. (Interview, May 16, 2012)

> CHRIS: The teachers they didn't really — if another student had a problem doing anything they wouldn't want it to become their problem. So they would get somebody like me, or somebody who was a little more advanced and get us to sort of do their work for them. You could say that. But they would tell us, "Oh, go help him, go help him." And then just sit at their desks doing whatever it is that they're doing. Because it was mostly we had a workbook, do the same workbook, take quizzes, but there was no real discussions, no in-depth sort of talks you can have with anybody there. (Interview. May 3, 2012)

Both narratives are familiar to many of us who have worked inside of public schools across this country. These comments provide evidence of an anti-humanistic and anti-intellectual approach to education. It impacts not only "high needs" children, but also seemingly "academically gifted and talent" students as well, not to mention the gradations of students in between who fall through the cracks of educational research and reform because they are "well-behaved" or are simply not falling behind. Iman's comment that he was "getting fours" was a common theme in many of my formal and informal conversations with students. For instance Tito tell us:

I think in a lot of public schools, people know that... the teachers know the students by what they grade, they don't really know their personality, in a way they don't really care about their personality, cuz they don't really talk about it, just care about their grade. If I was in a public school, and I was getting a four, [inaudible] they wouldn't let anything happen to me, but if there was another person that was getting twos and ones, and they were nicer than me, they wouldn't really care about them, because they really weren't doing anything academically to satisfy the teacher's needs or wants. Here, I feel like the teachers actually care about you more of your personality than your academics, in a way it's both, but more of personality because if you put effort into your work they'll say that you really try hard academically, and that you have a good personality that's how they would know you. They wouldn't know you if you had [inaudible] but you're really mean, they'll know you if you had [inaudible] and you were very nice. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

In fact, some students would go even further and describe their identity in their previous schools as "I was a three" or "I was a four." This phenomenon of students *literally becoming numbers* further cemented this dehumanizing pedagogy that is spreading, in the name of standardization and scientific efficiency, in many of our public schools. According to administrators and students, many of the public schools discouraged the students from applying to SMA or LHA because loosing them would mean that they would loose their "threes" and "fours" and as a result their school profiles would suffer.

When asked to compare the differences in his experiences between his old public school and LHA, Iman explains:

Smaller classrooms. I think I've gotten one hundred percent more attention in class than I've ever gotten before. Teachers are really nice. Sometimes I would have problems with some teachers, cuz I would disagree with them sometimes, but I think I'm a lot closer to my teachers here. The kids, they can kinda relate to me, cuz we've all been in the same situation, which we all had work that was too easy for us, and we know what it's like to be in classrooms where you don't get as much attention. That's a big difference. I think we also have community meeting, where we get to learn about what's happening and about how people feel. It's more of a community. We're in our own society, and the old school was kinda like you can help yourself. (Interview, May 16, 2012).

While Iman focuses on the feel, size, and relationships with the teachers at LHA, and how it made a difference in learning about "what's happening" and "how people feel," Irvin from LHA provides a more detailed description of the pedagogical approach of the schools:

ARG: What are some of the things you like the most about being at this school?
IRVIN: The respect for opinions because I think in certain schools, like in classes, our classes allow us to be, they give you the opportunity to be open, and talk and have real conversations. Sometimes the focus is on the textbook or the book we're reading or whatever. But for the most part these classes are discussion based, with fourteen kids in a classroom. Each person has the opportunity to talk, and it's never ruled by one person. I

feel like I can really say what I wanna say, and give whatever opinion I have freely. (Interview, May 1, 2013)

The students at both schools greatly valued the constructivist nature of the curriculum. In particular they seemed engaged by the centrality of student discussion and the humanistic questions posed by their teachers. Pedro, a sixth grader at SMA, describes one of his favorite classes:

> ARG: What classes or subjects do you enjoy the most?
> PEDRO: FATFOG (Faith in the Face of God).
> ARG: Why FATFOG?
> PEDRO: Number one!
> ARG: Why?
> PEDRO: In "The Shack," I think you sat in once. God is actually three parts. An Asian woman, an African American woman, and a man who's Arab/Middle Eastern. I don't exactly think about that. Sort of like the exact opposite of what you think.
> ARG: What you think God would be?
> PEDRO: Yea. Stereotypically. Umm... God would be an old man, white beard, wearing a robe and sandals. And in the shack she, *SHE*, is an African American woman with black hair and wearing a dress. It's sort of the exact opposite of what you would think. So you can't be exactly sure. (Participant's Emphasis, Interview, April 19, 2012)

As Pedro mentions, I sat in on his FATFOG class. I sat and listened to a room of sixth and seventh graders discuss complex theological questions that included: "Where do we find God?" and "What is the purpose of love?" I watched as the teacher posed these questions to the students, as students posed questions to each other and participated in an open yet guided inquiry. Throughout my time at both schools I readily observed this level of conversation happening across grade levels and classes. The discussions were nuanced, complex and highly abstract at times. Topics included: What is Race?; Identifying Ethnocentricism; Enlightenment Philosophy; Human Rights; The Oedipal Complex as described by Freud; Slaves as Social Non-persons; Colonialism, Power and Hierarchy; and What is a Civilization? Moreover, what fascinated me about Pedro's comments was his excitement in problematizing the normative conceptions of God and more broadly how the curriculum provided a space to ask questions and engage in conversations that pushed him to deal with "the opposite of what you would think." However, despite his intellectual curiosity, Pedro struggled throughout the school year with handing in homework assignments, organizational skills and his ability to focus. Aspects of his struggle were typical of many Black and Latino boys at both schools. The issues centered on academic consistency and capacity to hand in homework assignments.

In fact, in exploratory talks with the schools staff for conducting the dissertation study, a recurring pattern emerged in their concerns; while all of the Black and Latino boys were academically capable of doing the work, a significant percentage of them still underachieved. The pattern, many administrators confessed, would carry on into college admission where a disproportionate number of young Black and Latina women would get into the top schools, including Ivy League institutions, while the boys consistently were denied admission into those colleges and universities. As I mentioned in the introduction, the teachers and administrators were specifically observing a steep decline during the seventh grade year, where presumably

boys were beginning to make their rite of passage into young manhood. This became so much the case that the founder of SMA supported the opening of LHA which runs from fourth grade until eighth grade in order to disrupt the academic decline prominent among the younger boys. However, even though LHA had been functioning for eight years at the time of this research, they had seen little to no change in that critical seventh grade transition year. How and why was this happening?

In examining the curriculum, philosophy, and mission of the schools it becomes apparent that teachers and administrators subscribe to a belief that these students despite their class (and racial-ethnic social positions) - are able to not only achieve but are entitled to an education of the liberal arts and sciences usually reserved for more privileged students. Throughout my time at both SMA and LHA this philosophy and mission of instilling a sense of inquiry and critical thinking was evident. Students benefitted greatly from direct participation in questions of human development, morality, literary criticism, and sociological inquiry. As I will discuss in chapter 5, "expanding" the students areas of inquiry beyond language arts, math and science, provided students with tools to access other conversations that, most notably, allowed them to make sense of their own lives, their challenges, and positions within the world. There were instances, however, in which I observed students reach the limits of liberal humanism as they interacted with the formal and informal curriculum of the schools. I saw instances where despite the student and teacher's good faith in participating in this project of transcendental humanity, the lived experiences and knowledge of students were at odds with universal human ideals. These proverbial "walls" of humanism, present in school curriculum and policy, produced forms of liminality in the areas of knowledge, being and embodiment, and community involvement.

What is a Civilization?

A few weeks into my fieldwork at SMA, I sit in on a social studies class that is comprised mostly of six grade boys and girls. The course, which is the history requirement for the six graders, "explores early civilizations from pre-historic times through the fall of the Roman Empire… [Students] discover each individual culture through exploration of artwork, tools and other indications of lifestyles and philosophies" (Field Document, Required and Elective Course Descriptions Handbook, 2011). I take my seat in the middle row of the classroom to be able to see facial expressions of as many students as possible. I find out that the students will be talking about the features that make up a "civilization." The teacher begins by asking the students: "What makes people a civilization?" Students volunteer a plethora of answers that range from physical security to civil rights. For instance, one student says: "Writing is a symbol of civilization." In agreement the teacher responds: "How else do we know facts? You write them down. If we only speak and don't write how can we believe what we hear? So we write in a universal language." (Fieldnotes, September 13, 2011)

As the discussion continues, the teacher picks up on the theme of civil rights and emphasizes that this is a crucial point. The teacher reinforces the idea that the work that governments do for their people, is a sign of a civilization and explains that while the U.S. government is a good example of this, there are in fact other governments *outside* of the U.S. that do not guarantee these rights for their people. The teacher asks the students to name places where the rights of people are *not* guaranteed by the government. Just as the teacher finishes the question, Shayma, a young African American girl, raises her hand and says: "America doesn't treat Mexicans so good!" I look at the teacher, who is at first clearly taken aback, kindly and calmly answers in a somewhat ambivalent tone: "On some level…" While the teacher tries to be

open, the message was conveyed: it was not the correct answer. I look at the expression of the young woman who scrunches her face and jots down a note. The excitement and enthusiasm with which she had answered the question was now gone from her face. Another student immediately raises his hand and states: "India because they have a caste system." The teacher quickly validates and says "great answer" (Fieldnotes, September 13, 2011).

Later that day I decided to follow up with the young woman during lunch. I let her know that I was following the conversation in class and was very interested in her comment about "America not treating Mexicans so good." I asked her if she remembered that. "Oh yea!" she says, "I remember." I asked her if she would share with me what pushed her to make that comment—why had she decided to provide that answer? In response, she begins to tell me a story about one day when she and her parents were driving through the city. She describes how they drove past a construction site where there were some men of Latino descent working. She tells me that her father pointed to the site and told her that those people working over there are Mexicans and that they are paid very poorly and treated badly by people in this country. She says that she, her father and mother, then had a conversation in the car about how the conditions of (undocumented) Latinos, specifically Mexicans today, are like "blacks during segregation" when blacks lived under the discrimination and violence of Jim Crow.

According to recent insights made by philosophers and sociologists of the Caribbean and Latin America, knowledge is one of the main sites where our ideas of humanity and who is part of the humanity are decided (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2007). On one level, the contestations over what is knowledge and who can produce it are critical in determining, as Shayma's teacher reminds us, of what makes a civilization. In his work, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, historian Walter Mignolo (2003) describes how writing and documentation acted to police the boundaries of knowledge and by extension the boundaries of intellectual traditions, scholarship and ways of knowing. In short, if one did not produce "writing" then that civilization or people, for all intents and purposes, did not exist. What is particularly interesting about the teacher's comment: "How else do we know the facts?" is the notion that this distinction between civilization and non-civilization is justified by the need to develop universality. However, according to Shayma's remarks, this "universal" is not universal, but rather a particular, European humanism, that presents itself as a universal culture or knowledge. This is in part, one of the ways in which race is created in the modern sense; it does not simply pronounce the superiority of a certain perspective by claiming that European thought or American culture or whiteness is superior. What is perhaps more insidious and complex are the ways in which this false sense of universalism excludes and creates a particular human experience.

Moreover, in the case of Shayma, she must also contend with multiple narratives provided both by her family and her teacher. Both the incident inside of the classroom as well as her father's remarks in the car reveal inconsistencies with the narratives surrounding that knowledge. Her interactions with universal human rights as they are lived are what she draws upon in entering a conversation about universal ideas. In the case of the teacher, while he or she may have their own experiences, a choice was made to uphold and value the abstract principles, and not pursue a conversation that may have fostered lively discussion and more profound questions surrounding the politics of history and civilizations. Race operates in this instance by the inability of one to reconcile the universals expounded by teachers, schools and larger society with the realities that students encounter everyday. These moments, while not summoning the overt racial logics and technologies of phenotype and biological inferiority, work to produce a more profound differentiation between what is human and what is not human. In these instances

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students experience a sense of *non-being*; who they are, their experiences, knowledge(s) and perspectives are the *source* of failure (Gordon, 2000; Fanon, 1952/1967). In other words, being working class and non-white, is something that is failing them. One can imagine that such a precarious position can produce psychological complexes and traumas for students of color moving forward if they do not have the support to make sense of these moments of trauma.

On the other hand, Shayma encounters, through her discussion with her father and mother both the notion that, within a legal sense, rights are not applicable to Mexicans and that Blacks are somehow no longer contending with such issues. In one way, her parents act as an existential resource that validates an alternative reading to the teacher's account of civilization. This is particularly helpful in moments where students may feel invalidated by teachers, peers, the media, state officials or schools. On the other hand, her father provides a narrative of a "post-civil rights" era that posits anti-black racism as a thing of the past. While, Shayma's encounter with day laborers and the ensuing conversation about their current social status made her attuned to the inconsistencies of universal human rights in the U.S., her father's own existential dissonance surrounding the narrative of the civil right movement reveals the complexities of the particular moment both students and their parents occupy.

Acting the Part

While knowledge is one important arena for considering the cultural face of race, other important areas that emerged in my study were those of embodiment, language and being. Some of the most interesting moments in my fieldwork came when I would ask the students, at the end of my interviews, if *they* had any questions that they would like to ask me. I often left that up for interpretation and allowed them to ask me questions about my research, my educational history, my own experiences or anything else that was on their mind. I did this as a way of gauging what concerns or issues they were pondering in their own lives or that they were left thinking about after I had interviewed them. What surprised me was that a great number of students wanted to know what I thought about these issues, not simply as a researcher, but as a Latino male. Perhaps one of the questions that I found most insightful was one I was asked by Irvin and his ensuing discussion:

> Why do you think the necessity to have...cuz, I've noticed this for a while, when you look at this school, there's really no white people in this school, when you categorize as white, as being pure white...there's no really white people at this school. I know you went to [St. Mary's Academy], so it's kinda like the same thing...why do you think is the necessity to have schools like that...predominantly Hispanic and Black? (Interview, May 1, 2013)

Irvin's awareness of race and, more broadly, the educational intervention being made on his behalf, is telling. While he gets to the heart of the racial dimensions of the intervention, school administrators, websites and documents seldom mention race as being implicated in the mission of the school. Sure the seemingly race neutral language of "urban" low income, and disadvantaged is used euphemistically—but Irvin cuts past this to assert from his view, what the intervention aims to deal with. Terms like "urban" do not so much neutralize race as seek to obscure it. This embodies the dilemma of needing to address race while trying to deny it. It was a tension that these boys recognized and which is at the heart of Obamerica.

Whenever students asked me these questions I would make sure to have them answer before I responded in full:

ARG: Can I ask you first what you think and then I can tell you what I think? What's your theory?

IRVIN: I think it teaches Hispanics and Blacks how... expose them to all of the things they wouldn't have been able to get to in a public school atmosphere. Constantly I think about this this year, and at the end of last year, about if I went to public school, I would've never thought about boarding school, or entering [inaudible] that people here have the chance to do... people that come from these lower class or middle class families now they have the opportunity to rise above, and get to be in the same position as these rich kids who go to some of these schools that a lot of us won't get into, so it gives the opportunity for people who may not have the opportunity to be in the same positions as other who would've easily gone to private schools their whole life and to higher colleges, or ivy colleges and stuff like that, and they're paying it for them. It teaches us that when we work for what we want, no matter the color of our skin, we can accomplish the same things that the majority can.

ARG: When you say "expose you to a world that wouldn't have been exposed to" how would you define that?

IRVIN: I'd define it as the higher class…Things where it's predominantly owned by white people, or predominantly you'd see white people in that position; [prep schools] and stuff like that. When I was researching boarding schools, I would go on boardingschoolreview.com, go through all the stats, and every school would be like 10% colored, but when you go into the school, 10% is pooled from everyone that's Hispanic, and everyone who's black, and everyone who's Chinese, and everyone from any other country. Anyone who's colored is someone who's not white, so when you think about it 10% is basically anyone who's not white and all those other races, and the whole 90% white, and how these schools with big campuses and taking foreign languages, and all the opportunities that are provided... and the schools we've been... it's basically those things are restrained for those with money; people with money and people who are white basically. (Interview, May 1, 2013)

Irvin's account of strategies for achieving social mobility and access to white middle class culture is similar to those proposed by Moynihan (1965). Both Irvin and Moynihan argue that the solution to inequality, namely racial and economic, arises from integrating into middle class culture and values. Irvin demonstrates a great awareness of this when he talks about access to educational opportunities that are predominantly dominated by whites. Specifically, his use of the word "teaches" is telling since it implies that the intervention is a cultural or cognitive one where Black and Latino students must learn how to relate to middle class white culture if they are to be "successful." Moreover, what I find fascinating is that, unlike Ogbu and Fordham's (1986) account of Black folk theories of a block opportunity structure or of oppositional identities, Irvin offers a more nuanced and textured notion of the way race works in the era of post-raciality.

He affirms the ideas of universality and "making it despite color" but also points out the disparities that are present in the social structure. More importantly he says: "Things where it's predominantly owned by white people, or predominantly you'd *see* white people in that

position…" [My emphasis]. The qualification of *see* denotes an experiential or observed phenomenon, rather than an abstract "perception" of race being a factor in the road to social mobility. For Irvin "the talks" he has with his father, noted in chapter 2, regarding the way society will judge him as a Black man, was only the primer for the existential and observed instance of race Irvin would be faced with, even as early as in the admissions process for prep schools.

However, while the formal mission of the schools is in large part to prepare the boys (and girls) to enter prestigious public, private and catholic schools, there is a hidden curriculum that Irvin identifies, concerning race, class and how "color-conscious" this process of obtaining admissions into prep schools really is:

> IRVIN: Cause I remember, there was one day we were in class, and I saw people looking around, and somebody just said "wow, there's no white people in our class" and everyone was like "it hasn't been that since we got here" and then it made me think, does the school purposely does that? Do they purposely target Hispanic and black people knowing that the opportunities that they're probably gonna get from these public schools that you talked about that are in the neighborhood aren't gonna be the same they get here, so the need for those increase.
> ARG: Why do you think it is that you only notice when you are at this school, even though in your previous school it was like that too? Why would you be surprised that there wasn't any white people here?
> IRVIN: To be honest, cuz I know [inaudible] oh what have you learned from your years here, and to honestly answer, it's how to make myself look appropriate in front of white people. Since I got here, basically what they tell you is, you're representing this school, so when you're outside of this school, you have to look the part. That's why they make us wear suit and tie, and things like that. They basically... because that's how the world it's gonna be you're gonna to colleges, they're gonna be predominantly white, and these high schools that we see now are predominantly white, and they know that dressing the part, and speaking the part is gonna be essential to anything we wanna do in life. I know that in my old school, the reason why there weren't that many white kids was that's the neighborhood, but coming here, I expected it to be more white people cuz the way this school is presented is this high end school, where it's higher class... especially when my 4th grade teacher told me about it, she presented to me as this step up in life, where the successful go and stuff like that, so to me I thought it'd be like a place where white kids would go. So yeah. (Interview, May 1, 2013)

Building off from the earlier excerpt in his interview, we can see how multifaceted his narrative about race and class is regarding educational achievement. Again, he asserts human universality while at the same time acknowledging a lack of universality as a matter of personal development, specifically around dress and speech. The notion of "looking, dressing, speaking" the part, indicates that there is a dimension of *being* that is attached to the modern notions of race (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). With these perspectives in mind, the notion of "looking the part" is tied to ideas of what makes a "scholastic body." A scholastic body is created by institutionally sanctioned ways of knowing and being that are demanded for successful participation in schools. Moreover, the notions of scholastic bodies acknowledges that these ways of knowing and being in schools are not separate from the larger body-politics of knowledge in modernity which has

constructed being and knowing as particulars that are made universal. Simply being a student is not enough. The capacity to be a scholastic body imagines a specific body and thinking as scholastic, while regarding non-white and working class forms of knowing and being as non-scholastic. In a sense, it is not just an act of exclusion but an interrelational act of creation that needs scholastic and non-scholastic bodies to exist. One powerful example of this dynamic of exclusionary universalism at SMA and LHA can be found through the student's descriptions of the relationship between language and their schools.

[12]

Through the No "Like" Zone

I walk up to the third floor of LHA to sit in on a seventh grade language arts class. It is first period, 8:30am in the morning and I am still struggling to adjust my previous freewheeling graduate student schedule to the more regimented middle school pace. I locate the classroom where I see the seventh grade boys preparing for the day ahead. Just outside the room, some boys are still by their lockers changing from their fitted caps, basketball sneakers and hoodies into dress shoes and ties. I often witnessed these daily metamorphoses that take place once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Undoubtedly, when I would approach the schools in the mornings, after exiting the public transit stations, I would observe students coming from different parts of the city sporting dress pants and shirts, while also wearing Jordan sneakers and fitted Baseball caps. As I approach the door of the language arts class I notice a decal that reads: "This is a like free zone."

Entering the classroom, I greet the teacher and ask if it is okay for me to observe. He welcomes me and assures that I can observe his class anytime. I take my seat in the right hand corner of the class as the teacher announces into the hallway the amount of minutes until the beginning of class. I can tell already that the teacher's style is quite animated but also stern. As the bell rings a couple of stragglers rush in to take their seats, it is clear that the boys do not want to be late for this class. The teacher begins by selecting an "accountant." Attentive to my outsider status, the teacher has students explain to me the function of the accountant. The students make clear that the teacher is pushing them not to say "like" as a quotable during their in-class discussions (Kohn & Frantz, 2009). Presumably this is an improper way of conducting oneself during seminar discussions and must be unlearned. The student explains that every time they use the word "like" in the "wrong way" the boys must pay a small amount (I believe I saw mostly

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[12] Figure 1: Photograph taken of a decal on a classroom door at LHA. Taken by A.Gonzalez, 2011.

nickels and pennies in the container). If someone in the class goes a whole year without using "like" they are allotted twenty dollars.

After I am informed of the rules, the teacher takes a look around and says: "Let's see if we can get through a period without someone sucking or eating their pen!" The students laugh because as I have already observed in my short time at LHA, half the battle, for some of the boys, is staying focused and attentive to the lesson at hand. In order to better attend to class, the boys deploy a range of tactics that include sucking on pens and pen caps, furiously wiggling their legs and in some cases literally rocking themselves awake in their chairs[13]. The teacher begins the lesson by pointing to the board where an idiom is written for the boys to explain: "All that glitters is not gold." As the class proceeds, I observe a teacher who is aware of all his students at all times. When one student starts to drift the teacher is on top of him asking "Are you in the game?" His language to incentivize students is very sports oriented. The teacher refers to people as DH's, backup hitters, on deck and warns against an impending "sneak attack"—a check of folders that may be coming up. I suppose the teacher in this case is attempting to connect with his students through a stereotypical set of masculine pedagogical metaphors. In many ways, this particular teacher reflects the debates and literature surrounding the educating of boys and how one must guard against the "feminization of schools" (Sommers, 2000) that is often cited as a factor in the underachievement of boys in the classroom (Fieldnotes, October 4, 2011).

The above classroom highlights in pronounced ways the informal curriculum of LHA and SMA that students often allude to in my interviews and that I observe throughout my year. While I will focus on the "masculinization" of schools approach displayed by the teacher later in this chapter it is first important to note the ways in which this language arts classroom brings our attention to the non-academic aspects of schooling that the boys encounter through speech, dress, and space. First, take note of the ways language is operating with the boys at LHA and SMA. I focus on the ways in which symbolically this "no like zone" reflects the boundaries of race and class as the boys negotiate multiple zones of being.

More than simply teaching the students the "codes of power" or "standard English," students at both schools are attuned to the ways language usage signals profound narratives about *being* high achieving students. For instance Juan, an eighth grader at SMA, indicates that one of the major changes in coming to SMA was language:

> ARG: Do you feel like the school is changing you?
> JUAN: It really is because my old school I used to talk a lot of slang and stuff and now I feel like I'm talking more, like a stereotypical white person I guess.
> ARG: Say more about that. How do you get that feeling?
> JUAN: Because the way I talk, I'm saying "like" a lot and I used to have to have a accent, like black and stuff. (Interview, April 25, 2012)

Juan's description of the changes he underwent as a result of attending SMA is consistent with critical philosophies of existence, which assert that Reason has an ontology (Gordon, 2000 & 2005; Fanon, 1952/1967). In short, specific beings, usually of white European descent, are considered to be legitimate and authoritative in producing knowledge about the world (Osamu, 2006). Similar to our exploration of curriculum in the previous section, language in the case of SMA and LHA also has an ontology. Depending on your race and class background, forms of

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[13] In one instance, during a social studies class, I observed how frequent this was because the carpet in the room had begun to develop holes due to the boys need to recline the chairs and rock.

speech and written language can legitimate or invalidate your capacity to produce forms of knowing. In the opening example, the students by the lockers are negotiating a multiplicity of "zones" that have an ongoing impact on their subjectivities: their neighborhood communities or as some might call it "the hood," the space of transition from hoodies to dress shoes and ties, to finally the "no like" zone of the classroom.

For Scottie a sixth grader at LHA these zones and boundaries are very clear with regard to language:

> ARG: Do feel like you have to change the way you speak or talk when you come in here?
> SCOTTIE: Yeah
> ARG: How do you change?
> SCOTTIE: Because when I'm in school or when we are on break and there is no teacher around I'll be using slang. I be saying slang. But out of school I say slang a lot. Things like that. Fool around outside but here you can't really say slang. (Interview, May 30, 2012)

Scottie does not simply state that there are two zones of speech. He quite literally has to transform his speech pattern to signal the "outside" slang world that is contrasted to the "proper" language patterns found in the school. In the seventh grade language arts classroom at LHA, the teacher creates a "zone of non-being" (Fanon, 1952/1967) with respect to language, that excludes those who deploy forms of speech that are in no way indicative of their capacity to produce knowledge, but nonetheless are policed and made deficient, in this case through the punitive measure of enacting a monetary fee. These patterns of speech, such as the extended use of "like" as a quotable, are increasingly understood by socio-linguists as an indicator of racial, ethnic, regional, generational and class status (Kohn & Franz, 2009).

Another aspect to this "no like zone," was to teach what Lisa Delpit (1996) calls the "culture of power." For Delpit, there are rules or codes for participating in society that grant us power and control. These codes and rules are not neutral and are a reflection of those in power. In her estimation, learning this culture of power enables students striving to achieve upward mobility and should not be denied to them. The thinking is similar to previous studies by Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) and Lareau (2003) which point to the need for students, particularly in poor and working class communities, to be able to gain dominant, cultural capital in order to acquire institutional rewards and benefits.

Debates surrounding the place of student's culture and language, particularly poor and working class students of color, in school has been highly contested and controversial (Duncan-Andrade, 2004; Jordan, 1988). The controversy in Oakland Public schools regarding the use of "Ebonics" in the formal school curriculum is an example of this cultural war in schools. These controversies notwithstanding, perhaps a less polarizing theme in this debate is the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy which calls for "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (pg. 106, Gay, 2002). Jason Irizarry (2007) further explains that within the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy, the teachers "build bridges" between the home and school culture and recognize the difference between "academic abstractions and lived social cultural realities" (p. 22, Irizarry, 2007).

What is at stake in these instances where zones of appropriate language are policed, especially during a formative time such as middle school, is much more profound than simply teaching children "proper" or "standard" English. In perhaps the most telling part of Juan's comment about how the school changed him, he states: "…I'm saying "like" a lot and I used to have to have a accent, like *black* and stuff" [my emphasis]. The usage of *black* to describe his speech before coming to SMA indicates the association with this "incorrect" form of speech with blackness. Here is where, I argue, the most potential for harm occurs. It is certainly one thing for an adult to know the difference between settings for difference speech patterns and how to negotiate those as performances, rather than as essentialist categories. However, it quite another thing for young adolescents, who are making sense of their place in this world to equate certain *beings* with propriety, reason and scholastic ontologies, while equating those communities they come from as being the polar opposite.

Eddie, a six grade boy from SMA describes the moment he realizes he wanted to become a cardiologist:

> ARG: What kind of doctor do you want to be?
> EDDIE: Cardiologist
> ARG: How did you get to want to be that?
> EDDIE : One time, I didn't really want to be a doctor once in fourth grade. There was this substitute teacher and he was very sophisticated and always taught us… I don't know, it's hard to explain. He showed us a clip of how the heart sounds when it's sick, when it just finished a marathon, and then he made us draw a heart, and I got really caught up in the action, and that made me really interested in what was out there is being a cardiologist.
> ARG: When you say he's really sophisticated what do you mean?
> EDDIE: He always had proper grammar. Every word he spoke meant something. He didn't say, "I was good here," he was like, "this place is good for me." He would say proper grammar every time. (Interview, April 27, 2012)

In Eddie's eyes, the notion of language as a measure of "sophistication" and propriety indicates the weight language has in evaluating people and their worth. That "proper" language standards allowed every word the substitute teacher spoke to "mean something," indicates that those who do not use it have less meaning or may in fact, have meaningless words being uttered. While the intersection of race and language may manifest itself differently in the students, the following comment by Tito epitomized a recurring way of processing the implication of this kind of language valuation:

> Well, when I go back home I speak like say, yo' what's up? I really don't say that... I say that here, but I don't...like it just slips sometimes. I feel more comfortable speaking the way that I do here than over there, even though sometimes I feel like it comes more natural speaking the other way, I feel more comfortable here because I feel like I'm actually growing, but when I'm back there I feel like they're like just pulling back in when I'm speaking that language, and that I'm gonna like become like...like them, cuz they... they just turned bad, like most of my friends are really bad now. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

I am less concerned with protecting a notion of "authentic" speech patterns of poor and working class Black and Latino students. In my observations and interviews, I would argue that there are a range of sophisticated speech patterns and rules that students at both schools deploy (Walsh, 1987; Zentella, 1997). However, what we see throughout the interviews with the young men is how powerfully language works to construct valuations of being. In Tito's comments the notion of "growing" versus "pulling back" is telling in terms of the temporal importance assigned to these different communities that he is a part of. As the original framing of this dissertation argues, time is one important element in the ways in which race has been constructed in the modern era. The association of different peoples with pre-civilization or with savage culture, works in contrast to the modern, sophisticated, civilized and progressive culture being posited by core industrial nations that formally colonized underdeveloped areas. To relegate a people to past is to relegate them again to non-being. This move is further evidenced in Tito's subsequent distancing from the community by his use of the phrase "that language" and "most of my friends are really bad now" — read as savage, not modern.

I do not discount the ways in which Tito experiences the stark realities of living in a working class community of color and his desire to transcend those conditions. However, it is important to note the ways in which seemingly benevolent strategies aimed at helping students learn the culture of power, may create an empathetic distance between the students and the communities they come from. The result may well legitimize social stratification in their eyes.

Beyond the Book Cover

The dilemmas of teaching the culture of power could also be seen in the area of dress. Similar to many emerging charter schools and academies, SMA and LHA both require dress codes for their students. For instance, SMA states that its dress code "is geared toward the conscious development of a more formal and professional atmosphere. The manner in which we dress is a reflection of the way we view ourselves. Since we take great pride in ourselves and in our school, our dress shall in all cases be neat, tasteful, modest, and appropriate" (Field documents, 2011). While I could not locate documents at LHA that explained its dress code, this rationale was also reflected at multiple meetings and events I attended.

The rationale behind the dress code resonates with debates and discussions in the research surrounding school uniforms and dress codes (Behling, 1995; Brunsma, 2004; Brunsma, 2006; Garot & Katz, 2003; Morris, 2005; Pedzich, 2002). The topics can usually be broken up into three categories: 1) impact of dress codes and uniforms on academic achievement and school culture. 2) the constitutionality of uniforms in public schools, and 3) the use of dress code and uniforms to curtail gang violence in schools. The theme which most resonates throughout the literature, and with this study, is the notion that changes in dress will have some impact on the internal attitudes, behaviors and identities of the students. While the empirical research on the relationship between dress codes and student behavioral changes is not extensive, the research and literature reviews of Brunsuma (2006) and Pedzich (2002) suggest that there is little or no evidence of changes in student behavior or academic achievement as a result of school dress codes. Behling (1995) points out that the outcome of such policies may in fact be more of a "halo effect," where *perceptions* of behavior and intelligence of the children may change but not necessarily their actual attitudes and academic records. Furthermore, Behling notes that race continued to negatively impact the perceptions of "minority" students themselves despite being shown models of people from their own race in suits and ties. Additionally, Ferguson (2001) and

Morris (2005, 2007) demonstrated that race in general plays a role in the negative perceptions of Black and Latino student bodies by teachers and administrators.

At both schools, dress shirts, shoes, pants and ties are required for the boys, while the girls must wear collared blouses or polo shirts, knee length skirts or dress pants, dress shoes and no makeup. Besides the issues of professionalization, pride and decency, both school communities (teachers, students and parents) emphasized that the dress code was a way of walking a fine line between allowing for individuality while controlling for competition. Many people I spoke to emphasized that in their previous schools, dress often became a source of anxiety and pressure. To paraphrase Lance, the founder of the schools, not having a dress code often means that school becomes a "fashion show" where students compete with each other over name brands, sneakers and accessories. Instituting a dress code, in the eyes of the school, leveled the playing field for students whose parents could not afford to pay for expensive clothes even on credit.

Overall, dress codes at SMA and LHA seem to function as yet another avenue to expose poor and working class students of color to dominant notions of professionalization and taste. That students should learn how to dress appropriately for future employment and educational opportunities is the intended message. Like the emphasis on "proper" language patterns, "proper" dress functioned to expose students to knowledge surrounding the culture of power that could be exchanged later for benefits and rewards. Here is Tito's description of the dress code's function:

> I was like, that's just a waste of time, it shouldn't... that's not fair, but now I actually like it because, first I didn't like wearing shoes, like it was uncomfortable and then I had to wear them here. Now I find them more comfortable, so when I have to go anywhere dressed formal, like I feel more comfortable and used to it because I dress... I dress it here, and also I actually understand why they put dress code, so I actually like it more because when we get older we're gonna have to be dressed more casual and formal, so he wants us to get used to that already, know how it feels to be dressed casual, and he wants... I mean formal, and he wants us to present ourselves like we would when we're older, so this is... like giving us a preview of how it's going to be. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

In both schools, students were very attuned to the purpose and usefulness of the dress code. They had an understanding that while it was not always something desirable for them in the present, it would have benefits for them in the future:

> EDDIE: I like to be comfortable. I don't like being like a box. Being all mashed together. I like being loose…That's why when I go to weddings and stuff when I go to fancy things, I don't like dressing up. Yeah I don't like it…
> ARG: If it's uncomfortable why you think they make you wear it?
> EDDIE: Because [the principal] always says that when you go to visit the school make sure you represent yourself very well, very proper. So I think that to make sure you wear proper things and not anything inappropriate, because there's a lot visitors around so he wants you to look as best as possible as you can. (Interview, April 27, 2012)

Across the board, boys expressed an understanding of why the dress code was important. However, I also observed instances where boys (and girls) found ways of meeting or simulating dress code while not feeling like they were "in a box." Some boys would often wear ties but the

collars of their dress shirts were unbuttoned. I also observed instances where girls would wear outlandish sock colors or boys would wear clashing shirts and pants. I also noted on a few occasions footwear that resembled dress shoes but were more like sneakers or boots. Overall, there were many ways in which the children while technically in dress code were far from the "neat" and "professional" ideal that was promulgated in school documents. I saw these acts of resistance as responses to the "adultifying" norms of dress code rather than a conscious opposition to the class norms of professionalism.

Nonetheless, many students in my interviews and in my informal conversations confessed that while they disliked it at first, they grew to like being in a shirt and tie. Some boys even argued that it provided them a new sense of pride and confidence that they did not feel before. However, another pattern began to emerge that pointed to the limits of this policy with respect to the multiple meanings that were derived from the dress code. Hector, a seventh grader at SMA explains:

> HECTOR: I actually think [the dress code is] useful. It makes this generation look sophisticated, educated like we are ready for the real world. And kind of look like little business men so it gives people the good impression. It's kind of like judging a book by it's cover like, "Oh. You know he's wearing those he must be smart and intelligent." In a way that's kind of a good thing. It's still bad cuz your not suppose to judge a book by it's cover.
> ARG: Say a little more about that.
> HECTOR: You can see somebody with like a really cuz that's reason SMA was to offer academically advanced children who have economic issues. So you know there's a lot of kids who can be going to school like in a public school but he's wearing raggedy clothes but behind those clothes they have a significant amount of brilliance within them. (Interview, April 24, 2012)

Similar to his peers, Hector acknowledges the advantages and strategic importance of the dress. As he discusses boys becoming "little business men" and preparing for the "real world," there is evidence that the dress code's aim of exposing students to a culture of power and a degree of self-awareness is being accomplished. Nonetheless, in his discussion, Hector abruptly meets the limits of this seemingly neutral and well meaning goal through his direct experience. He realizes as he answers my question that the dress code seems to be equating dress with an innate value. Hector resists this equation, he has experienced students who perhaps do not attend SMA who demonstrate "brilliance." The popular adage "Do not judge a book by its cover" exposes the somewhat messy politics of dress code at the intersections of race and class, which obfuscate the body politics of knowing by appealing to narrow cultural remedies that in this case reveal their moral inconsistencies.

I reiterate that I do not wish here to debate the dichotomy between exposure or non-exposure to the dominant culture. Just as with language there are an array of debates and arguments that have taken place that describe the merits and pitfalls of dress codes at work and school. If anything, we are seeing in recent years that dress codes across industries are increasingly more diverse, and less rigid than they once were. Instead of imposing rigid rules and regulations, what employers seem to be emphasizing, is the capacity for their employees to become better judges of proper attire for specific circumstances. With those conversations aside, my goal was to understand more closely what meanings the students were taking away from

these policies and how these might effect how they view themselves and the communities they come from.

Perhaps some of the more telling and all-encompassing comments came from Miguel, an eighth grader at LHA:

> ARG: How do you feel about the dress code?
> MIGUEL: For the first year I didn't like it because I would be on the train with my mom all in a tie. People would look at me. I would be, probably the only kid that was wearing it, there would be adults wearing them but you don't normally see a kid like that everyday. But afterwards, I kinda got comfortable because, the fact that the people look at you makes you realize that you're different, that you're unique because I always go around looking at the people, how they were people bag their pants and it kind of disturbs me that they do that so the fact that I look sharp and clean and everything kinda defines the way I am.
> ARG: Why do you feel like you gained something from people looking at you differently?
> MIGUEL: I guess it would be the well when they look at me they think "wow this kid must be very smart" or is either that or "his parents must be very rich". But the fact that race, in this economy costs a lot, they might think that I'm very smart because you know, I'm not very rich honestly. I do come from a low class family and do have tuition here but I'm not that rich and then people look at me and on the train sometimes I go and then would ask "me what school you go to?" I'll say I go to a private school; they'll be very surprised. And they would ask me "what's the racial division there?" and I would say, "well there is no racial division because everybody from Hispanic to blacks to even white people come here" there isn't that many white people here but yea. (Interview, May 2, 2012)

Miguel begins by affirming all the previous dimensions of the policy we have discussed up to this point; he touches on the initial struggles, but then the prestige and feelings of efficacy that he develops. However as he moves through his reflection, he increasingly struggles to reconcile a race neutral narrative that promises socioeconomic mobility in exchange for the "proper" cultural performance. Specifically, Miguel begins to unearth the notion that dress "defines the way I am." This is crucial because here Miguel suggests questions of being that go beyond a superficial notion of etiquette and protocol.

In the latter half of his commentary, Miguel begins to elaborate on the theme of judgment we saw in Hector's interview. The three dimensions that emerge regarding the value placed on certain forms of dress reflect assumptions about race, class and intelligence. Miguel's narratives reveal his hope that dress code will help him transcend those assumptions by punctuating an assumed intelligence in the face of economic disadvantage and racial discrimination. Furthermore, he ends by echoing Irvin's earlier insights by discussing how the school, while located in the city center, is targeted for economically disadvantaged boys of color.

Curriculum, language and dress were some of the more salient ways in which I was able to understand the operationalization of race and class in the schools. Race in this case, revealed the logic consistent with scholars who have argued for a greater consideration of the more cultural aspects of race, which appeal to a universal humanism that acts in exclusionary fashion. The U.S. through a "colorblind" ideology has added more subtle discriminatory practices and ideologies to

the ongoing practices of racial discrimination. Therefore, developing ways to examine these more insidious forms of race and racism in contemporary U.S. society becomes important if we wish to better understand the issues of poor and working class Black and Latino students. For this reason, I have taken the time to demonstrate, the qualities of race that produce difference through knowledge, body and being through my observations as well as in the eyes of the students. These realizations often came as existential contradictions that would emerge between the students and their lived realities of schooling, with the purported universal ideals expounded by the mission statements and policies of SMA and LHA.

I wish to now turn our attention to the ways in which the student's class position necessitate a confrontation with the other face of race in the U.S.: what Michelle Alexander (2010) calls the "New Jim Crow" and what Douglass Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) called "American Apartheid," which concern long standing conversations surrounding housing segregation, access to key resources, safety and institutional discrimination. This discussion will focus on the student's neighborhoods and how space, residential segregation and violence impact their perceptions of self, their neighborhoods and their schools. Furthermore, I will discuss how the students straddling two worlds experience an array of challenges.

Border Crossings

For a few early Saturday mornings in late January and early February, hundreds of parents and students from across the city make their way from the outer neighborhoods and districts to central city area to take the entrance exams for SMA and LHA. Hopeful but nervous students and their parents travel by public trains and buses as well as private cars. While the city prides itself on public transportation, access, diversity and a relatively "liberal" political climate, students from these outer neighborhoods may have rarely made this journey into the "city center" of the city. As they do, students may for the first time observe high rise project buildings, concrete parks, corner and liquor stores giving way to luxury condos, boutiques and gourmet grocery stores. These are borders that are crossed only on an occasional school field trip, birthday or medical appointment. Moreover, depending on how close their neighborhoods are to the city center, some of these students may also observe how their own neighborhoods are changing. They may see the occasional Starbucks or Chipotle pop up in the outer districts in what signals the wave of gentrification that works to constitute and reconstitute these moving borders of race and class. However, the overall demarcations in the city are still noticeable for many of these students for whom crossing into the city center is another world.

The student's neighborhoods are poor and working class and are predominantly composed of immigrants from the West Indies, West Africa, Latin America, South Asia, South East Asia and Eastern Europe. The students also come from families who have carved out niches in the city for many generations before the growth of recent immigrant communities; they are of Puerto Rican and African American ancestry. Most of them are coming from local public schools and charter schools and the occasional parochial school. In the age of school choice, deregulation and school privatization, it is not uncommon to hear of these constellations of schooling that one may find in one city or even in one student's educational history.

In some sense the system of U.S schooling is increasingly a fragmented one. Sometimes students and parents looking to maximize resources may not attend the same school for more than 2 or 3 years. Even worse, in some cases, neighborhood public schools are being closed in the name of "turning them around" and making them "better." Nonetheless, prospective parents

make these journeys with their children across space, race/ethnicity, class, and school lines in hopes that they may have an opportunity to attend two of the most prestigious and highly regarded independent schools for "economically disadvantaged" children in the city. While privately funded, these schools operate on a need blind admissions policy that allows students regardless of their income to attend the school. A very small percentage of the schools' budgets come from family tuition. If accepted, most students would now have to travel forty five minutes, one hour, one and half, even two hours to commute to the new school.

I stand and observe as the parents and students walk through the threshold of the tall wooden doors of the SMA school building erected in 1905, where examinations for both schools take place. As they arrive, current students and faculty greet prospective parents and students. The students are directed to the cafeteria where they will take an admissions test. Parents are ushered to the auditorium where they will receive an information session about the school. As the parents and students go their separate ways I notice a mother and son hugging each other. As she hugs her son she tells him, "not to be nervous and to do [his] best;" her hug and voice conveying support while also acknowledging the high stakes nature of this moment in their lives.

Going to the "right" school is crucial in today's educational climate, especially for those of the poor and working class backgrounds; it could mean the difference between economic mobility or yet another generation of limited employment opportunities, a lifetime of rent payments, and zero wealth. I can't help but reflect for a moment on how unfair of a burden we are placing on these children at the young age of eight, nine and ten years old: how unfair it is that apart from a few "academically successful" students, all students from poor and working class communities of color are not afforded the *right* to a safe, dynamic and quality educational experience. Furthermore, as I continued my study with the current students at both schools, I begin to understand that the "price of the ticket" requires much more than one hectic and heart wrenching morning, large amounts of homework, lengthy train and bus rides. For students who are admitted, it will also mean successfully navigating a set of challenges that they must learn to negotiate if they plan on staying and graduating. (Fieldnotes, February 4, 2012)

Attending either SMA or LHA for many students requires transgressing both visible and invisible boundaries of race and class. Recall Tito's remarks at the opening of this chapter regarding how his friends back in his neighborhood viewed SMA as a "white school." Similarly, think back to Irvin's comment that he first thought LHA was going to be a "high end" school that was predominately white. Tito's use of the word stereotypical indicates that for some students a sense that the schools, because of their *location* and what they may *represent*, are white. In the first part of this chapter I examined the in-school influences of race and class for the students at the SMA and LHA. In the penultimate section of this chapter I examine the relationship between the students' neighborhoods and their schools. More importantly, I focus on the issues that emerge from negotiating race, class and space, and how these reveal central tensions and conflicts that these young students must balance.

From Schooling to Living: Race and Class

Both schools are directed towards "economically disadvantaged students" from racially diverse backgrounds. For instance, in 2011, SMA was comprised of 36% Latino, 21% African American, 26% Asian (includes students from China, Korea, India, Bangladesh, Philippines, Cambodia, Tibet, Nepal), 7% white with 9% identifying as Multi-Racial. LHA states that 97% of its student population is African-American, Latin-American, or Asian-American. LHA goes on

to qualify that most of those students are first generation immigrants. In terms of economic indicators the schools provided information on welfare or social security supported households, incomes levels below $25,000, $35,000 or $50,000 a year, and finally students being raised in single parent homes. For SMA: 24% of students are supported solely by welfare or social security benefits, 42% of the students were living with families with incomes of less than $25,000 a year and 64% were in families making less than $35,000 a year; and 39% of students were being raised by single parent homes. In the case of LHA: 18% of students are supported solely by welfare of social security benefits, 29% of the students were living with families with incomes of less than $25,000 a year and 59% were in families making less than $50,000 a year; and 46% of students were being raised by single parent homes. While the statistics and demographics suggest that these schools are not demographically white, the students in my study asserted that their experiences dictated that they are nonetheless crossing boundaries of race and class everyday by attending these schools (Field documents, 2011-2012).

This crossing of boundaries that I describe earlier became obvious to me on the "travel alongs" that I took with Pedro, a sixth grader at SMA, who lives in a working class neighborhood located in the northern districts of the city. Pedro's census tract had a median income of $32,245 a year, thirty seven percent of the population were on some type of government assistance, and the unemployment rate was higher than the national average at twelve percent.[14] This profile was not uncommon for many of the Black and Latino boys at SMA and LHA. Their neighborhoods were decidedly poor or working class. Traveling from the city center where SMA was located, we took a train for thirty minutes to his neighborhood. I describe walking from the station to his house in my fieldnotes:

Walking down the street my sense of space and time is disturbed. The short train ride moved us from the city's city center to the outer districts but it also seemed to shift space and time. It was only a short while ago that we were getting fries and walking around high-rises, luxury condos, coffee shops, bright lights and busy sidewalks. Around us now are warehouses, auto repair shops, laundromats, an occasional corner store and an iron and steel canopy that makes up the elevated train tracks. As I begin walking with Pedro from the station, I can't help but feel a sense of aloneness. It is strange because obviously I am with Pedro and there are to be sure other people walking around from time to time. I know that while they are not readily visible, in this neighborhood there are also churches, schools, families, students, workers. Maybe this aloneness I feel as I walk with him is more of isolation than loneliness. That is, isolation as a general state rather than a passing feeling. We are now far away from the center. (Fieldnotes, February 2, 2012)

In a conversation I had with one of the mental health staff at LHA regarding the experiential differences between school and home, I learned of a short but powerful remark by a child who was describing his weekend. The child described how he woke up in the morning and "waited for the day to end." There are some who see large metropolitan cities as places of entertainment, fancy eating and fast paced living, but these cities for poor and working people, especially in communities of color, look and feel different. While middle class children may have full schedules with music lessons and sports practices, others in the periphery of the local political economy are confronted with a different relationship to time. My "travel along" with

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[14] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey.

Hector, a multiethnic Latino seventh grader at SMA, demonstrates a consciousness of class as he travels from school:

> After our interview I head home with Hector to his neighborhood in the outer parts of the city. He tells me about the night of homework that awaited him. He looks visibly tired and overwhelmed. As we walk out, we are joined by another student, Jamal, who is a six grader. They live close to each other and from time to time take the train together … We ride this crowded public train toward the [outer] districts of the city for forty minutes. It is not until 10 minutes before our stop that we are reunited and can talk to each other again. We finally arrive at our stop and exit the train. We go down the long flight of stairs and toward the main street concourse where many busses stop. Making our way down the last flight of stairs Hector spots the bus that will take us to his home. Earlier on our train ride, Hector had commented on how crowded and infrequent the bus from the train station to his house can be. As soon as he spots it, he and Jamal sprint down the stairs towards the bus and I try to keep up right behind them.
>
> Luckily I observe that the bus is still at the curb, only having pulled away slightly. It was stopped because the street traffic was momentarily blocked due to a red light. Having spent time in this city before, it was often the case that the driver would allow passengers on the bus once the doors had closed, especially if the light was red. The boys and I bang on the doors to get the drivers attention. The driver looks over through the tall refracting bus doors and shakes her head no. All three of us looking at her in disbelief as she does this. I am especially furious because I cannot comprehend why she could not let a couple of young boys on a late evening bus while she was not moving. Just then Hector speaks up and says: "It's okay. I know she's probably tired and wants to get home." His empathy brings me pause, since I know how tired he must have been. As we wait Hector tells us that he thankful that he is at least waiting here in the early spring since it is way worse to wait during the frigid winters of the Northeast. (Fieldnotes, April 24, 2012)

On a basic level, the students from both schools must go through an informal rite of passage in taking trains, often on their own, from the age of 10. They must take long rides, often stringing together multiple forms of transportation. In many of my interviews students expressed a sense of pride in this accomplishment. They felt that they had gained a sense of trust from the adults around them and felt a greater sense of responsibilities by having to navigate the trains and buses. However, they were also in many ways, for the first time, encountering what it meant to be Black or Latino and poor or working class in relation to whiteness and affluence. Moreover, they also confront a very harsh adult world that exists outside of their school hallways, homes, parent's cars and school buses, especially in such a large metropolitan urban area.

Take Hector's comments for instance regarding the bus driver being tired and wanting to get home. His capacity to be inter-subjective and understanding of that position demonstrates a level of knowing that comes from an experiential engagement with those sorts of issues. As someone who is himself from a working class background, Hector can appreciate the woman's need to strictly enforce the bus schedule without taking it personally. Furthermore, one can assume that this was not the first time he had missed a bus by a few seconds. In a sense, navigating this city through public transportation as a poor and working class student teaches Hector a humility and understanding that middle and upper class students may never learn as they continuously accumulate privilege in other parts of the city.

This was not the first time I had seen such a stance toward poor and working people by the boys in my study. In another travel along, Pedro a six grader from SMA, and resident of a zip code to the southeast of Hector, had a similar working class sensibility when confronted by a flier distributor on the street:

> The three of us exit the station onto a commercial district filled with stores, laundromats, food trucks and eateries it seems a world away from where we started [in the city center]. Many families, people young and old, predominantly Black and Latino. Salsa and merengue are audible from passing cars and businesses. Pedro, Jennifer and I continue down the block towards Jennifer's bus stop. Among the many fliers being handed out is one for a tax service. Members of the city at times complain about these fliers because people tend not to read them and just throw them away on the sidewalk. I see Pedro takes two fliers. I ask him why he took one. He tells me "they get paid when you take the fliers." (Fieldnotes, Feburary 2, 2012)

Similar to Hector, Pedro had a sensibility that is indicative of a class-consciousness that he has developed through his experiences. Unlike some people in this city, including adults, Pedro knows that the person who is handing out fliers has a job, and a life to be considered beyond the perceived inconvenience others in the city might equate with them. Furthermore, both Pedro's and Hector's experiences are consistent with research that examines the ways in which race and class rob certain students of their childhood. This process of "adultification" can be a product of a poor and working family's inability to navigate institutions, spaces and realities that require language skills or educational credentials that are elude them. As a result, their children, who may have slightly more cultural capital, are enlisted to confront situations and circumstances that are not age appropriate (Ferguson, 2001).

Through the Looking Glass

While this "adultification" process (Ferguson, 2001) through a consciousness of class has useful elements in terms of responsibility, empathy and maturity, it is important not to ignore the difficulties many of these students face in living in poor and working class neighborhoods in terms of resources, safety, violence and residential segregation. For instance when we arrive in Hector's neighborhood I notice that while he can employ empathy there are still boundaries erected within the neighborhood:

> We end up waiting 25 minutes for the next bus to arrive. At this point it is about 6:25pm and we are still not at our destination. We finally make our way onto the crowded bus, which will take us to Hector's home in 10 minutes. We say goodbye to Jamal who must ride the bus for a while longer. Getting off the bus, Hector immediately begins to show me around his block. He first points to the projects and says: "Lots of people who are on welfare live there." He then points out the grocery store where he tells me his mom sends him on errands. He then shows me to a small section of patchy grass with some trees located in the middle of a busy two way street, that seems more like a fancy street median, he instead informs me that this is his park. He adds that his mother sometimes sits on one of the benches to relax. As we continue our walk I notice other stores like a

fried chicken spot, barber shops and corner stores, all of which were frequent in the neighborhood I grew up in as well. (Fieldnotes, April 24, 2012)

Hector's first comment regarding the projects as a place where those on welfare live reflects a larger understanding about the ways American society has come to identify those on government assistance and benefits. Specifically, his choice to section off that part of his neighborhood where "lots of people live on welfare" implies that welfare is more than a resource or service, it is an identity that like the term "ghetto," and carries a stigma and that he is distancing himself from. Despite facing similar circumstances and lack of resources as evidence by their "park" and the bullet holes I would later encounter in his building windows, there is a boundary Hector seems to erect. His remark is also telling in that it collapses space, race and class through the merging of welfare, a historically gendered and racialized term, with the projects, shorthand for housing projects that carries markers of race and class.

Scottie from LHA, further elaborates on housing projects as markers of race and class in his neighborhood:

> Well the projects I don't really like going to the projects, cuz some family members of mine have gotten jumped. And the projects is not really a place to go alone. But like um... because you don't [know] who's around there […] I like it [in the city center] bit more because it's a lot more people and if something bad goes wrong there's a higher chance someone would actually see it than down there. Because it's not a very big area over there. It's really small, so [in the city center] there's a lot more police just because of what's going on in the world and stuff. It's higher alert. (Interview, May 30, 2012)

For Scottie the projects are symbols of danger and alienation. They are places where family members have gotten "jumped" and are spaces marked by abandonment, which brings about danger and violence. This is in contrast to the neighborhoods by the schools, which are more integrated into the center of the political economy of the city, and are, therefore, protected and secured. Furthermore in Hector's depiction of housing projects, their mere presence along with the people "on welfare" in his neighborhood seem to function like the boogieman of race and class. A boogieman that threatens "decent" families in his neighborhood, families that are perhaps still "eligible" to participate in the colorblind American dream.

The debates about "decent" versus "street" families or "deserving" versus "underserving" poor are not new and have been widely discussed (Gans, 1995; Newman, 2000; Wilson, 1996). Oftentimes, powerful narratives about the nature of poor and working class people emerge from these debates. One major assumption advanced by this narrative is that isolation from middle class values and behaviors that are rewarded in mainstream American culture, is what has hampered poor and working class communities of color from social mobility in schools and in the workplace (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1996).

This theory has been taken up by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), as well as the "no excuses" schools in recent years. In the following fieldnote, Hector and his mother, Monica, support Ogbu's (1987) assertion that first generation immigrant families differ from more "native" African-Americans and Latin-American families since they possess a dual frame of reference where they are able to value the limited opportunities they have. However, I also saw conflicting class ideologies as I was invited into Hector's home:

As we approach his building I ask Hector if I might be able to say hello to his mother whom I had met at the seventh grade parents retreat earlier in the school year. He turns to me, smiles and says: "She would be delighted to see you." We enter the elevator of his building where Hector describes a couple of the small renovations that are taking place in his building. He takes great pride in telling me how the tiles of the first floor lobby and the elevator floor were recently changed. We arrive on his floor and I try keep in mind that it is close to 7pm, perhaps a bit late to make a full visit to his home. Moreover, I know that Hector needs to get some work done. As Hector opens the door I tell him that I will wait by the door for his mother to say a quick hello. Within seconds Hector returns with a message from his mother. She said: "It is impolite to have guests outside and you should come in." I am noticeably embarrassed but accept the invitation to come in. I notice how impeccably clean organized and orderly the apartment is as I make my way to the living room.

I come upon the living room where Monica, Hector's mother, enthusiastically greets me. We catch up for a bit and she asks me to advise her on potential boarding schools Hector should apply for. We walk over to the dinning table where I look at the list. She offers me some guava juice, which I happily accept. After the three of us discuss the boarding schools Hector goes into his room to change, eat dinner, and then starts work. Monica and I return to the living area where she begins to tell me about her life and career as well as her concerns about Hector and his younger brother. She expresses a great deal of concern for the younger brother who she describes as being "somewhat lazy." She goes on to tell me that she struggled getting her degrees and learning English. She joked that there were moments where she felt she "might graduate with a cane." However, she explains that thanks to some remedial programs at the college she attended, she was able to complete her degree.

We both exchange stories about the immigrant experience in the U.S. There are many parallels that we see in one another's narratives since we both descend from Latin American countries. She explains that it is important to relay these stories so that the kids become motivated to keep doing their work. She then points to the windows were we can see the park Hector pointed out on his informal tour of the neighborhood. She tells me that she observes people at the park dunk and drugged and that "God gave my boys these mirrors so that they can find a way to become something more." (Fieldnotes, April 24, 2012)

Notice that as soon as Monica comments that her other son is being "lazy," she begins to discuss her immigrant background. This juxtaposition of her immigrant narrative with Hector's behavior is presented as a strategy to help motivate her sons to do their work and to become academically successful. Nonetheless, Monica's comment about the neighborhood as "a mirror" for her children is instructive on the many narratives they are all juggling. The neighborhood as a mirror is unlike any metaphorical device that I have come across by researchers or scholars regarding poor and working class communities of color. It suggests a complex relationship where her children are to see *themselves* in this community while also prompting a sense of transcendence beyond the material circumstances they have been dealt. Perhaps even more telling is the comment: "find a way to become something more." This again suggests that the mirror in her eyes functions in a dialectical fashion that she hopes will prompt a synthesis that would allow them to transcend these current realities they find in the neighborhood. While she does contrast

her boys to people with alcohol and drug abuse problems, there is no sense that the neighborhood is something antagonistic to the children.

My visit to Hector's neighborhood illuminates a complexity that is often omitted from the conversation about "middle class values" as being those of hard work and individualism. In many ways, the students and parents of these children both appreciate the values of dedication, hard work and empathy found in their experiences with poor and working class people, while also feeling frustrated with navigating the challenges of living in the periphery of the city's politics and economy. The narrative that the middle class has a monopoly on these values serves to perpetuate a politics of shaming and stigmatizing the poor and working class experience that is nuanced and multifaceted. It is precisely this fissure created by narratives surrounding what Michelle Alexander (2010) calls, "the politics of respectability and responsibility" that may contribute to some harmful attitudes in displayed by the students in my study.

Caught Between a Post-Racial America and the New Jim Crow

I have presented the many complex layers that define the efforts of these schools and students to negotiate the politics of race and class. These schools are not representative of educational institutions found in most poor and working class Black and Latino schools; still the issues that the young men and their families encounter through their unique positions are indicative of a longstanding existential drama that involves competing and contradictory ideologies of race, class and gender. Being that the students are from poor and working class neighborhoods, traveling to SMA and LHA meant a direct confrontation with the inter-relational character of race and the class politics of the city. Students, for the first time in some cases, are experiencing the stark divisions along race and class. They are able to both observe displays of great wealth and poverty. Leonardo and Hunter (2009) explain that the "urban" is an American imaginary with competing meanings and ideologies. In one sense, it is a place of economic decline, black and brown bodies and academic underachievement. In another, the urban is a place of sophistication and modernity. These multifaceted views of the city are what students experience, and allow us to examine the many ways in which race and class function in our current U.S. Society.

The following interviews suggest that despite their best efforts, Black and Latino boys (and girls) at these schools meet the limits of the liberal humanism that promises to be "colorblind." These moments of dissonance do not reflect oppositional behaviors, thinking, attitudes and dispositions. As seen in the previous section, the children's existential realities of race and class come into constant conflict with the prescribed ideals that both the schools and larger society expound. These moments of confusion and tension can be qualified further as moments of *existential* dissonance.

Many of us are familiar with the notion of cognitive dissonance; the state of simultaneously possessing conflicting ideas or beliefs, which lead to feelings of anger, confusion and general discomfort, which in turn prompt us to alter that psychological tension (Festinger, 1957). I wish to expand the notion of dissonance beyond a purely mental-psychological process. Instead I submit that what students at both schools experience when their lived experiences refute and support scholastic knowledge, when they believe that neither dress nor language define a person's inherent value, are moments where they *live* dissonance. Moreover, I contend that these lived dissonances are product of a purported colorblind U.S. society that refutes class divisions visa-a-vis American exceptionalism. Furthermore, as a result of these lived contradictions,

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students grapple more profoundly with encountering conflicting perceptions of their humanity due to polarizing, controlling images and a culture of power that differs qualitatively from their self-perceptions. This notion of existential dissonance becomes clear in the following comments from Miguel, an eighth grade boy at LHA:

> …when going to the store, I am thinking about what chips I'ma buy or what soda I will buy because quite frankly I've lived there, around my neighborhood, for around nine years now and I know everybody pretty well. Even though there have been a lot of white people coming in, not to be racist but you know, my parents show that they are the safest kind of people that you can have around. You know she says "black people always go around shooting, stabbing somebody, Hispanic people always go around shooting somebody" you know. It's like some typical stereotype sometimes but I really don't care, I have a lot of black people black friends. I have a lot of Hispanic friends. I have a lot of white friends you know and sometimes you wanna do talk to them I can see the difference sometimes and then sometimes it can be you know similar sometimes it can be different but you know my neighborhood, it used to be dangerous. Me and my mom survived two shootings around there and you know it has changed a lot you know. Not only the flood of white people coming in but the fact that I've lived there for so long. (Interview, May 2, 2012)

Miguel's comments represent the echoing dissonance that these students, who must balance both realities, must sort out. I often observe students expressing this almost internal dialogue with me. In one instance Miguel attempts to reconcile his parents views on race and gentrification as Central American immigrants with his own experiences of interacting and befriending Black and Latino youth. He also attempts to balance the notion that his neighborhood can be violent and unsafe at times with a reassurance that "he knows everybody pretty well." Miguel attempts to make sense of color-blindness, with the idea that he might be stereotypical in the depictions of his Black and Latino counterparts. These existential tensions were also found in my interview with Juan, an eighth grade student from SMA. In this excerpt he discusses what he feels to be the racist culture outside of the school through the example of the Trayvon Martin case:

> JUAN: Trayvon Martin, I feel like that was a racial crime because he was a black kid wearing a hoodie does it mean that he's a criminal? That's not true.
> ARG: Can you say a little bit more about that? You said just because he was wearing a hoodie he was a criminal, but you think that's wrong, what do you mean?
> JUAN: Well you can't judge a book by its cover. Just because I walk around sagging, even though I don't like that that's weird, so I'm just doing that and then the police comes and take me and tell me that I'm in a gang or something just because I'm wearing my pants below my hips or something I wouldn't find that to be fair for myself, and then if I was that police officer and saw someone sagging I wouldn't just judge them by that. I would just if they had a weapon or something. Then I would take some action
> ARG: Could Trayvon Martin have gone to this school?
> JUAN: If he was younger I guess yes. Now I guess no. It's not just because of his age. I saw a few pictures of him and he just has tattoos everywhere, is sticking the middle finger, and there was an article that said he used to smoke marijuana or something like that. So I don't think you would be part of this school

ARG: Why?
JUAN: Cause of all those things that he does. They're just wrong. But it doesn't make him a criminal cuz he wasn't doing anything wrong at that moment in time…I guess I'm being kind of a hypocrite. It's just the things that he actually does because he's not doing anything wrong walking down the block getting his skittles and Arizona, but if you see that he's actually doing something wrong. Smoking marijuana. Sticking his middle finger at all the pictures and putting it on Facebook. I wouldn't really want that person to be a person that I can trust, or a person that I would want to trust or be a really close friend to, because there must be something wrong with him. (Interview, April 25, 2012)

Juan's observations regarding the Trayvon Martin case, point to the larger competing ideologies of race, class and gender politics in the United States. The tension of having to see Trayvon as both noncriminal and criminal indicates a gap that exists between ideologies surrounding Black boyhood and manhood. These tensions reveal themselves through Juan's situated understanding of strategically performing his own masculinity as a member of SMA, while also acknowledging that dress should not have an impact on how we view Trayvon. The anxieties about dress within Black and Latino poor and working class youth foreshadow the impending forces, mainly the prison industrial complex and physical death, that many of these children have yet to encounter directly, but certainly many are aware of either by witnessing these in others or stories that may be circulating amongst their community or in the media:

ARG: …and when you say there's certain things you can't do at this school, what do u mean by that?
MIGUEL: Well there's is a dress code so you can't go around that sagging your pants but I think that that's a good thing because then that gives you too much freedom so you have to restrict yourself to something things because if you don't then you know, you think , "I can go around doing anything" you might wind up in jail or even dead. (Interview, May 2, 2012)

Initially for Juan, this sort of profiling and policing of Black and Latino masculinity is what makes the case racial. On the other hand, both Juan and Miguel are also beholden to the recent racial strategies that posit Trayvon as a criminal, who was justifiably killed because while he was not in that moment engaging in criminal behavior, he was for all intents and purposes on a path of criminality. Miguel has internalized the ubiquitous nature of incarceration and death in his communities by making the issue about a choice made by working class young men of color to wear or not wear certain forms of clothing. This is noteworthy since examples like that of Henry Louis Gates point to claims that criminality has less to do with hoodies and more to do with the inherent criminality projected unto darker bodies. However, the evidence that Juan cites is Trayvon's purported marijuana use, dress and demeanor, are powerful in that they draw him away from his initial attempt to view Trayvon as a child like him, and instead insert a wedge via controlling images of Black criminality that allow for him to disassociate with the teen.

Yet, notice the comment "you can't judge a book by its cover" surfaces again and has thematic resonance with Hector's interview in the previous section where he discussed the strategic importance of dress code. In both cases, Juan and Hector are attuned to what many have called the *politics of respectability*. In brief, this political strategy emerges as a response to dehumanization by Blacks (and Latinos), and suggests that if whites view them as "less than,"

the response should be to claim human value by asserting ones capacity to dress, talk and act in ways that are coded as white and more specifically middle class. As legal scholar Michelle Alexander (2010) suggests, these strategies are built upon a logic that acts in good faith. That is, when Blacks prove through words and actions that they are not inferior, whites will do their part in ending racial discrimination. Moreover, it functions on the notion that Blacks and other subordinate groups are born sinners and their path is to prove their respectability and worthiness in the eyes of whites. They must prove worthiness of equal dignity, respect and equal treatment.

While the politics of respectability is compelling in that one may feel more relative control over one's own behavior than over the political economy or race structures, its centrality in discussions around the educational achievement of Black and Latino young men prevents us from getting closer to long lasting nor far reaching solution to the problems of race and class. Alexander emphasizes that the politics of respectability works for some who are able to gain access to education and privilege, but it also has the effect of creating an elite class of black and brown persons who act as "representatives" of a people from whom they have, in some cases, been distanced from experientially, physically and ideologically.

In some instances, Black and Latino representatives, who were once in similar situations, end up blaming poor and working class persons for their limited life chances without acknowledging the unique circumstances that produced their own success. Some of this stance was already apparent in the students, when they spoke about the difference between public schools students and themselves:

> ARG: When you say your mom doesn't let you play outside, what's her reason for not letting you play outside?
> IMAN: She said the kids are not home trained, and that the kids don't know what they're doing, and the kids are kinda dangerous cuz they don't know what they're gonna do, if they have cigarettes. She doesn't want me getting involved with that. (Interview, May 16, 2012)

> CHRIS: …my brother goes to a public high school and there's a lot of drugs, sex, all that stuff. I didn't really get to experience much of that. But, the kids, they weren't really serious about learning, at all. There was nothing motivating them to do anything. And they live in the same projects as me. So sometimes I'll just be coming home from school, and I'll see them. And I assume they get homework. I mean it is public school, but there's still homework and studying that you need to do…But I just see them playing outside till like twelve o'clock at night or eleven o'clock. And then, they're just running around the entire neighborhood doing stupid things. And, that's why I'm glad that I left. But the experience, the kids- you know how other kids are. I mean we play-fought a lot. Always just joking around. But nothing serious ever really happened, like, drama-wise. (Interview, May 3, 2012)

> ARG: What do you mean? Like why are they doing that... that they became bad, in your eyes?
> TITO: Like, every time I would come home with them, they wouldn't like, be very loud, like they would just play around with me, but not loud, like not do anything disrespectful to other people, like mind their business, but now like when they're... when... like when I

see them, like they're always loud, playing... like playing too much, like bumping into other people, and not saying excuse me, stuff like that. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

Attending schools outside of their neighborhoods thrusts the young men into the ongoing class tensions within Black and Latino communities. While these boys are not economically middle class, their educational backgrounds have distance them from their peers. This theme about an antagonistic "peer culture" arose most when I asked students to tell me what their friends thought about them coming to these schools or how they contrasted their schools and their neighborhoods. What I observed were the impacts of trying to abide by the politics of respectability, while also struggling with the *politics of solidarity*; an acknowledgment that while they have unique opportunities, they are not necessarily better than their public school counterparts. On one hand, these students knew that there was a culture of power that needed to be obtained, along with educational opportunities that were being provided by these students to activate this knowledge; as we see earlier in the chapter, to do so, students needed to "act the part" in ways that were contradictory and complex. On the other hand, students were still living in realities that pointed to inequalities and injustices that they were living by the hand of race and class.

Furthermore, they began to see the culture of power with *inherent* value and in turn begin to contrast this culture of power with the behaviors, speech and life of their poor and working class communities. In part, I observed this to be the negative impact of the strategies deployed by the schools in their effort to familiarize students with the culture of power. In other ways, this intra-racial division is a product of fissures produced by the differential forms of racialization where different racial-ethnic groups confront the opportunity structures in ways that are dissimilar. As a result, specifically of anti-black racism, recent immigrant parents, as well as working class Blacks, actively distance themselves from being associated with "blackness" at any cost. Seeing the differences in the worlds they juggle, some of the students begin to devalue and stigmatize their own communities. In short, the outcome of this tension is lived differently by the students, but in more cases than not, we can appreciate a dangerous slippage into shaming and stigmatization that begins to occur around race and class as these students look to become academically successful.

One of the central arguments concerning Black and Latino boys underachievement is that there is a culture present in their neighborhoods that is "anti-academic." This cultural argument centers on "folk theories" of race that describe an oppositional stance toward institutions that are perceived to act against the interests of Black and Latin students. The thinking is that unlearning this behavior and replacing it with "positive academic" attitudes would work greatly to ensure the reversal of a trend that is alarming. As we noted throughout the chapter, the schools target this culture by expanding the areas of inquiry of child, enforcing a "professional" dress code and forms of "middle class culture," namely speech, that would reposition these students as scholastic bodies. However, what is undeniable from the interviews and observations is that this process of becoming a future college student and professional entails an existential dissonance for some students, particularly Black and Latino males, that in many ways pushes them away from schools and their communities:

ARG: …and what about those guys, the people and your block. Do you feel like they're part of your community at all?

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JUAN: It's kind of a superficial community because we are friends, we joke around a lot, but you can't get down to a serious conversation with them because if you do they will get mad at you or they'll just gossip a lot

ARG: Why?

JUAN: I don't know I guess they've been hurt a lot because they go to public school I don't know what happened to them over there. I've had my experiences in public school so I guess they don't have… I guess they have trust issues or something. (Interview, April 25, 2012).

MIGUEL: I don't really talk to my friends anymore. I get home around 4:30, 4:45, they're inside their house. But sometimes when I see them they really don't care bout where I go or what not. Some of them, I don't talk to them, they don't talk to me. Some people might of ended up moving. I'm sort of informed about what happens in my neighborhood because I wake up in the morning, spend five minutes walking from my house to the train and all of a sudden I'm in [the central city] and spend the rest of my day there… (Interview, May 2, 2012)

IRVIN: Some teacher might go on and on and take it real seriously, for some of the simplest things. They really take like me wanting to put my hoodie in my book bag instead of putting it in my locker. It's made more of a big deal than they really need to. Sometimes the teachers or the faculty just have to take things beyond what they actually are and emphasize it more than they actually need to.

ARG: Tell me more about the, putting your hoodie in your book bag. Why is that a problem? Help me understand why.

IRVIN: Last year, I'm the type of person who likes to keep my stuff with me, I don't put, I don't use my locker. Because I feel like I need, keep my stuff with me all the time. So, I would walk into class with my hoodie around my arm, and my book and my hat in my hand. Sometimes I put my hat on the desk. I put my hoodie in the back of my thing. And teachers would really find offense in that. Or if I'm late to a class, I'd run in my sneakers but have my shoes in my hand so I can swap em in class. The teachers found that disrespectful, and stuff like that. So, I got sent out of class like seven times last year for doing that.

ARG: In your opinion why do they find offense to that, why do you think they do?

IRVIN:I think their just trying to, because their trying to set up some type of discipline in the class where small things like coming to school, coming to class prepared gets established so they feel like they have to be on every little thing so that the class functions properly. So they'll be tough on the, "having your collar messed up" to make sure that they enforce how the class is gonna run. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

After a careful reading of Fordham and Ogbu (1986), as well as grappling with the lived concerns of students who must "act the part," the data reveals that these policies, curriculum and schools are more than a simple set of codes and roles from which students could be expected to "code switch," but rather a more profound enactment of the "burden of acting human." In other words, to these young men and women, "acting" human requires a balancing of the contradictory and inconsistent ethos of a colorblind liberal humanism that, while different from Jim Crow racism, is equally devastating and traumatic. Notice that I say ethos and not that these universal

ideals are simply imperfect. As my philosophical and historical framing suggests, the creation of humanism was born first out of the need to justify colonialism in the Americas and later on expanded in the articulation of ideas and method in the nineteenth century Enlightenment produced, a theory of humanity that was by its very nature exclusionary and necessitated an "other" to juxtapose it civilization, culture, being and knowing.

Conclusions

For many Black and Latino students, the notion of naming institutions, cultures and practices as "white" works as a way of simultaneously making explicit the rules of engagement and the contours of the "cultural capital" valued by these institutions. At the same time, this naming also allows students to psychologically acknowledge the limits of the race neutral discourses schools attempt to impose especially in twenty-first century U.S. While certainly it is an oppositional stance in that it acknowledges a long-standing *and* ongoing conflict between racial groups, this acknowledgement of race does not always translate into academic underachievement. What often leads to underachievement is the inability to balance this burden and the traumas that may be produced in coping and failing to cope with this burden whose implications reach beyond the classroom.

Similarly, Prudence Carter (2005) conducted a study of Black and Latino students in Yonkers, NY and documented the belief, attitudes and motivation behind their work. Unlike Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Carter finds that most students buy into the culture and ideologies of rugged individualism and valuing educational achievement that we associate with middle class students. However, Carter reveals that the "acting white" phenomenon is the student's attempt to recognize power relations, that while they may experience in overt and more subtle ways, nonetheless impacts their conceptions of self and community. What is perhaps slightly different about student's at SMA and LHA, is that they have found the existential resources that enable them to hold these contradictions in balance and to find amidst the controlling images, exclusionary universalism, borderlands and identities, a sense of recognition that allows them to exist as the complex person of "flesh and blood" (Unamuno, 1972).

However, the right balance is something difficult to achieve. Students often find the transition to SMA and LHA to be difficult and riddled with pressures and negotiations that could oftentimes be taxing on them. These transitions were evident in the changes of space, language, embodiment, thinking and relationships. For instance, students often cited losing friendships, a sense of community on their block and/or feeling isolated on weekends with nothing to do. Parents frequently resorted to keeping their children indoors and keeping them safe from "the streets." This resulted in an almost complete isolation of the students from the experiences of their public school counterparts. It was interesting to observe, the impact of being more or less distant from their public school counterparts on the students at LHA and SMA. Those students who were often more in touch with other kids in their neighborhood acknowledged the differences in life, opportunities and access to institutional codes, that would enable them to achieve upward mobility while not rendering their counterparts simply "ghetto" kids who did not value schooling. Meanwhile students who were less, if not completely cut off, from these communities had begun a process of creating a narrative of those public school students that was not too different from those who were leveling cultural criticisms at these students as well. These students often describe public schools and the students in them as pits of waste and

backwardness. However, when it came to the weekend those students would find themselves trapped at home on the internet or playing video games.

This seems to have a disparate effect on boys and girls. For example girls at SMA while finding difficulties of going out because of general societal norms about gender and sexuality as well as specific cultural restrictions on their travel outside the home, were able to continue building friendships in meaningful ways over the phone, via text or over Facebook. Boys on the other hand seem to regret not having the opportunities to meet as a group and go play at a park. This was in large part due to spatial spread of their locations and also parents' worries about the trouble they would get into in the streets. They instead resorted to video game play, usually first person shooter games, that were violent in nature (See Ch. 5).

The burden of acting human is something we must take note of as educators in poor and working class communities of color. This becomes especially so in early adolescence, where students are beginning to formulate questions of collective identity and the relationship of self to the larger society. It may be convenient to say that students at this age are not ready to deal with such issues, but race and class do not care for age-appropriateness. These dynamics will manifest themselves in a host of ways that will burden our students in their schools, relationships and communities. The critical piece of the puzzle is that perhaps middle school and early adolescence is a key site when, especially for boys, we can aid parents in priming their future and current interactions with these dynamics so that they do not simply internalize and fall prey to anxiety, complexes and depressions but that they have the capacity to understand and react so that they, at the very least can balance the expectations and at the very most, they can feel empowered to act to change these harmful dynamics in the world around them.

Chapter 4
Am I a Man?:
The Psycho-Social Dramas of Racialized Masculinity

> ARG: …how would you describe this period of your life?
> IRVIN: The identity stage because a lot of people are really trying to find out who they are, and who they wanna be; what do they think about themselves? What do they think about what's going on around them? The build up of emotions that they go through is really what helps form themselves when they can get the knowledge of who they are as a person and then move on with that. (Interview, May 1, 2012)

Irvin's description of early adolescence as the "identity stage" is not at all surprising, since it has been argued that adolescence is a stage where "identity" work and the perennial existential questions "who am I?" and "who are we?" are omnipresent (Cuban, 1992; Erikson, 1980/1959; Furstenburg, 2000; Hacker, 1994; Hall, 1904; Lesko, 1996; Vigil, 2011). Undoubtedly, schooling is tied to the project of learning what it means to be human, and as a result adolescents of all races grapple with the question "Who am I?" However, what occurs when the basic assumption of humanity is taken away because of one's racial-gender-class position? What then characterizes the experience of schooling? More generally, what does it mean to grow up in an age where dehumanization as a result of race and gender is not readily recognized? My answer to these questions did not come during a social studies class or even a language arts discussion. It came in a brief interaction during an art class at LHA.

While the students were working on a still life exercise, drawing an array of objects on their tables, the boys were chatting about various topics and occurrences outside of school. The teacher floated around and worked with the boys on an individual basis, as needed, to clarify concepts and techniques. I would often wander around myself listening to their conversations. This was a rich setting to listen to the boys because they seemed relaxed and comfortable while working on their art projects. In this particular instance, without a precipitating conversation, one of the boys, Roberto, a seventh grade Latino boy of multi ethnic decent, lifts his head up and tells the rest of the group: "One time I 'google' myself, and all I got was that I'm a Mexican criminal." [Boys laugh]. Yea for real! I typed in Roberto Hernandez!"

In the previous chapters, I explored the ways in which students at SMA and LHA dealt with the existential dissonance produced by the dynamics of race and class in the era of purported color-blindness. In similar ways to race *and* class experiences, the young men I spoke to were often confronted by conflicting ideas and experiences regarding their race *and* gender identity. Similar to previous eras of U.S. history, young Black and Latino boys in the U.S. often come across experiences of dehumanization in their journeys toward manhood. This results in challenging existential reflections at best and damaging traumas at worst.

These direct and indirect encounters with dehumanization are often made possible in contemporary times through arenas such as the media, prison industrial complex, homeland security, and residential segregation that the boys confront inside and outside of school. As a gender identity is articulated with race and class during the period of early adolescence, I observed existential burdens on the boys that are consistent with longstanding debates and reflections spearheaded by Black and Latino intellectuals and figures. The thematic thread that links the boys to their predecessors are their frustrations with the transition into manhood. As

demonstrated by Roberto's comment, perhaps one of the main rites in early adolescence is a confrontation with the caricatures and stereotypes of Black and Latino men who are often viewed as criminal, suspect, savage, dangerous, hypersexual, monstrous, crafty and un-childlike. More than "ignorant ideas," these stereotypes are the products of policies, institutions and practices that rely on the ongoing dehumanization of certain groups for the sake of perpetuating advantageous power relations. For the young men in this study, the interruption of the exploratory existential process of "becoming" creates traumas and pain which produce anger, anxiety and depression in many of the boys. In other students, this developmental interruption prompted a need to find new ways of reconciling the divide between societal images of Black and Latino men, and their own self-perception.

Therefore this chapter grapples with the following question: What do the experiences and thoughts of students attending SMA and LHA reveal about the meaning of Black and Latino masculinities in a twenty-first century U.S society as they begin their transition into young manhood? To address this question, the first half of this chapter begins by reviewing instances where the young men encountered discourses and practices that made them feel "less than" because of their race and gender positions. According to these young men, the area of school discipline was by far the most prominent site where race and gender ideologies could be found at SMA and LHA. Beyond schools, the boys' accounts suggest a "post-racial" society that contains an accumulation of ideologies and practices of racism, some old and some new, that have disruptive consequences on their attempts for self-understanding.

The second half of the chapter grapples with the debates and theory on the articulation of race and masculinity. Utilizing Frantz Fanon's (1952/1967) theory of racialized manhood, I argue that Fanon's theory of racialized manhood, which combines sociological and psychological approaches, offers the most useful tools for interpreting the traumas of manhood for Black and Latino boys.

Delinquents and Perverts: Race-Gender in Schools

When I first approached the leadership at Langston Hughes Academy about the research project, they made it clear that the boys tended to get themselves into mischief. One of the administrators confessed that it was in those moments between classes, in the hallways, going up the stairs, heading to the park where boys pushed behavioral boundaries. Hearing this, I made sure to view these moments in between classes as equally important to my study. In one classroom, the teacher had the boys line up outside the door before entering class. They were to enter in an orderly and calm fashion only after she had arrived and was ready for them to enter. When prompted to enter the room, the instructions were then to take their seats starting from the table furthest from the door and fill in from that side of the room.

One day, however, the boys were rowdy and did not form a line before the class started. Suddenly the teacher appears in the doorway in time to see the group not meeting her expectations. The teacher is visibly upset, and once the students see this, they quickly become quiet and form an orderly line. After a moment of silence the teacher allows them to enter the room. As I tail behind the students, she apologizes and says that she has to give the boys a "talk." The talk is about school expectations and culture and how disappointed she was that they failed to uphold these standards. The tone was stern, but certainly respectful and not condescending. I note that as "the talk" occurs, some boys seem receptive while others, particularly Todd, a Black

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seventh grade boy, are turned off. She puts a great deal of emphasis on the notion that they are to be "brothers" to one another. Since this is the case, they must "pull each other up, not down!"

The next day the boys seemed determined to fix their mistake. Before class I observe the students discussing yesterday's "talk" given by the teacher. A couple of students attempt to get the boys together before class, but a sizable number seem to have had a negative response to this talk and internalized a different interpretation regarding the "talk" on brotherhood, culture and expectations. Todd, the young Black male student whom I had previously observed as having a negative response to the talk, proceeds to mimic the teacher's talk. He says in a "teacher voice": "You're a bunch of disrespectful juvenile delinquents!" Todd then lists all of their bad behaviors. I am taken aback because the actual content and tone of the "talk" in no way conveyed this sense of criminality that Todd recreates in his mimicry of the teacher. (Fieldnotes, October 3-4, 2011).

Todd's mimicry conveys a clear sense of how many of the boys, especially Black boys, understand the articulation of race and gender in the U.S. In this instance, the notion of "delinquency" is not one simply produced by "bad individuals." Todd's mockery did not directly reflect the teacher's "talk." Rather the teacher's comments opened up an opportunity for Todd to work through his resistance to what discipline, rules and expectations in larger society convey about Black masculinity. These boys have a reason to believe that their behavior is not simply disappointing, but criminal in the eyes of the adults of the school. This moment is deeply troubling because it signals that even when teachers may not necessarily look at their children as criminals (I never observed instances of teachers making this assumption), the boys themselves read discourses of discipline as labeling mechanisms that posit them as deviant and defiant. Concerning the "trouble" the boys would get into at the schools, I saw a noticeable difference. In LHA, the trouble was usually surrounding self-discipline. For instance, in some classrooms, boys at LHA would get in trouble for minor infractions like rocking back on their chairs, whispering something to a neighbor, making faces at each other.[15] My observations regarding the nature of discipline at LHA, were confirmed by Irvin, Tim and Darwin, who detail these kinds of infractions in their interviews:

> ARG: What are some of the things that you don't like about this school?
> IRVIN: Um. Some of them that I don't like is the way teachers define discipline. Being that, I don't mind if a teacher tries to discipline me cuz that's your job, but the way teachers respond to certain things. Like if I'm walking down the hall and something like a push, we're boys we do that. Some teacher might go on and on and take it real seriously, for some of the simplest things. They really take like me wanting to put my hoodie in my book bag instead of putting it in my locker. It's made more of a big deal than they really need to. Sometimes the teachers or the faculty just have to take things beyond what they actually are and emphasize it more than they actually need to…. they define discipline by controlling everything that happens and making it feel that kids know their place kind of. Because, and it's not all teachers it's just some teachers. It's not all the people but like,

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[15] When it came to behavior, the logic that an "all boys" school would diminish distractions (i.e.: girls) in the classroom seems to be off the mark. What I observed throughout the school year when comparing the co-ed versus the single sex environment was that boys were often more distractions to one another. The boys would often engage in trying to "one up" each other by pushing the limits of acceptable school behavior. For example, one boy would make the other boy laugh in the middle of class. When the teacher turned his or her back, the other one would try to do something to cause laughter right back. They would go through several rounds of this until the teacher turned around and one of them got caught. Other popular methods of pushing limits were throwing small objects at each other. This pushing of limits with each other seemed to be consistent with Kimmel's (1999) idea about the homosociality of masculinity. Boys, especially at LHA were constantly plagued by the need to seek approval of other boys by making them laugh or by testing the limits of propriety at the school.

simple things that I get in trouble for a lot. Because I'm not the person who, I'm a vocal person. And I don't like to be, when people try to really attack me, and I'm defensive on certain things so teachers feel like they need to attack you to make you do the right thing, or they need to like send you to the office so other people, so they can make other people know around you that you can't do this so, they really think that people don't like to have conversations like one on one conversations where things are resolved. (Interview, May 1, 2013)

ARG: Is there a moment where you ever felt disrespected as a man?
TIM: Well a lot of times. Cause this faculty, they say we're young men but they treat us like little boys. And that disrespected me, cuz if you're a man. Then why are we being treated like little kids, such as like, clap two times if you hear me. Count down and stuff, and I feel like they're acting like this is pre-k. Like we're teenagers. you could just say quiet down, you don't have to go through that and stuff. (Interview, May 4, 2012)

ARG: Do you feel like there's any faculty members here at the school that you can trust? (DARWIN: Not really.) Why not?
DARWIN: …I don't know, but I think that some teachers are racist. Because there was this white kid, he gets class easy and stuff like that, but then if a colored student did exactly what he did they would get in trouble for it…Well it's a different example with race. Like one of our teachers, like I'm Hispanic, and I did something that wasn't that bad, like I had my pen in my mouth and I was also throwing my pen up and down, but I wasn't throwing it that high just like, from here to here, and then he sent me to the office. But then another student did something that was worse. And like one of my friends was leaning back and then a kid pushed behind the back leg and then he pushed him down, and then he just told them both to go to the corner of the room. And I had to go to the office. (Interview, June 4, 2012)

The boys were clear that they did not mind being corrected about the rules and culture of the school. However, what the boys did seem to mind, and what I observed as well, was that there were different styles of setting these boundaries. Irvin describes being "sent out" of class a few times over minor infractions that he believed to "not be a big deal." I also saw in some cases that teachers at LHA were sending students to the office for talking or for minor infractions that seemed to not warrant such an action. Darwin discusses this dynamic at length:

ARG: Why do you think there is a difference in the way they treat kids?
DARWIN: Well I think because, well I don't really know because I asked a lot of teachers like if they do that intentionally, and they say it's none of my business. I don't think intentionally because [the Principal] reminded [the teacher] that he sent me to the office and he was like " I sent you to the office" and then he asked why and I told him and stuff and he said "I sent you to the office for that?" and stuff like that, and so I don't think he even thinks like what I'm thinking at that time, or he doesn't really think he just sent me to the office.
ARG: Take me through what happens when you get sent to the office. Has there been more than once you been sent to the office? (Darwin: yeah.) And so what happens when you go the office, what is the procedure, what usually ends up happening?

DARWIN: Well they don't really yell at me, we just talk and they ask me what I did and why'd I do it, and then they just send me up…. first they say what I did, and then like if I explain, I think I said I "throwing up and I didn't even throw it up that high" he said… I think that [the administration], they know that I'm right but since they hired that teacher they just tryna feel that they're right. Everyone knows that throwing a pen not even that high in a classroom is not bad, and so I told them that I don't even think it's that bad and also putting in my mouth because it's just like a habit. And so he said do I think that [teacher] wants to be thinking about that while he's teaching, and then he said that that could distract the class and stuff like that. And I don't see how that's distracting like even like, if I dropped it on the table and it made loud noises or it accidentally hit someone I could see how that's distracting but I didn't really- I only threw it up once and then he sent me to the office. (Interview, June 4, 2012)

I also observed teachers who established a clear set of expectations and handled discipline within the confines of their classroom without having to send students out. These teachers utilized the "one on one" context to bring behavioral problems to the student's attention. Studies suggest that *how* one disciplines has a great impact on how students will perceive the legitimacy of disciplinary action (Noguera, 2003). Overall, this appeared to make a big difference in how the boys perceived the nature of disciplinary action. As Tim comments, there were ways that he felt the teachers made them feel like boys versus young men when it came to discipline.

Like LHA, SMA explicitly viewed itself not as an institution but rather as a community. The school provided students with a set of rules and regulations that they must follow, but also a set of guidelines that would contribute to fostering a strong community culture. As a result, SMA was open to the students as "a home away from home." Students sometimes arrived as early as 7:30 in the morning to talk with teachers and students or do homework in a quiet and peaceful place. The same was true of the evenings, when it was not unusual for students and teachers to be at the school after 5:30pm.

In order to promote this "community feel," the parents, teachers and students at SMA decided early on that, for this school to truly be a family, the students needed to treat each other as such. One of the main pillars for maintaining a sense of family in the co-ed environment was the "no dating policy." The policy states that: "We do not allow nor do we encourage the youngsters to "go out" with each other at [SMA,] nor do we believe that they should be involved with others outside of the school." The policy cites among its many rationales that barring and discouraging students from dating each other accomplishes a few cultural and social goals. Cultural reasons include preventing or reducing the impact of exclusive relationships and cliques that may form around dating partners and thus negatively impact the students around them. Other cultural reasons may also include avoiding the pressure to "date" as a rite of passage for boys and girls. The larger social goals of the policy are about academic success and follow form the school's perception that boys and girls who dated in the seventh and eighth grade tended to fall behind academically. This was attributed to either their inability to maintain focus and/or to deal with the fallout of a failed relationship. When possible infractions of this policy were perceived, usually by other students, the faculty at SMA was alerted and informal discussions and meetings were arranged with students involved in the behavior.

I never observed anybody, boy or girl, get sent to the office at SMA. While the informal politics of discipline at SMA had positives, in that boys were not caught up in being "sent to the office," it did open the door for other issues. For example, when boys encountered disciplinary

problems, it usually revolved around their relationships with girls. These matters were often brought to the attention of the students one on one or in the moment. The boys and girls I spoke to confirmed that the boys were at times labeled "perverts":

> LEON:I remember when ...there was a period of time when I was coming late to school a lot. And [a teacher] had asked me why. And he'd asked me if I was staying up all night watching porn. And at first I thought he only asked that question cuz I'm African American. But then I realized that not because I'm African American he wasn't trying to be racist. But it's cuz it's something he sees not just African Americans doing, but almost everyone's doing it now. (Interview, April 26, 2012)

> ARG: What are some of the things that maybe you don't like so much about the school? NICK: I said before the feeling that things can get...like people can get intrusive and just sometimes assumptions that are made by both students and teachers…Well when we were in seventh grade a few of the guys, they got in trouble because they were talking about something but, cuz I walked past them and they were like they were here there were boys here and there were some girls near the lockers and [a teacher] said they were like "oogling" the girls and they weren't. They were talking to each other so it's things like that that were kinda like unjust just the whole kinda notion sometimes that it would be like the guys just trynna get with the girls there. Sometimes you can even feel weird if I'm just talking to my best girl friend, and we're just talking and things like that you can even see like looks sometimes where it's like of you might like her something it's just like, it gets bothersome because how things can spread and especially since it's a small school things can spread really quickly that way… I think from our class from sixth to especially from sixth grade the girls would talk to… the faculty a lot more. We were more probably towards the end of seventh grade that's when we actually started reaching out to faculty members so what they saw was pretty much what they knew and that's pretty much how they boxed us in. So I guess what we were giving off was you know, that we're just perverts… (Interview, May 8, 2012)

> CYNTHIA: And yeah, I talk to some of the girls, but if one of the girls goes up to [an administrator] and say, 'I don't like the way this person hugged me,' it's automatically in the middle of the hallway [to a boy], 'you're a pervert,' or 'you make the girls of the community feel uncomfortable.' Speaking for all of us because apparently, according to this one girl that went to him, 'this is how all of us feel, you need to fix it'. (Interview, May 31, 2012)

Leon's comments point to an initial read of why a faculty may be targeting him for watching porn. For Leon, it is about a perceived behavior associated with a race of people, in this case hypersexuality. While he clarifies that after he talked to the teacher it was apparent that this was not an assumption about his race, but rather the faculty's concern about a growing "online porn" problem they were having with the boys at the time, his initial reaction is nonetheless significant. This perception of certain boys as being "perverts" is corroborated by comments from Nick and Cynthia, both of whom are Black. While the adults and students are invested in creating a safe place for the students by delaying predatory dating behavior, the policy seemed to have a negative effect of "boxing in" certain bodies and groups as displaying more "sexualized"

behaviors. In addition, the boys (and girls) who confessed to feeling targeted by these disciplinary actions were oftentimes more physically "developed" than other students. For instance, boys and girls who were perceived to be at-risk of dating behaviors tended to have more pronounced secondary sex characteristics and oftentimes were Black or Latino. While there were many kids from other races and body types that I observed engaging in what would be perceived by staff to be flirtatious behavior, these students would not often be in discussions about dating violations. Moreover, Leon's experience mirrors Todd's earlier mimicry about being a "juvenile delinquent." In both cases, the young men perceive disciplinary moments as fertile grounds for judgment, not simply of their actions but of their criminality and/or hypersexuality as Black men.

It is notable that while the areas of schools culture and curriculum were generally thought to be equitable, race-blind and inclusive, when I focused on school discipline, issues of race and gender became clear for students. Thus, the topics that arise in the area of school discipline (e.g., self-discipline, control, behavior and sexuality) are key sites where one can look to examine the transition from boyhood to young manhood. Moreover, the encounters with controlling images such as "the pervert" and "the delinquent" are evidence of the ways in which the schools are part of a larger discourse of race and gender in U.S. that thrust boys at young ages to deal with racialized and gender images.

My findings with respect to race, gender and school discipline at SMA and LHA are not surprising. Previous studies examining the schooling of Black and Latino boys and girls have returned even more egregious examples of the ways in which certain children are pegged for hypersexuality and innate criminality. As Nolan and Anyon (2004) argue, the rise of "Zero Tolerance" policies transferred the "discourse of drug laws" into U.S. public schools. These policies, arising at a time of suburban school shootings, are more strongly enforced in urban schools rather than the predominantly white suburbs where many of the shootings take place. As a result, this has created a "flow of some students into the juvenile or criminal justice system through the establishment of a close working relationship between school personnel and the police and the installation of high-tech security apparatus" (p.142). The connection between the criminal justice system and schools is not only located within the jurisdiction of school, but also extends to the larger society. "During the late 1990s Mayor Giuliani insisted that crime could be reduced in the city if police officers had access to school yearbooks as a way of apprehending potential criminals" (López, 2004). Nancy López (2004) describes in her ethnographic study of Dominican male students in New York City, how security personnel equate violence and criminal acts with male students. She describes the attitudes of security officers at the site:

> He assured me that young women were involved only in frivolous spats over jealousies, unlike male students, who were involved in more "serious" fight over property…the informal institutional practice was to police the men but not the women. Male security guards were allowed to chase, manhandle, and apprehend male students. (p.38)

Ferguson (2001) suggests that Black male bodies in particular are seen as "adultified," since their racialization excludes them from "universal" paradigms of childhood development. Instead Black boys are seen as highly skilled strategists, criminals who act in ways only adults can. In other words, unlike White boys who are "naturally" mischievous at their age, Black boys possess a certain malice and immorality when they step into schools due to their socio-economic

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backgrounds and rough upbringings. As a result, schools enact processes of social classification and abjection by constituting them as outsiders within school culture (hooks, 2004b; López, 2004; Ferguson, 2001; Rios, 2011). This allows boys to be represented by the media and dominant culture in ways that suit the ideological needs of an existing social order.

The media and researchers both contribute to an alarmist tone surrounding the "urban schools" where "savage" boys of color are caught up in cycles of violence and underachievement produced by deficient cultures and attitudes. In this context, Black and Latino boys are defined by their perceived criminality, effectively rendering them undeserving of an education. Furthermore, excluding them from credential granting institution, such as schools, will limit their participation in the economic, political and social spheres at large. This pattern evokes the analysis of Charles Mills (1997) in his work the *Racial Contract*, where the notion of bodies as representation of spheres of humanity, is fundamental to the notion of citizenship:

> Even for Kant, who defines "persons" simply as rational beings, without any apparent restrictions of gender or race, the female body demarcates one as insufficiently rational to be politically anything more than a "passive citizen. Similarly, the Racial Contract is explicitly predicated on a politics of the body which is related to the body politic through restrictions on which bodies are "politic." There are bodies impolitic whose owners are judges incapable of forming or fully entering into the body politic. (p.53)

Students of color who are culturally, racially, linguistically and economically different from the normative White middle class student are seen as embodying the deficiencies of non-students. Morris (2005), Ferguson (2001) and Noguera (2003) noted discourses of criminal potentiality articulated by teachers and administrators in their studies; they referred to their behaviors, dress and styles of comportment as evidence that they were "en route to jail." Ferguson (2001) notes a similar phenomenon around the question of "behavioral defiance:"

> Many of the infractions coded as disruption, defiance, or disrespect-or sometimes as all three — seemed to emanate from the display of emotions by children, the performance of self in this relation of power described by the popular expression attitude [author's emphasis]. These generally involved interactions where children are seen as challenging adult authority and power…Both Black and white teachers perceive these displays as threatening, as denoting a specifically Black communicative style that they interpreted as showing a "bad attitude" by demonstrating the child's refusal to align himself with the school's standards, choosing instead to identify with what they considered a Black lower-class style. (p.68)

Increasingly, students are seeing that they must prove themselves worthy of being in schools not through intellectual means, but rather through behavioral means. There is a heightened awareness of "the politics of respectability" through in-school factors that push kids to be more aware of how they "present" themselves. However, my findings also suggest that children are attuned to the ways larger society interprets their bodies, behaviors and actions within a historical American imaginary that includes what Collins (1990/2000) calls *controlling images*-stigmatized stock images that justify the inequality experienced by subordinate groups-of Black and Latino boys and girls.

Roberto's comments at the beginning of this chapter on being a "Mexican criminal" along with Todd's image of "juvenile delinquents" point to some of the most salient ways in which the young men encountered race and gender, both inside and outside of schools, in the U.S. These narratives of criminality and inferiority summon what many call stereotypes, but what I prefer to call "controlling images" (Collins, 1990/2000). In her work *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins describes the ideological justification for the oppression of poor and working class Black women through the use of stigmatized stock images that include "mammies," "matriarchs," "welfare recipients," and "hot mommas" (p.69). Collins argues that these controlling images are significant because "the authority to define societal values is a major instrument of power, [for] elite groups, in exercising power [to] manipulate ideas about Black Womanhood" (p.69). In essence, these images are not reducible to "ignorant ideas" of a few bad individuals, but rather have been forged through specific social and historical circumstances which produced a need for justifying policies, institutions and programs that worked to exclude and dominate women, the poor, Blacks, Latino and Asians, through social, political and economic means at different points throughout U.S history (Locke, 1925/1997).

For instance, during slavery the powerful images of "mammies and toms," promoted caricatures of Black men and women who were loyal, devotional and happy to serve whites. These images suggested that Blacks were born to serve whites. Similarly, the stock image of the "coon" represented Black men as "lazy, shiftless, uppity" and in need of discipline. The "jezebel" was a portrayal of Black women as "sexually aggressive wet-nurses" with an insatiable appetite for sex. In the case of the jezebel, White male slave-owners used this as a way of justifying the massive amounts of sexual assaults and rape that occurred on the plantations against Black women. Together, all of these images provided a narrative that posited slavery as a benevolent institution that would work to civilize these childish, subservient, animalistic and docile people. Unfortunately, many of these controlling images would carry on with slight re-configurations and new formulations in current times (e.g. Uncle Ben's and Aunt Jemima; Blacks as comic relief in movies).

However, during the post-Civil war era, we observe the beginnings of a narrative of "southern redemption" according to which whites argued that without the benevolent institutions of slavery, Blacks' natural savage proclivities (read: violence) would be unleashed upon society. This rationale was successfully mobilized in the stock image of the "black brute." The portrayal of this brute caricature argued that Black men were inherently violent and hypersexual. Whites asserted that newly free Black men were on the prowl to rape white women. While slavery was not re-instituted, other forms of formal and informal social control such as lynching, black codes and the convict lease system emerged as a response to economic needs produced by the thirteenth amendment as well as the newly minted notions of criminality developed during the Reconstruction era (Alexander, 2010; Davis, 1999; Gilmore, 2009) Americans from that point forward, would see many of these images perpetuated in sports, entertainment and film (e.g. Minstrel shows, Boxing matches and D.W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation*).

Meanwhile, as groups of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were forcibly incorporated into the U.S. through wars, settler colonialism and imperial policies of the mid and late nineteenth century, a resulting set of controlling images would mimic many of the tropes of docility, hypersexuality and criminality already enacted on Blacks. For Latina women these stereotypes include the "Harlot," the Spitfire," "the domestic" and the "dark lady." Of male images, perhaps one of the most ubiquitous images is that of the "Mexican bandito" who is often depicted as a violent, unintelligent, irrational, lazy and dirty figure who carries guns and wears a large

sombrero. In many ways, the bandito is a revisionist symbol created by Hollywood through the "greaser films" of the late 1920s (Rodriguez, 1997, 2004), characterized by his irrationality, violent behavior, hypersexuality, uncleanliness and laziness. This image of the bandito in many ways reflected the nativist fears in southwest, which was preoccupied with the increases of Mexican immigration fueled by industrialization and revolution. Similarly in the decades to come, the bandito imagery would be re-inscribed by the other stock characters such as Puerto Rican gangsters and Colombian drug lords, all responses to issues surrounding immigration, urban blight and the war on drugs.

During the 1930s, another group of Latino stock figures came into view as the U.S. exchanged "gunboat" diplomacy" for "smiling face imperialism." Direct investment in Latin America, supported by U.S.-friendly dictators and "leaders," secured indirect power over the region in the decades to come. This time, characters played by the likes of Carmen Miranda and Desi Arnaz offered images of happy, musical and "buffoon" type people who welcomed economic exploitation by their Gringo neighbors from the North with open arms. Images like those of Miranda and Arnaz played their part in softening the image of U.S. imperialism in Latin America, and thus appealed to white middle class women who might associate bananas and other products for their homes with certain feel good emotions (Enloe, 1999; Rodriguez, 2004).

One last noteworthy image is that of the "Latin Lover" of the 1950s played famously by actors like Gilbert Roland and Ricardo Montalban. This image along with its feminine counterpart, the "dark lady," summoned notions of Latino men as hypermasculine "machos" and Latina women as hypersexual "bombshells." Coinciding with the beginnings of the cold war, a renewed sense of patriotism and assimilationist rhetoric overtook the country. Policies and programs like "Operation Wetback" saw three million Mexican and Mexican-American deported during this time. As a result, the Latin lover played on a renewed interest of seeing people who were different as "other." Therefore these hypersexual, dangerous and often immoral exotic stock figures played into fantasies aimed at largely white audiences.

Unfortunately, many of these stereotypes continue to hold power in our imaginaries as Americans, citizens, consumers, police officers, teachers, researchers, voters and politicians. While these images are clearly fictional, exaggerated and incredulous, there are those who, because of race and class privileges, tend to rely on these images as crutches for creating folk theories of inequality, injustice, poverty and criminality. In the end, these powerful images while situated firmly in the realm of popular culture and media have relevance in the everyday lives of boys as they must both encounter these stereotypes in popular culture and media, while also coming across those who have been shaped by these images and stereotypes.

Yet the popular culture is but one site where these boys encounter race and gender in the twenty-first century U.S. As I continued my interviews and observations it became evident that beyond schools, boys confront race and gender in many other places in their lives despite the post-civil rights rhetoric, which pervades the contemporary U.S. context. Often the boys candidly discussed the array of experiences and existential challenges that they had already dealt with in their lives.

Coming of Age in the era of "Color-Blindness"

> I was part of a generation of kids who saw something special about what it means to be
> human—something bloody and dramatic and scandalous that happened right here in
> America… (Jay-Z, 2010, p. 45).

Rapper Jay-Z (also known as Sean Carter) describes a new political, economic and social landscape that inspires a set of complexes, traumas, hopes and contradictions that urban poor and working class racialized youth must confront in the post-civil rights era. More specifically, Carter describes an era of decline and abandonment in segregated urban America after the mid-1970s that led to slum lords, urban blight, the war on drugs and mass incarceration, all of which only exacerbated violence, and poverty (Alexander, 2012; Marable, 1983; Massey and Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1996). While his comments more accurately describe many of the conditions under which the parents of the children (the hip-hop generation) attending SMA and LHA experienced, the larger contours of the social and political landscape that produce current inequalities persist. Neoliberalism—the Social Darwinist economic ideology which argues that the "social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, [as] it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (Harvey, 1995, p.3)—undoubtedly continues to present challenges to many poor and working class Black and Latino students and their families in the areas of jobs, schooling, food and housing.

For instance, in the year 2000 there were 6.6 million people in the prisons of the United States. Two-thirds of this population were ethnic minorities. African-Americans who are only 13 percent of the total population comprised about half of the prison population. Furthermore, of the African Americans in prisons, most of them are males between the ages of 16 to 25 (Nolan & Anyon, 2004). Another major dimension of Neoliberalism—free trade agreements and structural adjustment programs—wreaked havoc on many immigrant family's countries of origins and led to capital flight of many industrial jobs that were the engines of working and middle class people. These policies also include the privatization of schools in predominantly poor and working class communities of color that close schools, gentrify neighborhoods and a narrow curriculum geared to corporate interests.

Neoliberalism's slogan, as famously proclaimed by Margaret Thatcher (1987), is that, "there is no such thing" as society. As Carter's comments suggest, this dissolution of the concept of society introduces yet another dimension to an already heavy existential climate that children at SMA and LHA occupy. While the apocalyptic images of urban blight in places like the South Bronx, the South Side of Chicago and East L.A may seem to be a distant history to many of the young men at LHA and SMA, the current conditions of many poor and working class kids in the urban inner city areas still embody the structural and historical inequality. As we saw in chapter 3, these disparate environmental factors in their neighborhoods can lead many students to make judgments about the worth of their communities and themselves. This age of hyperconsumerism, privatization and competition, not only impacts us on material levels (jobs, housing and education); they also impact notions of what it means to be human. For many of the young men in my study, this era of neoliberal capitalism refashions long-standing stereotypes and effigies justify ongoing inequality. In turn, these images of hyper-masculinity and criminality are some of the dominant ways in which the boys in my study made sense of their place in society as young Black and Latino men:

> ARG: How do you feel manhood, race, ethnicity factor into your identity as a person, as an individual?
> LEON: Well, last week I read an article about how black men are perceived...some people might...due to prejudice some people might see you as a rapist or a criminal. And others might see you as someone who's not to be trusted. And the topics discussed in the

book we read *To Kill a Mockingbird*. And... there was a statement that black men aren't to be trusted around white women. And black men aren't to be trusted around white men. And how they are often times violent. And I think that, that's a statement that even though there's prejudice out there, we as a race aren't really doing anything to change their views. Because even now you still see a majority of the murders you see out there in the crimes are done by African Americans. And we need to change that. A lot of people are complaining about how people see us. But the thing is that we don't do anything to change their views. And I think that's what we really need to do. We shouldn't be doing... if you go outside right now a majority of the people are sagging. The first people I observed to be doing it were the African Americans. And then slowly the Spanish. And now even some of the Caucasians and the Asians are doing it because they see everybody else doing it. So...for a long time people have viewed us differently from everybody else, and that's because of prejudice. (Interview, April 26, 2012)

IMAN: Yeah. I thought... I was wondering if I have to act that way. A lot of jails were being open, were being extended for more African Americans. I found that usually if you didn't do good in third grade... I think it was 50 to 75% the chance of you going to jail if you didn't do good in third grade, so that kinda scared me and I'm glad I did do good, but I started wondering if that was the way I had to act as if I didn't care about anything, or if I was supposed to be selling drugs, or I was supposed to be doing something that was kind of against the law, or if I was trying to rob or steal. (Interview, May 16, 2012)

Leon and Iman reflect on the tensions of balancing the conflation of Black masculinity with criminality with a sense that "there's prejudice out there." Their words echo Alexander 's (2010) claim that, "[i]n the era of colorblindness, it is no longer permissible to hate blacks, but we can hate criminals (p. 199)." Leon discusses how "sagging" pants are an indication of criminality and justify "how people view us" as criminals. Meanwhile, Iman extends this logic to the schools by citing a study that links the academic underachievement of Black boys to a propensity for criminality. In their own minds both boys have begun to internalize powerful ideologies that *continue* the work of policing Black men due to their race and gender positions. It is this observation which drove Alexander (2010) to argue that we live not in a "colorblind" society but rather in a "New Jim Crow" U.S. That is, while the language and public discourse to treat Blacks (and Latinos) as less than human has changed, the *structure* of society has changed little from previous eras.

In his first published work, a collection of novellas, Richard Wright (1938/2004) provides an "autobiographical sketch" titled "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," in which a young Richard lives in a poor segregated section of Arkansas in the early twentieth century. He recounts his process of confronting a violent, demeaning and exclusionary society from his days as young Black boy to his experiences in the workplace as a young Black man. What is most notable about this account is Wright's description of the rite of passage into young manhood as his "Jim Crow Education." For young Richard the lessons taught about "who he is" are captured most starkly by an incident involving childhood "cinder wars," where he and other young Black boys would utilize the readily available rock-like ammunition to hit each other while hiding behind one another's brick houses. This seemingly reckless yet youthful activity took a turn for the worse when he and his friends encounter a group of young white boys who lived in the neighborhood where there were more "green growing things." As they engaged the white boys with their cinder

ammunition, Richard realizes that the white boys have begun throwing broken bottles. As the Black boys retreat, Richard is hit with a milk bottle behind his ear, opening a gash that bleeds profusely. Richard feeling a sense of injustice retreats home to what he thinks will be an understanding mother. Instead Richard is met with one of the first lessons of Jim Crow:

> I grabbed her hand and babbled out the whole story. She examined my wound, then slapped me. "How come yuh didn't hide? She asked me. "How come yuh awways fightin'?"
> I was outraged, and bawled…She grabbed a barrel stave, dragged me home, stripped me naked, and beat me till I had a fever of one hundred and two. She would smack my rump with the stave, and, while the skin was still smarting, impart the gems of Jim Crow wisdom. I was never to throw cinder anymore…I was never, never, under any conditions to fight white folks again. And they were absolutely right in clouting me with the broken milk bottle. Didn't I know she was working hard every day in the hot kitchens of the white folks to make money to take care of me? When was I ever going to learn to be a *good* boy?…She finished by telling me that I ought to be thankful to God as long as I lived that they didn't kill me." (my emphasis, p. 2-3).

The lessons of Jim Crow are clear: 1) Black boys are not viewed as children but rather as inherently "bad" little criminals. 2) Childhood in a racist society eludes the Black child; they will have to face the harshness of race, class and gender from an early age. 3) Under the "ethics" of Jim Crow, the Black child is always seen as unethical and morally bankrupt. 4) To survive, Black boys must keep quiet or else face the real prospects of violence or even death. Wright's account of boyhood keys us into the specificities of growing up as a Black boy that, while fictional and historically specific, still resonate with the lives of many Black (and Latino) boys today.

While we are not under the Jim Crow of the post-emancipation era, there is a "new racism" which enacts equally cruel forms of exclusion and violence (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For instance, Nick, an eighth grade Black male from the Caribbean, recounted in his interview several instances where he felt the weight of his blackness as a young man:

> ARG: Has there ever been a moment where you felt disrespected because your race or ethnicity?
> NICK: Yeah, if you walk into the [train station] there's gonna be this corner store... Avery walked in there, since he looks Asian the guy didn't even say anything to him, just like a regular guy, but when me and my friend walked in there, and we're black, there was automatically a guy who started watching us. He walked on, and he started watching us, and the cashier was looking at us and rushing us out of the store too, and you could obviously tell there was some sort of a racial conflict. Also, in one of my boarding school visits to Concorde Academy I think it was, we walked into this diner thing, we wanted to get breakfast...I was the only black person there. Everyone that was already in the store, the older people, they automatically turned and they looked at me for a second, and it felt awkward you know, it was like "hi"... you don't really know how to respond, I just walked in and took my seat, and they just stopped looking and kinda went about their own business, but I felt it was weird you know…I think if I was white they probably wouldn't have looked at me, and they probably would've gone about their own business.

Cause I think I was probably the only black person in that town for miles, so seeing something that they don't usually see, it's just kinda striking to them too; and I'm tall so... it's like who's this guy? Part of me feels like was there some kind of racial component to this? I think so, but I'm not gonna... I don't wanna read too much into it because nothing really happened, I just got some glances. (Interview, May 8, 2012)

Nick's last line is commensurate with one of the key signs of colorblind racism. Bonilla-Silva (2003) writes that "[i]n contrast to the Jim Crow era, where racial inequality was enforced through overt means (e.g., sign saying "No Niggers Welcomed Here")…today racial practices operate in "now you see it, now you don't" fashion" (p.3). Bonilla-Silva goes on to describe these sorts of racial practices as "smiling face discrimination" where one can perceive racist practices at work, but would not have "prima facie evidence" for contesting these practices in court or society at large (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). For instance, one can inquire about an apartment and have agents quote higher rents or refuse to call you back based on your name. You could see a job-posting on Craigslist (a popular website with classified ads) and call to inquire about it but after hearing your name, someone politely telling you "We don't have any jobs now, but please check later." In the case of Nick, the constant following of young Black and Latino boys in stores is a common occurrence, and while there are no Jim Crow era signs that prevent their presence in any establishment, small cues like a glance, watchful monitoring or a repetitive "may I help you" can work just as effectively. What has not changed is that a confrontation with the practices and ethics of racism is an ongoing rite of passage for many young Black and Latino young men. This is not a time of childlike innocence, exploration and uninterrupted development that we often associate with white middle and upper class children.

Even with "colorblind racism" at full throttle, some students still experience some of the more overt forms of racism, which cause them pain and trauma in their coming of age narratives. Eddie, a six grade Latino male, of mixed ethnicity, described a moment that he remembers "crystal clear" which occurred at his friend's house when he was only eight years old. The discussion came about as he reacted to encountering the word "minority" in an article for the first time:

> ARG: …I'm interested more now to hear about why the word minority makes you upset?
> EDDIE: Because I know minorities are people who don't follow the law, kind of break the law. Because when I hear "minorities," I think of bad things and gangs. In every movie I see with gangs, it's either Latino people all black people that are in gangs. So I find the word minority [voice trembles and shakes] kind of a stereotype and it's upsetting to me because of that. I just find it upsetting.
> ARG: When you say that, I think you're saying that when you read that [word "minority"] it made it feel like the white people were "higher," what do you mean "higher?"
> EDDIE: In a higher class. Because you know how they put it in the law that black people have, during that time the black people had to get up on the bus for the white people to sit down, I think that that's just not right [voice trembles]. Every person here is a human being, everyone should have the same rights. I don't think anyone should be a higher race just because of the color of their skin. [pause] That's why I don't like talking about people's races, because it's upsetting to me because of the color of your skin people can… Oh you're black then you are a bad influence on me because you're black. Or you are a bad person just because you are Hispanic, because that happened to me once.

ARG: Tell me about that.

EDDIE: I was at my friend's house. Ok? He was Italian. He was not Hispanic.   I went to his house, I went to his bathroom and then I came back on the stairs, and they [boy and his mother] were talking, and I heard that "you shouldn't really be hanging out with him because he is Hispanic." It really hurt me. [voice trembles again] I was good in school. I wasn't a bad kid. Just because of the color of my skin she was judging me. [pauses and cries] So I just pretended I didn't hear it.

ARG: Did you talk to parents about that?

EDDIE: No

ARG: Why not?

EDDIE: He didn't listen to his parents either. He didn't care because he was my friend.

ARG: How did your friend react to that?

EDDIE: He just said "No. Mom he is a good kid." [cries] (Interview, April 27, 2012)

Eddie's moving account of racism in "post-race" America is sobering. Beyond the traumatic event that happens at his friend's house, Eddie ties this seemingly "unfortunate" single incident to a larger pattern of discrimination and representation in the media as well as in research. Eddie is keenly aware that while there are ideals of universal humanity that we can and must strive for, he has experienced a set of practices that throw those ideals into crisis. For Eddie, the racially charged word "minority" is not a simply numerical descriptor that defenders of the word often cite; it is for him a judgment of value. Moreover, Eddie's friend's comments in response to his mother "he is a good kid" eerily echo Wright's account surrounding the contentious goodness of Black and Latino boys.

While none of the children at LHA and SMA reported having direct confrontation with the juvenile justice system or other forms of the prison industrial complex, students did report having fathers or uncles were imprisoned or deported. Many confessed having these experiences in confidence because of the pain it caused them. Therefore, while direct evidence of involvement was not salient in my study of early adolescence, it was palpable that the children experienced vicarious trauma of having a family member being taken away from them through imprisonment or deportation (see Chapter 5). These experiences indicate that racialized childhood necessitates a more complex portrait that includes both the challenges of race and the reminder that these are still children negotiating the existential labyrinths of becoming under the regimes of race, gender and class.

While theory and research tends to deploy manhood and masculinity as analytical categories to discuss Black and Latino boys, my time with the young men at LHA and SMA necessitated a confrontation with the "adult-centered" bias of social theory and science and to theorize what young manhood and boyhood means in early adolescence as poor and working class Black and Latino boys prepared to begin their rite of passage into manhood (hooks, 2004b; Thorne, 1993). First, I would like to acknowledge that there is an existing literature that has taken on the project of understanding the specificity of boyhood (Pollack, 1999; Sommers, 2000). As Niobe Way (2011) explains there are four main categories of studies on boyhood: 1) Studies that examine negative impacts of conventional masculinity on boys; 2) Studies that document the ways in which we impede boys "natural" maleness in a modern U.S. culture; 3) Research that focuses on the underachievement of boys in schools in which "authors allude to either or both of the first two groups of books to justify their proposals to solve the boy crisis" (p.44). It would be important to note that in the first three kinds of studies the audience and

subjects of study are mainly white middle class boys. In many ways, this focus is not an accident and mirrors the historical development of the "boy crisis," which dates back to the turn of the twentieth century (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). What was known then as the "boy problem" had much to do with larger concerns about the state of (some might argue "crisis") of manhood in the U.S. and how specifically white men might claim manhood in ways that, "other" men (Blacks, Latino, Natives and imperial subjects) could not (Bederman, 1995). In response, we see the creation of key social institutions such as the YMCA and boy scouts, both of which were concerned with rites of passage from boyhood into manhood that could confer upon white boys an authentic "manliness" (Kimmel, 1997).

In contrast to this white middle class focus, the final area of studies on boyhood focuses on a diverse range of boys and sees the diversity of contexts and experiences as important insights. These studies tend to decenter biology and culture as sole determinants of boyhood and manhood and instead take into account the lines of difference surrounding race, class and sexuality to provide a more inclusive account of what boyhood looks like. For instance, in her book *Deep Secrets*, Niobe Way (2011) deftly argues that often cited biological and cultural definitions of human nature simultaneously create gendered stereotypes about boys being "emotionally illiterate" and naturally incapable of intimate friendships and relationships while homogenizing boys experiences and tending to offer white middle and upper class experiences as universal.

In his essay "Joaquin's Dilemma" sociologist Pedro Noguera (2008) describes the academic challenges faced by his eldest son, Joaquin, as he "was trying desperately to figure out what it meant to be a young black man"(p. 4). Noguera notes that despite coming from a two parent, middle class family, his son's grades took a "nose-dive" in the tenth grade. After listening to his son and making sense of his experiences, Noguera identified two factors that contributed to his son's dilemma. First, despite his own middle class upbringing, his son's peer group was poor and working class without any support and resources that enable academic success. While this was not his reality, he identified more with his peers. Second, Joaquin felt a tension between the world of school and the world of "the street." He felt a need to establish a persona that allowed him to be recognized and respected as a Black man. According to this account, making the rite of passage into manhood means that while in the course of human development, Black and Latino boys encounter more than the awkward contours of adolescence, but more profoundly, the ill fitting and limiting straitjacket of race. In summary, Black and Latino boys often confront the double-edged sword of human development that pretends to be universal, while they are left to experience otherwise. In his work psychologist James Diego Vigil (2011) describes these moments of "marginal status crisis" during the transition from childhood into adulthood as what Erik Erikson calls, "psychosocial moratoriums": instances where persons may go through a variety of personalities in an attempt to settle on a relatively stable identity. Furthermore, Virgil argues that low-income boys of color are more likely to experience these overwhelming stages of confusion and stress, not simply as a developmental plot point, but rather as a result of larger social and environmental factors.

When I first arrived at SMA and LHA, administrators and teachers kept repeating that something was "occurring" to the boys in the seventh grade where they experienced a decline in their academic and social engagement. SMA reported an inability to admit more "academically talented" boys because, they were not applying or many who did apply did not have a strong profile by the time they got to six grade. In the case of LHA, they thought they would increase the pool of "gifted and talented" boys by starting the school in the fourth grade. However, when

pressed, some teachers and administrators confessed that the issues surrounding seventh grade Black and Latino boys were alive and well at both schools. While the following chapter will provide a more in depth look at the source and explanations for these "psychological moratoriums" at SMA and LHA, for now I maintain that what is consistent, is that the boys at this age are confronted with attempting to understand who they are within a broader context of race and class which undoubtedly impacts their social, personal and academic lives.

Returning specifically to masculinity, it is precisely these moments of confusion and existential stress that I was able to more clearly observe as a possible hindrance to "generative" masculinity, rather than it being a result of a maladaptive phenomenon born out of some innate hypersexual or hyper masculine Black or Latino cultural code. A significant amount of literature on Black and Latino boys focuses on behavioral, cultural or moral dimensions of racialized masculinity that purportedly exacerbates issues like gang membership, violence and sexual promiscuity. Assuredly, some of the boys in study were aware of these cultural "rites" in their own understanding of passing into manhood:

ARG: In your opinion when do you know if someone's become a man?
MIGUEL: When someone has become a man? It is when they realize that...let's say you impregnate a girl and you're only 15, I would consider you a man if you manned up and decided to make a family with that person and didn't decide oh I'm gonna leave her because I impregnated her because it would be taking the consequences in. Because of his actions he has to face the consequences now. You have to face reality. (Interview, May 2, 2012)

RANDY: Because I guess you can say being a man here is working and not worrying about anything, being the success makes you the man, but in the streets it's always about the friends. You don't have to worry about the brains, if you're willing to risk your life to do something that you believe for, that makes you the man.
ARG: Have you ever felt like your manhood was disrespected? Or your masculinity was disrespected?
RANDY: Yea, there was this one time when I was really young where it was this one kid, who really did nothing but I was hurt because of it, and I just didn't feel like a man at all, at that moment. Like it wasn't really that big, like he kinda picked on my brother a little bit. So I go in there, I was really young at this matter, at this age, at that time. And he kinda manhandled me with nothing, and he was stronger and younger than me, so that kinda like ruined me. (Interview, April 30, 2012)

TIM: I think there's a lot of stereotypes for a teenager. That they're supposed to start drinking, lose their virginity and stuff like that. When they turn a teenager and start doing drugs as a teen and stuff. (Interview, May 4, 2012)

Utilizing sex, violence and domination as ritual for asserting manhood is and will be in some students' purview as a result of patriarchal masculine expectations. Nonetheless, many of the boys were aware that these were also stereotypes and, in fact, did not make them more "manly." We will see in the next chapter that these rituals and rites still impact them, but in terms of their meanings and understandings I found the boys to be more nuanced. For instance Tim, an eighth grade Black male at LHA took issue with the conflation of masculinity and manhood:

ARG: So I'm gonna say some words and I want you to tell me which of these words you feel like have meaning to you. The words are masculinity, manhood, maleness, manliness, masculine. Do any of those words have any meaning to you?

TIM: Masculinity cuz, masculinity and manhood cuz, cuz masculinity shows that you're a man, and that you...when I think about masculinity I think like the difference between like straight and gay. Because when it said "inity" at the end makes me think "ok so you're not fully masculine, you're kinda...you have some masculinity, you might not have it all. So it makes me think about that, and it makes me think. Who am I truly a man, cuz people say if we're just young men, we're just little boys. Masculinity makes you think about when will I cross over to become a man…Manhood makes me think of like really, a real man, how he just crossed over from being a little kid to being a man. And what he had to do to do that. And I think masculinity, that applies to everybody, manhood only applies to men, but masculinity applies to little boys, baby boys, teens, and everything. (Interview, May 4, 2012)

Tim's depiction of the distinction between manhood and masculinity is rich and generative. In his eyes, manhood is the ideal, a role that is bestowed through the approval of homosocially sanctioned acts "what he had to do to do that" which enables one to "cross over" into a recognizable manhood. However, masculinity "applies to everybody" and is part of a larger human story, something of which everybody has a part. In many ways, Tim recognizes that there is a great deal of proving that needs to be done in order to be able to achieve "manhood." Nonetheless, the discursive practice of masculinity is a dynamic site of contestation where experiences and personal biography shape its definition. This is not to say that these everyday practices are not beholden to the hegemony of American masculinity and the traumas experiences by racialized masculinities, but it does leave the door open for young men to contest and make sense of the gender, race and class articulations working on their subjectivities.

Yet despite the avenues for "new masculinities," these boys are still interacting with a society that characterizes their imperfect negotiation of these dynamics as products of deficient characters to be corrected. Holding their cultures, identities and behaviors responsible for their existential confusion suggests their inherent criminality and deviance. As Noguera (2008) describes, being faced with race and racism begins a process that is quite tumultuous and difficult for many Black and Latino boys. For Noguera's son, Joaquin, as a young, middle class Black man, it was far from a life of drugs, gangs and violence. Nonetheless, dealing with racialization was a rite of passage for him as well. Therefore, in the remaining moments of this chapter I wish to more closely examine the pernicious contemporary dramas contributing to the passage of young Black and Latino boys into young manhood: controlling images and explanations of their responses to existential trauma.

For the boys in my study, the election of the first president of color seemed of little lived importance to the existential minefield that they must navigate on their way to young manhood in the twenty-first century. The young men consistently recount stories and experiences that reflect their race and gender positions. Moreover, while these encounters are challenging enough, they must also contend with a society that often attempts to downplay the significance or even existence of ongoing forms of dehumanization. In many ways, the face value trauma that many boys experience in these interactions is only exacerbated by the societal repression of these experiences which can further increase their malignancy. Therefore, examining the stakes of the

transition for young Black and Latino boys requires a nuanced framework that accounts for the existential dilemmas that might arise through the articulation of race and masculinity.

Theorizing Race and Masculinity

While much has been written and said about Black, Puerto Rican, and Chicano men, little has been done to synthesize the history, theory, cultural politics and experiences of men of color into a coherent field (Abalos, 2002; Baca Zinn, 1982; Baldwin, 1985; Bourgois, 1996; Canada, 1995; Diaz, 2007; Ellison, 1952/1990; España-Maram, 2006; Espiritu, 2003; Ferguson, 2001; González, 1996; Gutmann, 1997; hooks, 2004; Irwin, 2003; Limón, 1994; Marabel, 1983; Mirandé,1997; Neal, 2005; Newton, 2002; Noguera, Hurtado, & Fergus, 2011; Orelus, 2010; Paz, 1985; Ramírez, 1999; Staples, 1982; Wright, 1940/2005 & 1945/1998). As late as 2004, bell hooks remarked that she was tired of waiting for Black men to productively and critically articulate an analysis of Black masculinity (hooks, 2004b). In earlier studies (Baca Zinn, 1982; Marabel, 1983; Paz, 1985; Staples, 1982) subordinated masculinities are discussed in response to attacks on men of color through cultural arguments that posit their "malformed masculinity" as a symptom of a "tangle of pathology" and antiquated gender roles (Moynihan 1965; Lewis, 1968). However, at times, the "progressive elements" are somewhat reactionary in that they attempt to dispel myths of machismo and hyper-masculinity, rather than take on the task of assessing racial masculinity on its own terms. Instead of unpacking the complexities, contradictions, problematics and possibilities that comprise racialized masculinity; they take manhood as a valid project. Ultimately, these early responses to the attacks on men of color, fall prey to thinking about patriarchal masculinity in communities of color as, what Mirandé (1997) has called, "adaptive strategies," products of economic, social and political exclusion, experienced as a form of emasculation (Wilson,1996; Royster, 2003).

This line of argument implies that racialized masculinity can be understood as a pseudo-evolutionary strategy that serves the interest of survival. However, horizontal violence, misogyny, homophobia, alcoholism, and drug abuse can hardly be called survival strategies. In many ways these "adaptations" act against the interests of a majority of men, women and children. Rather than solely theorizing "survival" in the interest of rescuing agency in the lives of the oppressed, a more productive approach might be to acknowledge the competing, and at times contradictory strategies, deployed by those in situations of oppression. It is not enough to highlight one's ability to survive under oppressive conditions; one must examine the ways in which our attempts to tend to the scars of oppression, while making oppression more bearable, do not always lead to thriving and sustaining our communities (Dussel, 2008; Anzaldúa, 1999). Therefore, a critical analysis of racialized masculinity must include a more flexible understanding of agency that acknowledges both the possibility, but also the limits of identifying with a social-historical formation such as masculinity.

The tension between structural emasculation and cultural arguments is exacerbated by an economic reductionism implicit in the literature. In one case, men of color are thought to be failed masculine subjects, as a result of the larger economic emasculation they face. On the other hand, they are seen as stuck in a pathological cycle where they have come to internalize backwards and oppressive gender roles that are products of an inherent cultural "backwardness" that promotes macho or hyper-masculine behavior inherent to their communities.

For instance, in his study of Puerto Rican crack dealers in El Barrio, Bourgois (1996) places into a social and structural context the ways working class men of color, specifically

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Puerto Rican men, deal with a post-industrial economy that has taken away their reliance on traditional "jibaro" masculinity. Bourgois asserts that for the "jibaro", respect was gained through his capacity to earn a wage, his status within the community, his age and his ability to provide for his family. Bourgois argues that through a mix of exclusion from the formal economy and middle class white norms, men of color search for a place to find respect, dignity and identity through "street" culture which offers concrete alternatives (i.e informal drug economy) to their exclusion. However, these alternatives often provide contradictory and violent outcomes that effect other men, women and children. Nonetheless, Bourgois does not agree with essentialist notions of psycho-pathology or machismo that explains their conditions as innate or natural. Rather, he invites us to explore the ways in which these contradictory longings for dignity and power are products of historical and structural factors. He is also cautious to say that they are agents in search of dignity and power. Ultimately, Bourgois maintains that it was the change in Puerto Rican masculinity as a longing of respect to a "fear of disrespect" that has negatively impacted these men.

Accounts like those of Bourgois (1995) as well as Liebow (1967), and Wilson (1996), tend to reduce their arguments to individual masculine performances and not a more interrelatonal study of masculinity. For instance, Connell (1995) argues that a rigorous study of men requires understanding the hierarchical and differential relationships *between* men. In other words, we should not simply elucidate the "diversity of men," but rather be aware of the power relations *amongst* men.

Toward a Fanonian Theory of Race and Masculinity

> ARG: Is there one question that you find yourself asking time and time again, as of late, or in recent memory?
> IRVIN: Kind of what happens if I fail, cuz in my family, for a long time I felt like... and in this school there's a level that's really high, and everywhere I go... ever since my [inaudible] or if I do something well, my mom tells everyone and then I feel like when I didn't get enough money for boarding school and stuff like that, it was...what happens if I don't reach the pinnacle that people set for me? What happens if...cuz a lot of times I get lazy some times or things like that, and then... other people really judge me for things like that. (Interview, May 1, 2012)

Irvin's concern with "failure" during early adolescence and how it might impact society's valuation suggests that this existential crisis is not provisional, but is a perpetual state for Black and Latino men, who carry with them a double burden of proving both their humanity and their manhood. Poor and working class Black and Latino men are asked to prove themselves in a society that excludes them economically, socially and politically (Massey and Denton, 1993; Noguera, P., Hurtado, & Fergus, 2011; Royster, 2003; Young, 2006).

Reflecting on Mexican identity, history and culture, Octavio Paz (1985) writes about the nature of the popular phrase: "¡Viva Mexico, hijos de la chingada!".[16] He begins by signaling the ways this expression reflects the "anxious tensions" of the Mexican male "condition", produced by a history of conquest and violence. In brief, he uses his study of language, history and philosophy to unearth the ways in which Mexican masculinity, and notions of the Mexican

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[16] This phrase roughly translates into: "Long live Mexico, Sons of the Violation (read rape).

nation, come from a place of wounded manhood which is preoccupied with performing more conquest (of other men and women). This wounded masculinity therefore seeks redemption through the very violence that produced such an identity, and in turn is preoccupied with the fear of being violated. Preceding both Limón's (1994) and Pascoe's (2007) contemporary studies of masculinity, Paz allows us to see men defining their existence through a set of relationships based on violating others before they are themselves violated. This game of "hot potato" is enacted in the presence of other men who look on to approve or disprove their masculine abilities (Pascoe, 2007). Building upon the insights of Paz, Ilan Stavans (1996) writes of the centrality of the "phallus" during the era of conquest. In particular he theorizes that through murder and rape, the phallus becomes embedded in the psyche of Latin American men. This subjectivity that enables a violent project of conquest, a "conquistador masculinity, a subjectivity that came in search of wealth and pleasure," contributed to the formation of a psycho-social obsession with performing ritual conquest in everyday life.

The narratives of conquest masculinities offered by Paz and Stavans could be read as justification for machismo, "a social construct that refers to amalgamation of male traits characterized by extreme aggression and intransigence in male-male relationships, as a well as by sexual aggression and contempt in male-female relationships" (p. 58; Muñoz-Laboy & Perry, 2011). Latino men exclusively are assumed to be displaying these behaviors (although in some cases has been extended to Black men as well), thus indicating an inherent cultural deficiency with Latin American culture more broadly. Likewise, understanding the appeals of Black and Latino men for humanity through manhood may be seen as a deficient attitude.

As Gutman (1996), Mirandé (1997) and Ramírez (1999) point out, constructs such as machismo reflect a societal tendency to naturalize in Latino men (and Black men) behavior that exists in other groups as well. In the case of Latino men, discussing masculinity as a cultural or behavioral phenomenon oftentimes produces controlling stereotypes such as the "Latin lover" and the "bandito" or in the Black men's case "rapist" or "criminal," which we will look at more closely in the next section.

Nonetheless, as Ramírez (1999) reminds us, constructs such as machismo and masculinity are not simply behaviors, postures and bravados that have genetic or cultural basis; they can be explained as discourses-social and historically formed interpretations of the world that shape and regulate how we view our own realities. In Latino men, according to Paz and Stavans, there lay fears, anxieties and an inferiority complex that are products of historical dramas (Stavans, 1996). The latter are easily exploited by discourses such as machismo, that argue for a specific way of making sense of these deep-seated, intergenerational traumas and ongoing experiences of masculine failure.

As R.W. Connell (1995) suggests, it is crucial to talk about the social relations governing "masculinity" as opposed to the only focusing on the gender norms of "men." Focusing on gender as a set of behaviors or traits shifts us away from discussing power and privilege and instead leads us to merely listing essentialist characteristics. Therefore to talk about *masculinity* as a opposed to *men* is a move to discuss the ways these advantages are produced, reproduced and defended (p. 231). Thus, the larger societal ethos of American masculinity also contributes to the homosociality of the meaning of manhood among Black and Latino men and boys.

In *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bedermen (1994) documents the concept of masculinity as a uniquely American creation. She explains that American manhood at the turn of the twentieth century was linked to the project of civilization through the mechanisms of race and gender. Examining American imperialism alongside the closing of the American Frontier in

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the late nineteenth century, Bederman argues that masculinity, a particular version of U.S. manhood, had begun a process of distancing itself from European Victorian manhood, as a repressed and disembodied subjectivity. Manhood was in essence a merging of the frontier man with the impending modern man of the twentieth century. On the one hand was a rugged manhood that constituted itself through a "primordial" maleness that was physically strong and rugged, previously used in justifying the White American male to conquer the natural and savage of the West. On the other was a "civilized" man, who with the help of technology and innovation could learn new ways of imposing his will on the world. With the closing of the frontier, these men went in search of other places where they might impose their new sense of manhood; in other words, they needed an "other," a savage maleness against which a civilized masculinity could be defined. It was no accident that at the turn of the twentieth century there were more colonial incorporations than any other time in the history of the modern/colonial world-system (Grosfoguel & Georas, 2003). The period from 1890 to 1920 contained immense shifts and reorganizing in the world-system. In particular the U.S saw, both domestically and abroad, an intense need to do what was necessary to uplift and preserve the evolutionarily advanced state of the "Nordic" race.

This process of "manning" the nation allowed for what would become a central preoccupation of the progressives at the turn of the twentieth century, social efficiency. This method of tackling the evils of an industrialized society through business-like social organization was central. Chief among the progressives was President Theodore Roosevelt who could be found promoting the ethos of American masculinity through his idea of the "strenuous life;" an imaginary that rejected an impending "comfortable" life that was on the horizon of American modernity in favor of a mindset that urged Americans to take on the personal, domestic and international challenges in need of domination and control. Domestically, prisons, schools and other social institutions were enlisted to do what was necessary to maintain the nation at the height of evolutionary superiority.

To successfully carry out the task of civilizing "savage" elements both domestically and abroad, masculinity needed to be bestowed on certain groups of men and boys according to their social position based on race. This would become important not only as they incorporated "underdeveloped" and "effeminate" nations, but also as they deemed who was worthy of citizenship inside the U.S. Sociologist Michael Kimmel (1997), summarizes this history by arguing that manliness, what would eventually become masculinity at the turn of the twentieth century (Bederman, 1995), is a homosocial phenomenon where men constantly have to prove their masculinity to other men (Kimmel, 1999). Kimmel suggests that this source of anxiety for American manhood was the shift from the *Genteel Patriarch*—an ideal formulation of manhood found at the turn of the nineteenth century, rooted in landownership and the self-possessed posture of the artisan, shopkeeper and farmer—to the self-man, which was ushered in at the height of the industrial revolution. In a sense, when the Genteel Patriarch and the frontiersman gave way to a more modern self-made manhood, those like Roosevelt felt a need to redefine and assert manhood on different levels. Overall, this obsession with manhood by the nation contributed to a highly problematic and unstable subjectivity that feeds off of exploitation, and domination of others in order to maintain its superior status.

The amalgamation of all different social formations of manhood, including machismo, cabellerismo, manliness and masculinity, were confirmed by many of the boys who provided their definitions of manhood:

NICK: It's just to be a man. It's like…you know, you have to be more...well you have to be pretty much emotionless. You know, suave with the ladies. You have to be truly manly and masculine, you have to be ripped have big muscles. I even fall into that sometimes too, I'm not gonna lie. You pretty much have to deal with things yourself. You really just have to be the leader of everything you know, you can't really just ask for help. So that's really what it today is really what it entails. Even if, like, sometimes it'll say that you know you have to have a good relationship but you're the man of the house or it's you don't need to be tied down, it's just about how many girls you can get. So you know that's the whole kinda thing you're getting from being masculine, now-a-days. (Interview, May 8, 2012)

LEON:I think manhood is society's views on how people should... boys in particular should act and how to actually be a man. And how they interpret being a man. And how it's different from a lot of people view of being a man. Like they say men can never cry, men can only care about sports, men do the tough jobs, men are tough, they don't cry, they don't whine, they take matters into their own hands. And while...very few of those ideas are true, most of them are false. And like men can't cry. Not all men have to like sports, and like reading books, and things like that. Men can do some of the jobs that are interpreted as womanly. (Interview, April 26, 2012)

RANDY: Being a man, not stay secluded from the world; you gotta be more open, you gotta be more tough or harsh out there. With me I didn't feel more like a man back then cuz I was so shy. I didn't even wanna talk to anyone, and I was scared of the littlest of things, like spiders, all that like that, or arachnophobia, blah blah blah. As I began to develop more into a man I changed my attitude; I became more brash, reckless, began to care more about my friends, more social. I began to have less fears and more pride in what I do…Cuz when I reach a relationship... when I go into a relationship you have to be the man, cuz or else it's not even a real relationship. Females have a certain role that I do not know of, but I know my role is to be the man of the house, so you gotta be tough, you gotta be willing to risk to do anything for your friends or family. You can't have a lot of fears….Let's say a female that this man really likes is on the sidewalk, and she crosses and there's a bus, if you're willing to risk your life to save her, that kinda makes you a man cuz you're willing to do that. You're willing to risk your life and possibly die to save someone else's. (Interview, April 30. 2012)

While the boys provide us with a collection of meanings surrounding manhood, the need to gain approval from other men unified their accounts. While they mention "females" or "ladies", their definition bring them in not as producers of the gaze but rather as objects that represent status, symbols and power (Enloe, 2000). Overall, the young men express an awareness of masculinity as a regulatory discourse that subjects them to pressures to conform to certain ideas and practices. Kimmel (1997) specifies that at its core manhood is a "homosocial enactment." Being a man is not a birthright, it is constantly in question by the gaze of other men. As Kimmel simply states: "Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval" (115). Kimmel extends Freud's work by saying that at the height of the boy's Oedipal crisis, the boy not only confronts his father and is in "awe, wonder, terror" of him, but the boy also desires to be like his father. This "Oedipal crisis" is constantly reenacted in homosocial interactions in the public sphere through

the need to constantly repress the desire for other men through repudiating other men. In short, Kimmel captures the historical and social dimensions of this discursive formation and gives us an account of how they play out on the level of one's psyche. While I find the inter-relational theorizing of masculinity useful, I have difficulty with Kimmel's somewhat race-blind "homosociality" in discussing the development of a gendered subjectivity. How do we make sense of these relationships of fear and desire while taking race into account?

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1952/1967) adds elements of race to the fear and desire embodied in masculinity. Fanon recalls racial epithets of anti-blackness and comments on what these experiences reveal: "'Dirty Nigger!' Or simply, 'Look, a Negro!' I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of objects" (pg. 109). Fanon argues that the effects of anti-blackness do not simply create an "other," or a differential being that can gain recognition and aspire to become human through a demand for recognition from the "superior" subject. Rather, for Fanon, to be Black in an anti-black world means "non-being." It is a failure of being that is produced by blackness itself; therefore, every attempt at becoming human under this anti-black humanism will result in failure and psychological trauma.

Throughout his work, Fanon explores different dimensions and instances that reinforce the inherent perils of Eurocentric humanism. One key example he explores is the striving for manhood, on the part of the "man of color." Fanon writes:

> At the risk of arousing the resentment of my colored brothers, I will say that the Black man is not a man…Uprooted, pursued, baffled, doomed to watch the dissolution of the truths that he has worked out for himself one after another, he has to give up projecting onto the world an antinomy that coexists with him. The black is a black man; that is, as the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated. The problem is important. I propose nothing short of the liberation of the man of color from himself. (p.8)

Fanon is critical of the universal project of the human born out of the western philosophical tradition of the enlightenment. Recall, in chapter two the review of the ways in which the foundations of western philosophy theorize existence from the white European heterosexist Christianocentric view, and then posit it as the universal departure for all existence, what Santiago Castro-Gómez calls the "point zero philosophy" (Grosfoguel, 2007). Therefore, the "universe" of which Fanon talks is a white, modern-colonial and western universe. The "universe" from which the man of color must "extricate" himself, according to Fanon, is a Eurocentric but also gendered humanism that excludes men of color from fully realizing themselves and only leads to frustration and anxiety as they encounter the inability to be recognized as men. In everyday life, these anxieties can stem from issues such as employment, sexuality, racism and media images, all of which can be utilized by larger (white) society to level "judgments" of one's manhood.

Lewis Gordon (2005) clarifies Fanon's race and gender theory by stating: "There is no Black father to mirror as The Father… It is the White father, the Colonizing Father, against who such a relation could be made manifest, but that father is structural and rarely made flesh on the level of the personal" (p. 22, my emphasis). What Fanon allows for is an expansion of the Oedipal complex from a micro-relation (psychogenic) to a macro-relation (sociogenic). Enacted here is a paternalistic racial-homosociality: meaning for men of color, in the scenarios described

by Fanon, is derived from the approval of white men. However, the cost in taking up the project of masculinity, is the understanding of masculinist power that thrives off of anxieties, insecurities, domination and death. As a result Black men's relationship to white masculinity is one of fear, a fear that they may one day be found out to be less than men. Fanon is clear throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, that this project of striving towards a Eurocentric human is "doomed." This sort of relation can be best explained through an episode found in the life of Frederick Douglass.

Historian Steve Estes (2005) suggests the doomed quality of Black men's efforts to embody the Eurocentric human. He writes that unlike the white abolitionists' depiction of Black men pleading for their freedom: "Black abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass...demanded it" (p.2). As Estes explains:

> Since slavery rested on the violent suppression of Black bondsman, Black men in the antebellum period often spoke of physical confrontation with whites as a rite of passage into manhood. In his autobiography, Frederick Douglass wrote about such a confrontation when describing his first fight for freedom. After winning a bloody, two-hour brawl with a white overseer, Douglass realized his own power and will to be free. "This battle with Mr. Convey," Douglass wrote, "was the turning point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence and inspires me again with determination to be free." (p. 4)

Douglass' confrontation with the slave master is consistent with the notion that rites of passage commemorate events that mark significant achievements in one's life as a human being. However, beyond the function of commemorating, rites of passage naturalize certain occurrences. In this moment the notion of achieving manhood through the repudiation of a more "powerful" man becomes normalized through violence. bell hooks states: "Although the gendered politics of slavery denied Black men the freedom to act as "men" within the definition set by white norms, this notion of manhood did become a standards used to measure black male progress" (p. 3, as cited in hooks, 2004b).

Masculinity, in this instance, becomes more than an identity. It begins to define the terms of our existence and our relationship to others through a logic which defines power as our ability to overcome "others," what hooks calls patriarchal masculinity (hooks, 2004a & 2004b). Moreover, not being able to prove oneself as a man in the "court of manhood" leaves one subject to ridicule, embarrassment and humiliation. Rather than the use of violence as the element that makes this situation inherently masculine, it is the racial homosociality of the moment which indicates the presence of racialized masculinity. Therefore it is not simply the will to dominate that hinders a generative masculinity. Rather, it is the need to prove one's masculinity for the approval of white society, which complicates the terms of racialized manhood.

This Fanonian understanding of the psycho-social drama of race and masculinity was apparent in my interview with Irvin:

> ARG: When you walked through the doors of the school in the morning, do you feel like you have to change who you are?
> IRVIN: Originally yea, but not as much maybe. Because when I first came here, I feel like oh, people are gonna be watching me and that being my parents always reinforce that

people in this world always have their eyes on you, people are waiting for you to make mistakes. So that they could judge you on it. So you have to try harder and harder to prove yourself to people. So I realized that, first when I came here, I feel like I have to be on my game 24/7, so I could be successful and be able to do and accomplish what I need to. But at first I kinda changed who I was, like I'd be one way with the teachers, but I wouldn't be the same person going home on the bus or whatever. But then, I felt that once I realized this is a really open environment where I don't have to change myself. I could honestly be the person I am and be accepted for it. It kinda opened up who I actually am. (Interview, May 1, 2012)

Preoccupation with the "look," the "eyes," and "the gaze" has been the subjects of many Black male thinkers. In Irvin's remarks one sees evidence that these "eyes" are also present in the current context of U.S social relations. The notion that he "prove himself" to the judging eyes of a society that waits for him to make a mistake, is a heavy burden to carry at the age of thirteen. To be sure, adolescents make mistakes regardless of race and class lines, but it is the different risk factors and social forces which begin to set them apart. However, what has become engrained is an over reaction to the behaviors and actions of Black and Latino boys, which in turn crminalizes them and only worsens the risk factors that come with race and class social positions. This criminalization is therefore met with "zero tolerance," "no excuses" approaches that unlike their white middle class counterparts do not afford these children the benefit of learning from mistakes. As evidenced by Irvin, both the students and their parents are aware of this differential expectation and must address this attention to the best of their ability. This becomes urgent during the age of adolescence where young Black and Latino men, like many others are attempting to imperfectly answer the questions circulating at this time.

To be clear, it is common for many young men of different races and cultures to experience anxiety over what it means to be a man. Nonetheless for Black and Latino boys, the transition from boyhood into manhood, carries with it societal judgments about their humanity making it a more existentially *high stakes* process. For young men at SMA and LHA, this period of making sense of who they are is not only an act of self-reflection but also an act of realization of what they are in the eyes of a society that dehumanizes them through the articulation of race and class.

Conclusions

ARG: Was there a time where you felt disrespected cuz of your race?
TIM: When the Trayvon Martin case. I felt that the black person which was Trayvon Martin was disrespected because he was killed for no reason. And that just showed how that person felt about black people. Another case when guy [Henry Louis Gates] was, his key wasn't working, forgot his name, but he tried to put it in the door, and started shaking the door. The lady called the cops on him, even though it's his own house. That didn't disrespect me as being black, but that disrespected me as people saw me. I never really been disrespected as being a black person.
ARG: And why do you feel like that was an example, those two things were and examples of feeling disrespected?
TIM: Because those were different examples of being disrespected because it shows that people don't really care blacks. They see them as bad, disrespectful. I saw Malcolm X.

And he said, in the chapter they said if you look black up in the dictionary, it means dark, evil. When you look up white in the dictionary, it says pure, good, and yea. (Interview, May 4, 2012)

This chapter has described the ways in which Black and Latino boys make sense of masculinity within a historical and contemporary context. One major finding included the continuity that exists between previous generations of Black and Latino men and the boys at LHA and SMA as they went in search of manhood. While the violence and overt racism found in previous generations is seldom observed by the students, there was still a sense that race was a powerful socializing agent in their path to understanding manhood in the supposedly color-blind U.S society of today. Boys often encountered race through personal interactions and experiences, with "smiling face" racism that did not mobilize the "old racism" of the Jim Crow era. Yet, as was the case with Nick, the glances and "following" in stores send a clear message about who he is.

Nonetheless, I hesitate to use the terms "old racism/new racism" since as we observed with Eddie, while overt racial discrimination may no longer be acceptable in the public sphere, it is alive and well in homes, neighborhoods and families. Moreover as Tim comments on case of Trayvon Martin, as well as the Henry Louis Gates incident: "That didn't disrespect me as being Black, but that disrespected me as people saw me. I never really been disrespected as being a black person." While there is not a sense that people discriminate him, there is still a sense that these discourses of criminality and hypersexuality of Black and Latino men, for instance, are speaking directly to him.

Despite their best efforts, SMA and LHA were, in some instances, not exempt from the larger discourses and practices that manifested themselves with regards to poor and working class Black and Latino boys. While the site of these meanings of race and masculinity differed at the two schools, self-discipline versus dating, Black students in particular, still perceived a value judgment that went beyond their actions and more profoundly assessed their humanity.

Nonetheless, in places like SMA and LHA, students do have opportunities to make sense of these contradictions. Leon shared that he was able to make sense of the harmful controlling images that were being utilized in the Trayvon Martin case through an in-class discussion of "To Kill a Mocking Bird:"

LEON: We spent about a few months reading [To Kill a Mocking bird] and we talked about how racism, was creeping into the setting of the story, cuz there was a trial and it was Tom Robinson an African American, was in a rape trial against the lowest of the low in Maycomb county. …We talked about that because the lawyer for Tom Robinson, Atticus, one of the main characters, he actually spoke about that and how black men are seen as...they are not supposed to be trusted around women. Not supposed to be trusted around children and that they aren't supposed to be trusted around people because they're black. And that was the stereotype and the lawyer had, Atticus had talked about how we're not supposed to actually support that because all people shouldn't be judged for the color of their skin, but the content of their character. And that was what Martin Luther King preached to America…talked about how, it was wrong for the jury, an all white jury to give into racism. And they talked about how even though none of the evidence pointed towards Tom Robinson, he was still an easy target cuz at that time, it was the 1930's, and that was the time racism really, was really a big thing. Even though the book was written

around the time of Martin Luther King, the message was we're destroying each other, and innocent people are dying each day because we don't think they're equal to us, but we think they're lesser than us. And basically most of our... my classmates, everyone thought it was wrong for Tom Robinson to die because he didn't do anything, and that if he had done something, the whole story would have been different. Because, I don't think it would have been because of his race, but because he had done something wrong, and then he'd deserve whatever the punishment was, the consequence of the punishment. But because he didn't do anything, we all agreed that it was wrong to send him to the electric chair. (Interview, April 26, 2012)

Similarly Eddie, who we remember experienced a traumatic moment when he witnessed his childhood best friend being told not to play with him because he was "Hispanic", cited the following language arts class discussion as one of the ways he was able to process the meaning behind that racist incident:

EDDIE: Well I processed it as I can't believe she said that about me, because she... earlier this year we talked about a thing. A phone call. There was this short story, that there was this huge black man, that worked at this place, and he's like can I use your phone, and she said ok, and he's like "I've heard about people like you," and then she pulled out a knife, and she said "I read about people like you in the paper,' and she was making such a big judgment, just because the color of his skin.
ARG: Do you guys talk about that in class at all? The part about race?
EDDIE: Just that people can make such an impact. Stereotypes and all that stuff. She said that she tried to stab him. I thought that was... non-sense. Why would you do that? Just because of the color of his skin you think he's bad. He can be just a normal person, but just because the color of his skin you're judging him… I used to think in mind on how they would say that. And now I realize why she would say that, cuz she didn't know... You know how knowledge is power, I think she was unknown to the fact... you know how you read something and you're like "wow that's a lot" How she said a lot of Hispanics... in all movies they show Hispanic people and the black people with guns and all that dangerous stuff, so maybe she didn't know that not everyone is like that, so she just made that big conclusion about everyone. I don't think it was her fault. I don't judge her to this day. I really don't hold any grudges. Just cuz I don't think it's good. So I kind of understand she would say that. (Interview, April 27, 2012)

In both cases, Leon and Eddie were able to do something important: they were able to begin a process of healing through curriculum. While I am sure there will be new instances that situate their subjectivities within the confines of criminality and hypersexuality, both boys have demonstrated an ability to not internalize these narratives and instead acknowledge them as systemic failures rather than failures of being. In this regard, the curriculum and cultures of SMA and LHA had a great deal of upsides. In both places I witnessed a potential to allow kids within the formal and informal curriculum of the school to heal from the wounds of race, class and gender.

These wounds and traumas were in some cases much more profound and produced a guardedness, a flat affect and what some might even interpret as a "cool pose." Unfortunately, these behaviors and periods of disinterment are often confused for cultural opposition, rather

than expression of pain. The very successes of students, like Leon and Eddie, in understanding their world through the tools and space provided by educational modalities, leads me to discuss the nature of the traumas experienced by these young men, as well as ways of aiding in the process of healing.

Chapter 5
Under the 'Man'hood:
Seeing and Feeling Beyond the Cool Pose

I struggle to make my way up what I knew to be some of the steepest stairs I have ever climbed. St. Mary's Academy had just finished another year and it was one of those first, unbearably hot days that announce the beginning of summer. I made my way up the last flight of stairs practicing the pitch to the administration about the project that I wanted to work on for my dissertation. Rehearsing the litany of arguments, literature and talking points I had devised in my head I reach the final landing. As I entered the front door all of those pre-rehearsed speeches fade, as I am met with the boisterous laugh and smile of Lance the co-founder of both SMA and LHA. We make small talk as he and I leave the main office for a classroom where we will have our meeting along with Max, a senior member of the faculty at SMA.

I greet Max on our way to our meeting place. He is still finishing some work and will join us momentarily. Lance and I set up in one of the ten classrooms of the school. We both pull three chairs around a long wooden table and begin our conversation. As we settle in, Lance begins to share an account of the present day state of Black and Latino boys at his school. He is convinced that the young men of color entering St. Mary's Academy (SMA) from the public school system, increasingly come through the doors with traumas and challenges that previous adults and educators have failed to identify and document. Once the young men arrive at SMA these challenges surface, and it becomes difficult to make informed interventions, since no record of the young men's challenges exists. To be clear, students at SMA have always had difficulties and challenges, but Lance is noticing unprecedented emotional and social challenges in this rising generation of young men. He details that increasingly, boys are coming in with online porn addictions, video games are taking up unhealthy amounts of space in their lives. He laments that the time they spend outside playing is decreasing, and their commitment to the social and academic dimensions of the school are lackluster. Moreover, when confronted about these issues, Black and Latino boys express an emotional aloofness. The outwards signs of these challenges manifest themselves in what he calls forms of detachment, self-centeredness, immaturity, low self-esteem, lack of self-discipline and "guarded-ness" displayed by the young men.

I furiously take notes while he speaks until his tone changes; I pause and look up. He begins to talk to me about "a fire." He explains that somewhere between fifth and seventh grade, especially with the boys of color, "a fire goes out." While he only has firsthand knowledge of this phenomenon at SMA, he also states that the administrators at LHA are also experiencing the "fire going out" with their boys as well. In his description, the boys push adults away, they stop doing their work, and display a lack of self-control and an inability to make decisions beyond the present. However, by the time the "fire" returns in the eighth grade it is too late; their academic record has suffered and the high school placement process has ended. Lance tells me: "It defies rationality."

Max joins in the conversation and details his struggles with the young men. He explains that the issue is not only getting boys to turn in homework and do well in school; it is also that when they are presented with options or interventions to remedy their poor performance, they do not take them. For instance, he says that he is available all summer to help students with their summer math homework, yet the only students who come to him for help are the young women of the school. In his estimation, the culprits are a lack of motivation on the part of the boys, and family and home structures that do not foster the tools and skills necessary to be academically

successful. He added that it is also becoming harder to support the boys since they shy away from close relationships with each other and adult men. He noticed that in recent years there has been an increased fear of being called a "fag" and an obsession with having to qualify any kind of male intimacy with "no-homo[17]".

I see this as an opportunity to insert myself in the conversation and explain how my research connects with these concerns. At this point the notion of "the fire" detailed by Lance still rings in my head. I hypothesize that if the "fire" mentioned was going out without a "rational" explanation, it would be helpful to look towards areas of emotion and affect to understand the accompanied social and academic disengagement. Lance nods his head and continues to listen as I cite some research and thinking I had done on the subject. He sits back listening to the cluttered thoughts that characterize the beginnings of any project. However, he also sits back in a way that suggests he is trying to sense my intentions. Lance is very protective of the school and "his kids." He would never let in anyone who he felt would not act in the best interest of the culture and community of the school. Therefore he listens attempting to discern not just the *meaning* of what I am saying but the *spirit* of what I am saying. As I finish my comments, I offer that as a service to the school I could provide my expertise and skills to aid in the efforts of supporting the boys at the school, in exchange for doing the research for my dissertation.

All three of us take a pause and reflect on all that has been said. My offer lingers as Lance bows his head in reflection as he would many times during my time at SMA. He does so not necessarily to think but to wait. Just then he jumps up and says: "Ahh. Big Bird has just spoken to me!"[18] All three of us laugh uncontrollably for a few seconds. Just then Lance suggests that I lead a group of eighth grade boys in a "joint-intervention" in which to work on some of the affective and emotional issues that they confront, but in a space that was more social-cultural than therapeutic (see Ch. 6 for an in-depth description of this program).

I felt relief, all was in place to begin the study and that I would finally be able to get some answers to the questions I had been asking for half a decade in graduate school. However, I also felt pressure since I only had vague idea of how to construct this new educational intervention for the young men. As I began to wrap my head around this proposed intervention, Lance gave me some questions to think about: "What roles can schools play in the process of healing? How do we get 'the fire' lit? It doesn't have to be blazing but how do we *light* 'the fire' so we can fan it gradually?" He ended by stating: "Healing is possible." I leave the meeting perplexed and excited. This was an ideal environment for investigating the nexus between manhood, race, class, affect and education. Moreover, it confirmed for me what I knew about these sites. They were places where there was a language, an infrastructure, and a culture to discuss the themes of affect, emotion and gender. I was perplexed, however, as to how I would juggle these multiple roles of researcher, mentor and service provider. How would I create a program that dealt with these issues? Finally, how would I balance the secular language and methods of social science with the unmistakable spiritual[19] infrastructure that Lance and the rest of the school clearly saw

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[17] "No homo" is a slang term that is used when two men find themselves saying or doing something that can be somehow understood to be evidence of same-sex desire. By saying "no homo" before or after a phrase or act the person abdicates themselves from being read as having same-sex desire.

[18] I would later learn that Big Bird is Lance's facetious way of referring to the Holy Spirit.

[19] I use the word spirituality loosely. I do not mean spirituality to stand in for religious. Within the context of the school, spirituality takes up both humanistic and religious connotations. Recall, the school while heavily influenced by a catholic tradition is nonetheless a private school that is independent from the local archdiocese. Furthermore, as detailed in chapter 2, it is running a curriculum that has humanistic and religious components. Therefore, the proposal provided by Lance and Max for

as important to their mission? This last question especially frustrated me, since educational research traditionally does not take spirituality seriously. In fact, the topic of spirituality in schools is often reserved for the issue of school prayer in public schools. Nonetheless, the significance of the conversation I had with the administrators at SMA about the spiritual "fire" of Black and Latino boys, while couched in the language of Catholicism, could also be expressed through a more secular example.

During my first year of graduate school, I tutored a young man, Phillip, in Oakland, California only a few blocks away from where Oscar Grant would be murdered. The young man was having difficulties with school-work. I asked him to tell me what was wrong. In response, he pulled his hoodie over his head and started to cry. While some adults at the school might see this as an act of "behavioral defiance," I perceived this as a moment of intense pain. I took him outside to talk, where he spoke about having nightmares. He said he saw death when his uncle's house was foreclosed, when police harassed young men on his block, when he saw homeless people on the street and when he saw people begging for food to eat. In brief, death for this young man was both physical and social.

What stood out was not only his account of social death, but also his response to this pain. For him and for other students with whom I have worked-the hoodie was a place of protection. Throughout the time I have spent in schools and working class neighborhoods, as a researcher and as a youth, I have noticed that for some young men of color, the hoodie, the fitted baseball cap, and the hard bravado are symbolic security blankets in a society that systematically excludes and/or confines them to certain areas of existence.

However, this was more than a story about an individual's trauma. His description of what caused his nightmares was an account of a historical-structural trauma that appeared in his biography. Furthermore, this was not someone who many would construct as a "typical" at risk boy of color. Phillip was not underperforming because he was directly involved in gangs, nor was he obsessed with being "cool," turning to drugs, sex or popular culture to affirm himself. Philip was from a neighborhood where we see issues that have arisen in the aftermath of urban decline for many poor and working class students or color, but he was not the student that researchers, teachers and politicians often discuss. He was a young man who eluded the facile explanations that faulted a culture of poverty or an oppositional attitude for his schooling woes.[20] So to me, this prompted the question: What is *under "*the hood"?

As I observed and worked with the boys at SMA and LHA, I became increasingly convinced that the blaming of boys' problems on choices, culture and behaviors missed the mark. In *We Real Cool*, perhaps one of the few works that takes into account the dimensions of race, gender and age, bell hooks (2004b) states: "What is different for black males, what makes it harder for them to survive than black females, is the dearth of healing theory and practice addressing black male pain and possibility" (pg. 128). Building on hooks, this chapter will reexamine the explanations for why some young poor and working class Black and Latino boys exhibit what some call a "cool pose" (Majors and Billson, 1992).

In the first half of this chapter I review the framework of cool pose, summoned by both staff and students at both schools. Furthermore, I put the "cool pose" in conversation with the interviews and observations in my study. In light of the data, I found that the "cool pose"

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identifying the pain of the boys is somewhere between psychological and spiritual and thus invites a hybridity of the secular and religious discourses.

[20] He enjoyed listening to hip-hop, but also liked Pokémon cards. He played violent video games but also enjoyed greeting me with hugs before we had tutoring session. He was bullied and bullied others by calling them gay, but also spoke passionately about his male friends.

analysis often obfuscated the source of the trauma plaguing young Black and Latino boys by using Black or Latino culture, specifically Black and Latino masculinities, as a scapegoat for manifestations of emotional guarded, disconnect and disengagement; I observed that the cool pose is not an oppositional response created by a oppositional culture, but rather a *symptom* and not a *cause* of young Black and Latino boys' problems. In the second half, I examine the multiple sites where boys attempt to transition from boyhood into young manhood. These sites (e.g.: the playground, friendship, video games and mentorship) portray a journey that is ripe with rich existential resources as well as the fraught with traditional patriarchal tools such as violence and sexual conquest.

Too Cool for School

Repeatedly, I have heard teachers and administrators throughout my career cite "being cool" as a cause for Black and Latino boys falling behind their peers in academic achievement. While SMA and LHA make efforts to understand the larger social and cultural factors that contribute to the lived inequality of their students, their analysis of the "cool pose" is no different from what I have heard elsewhere. SMA and LHA do not only agree with this analysis of cool as adversarial, they are proudly against the "cool culture," which they feel is in part to blame for the decline in the engagement of poor and working class students of color.

As you might recall from chapter two, one of the schools documents stated: "In an urban culture where smart is uncool, our students learn to think critically, to engage academically, and to value their intellect as a unique and precious gift." In practice the notion of "cool" seems to refer to both a specific urban "street" culture and a broader modern U.S. culture. In the eyes of the schools, the 'street' usage of cool is an "oppositional stance" produced by a classed and racial sub-culture that values instant gratification, anti-intellectualism and consumerism while rejecting decision making, future planning and a strong work ethic. According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), this oppositional behavior comes from a racially charged rejection of mainstream White institutions which have "historically" discriminated against poor communities of color. This "stylized" rejection of schooling is pronounced among Black (and Latino) males who turn to violence, misogyny and emotional detachment as strategies for conveying this resistance to schooling. Therefore to embrace the cool culture is to reject middle class values, which are integral to upward mobility in U.S culture.

The broader usage of cool was created by consumerist culture of modern world capitalism, where people defined their worth through their acquisition of commodities such as clothes and technology that made them "better" than others. This obsession with cool created by the media was driving a selfish and individualistic mentality that the school felt militated against their culture of community.

Students were aware of the school's position on the cool pose. During my interviews I regularly asked students to provide me their understanding of what schools means by "cool." First, a number of students focused on the impact of popular culture:

> JUAN: I think they're talking about pop culture. Things that people wear, and boy bands, new music and stuff like that and for this culture, the here culture is just about community and staying away from that outside culture. Trying to be different being yourself. (Interview, April 25, 2012).

NICK:I think it means like the culture out there today is like you know a lot more into just like drugs and alcohol, and like sex. Getting into trouble, you know that's kind of like the better thing to do. You'd rather even like at early ages people are just having sex just to have sex cuz it's the cool thing to do. They don't really have a realization of any real mental and subconscious traumas. You know hurt, how much it can hurt their subconscious. Their just doing it cuz that's like the cool thing to do. So I think that's one of the things that the school stresses a lot, you know how people do things just cuz their cool, and you know how we do things cuz it's the smart and the right thing to do. And I think that's a pretty fair statement in some cases. I think it depends on the person a lot in here. Because, not even some people here, they won't really or kind of even give into the outside kind of view. But you know for the most part we're just...we're trying to be counter-cultural, we just turn their views a lot on them. So yea, we're really trying to set our own boundaries and really try to do what's right. We're doing it because it's right, and not doing it because it's like oh yea everyone else is doing it. (Interview, May 8, 2012)

JAMES: I think that the culture out there they mean every man for themselves, do what's gonna help you best, it's okay if you're okay. And it's okay if everybody else is not okay as long as you're okay. And I think that here it's more about making sure that everybody is okay and everybody can help each other and everybody's okay. (Interview, June 12, 2012)

The comments by the boys confirm the second usage of cool that the administrators emphasize at the schools: cool as part of the general *American* culture. For some boys, the culture "out there" tended to be competitive, unsafe, superficial, hypersexualized and individualistic. In contrast the two schools were for the boys a place of safety, community, post-raciality, gender non-conformity and support. The students often expressed that they could "just be themselves" when they were at these school and did not have to feel the pressures of fitting into certain expectations.

To achieve this sense of culture and community at the schools, the teachers and administrators worked a great deal to not simply "enforce rules," but rather to go beyond defining school culture as punishment. Instead, SMA and LHA provided students and faculty with a common mission that was to be upheld at all times. This mission could be best summed up by one of the central "elements" of their community that state that they will "do no harm", nor "let no harm" "physically, emotionally and spiritually" come to anyone in their community.

Nonetheless, the notion of "cool" as a describing a specific "street culture" was by far the more prevailing meaning among staff. The word "urban" as it was found in the document seemed more specific than a general consumerstic American culture. Furthermore, I encountered similar language in SMA's no dating policy that states: "The very best is expected and it becomes quite evident that there is a wide difference between our values and those of the street. The "street culture" and SMA's values of community are incompatible."

My intuitions about how this language of "oppositional culture" might be interpreted by students along class, gender and racial lines were confirmed:

LEON: The culture that society shows to everybody else. Like if you listen to somebody's conversation, or just a random person on the street. You might hear a lot of slang which

is okay. But then there's also cursing, racial slurs, and things like that. And we're encouraged to not do those things because they're offensive. And they get you nowhere. Like I remember when I was kid going to public schools, the kids thought you were cool if you could curse openly at someone else. But if you were too afraid to curse, or you thought it was wrong they would reject you. Because they think you're a wimp and you can't act like a man, is what they would put it. And how society supports that, but we're told that we're not supposed to listen to society. Because most of the things they're putting out there are wrong. (Interview, April 26, 2012)

TITO: Gender roles, because... you know, and a stereotype also, cuz you know how outside you're not really supposed to show your emotion, here... show all your emotion, in a way it's bad if you keep it all bottled up. Another one is that men don't clean. First of all, we have clean up every day, so that proves that we clean, and it doesn't really matter... I really don't care what other people say when I clean cuz I'm being neat and organized. Let's see... another one is men are supposed alone, without any help, but here you're encouraged to go ask the teachers for help and kind of to other people too. So...yeah. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

Leon and Tito were more specific when they discuss the culture "out there" as the "streets." In their minds, the culture of the streets is adversarial because of "bad behaviors" that are considered to be "cool." For Leon in particular, not abiding by this "street code" will force others to reject you. In the account put forward by Tito, the culture outside of SMA meant the ability to convey an adversarial emotional aloofness and toughness that is associated with poor and working class Black and Latino men. My observations and interviews made it increasingly clear that the discourse of "cool pose" was alive and well at both schools. Therefore, it would be helpful to briefly review the research and debates that have shaped this popular explanation of educational underachievement among the boys at both schools.

The Cult of Cool

The cool pose is a set of language, mannerisms, gestures and movements that "exaggerate or ritualize masculinity…The essence of cool is to appear in control, whether through a fearless style of walking, an aloof facial expression, the clothes you wear, a haircut, your gestures or the way you talk. The cool pose shows the dominant culture that you are strong and proud, despite your status in American society. (Goleman, 1992, para. 15)

Two social scientists, Richard Majors, a psychologist, and Janet Billson, a sociologist, wrote what is perhaps one of the most cited works on the subject of black masculinity. *Cool Pose*, made popular the notion that Black masculinity in the U.S. is heavily influenced by a culturally authentic coping strategy called the "Cool Pose," which permits them to deal with larger structural injustice. Similar to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Majors and Billson (1992) qualify their claims by foregrounding the "cool pose" within structural and historical factors. They argue that "cool pose-which certainly characterizes the style of *some* black males, some of the time-does not apply to all black males, all of the time." Indeed, "cool pose is not necessarily dependent on poverty, unemployment, or ghetto living. People of all racial, ethnic, class, and gender groups use cool behaviors to some extent (p. xii). Still, the majority of the book is

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dedicated to describing the cool pose as a cultural and psychological phenomenon *specific* to Black men. For example, in chapter four of *Cool Pose*, Majors and Billson (1992) delineate the different social interactions and sites where the cool poses are deployed as both a productive and counterproductive defense mechanisms. However, when discussing race relations with Whites, Majors and Billson revise the cool pose to fit stereotypical differences between Black and White masculinity:

> Black styles are more often characterized as expressive and performance behavior: high-stimulus, spontaneous, intuitive, improvisational, emotional, rhythmic, assertive, confrontational, direct, and animated. White behavior is more often seen as low-stimulus: dispassionate, nonchallenging, and impersonal. While blacks are more interested in expressing than controlling their impulses, whites value self-restraint, understatement, and diffusion of intense situations. (p. 52)

Thus, where the Black cool pose is confrontational and emotional, White coolness is rational and dispassionate.[21] When describing such displays in White men, we tend to situate them in ways that are positive: "self-restraint," "controlled," "dispassionate." In his study of poor and working class Black and White males, MacLeod (1987) describes how the White males in his study exhibited an adversarial "cool, tough and defiant" masculinity that was modeled after figures such as John Wayne, Clint Eastwood and Sylvester Stallone. Yet, we hear no pundits or teachers claiming that White adolescent boys suffer from a cool pose masculinity.

Adolescents across race, class and gender lines experience challenges as they are coming of age. Regardless of the context or reasons behind their difficulties, they will all make mistakes and push boundaries. The difference between Black and Latino poor boys and White middle class boys is that white children are afforded the privilege of making these mistakes. White kids are afforded the resources, time and disciplinary slack to make sense of their confusion. "Historically White Colleges" (Bonilla-Silva, 2012) such as Harvard, Dartmouth and Princeton, have problems with young adults engaging in high risk behaviors and committing deviant acts. Anyone who has ever stepped foot on these campuses, including this researcher, can attest to the fact that illegal drugs are readily available. Sexual assault is a serious, unacknowledged problem on Ivy League campuses (Gattuso & Salley, 2013). Yet, no one is profiling White men as rapists nor are college public safety offices implementing stop and frisk policies on these campuses. Mass shootings in Colorado and Connecticut have taken place in predominantly white areas yet seldom does someone speak of the violent White male youths besieging this country[22]. Just about every other day it seems, we can turn on the television and find out that another white middle class male is involved in a sex scandal, but no one calling to be wary of White male sexual predators. Walking through New York City's Penn Station's Long Island Rail Road station on Saturday night, I have observed countless suburban white adolescents spread out on the floors belligerently intoxicated, while NYPD officers looked on with grins. I need not remind you how different the situation would be if the location and bodies were changed.

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[21] Similarly Morris (2007) finds in his study that behavior such as assertiveness, strength and confidence associated positively with white middle class students were seen often mistaken as displays of "attitude" in black girls.

[22] For discussions on these issues see: Kimmel, M. S., & Mahler, M. (2003). Adolescent Masculinity, Homophobia, and Violence: Random School Shootings, 1982-2001; Perlstein, D. (2000). Failing at Kindness: Why Fear of Violence Endangers Children. *Educational Leadership*, *57*(6), 76–79.

Nonetheless, Black and Latino children everyday are punished physically and psychologically because they are perceived to be culturally deviant. As is evidenced by Majors and Billson's (1992) depiction of different "styles" of expression, we may not be observing "cultural differences" but rather an interpretation of how some people and their actions are interpreted as universal and human, while others are interpreted as not human and deviant. The narrative becomes a burdensome one: poor and working class Black boys are born deficient and must work to be seen as worthy of human consideration (Alexander, 2010). How did we arrive at this place? Why has "cool" become the scapegoat for the academic underachievement and disengagement of poor and working class Black and Latino Boys?

Cool Pose as Anomie

Majors and Billson's research on the cool pose is part of a larger debate that has been occurring within sociology and anthropology, specifically urban ethnography, for many years. According to Alford Young (2004), the central research question that many of these studies attempt to answer is: Why do marginalized communities (mostly poor people of color) engage in deviant behavior and developed anti-social attitudes? Young explains, "A leading claim of such studies is that black men are psychologically wounded both by a labor market that does not provide them with what they need for sufficient living, and by a community rife with threats and uncertainty. The prototype that emerges from this ethnography is of a people responding to despair and futility by leveling their goals and desires" (p. 28). The researchers in these studies foreground structural and historical factors to talk about the responses to these factors, but in their analysis they focus on deviant choices, decisions and behaviors. Sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2002) explains: "Specifying how the code of the street produces more or less violent behavior on the ground would likely disclose its dubious conceptual status. As a *depictive* device designed to capture the everyday perspective of ghetto residents, it is useful and illuminating; as an *analytical* tool aimed at explaining social conduct, it suffers from severe shortcomings" (author's emphasis, p.1493).

Just as Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) depict the real phenomenon of people living in poverty and racism exhibiting signs of psychological fatigue and frustration (Fanon, 1952/1967; Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T., 2000), Majors and Billson correctly portray a phenomenon but inadequately explain the source of these behaviors. Instead they continue in the tradition of urban ethnographers who explain the persistence of poverty as a product of an "underclass" culture, which was created by structures and histories, but is perpetuated by the people themselves.

Invocations of "cool pose" draw on Emile Durkhiem's concept of *anomie*; the general feeling of anxiety and disconnect that individuals feel in a modern era where "traditional" norms and values have dissipated but have not been replaced by new ones, is in part to blame for the emergence of crime within the poor communities (Durkheim, 1897/1951). In doing so, Emile Durkheim and other functionalist theorists sought to find a social explanation for behaviors such as suicide and criminal deviance. Furthermore, Durkheim's theory of anomie was updated and modified by American sociologist Robert K. Merton who, according to Thio (1975), rests his work on a simple logical argument:

1) The disjunction between aspirations and opportunity for realizing aspirations produces pressures towards deviance. (2) Due to the pervasive influence of the success ideology in

American Society, persons of the lower class, like those of the upper and middle classes… tend to hold high aspirations for success but, unlike those of the higher classes, suffer from the socially structured lack of opportunity for realizing the aspirations. That is, lower-class persons tend to experience a greater aspiration-opportunity disjunction than do higher-class persons. (3) Therefore, lower-class persons are more likely to be pressured toward deviance. (p.139)

While on an intuitive level this "syllogism" makes sense, Thio and to some extent Young (2004), go on to criticize Merton's reliance on "public" displays of criminality as measures for criminal deviance. The methodological pitfall in using official crime statistics is that doing so ignores the difficulty in observing *all* criminal activity. "Public" deviance is easier to document than "white collar" deviance since upper and middle class persons are able to circumvent forms of everyday surveillance and generate relative privacy in their everyday lives. In short, there is a difference between those who are likely to commit crimes versus those who are likely to be observed and punished committing these crimes. The data we have to make general claims about criminality and deviance is economically and racially biased, and therefore only tells part of the story.

As Thio points out, "haves" and "have nots" may turn to deviance for different reasons, but the tendency towards deviance cuts across race and class lines. Thio proposes an alternative logic that might be useful in re-imagining our understanding of deviance along class lines. He proposes that (1) upper and middle class persons "are likely to hold levels of aspirations so high that they suffer from relative deprivation, whereby they are pressured toward the performance of such deviant acts as tax evasion, embezzlement, political skullduggery, corporate price-fixing, and other so called "white collar crimes." And (2) lower-class persons are likely to hold relatively high (though low if compared to the case of high-class persons) aspirations and yet suffer from objective deprivation, whereby they are pressured toward the performance of such deviant acts as armed robbery, burglary, assault, and other so-called "street crimes" (p. 152-153).

To their credit, Majors and Billings, recognize that deviant "strategies" cut across race and class lines. However, they still assert that deviance on the part of Black men is more *frequent*. Drawing from Merton's theory of anomie, they argue that Black men opt to deploy *innovative* and *rebellious* performances of masculinity in an effort to cope with this perceived block in the opportunity structure, while arguing that White masculinity takes on more conformist and socially sanctioned display. In asserting that cool pose is not specific to Blacks but ignoring its manifestations away from Whites, they suggest both that cool pose is uniquely black and that it reflects the choices of Black men rather than the social order in which they live.

Perhaps the most preeminent study of White cool pose that ignores its racialized production and analyses is Paul Willis' (1977) *Learning to Labor*. Wills claims the working class White males of England, whom he calls "the lads," are merely projecting attitudes and behaviors that are commensurate with their future outcomes. Shifting from an overly deterministic model, Willis engages the ways in which institutions and ideological apparatuses, formally thought to be part of a secondary "superstructure," were reproducing beliefs and interpretations of reality necessary for maintaining a division of labor. Willis asserts that the 'lads' are complicit in their own stratification via their counter-cultural, non-conformist ways. It is their stylized rejections of school and society that frame their compatibility to work in the masculinist, shop floor sub-culture. This is juxtaposed to the conformist 'earoles' whom, while also working class, are able to adopt middle class values, allowing them to choose higher paying jobs.

Learning to Labor continues to be regarded as a seminal text in understanding questions of agency and culture in connection with the political economy. While works like those of Bowles and Gintis (1976) have provided important contributions to examining the ways schools are active in reproducing inequality, they tended to posit students, administrators and teachers as passive agents at the mercy of institutional and economic demands. Willis provided an analysis of culture, not as superstructure but as a "relatively autonomous" field, where people made choices within the constraints of a capitalist economy. In his view, schools presented the lads with a dominant culture and a narrative of upward mobility that the lads choose to reject. In turn, schools reproduce a stratified society insofar as they act as meditating institutions that sort people into social positions based on their relative conformity to or rejection of the dominant values and culture presented to them.

Willis contrasts 'the lads' culture with what he calls hyper 'lads' culture developed by young West Indians in inner city schools. He writes:

> They differ from white varieties of counter-school culture principally in that differentiation of the institution has occurred with respect to themes borrowed from the West Indies…The consequences of these new cultures for the preparation of labour power and attitudes to work are even more profound than those arising from the parallel white forms. In particular, the theme of wagelessness and survival without a job borrowed from the *underdeveloped* context may well be in the process of being converted into the themes of refusal to work in the developed context. We are facing for the first time in this society the possibility of the rejection of contemporary forms and structures of work by at least a significant amount of our second generation immigrant population. (my emphasis, p.85)

This analysis does not hold across contexts, and obscures rather than makes visible, the power relations at play in regards to the West Indian boys. His usage of the notion of "underdevelopment" highlights his lack of attention to the inter-relationality between wage labor in the core industrialized city of Birmingham, and the peripheral sub-proletariat classes that exist in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and within Birmingham itself. While his analysis of the complicity of the lads with their own oppression is a valuable insight, he fails to explain the ways in which underdevelopment is not a "natural" cultural phenomenon of the West Indies, but rather a direct consequence of the colonial expansion of England itself.

This is not to say that one could not make the argument for the complicity of the West Indian boys in their own oppression. Expanding the analysis of labor to the *global* and not just a *national* unit of analysis, Willis would necessarily have to take on the role of race and gender in organizing labor on a world scale. Otherwise, his analysis of "learning to be unemployed" falls in line with the pitfalls of previous urban ethnographers of the urban underclass. The usage of phrases such as "underdevelopment" and "rejection" to describe the situation of the West Indian boys, inscribes the moment with the myth of modernity. By deploying the 'developmentalist' rhetoric, Willis accepts a package of historical, political, epistemic and ontological power relations which place students as closer or farther away from the modern world. What I am alluding to is not simply a matter of emphasis or focus. It is possible to focus on the lads, however it would mean taking on the whiteness of the lads. Acknowledging the whiteness of the lads would allow one to see how their "sub-culture" is incorporated into the wage labor system in ways that are not afforded to the West Indian boys. Moreover, acknowledging the ways in which race and class are inseparable would permit one to acknowledge how the lads' white working

class culture is inextricably tied to the sub-proliteriotization of the West Indian boys. An integrated race and class analysis unearths the inter-rationality of culture itself and represents the lads and the West Indian boys as two sides of the same coin.

As White and nonwhite boys make the transition to manhood, the toll exacted from all boys in American society is high. Many live where shame, humiliation, loneliness and isolation are norms. However, when it comes to Black and Latino boys, there is more work to be done, since controlling images and practices of race, class and gender have impeded our abilities to encounter them as "normal" and instead as unsalvageable, delinquent, criminal and adultified beings who are in deserving of punishment and not healing. Perhaps bell hooks (2004b) said it best: "I wanted to make it clear that there is a crisis in the black male spirit in our nation. And that crisis is not because black men are an 'endangered species'; rather, it is a crisis perpetuated by widespread dehumanization, by continued placement of black males outside the category human, one that identifies them as beast, other…" (p.127).

Inevitably, patriarchal masculinity manifests itself in distinct ways for different men. Still, by challenging the ways academic discourse no less than popular culture, has tended to treat Black and Latino men as less than human, we are better positioned to assess the lived experiences of the boys, their expressions of pain and trauma. Rather than projecting prefabricated narratives and stereotypes that frame our understandings, we can begin the work of encountering them as struggling human beings who are hurting for an array of reasons, but whom nonetheless deserve our respect, empathy and careful attention.

The young men in my study recognize the complexity of the issues they encounter as they made the transition to young manhood. Tim, an eighth grader at LHA, articulates many of the previous understandings of the racialized, classed and gendered "street culture" as adversarial:

> TIM: I think that we're talking to two cultures out there. One is the streets. Cause they always are referring to the streets even when they don't say it sometimes. And there's another one in the work place with a professional. Cause in the streets it's really tough, nobody's gonna show sympathy for you. But also in the work place it's also tough, nobody will show sympathy for you. So you have to really succeed and try to successfully go up in ranks when you're in a job.

However, Tim also recognizes the school's notion of "cool" as an ideology that constructs Black and Latino boys in ways that are discomforting:

> ARG: When you say that they refer a lot to the streets, but they don't necessarily mean that, can you give me some examples?
> TIM: Well basically they, most of the kids that come here are from rough areas. So there's no fancy snotty kids, um it's mostly the minorities. Like Hispanics and blacks. They pick those kids up because they see something special in them even they're from a bad area, and they wanna fix those kids. And when they talk about the streets they're talking about how you shouldn't do what you see. Like sell drugs, you shouldn't do that. And I think that's common knowledge, so it shouldn't be rammed into my head like they do. Cause I have no reason to want to sell drugs and I talk to my friends like on about, they feel stupid too...some of my friends like...smoke weed and stuff. But they can't...they've been in bad situations. And they can't control themselves.
> ARG: Why do you think they can't control it? Some of those kids?

TIM: Probably they were not "cool" at once. As people say cool, like they want to fit in. And be accepted into community and they felt the only way they could be accepted into that community was by doing exactly what other people do. (Interview, June 12, 2012)
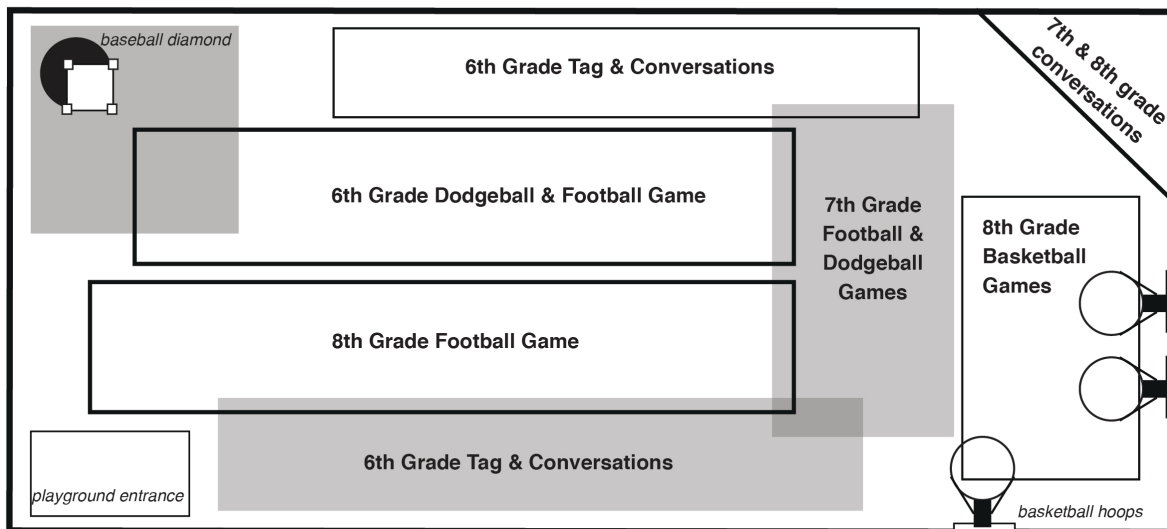ARG: And how have you been able to kind of, you know, control your own destiny, or control of your life that other people can't?
TIM:I think it's cuz my family. Cause people are born to families where drugs are important thing. Cause some people, parents sell drugs to help the family. With my family, they raised me to be like, none of that would be accepted, like it would be done for me. And they really taught me that I cannot do that. And if I do, I would have bad consequences. And I agree with them. (Interview, June 12, 2012)

This response acknowledges the complexity of the issues young men are dealing with at the nexus of race, class and gender. Tim, in a "Du Boisian" way, perceives not one but two cultures both of which are equally difficult and challenging to navigate. On the one hand, he must contend with a world that is trying to "fix" him for being from "bad area." On the other hand, he acknowledges the realities of living in an economically disenfranchised areas where drugs and violence are issues. It is in this conflicting world of young manhood with multiple sites and challenges that Tim and his peers are charged with making sense of their manhood.

Sites of Passage

The Sites of Passage
(LHA PLAYGROUND)

baseball diamond	7th & 8th grade conversations
6th Grade Tag & Conversations	
6th Grade Dodgeball & Football Game	7th Grade Football & Dodgeball Games
8th Grade Football Game	8th Grade Basketball Games
playground entrance	6th Grade Tag & Conversations
	basketball hoops

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Some of the most significant insights regarding young manhood and boyhood came to me during recess at Langston Hughes Academy. While I would eventually come to participate in a few pickup basketball games and some great conversations later on during the year, I spent the first few months taking in the rare opportunity to see the many stages, sites and trajectories boys

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[23] Illustration of LHA playground as rendered by Gonzalez, N. (2013).

undertook in coming of age from grades six to eight. As I sat and watched the boys participate in various activities, it occurred to me that I was watching a living representation of the process the boys undergo in early adolescence becoming young men.

There are three compelling observations to this effect: the first is the way in which each grade of boys took predominately to certain activities like tag, dodgeball, basketball and football. For instance, the six graders, especially at the beginning of the year, tended to be involved in playing tag, occasional dodgeball and/or simply taking the time to talk to one another. One moment in particular encapsulates the spirit of sixth grade boyhood as I saw it at LHA and SMA. Two sixth grade boys, one of African American descent and the other of Latino descent, sit on a bench next to mine after they have finished chasing each other. One of the boys was noticeably more tired and started resting his head on the other boys shoulder. I could overhear the two boys talking about the usual run of the mill topics like television, video games and zombies.

However, as the conversation continued, the boy who was tired, eventually settled his head on the other boy's lap while the other boy rubbed his head. I watched as the two boys continue their conversation without fear or trepidation. Meanwhile, as my vision turned back to the broader playground, I observed that directly ahead of me, the eighth grade boys had paused their game again in order to argue about a call that was made. I often observed that behind the performance of hypermasculnity that was endorsed by football, there was another use to the game, which was to practice debate and argument in the male dominated public sphere (Thorne, 1993). In these interactions boys learned to be assertive, dominating and aggressive in putting forward their desires and visions. I could not help but contrast the shouting football players with the intimacy displayed by the two boys on my right.

The second observation was the literal distribution of the space where these activities took place, specifically the activities that are centered and decentered within the playground. I am not arguing that the activities just take more space, obviously a conversation requires less space than a football game, however how the activities are literally distributed, *where* football and dodgeball are centered, and conversations are marginalized (or in some cases cornered) in the peripheries of the playground suggests a hierarchy of patriarchal masculine socialization. Lastly, while there were dominant trends of the ways in which boys were socialized away from investing time in relationship building and intimacy, and toward sport, boys at all grades could be found transgressing these dominant patterns and engaging in an array of activities that constituted their rite of passage into young manhood. Some days, boys who would usually be having conversation in the corner would step in and play a football game. Other days, boys who you would normally find playing football would sit a recess out to have a conversation with a friend or to study for a test.

While this scenario does not capture all of the minutiae and intricacies of the rite of passage from boyhood into manhood, it does helps us visualize some important shifts that take place as poor and working class Black and Latino boys come of age in the U.S. When it came to the nature of the relationships and the resources that were available for them to make sense of the world, it became compelling for me to see how what hooks (2004a) calls "patriarchal masculinity,"[24] which has a monopoly on the "socialization" process over boys in the U.S is more of a deleterious process, than an additive one. Seeing the contrast of manhoods from being relatively expressive, vulnerable, open and loving beings to aggressive, hypermasculine,

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[24] hooks (2004a) states that this kind of masculinity is based on "a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (p.18).

overbearing individuals was not evidence of growth but of beings who were traumatized, scared and shamed away from being their full selves.

Ample literature exists to support gender "socialization" as a complex process of regulation and resistance (Thorne, 1993). For instance, Monique Wittig (1992) describes heterosexism as a form of social contract that regulates not only individual bodies and desires, but also the ways in which persons may relate to one another. For Rubin the "sex/gender system" is "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (p.159). Thus the sex/gender system, while certainly relating to the political economy, cannot be reduced to the facilitation of economic exploitation. In other words, the "lived experiences" of an "unlivable" social contract — which is racial, sexual, economic and heterosexual — are themselves the "social machinery"(Rubin, 1975, p. 197-198). For Black and Latino boys in this study, race and class only compounded the negative impacts of a hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity. In many cases, key moments in their transition to young manhood were marked by what Valenzuela (1999) would call a "subtractive process," that was exacerbated by race and class both inside and outside of schools. Still, other spaces acted as imperfect existential resources to deal with pain and emotions that they encountered on their journeys.

"Like a Puppy Licking Your Face:" Boys Friendships

While some might see the display of affection between the two boys on the playground as an aberration, the display of love, affection, intimacy and friendship was consistent in Pedro, a sixth grade boy from SMA, who provided me with the heart-felt reasoning for why he considered one specific boy his "best friend:"

> PEDRO: The first thing that got my attention was his laugh.
> ARG: His laugh?
> PEDRO :It's not exactly a snork. But he would laugh so loud that he would actually start banging on things. And it sort of got my attention. Cuz I would just say a little sarcastic comment and he would die.
> ARG: So why was his laugh something that really drew you to him? What is it about that laugh?
> PEDRO: That laugh sort makes me feel awkward but in a good way. Like awkward. Like a puppy licking your face when you wake up. It makes you feel awkward but it's sort of like funny at the same time. (Interview, April 19, 2012)

In other words, my findings with respect to sixth grade boys' friendships are consistent with the studies done by Niobe Way (2011) who argues that Black and Latino boys are not, by virtue of their sex (and race), emotionally illiterate. Throughout her work Way identifies the emotional depth and aptitude of young men who have traditionally been understood as guarded and "cool." Specifically, Way finds that these capacities for affection and emotional expressiveness are most pronounced when young men discuss their friendships. According to her study, friendships allow boys to deal with the problems which can accumulate during their lifespan and become burdensome if they are without persons to process their issues with. Tito, a seventh grader at SMA, described this function when he shared why and how he developed a "connection" with his best friend:

Well... let's see. So, the... how it first started was, we were assigned seats so we sat next to each other, and then we started talking, and then... [inaudible] I was like very playful, and like in a way immature, so yeah he was the same way, so then we started playing with each other, and I started realizing that every time I would go somewhere I would be next to him. So then we started talking, and then some of the topics we would talk about is like sports, like... school sometimes, uumm... we'd talk about like who has better stuff, let's see... we'd talk about girls sometimes, uumm... and we'd talk about our life at home, and then, like cuz we live like a block or two away, but like the environment's different, like mines is more ghetto, and his is like more peaceful. So yeah, we started talking about it how we wanted to switch, like switch places for like one day to see how it felt. (Interview, May 10, 2012)

Tito describes what I observed were the many layers, which characterized friendships among boys at LHA and SMA. The first connection was always around humor. For many boys, having a good laugh (Willis, 1977) or "just playing" were some of the ways in which male bonding often occurs at this age. These seemed to be the preferred modalities of bonding because it was low-risk and still allowed for some affective openings to appear through humor and happiness.

Boys went to great extremes to solicit laughter and play. For instance, I often observed boys attempting to perform mundane physical challenges between lunch and recess while going up or down stairs. One boy would try to slide down a banister and fall off in time to catch his friends laughing. Other boys would try to jump and touch a water pipe that emerged from the celling to show off their "jumping ability" to their friends. Other ways boys performed for each other for a laugh was through sarcasm or by seemingly "dissing" each other in a "joking" manner, so as to not completely offend the other person.

However, as the boys moved past those initial points of connection they began to cite more deep seated avenues for friendship. Like school and parents, peers were also important existential resources for students to make sense of the contradiction they were facing in their lives through class, race and gender. In this case, Tito playing with the idea of "switching" homes with his friend could be seen as a tool for reconciling the burden of living in the "more ghetto" parts of the neighborhood. I found this notion to be a recurring motif:

MARCO: Me and [Hector] are both Spanish, so we came here... he came from [South America], I came from [the Caribbean], so our families had troubles, and he gets along probably as well as I do, but he lives with both of his parents, so I guess we can compare our lives together from that, and we understand what we're going through, and money issues. We can just talk to each other about it. (Interview, April 20, 2012)

Unfortunately, boys are often socialized away from deep, intimate spaces and relationships that in previous years would have been acceptable. Instead, as they go through the crucible of adolescence they are shamed, bullied and made to feel that intimacy is weakness antithetical to their development of masculinity. Iman recalls an incident that occurred during his after school program where he witnessed one boy bullying another: "...we were pouring libation for our ancestors, during the program, and one of these kids, he poured libation for his grandmother, and then he started calling him the G word, and I was wondering was I supposed to act that way? And then the kid started feeling bad, and then he didn't want to pour libation for his grandmother any more" (Interview, May 16, 2012).

What is being mocked in moments like these, are not the acts of ancestral veneration but rather, the discomfort with vulnerability that the other young men felt in watching the young man pour his libation. As sociologist C.J. Pascoe (2007) argues the fag discourse so often found in middle and high schools, is not simply the fear of the homosexual subject, but is an act that bestows a masculine authenticity on those who 'repudiate' any heterosexual adolescent boy temporarily exhibiting markers of femininity. Furthermore, consistent with Thorne's (1993) notion of ' gender play' in schools, Pascoe illustrates how the repudiation of the 'fag' becomes a game of 'hot potato,' where boys engage in a back-and-forth hoping to rid themselves of association with the effeminate. Failure to distance oneself from moments of emasculation will isolate boys who have unsuccessfully performed practices of masculine power and domination. Thus, what is a stake in the usage of the term fag is not simply a matter of homophobic bullying, as some mainstream discourse on the issue has attempted to frame the conversation, but rather it is the lynchpin of a sanctioned ideal in schools: heterosexual masculinity.

In contrast to the "fag discourse," I found that many of the boys at SMA and LHA felt that one of the highlights of their experiences was the ability to build these strong and intimate friendships with other young men at their school. In the following excerpts both Nick from SMA as well as Chris and James from LHA, describe how comfortable they feel with developing intimate relationships and interactions with their male counterparts. They attribute their capacity to have deep emotional relationships with male peers to the ways in which the school make them feel safe. In particular, LHA uses the notion of "brotherhood" to sanction these deep intimate relationships among the young men. Conversely, SMA relieves the young men of compulsorily heterosexuality through their "no dating policy" by allowing them to focus on *friendships* with girls. In the case of SMA, this also translated into being able to build strong intimate relationships with girls without feeling pressured to date them. The boys often spoke passionately and honestly about brotherhood and the bonds that they forged during their time at the schools:

> CHRIS: Well, I mean, to me the school when they said "this is brotherhood, this is what we're trying to foster here," I thought about it and I was like, the honor, integrity, excellence, y'know. I mean, I didn't really believe it. I didn't find it genuine. And I didn't really find meaning in it at all, for my first two, two and half years. But finally in really seventh grade and eighth grade, I've come to know it as- I care deeply for my friends, specifically for the people that keep up with me outside of school. And I make efforts to hang out with them as much as I can and to help 'em as much as I can and to make them feel like they have somebody to talk to whenever something's wrong. Because a lot of stuff goes on outside of school. So, I mean... some people's families, they're not always there for them. Cuz that's kind of… it is kinda that way with me. But I mean I have [SMA friends], who… they tell me the truth. Because [My Friend] told me on the train, two days ago… "You see I'm always straight up with you, right?" I'm like, "yeah." And he says "because I think if I lie to you, I'm not being a friend at all. So I'm just gonna tell you whether or not it really hurts you, you shouldn't take it to offense because I'm only telling you what you need to hear." (Interview, May 3, 2012)

> ARG: What makes your friends so special at LHA?
> JAMES: I can really literally tell them anything. Like a thought that came into my head, "what do you think about this?" Or, "hey did you hear about this?" And they don't judge

in a bad way, like they'll give you a good response. Or like what they honestly think, they're not gonna sugarcoat anything. (Interview, June 12, 2012)

NICK: Being able to laugh and kind of get away from some of the dangers and anxieties of the outside world, because once you leave the building and you're just walking home you don't feel safe…You're just with your friends laughing and there are people you can trust and I think what I've gotten the most out of SMA is building stronger relationships with girls because before SMA I don't even really know how to have a strong friendship with girls and now I have a lot of strong friendship with girls so I think that if I hadn't have gone with SMA I wouldn't have had as many or maybe none at all strong friendships with girls so just the things that I've learned over this three year span because the person I walked in as and now the person I'm leaving as, they're I don't wanna say two completely different people but the amount that I've grown is exponential in my opinion. (Interview, May 8, 2012)

Moreover, the trust and intimacy built amongst the boys forged a safe environment at both schools, where they felt comfortable blurring gender boundaries. I often observed behaviors of boys after the sixth grade that I could seldom fathom at other schools. For instance, in the months leading to SMA's Martin Luther King Assembly —a talent show where students representing an array of cultural backgrounds performed in skits, dances and songs— I observed two boys practicing merengue steps in a classroom. In addition, I observed boys at both schools regularly playing "hand games" usually associated with girls. Finally at LHA and SMA, I observed as boys regularly took on women's roles during skits and plays without fear or intimidation. While on the playground these seventh and eighth grade boys referred to some of the more hypermasculine forms of interactions, it was clear that they still felt they had the room to build on other forms of bonding and relating to one another that were long lasting and meaningful.

Coming to these select schools and leaving their neighborhoods could entail severing old friendships as well as forming new ones. First Pedro shares the significance of his old friendship in his neighborhood:

They actually use to be my group outside of school. A brother and a brother. One was older one was younger. Another guy and the super's son like I told you. Those four along with me, makes five. We stayed those whole three years. They've been my sort of my best ones... We use to have maybe dinner at each other's houses. Our parents met. We go into each other's houses. It wasn't exactly an awkward confrontation. It was sort of a friendship that you could like go into their houses, knock on their doors, and actually ask them to come out. They don't come out. You go in. (Interview, April 19, 2012)

Nonetheless, some of the boys moved away; Pedro was drawn into the orbit of his new school. In this moment Pedro reacts to the loss of these old friendships:

"[Moving] [s]hattered things. Like we each have different personalities. That's the thing. We each like to joke around but different exact personalities. Like maybe one would be overly pride. One would be low self-esteem and one would be too serious. And I would

be not serious. We'll just mix around and try to find something new." (Interview, April 19, 2012)

The use of the words "shattered" stresses the value and significance of friendships in the lives of all boys, but especially those impacted by race and class. Whenever I ran workshops with boys and asked them to tell me about significant life changing moments, there were always a few stories about boys losing a friend because of "rumors" or due to a the child moving away. This can only create within our children a sense of abandonment, mistrust and loss.

As Pedro describes, having friendships where you can go to each other's houses and know each other's parents provides added layers of support for students. Ironically attending places like SMA and LHA that are located outside of the neighborhoods of the children made it difficult for them to maintain old friendships like the ones described by Pedro. While the city boasts a fine public transportation system, the students often said that having money to pay for fares was sometimes an obstacle. In some cases, parents did not want students leaving the house unsupervised for anything beyond school. This also meant that boys attending SMA and LHA often did not have a chance to play outside and interact with each other. Gauging the current climate of reform efforts that close "failing schools" and the rising popularity of charter schools, it would not surprise me if meaningful friendship become scarce in particular for poor and working class boys of color. As a result of these constraints many boys may turn to the world of video games to compensate for the amount of limitation in their lives.

Longings for Feelings and Understandings: Video Games and Online Porn

At first, I did not expect video games to be a significant site in processing the emotions and burden of young manhood. Nonetheless, as the study proceeded the subject came up not only in my interviews, but also in everyday conversations. Citing statistics from The Entertainment Software Association, DiSalvo and Bruckman (2010) explain that "games are not only played by adolescent Caucasian and Asian men…video games are being played by over 90% of children and consumed by Americans across all classes, culture, gender and ages" (p.56). I found in my study that while not all students *owned* a video game console, students for the most part had *access* to video games through another family member or friend who did own a game system.

While students at SMA and LHA usually came from families that did not have much disposable income, they often made an extra effort on occasions such as a good report card, graduation or Christmas to reward their children. Parents see gaming consoles as alternatives to socializing with the "wrong crowd" or avoiding the dangers of "the streets." Meanwhile, teachers and administrators see video games as distractions that won boys over because they provided overstimulation, instant gratification and numbness from the world. Teachers explained to me that boys were "addicted" to video games, which indicated that they saw this more as a psychological or biological issue.

Instead, what I discovered is that playing video games in the twenty-first century has a host of *social* and *emotional* meanings that educators and teachers should approach with more nuance. The kinds of video games boys (and some girls) are playing are more sophisticated and involved than many of us, including myself who grew up as "gamer," could ever imagine. I could not end a day of observation at both schools without hearing about the videogame franchises *Call of Duty: World War II, Black Ops* and *Modern Warfare Three* as well as *NBA*

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2K12. The former set of games are in the genre known as *First Person Shooter* (FPS), where one is literally inhabiting the first person view of a soldier in a war zone.

According to Frostling-Henningsson (2009), FPS games are alluring to young men because they provide boys with places to *communicate* and *feel*. While boys at SMA and LHA did have more empowering spaces to engage emotion and affect, these games provide the boys an alluring patriarchal space to engage feelings, emotions and experiences that otherwise might be deemed inappropriate by peers, adults or larger society. Antonio describes why this particular space is inviting to him:

> ARG: The school talks about it being a community, do you feel like you're part of any other community besides this one?
> ANTONIO: …I know this is gonna sound ridiculous but I kind of take video games seriously so I feel like I'm part of the gaming community…I feel like it's kind of a chance to escape from reality. When I'm at home and I have my PS3[25] on, it's gone from a 'I am a SMA' to 'I am a Black Ops' gamer and I gotta get the highest kill streaks and stuff. It's kind of a personality shift to a more competitive place than community wise.
> ARG: Tell me more of that shift that you're talking about.
> ANTONIO: Well, okay, it goes from helping out Nick pick up his books to stabbing him every chance I get. I know it kind of screw up your psyche and stuff cuz I read a lot of studies and stuff but it's fun. In a way I do get that bond with Emilio. When he got a PS3 I know it definitely started us getting into more similar conversations. It's not like I made him change, it's like he said "I got a PS3 now do you wanna talk about such and such game?" Now I can talk to him about anything. So it's not that I get meaner, it becomes more selfish based. (Interview, May 15, 2012)

Antonio touches an array of important themes concerning the social and emotional functions of gaming specifically for Black and Latino poor and working class boys (DiSalvo & Bruckman, 2010). Given the experiences and circumstances delineated in this dissertation, these themes should not be surprising. However, what is novel is that boys find video games as a place for indulging in specific experiences and desires that are not always possible once they leave their schools. Consistent with the findings of DiSalvo & Burkman (2010), I noticed that for poor and working class boys, video games were places for bonding and socializing rather than simply gaining mastery and engaging in competition. For example, Pedro spoke at length about playing video games with his father:

> Let's start with my father. He has a big personality. We have a PS3 there [at home] that we got a few months ago. He likes to play PS3 games that I play. I actually play rated M games. I have no idea why. I play God of War, Mortal Kombat and Call of Duty. That's rated M for mature. He likes these games like I do because God of War it's sort of adventurous. Mortal Kombat he knew since he was a kid in the arcades. Modern Warfare because he likes [the feeling] of going to war and actually shooting. We actually started a rivalry and he starts saying "Wassup?! Wassup?!" And sort of like be jumping around. He loves winning. He loves a winning streak. He not exactly a sore winner. He'll sort of rub it in your face: "14 in a row!" "Ah! You're dead!" And sometimes he'll say: "Ah! If I win this time you're going to sleep!" And he'll send me to bed. He doesn't but...And if I

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[25] PS3: Playstation 3, a sony game console.

actually beat him he'll say: "That's luck. That's luck." Even though it's five times in a row. (Interview, April 19, 2012)

Pedro's account begins with a rationale for why his father would play games with him, but towards the end of his narrative he begins to describe the bonding that gaming provides for he and his father. Pedro depicts an animated and excited father who is "jumping around" and who "loves" winning. In my interview with Pedro, this was perhaps the only point where he described his relationship with his father in a detailed manner. This signals the emotional resources that perhaps open up through the gaming experience that otherwise are not possible for men.

Other evidence of the affective and social dimensions of gaming include Antonio's earlier assertion that these games provide an "escape from reality." This idea was also echoed by Scottie, who stated: "Games are just fascinating. They can do things you cannot do in real life. In case you got experience they can say "Oh, I can shoot someone" or run over someone. I can get shot 20 times and not die" (Interview, May 30, 2012). Recall, earlier in the dissertation the school psychologist at LHA reported that a young man confessed going home and "waiting for the day to end." For the boys in my study, the need for transcending the limits of being a poor or working class young men of color shows an awareness of the constraints around them.

At a workshop I ran this past year with another group of eighth grade boys, I asked what aspects of gaming might tell us about how boys define masculinity. We began talking about the "Create a Player" option that was part of the popular NBA 2K franchise. In brief, NBA 2K simulates a real life professional NBA basketball game where you can play as your favorite team or basketball player. However, the "Create a Player" option allows you to create yourself in the game by allowing you to modify your virtual representation's height, skin color, body type and skill sets. At first, the boys were pressed to see anything noteworthy about that aspect of the game but then I asked them: "When you create yourself, do you look exactly the same as you so now?" The boys began to raise their hands saying that they make themselves taller, more muscular and even add tattoos to their biceps and forearms. The desire to reimagine their bodies signals, on some level, a dissatisfaction with the constraints of their corporality as young poor and working class Black and Latino men.

The boys often reported that playing these games was less about trying to achieve a "real" simulation of war, violence, competition and domination, than a longing for the emotions, and feelings that the games engaged. Tito and Scottie share insights on the affective needs that are met in these gaming experiences:

> SCOTTIE: I play really a lot. So it's kind of a normal thing. One game can make you feel sort of unstoppable like Prototype 2. Like jump off the highest building and not take any damage. There is mutants that can cut them in half. Rip peoples head off. Cut peoples heart. Things like that. Pick up things like a car. You can run up walls. Summon creatures. It's really cool. (Interview, May 30, 2012).

> TITO: I guess it's really played around in the school because it feels good just getting leveled up, getting promoted like [inaudible], or unlocking something new for a gun you'd be like 'I really worked for it.' I feel like sometimes I get upset, because when I'm playing I just keep dying, and I feel like I'm shooting at the person, but I'm really not. So, sometimes I get very upset. Other times, I feel very attentive, like I can see, if I'm playing I can see somebody from over there, and... yes! I caught him from far away. Other times I

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feel happy cuz I've got a kill streak, and I got one that I never got before, and then sometimes I feel bored cuz I have nobody to play with. (Interview, May 10, 2012).

In sum, video games fill voids in the lives of the young men who may at times perceive a lack of existential resources inside or outside of school. Yet, the danger of these games rests in the allure of patriarchal violence as a form of male-bonding that while spectacular is also fleeting. It became apparent as I spoke to the young men that while there may be existential resources like curriculum, mentors, friendships and parents, patriarchal social experiences and rites of passage are still available and enticing to the young men.

In this vein, SMA signaled that online pornography was also becoming an issue in their school. According to teachers and administrators, in some cases, boys were developing "addictions to porn" that kept them up all night and negatively impacted their academics. If you recall, Leon brought up how he and some other boys were suspected of watching porn. While at first he felt that it was a suspicion due to his race, he later elaborated that it was a problem and that he had thought about this topic at length:

It's something he sees not just African Americans doing, but almost everyone's doing it now. And then, even though he only asked the question cuz a lot of people are doing it now, I saw that as a child even in second grade and third grade. …Porn, and dirty jokes and things like that. So I think we should try to be above that an, we've discussed that people who get into that are slaves of society and slaves of porn. And all of us need to take precautionary measures towards it. (April 26, 2012)

While there was never any evidence in this study for "porn addictions," Leon and other boys still saw it as a salient issue in their transition to manhood. Anonymous surveys conducted by SMA revealed that most of the eight grade boys rated pornography as a topic that they were either "most concerned" about or "moderately concerned" about. The administrations at both schools, affirmed that wireless internet and mobile technology has increased young men's access to porn. Boys would confess to being able to watch the content on cellular phones and tablets, using wireless internet readily available in their homes or through a neighbors' unprotected network. Leon confirms the accessibility of online porn when he mentions how young he was when this first became a concern. In addition, Leon clarifies that while this is an issue for many of his Black and Latin counterparts, it is in his estimation a larger societal issue.

The thematic emergence of male bonding through violent video games, as well as the viewing of pornographic materials as a means of patriarchal male socialization (MacKinnon, 1985; McCarthy, 1980), signals a need to exercise caution in approaching the process of understanding and healing racialized masculinities. While the young Black and Latino men in this study do experience existential strain as a result of their race and class positions, their gender privilege always has the capacity to threaten the well being of those around them (peers, women and girls), as well as themselves (Anzaldúa, 1999; Fanon, 1952/1967; hooks, 2004a; Katz, 2006). As Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) writes:

Though we "understand" the root causes of male hatred and fear, and the subsequent wounding of women, we do not excuse, we do not condone, and we will no longer put up with it. From the men of our race, we demand the admission/ acknowledgement/ disclosure/ testimony that they wound us, violate

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us, are afraid of us and our power. We need them to say they will begin to
eliminate their hurtful put-down ways. But more than words, we demand acts. We
say to them: We will develop equal power with you and those who have shamed
us. (p.106)

While the challenges and patriarchal pitfalls facing Black and Latino boys should be taken
seriously, a healthy critical adolescent masculinity must also include space to dialogue openly a
freely about masculinity, femininity, sex and sexuality (Filipovic, 2008). SMA (and LHA)
provided the boys with ample opportunities to discuss sex and sexuality. For instance, SMA held
sex-education classes for all new students. These classes were designed to address biology. In
addition, every year, all students would have "health education" (formal sex education) seminars
where they broke up into groups by gender to discuss the social, cultural dimensions of sex and
sexuality. Among the topics discussed in the seminars for the boys were "Rape/Sexual Abuse,"
"Relationships with girls," "Having Sex," "STDs," "Dating," "Abortion," "Media," "Gender
Roles and Stereotypes," "When to have sex" and "Masturbation." While I am not at liberty to
discuss the specifics of the conversations in these seminars, I will say that generally the
conversations that took place in the eighth grade boys group usually reflected the topics above.
The seminars would start with the boys just getting a chance to ask male faculty about questions
(no matter how silly or awkward) about sex. What was interesting about these moments was
seeing how *uncommon* this occurrence was in their lives. They often would tell me in informal
conversations how uncomfortable they felt talking to adult about these questions. Moreover, for
the young men it was a rare occurrence to be in a room with adult men speaking openly and
honestly about these topics. While I did not have ample evidence to explore the emotional and
affective functions of porn as I did with video games, I did perceive one possible source of
concern, which may prompt many young adolescent boys to turn to porn at SMA and LHA.
        In a survey taken by SMA of twenty-three eighth grade boys, about 48% remarked that
"feeling the pressure to have sex" was one the "biggest struggles" they were facing at the
moment. Related questions of "When to do it?" and "How to do it?" were also salient in the
questionnaires. Moreover, many surveys seem to link these questions to concerns about "being a
man" or "being cool (as a man)." These pressures were palpable in my interviews with the young
men:

        HECTOR: Everybody has their different opinions. In [SMA] I think that many teachers
        and students see being a man as completing puberty, and going through adolescence as
        actually becoming mature, and alright to handle almost anything in life, and stuff like
        that. It's just me. But in neighborhood it probably means... I know that some people view
        being a man as having sex, or graduating college first, and now you're a full educated
        man. That's what's considered a man. People have different views and different
        perspectives…When I was going to... coming back from school to home, I overheard this
        man. He's like "my 14 year old son just turned into a man" and I'm like how is that even
        possible. I thought you had to finish puberty, go into adolescence. I base most of my
        thoughts off the things at [SMA], so I'm like maybe this kid must be very mature for his
        age, very well educated. So then he's like... his buddy was like "how?" and he's like "oh,
        he just had sex. He might have gotten the girl pregnant, but it's ok, cuz he's smart" and
        I'm like, oh his way of seeing a person as being a man is to have sex. So to him I guess if
        a person hasn't had sex yet and they're in their 20s, you're still not even a man. (Interview,

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April 24, 2012).

CHRIS: So, [my neighbor] and my brother they both have sex and they both smoke weed and they both have done a bunch of stuff that- I'm Christian, so I don't really like to do any of that stuff. Sure, I mean one day I might make that mistake. But in my head, it's not the same feeling that they're feeling. And they bring it up in arguments all the time, like "You've never had sex." I'm like, "What is that s'posed to mean? What are you trying to prove?" And they're like, "I'm not tryna prove anything. I'm just saying." And you see how it has no…it doesn't fit in the rest of the argument. They're just bringing it up out of nowhere. They're trying to assert their manhood, the fact that they've had sex, they feel like they're more of a man than I am… I just think, my brother, the fact that he feels, and the way that they treat women, they feel like they're being men, they feel like they are men. And then they look at me, and they're like "Well, you haven't had sex, you haven't drank, you haven't partied the way we have, you haven't hung out in the streets doing stupid stuff, so you're not a man. You're not the same kind of person I am. And that person is a man." And I just sit there, like, it's ok. I just let them say whatever they want. But then when I sort of flip the tables on them, I'm just like, "you know you put yourself at risk all the time." And they're just like, "Shut up." Or they'll just continue with the same argument. And I'm like, whatever, and then I'll walk away. (Interview, May 3, 2012).

NICK: I think it means like the culture out there today is like you know a lot more into just like drugs and alcohol, and like sex. Getting into trouble, you know that's kind of like the better thing to do. You'd rather even like at early ages people are just having sex just to have sex cuz it's the cool thing to do. They don't really have a realization of any real mental and subconscious traumas. (Interview, May 8, 2012).

Hector's comments illuminate an awareness of the multiple sites of passage into modern U.S manhood. While sex is one salient rite of passage into manhood (Diaz, 2007; Canada, 1998), it is by no means the only one available in the young men's communities. The pressures to utilize sex as a way of conquering women and earning homosocial respect is something that is part of not only Black and Latino masculinities but also of American hegemonic masculinity writ large. Nonetheless, the controlling images and long standing psycho-social dramas that we explored in relation to Black and Latino manhood in chapters 3 and 4 contribute, in part, to the salience of achieving manhood, specifically through sex. Moreover, as Muñoz-Laboy and Perry (2011) found that sex as a rite of passage becomes a more "public" issue in these communities because of social-economic factors that impede access to healthcare, resources and information, and institutional support.

Fortunately for the boys at LHA and SMA, their access to safe spaces for having these conversations, as well as caring adults who are willing to have these conversations, is a great resource for dealing with these pressures. However, the shift to pornography becoming yet another potential rite on the way to manhood for many boys in early adolescence is cause for concern. As with video games, we can see that in an age where such media is readily available for boys to interact with, these become forms of exploring conflicting feelings and emotions that must be addressed and that the boys are correct in attempting to address. The issue becomes that porn, like video games, capitalizes on the real desires and feelings by sensationalizing them and

divorcing them so far away from the original context from which they first surfaced. Essentially, rather than explore feeling and emotions related to these topics, boys and men may very well end up not dealing with them at all.

Beyond Heroes and Role Models

> TEACHER: What's the difference between a hero and someone you admire?
> NICK: A hero is someone who does something spectacular. Someone I admire is someone I wanna be like.
> JOHNNY: I admire (Derek) Jeter. He's someone who constantly does stuff to overcome odds. He is someone consistent.
> JUAN: A hero does stuff. Like a firefighter is a hero. He saves lives but I don't necessarily want to be him. Someone I admire is someone who I want to be. (Fieldnotes, October 12, 2011).

Despite the popularity and gravitas of technology, I still found that there was no substitute for young men looking to adults, especially adult men, as prominent resources where they might explore feelings, emotions and questions emerging during their early adolescence. When asked to name someone he respected as a man, Miguel named his gym instructor who the Boys called "coach." Miguel stated that coach from the Boys Club, where the boys have gym sessions, sits them down a gives them "very emotional speeches." In our interview, Miguel elaborates the effectiveness of emotion in his mentoring relationship with coach: "It's also because since he is a man now, he's not as young as we are, he's experienced a lot. He can tell us a few months ago, he survived a bus accident, and he realized that life is so precious, because in one instant, it could've been taken away from him. So he gives us a lot of advice: "Take advantage of what you have because you never know when it's gonna be taken away" (Interview, May 2, 2012). Moreover, according to Nick, Johnny and Juan, the "people they admire" are not necessarily those who are famous, perfect or even "successful." Scottie shared: "I'm just not a role model person. I [don't] want to be something *you* want me to be. My mom wants to give me all her tips and stuff and do super good in school. But I don't want to because I feel like she is trying to make me into someone I don't really want to be" (my emphasis, Interview, May 8, 2012).

Contrary to the notion that all poor and working class boys of color want to be like the "ballplayers" and "rappers" on T.V., I found that instead boys longed for people who could guide them through their *current* realities. Adults who exhibited consistency, as well as shared their own experiences of becoming young adults, opened up significant points of connection. Specifically, adults sharing "mistakes" and "struggles" opened up avenues for vulnerability that allowed for the trust necessary to formulate authentic mentoring relationships. For instance, Randy named his father as someone who he respected as a man, despite his history of involvement with the criminal justice system as well as being currently unemployed. Citing his compassion for his father's "hard childhood," Randy said "he went through so much and he became a success, especially to me, he's my inspiration. One who went from doing drugs, selling drugs, getting arrested for assault charges, to becoming one who's willing to do anything to save his friends and family, and I just respect him as a man for that" (Interview, April 30, 2012).

Randy's account moves beyond the traditional notion of a role model or hero so often proposed as a resources for young men of color. In his eyes, Randy is able to understand the extent of his father's mistakes and challenges, while salvaging his father's ability to productively

deal with the dire situations. Similarly, Miguel describes why his father, who works as a bus boy in a restaurant in the city, is his mentor for manhood:

> He was married at the age of fourteen, but unfortunately... he had two kids, then he met my mom. He had three more kids. His parents died before he could meet them, so he grew up motherless, and fatherless. He has three, four step brothers and sisters, and I feel that for a man who never had parents, he's doing a really good job. Sometimes it's the people that don't have the things that makes them into the things, because they learned by themselves. It's like a bird with no wings. He tries another way to leave or go around in the day. (Interview, May 2, 2012)

Different from being "models," mentors center stories about struggles and contradictions of the world the boys will face, and work to enhance the narrative resources that the young men can draw from in moments of existential dissonance. While the possession of these narratives and perspectives of struggle is something usually reserved to explain why first generation and immigrant students find motivation to do well in school (Ogbu, 1987), for Randy and other "American" boys, the struggles with the actualization of the American Dream seemed to have a similar motivating effect. Telling these stories of struggle also work to demystify the process of social mobility and opportunity, which are often more complex and perilous than the neat narratives of rugged individualism present. Therefore, when poor and working class boys of color encounter these moments of struggle and contradiction in their own journeys, they will not simply rationalize the limits of opportunities and upward mobility as internalized failures. Rather, one could assume that boys will possess a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between their effort and the limits of their situations, without it negatively impacting their psyches. Two examples speak to the potential of "struggle narratives" provided by "elders" in bridging the experimental gap that occurs during moments of dissonance produced by race, class and gender structures.

Recall Irvin's "talks" in Chapter 2 with his father regarding the predominantly "white world" Irvin would enter in the near future. Their discussions touched on strategies of "respectability," that would allow Irvin to circumvent the "new racism," while not placing inherent value on the middle class white culture, which arbitrarily attributes power to certain forms of speech, dress and behavior.

Moreover, I found that even the narratives provided by immigrant parents to their boys were more multi-faceted than the literature (Gans, 1992; Portes, A., & Hao, L., 2004) suggests. In one of my "travel alongs," Leon, an immigrant African student, recapitulated the many stories about his father's challenges as an immigrant in the country. In one story, Leon described how his father worked as a security guard while living in the outer neighborhoods with several roommates during his early years. Generally, there is a sense of pride Leon has in telling me these stories. He shares that his father often tells him about back home in Africa, and how different it was there. He says his father tries to instill a sense of pride in him without embracing a sense of privilege. He says he remembers one story his father tells him about getting up and going on buses and selling Coca Cola and bread to support himself and his family. Nonetheless, he is also critical of American culture when he stated to me that "[h]ere they just hand you things." He recalls that one of the earliest memories he has of arriving in the U.S. from Africa and seeing free candy and feeling the concept strange to him. However, he says that while the U.S. has ample resources, he feels that in Africa there is more "brotherhood." He says that in

Africa, according to his father: "You don't see homeless people. There, someone will take care of you. Here, people are private. There is a sense of brotherhood there [in Africa]. This is not true here in the U.S." (Fieldnotes, February 15, 2012).

The impact of the discussion between Leon and his father about Africa and narratives surrounding hardship and struggle, work to bridge moments where racist interactions might have otherwise cause deeper emotional scars. This conversation continued into our interview where Leon shared experiences of anti-African racism in his previous school and how he made sense of that experience of discrimination using the knowledge about Africa from his father:

> ARG: Have you ever felt like you were disrespected? On the basis of your race or ethnicity?
> LEON: I have because like most people, kids now, they see Africa as a place of huts. And things like that. Especially like West Africa, cuz that's the part they think they know about. And they think that it's just grass everywhere and garbage everywhere and animals everywhere. But some of the cities are actually becoming metropolises like New York and they actually make fun of me. They call me "African booty scratcher" and things like that. Cause what they've seen is actually different from what's going on. Like they see boys running around in like a covering over their private parts and things like that. And they often view those boys as poor. Those boys might be poor, they actually have better values than some of the people here.
> ARG: What do you mean by that, "better values"?
> LEON: Like they don't take advantage, they don't take things for granted. And they respect their parents. They won't argue with their parents when they say do this right now. And like if they think, and yea if their parents say do this right now they'll do it first, and then if they do want to argue after they've done it, they'll argue and make their point. (Interview, April 26, 2012)

Leon's remarks challenge an assumption about intergenerational dialogues between children and parents. In my experiences with teachers and researchers, the notion that immigrant kids are more successful than "native" Black and Latino kids is prevalent. The folk theory is that immigrants, and children of immigrants, are more closely aligned with a middle class American work ethic that makes it possible for them to take advantage of abundant opportunities for social advancement in this country. Leon's account challenges that formulation and instead places it within a continuum of narratives that provide students from different social status resources for working through moments of existential crisis.

Unfortunately, like peer friendships, the loss of these relationships with mentors has detrimental effects on the boys' lives. As Randy and Miguel alluded to in their comments, many of their families are disproportionately faced with the everyday challenges of poverty, underemployment, multiple military deployments, incarceration, deportations, violence, drugs and poor schools. All of these, not only contribute to ongoing inequality and blocked opportunities, but also work to sever the critical intergenerational dialogues and relationships that are significant to the emotional and spiritual lives of young Black and Latino children. When asked to describe a moment that defines who he is, Juan describes the feelings and circumstances surrounding the deportation of his father when he was in sixth grade:

> JUAN: It kind of made me really angry about my life I guess, and then I got really

furious and violent. I ended up being a bad behaved person. I didn't know anything about him being in jail until he actually got deported and then he was out of my life so I didn't know what was happening, and my mom never told me until he actually did have to leave the country. So I kind of got mad at her for not telling me anything at first but then I understood because that would kind of traumatize me since it's not something that I need to know at the moment. I was kind of young.

ARG: How do you deal with that afterwards? How do you deal with being angry? Take me through the stages of how you went from being angry to the way you are right now.

JUAN: Well at first I was angry at my mom for life the first year, and then I was kind of… Started to behave bad in school. My grades didn't really change but I was close to being suspended once. But then when I came here I guess I stopped being angry at her because I learned that… She told me that if she would've told me earlier I would've been hurt really badly, so she decided to tell me when I was old enough or just mature enough to know. I guess there is a time and place for everything. I guess that's what I learned and I forgave her…It did make it a little bit hard for me to be who I am. It made it take a little bit longer because, I would've been here a little bit earlier if I was not as angry, because during parent-teacher conferences they would have been complaining a lot about my behavior. If I didn't take those actions earlier I guess I would've probably applied for [a private school] in the fifth grade, and then apply for here is I got on the waiting list. (Interview, April 25, 2012).

Other peers would trigger the anger mentioned by Juan as well. In one case, he mentioned how he entered into an argument with another a classmate. The other boy began teasing him saying his father was "gay." Since Juan didn't live with his father, it prompted him to get into a fight for which school officials punished him. Oftentimes, the response to this anger was punishment or even exclusion from the community of school. Nonetheless, in his comments there is not only anger but also lament that his unprocessed emotions worked against his own development and success.

During the course of a workshop series I facilitate for middle school boys, I ask them to share one "disturbance point", an experience that has negatively contributed to the story of who they are, and to speak it into a glass jar filled with water. The point is for the boys to begin the process of confronting and clearing narratives that they have been holding about their lives. In many cultures and traditions, water acts as a conduit into which one can communicate desires, as well as things to release (Cohelo, 2008). As result, once the boys have released these stories into the jar, I walk to the nearest river and release the contents to be taken away from them (if circumstances permit I would take the young men with me). The exercise is perhaps one of the most powerful ones because, without fail, the stories of loss and loneliness that boys feel emerge. Specifically, the most salient disturbance points revolved around relationships that young men have lost because of a move, a deportation, emotional unavailability, incarceration, or even a loss of trust due to their witnessing domestic violence in the home.

Conclusions

What is compelling about theories like the "cool pose" that center the cultural, psychological and behavioral problems of the marginalized, is that they relieve people of feeling powerless (Alexander, 2010; Gonzalez, 2011). Being faced by long standing power relations

such as race, gender, class and sexuality, is daunting to many who work day in and day out in schools, clinics, public housing and community centers. Nonetheless, we must not excuse ourselves from the responsibility to enact a multi-pronged analysis and agenda that deals with the many forms of pain and suffering our children face. In abandoning individual reductionist arguments and centering a more holistic account of Black and Latino boys, we can finally attend to the physically, emotional and spiritual needs of the students. As I documented throughout this chapter, the boys face a variety of sites of transition through which they will need careful, intentional and nuanced resources to navigate. Failure to provide these resources to the young men will mean that they will turn to the de facto tools and ideologies that are available to them to make these transitions. It is our job, then, to question perspectives that lend themselves to analyses that fall short of addressing these multiple layers of inequality and power.

Extending the research of sociologist Nancy López (2003), I propose that while young men in these communities are impacted by similar circumstances, their experiences of race and gender do not simply shape their *perceptions* about future prospects; it is not just about rational actors logically making decisions with regards to an abstract notion of opportunity and constraint. Experiences of race, gender and class leave emotional, spiritual and even somatic traumas on young men that are left unhealed. This can be attributed to limited socially sanctioned resources, spaces and tools at the disposal of young Black and Latino boys for processing and healing these traumatic experiences. These existential resources are limited due to a collection of hegemonic masculine norms, as well as the deleterious effects of race, class and gender which corrode the possibilities of meaningful of friendships, mentorship, emotional engagement, productive vulnerability and opportunities for self-reflection.

An extended quotation from an interview with Chris from LHA accomplishes this in a more complete, and meaningful manner. He highlights how high stakes this process of becoming a young man can be for poor and working class Black and Latino boys. He reminds us of the stakes in blindly deploying the facile arguments provided to us by culturally reductionist arguments that may seem "common sense," yet miss the mark when it comes to the lived realities of these young men. In this genuine, honest thoughtful moment, Chris provides us with an account of the difference between his and his brother's life trajectories:

> When I was two, well before I was born my mom was still with my father, my brother was five when I was two. And my father left when I was two. And him and my mom would always fight. It was a lot of verbal abuse toward my mother. But I was too young to remember any of it, but my brother saw all of it. And if you look at my brother you can see how it has affected him. Not because he constantly thinks about it, but because it's like the same way with people who go to war and then they come back with post-traumatic stress syndrome. And it sticks in their minds. They were so young and now they're holding in all these memories of their father yelling at their mother, their mother crying. And my brother, he's like really shy, he's depressed. He made some mistakes earlier in the year, and in 2011. But that's kinda because of, I attribute it to what happened with my father. But then when I was two my stepfather came into my life. And then I looked at him as my father as opposed to my actual father, being my father. In 2008, like right on Christmas, my mom found out he had another family. He's from the Dominican Republic, he was born there….And he'd been living with us for like eight years. So we found out he had another family, he had other kids and that happened while he was still with my mother. So then eventually, my stepfather, he sorta, him and my

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mom sorta split. And since he was like my father, I looked at it as like, "Wow, he's gone." And I still see him a lot, but I mean, he's been slowly fading away again. And that taught me, like I would think about it and be like, "Wow, I don't really have a father." And then I think about it and I try to value the fact that I have my mother and my brother, and then that's why [my LHA friends], they play such important roles in my life. Like, they're the people that I trust. Because on my father's side, my actual father, his family they don't really care for me and my brother. They don't really seek after me, they don't seek to come… they live in Florida so they don't try to come all the way up. And then my step-father, after what he did. I forgave him, because I love him, but I felt that was a defining moment for me, because I changed the way I looked at the world. Because I was like, my life is happy, I have a father, I have a mother, I have a happy life. But then when he left, I didn't expect it. I didn't expect it to come from him. I forgave him for it, but changed the way that I value every single thing, it changed the way that I value it.

ARG: What did you replace that sense of feeling with, that was lost of sort of the safety of a family? What have you found to deal with that?

CHRIS: Well, I mean, at first a lot of the time… a lot of the time, I don't like where I live because it's really dangerous, like last night I was just doing my Latin homework and I'm on the phone with [my friends] and we're just talking and then like 10 gunshots out of nowhere, right outside my window. So then I just had to drop, and I went behind a wall. And my mom was like, "Don't go near the window." And then we turned off the lights and we were just waiting there. I don't like to live like that. It's not really safe to me. And when I come into the neighborhood, the projects, dressed up in a suit or just a shirt and tie, and with my hair the way that I have it sometimes, I don't fit in with everyone else. And I don't care that I don't fit in. Like I'm not gonna try to change the way that I am the way others do. I just, I feel like I'm not safe because people will look at me and be like, "He's vulnerable, and he's not one of us." And I feel like, at any moment, I could be walking home like late at night and somebody could just come up to me and kill me. I mean, at first, I didn't really hang out outside that much. But this year specifically, like lately in the past five months, I've just been going outside every weekend. I don't care where I go as long as I'm not in [my neighborhood]. I just go anywhere in [the downtown area]. I'll go [downtown] and be with everybody that I'm normally with, and just stay outside, I'll be home at 9:00 because I don't really feel safe in my home. Because there's always vandalism, there's always this terrible stuff that I don't feel like I deserve, living there. I don't feel like I deserve to live there. It's not necessarily below me, but it's dangerous for me. And I don't deserve to be put in danger. I just decided to really deal with the fact that I didn't have that feeling anymore with my stepfather and the fact that I didn't have a family. I just started looking at it- the way that I looked at it was that I had to somehow get my stepfather back. But I started slowly realizing that that might happen, but there's an even greater chance that it won't happen. So I just decided I have my friends and my mother and my brother. That is my family. And the father part of it was just sorta like cut out. It was as if it was like never there, really. The way that I look at it.

My mom's adopted, so she doesn't really have a very large family, she has one or two uncles from her side, and like one cousin since it's really difficult to reconnect with all that family. And then there's my father, and since he's like Trinidadian and his mother's

really old, and since she was really old she lived a really long time ago, she had a lot of kids. She had like five daughters and like six sons, and they had a lot of kids too. I have a large family from them but when I used to vacation down then, they would see me for one day and put on that act and that mask like "We're your family, we love you, you should come down here more often." And then after one or two days they would just not talk to us for the rest of the time we were there. So I couldn't rely on that part. I never really felt like they were my family. So I really formed the idea of family out of really close friends… I have friends, and then there's people who I call brothers. Like [a couple of my LHA friends], they're the only two that I call my brother. And they're the only two that I tell them I love them. "You guys mean a lot to me." And I mean I've created a sort of family out of them and my brother, my mom and me, that's like my family. I changed the way that I looked at the world. My father and my step-father they were like, they were out of that picture. So then I just changed the entire picture in and of itself to fit what I had. And I just used what I had to create what I needed. (Interview, May 3, 2012).

Chapter 6
Conclusion:
"A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich[26]"

The young men of LHA and SMA embodied a range of subjectivities and strategies as they began their transition into young manhood. Despite being "academically gifted and talented" students, this process of "becoming," still proved difficult as they negotiated the contradiction of U.S. society in the era of purported color-blindness. These coming-of-age passages were challenging due to the young men's confrontations with ongoing structures, practices and discourses around race, class and gender. Many boys expressed what I have called, a sense of *existential dissonance*-moments when they experienced a gap between their lived realities of race, class, gender, and the post-racial meritocratic claims of twenty-first century U.S. society- that cause feelings of contradiction and confusion. For some, this dissonance was temporary and was overcome with the aid of *existential resources*: mentors, friends, curriculum and communities that permit the young men to process and make sense of the dissonance. These resources were not stereotypes of a "middle class" outlook, but rather they could take the form of a narrative of "struggle" "overcoming" or "empowerment." Some narratives emphasized work ethic, specific forms of self-presentation, and strategies for reducing racial profiling, whiles other spaces like school programs or parents offered struggles, counter-narratives and histories that helped frame the reasons behind the larger injustices. Still others were able to look to the curriculum or friendships to work through the tumultuous time. Those who did not have these resources or who were faced with more visceral formations of racial and economic injustices through deportations, incarcerations, poverty, displacement, violence or isolation had a more difficult time reconciling these realities and went on to feel angry or blame themselves, causing spells of guardedness, aloofness, anger, depression and academic disengagement.

While many argue that it is racialized masculinity that directly impedes the young men's capacity to overcome these difficulties, along with an obsession with coolness and an oppositional attitude about life, I found that the natures of their scars, while contextual, were not a product of a culturally specific set of self defeating behaviors. Concerning gender, White and Black boys both suffer from the burdens and gaze of patriarchy (hooks, 2004a). However, the ways in which we read these expressions of pain, violence and agony are different and contribute to differential treatment in society. Moreover, there is a dissimilarity in the resources available to either make sense of or shield oneself from responsibility to patriarchal actions. The key is recognizing Black and Latino boys as children who are in need of guidance, support and mentoring worthy of embracing them in this critical period in their lives. With those findings in mind, I conclude this study with some proposals to address the mentorship needs of young men of color, and suggestions for further research.

This dissertation proposes that schools need to explicitly deal with race, class and gender in their curriculum while also providing students with the cultural, spiritual and emotional infrastructures to heal and renew relationships and friendships that can help them deal with the trauma and pain they experience as a result of these structures of identity and power. As evidenced by the unique cultural, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of SMA and LHA,

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[26] I borrow this chapter title from the novel "A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich" by Alice Childress (1973), who writes about Benjie, a thirteen year old black boy who is coming of age amidst his battles with heroine addiction, city life, poverty and academic underachievement.

attempting to engage these angles can, in part, help with providing safe spaces for early adolescents to grow and build meaningful relationships. However, the schools, while well intentioned, at times failed to contextualize their efforts at "harm reduction," by over-relying on cultural and psychological discourses that located failure in the children, their culture and communities. In contrast, the healing and transformational practices must be guided by what psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon called a *sociogenic* sensibility; an approach that emphasizes how our experiences of wounding, trauma and failure should not be seen as individual failures, but rather as reflections of larger processes, histories and structures that are embedded in our psyches, bodies, and thinking. These manifestations of intergenerational and ongoing structural trauma, what Eduardo Duran (2006) calls the "soul wounds," are the lived manifestations of race, class, and gender. These wounds are often produced in our lived realities by domestic violence, deportations, incarcerations, community violence, poverty and isolation. As a result, we must take on a multi-pronged approach that captures the many phases and analytical levels needed to eradicate the soul wounds that are exhibited by young Black and Latino men.

I have identified three important levels that must be engaged with regards to young men of color in order to address their processes of healing, accountability, and transformation. First, micro-level healing and support is necessary. We need to create the resources that assist with and are designed to facilitate the expression of pain and vulnerability, and the building of trust; we need to invest in sustainable models of support for boys' relationships so that they are provided with useful emotional and interpersonal tools that more strongly help position them as resources in each others' lives. Middle schools need to be less like high schools and colleges and more dedicated to the existential needs of their students, which will be dependent upon the local context and formations around race, class and gender. Healing is one part of a transformative educational experience; it is the work of harm reduction. Friendship and intimacy, in the lives of boys, are renewable and sustainable resources for combating pain in trauma in their lives. These are fundamental resources that must be encouraged but require the help of a safe and nurturing school environment to promote.

Second, there needs to be action and change on the levels of the institutional and programmatic. We need to be able to give students the tools and skills to understand a world we all inhabit that is contradictory, complex and dissonant. We cannot sanitize the world and provide "feel good" narratives that attempt to erase complexity and in the process reproduce trauma. We must do the work to empower our youth by helping them realize that the world is not purely meritocratic; this requires that as educators we lay bare the inner workings and structure of our world so that students may confront it with strategies, confidence and agency rather than surprise, trauma, and notions of self-failure. Third, we cannot lose sight of the larger institutions, laws, policies and structures that continue to produce inequality, injustice and trauma in our students and their communities. Mass incarceration, poor public schooling, unaffordable and segregated housing, and getting paid below a living wage — these are all issues that shape the lives of our boys and must be struggled over if we want things to be truly transformed.

Young Men's Workshops

While collecting data for this dissertation, I was given the opportunity to create and facilitate a workshop for the eighth grade boys at SMA. While I did not include this program as a part of my research, I would be remiss not to say that my emerging findings from the dissertation informed the workshop, as well as to say that my dissertation benefited greatly from working

with the young men who participated. Due to the success of the workshop, the program has continued on and is going into its third year of implementation, as well as sparking a young women's version, which I advised. In contrast to clinical-psychological based approaches, the workshop took a socio-cultural approach to the issues facing many young men of color in urban working class areas. As a result, the workshop moves from the larger contexts of the issues that young men may face (i.e.: Men in the Media; Video Games; Health and Wellness; Sexuality and Pornography) and does the necessary scaffolding to push the students to apply their exploration of these topics to their own lives. Therefore, different from a traditional therapeutic group, the exploration of issues and themes are guided by a curriculum where facilitators present a variety of literary, cinematic, experiential, philosophical and anthropological "starting points" that act as entries into otherwise emotional taboo subjects for young men to explore. The topics were devised from a mixture of informal surveys, conversations with students and teachers, as well as my dissertation research.

　　While some of the boys were involved in one-on-one counseling with therapists, I often heard young men tell me "all they do is listen." In my estimation, this phrase signals a criticism of the linear and flat tone of traditional psychological approaches and not a wholesale rejection of therapy (Duran, 2006; Duran & Duran 1995). As Duran (2006) writes: "Western-trained therapists are trained to think within a prescribed paradigm that targets pathology. If this strategy does not work, the patient may be further diagnosed with personality or characterological disorders" (p. 19). Building on the interdisciplinary work and practice of Duran and Fanon, I decided that the workshop needed to be a space where we could place the larger societal constructions of race, class and gender at the center of our explorations. I would often begin with what Paulo Freire (1970/2000) calls a "codification." It could be an image, a set of words, a news event, a video clip, a poem or a song. While I make it a point to be aware of the cultural and societal shifts happening, I also learned about the emerging "thematic universe" by talking to the boys during lunch or recess and learning about new songs, events or issues.

　　My task as a facilitator has been to pose questions to the boys to aid them in their analysis of these larger issues and images that were attempting to define their manhood within the context of race, class and gender. While I do from time to time provide them with terms or concepts that synthesize their emerging analysis, I never begin by imposing ideas or concepts through which they must make sense of their world. Therefore, the most powerful moments in these groups are when boys can hear *each other* comment on these issues. Without fail, the boys have told me that the most moving part of these workshops is hearing that other boys are going through or have thought about these issues and that they no longer feel *alone*. It is combining this social-cultural approach along with a *group* examination of these issues that challenges traditional methods, which tend to emphasize a more "private" and individual model that can lead to further feelings of isolation. As the year goes along, I have found that the boys "open-up" more and an organic trust in the group emerges, where boys feel more comfortable talking about their personal lives, issues and struggles. Again, the dynamic of being in a group where they can trust one another, but also hear that they are not alone is the key to the success of these groups.

　　I hesitate to give specific curricular ideas and "blueprints" because these must emerge from the context of the boys' social and cultural realities. What works for boys in one area may not be applicable to those in another. However, it is critical that we take youth culture, as well as their everyday experiences seriously and use them as an indicator of the societal understandings of power and social relations. Moreover, if you are not regularly involved in the milieu of the students, it is important to make the effort to do the thematic investigation necessary by talking

to the students or making a point to critically consume and be aware of these issues. I fully recognize that this method of intervention through workshops is but one part of a larger complex of interventions needed to aid the young men in healing and transforming their own lives. Furthermore, there is plenty of already proven work being enacted across the U.S. by organizations such as Brotherhood Sistersol, the Homies Empowerment Program, Barrios Unidos and Roses in Concrete, all of which contributed in some way to my own work and practices as an educator, to say nothing of The Highlander Folk School and the Citizenship and Freedom Schools which contributed greatly to the Civil Rights Movement.

Nonetheless, these workshops have limits; they are not substitutes for the institutional and societal changes that must take place in order for true healing and transformation to take place. Workshops, and other similar afterschool programs, are great resources for doing the work of healing *past* traumas and wounds. They may also be great in teaching boys efforts at harm reduction techniques and practices by providing them with specific strategies and knowledge that will help them navigate and cope with the *ongoing* pain and suffering they will endure in a world that continues to be racist, classist, homophobic and generally discriminate against "difference." Therefore, I want to be clear that the outcome of this dissertation should not be that the problems will be solved by getting young men to "pull back" their hoods, understand masculinity, or talk about their feelings and pain. The problems are not located within the pain from which they suffer, but with the societal structures and society *causing* that pain.

Institutional and Structural Change

SMA and LHA demonstrated the limits but also the promise of middle schools for poor and working class Black and Latino youth. In particular, the capacity of students to honestly discuss their lives was a product of a highly engaging and rich curriculum that is refreshing in the era of common core and a testing obsessed culture. It should be clear from my descriptions, that while imperfect, these schools are truly committed to educating children's minds, bodies and spirits. The curriculum in effect is radical for our times because instead of the narrow skills-oriented vision, these schools instill in their students a belief and a capacity to interrogate the world. Moreover, their mixture of faith and social science courses permitted students to be in touch with the original function of middle schools. As we saw multiple times during this study, students were able to utilize actual course content to make sense of the existential dissonance they experienced by piecing together insights from subjects areas like morality, adolescent psychology, and English language arts. Nonetheless, I still saw a need for a greater presence of social and cultural studies in the formal classroom.

We often ask students to do "critical thinking" without arming them with the foundations, themes and terms that will help them formulate critical questions. We can use fields like sociology, anthropology, philosophy and cultural studies as sites where salient analytical themes can be introduced and made more central. I find that students are ready and excited to have these conversations. In fact, it is the adults who are often afraid and ill prepared to help them in this endeavor. While I do not blame nor find fault that some adults shy away from these conversations, I do feel that it is important for adults who are involved especially with poor and working class students of color, to find ways of educating themselves, running long-term professional development, and doing the research necessary to have a working understanding of these issues. Furthermore, social and cultural studies need not be reserved for researchers and academics. We must move toward actualizing the democratic potential of these analytical tools

for the greater society. The use of these analytical tools must be freed from their isolation and privilege in universities and be brought squarely into places like schools and beyond.

As my "travel alongs" and interviews constantly revealed, schools can only do so much in aiding poor and working class youth. Oftentimes, students under these circumstances faced an array of challenges before stepping foot inside of a classroom every morning. As I saw in taking public transportation with Hector and Leon, on some days, just making it to school and back is a victory. There were many factors that affected these students' ability to engage and learn that could have in and of themselves been their own studies such as the existence of a space to study or assignment help at home, proper nutrition, health care, vicarious stress from parents and family who are stretched thin, safe recreational spaces, access to extracurricular activities and stable housing. Moreover, the impact of institutions and structures such as the criminal justice system, homeland security, and a post-industrial economy point to a need for serious organizing and mobilization to occur in the areas of immigration, employment, and prison sentencing. As the students testified in this study, events like that of the death of Trayvon Martin, are not only about "better" laws or reforms. What is at stake in enacting these kinds of structural changes is nothing less than our core assumptions and beliefs about the value of lives which have been for too long been denied a seat at the table of humanity.

Conclusion

In the wake of the George Zimmerman trial, President Barack Obama, give some "extemporaneous remarks" on the reactions to the "not guilty" verdict decided by six female jurors in Sanford, Florida. The reactions to the verdict were not dissimilar to those we saw with the cases of Oscar Grant, where people took to the streets to express their disgust with a system that had again decided that Black life, especially young Black male life, is expendable. As I watched the remarks live on my television, I could not help but feel a sense of agony that was betrayed by Obama's voice and facial expressions as he attempted to tell the "rest of America" why there was outrage, sorrow, and indignation in Black communities across the country. Building on his previous statements on the death of Trayvon Martin he told the White House press core:

> You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago. And when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it's important to recognize that *the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away.* There are very few African American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in a department store. That includes me. There are very few African American men who haven't had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. That happens to me — at least before I was a senator. There are very few African Americans who haven't had the experience of getting on an elevator and a woman clutching her purse nervously and holding her breath until she had a chance to get off. That happens often.
> And I don't want to exaggerate this, but those sets of experiences inform how the African American community interprets what happened one night in Florida. And it's

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inescapable for people to bring those experiences to bear. The African American community is also knowledgeable that there is a history of racial disparities in the application of our criminal laws — everything from the death penalty to enforcement of our drug laws. And that ends up having an impact in terms of how people interpret the case.

Now, this isn't to say that the African American community is naïve about the fact that African American young men are disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system; that they're disproportionately both victims and perpetrators of violence. It's not to make excuses for that fact — although black folks do interpret the reasons for that in a historical context. *They understand that some of the violence that takes place in poor black neighborhoods around the country is born out of a very violent past in this country, and that the poverty and dysfunction that we see in those communities can be traced to a very difficult history.*

And so the fact that sometimes that's unacknowledged adds to the frustration. And the fact that a lot of *African American boys are painted with a broad brush and the excuse is given, well, there are these statistics out there that show that African American boys are more violent — using that as an excuse to then see sons treated differently causes pain.* (My emphasis, Obama, 2013)

The idealistic depictions of a "Yes We Can" America by an enthusiastic and hopeful president elect in 2008, are in this moment humbled by the weight of the existential nightmare that the U.S. can be for Black and Latino men and boys. Unlike in his Morehouse commencement speech, exactly two months to the day, here Obama spoke of "a history that doesn't go away." Unlike his usual "no excuses" speeches to Black people, the president was forced by his own encounters with the sounds of clicking car doors and tightly clutched purses to publicly acknowledge "historical context." Perhaps the most powerful commentary comes at end of the above except when he seems to subconsciously invert the popular slogan of educational reform in the twenty-first century. In this case, he seemed to almost say if we are willing to hear it that there are indeed "no excuses" for the pain and suffering of our children.

Reflecting on the election of Obama, Jeff Duncan-Andrade (2009) cautioned that educators must not settle for notions of hope that ignore our children's indignation, suffering and cries. Tuning out their realities and "peddling," what he calls "false hope," where we celebrate "individual exceptions" and feel good American ideologies, militates against the interests of our students. Instead we must do the tireless and painful work that actualizes and genuinely allows our children to "critically hope" for better futures. This requires that we expand our conceptions of teachers to include our roles as intellectuals, healers, and organizers. My hope is that by delineating the existential contradictions of living and being a poor or working class Black and Latino boy in these times, I have contributed in some way to the project of courageously imagining a better future for schools, teachers, and children.

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