Introduction

Masculinity and Boyhood Constructions in the School-to-Prison Pipeline

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Abstract: The conversation on the school-to-prison pipeline among boys of color is complex and involves understanding how the 4 C's— classroom, cops, courts, and community— interface to create a pipeline. However, what has been under-conceptualized is whether and how notions of masculinity and boyhood that emerge within these institutions may operate as an invisible connective tissue across these institutions. In other words, the manner in which the bodies of Black and Latino males are viewed, interacted with, and treated within these institutions provides a rationalizing frame for how the actions within institutions occur. In this special issue, we theorize that, to understand the ways in which the school-to-prison pipeline operates for boys of color, there needs to be theoretical exploration through empirical work of what notions of masculinity are promoted and detracted within these institutions during boyhood. This interdisciplinary special issue of *Boyhood Studies* provides a conceptual exploration of how male bodies of color are constructed within and across these institutions, e.g., suspensions (schools), arrests (police), sentencing (courts), and violence (communities) in order to establish the pipeline as concretized through “normative” or oppressive notions of masculinity and boyhood.

Keywords: school-to-prison pipeline, masculinity and boyhood, Black and Latino males, connective tissue, schools, police, courts, communities

The research and policy conversation on the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) has exploded over the past 15 years. Russell Skiba and colleagues (2014) note in a review of the term STPP that the research has an implied direction and indictment of systems or institutions such as schools, police, courts, and community. Much of this research and policy conversations on STPP centers on the disproportionate patterns of school discipline as highlighted in the most recent release of the Civil Rights Data Collection. This report notes the following disproportionate patterns: Black students represent 15 percent of school enrollment and 31 percent of school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement, while White students represent 49 percent of school enrollment and 24 percent of school-based arrests and referrals to

law enforcement; male students are 51 percent of enrollment and 69 percent of school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement; and students with disabilities are 12 percent of enrollment and 28 percent of school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement (OCR 2018). The concern of these patterns is the domino effect it has on the engagement of youth of color with police and juvenile justice system. As a result, the plethora of STPP research and policy action is geared to disrupt the manner in which the institutions involved in the pipeline—schools, police, courts, and communities—engage, support, punish, and sentence youth of color, and specifically men of color (i.e., Asian, Latinx, Black, and Native American).

Though race and ethnicity constructs are explored and identified as mediating factors within the STPP research and policy action, there is less consideration and/or measurement of how notions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995) operate alongside racialized notions of discipline. In other words, are there forms of masculinity boys are expected to demonstrate while interacting within schools, community, police, and courts? How are these hegemonic masculine identities transfixed on boys of color? Are demonstrations of these hegemonic masculine identities through specific behaviors among boys of color interpreted as threatening (e.g., talking back to adults, “horseplay” with other boys, etc.)? This special issue explores through theoretical and empirical accounts the complicated intersections of hegemonic masculine identities, racialization of behavior, and institutional expectations of boys of color. For instance, are schools’ cultural overtures of racialized masculinity translated into boyhood expectations that present a limited range of masculinities boys can express (e.g., “you write so nice for a boy,” “go play with the boys,” “you’re such a big boy in this class,” “be a gentleman and help me hand out these papers,” “go play with the blocks and trucks,” and “be gentle with the girls”)? Do communities expect boys to enact “fatherhood” expectations during boyhood (e.g., “be the man of the house while your father is at work,” “go to the corner store with your sister, she needs to be protected”)? Do policing tactics and courts reinforce strength and power interpretations of male of color movements and expectations (e.g., “you think you’re a tough guy,” “why are you on the corner, go get a job,” “do you belong here,” “you think you’re tougher because you have a degree”)?

In this special issue, we theorize that, to understand the ways in which the school-to-prison pipeline operates for boys of color, there needs to be theoretical exploration through empirical work of what notions of masculinity are promoted and detracted within these institutions during boyhood.

We argue, across these various institutions, notions of hegemonic masculinity within boyhood are based on unidimensional expressions of power, strength, and sexual prowess and are further complicated by our understandings of these in relation to race and ethnicity constructs. For instance, when boys of color demonstrate expressions of frustration, hurt, pain, and disappointment tied to racial discrimination and stereotype tropes, they may only be viewed as public threats. This raises two concerns: (1) whether and how STPP research explores the manner in which these institutions' use of hegemonic masculine identities on boys of color, and (2) whether hegemonic masculinity operates differently toward boys of color and if this signals that "men [of color] cannot speak their pain in patriarchal culture" (hooks 2004: 135). Thus, how do these institutions begin constructing hegemonic-free social identity environments? Our attempt in this special issue with a particular focus on the school and prison components of the pipeline is to situate a framing for exploring the intersections of hegemonic masculine identities, race identities, and racialization of behaviors. This special issue provides a range of empirical explorations to engage earnestly on whether hegemonic masculine identities braid together the school-to-prison pipeline.

Racialized Discipline and Hegemonic Masculinity in Schools

Despite substantive research on the disproportionate suspension and overall discipline patterns of boys of color in schools (e.g., Bradshaw et al. 2010; Gregory and Weinstein 2008; McFadden et al. 1992; Payne and Welch 2010; Mendez and Knoff 2003; Skiba et al. 2002, 2011), there is less interrogation within this research as to how these patterns occur for boys alongside their Black, Asian, Latinx, and Native American identities. Research on disproportionate suspension identifies patterns in which racial and ethnic minority students (i.e., Black, Latinx, and Native American) are more likely to be suspended, to be suspended more severely for the same infraction as their White counterparts, and to be suspended more repeatedly. Most devastating, these patterns heighten likelihood for youth to engage the criminal justice system (Fabelo et al. 2011). The research on disproportionality in suspensions provides a range of factors related to this outcome. For instance, one line of inquiry focuses on the types of student-level demographic and school-level factors that are predictive of the presence and intensity of disproportionality in suspension. Audrey Beck and Clara Muschkin (2012) identify student-level demographic factors (i.e., gender,

race, parent educational level, eligibility for free or reduced lunch) as explanatory variables of disciplinary infractions. Additionally, they state academic differences comprise the largest racial difference contributing to behavioral infractions. Amanda Sullivan and Aydin Bal (2013) also identify similar patterns between student level demographic factors and discipline infractions. Moreover, Julia Bryan and colleagues (2012) identify students' race, gender, and teachers' postsecondary expectations as predictors of behavioral referrals. Also, Skiba and colleagues (2014)—in a multilevel modeling of infraction type, individual, and school-level characteristics in out-of-school suspensions (OSS)—show schools with higher proportions of Black students contribute to OSS, and systemic school-level variables are more important in determining Black overrepresentation in suspension.

This robust research explains discipline patterns and defines the practices and processes of schooling that interact and in some instances are predictive of disproportionate discipline, but less exploration has been conducted into whether the construction of good and bad behavior in schools is bound to specific gendered and racialized notions of those behaviors. One of the few empirical studies that engages this dynamic is Ann Ferguson's (2000) *Bad Boys*, in which a critical theory examination situates the culture and institutional policies and practice of schools (i.e., discipline, testing, tracking) operate to create, maintain, and internalize societal images of Black men as either criminals or endangered. Other scholars have theorized the identification of these pathologized cultural notions (e.g., Kunjufu 1985; Majors and Billson, 1992) but of less attention within these few empirical studies is the extrapolation of how masculinity is imagined and acted on within various institutions.

To conduct such exploration, there must be a situating of what is known about masculinity and its many forms. Varying scholars situate hegemonic forms of masculinity as the most prominent pattern of masculine representations (Connell 1995, 1996; Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997). More specifically, this involves social cultural discussions that consider what allows for hegemonic masculinity adherence and persistence, as it's tied to desires to "fit in," manners of suggesting definitions of "boy behavior" through symbolic passive or violent actions, and visible or invisible ways of reifying the need to participate or be part of the group (Connell 1996; Swain 2006). The empirical research on the ways in which hegemonic masculine identities appear provide a robust landscape of understanding the role of gender actors and the social institutions. For instance, Brett Stoudt (2006) argues masculinity is performed not solely by men and boys but also by women and

girls. In other words, to better understand masculinity, we need to simultaneously examine the ways in which female teachers and students perform masculinity and femininity in school settings. These forms of hegemonic masculinity performance, as Cliff Cheng (1999) argues, are the symbolic and explicit normative notions of masculinity boys and girls are expected to adhere to. These hegemonic masculine identities are enforced through behaviors such as bullying and expected allegiance-building and bonding among boys. For instance, various empirical studies of boarding schools show boys are “sent away” to institutions that condemn bullying but create cultural environments that give permission for engagement between boys to be based on traditional attachment and subjection to hierarchy rules (e.g., boys not permitted to hold hands or embrace, “measuring up,” displaying inappropriate masculine behaviors) (Heinrich 2012; Poynting and Donaldson 2005). Maria Hedlin (2013) highlights another form of hegemonic masculine identity framing that involves the presence of negative “boys’ behaviors” as connected to the absence of a male role and the type of female representation in the home context. Overall, these empirical studies situate the dynamism of how hegemonic masculinity is curated within the school setting (Martino and Meyenn 2001). However, there is further growth to be made in how these constructs operate alongside race and racialization.

Understandings of these hegemonic masculine notions within the context of schools must also consider racialized dynamics—when compared to White boys, why is there an intensity of discipline toward Black, Latinx, and Native American boys? Various theoretical and empirical studies argue notions of White racial purity, climates latent with discrimination, and so on, as suggesting the climate has a silent violence toward masculine identities of racial/ethnic minority boys. For instance, Decoteau Irby theorizes the basis of disproportionate discipline is because of White racial purity using patriarchy to reproduce Whiteness through “the continual surveillance, punishment, distancing, and removal of primarily heteronormative Black male bodies, locating its justification in protecting the bodily safety and academic achievement of heteronormative White girls” (2014: 783). Elan Hope and colleagues (2015) highlight in an empirical study of Black high school students that experiences of racial discrimination including lack of diversity in curricular offerings are implicated in their socialization or sense of belonging in school. In sum, the discussion of the school as the beginning of the STPP requires a complicated conversation on how masculine identities and racialization of behavior are being curated within school processes and policies to understand their current effect of over-surveilling of boys of color. Of

further curiosity is how research on the other social institutions involved in the STPP extrapolate the forms of hegemonic masculine identities present within their practice and processes.

Community Policing of Masculinity

Substantive research notes the community/neighborhood context of boys being disproportionately disciplined contains varied dynamics of employment and labor participation, policing presence, food security and stable quality food stores, and so on, (Johnson et al. 2018; Wilson 1987). With this understanding of the community as complex, we focused our review on sociological research on urban community, which has empirically explored the understandings of masculinity and its performance as a means to understand the continuation of unemployment and some instances crime.

Conversations on men of color in low-income urban community settings has outlined renderings of hegemonic masculinity and related factors that are explanatory or correlated with poverty and underemployment conditions. And the interaction of these social cultural dynamics are theorized to place men of color in a state of threat within low-income urban communities. The most prominent and long-standing theoretical contribution in this discussion involves the notions of social isolation and poverty concentration (Wilson 1987). These notions, “created a levelled analytical space for documenting and assessing the effects of enduring social and geographic dis-connection between the urban poor and those in more affluent positions” (Young 2004: 1076). Alongside these notions of social isolation are the understandings of institutional racism and masculinity threats abound among men of color within communities as perpetuating outcomes. Urban community research highlights that men of color promote a violent code of conduct as representing their masculine notions (Anderson 2000), maintain complex sense making of their condition and ideas of opportunity within social and structural realities (Young 2004), their experiences of racial discrimination interacted with increased endorsement of male gender norms and increased vigilance of masculinity threat cue (Goff et al. 2012), and patterns of male mentorship operate through various means within urban communities (Anderson 1990; Young 2007). The traditions of this sociological research demonstrate community dynamics for men of color involve social conditioning of masculine identity tied intimately to the nature of isolation, poverty concentration, joblessness, racism, and connections with employed men.

Masculinity and Boyhood in Police and Policing

Though the research on boys of color has not substantively explored the hegemony of policing as it relates to traditional notions of masculinity and as framing the power plays between police and youth of color, there is empirical evidence as to the presence of social cultural dynamics occurring alongside disproportionate police interaction outcomes. Currently, there is a growing concern surrounding the disproportionate number of Black and Latino youth who are arrested and confined in the juvenile justice system as involvement with police officers directly results in arrest and further conviction (Gabbidon and Greene 2013; Sickmund and Puzzanchera 2014; Walker et al. 2000). Particularly, it has been noted that Black adolescents are three times more likely to be arrested than White adolescents (Huizinga et al. 2007). For instance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported 1,024,232 arrests of individuals under 18 occurred in 2014 and of these youth, 355,345, or 34.6 percent, were Black (Snyder et al. 2014). The data consistently reveal significant differences in treatment between Whites and racial minorities, but, moving beyond a racial interpretation, it is difficult to explain why these differences persist.

According to Carla Shedd (2012) and Victor Rios (2009), most youth of color are often criminalized and punished before they are formally processed in the juvenile justice system. Specifically, they contend that policing practices and notions of punishment are grounded in gendered expectations, power, and privilege displays, which helps provides a more holistic perspective to better understand the differences in treatment of men of color. Plainly stated, enhanced policing, surveillance, and punishment of marginalized youth often lead to a set a gender practices of “hypermasculinity” or the “young male syndrome” (Anderson 2000; Rios 2007). This type of gender performance by youth of color, which prioritizes toughness and violence to demand respect, often leads Black and Latino men to commit more crime as well as endorse police officers to act more aggressive towards them. For instance, Phillip Goff and colleagues (2014) highlight through a series of experiments that Black boys are viewed more frequently as older and less “childlike,” which includes being perceived less innocent. Jack Greene (2012) contends that over-policing youth of color results in very negative and damaging consequences. Specifically, the criminal justice system asserts notions of masculinity to boys and young men of color that they should be law-abiding and docile. However, when these youth of color try to uphold and ascribe to mainstream notions of masculinity, their efforts are thwarted

as the police constantly stop, harass, and treat them like criminals. For instance, in New York City the number of stop and frisks increased rapidly between 2003 and 2011. Most of those stops consisted of people identified as Black or Latino, and they were stopped nine times more often than Whites. Consequently, because of the disproportionate interactions with police, boys and young men of color often resort to a “street code” that allows them protection and safety in their neighborhoods but put them in precarious situations with the juvenile justice system (Anderson 2000).

Additionally, stop-and-frisk practices not only operate in the neighborhood context but also often in schools (Devine 1996; Kupchik 2010). In other words, these youth are exposed to negative police encounters in multiple settings as there has been a shift in schools across the nation to criminalize and deal out harsher punishments as discipline (Na and Gottfredson 2013). School resource officers are used to maintain safety and enforce school rules. However, as schools began to rely more on police and juvenile courts to address school-based behavior, there have been dramatic increases in the use of lengthy out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, referrals to alternative schools, referrals to law enforcement, and school-based arrests. Schools are following stricter legal reforms mandating that certain offenses be referred to the police when they occur on school property, which has increased the number of secondary school students suspended or expelled over the course of a school year to 40 percent (Advancement Project 2010).

Ultimately, the surveillance response to Black or Latinx and male identities become the connective tissue that explains the disproportionality and disadvantage these youth face once they have contact with the juvenile justice system. Inequitable practices by law enforcement are no mere coincidence but rather race in tandem with gender defines differential treatment for youth of color. The consequences of these discriminatory practices extended far beyond initial interactions with police to over-criminalize, stigmatize, and send external messages to society that boys and young men of color are dangerous. As a result, society views these youth as “throwaways” or “disposable,” which serves as a common thread or reoccurring theme in an attempt to push them further into the juvenile justice system (Gabbidon 1994; Rios 2009).

Masculinity and Boyhood in the Criminal Justice System

Once youth of color are formally processed into the system, juvenile corrections primarily comprise of two methods, which include community-

based and residential programs. Currently, 82 percent of most youth reside in some form of residential programs, and the remainder (18 percent) are monitored in community-based programming (Sedlak and McPherson 2010). Mostly, Black men are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, as they are more likely to be arrested, convicted, and waived to adult court. Geoffrey Ward (2001, 2012) notes that the origins of the juvenile justice system have always been a racialized system and that different races and ethnic groups are placed in different types of programs, as youth of color were deemed as incorrigible (Oshinsky 1996; Ward 2001). This has led to viewing youth of color in a negative manner, especially, boys and young men, who have been stigmatized by the juvenile justice system as extremely violent “predators” with no moral conviction or remorse for their actions (Dilulio 1995).

As a result, Black youth tend to be held in placement or in correctional programs, Hispanic youth are placed in camp programs more often, and White youth are placed in residential treatment programs more often than Blacks or Latinx. Although modern juvenile corrections have made significant strides as far as implementing new programming, youth of color in custody do not perceive fairness or justice in their facility environments. Half of youth in custody report that staff apply punishments without cause, and more than a third claim that staff use unnecessary force. Only about less than a third contend that punishments are fair (Sedlak and McPherson 2010). These programs have not only been proved ineffective but also pose serious health risks and safety concerns. Even when residential programs get it right and meet the appropriate benchmarks, 70 to 80 percent of juveniles released from youth corrections facilities are rearrested within two or three years for a new offense. Incarceration unfortunately, is not the correct response to delinquency. Removing juveniles from their community and sending them to unfamiliar residential programs has severe negative consequences, including separations from their entire support system (Mendel 2014). Overall, the juvenile justice system exhibits practices that are resulting in disproportionate patterns by race and gender (Feld 1999; Platt 1977; Ward 2001), and the enduring question is whether the engagement of hegemonic masculinity affects boys of color within schools, specifically its role in beginning the domino effect that, by the time boys and young men of color engage in detention centers, they are practicing reinforcement of these hegemonic masculinities in order to survive.

This Special Issue

The empirical accounts in this special issue provide varying terrains of discussion on hegemonic masculinity within social institutions—schools, community, and detention centers. For instance, Pavirthra Nagarajan examines in a single-sex school how varying displays of boys' masculinity are met with exclusionary discipline, including negative labeling, punishment, and isolation. In all, Nagarajan argues that school practices may obscure the benefits of boyhood, and inadvertently reproduce elements of the pipeline that they seek to disrupt. In fact, Nagarajan's study of this single-sex school illustrates the challenges such schools must circumvent to work toward highlighting and embracing the benefits of boyhood in a world that adultifies black boys much too soon. Joseph Nelson and Sangeeta Subedi offers a similar analysis of a single-sex school setting; in particular, their examination focuses on how boarding school serving Black boys in first grade operate to disrupt hegemonic masculinity on boys of color. They highlight in this study the manner in which the adults operated to dissect their renderings of hegemonic masculinity in order to construct an environment hegemonic-free.

L. Trenton Marsh demonstrates in an empirical study of a “no excuse” charter school—with a “no excuses” philosophical orientation presupposing that Black and Latinx students (and their families), who reside in homogenous, low-income communities, are in need of a teaching and learning approach that is narrowly predefined, teacher-directed, and offers little room for student voice, creativity, and autonomy. Marsh argues that while the practice of labeling has become commonplace in schools, its effects are not normal, at least for Black and Latino boys, as they are disproportionately affected. As evidenced by these data, school-imposed labeling for Black and Latino boys can serve as a catalyst that leads to further punitive consequences in schools. And in this school setting, the labels of “being academically behind” or boys demonstrating behavioral needs served as “mug shots” for how practitioners framed the possibilities of these boys. Hawkins examines the narratives of middle and high school Black male students describing in their own words how the school institutions imposed a dual axis of hegemonic masculinity expectations and racially charged stereotyped tropes to isolate these boys. Celeste Hawkins highlights the manner in which the boys experienced a loss of care and belonging as a result of this dual axis of experience.

Catherine Voulgarides engages how the three functions of schooling (i.e., sort, socialize, and social control) impact and constrain the freedom

and agency of a group of Black and Latinx young men in one suburban school district in the Northeastern United States. Voulgarides demonstrates how the young men in the Boys Group experience schooling and how the local community context facilitates the institutionalization of discriminatory sorting processes that are latent with racial and gendered overtones—in particular, how the young men are excessively controlled and monitored in their school. In doing so, Voulgarides illustrates how the norms of local community contexts converge with strict disciplinary policies and practices and arguably strengthen the connective tissue of the school-to-prison pipeline.

Adrian Huerta's article provides insight into what happens to youth who are suspended from school and sent to an "alternative school" setting. In particular, Huerta's examination of Latino boys who attend two continuation high schools provide the ways in which boys make sense of personal violence experiences and their subsequent educational aspirations. It is important to note that these students were previously removed from traditional comprehensive schools because of school discipline violations. The focus on continuation schools is an important, and often missing, element of discussions about the school-to-prison pipeline, as these educational institutions serve over-disciplined and expelled students from traditional comprehensive schools. The concern this article provides is an understanding of what happens to male youth entering the "last" school environment to help them make academic "recovery."

Finally, Taryn VanderPyl and colleagues explores the ways in which adolescent and adult men in detention centers and prison describe their experiences in schools. In particular, they focus on the ways in which exclusionary discipline practices in schools and hostile engagements with police represent experiences of whiteness and maleness as property being employed in the regulating of boys of color movement.

The aggregate of these empirical studies considers that what occurs within the school environment involves an understanding that the forms of hegemonic masculinity placed on boys of color includes racially charged tropes. In addition, these studies highlight the nature of policies and practices as vehicles for the enforcement of these masculine expectations through infraction codes such as disobedience, disrespect, or disorderly conduct that are given permission to be interpreted through a lens of hegemonic masculinity. This special issue, an initial foray into the considerations of the STPP effect on boys of color, is braided together with features of hegemonic masculinity. To move beyond policy and practice change, there must be

further exploration of what social cultural dimensions of masculinity operate in the imagination of practitioners in schools, police, and courts.

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