# Gender, Race, and Justifications for Group Exclusion: Urban Black Students Bussed to Affluent Suburban Schools

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## Abstract

Relational theories of gender conceptualize masculinity and femininity as mutually constitutive. Using a relational approach, I analyzed ethnographic and interview data from male and female black adolescents in Grades 8 through 10 enrolled in "Diversify," an urban-to-suburban racial integration program ($n = 38$).[1] Suburban students ($n = 7$) and Diversify coordinators ($n = 9$) were also interviewed. All the bussed students, male and female, were racially stereotyped. Yet as a group, the Diversify boys were welcomed in suburban social cliques, even as they were constrained to enacting race and gender in narrow ways. In contrast, the Diversify girls were stereotyped as "ghetto" and "loud" and excluded. In discussing these findings, the current study extends previous research on black girls' "loudness," identifies processes of racialization and gendering within a set of wealthy suburban schools, and offers new theoretical directions for the study of racially integrated settings.

## Keywords

adolescence, affluent suburbs, racialization and gendering, social exclusion

Scholars have examined how race and class relations shape evaluations of students' gender performances. This research shows that teachers and peers often view ethnic minorities' behavior as gender-inappropriate. Many authors conclude that teachers and students explain the inferior achievement of lower-class and non-white students with references to the inappropriateness or undesirability of their gender performances (Bettie 2003; Ferguson 2000; Lewis 2003; López 2002; Morris 2007; Pascoe 2007; Schippers 2007; Tyson 2011). However, researchers have yet to theorize the conditions under which dominant groups use subordinate groups' gender performances to maintain race/class hierarchies. Without such an examination, it appears as if the gender performances of *all* individuals belonging to subordinate groups are used against them, all the time. This assumption

prevents a more specific understanding of how idealized definitions of masculinity or femininity can serve race/class hierarchies. To address these gaps, I conducted an in-depth study of adolescent culture within a network of affluent, intentionally racially integrated suburban schools. Empirically, the goal was to identify when and how minority participants' gender performances would be used as the rationale for their exclusion from peer cliques. The findings and analysis have broad theoret-

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ical implications for the study of gender in racially integrated settings.

The study compares the everyday experiences of male and female black adolescents participating in Diversify, a voluntary urban-to-suburban racial integration program.[2] The Diversify program buses black students from poor and working-class, majority-minority neighborhoods to a participating network of affluent, majority-white suburban schools. Thus, Diversify students are not only ethnically different from their (mostly white) suburban classmates, but also come from a lower class background. Previous research has shown that minority students in such circumstances have a heightened likelihood of experiencing incomplete belonging in majority peer networks (Gaztambide-Fernandez and DiAquoi 2010; Horvat and Antonio 1999). The Diversify students' experiences of peer culture offer an excellent platform for understanding when and how members of a lower-class minority group's gender performance are used as the grounds for its exclusion.

I found that black boys in the Diversify program reported being popular and included in suburban social and dating networks, while the black girls reported the opposite (Ispa-Landa 2011). Upon investigation, I discovered that although the boys in Diversify were popular, they were also perceived as incapable of academic "success." This called into doubt their ability to reap the economic rewards associated with masculine dominance in adult social circles. Thus, the Diversify boys' role in the suburbs supported masculine ideals and also did not threaten white dominance. In contrast, the Diversify girls were unpopular and excluded from suburban social and dating networks. The suburban students and the Diversify boys explained that the Diversify girls were unpopular and sexually undesirable because they were coded as "ghetto" and "loud." Thus, Diversify boys and suburban classmates criticized the Diversify girls' "loudness" according to a discourse about feminine norms. They also used this discourse to rationalize the Diversify girls' social isolation. From their standpoint, the Diversify girls claimed that their "loud" reputation came from their direct style of handling interpersonal conflict and racially insensitive remarks.

Morris (2007) and Fordham (1996) also analyzed black girls' so-called loudness. In their accounts, "loudness" represents resistance to pressure to conform to idealized white middle-class womanhood. I propose to extend this line of analysis by using a relational lens to yield a different interpretation of similar findings. A relational perspective highlights that

actors evaluate others' gender performances according to a gender system in which masculinity and femininity are co-constituted. It draws attention to the way gender performances are sorted and ranked, not just as within-gender comparisons (a femininity compared to another femininity), but also vis-à-vis their ability to uphold the idealized relationship between masculinity and femininity (femininity and masculinity evaluated according to their ability to uphold masculine dominance). My focus on gender relationality revealed that the Diversify girls were sanctioned not only because they were perceived as different from white suburban girls, and not only because they expressed outward resistance to white dominance, but also because they symbolically threatened the *overall* gender order. Drawing on these findings, I offer two key contributions to research on peer relations, gender, and racialization. First, I add nuance to previous treatments of the issue of black girls' "loudness" by examining the experiences of urban black students attending affluent suburban public schools where most children are upper-middle-class. Second, I attend to the specific circumstances under which gender performances are used as the rationale for a group's exclusion.

## The Idealized Relationship between Masculinity and Femininity

In a recent article, Schippers (2007) describes how as analysts increasingly focus on multiple masculinities and femininities, they neglect the complementary and hierarchical relation of masculinity vis-à-vis femininity. Critiquing this trend, she writes, "the implicit relationship between genders becomes a taken-for-granted feature of interpersonal relationships, culture, and social structure" (p. 91). In this research, I analyzed the Diversify boys' and girls' seemingly opposite social situations. In so doing, I sought to go beyond an analysis of the Diversify girls' social situation vis-à-vis the femininities deemed desirable within the suburban school. My approach is complementary to, yet distinct from, previous treatments of black girls' "place" within schools (Grant 1984; Morris 2007), which have largely emphasized how black girls may be sanctioned for failing to live up to standards of white femininity. In seeking to understand how the black girls' social position related to the *overall* gender order, I brought a relational gender lens to bear on analysis.

Schippers (2007) emphasizes that the idealized features of masculinity and femininity are those that ensure a complementary and hierarchical relationship

between the two. On the masculine side, these include desire for the feminine object, violence, and authority. On the feminine side, these include desire to be the *object* of masculine desire, physical vulnerability, and compliance. Gender is a set of practices, rather than a property of individuals. Thus, women can embody masculine characteristics. However, when they do, these characteristics are constructed as deviant *feminine* characteristics (the bitch, the bad-ass, the slut). For masculinity to remain a legitimate property of men, feminine access to it must be denied. Thus, when a man exhibits hegemonic feminine characteristics—such as desiring to be the object of masculine desire—he is viewed as contaminating social relations. He has violated the idealized relationship between masculinity and femininity. When men enact the quality content of femininity, they are therefore constructed as feminine (the fag, pussy, or mama's boy). Masculinity is superior and desirable. Therefore, masculinity cannot "sustain" stigma and contamination—only femininity can (Schippers 2007).

Within this theoretical framework, the characteristics and practices that hetero-sexualize femininity in relation to masculinity are valued. For example, in both elite boarding school and college cultures *and* in more working-class educational environments, womens and girls' bodies are the stage for communicating class-specific definitions of feminine desirability. In elite school settings, cultivated slimness, expensive brand-name clothing, jewelry, and purses signal feminine desirability (Chase 2008; Gaztambide-Fernandez 2009; Khan 2010; Stuber, Klugman, and Daniel 2011). In lower-class settings, the accoutrement of femininity may be less expensive or luxurious (Bettie 2003), but being sexually desirable to men is just as valued. Thus, similar gender processes operate in many group settings, although the traits or behaviors that hetero-sexualize femininity and masculinity may be group-specific.

Moreover, the seeming "gender differences" between women and men within an ethnically or socioeconomically diverse setting are actually race and class differences in *gender performance* or social organization. Race and class differences in gender performance legitimate class and race hierarchies (Schippers 2007:100). For example, the gender performances of those in low-status positions are often constructed as problematic or deviant—as in the well-known tropes about the hyper-sexual "welfare queen" or the black rapist (Collins 2004). Many school ethnographies describe rites, rituals, and

patterns of behavior consistent with the basic relational insight that race and class domination hinge, in part, on the ability to deem illegitimate or inappropriate the real or stereotyped gender performances of others.

Pascoe's (2007) analysis of a student-led "Revenge of the Nerds" skit reflects a relational analysis. In the skit, several African American boys dance and cheer after a group of white male nerds, turned strong and masculine after working out, rescue their girlfriends from a group of black gangstas who have kidnapped them. Pascoe interprets the African American boys' masculinity not only in relation to other masculinities, but critically, *also* in relation to femininity. She stresses how the African American dancers are alternately constructed as feminine (they dance and cheer the white nerds) and as morally or socially problematic (the problem of the black criminal/predator, as represented by the black gangstas). The African American boys occupy a *feminized* masculinity.

As Schippers (2007) points out, *Women without Class*, Bettie's (2003) ethnography of a working-class school in California, also reflects relational insights. Rather than conceptualizing femininity in isolation from masculinity, Bettie (2003) shows how working-class Mexican American (Las Chicas) and middle-income white (preps) high school girls' femininity is built around their embodiment of characteristics that support an idealized relationship between masculinity and femininity. Both groups of girls experienced their embodiment of femininity as appropriate in relation to girls and boys *within their ethnicity and class location*.

In Bettie's (2003) description, teachers, administrators, and peers disapproved of the working-class Mexican American Las Chicas' gender performance. They interpreted it as hyper-(hetero)sexual and as interfering with school achievement. In contrast, they validated the middle-class white preps' performances of femininity, associating it with being a "good (heterosexual) girl" and a "good student." Thus, a discourse of gender suffused perceptions of Las Chicas and preps. Yet, as Bettie notes, the "hierarchies themselves are about race and class difference, not gender" (Bettie 2003:99). Indeed, Bettie showed that many of the girls' actions—from their clothing to their conflicts—were driven by race and class. (See also Warikoo 2011 for how youth culture reflects students' concerns with racial and ethnic boundaries.) Yet, teachers and peers continually reduced these issues to gender and sexuality.

## Racialization within Schooling

Research on racialization within schooling shows that racism often constructs black students' gender performances as inferior and incompatible with school achievement (Bettie 2003; Carter 2005; Ferguson 2000; Lewis 2003; López 2002; Morris 2007; Tyson 2003). Many black students endure harsh and gender-specific training in how to "conform to the norms of the 'Other'" (Fordham 1996). Studies of racialization within schooling have thus identified everyday interactions that contribute to cumulative racial advantage and disadvantage (Diamond 2006; Lopez 2002). They demonstrate that the racialized educational terrain exists alongside, and intersects with, society-wide norms about gender-appropriate behavior.

Prior research shows that race and class shape perceptions of femininity for black girls. In many schools, black girls learn that to succeed, they must reform their self-presentation to be more like their (real or imagined) white, middle-class counterparts (Grant 1984). Yet, being forceful, loud, and visible can promote academic success, and thus represents a positive strength and resource for black girls and women (Morris 2007). Previous researchers have associated black girls' supposed "loudness" with African American women's resistance to being defined against white, middle-class standards of femininity (Fordham 1996). I use my findings—especially those gathered from interviews with *male* Diversify students—to complicate this analysis. I suggest that in addition to stereotyping, negative views of black girls as "loud" are also a response to the perception that these traits constitute a threat to masculinity. In other words, in addition to being racially stereotyped, the Diversify girls were also sanctioned for symbolically threatening men's exclusive access to the characteristics (assertiveness and aggression) that define masculinity's superiority and social dominance.

## CONTEXTS, PARTICIPANTS, AND ANALYTIC METHODS

### Background on the Diversify Program and the Suburban Schools

The Diversify program is an urban-to-suburban racial integration program. It busses ethnic minority students from an urban public school district to schools located within a network of 40 suburban school districts. All the participating suburban school districts have voluntarily elected to participate in Diversify, generally with the stated goal of increasing racial diversity within their predominantly white suburban school districts. Diversify students often wake up at 5 or 6 a.m. to board the buses that take them to school in the suburbs. There, Diversify students are a visible minority, as there are rarely more than two Diversify students in a classroom, and they are usually the only black students there.

Of these 40 suburban school districts, 11 are located in extremely racially segregated (over 97 percent white and Asian) areas of concentrated affluence. I focused on schools in these districts to maximize the race/class differences between the Diversify and the suburban students. As I found during my fieldwork, these suburbs were filled with quiet, tree-lined residential areas with single-family homes and professionally landscaped lawns. Property values ranged from roughly $450,000 to well over $1 million. The schools had well-stocked and attractive libraries, lush athletic fields, and competitive programs in the performing and visual arts. In the hallways, I saw signs advertising summer abroad opportunities for students enrolled in foreign language courses. Most schools offered AP classes in math, science, and English. Not surprisingly, in a recent parent survey of Diversify parents (citation omitted to preserve program anonymity), nearly three-fourths cited academic opportunity as the primary reason for enrolling a child.

Course placement and tracking in the suburban schools reflect broad national trends, wherein black students are consistently placed in the least advantaged settings for learning (see also Diamond 2006; Tyson 2011). In one suburban school district that I studied, for example, I was told that not a single Diversify student had been recommended for honors English courses and that over 50 percent of the Diversify students had been recommended for the "low" level English course (field notes, June 2, 2011).

There are stark differences between these affluent suburbs and the urban areas where Diversify students live. Most live in neighborhoods where African Americans are the majority. Further, although they come from a variety of class backgrounds, none of the Diversify students live in wealthy neighborhoods. Their neighborhoods had median household incomes ranging from $27,000 to $47,000 (U.S. Census 2000). Many live in tidy triple-decker houses in working-class

neighborhoods that are safe, but far from posh or professionally landscaped. Others live in more crowded and dangerous apartment complexes. Several of my participants faced serious challenges, such as food insecurity, a homeless or imprisoned parent, and recent gang-related deaths in the family. Nearly 50 percent of the Diversify students who attend suburban schools are eligible for free or subsidized school lunches (conversation with Diversify administrator, June 2, 2011). (State department of education statistics show that nearly 70 percent of students in the local public schools are eligible.) Thus, across multiple dimensions, the Diversify students are disadvantaged relative to the suburban students with whom they attend school.

*Participant recruitment: Diversify students.* Using U.S. Census (2000) statistics, I identified 11 suburbs as affluent. These were suburbs where the median family income was over $100,000, over 60 percent of the adult population has a BA or higher, and the percentage of black people was less than 2.30 percent of the total population. Using the Diversify database, I identified and sent letters to the parents/guardians of all black Diversify students ($n = 109$) in Grades 8 through 10 in these affluent suburban school districts. My interest in adolescent peer cliques and how race, gender, and sexuality would shape Diversify students' peer experiences guided my decision to sample students in Grades 8 through 10 in three ways. First, adolescents in middle and high school are highly sensitive and aware of the peer context (Kinney 1993). Second, they are old enough to reflect self-consciously on social categories and identities (Eckert 1989). Third, many adolescents date and/or are sexually active (Eder, Evans, and Parker 1995).

I formally interviewed all the Diversify students who agreed to be interviewed and turned in consent forms, yielding 38 Diversify students for my sample. Most interviews were conducted at students' homes or, if the parent wished, in a private booth of a nearby McDonald's or Burger King. Five interviews were conducted in November 2008, with parental and teacher permission, in an empty classroom at one of the suburban schools where I did fieldwork.

*Suburban students.* The principal of one of the affluent suburban schools randomly selected for me 30 non-poor eighth-grade students and gave me a list of their names and contact information. I contacted all 30, but only 7 agreed to be interviewed. Several parents of the remaining 23 students told me their children were either not interested or "too busy." I interviewed all the suburban students who consented to be interviewed. I refer to the Diversify and suburban students as either Diversify or suburban students. To reduce the reader's confusion, I call any suburban area either Chilton or Glenfield, rather than providing a pseudonym for each of the 11 suburban school districts. Although the suburban sample is small, it was nonetheless informative, as all the suburban students confirmed that the black girls were generally isolated and marginalized while the black boys tended to be popular and high-status.[3]

*Diversify coordinators.* I spoke with nine Diversify coordinators, all of whom I initially met at Diversify, Inc. staff meetings. I contacted them by e-mail after introducing myself to them at staff meetings, telling them about my project, and letting them know that I might contact them in the future to ask if they would be willing to be formally interviewed.

*Observations.* I observed a school cafeteria and hallway in a Diversify school for two months and attended several ice cream socials aimed at increasing contact between the Diversify and suburban school communities. I also attended a few Diversify Alumni meetings and social events. A Diversify staff member, whom I had met at a staff meeting, put me in touch with an alumna who was active in the alumni association. I interviewed her informally, in a mall food court, after which she invited me to attend the alumni association meetings. I used my field notes from these observations as a form of triangulation, examining whether the Diversify students' reports of gender-differentiated friendship and dating patterns were accurate.

*Strategies for addressing potential error and bias.* I took three measures to reduce the potential for error and bias. First, I triangulated my interview data from the Diversify students with interviews of suburban students, Diversify coordinators, and ethnographic observations. Thus, data from participants who were positioned differently within the same setting revealed a consensus around the place of the black Diversify students in the suburban schools. Second, I used strategic member checking toward the end of my fieldwork (Lofland et al. 2006) to corroborate main findings. I asked two Diversify coordinators to assess my findings and analysis. Both confirmed that my basic observations were accurate. (I describe one member-checking incident in the findings section.) Third,

although I solicited personal narratives from students, much time was spent on the social landscape of the suburban schools. We talked about how the Diversify students' reputations were socially constructed. Although the Diversify students experience their reputations individually, these reputations are also integral to the social system of the suburbs. Thus, students' reports about the reputation of Diversify students, and the consensus around those reputations, seem to be an accurate representation of the collective perceptions.

*Data analysis.* I used a modified version of grounded theory, one that emphasizes the utility of moving between inductive and deductive modes of analysis (Fine 2004). I entered the research with an interest in how gender and race would influence the Diversify students' social experiences in the suburbs. These categories functioned as "sensitizing concepts" that "suggested directions along which to look" (Blumer 1954:7). They narrowed my focus as I took field notes, developed and revised the semi-structured interview guide, and selected topics of conversation for my meetings with coordinators and counselors.

In the first stages of coding, I labeled elements of data that spoke to the Diversify students' experiences of inclusion and exclusion. I used codes such as "feels included," "feels excluded," "feels Blackness valued," and "feels Blackness devalued." I did first-level of coding descriptively, seeking to "recognize and recontextualize the data, allowing a fresh view of what is there" (Coffey and Atkinson 1996:45). Later, I conducted what grounded theorists call theme or pattern coding (Miles and Huberman 1994). I looked for how these initial elements related to one another and explored how patterns emerged differently across participants. During this and later stages, I continued to refine and modify my coding scheme, working iteratively between labeling text with codes and looking for patterns among the codes.

*Key points about my social location.* My social location as a white, middle-class woman from the Midwest doubtless influenced what participants told me and what I noticed. As a child and adolescent, I attended schools that were more racially and economically diverse than the affluent, predominantly white schools I observed. When I first gained entrée to the suburban schools, I sometimes felt like a "foreigner," even though by my appearance and academic credentials I fit right in. Later, these insider attributes gave me

a sense of ease and comfort. I enjoyed feeling relatively unnoticed and invisible in the suburban schools. Indeed, I was often taken for a teacher or other staff member in the suburbs. (In the inner-city neighborhoods, I was usually taken for a social worker, community health worker, or teacher.)

At the beginning, I also felt like a "foreigner" in the inner-city neighborhoods. I was frequently the only white person, and people often stared. Further, residents often reminded me of my outsider status through comments like "You have to be careful around here; people aren't used to seeing whites after dark" or by driving me to the train station when it was late (rather than letting me walk).

At times, the participants and their families may have been trying to impress me with their hospitality; they also appeared genuinely concerned for my well-being. Some (but not all) of these incidents suggested that participants were constructing me as a higher-status but vulnerable "visitor" who needed protection. At other times, particularly in informal group (noninterview) settings, I was humorously positioned as a foolish and naive outsider. I experienced these moments of teasing as bonding events. They seemed to cement my position as someone who was different and perhaps a bit strange, but also trustworthy. In these moments, the interpersonal power relations between my respondents and their families (mostly poor and working-class ethnic minorities) and me (a white graduate student attending an elite university) diverged from the status hierarchies of the broader society: I was put into the role of a dependent and a dupe.

Overall, I do not believe that my cultural, geographic, and racial background invalidate my data. Rather, I think they influenced my interactions in the field and what participants shared with me. Some participants may have tried to paint a rosier picture of their lives in hopes of impressing me. Undoubtedly, some participants were reluctant to share negative beliefs and experiences about whites. Others (both black and white) pretended that race does not exist or influence their lives in any way. At the same time, after establishing rapport with me, many black participants would begin to talk about white people. They prefaced their statements with, "No offense, 'cause I know you're white and all, but . . . ."

Perhaps my background caused me to misconstrue (or simply miss) the intended meaning of some participants' words or actions. However,

my position as an outsider was also helpful. I often asked participants to "explain" the meanings of events to me. For example, I would say (to both suburban and urban participants), "You know, I'm sorry, it's hard for me to understand this—I grew up really differently. . . . Can you clue me in?" Responses to such questions were frequently vivid. Participants enjoyed "teaching" me about their lives, and did so with great detail and interest. Thus, the ways that my own perceived or real status influenced the data I gathered does not seem to fall into any easy pattern. (See Horvat and Antonio 1999 and Morris 2007 for similar points about "outsider" interviewing.)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I describe the social landscape and ideological environment of the suburban schools. Following that, using my interview and observation data to illustrate key points, I analyze the Diversify girls' and boys' seemingly opposite experiences of social integration.

### Valuing Achievement—A Racialized Context

It is important to know that the suburban schools the Diversify adolescents attend are not only well-funded and largely white, they are also intensely achievement focused. The teachers and white students I talked to put high value on a strong work ethic, excellent grades and test scores, and professional accomplishment. Acceptance at Ivy League colleges was a common goal. Moreover, the white students I talked to felt that their parents "deserved" the right to live in their affluent neighborhoods because they had worked hard. Noah, the white 14-year-old son of two endocrinologists, illustrated this view, adding that the suburban parents had passed their work ethic and motivation to succeed to their children. He went on to say that he felt the Diversify kids had a reputation for not being as hard-working or successful:

> I mean most kids that live in Chilton, their parents are successful because it cost a lot of money to live here. So yeah, I'd say the attitude of most kids is obviously to do well and turn out like their parents, or if not, even better. Yeah, there are very few kids that don't care and just give up. . . .

Like Chilton is pretty overwhelming, the amount of work and like the amount of pressure, because there are a lot of smart kids. There's a lot of work and things. . . . But like the Diversify kids, I guess,—they're seen as not trying their hardest or just not doing as well academically.

Within this racial and socioeconomic context, the Diversify boys correctly perceived that their suburban classmates saw them as "underachievers" and "troublemakers." For example, Ebo, 15, a high-achieving Diversify freshman, complained about the stereotypes of black students as "troublemakers" and "underachievers" and was very critical of his school's placement policies, saying, "They put the black kids in the stupid classes. Like if you're from the city going to there, they put you in the stupidest classes ever. Like Pre-Algebra I?! Like I can do that stuff, I'm not that stupid!"

Consistent with Diversify students' complaints about race and class stereotyping, the suburban students questioned the Diversify students' presence in the suburban schools, speculating that perhaps they didn't "deserve" the high-quality suburban education they were getting. In so doing, they redefined Diversify as a "scholarship" (rather than a racial integration) program.

Noah, quoted earlier to illustrate the white students' high valuing of achievement, told me that in contrast, the Diversify students were not as hard-working or interested in school. When I asked him how the Diversify program could be improved, he stated that perhaps the Diversify kids could be given an extra "incentive" for working hard:

> I think the point of Diversify is . . . to give kids that don't come from the same background and don't have what most kids here have, give them a chance to have a great opportunity to have better teachers and better activities. . . . But I see a lot of kids I know are from Diversify are just skipping class. . . . I don't know what they [school faculty and staff] do to motivate them. . . . I think they . . . need to somehow motivate them more . . . like say, give them like a prize if they do well, or something.

All the suburban students I interviewed liked the *idea* of offering urban minorities spots in "their" schools (Ispa-Landa 2011). However, they

felt that suburban schools should try to recruit (in their words) "better," more "hardworking," or "more intelligent" Diversify students. As Joel, another 14-year-old white suburban student, explained, "We need kids who . . . would make more of an effort to make use of their opportunities." Thus, nested within the discourse about the Diversify students' supposed underachievement was another discourse, one that questioned the Diversify students' presence and/or "deservingness" to a suburban education. Further, echoing popular and scholarly concerns about the well-being of affluent youth (e.g., Demerath 2009), Diversify coordinators stated that the suburban students were, if anything, excessively achievement oriented. Thus, achievement (and anxiety about achievement) was racialized, making it seem as though "stress" and "doing well" were suburban (white or Asian) concerns.

## Cool and Different: The Social Situation of the Boys

Nonetheless, in a seemingly paradoxical pattern, all the Diversify boys also reported that because they were black and from the city, they had a reputation for being popular. Recall Ebo's complaint about pervasive racial stereotyping about black students as "troublemakers" and "underachievers." Yet, when I asked Ebo if he spends time in the suburbs at friends' houses, he answered, "Well, because I'm black, yeah." He went on to explain, "It's like, if you're a black guy and you're not popular, it's like something must be wrong with you, you know? I don't know what they like about black people, but . . . uh, yeah [they do]." Some Diversify boys reported that they practically "lived in the suburbs." For example, Ronnell, 14, described himself as having like "ten moms" in the suburbs:

> Ronnell: I'm always out there.
> Interviewer: Oh. Like doing what, what do you do?
> Ronnell: Well, it like depends who I'm with . . . with a certain friend, I can probably spend . . . like if it's my best friend, I'll probably spend like two weeks with them, like just stay out there and spend the night. . . . 'Cause so technically I have like ten moms, pretty much. . . . 'Cause like, with my best friend, she [friend's mom] just got like used to me and stuff, . . .

like I was her own son. So like I can hang out there, days at a time.

*Tough facades.* My analysis suggests that the Diversify boys' popularity hinged on their embodiment or exaggeration of stereotypes of black masculinity. For example, some of the Diversify boys consciously exaggerated the perceived differences between themselves and the suburban boys. They tried to appear "street smart" and tough, even as they privately acknowledged (in interviews) that they were not. As 14-year-old Christopher, a black boy in Diversify explained, being tough is part of Diversify boys' unique social status in the suburbs:

> Interviewer: What do the [suburban] kids think of the city kids . . . do you think?
> They think we're cool and different. Like we're not the same as them, we come from rougher neighborhoods. And they learn different things from us . . . like different slang. And like since some of these—most of these kids are from Glenfield [a suburb], so they don't like, they don't go for like gangs and stuff like that. So the Diversify kids act tough because they are from the city. Like it helps your coolness to be from a tougher area. For the [city] kids and the suburban kids.

Christopher went on to explain that Diversify boys sometimes fight one another to support their image as tough:

> I have been in fights with a couple of people but then we ended up being friends later.
> Interviewer: Were they kids in Diversify?
> Yeah. Because we all have our differences and like, some us try to act tough because we're from [the city]. It's like a way of making yourself look better. . . . 'Cause it helps your coolness to be from the tougher areas.

Although Christopher emphasized his toughness in the suburban context, he admitted to me that while suburban kids might think he is tough, he knows that he is not tough by city standards and in fact is afraid of the kids in his own neighborhood. He said that he would be "trying to hide all the time" if he went to his neighborhood school.[4]

Diversify directors also displayed awareness of the unique social position of black Diversify boys in the suburbs. One complained that "a lot of the

Diversify guys get head-swell. . . . 'Cause out here, they are the big guys, whereas if you put them back in [City] High, they'd just be another guy . . . nothing special." The director went on, "Can you imagine, what it does to the girls (implying it turns them on), to hear their names all over the loudspeaker (from sports wins) all the time? They are like the big guys out here!" The language used in these comments—"big guys"—underscores how the Diversify boys' gender performance was positively evaluated. It could also be an evocation of racial stereotypes about black men's penis size and sexual prowess—stereotypes that reduce black masculinity to bodies and body parts (Collins 2004). Finally, the director's comment about "what it does to the girls" seems to signal the possibility that a "correct" relationship between masculinity and femininity—one of submission/mastery—would be performed.

*Sexual politics and dating.* Many Diversify boys dated white suburban girls, and being in an interracial, heterosexual dating relationship was seen to raise both parties' status. Tania, 15, an African American girl in Diversify explained, "It's like fashionable for them [the suburban girls] to be seen dating a Diversify boy, like they'll be like, 'Oh my god, do you hear that so-and-so are dating?!!' and get all excited."

Indeed, interracial dating appeared to offer the suburban girls a set of highly visible opportunities to perform prescribed notions of femininity. Comments from Michael, a 15-year-old black Diversify student, highlighted how the Diversify boys' relationships with suburban girls captured an idealized and complementary relationship between femininity (compliance) and masculinity (goal-seeking). He explained,

> Of course we [Diversify boys] are going to be all nice to the white girls, you know . . . like, we are trying to . . . um, get something [sexual] from them. I mean, like, uh, why wouldn't we be? And like, uh, from my side, you know, *they are easier*. No offense [looking at the interviewer, a white woman], but yeah, they [white girls] *are easier to handle*. Just easier, yeah.

Here, it appears that the Diversify boys' enactment of masculinity may have provided an ideal backdrop for the suburban girls to enact a complementary femininity of compliance or sexual submission (being "easy"). These dating dynamics

suggest that the Diversify boys were constrained to performing blackness and masculinity in fairly narrow, heterosexual ways—but also that the Diversify boys' social status and popularity hinged on these same hyper-masculine enactments of gender and race. From their perspective as heterosexual males seeking sexual attention from females, the Diversify boys were rewarded for their gender performances.

From their side, it is possible that suburban girls gained peer approval from revolting against the expectation that they develop into the girlfriends, mothers, and wives (however unequal) of white men, reaping the economic and social benefits associated with these roles (see Hurtado 1989). Indeed, comments from adults also suggested that adolescent rebellion had its role in interracial dating. At a meeting for Diversify alumni, a 25-year-old Diversify alum explained that "They [suburban girls] just want to flout to their parents, that they're dating a black boy, because they know their parents won't like it."

Many Diversify boys and girls and suburban residents attributed the black boys' popularity and integration to their sports involvement. Researchers using contact theory also argue that sports participation is integral to the social success of African American males in integrated schools because sport provides ideal conditions for interracial contact. (See Holland 2012 for a recent example.) However, my findings did not confirm this folk thesis. Even individual Diversify boys who did not play sports benefited from collective images of black masculinity as cool and athletic. Indeed, Diversify boys who did *not* play sports were just as likely to spend time in the suburbs at friends' houses as Diversify boys who did play sports. Further, Diversify girls who played on school sports teams were even less likely to spend time in suburbs at friends' houses than girls who did not play on suburban sports teams. It therefore seems that collective images of black masculinity—more so than the successful individual embodiment of these images—were a decisive factor in Diversify boys' popularity.

Two years after finishing the interview portion of my project, I returned to a suburban school to talk with a Diversify guidance counselor. Ms. Robinson is a black woman in her late 40s or early 50s, much liked by the Diversify students. The goal was to feed the findings and analysis back to an informant, checking to see if she would corroborate them (Miles and Huberman 1994). While we were catching up, several Diversify boys walked in.

Ms. Robinson asked them whether they would ever invite a white girlfriend to their home. Morris, a black Diversify boy, explained that he would not. The underlying reason appeared to be that his mother and sister would not approve of the relationship, although his response also indicated that his girlfriend would feel uncomfortable with his mother and sister.

Ms. Robinson: So what's the deal, why do white girls love the black boys?

Morris: Well . . . (laughing).

Ms. Robinson: Yeah, you've tasted a couple flavors, tell us what it's all about!

Morris: I uh (snickering about the sexual allusion to flavors), I can't, I can't get into details.

Ms. Robinson: Did you ever bring your girlfriend home? 'Cause she's white!

Morris: Oh no, I would never do that. My sister, she's like all thug, and that just would not be comfortable [for the girlfriend], she wouldn't know what to do. . . . I can just see her [my girlfriend] coming in all like "hi" and stuff (imitates uptalk associated with suburban girls), and my mom and my sister would just be like uh-uh (shaking his head to show that they wouldn't approve).

In this excerpt, Morris seems proud of his sister's strength. After all, she is a "thug," not a "hoodrat." Thugs have hard lives; they fight against victimization. The students in my sample used the term *thug* (an adjective that was applied to boys *and* girls) in a complimentary manner. In contrast, they used the terms *hoodrat* and *ghetto* (terms typically used to describe girls) to convey disapproval. From a relational perspective, it is not surprising that the term *thug* had positive connotations. It is not insulting to be masculine. Masculinity is never inferior. (This helps explain why adopting a "tomboy" or "thug" identity is so popular among girls.) However, because femininity is contaminating and inferior, the terms *ghetto* and *hoodrat* expressed the speaker's contempt (Schippers 2007).

Clearly, Morris cares about his mother's and sister's approval. Yet, he is dating a white classmate against their wishes. Perhaps this choice (dating a suburban shite girl) reinforces his masculinity and positive reputation at school. (Morris was popular, both when I interviewed him as a high school sophomore and two years later as a senior.)

I observed many boys in my sample showing respect and deference to their mothers, sisters, aunts, and the black Diversify guidance counselors. At the same time, they did not seem to consider the Diversify girls eligible for dating. Perhaps their masculinity was threatened by the specter of the angry black female, who would remove their exclusive access to masculine characteristics (Collins 2004).

In any case, racial stereotypes about black men's intelligence, coupled with the Diversify boys' reluctance to bring their white girlfriends home, seem to undermine the legitimacy of their future masculinity as adult men. If we understand adolescent masculinity as a form of dominance usually expressed through sexualized discourses and heterosexuality (Chase 2008; Pascoe 2007), then the Diversify boys are having a short-term run of success. As in Pascoe's (2007:5) study, the Diversify boys symbolized "failed, and at the same time, wildly successful men in their heterosexual claim on the girls." Indeed, perhaps the very traits that made the Diversify boys' gender performances attractive within the suburban context also ensured their "place" within the suburbs as failed adult men. Ultimately, their ability to dominate adult women through economic power was questioned. Given that all the suburban students whom I interviewed said that Diversify kids were "troublemakers" and poor students, it is clear that they did not predict that Diversify students would have successful futures.[5]

## Isolated and Aggie [Aggravated]: The Social Situation of the Girls

The Diversify girls' evaluations of their social acceptance were different from the boys'. They felt that being black and from the city were social liabilities and, that as a result, they preferred to keep company with one another.[6] Sabrina, 14, lived with her parents in a three-bedroom house they owned in a quiet working-class section of the city. Her comments were typical:

They [suburban kids] know us [Diversify kids] as like . . . loud and obnoxious . . . and I hate that. And like they think that we like wear the same clothes every day and live in an apartment and don't have food every night. . . . I hate it, that's why I try to stay in my own little group [of black Diversify girls].

Even the six Diversify girls in my sample who did spend time in the suburbs complained about the characterizations of blacks as aggressive, overly tough, and poor. For example, Apryl, 15, attended many social events in the suburbs. She was clearly popular with both her Diversify and suburban classmates. Nonetheless, during my interview with her, she complained about racial stereotyping and the constraints it imposed on her behavior, saying, "They [suburban kids] . . . think that black people have to act a certain way. Have to talk a certain way. . . . It's really annoying."

Like the black teenage girls whom Jones (2010) observed in inner-city Philadelphia, the Diversify girls used the folk definitions of both mainstream and black standards of respectability to evaluate and describe themselves. However, the suburban students were unaware of the existence of a "folk category" of strong black woman familiar to the Diversify students—the black middle-class "respectful" or "lady." For the adolescent Diversify girls, like Anderson's (1999:35) adult participants who characterized the world in terms of "street" versus "decent," "ghetto" and "respectful" represented "two poles of value orientation, two contrasting conceptual categories that structure moral order." The Diversify girls were frustrated and demoralized by the suburban students' use of the term *ghetto* to describe them. Not only did they find it insulting, but it also indicated social and cultural distance between the suburban culture and that of the black students. The suburban students seemed unfamiliar with labels (like "respectful") that the Diversify girls routinely used to describe appropriately feminine behavior within their own communities.

For the Diversify girls and for many Diversify coordinators, being a black "lady" or "respectful" was desirable. This was perhaps most vividly illustrated to me in a conversation with Kathryn, 14, a Diversify student who spoke proudly about her recent evolution from acting "ghetto" to being more "ladylike":

> My dad, he says, well, 'cause I'm loud a lot, or I used to be, and he says I used to be really obnoxious. So he used to tell me stuff like that. And my mom, she would say, I need to lower my voice. She said I need to be more ladylike. So like, I piped down a lot . . . and being obnoxious, like I stopped doing that. And um, I used to be like stubborn a lot and rude, so my maturity level came up a lot on that.

Further, while both suburban and Diversify boys seemed to interpret the Diversify boys' urban clothing styles as "cool," the opposite was true in regards to Diversify girls' clothing. (Almost all the Diversify girls wore some urban styles, like bright sneakers with distinctive shoelaces, and they mostly favored the same hip-hop/athletic clothing brands as the Diversify boys.) Over and over, they told me that people called them, and their clothing, "ghetto" and that they found this characterization to be wrong and insulting. Malika, a 15-year-old student in Diversify, complained:

> They think I'm ghetto, 'cause I'm black. . . . I mean, I mean they think I'm loud, *but I'm not*.[7] And, like, the kind of jewelry that I like, they call me ghetto, 'cause I wear these earrings with my name in it. . . . And like I have the rings that say my name in them across here.

The term *ghetto* clearly has multiple connotations and has—like the broader issue of black girls' loudness—been analyzed before (e.g., Jones 2010). In the suburbs, adjectives like *ghetto* seemed to symbolize not just failure to live up to upper-middle-class white standards of femininity (not being "loud," wearing discrete jewelry), but also failure to embody characteristics of femininity that support subordination *to masculinity and whiteness*. In what follows, I show the connection between these adjectives and the ways the Diversify girls posed a symbolic threat to racial privilege and men's exclusive access to aggression.

Diversify girls recognized that they were stigmatized in the suburbs. They, like the white students, attributed this to their conflict management styles, which, importantly, included directly confronting racial insensitivity. Jade, 14, a Diversify student, talked about black girls' unwillingness to be silent when racist remarks are made. She believed that her suburban classmates expected her and other black girls to act "defensive" during conversations about race, as well as in interactions where respect was not sufficiently demonstrated:

> And then there is, "Ohh she lives in The City. She's from the projects." So you are expected to act all loud and stuff. And, um . . . um . . . you're expected to always be defensive. . . . Mostly [about] race, but like, if . . . you are approached the wrong way, you are supposed to get defensive.

Some Diversify girls depicted the suburban girls as "fake," while they were more "upfront." Tellingly, Ranah, 15, a Diversify student, used the term *boyish* to describe the black girls' more direct style of confrontation:

> The Chilton girls . . . they'll talk about you behind your back. . . . Or it's like, "Oh we're going to make up a Facebook group about you and say how much we hate you." But it's never to your face. And City girls, the way we hold ourselves, it's like maybe we're a lot more argumentative, we're more like boyish in a way. We feel like we can fight. . . . We're upfront. . . . 'Cause like, like how we were taught was if you have problem with somebody, say it to their face!

In the end, the Diversify girls did not succeed in promoting a definition of their more aggressive or assertive behavior as "authentic." Thus, the Diversify girls' widespread concern and preoccupation with the *ghetto* label and other pejorative terms reflects the discursive power of the dominant group. In many ways, it was the dominant group's worldviews that were recognized (even by the Diversify girls) as legitimate, something that merited attention and concern.

*Out of the dating picture.* The Diversify girls reported that neither the white suburban nor the black Diversify boys were interested in dating them. Jade explained that the suburban boys didn't want to get "mixed up" (involved) with the Diversify girls because they were too "aggressive": "The [suburban] boys, they're like, 'Oh, she's a black girl, she has *attitude*,' all that stuff, so they don't want to get mixed up in it." Other Diversify girls said that the suburban boys didn't like the black girls physically, preferring the "Barbie doll" look. Fourteen-year-old Ruth, a Diversify student, explained:

> The boys from the suburbs, they don't pursue the City girls, because . . . they typically prefer blonde hair and blue eyes. . . . Like, the Barbie doll thing. You know? And well, that's just not us, you know—we're ethnic, we have colored skin, we have curly hair, and all that.

For their part, Diversify boys also referred to black girls' assertiveness when explaining why the black girl–white boy dating combination was rare. Jordan, 15, a Diversify boy dating a popular white suburban girl told me, "So you know, most of the white boys, well they just can't handle the black girls. *They just can't handle them.* The black girls, you know, they can be really aggie!" Jordan's comment that the white boys "can't handle" the black girls underscores how the Diversify girls' failure to support masculine dominance—perhaps coupled with Eurocentric beauty standards and the Diversify girls' so-called defensiveness about race—played into their exclusion from the suburban social and dating scene.

The Diversify girls rejected the idea that they could—or would want to—date the black Diversify boys. For the most part, they said they were "too familiar," "too close," or "too much of friends" to date. They reminded me that they had been riding the bus to/from the suburbs together every day since they were small children. As Ruth, quoted earlier, explained, "We're sort of like family . . . it would be kind of like incest or something."

Thus, the Diversify girls felt socially excluded from the suburban social and dating scene, and there are many reasons for their relative isolation. As these data show, one powerful reason is that suburban students and Diversify boys perceived their behavior as threatening to the gender order. In this order, adolescent women's heterosexual desirability is partially predicated on being "easy" for men and boys to "handle." This includes being deferential in many circumstances, including but not limited to racially insensitive and ignorant remarks.

*Limitations.* A goal of the current study is to offer new theoretical directions for the study of gender within racially integrated settings. Although not interfering with this goal, it is worth noting that several aspects of the study limit the generalizability and transferability of the findings. (See Firestone 1993 on generalizability on transferability.) In terms of generalizability, the Diversify program doubtless attracts students who are not representative of the total population of eligible minority students. For example, children whose parents are concerned about racial discrimination and tracking in the suburbs—or who feel that a suburban education is worth these potential difficulties—may be underrepresented among Diversify students. It is also possible that children whose parents are knowledgeable about local educational programs and resources are overrepresented.

In addition, the suburban-residing students' participation rates in this study were low. It is impossible to determine all the sources of possible selection bias. Future research with a larger sample size could doubtless provide even more insight into how suburban-residing students view Diversify students. Nonetheless, the suburban students' reports about the Diversify students' place in the suburban schools was consistent with the Diversify students' and coordinators' reports, as well as my own observations. Thus, this study offers a valid portrait of the social position of the Diversify students.

Regarding transferability, the students I interviewed were voluntarily attending public schools in affluent suburban school districts. I would hesitate to use their experiences to understand the social position of black students participating in *mandatory* or intradistrict racial integration programs—or programs involving attendance at nonaffluent schools.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this study, interviews and observations with students attending affluent, intentionally racially integrated suburban schools provided a rich set of data for examining when and how an ethnic minority group's gender performance is used as the rationale for social exclusion. Suburban students, Diversify students, and suburban counselors and coordinators agreed that the suburban students generally accepted the African American boys, but not the girls. Diversify boys were included in various suburban social cliques and cast as desirable dating partners. Further, the suburban students seemed to valorize and celebrate the Diversify boys' masculinity, complimenting them for being "cool" and "tough." In stark contrast, suburban students and Diversify boys excluded the Diversify girls from white-dominant social cliques and the suburban dating scene. They justified the Diversify girls' exclusion and social isolation as the natural consequence of Diversify girls' assertiveness and aggression.

A central contribution of this research involves the use of a relational lens to build on the insights of previous scholars who have examined black girls' so-called loudness. Previously, Morris (2007) and other scholars (e.g., Grant 1984) emphasized that teachers may negatively evaluate younger black girls for failing to live up to standards of white femininity. While not rejecting the notion that black

adolescent girls in Diversify were penalized by their peers for not living up to white feminine norms, the data presented here suggest it is not the full story.

The African American girls in my study may have been sanctioned and stigmatized in part because they did not embody the same gender performances as their suburban classmates. Critically, however, their gender performance also threatened the boys' exclusive access to the characteristics that provide "cultural insurance" (Schippers 2007:96) for male dominance. This is a plausible explanation for why the white suburban boys disavowed them, making them "invisible." It also suggests a reason why the Diversify boys said the Diversify girls were said to be too "aggie" to date. The Diversify girls' contamination of the gender hierarchy also explains the choice epithet of "ghetto" to describe the Diversify girls. This epithet referred to the girls' loud, obnoxious behavior—behavior that, when embodied by a man, might be interpreted as assertive or confident.

In addition to the symbolic threat that Diversify girls posed to male dominance, gender differences in friendship patterns may also contribute to the Diversify girls' exclusion. Boys' networks are larger, more inclusive, and less intimate than girls' networks (Eder 1985; Eder and Enke 1991). This could imply that the Diversify girls' experiences of exclusion (and the boys' experiences of inclusion) had little to do with race and were instead driven by differences in normative friendship patterns between boys and girls. However, gender differences in friendship exclusivity do not explain key findings. The Diversify girls felt that suburban classmates and black male peers devalued their femininity and blackness, even as the Diversify boys reported that their masculinity was respected. Overall, a framework that focuses on gender differences in friendship patterns can elucidate some aspects of Diversify students' experiences, but I believe that a relational framework provides a more complete fit for these data.

As the findings indicate, the idealized relationship between masculinity and femininity maintains not only masculine dominance, but also hierarchies of race and social class. Thus, black masculinity and femininity stand in relation not only to one another, but also to white norms. This dynamic is perhaps most poignantly expressed in the Diversify students' shared experience of constraint. Racial stereotypes limited the Diversify boys' and

girls' possibilities for being full participants in the suburban social scene. Although Diversify boys could draw on perceptions of black masculinity to gain access to suburban social networks, they—in stark contrast to the white suburban boys—appeared to have few alternative status options. For example, none of the Diversify boys in my sample occupied the niche of the "smart and nice [popular] band boy." Instead, it seems like academically gifted boys like Ebo were accepted in suburban peer networks *despite* their achievement, rather than because of it—as white boys in some high-achieving schools seem to be (e.g., Khan 2010). Further, as Ebo and several others pointed out, it was the Diversify boys' blackness (underscored through their masculinity) that positioned them as less smart and academically talented than the other male students.[8] These dynamics highlight the intersection of racial and gender oppression within the suburban schools I studied, as well as within the broader social and cultural discursive contexts in which these processes are situated.

Other authors who have studied affluent schools have also found that students of color are faced with a narrower set of social identity options than white upper-class students (Gaztambide-Fernandez 2009; Horvat and Antonio 1999). This is troubling from a policy perspective. Gender performances are also racial performances, and the Diversify students were constrained in how they enacted both. Further, their claims to belonging were limited, as indicated by how suburban students talked about the Diversify program and the Diversify students. Like students of color in other privileged settings, the burden was on them to adapt to the setting (e.g., Gaztambide and DiAquoi 2010).

Indeed, the positioning of the Diversify students, especially the boys, as less intelligent and hardworking than suburban students poses a serious challenge to the viability of racial integration programs.[9] The intent of such programs is to reduce the racial and social isolation of white communities as well as to provide black students with opportunities to become full academic and social participants in the educational settings from which they have historically been excluded. Yet, as this article shows, views of racial integration and of black students' role in integrating white-dominant schools reflect the strength and shifting nature of ideologies that even today justify racial and ethnic exclusion and hierarchy.

The Diversify students' experiences of valorized and temporary inclusion (the boys) and stigmatized exclusion (the girls) could not have clearer historical roots. In *Black Sexual Politics*, Collins (2004:119-49) observed that prior racial formations drew on ideas about black sexuality to justify formal structures of racial subordination. In the early twentieth century, a church-based "politics of respectability" attempted to define a standard of white femininity to which black female industrial and domestic workers should aspire. This standard was rooted in traditions of white southern chivalry, and it also reflected a desire for white approval (Higginbotham 1993). As Collins (2004) notes, ideas about black sexuality still legitimate the ongoing—if less formally organized—racial segregation of the black poor and working-class.

The suburban students in my sample believed that not all black students were eligible or appropriate candidates for a racial integration program. This placed an unfair burden of visibility on the black students. Further, their presence in the predominantly white suburbs sometimes appeared to be embraced as a commodity, as the "spice that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream White culture" (hooks 1992:14). This orientation to racial progress, like the view of racial integration as a "scholarship" program for deserving blacks, maintains the racial hierarchy. It exoticizes and otherizes blackness while rendering whiteness normative and mainstream. A truly progressive social justice program would include a call for racial integration that requires as much adaptation from its white and middle-class participants as from its black ones.

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## NOTES

1. All names of people, the program, and the suburban towns are pseudonyms. Information that could potentially identify any individual I interviewed is also altered.
2. I use the term *black* instead of *African American* to describe my research participants, as this was the term most often used by participants themselves. The term *black* also has the added benefit of not implying a particular immigration status or family history. When citing others' research, I use the terms preferred by that author.
3. All of the adults whom I interviewed were initially contacted as the result of their publicly advertised professional duties or because I met them from attending Diversify alumni association events.
4. See McCready (2010) for more on the need to make space for diverse masculinities within urban environments where many black boys face pressure to conform to highly scripted masculine roles.
5. There is evidence that Diversify students perform worse than their suburban classmates academically. According to recent reports, students in Diversify have substantially lower test scores than their classmates who live in the suburbs. Yet, almost 90 percent of Diversify high school seniors continue on to two- and four-year colleges, whereas only 66 percent of high school seniors in their urban public school district do so (citation omitted to preserve program anonymity).
6. These trends were reflected in the high proportion (14/20) of boys who reported spending time in the suburbs at friends' houses. In contrast, girls were less likely to be integrated into suburban peer networks, and they were also less likely to report spending time in the suburban friends' houses (6/18).
7. I use italics throughout the findings section to indicate the respondent's own emphasis.
8. I thank an anonymous reviewer for a clear articulation of this dynamic.
9. I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this discussion.

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# BIO

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